
In 2007, The Global Intercultural Communication Reader took pride in being the first anthology to present a non-Eurocentric approach to the study of culture and communication. In the expanded second edition of the book, editors Asante, Miike, and Yin continue to offer a significant contribution to the field of intercultural communication. They confirm the importance of opening to indigenous perspectives and of underlining not only cultural differences but also cultural similarities within the global paradigm. In this context, they wonder whether interculturalism is truly intercultural and what the implications are for contemporary intercultural communication in a globally connected world. To answer these questions, they have collected the best work of some of the principal scholars in the field. Although some articles are more captivating and flow better than others, the result is a fascinating journey through different philosophies of knowledge and different interpretations.

The volume is designed for graduate seminars and upper division undergraduate courses related to the study of culture and communication; it covers a wide range of topics and is organized in five parts: 1) The Emergence and Evolution of Intercultural Communication; 2) Issues and Challenges in Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Inquiry; 3) Cultural Wisdom and Communication Practices in Context; 4) Identity, Multiculturalism, and Intercultural Competence; and 5) Globalization and Ethical Issues in Intercultural Relations.

The 32 chapters, 25 of which are new essays for the second edition, are accompanied by an 870-item updated bibliography on intercultural communication theory and research. The articles were chosen with the objective of indicating four new directions for future research in the field. The first direction is to integrate micro- and macro-levels of culture and context, since interculturalism can no longer ignore the macro-context of historical, institutional, economic, political, and ideological factors that frame the conditions and positions of (inter) cultural communicators. The second direction is to stimulate and incorporate indigenous theoretical perspectives into culture and communication studies to overcome cultural and communication imperialism, typical of European and North American approaches. The third direction is to examine power and privilege and their impact on the equality and mutuality of communication in intercultural contexts. In fact, as the editors stress, it is one thing to deliver a message; it is another thing for that message to be received, and quite another for it to be received as the sender intended. The fourth and final direction for future research is to articulate local and global ethics for humanistic connection and community building.

The Global Intercultural Communication Reader offers some positive observations. First, people around the world can communicate. And the reason why people commu-
nicate is to be understood in harmony. However, there are also roadblocks to communication. In fact, this positive communication among people is not reflected in the literature, which ironically makes the reality less tangible than the debate. As the book’s editors state, “An enormous human creativity sits at the very gate of our communication process. Until we are able to establish this type of consciousness in the literature, we will not create it in the commonplace of ordinary conversation” (p. 11). Another positive suggestion is that, after many changes, intercultural communication studies have today reached a decisive point of thinking dialectically about culture and communication, which in contributors Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama’s words means “letting go of the more rigid kinds of knowledge that we have about others and entering into more uncertain ways of knowing about others” (p. 203). Globalization is not homogenization, Tu Weiming points out, and can paradoxically heighten and accentuate local awareness. Most importantly, the majority of the authors of the chapters, in different ways, urge scholars and teachers to challenge the privileged position of Eurocentric canonical histories and epistemologies and suggest that to successfully educate their students they should choose to examine and confront the global culture in which they live from diverse perspectives, not through the “one-sided, singular, patriarchal, racially biased and hegemonic interpretations” of Eurocentric, U.S. American cultural experiences (Ronald Jackson, p. 88; see also Chapter 22 by Gust Yep). Interestingly, Yukio Tsuda, in “The Hegemony of English and Strategies for Linguistic Pluralism,” problematizes how language is assumed to be a neutral means of communication and is seldom questioned as a form of domination that sustains unjust global power relations, while in fact the hegemony of English functions to perpetuate the neocolonialist structure. This results in linguistic and communicative inequality, to the great disadvantage of other language speakers, and in colonization of the consciousness.

Another main objective of the editors is to demonstrate, through this volume, various ways in which we can approach human communication in a global manner. And they definitely reached their goal. A very interesting contribution arrives from Lise M. Sparrow, who challenges Peter Adler’s model of “multicultural man,” which describes an intercultural person as someone who lies on the boundary with a fluid and mobile identity and embraces marginality as the most desirable stage of identity development. She argues that this is not the case for women and ethnic minorities. Particularly, she describes women as trees, deeply rooted in a community while adjusting their growth to the environment and expanding connections with others. Consequently, she invites communication scholars and students to reconsider the issues of marginality, in-betweenness, uniqueness, and commitment to community action in the conceptualization of intercultural identity development. However, we should keep in mind that women and men, or “people of color” (p. 409), cannot be considered just as categories, without acknowledging the diverse peculiarities within genders and races.

The juxtaposition and range of articles in the book underline how intercultural communication is interdisciplinary (and see Chapter. 2 by Gary Weaver); they connect scholars of all kinds of backgrounds and from different fields, including cross-cultural, intercultural, and international communication. They also offer original and fascinating indigenous
perspectives, showing Afrocentricity and Asiacentricity as ways of shifting paradigms in African and Asian studies in particular, and in communication studies in general.

Yoshitaka Miike reminds us that cultural hybridization is not a recent phenomenon and should not be attributed only to the era of globalization. As both Afrocentrists and Asiacentrists have acknowledged: “African and Asian cultures have developed through intercultural interactions within and across regions” (p. 120). And this has not happened in a “power-free vacuum” (p. 121), but in a specific political, ideological, and economic context (see also Miike, 2008). “It is precisely because the local is on more and more exchange with the global that the importance of centricity must be stressed,” writes Miike (p. 121). Manulani Aluli-Meyer proposes an indigenous Hawaiian way of knowing that challenges the dominant research world view based on the Newtonian notion of space:

Using body, mind and spirit as a template in which to organize meaningful research asks us to extend through our objective/empirical knowing (body) into wider spaces of reflection offered through conscious subjectivity (mind) and, finally, via recognition and engagement with deeper realities (spirit). (p. 142)

Altogether, these contributions present a layered overview and a detailed literature of the most influential contemporary approaches in intercultural communications, recommended to everyone who operates in the communication and culture field.

As the editors suggest, in a world where globalization and localization intensify in every corner, the field of intercultural communication is increasingly confronted by fundamental issues of identity, community, and humanity. In fact, not only have communications changed in the global era, but so have people, particularly migrants and the reasons for migration. Analyzing this aspect further could be an opportunity to deepen this new chapter of intercultural studies. But as they stand, these collected articles show that intercultural communication is an effective and perhaps the only way to mitigate identity politics, social disintegration, religious conflicts, and ecological vulnerability in the global village.

Reference

Daniela Sanzone, York University