

中国跨文化传播研究年刊 (2017)

China Intercultural Communication Annual

顾力行 英亚东 主编

Edited by
Steve J. Kulich &
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上海外国语大学跨文化研究中心
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(*CIC Annual*) Volume 2

The “field” of “intercultural communication” that this series and volume seek to represent in Chinese contexts evolved from several sequences of developments occurring in the 1960s and 70s. As this volume notes, there were a number of important streams and even more key influencers, but one of them was Fred Casmir. Both Fred Casmir and Michael Prosser (who we dedicate this volume to) were among those seeking to identify or coalesce efforts that would help strengthen intercultural scholarship in various disciplines. As Casmir notes:

I think our early “philosophy” was not pointing towards a separate field, but rather on impacting all academic disciplines that had a stake in this—of course that has happened, although the “communication” aspects, and the expertise of our colleagues in communication was at times “lost,” as I see it, because of the “usual” academic competition. (Personal Correspondence, Casmir, 2012)

Both coming from “Speech Communication” circles related to the Speech Association of America (SAA, 1949 – 1966, before it became SCA, 1976 – 1996, then NCA, 1997-present), during a meeting of the SAA “Committee for Cooperation with Foreign Universities” in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1967, Casmir and Prosser (with several other scholars) began discussions on forming an intercultural field. These continued at a mini-conference held the next year (1968) at the “Pepperdine Haus” in Heidelberg, Germany mini-conference (that became an ongoing “speech and culture” conference series), which Prosser also attended.

That gathering provided motivations for the 1971 joint-US/Canada speech communication associations' gathering organized by Prosser where formal plans for the field were laid out. One of the recommendations was to launch an academic annual. Fred Casmir was the first editor of that Pepperdine sponsored (along with SCA) *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* (launched in 1974, with Vol 2. In 1975, and Vol. 3 in 1976). The *IIC Annual* continued to be the showcase of intercultural communication (IC) scholarship for over 30 years well into the start of this 21st century before it became an NCA journal, and is the model for this series now being launched in China.

Thus, we have asked Fred Casmir to write the Preface for this volume and reflect on where we have come or where we are going after these 40 plus years. Read, whet your academic appetite as we continue this legacy of moving the intercultural field forward, and enjoy this new volume!

Steve J. Kulich

President-Elect of IAIR

Shanghai, July 2017

Preface

*Fred Casmir, Professor Emeritus,
Pepperdine University, California*

One way of looking at sustained human communication is to consider that it is always need-driven. Throughout the ages, and in all major cultural centers shaped by the human race, there have been philosophers who were concerned with understanding and developing organized systems related to human communication within their own communication environment. For Western culture, early rhetoricians significantly impacted the thinking and concerns of many future generations to come.

In studying all human conditions and endeavors, it has always been relatively simple to study and describe the “how, who, what, and where”. What has continued to represent a major, even ultimate challenge has been understanding the “why” of human actions and interactions. Tens of thousands of systems of study, theories, techniques, and entire fields or disciplines have attempted to find all-inclusive, or at least satisfying-for-the-moment, ways of developing organized explanatory systems. Possibly there have been many more than that. These attempts most frequently have led to sustained and at times bitter confrontations between those who became adherents, disciples, or followers of a particular individual or philosophical approach.

It has been suggested that understanding one’s own culture is more difficult than understanding another. That reaction points to the fact that need-driven sustained communication includes a significant amount of individual interpretation and reaction to the needs that the culture in which we exist and operate tends to establish and sustain.

It is at this point that the study of intercultural communication faces the same kind of challenge early Western rhetoricians and many others faced. Are

we to become merely “sales-men and -women” of the practical applications we have discovered, or what we define as “effective” communication? There have been a lot of reasons to condemn the actions of past generations in various historical and cultural settings, whose major or only aim was the domination of others for their own benefit. “Colonizing” has been a major effort in all parts of the world at one time or another. There is a great possibility for deception that makes it impossible for anyone, in any endeavor, at any given time, to be aware of the negative aspects of their supposedly beneficial efforts.

The question thus becomes one which a number of us wrestled with decades ago as we tried to understand what would be the best approach to the study of intercultural communication. Would we succumb to the blandishments of academic systems and cultures that offered advancement, money, and recognition? Or to what extent would it be possible for students of intercultural communication to impact all academic fields of study in order to developed insights into the human “why,” based on those cultural and individual needs I mentioned? When one considers the varieties of backgrounds, both cultural and academic, of those of us who first met to consider this issue, you can understand why we struggled with what the future of the “field” (or even if there should be a “field”) should look like.

It is an important fact that now, over 50 years later, the academic, grand-and great-grandchildren in the various academic fields find themselves in what indeed have turned into various academic disciplines. What will they see as their ultimate purpose, their ultimate understanding of the needs behind the sustained communication of those who see a reason for communication with those from other cultures? That is a challenge far beyond any contribution any of us can make to what academic discipline we see as our anchor.

In 1974, a small group of individuals with different academic and cultural backgrounds met to consider the possible future of intercultural communication studies both on universities and colleges, the academic community at large, and the world. Our desire was to connect what one might see as “the old” and “the new.” In the first SCA sponsored volume of the preceding *Annual*, the “Editor’s Notes” suggested:

Preface

This is not a new venture... It is in effect a very old venture when viewed against the total human experience of studying and reporting our insights, efforts, and concerns. However, it is just as vital to point to the hopes and aspirations of a group of people who have envisioned this publication for some time, because they wanted to bring together some old and some new ideas within a new setting with a new framework, to assist all of us in our attempts to gain some new insights. (Casmir, 1974, p. iii)

However, we also realized some of the fundamental challenges our proposed venture would face:

It may be time to challenge fundamental concepts. It may be time to ask within the framework of intercultural and international settings if our new sacred cows, our 20th Century "mysticism" and "superstition" (possibly centering around our elevation of science to a quasi-religious level), need to be challenged. Maybe it is time to ask first how we see Man and his world [considering men and women], and then to understand why we almost necessarily reach our conclusions, in spite of the illusion of objectivity, which may be dictated by our cultures, societies, instruments, methodologies, and languages. Certainly, within the pages of this publication a new scientific or Western ethnocentrism can be meaningfully fought which otherwise could cause us to take the standards of Western culture as the basis for our discovers of other human beings as they compare, favorably or unfavorably to our own way of perceiving. (Casmir, 1974, p. iii)

Later, on that same page, you can find the beginning of a vision that included our concern for avoiding what we saw as past mistakes:

...The fact that this is a "shrinking" world has been mentioned so often that it would be meaningless to delve into a discussion of it once more. What may not be so obvious, is our search for commonalities, for

common experiences, for common perception to make our human interaction possible, meaningful, happy, more satisfying. Certainly, our world is threatened, or at least challenged, by a great many dangerous factors. But if communication scholars have learned anything, it is the concept that mere presentation of facts, mere discussion of the issues does not solve our problems. (Casmir, 1974, p. iii)

Here then are some of the conclusions that I believe still can be seen as contemporary concerns and challenges if as both students and practitioners of human communication we are to be considered to be moral, ethical, responsible contributors to the ongoing positive development of the human condition:

Maybe it is time to ask if all Man's [people's] acts are not first of all based on the concept that he needs to control his [her] environment, keep it in balance, feel safe, and at the same time carry out his [her] efforts, work, and thoughts in such a way as to enable him [her] to grow, to feel needed, wanted, to feel as if he [she] is contributing and growing as an individual...

It appears to be a time to synthesize, think, meditate, evaluate, and then to move on with methods perhaps yet undeveloped or undiscovered, rather than to be shackled by the fetishes of a yesterday which many of us fear to leave behind. (Casmir, 1974, p. iv)

Reference:

Casmir, F. L. (Ed.). (1974). *International and intercultural communication annual, Volume also 1*. Peppardine, CA/Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association.

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