

JBA

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Letter from the Editors

Brian Moeran and Jakob Krause-Jensen

Well, here we are: another spring, another year, another issue of the *JBA*. As we go through the selection of articles, opinions, and essays published here, we wonder whether, perhaps, we're not settling into routine. The journal seems to have taken on a certain structure, and readers (that is, you!) are beginning to know what to expect when they go to the *JBA* website. Is this the beginning of the end—the end of pleasurable anticipation, of format innovation, and of a certain quirkiness, perhaps, in topics selected for discussion in the journal? Hopefully not.

One thing that reassures us in this hope is that, when given the chance, academics are often themselves somewhat on the quirky side. When we asked a handful of scholars to write about culture for this issue, neither of us anticipated how they would respond with their opinions. But respond they did, with almost as broad a range of interpretations and approaches as the word “culture” itself embraces—a point made by Raymond Williams many years ago.

You will note, of course, the different tacks taken by those in different disciplines in their opinionated views of culture. In this respect, we are still committed to a cross-disciplinary dialogue that will eventually, we hope, create bridges across the silos that currently separate and often isolate academic departments at universities and business schools. It gave us immense pleasure, therefore, when Aradhna Krishna—surely *the* foremost scholar of sensory marketing—agreed to

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write a commentary on Timothy de Waal Malefyt's article on that subject. We hope to continue this kind of dialogue in a future issue of the *JBA*, when anthropologists will be asked to write their own commentaries on an article written by marketers.

Anthropologists view the senses not as purely biologically determined, but also as socially and culturally mediated. Armed with this insight, Malefyt interprets the apparently mundane, masculine act of the morning shave. Commissioned by a manufacturer of grooming products, he investigated the meanings and practices of shaving for middle-class American men. The research reveals how, for some, shaving is not just routine but ritual: a sensuous experience full of symbolic meaning and reflection through which they transform themselves. To paraphrase Malefyt's words: as they sense, they also make sense. Although shaving is usually a solitary act, this group of men enhance its ritual quality by sharing their experiences on online shaving sites, and develop a common language to capture and add to their experience. Malefyt thus brings his anthropologically-informed research to bear on recent marketing efforts to enhance consumers' relationship with brands by targeting the senses. Aradhna Krishna comments on Malefyt's contribution from the perspective of sensory marketing and psychology, arguing that the approach of anthropologists attuned to variation and ethnographic research, and the perspectives of psychologists looking for commonalities in human perceptions through experimentation, provide possibilities for synergies between the two disciplines.

Theories of ritual, sensuous experience, and impression management are also key terms in Arthur Mason's analysis of a phenomenon on quite a different scale. Mason analyses the promotional images used in connection with an energy roundtable about the future of the Arctic. He focuses on the persuasive force in the central promotional image of an island, whose reflection in the sea is an off-shore oil-rig—supposedly pointing to the future of the Arctic in 2050. This ubiquitous image provides a forceful framing of the event, by forecasting a future which is by no means certain. Mason draws on marketing analysis and points out that such images share features with the promotional imagery of brands. It is a fabrication, but it carries a suggestive force by imposing an illusion that the Arctic future is already decided. In contrast to another persuasive visual representation of the summit—the bar graphs used by energy experts to convince their audience—this central image of the island-turned-into-oil platform carries no authorship and is never discussed; or, to paraphrase Bourdieu, it goes without saying because it comes without saying.

The third article in this issue of the *JBA* has its own take on the theme of promotion as it deals with US consumers and their changing perceptions of fine chocolate. Drawing on her long-term research interest, Maryann McCabe traces a new political and moral awareness in the way

in which fine chocolate has been perceived by US consumers since the turn of the Millennium. This new awareness came about largely because of the 2000 BBC documentary, *Slavery: A Global Investigation*, which described child slavery on commercial cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast: Whereas, previously, US consumers had tended to associate fine chocolates with European haute cuisine as something crafted by French and Belgian chocolatiers, the documentary helped consumers to become conscious of the complete chocolate commodity chain and the political and moral aspects of chocolate consumption, by turning attention to specific places of cocoa bean production in tropical regions of the world.

Despite their differences, the articles discussed above have focused on people's perceptions—whether they be associated with shaving, promotional imagery of the environment, or chocolate. In the final article published here we have to drop all pretence of an even very general theme in this issue, as we move on to something very different. Fiona Moore interprets the role of the interpreter in business by analysing his or her role in shaping participants' identities. Interpreters talk a lot, but never speak—or, at least, that is how they are often mistakenly perceived. Through a case story of a “Mrs Park”—a Korean-born, long-term resident in the UK—Moore argues that the translator is not just a vessel, but a person occupying a precarious, and often powerful, position. In translating from one language to another, the occupation of interpreter accentuates issues of migrant identities in particular ways, because the interpreter's work necessitates their maintaining a balance and putting a limit on the degree to which they can leave behind either their country of residence or their native country. Moore draws on theories of the “cultural intermediary” and liminality to understand this special position of the interpreter.

In addition to these articles and opinion pieces, we are publishing three essays: one by Keith Negus on the effects of digitization on the culture of the music industry and what is, surely, a critical moment in the relationship between analogue and digital economies of music. Whereas the former emphasised “locating repertoire and nurturing talent, recording and promoting that talent, and generating revenue from sales, performances, and rights usage of repertoire, with a demonstrable commitment to reinvest in new talent at the level of production,” the digital economy (epitomised by Google, YouTube, and Spotify) is more focused on “monetising content,’ by generating revenue from streaming, data collection and analytics, cloud storage, and by attracting advertisers to sites or pages containing sounds, images, data, and information.”

A second essay is by Simon Roberts on the use of models, which—as Lévi-Strauss once wrote famously of totems—are good to think and communicate with. But they are also “technologies of enchantment,” which allow us to bridge the gap between “what is” and “what might be” as they enable us to move from a set of “given” elements to a final goal.

Drawing further on an idea put forward by Brian Moeran at the last EPIC conference in New York, Roberts goes on to suggest that models have a magical power that communicates mastery over materials, in the process “herding” their audiences in pre-defined cognitive spaces, while also acting as intellectual shortcuts.

Finally, in a short rumination on the phenomenology of ageing, Michael Donovan reflects upon the lived experiences of growing older, and of ageing “spurts” that are not necessarily or directly related to the number of years we have put behind us, but which involve rapid shifts in perspective. Age is something whose meanings we construct, and in some measure negotiate, with other people and with the world around us. Drawing on the work of Victor Turner, Donovan goes on to argue that we need to look at how ageing is lived, negotiated and contested, as certain moments become catalysts for change and we find ourselves as trickster figures “betwixt and between” our allocated and other generations.

And so to the disruptive and creative possibilities of our own “trickster” role as editors of an Open Access journal. Until now, the *JBA* has been hosted by the Copenhagen Business School website because Brian Moeran has been employed there since the journal’s launch. That employment, however, comes to an end in January of 2016 and, with it, the *JBA*’s cyber home. Consequently, the Editorial Board is looking for a new home for the journal and has entered into discussions with several publishers. However, because we are determined to keep the *JBA* as an Open Access journal, such discussions are not easy—if only because Open Access totally upsets the standard academic publishing model where journal subscriptions provide a publisher with up-front cash that it can then use to finance the publication of book titles.

In spite of these potential difficulties, we believe that we have found a way forward in cooperation with one publisher, in a partnership that—unbelievably—harbours the potential of a “win-win” situation for all concerned. Details have yet to be worked out, however, so we ask you to be patient during the summer months (when the last thing you’ll want to think about, anyway, is the future of the *Journal of Business Anthropology!*), and promise you that all will be revealed in the autumn issue due to be published just before the AAA meeting in Denver.

And yes, we’ll both be there. So we look forward to meeting all of you during those first heady days of December when the world seems to exist entirely of anthropologists and all’s well! In the meantime, to paraphrase those immortal lines of T.S. Eliot, we grow old, we grow old. Is it time to wear the bottom of our trousers rolled?