

JiIC Edit 1 Transcript

Hello again, I'm Shelley Allen from Routledge, Taylor and Francis and today I'm talking to Shiv Ganesh of the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

Shiv, you're editor-elect for the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, how would you describe the journal and what are its aims and scopes?

Gosh, that's actually a rather big question, Shelley! International and Intercultural communication issues are, you know, a major concern, not just in the field of communication studies at NCA, but in a really wide range of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, education, political science, literary studies and the list goes on! Sometimes International and Intercultural issues are addressed separately by scholars and sometimes they are addressed together.

And when NCA created this journal a few years ago, it's not only built on the tradition that was established by 30 odd volumes of the International and Intercultural Communication annuals that preceded it, but it also recognised the fact that there'd been a rapid growth of both international and intercultural studies in a wide number of communication divisions within NCA and these include interpersonal, organisational communication, mass communication, seminar studies, critical race studies, career studies, you know, the list goes on. And so, you know, right now, the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* serves as a primary outlet for original research on both international and intercultural communication and we emphasise that we showcase diverse perspectives and methods and this includes qualitative, quantitative, critical and textual approaches.

Our readership is international and we feature research conducted in a wide range of locations, by a diverse groups of scholars and I suppose in terms of our objectives, what we do is we seek to expand our understanding of international and intercultural communication, theories, issues, practices, in a range of context, ranging from democracy, the environment, gender, sexuality, globalisation and health, all the way through media, organising, pedagogy, post-colonialism, trans-nationalism, among others.

So what would you say are the most contentious issues that are being addressed within the journal?

There are many, as I imagine any NCA editor would attest to, but I can think of two for the moment.

I suppose the first one I would refer to as the debates about the constitutive power of what counts as the intercultural and by that I mean questions about, to what extent does the notion of intercultural itself signify something unique and special about communication, or is it automatically implicated in all communicative forms?

So, for instance, you know, we are preparing a special issue on intercultural dialogue and in that intercultural dialogue we say, 'well, what exactly is intercultural about dialogue, or are all dialogues automatically intercultural and if so, is interculturalism, if you will, redundant?' Likewise, in studies of mainstream inter-cultural communication studies, there is such phenomena as intercultural competence. Scholars do raise questions about to what extent is intercultural competence difference and unique from inter-personal competence, more broadly speaking.

The second issue that I think, is this historical trajectory of an issue and this has to do with detailed considerations of issues of agency and domination and scholarship in international communication, in particular, continues to debate the extent to which identity and difference is shaped by contemporary global forces. While we had an early generation of scholars back in the 1980s who were debating the extent to which cultural imperialism characterised international communication systems and what the nature of that domination and imperialism was, in the 1990s we saw a big switch to debates about the relevance and pervasiveness of hybridity and, to my mind, in the last several years, scholarship in this area has begun to debate the ability of networks and groups and coalitions to resist a range of transnational discursive and material forces and practices and these include, neo-liberalism, whiteness, war, violence and the list goes on; but that's a vibrant debate that's acting continuous in the field and is I hope reflected in the pages of the journal.

So what do you look for when considering the articles that are submitted?

Well, regardless of the topic, articles in the journal need to be theoretically informed and theoretically sophisticated. They have to relate broadly to issues that are socially and communicatively significant. They have to be methodically or argumentatively rigorous. All submissions to the journal are peer reviewed. As a matter of fact, even proposals for special issues of fora have been preceded by an open call for papers and those proposals themselves are sent out for peer review.

You know, we welcome both theoretical and empirical submissions from authors all over the world and I suppose the other underlying factor is, you know, good scholarship and good writing.

So what are the most common mistakes made by authors submitting to the journal?

Well, it's interesting because there is one area in particular that I think is made across the board, regardless of whether it's a first time submitter or someone submitting in the senior part of their career, who've got about 30 or 40 publications behind them, and this issue, the most common mistake is appropriately anonymising the manuscript. We find that sometimes authors leave names in manuscripts, sometimes they self-cite so often that it's pretty evident who they are; sometimes they're really easily identified in the text of the essay, you know, references to institutions, references to supervisors, references to students and this is something that, you know, it is difficult to get a set of rigid principles on. We've asked authors to take care of anonymisation problems and have described ways in which they can do it on our web page, but what we do, is when we feel that a manuscript is not appropriately anonymised, we un-submit it and we actually give authors three chances to make changes and on the third chance, if the manuscript is not anonymised, we do reject the manuscript. And anonymisation is, to me, it's an incredibly important issue and that is because it is at the heart of the peer review process. You can't really protect an author from a biased review if the reviewer knows or can guess very well who the author is. Likewise, I suppose it would work the same way if authors were able to identify who reviewers were, you know, I mean reviewers wouldn't necessarily write the kinds of reviews if authors were able to see them.

So, I mean, I recognise that the issue is much more complicated than I've presented it here, but I'd say anonymisation is probably the biggest issue. I don't necessarily see this as a common mistake, but sort of more of a tip that I've learned in the year

that I've been editor-elect of this journal and that is that authors don't really pay a whole lot of attention to abstract and I try and emphasise the importance of creating and crafting and excellent abstract because that is the basis upon which we solicit reviewers and that is what reviewers first see and that is what shapes their understanding, whether you like it or not, and their overall approach to a manuscript.

So, from where I come from, you know, the more care one takes in preparing the abstract and proofreading the manuscript, the less likely a reviewer is to be put off by the manuscript or by your work.

I agree wholeheartedly about the abstract issue actually because one of the first things that readers will look at, when they come across your manuscript, is the abstract, that's what they read to decide whether they're going to continue to read your work and perhaps cite it.

Absolutely and you know with increasing digitisation abstracts and keywords are becoming even more important and also the attention is, rightfully so, on the content and the arguments of the essay itself, but at the end of the day, if one wants one's work cited, if you want it to be visible, then you have to be savvy, I suppose, in thinking about how you're framing the abstract; what key words you're using to describe your manuscript work and that's something that, you know, we've accepted a few manuscripts and we've begun to work with authors on that.

So, you've been editor-elect now for a year and your first issue's coming out shortly, so what are your aspirations for the future of the journal in your 3-year tenure?

Well, on reflection and I think in my application to edit the journal, one of the things I stated was that I would like to see the journal move further out of the United States and I certainly don't mean that I want the journal to move away from NCA, by no means am I saying that. I think that we need to retain our core membership here and continue to support our membership here, but at the same time, given the topic and the content of the journal, and given the overall contours of academic publishing worldwide, it's really, really important that we be global and so I'm in the process of expanding the review board and now about a quarter of the reviewers are currently from outside the US and that, I think, represents a pretty big shift for an NCA journal. It's something that the Publication Board wanted me to do as an editor-elect and I hope I am delivering on that front.

Moreover, though there are a lot of networks in Australia, Africa, Asia and Europe that the journal is beginning to tap into and I think that is good for us, you know, that's good for our visibility and it, hopefully, increases the range of submissions we get and increases the overall visibility of communication scholarships, as well as, hopefully, adds to the overall quality of the work that eventually gets published in the journal.

So I think that the potential for growth in the journal is absolutely immense. I think that there is a lot we could do.

So how do you see communication studies developing in the future? Are there any particular areas which you feel will come to the forefront of the debate?

Well, actually, I think that the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* is at the forefront of growth and communication studies, so I think the number of submissions that we've received has really jumped in recent years and in

the last 12 months we've received about 145 submissions. Our circulation, I know, is growing well and worldwide, you know, I think that the big issues that we face today, you know, issues involving globalisation, peace and conflict, intercultural issues, climate change, these big issues of our time are all very significantly within the journal remit and as communication scholars, we need to continue to focus on these big issues as a field if we are to stay relevant and I think that the *Journal of International Intercultural Communication* is helping us do exactly that.

So how do you think the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* addresses the conference theme, which this year is building bridges?

Well, the journal title is 'The *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*,' the prefix 'inter' appears twice in the journal title, so in that sense, we have not just one, but two bridges, you know, one bridge between cultures and one bridge between nations. So what we do in the journal is absolutely core to the conference theme I think.

So how do you feel the NCA journals benefit the membership of NCA?

At one level, journals themselves should contain cutting edge research and research that pushes communication inquiry to un-inhabited edges, if you will. At another level, journals represent the association and its members to the world. The quality of the journals we have is the quality of the scholarships that we eventually offer, both to academics and society and that's why, for me and as an editor, issues of quality, citation etc, are absolutely critical.

And finally, and perhaps most deeply, journals, in a sense, constitute fields of knowledge themselves. I'm a new editor and while I've known this in a sort of dry abstract kind of way, it's also been another thing altogether to actually see reviewers offer feedback, so see authors try to do good work. You know, more than anything, I suppose what's shifted since I've become an editor-elect has been the rather adversarial view of the review and publication process. Well, I think that in a sense, the friendly adversarial relationship that ought to exist between reviewers and authors is incredibly healthy. I realise that as editors, what we're trying to do, is improve scholarship in general, regardless of whether or not an article is sent in for revision or re-submission or it is eventually rejected or considered not suitable for publication. We provide authors with a heck of a lot of feedback about the quality of their work, about what they need to do in order to make their work publishable, but potential alternative sources. So, in that sense, you can see how the review process itself develops a field of knowledge in a pretty deep way. I think that this kind of development is a by-product of journal work itself and the peer review process itself, and that isn't necessarily acknowledged, that I'm now beginning to appreciate seeing from the inside out, as it were.

Thanks very much for taking the time to talk to me today. Those listeners that want to learn more about the NCA journals can do so by visiting www.communicationarena.com.

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