

Critical Intercultural Communication Studies *At a Crossroads*

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Standing at the Crossroads

Many of us dare to go where others steer clear: across and through the junctures and ruptures of historical authority, formidable structures, and power forces that touch our encounters, relationships, and everyday lives; inside the fragmentations and displacements of cultural groups and identities – ours and those of others for whom we care; in and around the contours of our intersecting positionalities in relation to surrounding ideologies and hegemonies of society, and deep within the struggles over power among cultural groups, members, and dominant structures and forms. We have traversed these trajectories in the overlap among corollary areas such as rhetorical, cultural, critical, and feminist studies, critical communication pedagogy, organizational communication, media studies, performance studies, race and ethnic studies, and intercultural communication studies, with a wonderful diversity in approach and theoretical position and a unified, steadfast focus on culture, communication, and power. Such important work has emerged and converged into a vibrant and burgeoning body of scholarship and political engagements that we refer to as “critical intercultural communication studies.”

Critical intercultural communication studies represents an exciting, productive, and rapidly growing area of inquiry within the field of intercultural communication in the larger Communication discipline and one that connects with and joins other situated fields in Communication (rhetorical, cultural, critical, and feminist studies, critical communication pedagogy, organizational communication, media studies, race and ethnic studies, interpersonal communication, performance studies, among others). This area foregrounds issues of power, context, socio-economic relations and historical/structural forces as constituting and shaping culture and intercultural communication encounters, relationships, and contexts (Collier *et al.*, 2001; Martin and Nakayama,

1999; Mendoza, Halualani, and Drzewiecka, 2003; Starosta and Chen, 2001, 2003). According to Martin and Nakayama (2000), a critical perspective is defined as one that addresses issues of macro contexts (historical, social, and political levels), power, relevance, and the hidden and destabilizing aspects of culture. These scholars explain that the critical perspective seeks to “understand the role of power and contextual constraints on communication in order ultimately to achieve a more equitable society” (p. 8). Moreover, a critical perspective in intercultural communication requires that we “understand how relationships emerge in historical contexts, within institutional and political forces and social norms that often invisible to some groups” and how intercultural communication relations are “constrained and enabled by institutions, ideologies, and histories” (Collier, 2002, pp. 1–2, see Lee *et al.*, 1995).

Although to some extent, scholars in the field have imagined and envisioned what critical intercultural communication studies can be (see e.g., Collier *et al.*, 2001; Martin and Nakayama, 1997, 2000; Moon, 1996; Ono, 1998; Starosta and Chen, 2001), we have not fully engaged and explored such imaginings in terms of the diverse theoretical strands and foci, the unifying points of convergence, and the stakes involved that constitute critical intercultural communication studies. We are situated in a unique moment – at a crossroads if you will – to reflect back on the steps it took to get here, take stock of where we are, and where we need to go.

Looking Back

In reflecting back, several junctures paved the way for the emergence of an area of study generally termed as “critical intercultural communication studies.” In their genealogy, Halualani, Mendoza, and Drzewiecka (2009) trace the significant junctures and moves that paved such a way. They discuss the importance of scholars’ calls (Asante, 1980; González and Peterson, 1993; Prosser, 1969; Smith, 1979; Lee *et al.*, 1995; Mendoza, 2005; Moon, 1996) for closer attention to historical specificity and contextual grounding in intercultural studies. Overlapping this stretch of time was a period in which several critiques of the predominant theoretical construct of culture as nation circulated (see e.g., Altman and Nakayama, 1992; Asante, 1980; González and Peterson, 1993; Moon, 1996; Ono, 1998; Smith, 1981). Yet another juncture that occurred was the rise of works that argued for the retheorizing of culture as “sites of struggle” based on power relations and ideologies (Collier *et al.*, 2001; Cooks, 2001; Martin and Nakayama, 1999; Moon, 1996; Starosta and Chen, 2001). These junctures gradually opened up and stretched the boundaries of intercultural communication inquiry and research and ignited new, complex questions about culture and communication.

These historical moves should also be contextualized in terms of the prevailing tide of knowledge formation in the field of intercultural communication in the areas of scholarly research (in the field’s journals and monographs) and textbook materials. We contend that through this body of knowledge, intercultural communication was proscribed in a very specific way: as a privatized, interpersonal (one on one), equalized and neutral encounter/transaction between comparable national

group members (and in some cases, racial/ethnic group members within a nation) and as such, in terms of individual (interpersonal) skill development to bridge equalized differences among cultures regardless of the context, setting, or historical/political moment.

For instance, from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, academic journal articles dedicated to a focus on intercultural communication as well as scholarly monographs and books, primarily framed culture as nation and relied on postpositivist (cultural measurement) approaches (as argued by González and Peterson, 1993; Martin and Nakayama, 1999; Moon, 1996). There also grew a steady rise of intercultural communication textbooks and readers written for lower division undergraduate students that focused on a survey of intercultural communication concepts. The majority of these successful and multieditioned textbooks focused on an interpersonal approach to intercultural communication, emphasizing individual and group-centered attitudes and communication skills. While useful and important in its own right, such an approach glosses over the larger macro-micro process of intercultural communication, or the ways in which larger structures of power (governmental, institutional, legal, economic, and mediated forces) intermingle with microacts and encounters among/within cultural actors and groups.

In response, there have been several academic critiques of the intercultural communication field and the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of the traditional social scientific and interpretive paradigms that have dominated the field historically. Among these are works that have raised overlooked questions about the relationship between and among culture, communication, and politics, in terms of situated power interests, historical contextualization, global shifts and economic conditions, different politicized identities in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, region, socioeconomic class, generation, and diasporic positions (e.g., Collier, 1998; Drzewiecka, 1999; González, Houston, and Chen, 1994; González and Peterson, 1993; Hall, 1992; Halualani, 1998, 2000; Lee *et al.*, 1995; Martin and Nakayama, 1999; Martin *et al.*, 1998; Mendoza, 2000; Moon, 1996; Ono, 1998; Smith, 1981). According to these critiques, a power-based perspective not only fills a void but also meets the demands of many scholars, instructors, and students who are intrigued with larger macro processes that inform intercultural relations. Likewise, in the field, scholars have been calling for a perspective – known as “critical intercultural communication studies” on intercultural communication (“the fifth moment”) – through a power-based lens especially within the last fourteen years (see e.g., Collier, 1998; Collier *et al.*, 2001; González and Peterson, 1993; Lee *et al.*, 1995; Martin and Nakayama, 1999; 2000; Moon, 1996; Ono, 1998; Smith, 1981; Starosta and Chen, 2001). What followed suit from these critiques were numerous identifications of gaps in knowledge, calls to fill voids in research, and the explicit need to approach intercultural communication in a dramatically different way. This “taking stock” phase has elucidated significant questions that have not been fully engaged. These questions form the road ahead or the “forks” in the road that need to be confronted. We call your attention to these questions located at this crossroads.

Lingering Questions and Forks in the Road

In order for critical communication studies as an area of study to further grow, develop, and stay relevant (historically, politically), there are several lingering questions regarding the nature, key assumptions, lines of work and collaboration with other schools of thought, and challenges for the future of critical intercultural communication that need to be faced.

What does it mean to do critical intercultural work in communication?

The aforementioned critiques of the field underscore the need for a critically infused approach to culture and communication but do not fully articulate what this means in terms of larger goals and the role of a critical intercultural communication scholar. Indeed, many initial summaries of a critical perspective describe the larger goal of a critical intercultural communication approach as “making change,” “to push against the grain of the status quo,” and to “interrogate dominant power relations and structures” (Martin and Nakayama, 1997, 1999; Moon, 1996). But what does this mean for us as scholars in terms of framing and conducting our research? How do you begin to engage power when the stakes involve the larger goals of liberation, justice, voice and the power to name, the dismantling of legacies of colonialist oppression, and a culture’s self-determination? And with what larger objective in mind: as an intellectual project only or one that progresses into a form of advocacy, activism, and or action effort? It is important to designate what our work is aspiring to be and do and our unique role as academics, scholars, educators, intellectuals, activists, and practitioners. We can, perhaps, take a cue from cultural studies and Stuart Hall’s (1996) reading of Gramsci’s concept of the “organic intellectual” who must “work on two fronts at one and the same time”:

On the one hand, we had to be at the very forefront of intellectual theoretical work because, as Gramsci says, it is the job of the organic intellectual to know more than the traditional intellectuals do: really know, not just pretend to know, not just to have the facility of knowledge, but to know deeply and profoundly ... the second aspect is just as crucial: that the organic intellectual cannot absolve himself or herself from the responsibility of transmitting those ideas, that knowledge, through the intellectual function, to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class. And unless those two fronts are operating at the same time, or at least unless those two ambitions are part of the project of cultural studies, you can get enormous theoretical advance without any engagement at the level of the political project. (Hall, 1996, p. 268)

As “organic intellectuals” and critical intercultural communication scholars, we must navigate through and stay true to the highest quality of analyzing power and paving the way to transgress and break down that with which we interrogate.

Furthermore, might we also gain from cultural studies the reconceptualization of culture and intercultural communication contexts, discourses, and cases as

political projects that require inquiry, investigation, historicization, reflexivity about one's interests and location, and translation for other audiences, purposes, and uses (Hall, 1996)? That is, our engagements of culture, power, and intercultural communication represent projects with urgencies and much at stake for real people and having real consequences. Political projects also connote a continuous line of work, change, and commitment to them; these are not fixed, one-time dalliances with a topic. Instead, these projects are sustained works that are continually pursued, worked on, and traced. In this way, critical intercultural scholars can better craft timely responses and strategies for how to interrupt dominant conditions and constructions of power. How we approach this question requires not just more dialogue among scholars but also more attempts to make visible (in published, online, performative forms and demos) the full cycle of critical intercultural communication as political projects (from inquiry to analysis to reflection to praxis).

What is the unique role that only critical intercultural communication scholarship is meant to take up and the area that a critical perspective is uniquely designed and equipped to shed light on? And what are the larger assumptions and tenets of such work?

Critical intercultural communication studies is best suited to pay close attention to and follow how macro conditions and structures of power (the authority of History, economic and market conditions, formal political sphere, institutional arenas, and ideologies) play into and share microacts/processes of communication between/among cultural groups/members. Critical perspectives have always been finely attuned to revealing great insight on the larger, hidden (beneath-the-surface) and visible (what we see but take-for-granted given its naturalized appearance) aspects of power that constitute intercultural communication encounters and relations. Such a view has been obscured through the field's chronically singular focus on interpersonal acts between intercultural interactants and two-group comparisons along scales that are presumed to be culturally shared and equivalent. A critical perspective's penchant for tracing the historical specificity and globalized economic conditions surrounding and constituting intercultural contexts is especially useful given that history, economics, and power have always positioned cultural group members and their identities disproportionately to one another within and across contexts. There is likely much more by way of dimensions, layers, and intersections of power (and aspects that we have yet to fully recognize and understand) that can be revealed and unpacked through a critical perspective. Thus, there are limitless possibilities for what critical intercultural communication studies can shed light on in terms of intracultural and intercultural relations on local-global levels. The truth of the matter is that we may not even realize the full potential of this perspective and what it can uncover about culture and intercultural dimensions. It is an exciting time to fully explore the possibilities and take in all of the different views.

Moreover, through such a view, critical intercultural communication studies holds recast, loosely defined assumptions about **culture**, **communication**, and **inter-culturality** in relation to power.

Culture

First, as Halualani, Drzewiecka, and Mendoza (2003) argue, a critical intercultural perspective retheorizes *culture as an ideological struggle* between and among competing vested interests, a move that requires us to go beyond empiricist explanations to account for the constitution of intercultural interactions within the constraints of historic power relations. In other words, there needs to be a move away from an unproblematized description and characterization of culture as given, or as an essential (natural/internal) set of traits or characteristics or psychological tendencies possessed by a group of individuals merely by virtue of their geographically “belonging together” (Halualani, Drzewiecka, and Mendoza, 2003). Several scholars have previously argued that it is important instead to turn to conceptualizing culture through power and “contest the notion of ‘culture’ as unproblematically shared” (Moon, 1996, p. 75). In their dialectical explication of intercultural communication, Martin and Nakayama (2000) explain that “culture ... is not just a variable, nor benignly socially constructed but a site of struggle where various communication meanings are constructed...” (p. 8). In other words, they argue that cultures are differentially positioned in relationship to one another within societal structures, material conditions, power relations and as such, culture becomes a field of forces where competing interests vie for dominance and control (Halualani, Drzewiecka, and Mendoza, 2003).

There is a necessary theoretical move, then from “culture” to “ideology,” or from understanding culture as a neutral, innocent place to one always and already implicated in power relations where differently positioned subjects and social entities (e.g., the nationstate) compete for advantage and control of the process of meaning production (Halualani, Drzewiecka, and Mendoza, 2003). This entails, too, analyzing cultural meanings and practices in the context of particular subjects’ interests and positionings vis-à-vis the ideological operation of power within a specific given social formation.

Culture is therefore an assemblage of meanings and representations that are vested with or are reified and spoken via different power interests, most notably by dominant structures (nationstate and its arms, law and governance, institutions, the economy, and the media) and cultural groups themselves (Hall, 1985). Thus, to say that culture is “a site of struggle” is to point to the process whereby competing interests (dominant structures and cultural communities) shape different representations of culture from different positionalities of power (Hall, 1980, 1985). The view then of culture as a set of socially created/shared meanings and practices must always go hand-in-hand with attention to the structures of power (government, law and court system, economy and modes of production, education, and the media) that attended its constitution (Halualani, Drzewiecka, and Mendoza, 2003). This reconceptualization of culture does not mean that individuals are then merely passive consumers of culture; rather, in their quotidian performance of it, they participate in actively creating and recreating meanings that are made available to them by competing ideologies.

Communication

Culture as a site of struggle imbues “communication” not as some equalizing, neutral channel of expression that is widely reproduced in the field of communication studies; communication is not just a way of speaking, a set of utterances. Communication involves the creation, constitution, and intertwining of situated meanings, social practices, structures, discourses, and the nondiscursive. Culture is therefore a larger social formation constituted by communicative meaning-making practices (or dialectical exchanges among meanings, practices, and structures). *Communication, then, encompasses the processes and practices of articulation.* For example, Hall (1980) in his well-cited and very important essay, suggests a different way of conceptualizing communication via a four-part theory of communication (different from content analysis), particularly for mass communication research and media studies. He complicates and retheorizes the process of communication as in mass communication(s) research in which there is a circulation circuit or loop with a linear set-up between the sender, message, and receiver. Rather than being a linear, equivalent process, he argues for a structured conception of the different moments as a “complex structure of relation” (During, 1993, p. 91). As described by Slack (1996), the process of communication had been theorized as the mechanism whereby correspondence between meanings is encoded (the what) and the effects that meaning generates is guaranteed. Hall challenged this, arguing that there are no intrinsic identities in a neutralizing, de-historizing process. Instead, the components of the process (e.g., sender, receiver, message, meaning) are themselves articulations, without necessarily essential meanings – thus, we are compelled to rethink communication as largely a process not of correspondence but of articulation – that there is more within communication than a reliable model of encoding/decoding (as Hall demonstrates and Morley, 1980 with television news as well). So, what happens is that if every component or meaning in the process of communication is itself an articulation, then they are relatively autonomous moments, in which no one moment can fully guarantee the next with which it is articulated (Hall, 1980, p. 129) – so autonomy is somewhat relative (much like Althusserian structuralism) and breaks articulation from a necessary noncorrespondence risk, thereby demonstrating that some articulations are located differently (in particular specific locations) and thus vested with different degrees of power and privilege. Through communication as articulation, we should analyze how particular meanings, practices, discourses (systems of meanings, messages, and symbols as well as practices of speaking) institutions, and relations – are all somewhat autonomous but organized into unities that are effective, which may be relatively disempowering and enabling (and with these practices as lines of tendential force). Theorizing communication in this way offers some interesting methodological detours and strategic paths. In this way, the specificity of communication allows for examining how these forces

at a certain moment, yield intelligible meanings, enter the circuits of culture – the field of cultural practices – that shape the understandings and conceptions of the

world of men and women in their ordinary everyday social calculations, construct them as potential social subjects and have the effect of organizing the ways in which they come to or form consciousness of the world. (Hall, 1989, p. 49).

Studying/participating in communication in terms of a struggle to mean and to connect meanings, involves a process of rearticulating contexts, that is of “examining and intervening in the changing ensemble of forces (or articulations that create and maintain identities that have real concrete effects. “Understanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)-constructing its context” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 55). The goal is not to situate a phenomenon in a context, but to map a context, mapping the very identity that brings the context into focus – context is not something out there “within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices. Rather identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities, or effects” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 125).

Interculturality

The notion of “intercultural” may be too reminiscent of a traditional view of an equal line or exchange between cultural groups – a notion that the critical perspective quickly challenges and de-mystifies. Instead, a critical perspective reconceptualizes the terms “intercultural” and “intracultural” as broad spatial metaphors through which to analyze more fully the relationship between culture, identity, and power. Such a broadening transforms the notion of “inter” from connoting actual interaction between culturally different “dialogue partners” to the intersecting layers of cultural, discursive, and signifying practices that constitute power relations within and around groups. Instead, “‘inter’ and ‘intra’ could symbolize temporarily useful spatial metaphors for re-thinking how culture involves contested sites of identification as opposed to others and the resulting political consequences” (Halualani, Mendoza, and Drzewiecka, 2009, p. 17). Interculturality as a metaphor and movement of power represents a form of articulation and communication that sutures into place as a homology the seemingly natural linkages between a place, group, and subjectivity (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996). This notion could be productively deployed to examine the different relations of power within and across contexts.

We must keep in mind that the assumptions above are mediated by and read through the different histories, conjectures, discourses, and theoretical positions held within a context or surrounding a group. There is a diversity of history, politics, stakes, and power interests involved but a united in these aforementioned presuppositions.

How does a critical framing of intercultural scholarship change the nature of theorizing and methodological practice?

As a result of the macro-micro focus of critical intercultural communication, the roles of theory and method become complicated. How do we “build” or identify

theory with such moving contexts and factors such as history, structures, and economics? Rather than the pasting of theoretical molds onto different contexts, embracing the notion of “theorizing” could prove useful. Similar to cultural studies, a critical scholar looks into a setting with a particular philosophical lens to examine culture and power, and this “context,” or the combination of metacontext and analyzed setting then informs a theoretical formation about the setting. As another movement, the theoretical framework bears meaning upon the analyzed setting. For example, a scholar who believes that the struggle around politically created culture exists predominantly among lower class ethnic women because of their multiple oppressions of gender, race, and class, will approach contexts of ethnic female communities. With their own philosophical assumptions, the researcher would delve into such a context and analyze its specific material conditions and history. From this critical exploration, the scholar can propose a type of theoretical framework based on examined specificities (e.g., histories, experiences, economics, social relations) about the field of forces in that context. Perhaps, the scholar would develop a theoretical notion that ethnic women resist dominant Anglo patriarchal culture in their “talk” about oppressive meanings and texts and use this construct to critically analyze the “culture.” This theoretical framework and resulting critical analysis would then seep back into and inform the analyzed setting by uncovering its underlying cultural practices. As a result, critical work recognizes that there is no theory in advance and no social process of culture without some theoretical sense-making; it travels through a trajectory of theory from and towards context (e.g., metacontext and the studied setting) (Grossberg, 1993).

Methodologically speaking, examining macro to micro dimensions requires varied tools and processes (for e.g., discourse analysis, political economy, in-depth interviewing, oral histories, auto/ethnography, performance and narrative analysis, and surveys). The vast array of theorizings and methods suitable for critical analyses further complicates the “heuristic” and dialogic functions of this kind of intellectual work. But, alas, the goal is to not merely build or propagate research for its own sake but rather to yield multiple insights over time that can be shared and discussed in degree and by historical moment within, through, and across contexts and through postcolonial comparison (as it allows).

What are some key dimensions or foci of critical intercultural research and what does such a perspective yield in terms of insight, inquiry, and analysis of culture and intercultural communication?

There is still much we do not know about critical intercultural communication studies and what it can do and proffer. For instance, we need to uncover the major macro aspects that can be looked at through this perspective and what can still be learned about specific cultural and intercultural communication phenomena and contexts, ones that have not been engaged before or ones that have for too long been studied in a particular way and can be viewed differently through a critical lens. More specifically, there are topics that can be engaged for key insights not yet

uncovered in other approaches, topics such as race, language inequalities, local-to-global articulations, diasporas, and much more. By exploring and contributing to this area of critical intercultural communication studies, our conclusions and theorizings about culture and intercultural communication can be furthered.

How do we take the larger collection of critical intercultural communication research, informed by multiple theoretical and perspectival traditions and spread across various fields of communication scholarship and outside disciplines, and engage these works in meaningful and productive dialogue around insights, conclusions, and question-probing and provide these with a deeper, integrated focus to have important metacritical conversations that characterize the continual development of perspectives and forms of scholarship (as even in the case of critical theory, cultural studies work, postcolonial perspectives, feminist studies, among others)?

The idea is to not “police” or discipline the boundaries of critical intercultural communication studies or create some grand narrative but to stake out some positions and meeting points to build a diverse community with webs of connection, convergence, and vested stakes. With rich critical intercultural work spread out across disciplines, regions, institutions, conferences, and publication outlets (by graduate students, junior faculty, and advanced stage faculty), how we as a larger community amass together the collected insights and political projects and create a vehicle through which we share, communicate, converse, and push each other on our projects, can help stretch our analyses and interventions towards our aims for justice, liberation, and meaningful, transformative change.

How do we not let our academic need to trace, name, identify, and record critical scholarship and its varied nature smother or undermine a necessary and key focus on historical specificity, contextualization, situated power dynamics, and fluid theorizings in critical work?

We understand the academic obsession for boundary delineation and identification of positions (especially in the United States). However, it is key for us to consider how such a need to name, identify, and solidify may in fact suffocate that with which we critique in terms of the larger contextualizations and situated power dynamics that constitute such phenomena. Reconciling these often conflicting aspects of critical work merits more attention and careful movement so that the political projects (and the larger aims of these) always take priority.

How does such work link up to, contrast and interact with intercultural scholarship from other paradigmatic perspectives? Or does it and does it even have to?

Martin and Nakayama (1999) have long pushed for a dialogic approach in the field of intercultural communication among paradigmatic schools of thought so as to stretch the collective knowledge in the field. Indeed, linkages among the postpositivist, interpretive, and critical approaches can magnify great insight on culture and

intercultural communication especially in terms of multilayered contexts that involve privatized experience, perception, and behavior and larger structures, conditions, and histories. But we must also ask ourselves about the areas in which these approaches depart and collide. There is no denying that there are fundamental differences in assumptions about culture and communication and the goals of intellectual work. To constantly feel the pressure of folding in to and accommodating (or dialoguing with) other perspectives may inadvertently weaken the potency of critical analyses and engagements and risk defusing and domesticating politically charged projects. We should at least ask what the risks are to our own work as critical scholars with political projects when we do this. Some may have tangled with the question of how to dialogue with a perspective that has historically reproduced and reified colonialist myths and images of a cultural group and ones that she or he is trying to dismantle in their work. Can we align with dominant arms of Science and Governmental Classifications that have so persistently punished a group, a people, or a land for whom/which we are advocating? The question may actually be not whether or not to link up or dialogue but when it is appropriate and useful to the contexts and groups with which/whom we work and focus on. Ultimately, critical scholars must face head-on the tricky issue of interacting and collaborating with other colliding perspectives and at what cost.

What are the future directions of critical intercultural communication work and pathways that need to be continually revisited and others that have been sorely neglected?

Through these forks in the road, we stand at the crossroads of critical intercultural communication studies with even more questions about what the future holds for the area and for the engaged political projects. Our future cannot be tentatively mapped out without doing the painstaking work of traversing this crossroads (and the forks we still face). This handbook is our concerted attempt to broach several of these lingering questions and delineate a path through which there is continued inquiry, dialogue, debate, and energy on this road.

This Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication

What we as intercultural scholars and contributors have noted is that there has yet to be a more definitive move in intercultural communication as a field to go beyond critique to sustained production of new knowledge on intercultural communication phenomena (and not just conceptualizations) based on a critical perspective. A possible reason for this lacuna may be the lack of clarification of what this perspective is all about, what its constitutive elements are including its theoretical and methodological possibilities. The aim of this handbook therefore is to push critical intercultural communication studies into the next necessary phase for the intercultural communication field: the articulation and explication of the critical paradigm in intercultural communication.

This *Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication* stands as one of the first collections that features all works and projects through the critical intercultural communication studies perspective in communication studies. As a focused collection, it aims to tour what might be the constitutive elements of a critical theoretical tradition in intercultural communication scholarship. While some areas of communication have made more definitive moves towards theorizing communication from a critical perspective, notably media studies, rhetoric, organizational communication, and performance studies, intercultural communication remains at the threshold of this paradigmatic challenge.

Compared to other intellectual courses, the theoretical and contextual range of critical intercultural communication studies has not been fully delineated, articulated, or explored, although scholars have argued for its creation since the 1970s. (There are also several critiques that call for, but do not explicitly detail a critical intercultural communication perspective, e.g., González and Peterson, 1993; Smith, 1981, with the exception of Martin and Nakayama, 2000.) As this intellectual course is still developing and taking shape and is in dire need of delineation, a *Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication* is designed to serve as a consolidated resource of essays that highlight critical intercultural communication studies, its historical inception, logics, terms, and possibilities. In addition, it will also serve as a valuable tool to help graduate students, scholars, and faculty members showcase, articulate, and imagine what kinds of work can constitute and speak to the area of critical intercultural communication studies. Our companion will be one of the first volumes to sketch out the intellectual terrain of critical intercultural communication studies in terms of the following: (a) revisiting and reengaging important scholars and their key works (which have been updated and recast for today) that enabled such a course of study and (b) presenting works that demonstrate the new and vibrant possibilities of engaging culture and intercultural relations and contexts in a “critical” way. It is our hope that this *Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication* will help scholars revisit, assess, and reflect on the formation of critical intercultural communication studies and where it needs to go in terms of theorizing, knowledge production, and social justice engagement. Our handbook will also highlight the contemporary issues and debates that are shaping the area of critical intercultural communication studies. The handbook is organized in terms of four main sections: (a) critical junctures and reflections, (b) critical dimensions, (c) critical topics, and (d) critical visions. Part interludes punctuate the handbook with specified contexts for each of these main portions.

The first part of the handbook will highlight the formative critical moments and “junctures” through which a critical perspective first emerged and “took flight” within intercultural communication. In unique fashion, this part includes current reflections and insights of influential intercultural communication scholars such as Alberto González, Dreama G. Moon, Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, William J. Starosta and Guo-Ming Chen, Leda Cooks, Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, Kent A. Ono, and S. Lily Mendoza, who wrote original essays that created the impetus for a critical line of inquiry. As opposed to merely including the reprints

of these essays, these scholars have contributed present-day reflections and updated insights on those essays and their thoughts in the current moment about the critical turn in intercultural communication studies (in terms of the questions – What does it mean to do critical work? What is the unique role that only critical intercultural communication scholarship is meant to take up? And what are the larger assumptions and tenets of such work?). This section serves the purpose of referring back to several key works that historically shaped a critical orientation to intercultural communication studies while at the same time adding a new spin to these works through the contemporary/postreflections of the authors.

With critically incisive work from Raka Shome, Kathryn Sorrells, Yoshitaka Miike, Aimee Carrillo Rowe, Crispin Thurlow, Yukio Tsuda, Melissa L. Curtin, Marouf Hasian, and Jolanta A. Drzewiecka, the second part of the handbook highlights key dimensions – theorizing, language and hierarchies of meaning and value, and historical memory – that constitute and drive a critical perspective of intercultural communication. Such dimensions touch on the main aspects that a critical work is well suited to uncover and interrogate such as politically situated theorizing, historical context, ideologies and hegemonies, structural/material and interactional forms of power.

Next, the handbook features significant and urgent topics and subjects within critical intercultural communication studies and represents examples of critical works and political projects that form the larger body of this area. Indeed, these works represent actual case studies and specific political projects that focus on different cultural groups/contexts from a critical intercultural perspective. Such work collectively demonstrates the dynamic and politicized nature of the critical intercultural communication studies perspective as presented in specific studies (and begin to answer the recurring questions – What is a critical intercultural communication study and what does it look like?). As a unique feature of this book, the authors present mini-case studies and incorporate reflexive comments on the goals and assumptions they made in their political projects so that the reader can understand the complexities of theorizing and researching issues of cultural politics and communication.

Topics presented in this section, such as gender, race intersections, disability/ability/subjectivity, inclusion/exclusion, assimilation and coculturation, diasporas and diasporic politics, postcolonialism, globalization, intercultural training and dialogue frameworks, and alliances with other fields of critical communication studies, represent ongoing, contemporary concerns of critical intercultural communication scholars. Here many scholars with intersectional identity locations and research interests across fields in and out of the Communication discipline (such as Lara Lengel and Scott C. Martin; Ronald L. Jackson II and Jamie Moshin; Bryant Keith Alexander; Jim Perkinson; Bernadette Marie Calafell and Shane Moreman; Lisa A. Flores, Karen Lee Ashcraft, and Tracy Marafiotte; John T. Warren; Deanna L. Fassett; Richard Morris; Victoria Chen; Etsuko Kinefuchi; Radhika Gajjala; Melissa Steyn; Hsin-I Cheng; Sara DeTurk; and Brenda J. Allen) speak to these concerns with a specific context in mind and directly link this concern to a critical perspective and the insights, risks, and consequences that follow from taking up such a view.

Finally, we as editors of this collection conclude the handbook with a delineation of what the intellectual course of critical intercultural communication studies will come to be in the future. It is our hope to envision, imagine, and aspire for what critical intercultural communication studies can become and do for the world.

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