

# Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization

---

Volume 5 | Number 1

Article 4

---

2014

## Digital Ethnography for Intercultural Professional Communication: Some Best Practice Principles

Michael Madson  
*University of Minnesota*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/rpcg>



Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Madson, Michael (2014) "Digital Ethnography for Intercultural Professional Communication: Some Best Practice Principles," *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*: Vol. 5 : No. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/rpcg/vol5/iss1/4>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.



ISSN: 2153-9480. Volume 5, Number 1. February - 2014

## Digital ethnography for intercultural professional communication: Some best practice principles

---

**Michael Madson**

University of Minnesota, USA

### **Introduction**

With global compressions of time and space, intercultural contact is heightening. Digital networks are converging. Perhaps more than ever before, professional communicators require cultural and technical savvy, allowing them to navigate, in a principled manner, digitally-mediated contexts (Spilka, 2010). Since no mediation is value neutral, digital technologies can spark intercultural friction (Thatcher, 2004; Warshauer, 2003, p. 6), blur ethical codes (Capurro, 2008; Himma, 2008), and perpetuate colonial relations (Ess & Sudweeks, 2012, p. xvi). How to operate in such complex, power-laden environments is a central concern in intercultural professional communication (IPC) and merits additional inquiry.

Highlighting needed developments in IPC, Thatcher (2010a) has proposed an etic-then-emic approach. Etics have conventionally provided the bases for comparison across cultures and usefully so. Yet, an etic-then-emic approach should not be adopted unreflexively, for numerous scholars (e.g., Cardon, 2008; Ding & Savage, 2013; Ess & Sudweeks, 2012; Mao, 2013; Shuter, 2011) have critiqued the superimposition of dominant, outsider theories of communication on insider categories of knowledge and ways of being. This critique is not without cause. The global and the local are increasingly inter-embedded (Appadurai, 1996; Burawoy, 1998), and the local may well shape the global (Ember & Ember, 2009). As a result, intercultural communication, IPC certainly included, needs more indigenous theory building and greater attention to subjectivities (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005, pp. 25-26). IPC also needs more data grounded in real-life encounters (Agboka, 2013; Carbaugh, 2007). Thus, an etic-then-emic approach must be carefully tempered by emics-then-etics, as Thatcher (2010a) duly recognized. Although the boundaries between emics and etics are often underspecified (Mao, 2013), IPC methodologies must ultimately capture both—as well as the blurred, digitally mediated areas in between, where much of IPC occurs (St. Amant & Sapienza, 2011).

Given these conditions, I argue that digital ethnography might contribute much to IPC theory and practice, and this article is written so as to further the disciplinary conversation. The first part

reviews core literature relating to digital ethnography, addressing the question *what is digital ethnography?* The methodology's reported strengths and limitations are then overviewed. In the second part, the discussion turns to applications of digital ethnography in IPC, and particular attention is devoted to the question, *what theories and practices, more specifically, are needed in IPC, and how might digital assist in building them?* Finally, the third part distills three best practice principles, and a brief summary and conclusion follows.

### **Core literature relating to digital ethnography**

Reviewing core literature relating to digital ethnography poses several challenges from the start. One challenge is that this core literature, though concentrated in anthropology and sociology, cuts across numerous disciplines, each with its own traditions for research. The resultant methodological diversity can trouble attempts at alignment or cohesion, for authors present varying, at points contradictory, views on digital ethnography's tenets, including the necessity—or irrelevance—of sustained presence in a fieldsite (Hine, 2000, p. 123; Miller & Slater, 2000, p. 21) and the complementarity—or collision—of online and offline interviews (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012, pp. 124-126; Hine, 2000, p. 49). Even so, “traditional” ethnography has always been methodologically diverse, so expecting otherwise of its digital offspring seems unreasonable.

Another challenge is combinatory. Depending on researcher intent, digital ethnographic methods can be deployed without being labeled as such (e.g., Orgad, 2006) or folded into an associated term such as “case study” (e.g., Gu, 2011). They can also be mixed with quantitative tools for purposes of triangulation and finer-grained analyses (e.g., Putnam, Rose, Walton, & Kolko, 2009). Since ethnography is as epistemic as methodological, however, studies that incorporate digital ethnographic methods are not, perforce, digital ethnographies. In fact, aside from Laquintano (2010), relatively little IPC research has claimed to be so; more common is “digital ethnographic” research, which typically combines observations and interviews. Yet, even without a full commitment to an ethnographic epistemology, digital ethnographic studies, too, can throw light on digital ethnography in general.

Owing to these and related challenges, reviewing core literature relating to digital ethnography requires some measure of representation, interpretation, and construction—subjectivities that inhere in all ethnographic research. The writer and readers must therefore be reflexive, considering both what has been written here and what might be, despite my best efforts, absent. That having been acknowledged, it might now be possible to address the fundamental question, *what is digital ethnography?*

### **What is digital ethnography?**

Digital ethnography is a many-stranded mesh, encompassing virtual ethnography (Dominguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2000), internet ethnography (Sade-Beck, 2004), connective ethnography (Hine, 2007), netnography (Kozinets, 2010), sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009), multimodal ethnography (Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006), hypermedia ethnography (Coffey, Reynold, Dicks, Soyinka, & Mason, 2006), as well as the more recent expanded ethnography (Beneito-Montagut, 2011), trace ethnography (Geiger & Ribes, 2011), and extreme ethnography (Rotman, Preece, He, & Druin, 2012). These strands differ in genealogy, applications, and epistemic foci,

*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

yet they all implement digital technologies at some point. Hence, digital ethnography might be most succinctly and inclusively defined as “ethnography mediated by digital technologies” (Murthy, 2011, p. 159). As each term—ethnography, mediation, digital technology—pulls significant conceptual freight, some unpacking might be helpful.

**Ethnography.** With its long history across disciplines, ethnography has multiple, overlapping layers of significance. Its Greek roots, *ethnos* and *graphein*, mean respectively “people” and “writing,” so ethnography most basically denotes writing about people (Boellstorff et al., 2012, pp. 13-14). Ethnography cannot be reduced without remainder to its written artifacts, however; it is also methodological and epistemological. As a methodology, ethnography is characterized by sustained, local participant-observation<sup>1</sup> (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) that allows for both detachment and “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, pp. 5-6, 9-10), careful data analysis and storytelling (Murthy, 2008). These etics and emics, however specified, hinge on an epistemology of ontological relativism. Since ontological relativism emphasizes social, rather than materialist, understandings of human and nonhuman agents (Glass-Coffin & Kiiskeentum, 2012), ethnographers typically explore, follow, and interpret a particular sociocultural phenomenon as it occurs *in situ* (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Its closeness to situated, real-life data makes ethnography re-scalable across sites (Marcus, 1995) but also bundled, at times problematically, to ethics, representations, power, and other tensions that affect intercultural research (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

**Digital technology.** This refers to the conversion of data to binary code, which can then be captured, manipulated, transferred, and stored by a variety of electronic devices (Dicks, 2012, pp. xxiii-xxiv). Recent studies of digital technologies, specific to culture and communication, have focused on the internet (e.g., Garcia, Standlee, Bechhoff, & Cui, 2012; Goggin, 2010; Orgad, 2006; Poor, 2007; Takahashi, 2010), mobile telephony (e.g., Baron, 2011, 2013; Baron & Segerstad, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Westlund, 2010), and their integration: mobile internet (e.g., Humphreys, Von Pape, & Karnowski, 2013). Some digital technologies, such as digital photography and video, have already become widely embedded, invisible, or mundane. Others, such as near field connectivity or global positioning systems, remain to be investigated in IPC scholarship.

It is important to note that digital technologies, though frequently conceptualized as devices, are constructed and operationalized within local, culturally variable contexts, to which all strands of ethnography are responsive. Digital technologies can resultantly be theorized as capital (McEwan & Sobre-Denton, 2011; Tapscott, Lowy, & Ticoll 2000); real or imagined geographies (De Freitas, 2010; Mossberger, Tolbert, & Franko, 2013), including “supraterritoriality” (Scholte, 2008, pp. 1479-1482); ontology (Capurro, 2006; Cheong, Martin, & Macfadyen, 2012; Vadén, 2004); epistemology (Jenson & de Castell, 2004; Kellner, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2006); discourse (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011); or the subject, instead of the object, of research. Indeed, with the development of sophisticated monitoring systems, many users knowingly or not, willingly or not, divulge personal information to company loyalty

---

<sup>1</sup> As demonstrated in the path-breaking research of Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, Hortense Powdermaker, and the Chicago school of sociology.

programs, mobile phone apps, security firms, archives, search engines, and other apparatuses capable of data aggregation and surveillance. In the wake of these apparatuses, “data gathering and data classification have become an integral (some say indispensable) part of warfare, policing, education, health care, finance, travel, and virtually every other aspect of contemporary life” (Lievrouw, 2012, p. 621). No digital technology, nor any technology for that matter, is innocent.

**Mediation.** In general, mediation refers to the dynamic positionality between digital technologies, their users, and the world. These constructs, sensitive to locale, vary by cultural group as human interactions remediate technology and vice versa (Walton, 2013). These constructs vary further within and across research traditions, and perhaps in consequence, mediation is often theorized disciplinarily. For instance, Dicks’ (2012) weighty, four-volume compilation illustrates how digital qualitative researchers have viewed mediation through symbolic interactionism, social constructivism, multimodality, and additional theories imported from disciplines that have utilized digital ethnography. Problematically, however, these theories, along with activity theory, may revolve around old socioeconomic notions, making mediation a difficult concept in light of innovation and contemporary social changes (Rückriem, 2009, p. 95). Research practices, too, can render it difficult to conceptualize mediation, which may describe studies of web-based groups through web-based technologies (e.g., Orgad, 2006); studies that use digital technologies to cull, analyze, and disseminate data from offline groups (e.g., Putnam, Rose, Walton, & Kolko, 2009); or studies that combine the two (e.g., Walton, Yaaqoubi, & Kolko, 2012).

For greater conceptual precision, IPC can draw on media studies, which offers an array of analytical tools for understanding mediated interaction. Media naturalness theory, for example, stresses mediation as an embodied, ontological phenomenon that arises from innate and learned schemas (Kock, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005). Media stickiness theory stresses mediation as a practice situated in group culture, task objectives, and time-space constraints (Huysman, Steinfeld, Jang, Poot, & Mulder, 2003). Other influential theories in media studies, formulated as correctives to media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) and social presence (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976), include adaptive structuration (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994), medium synchronicity (DeLuca & Valacich, 2005; Dennis, Valacich, Speier, & Morris, 1998), social information processing (Walther, 1992; Walther & Burgoon, 1992), and task-medium fit (McGrath, 1991; McGrath & Hollingshead, 1993; McGrath & Hollingshead, 1994). Each implicates emics and etics differently, yet each underlines that, as no technology is innocent, no mediation is neutral. For instance, in addition to influencing perceptions of technological affordances (see Norman, 2002), mediation can obscure acts of power and privilege certain knowledge, interests, values, and boundaries over others (Beer, 2009). Analyzing mediation, in turn, might involve the imposition of an outsider, etic view over an insider, emic one, and this because of inferential necessity. Without connections between data and theory, research findings, no matter how descriptive, collapse into mere “isolated curiosity” (Hine, 2013, p. 42).

**Why the “digital” of digital ethnography.** Construed so broadly by Murthy (2011), essentially all ethnography is digital now, and Boellstorff and colleagues (2012) have proposed that the

various strands be merged under a single term: ethnography. Ethnography, they argue, already has sufficient flexibility for digitally mediated environments, rendering any semantic modifiers, such as “digital,” redundant (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 4; see also Beaulieu, 2004). Granted, digital ethnography is not wholly distinct, in epistemology or in practice, from its methodological predecessors. Nonetheless, there are at least two reasons to prefer the modifier when appropriate. One reason is presence, for digital ethnographers and participants tend to have highly mediated presences in a fieldsite. Indeed, in IPC fieldsites, presence can be mediated not only by technology, but by cultural groups, teams, administrative levels, and geographic locations, as in studies of international companies or humanitarian organizations (see Walton, 2013). Perhaps because of such mediation, digital ethnographies tend to be shorter relative to earlier, pre-digital strands (see Hammersley, 2006).

A second, related reason to prefer the modifier “digital” is the impact of technology and mediation on research findings. Hence, “digital” might encourage more careful, transparent, reflexive consideration of how decisions about technology, as well as mediated presences, might be culturally, methodologically, and ethically reactive. Across disciplines, there has been heightened concern over reactivity, and scholars have given much attention, and rightly so, to the reported strengths and limitations of digital ethnography in general. These strengths and limitations suggest how digital ethnography might be effectively and ethically applied in IPC.

### **Reported strengths of digital ethnography**

One reported strength of digital ethnography is its “promiscuousness.” Writing of netnography, a digital ethnographic strand adapted for marketing research, Kozinets (2010) explained that, “Many methods are complementary with netnography. Netnography, like its older sibling, ethnography, is promiscuous. It attaches itself to and incorporates a vast variety of different techniques and approaches” (p. 42). This strength holds true for other strands as well but may manifest itself in various ways; digital ethnography can be fragmented (e.g., Orgad, 2006); folded (e.g., Gu, 2011); or rescaled, following the people, thing, metaphor, conflict, or story of interest (see Marcus, 1995). For instance, larger-scale digital ethnographies have explored geographic regions (e.g., Miller & Slater, 2000; Wheeler, 2006), social networks (Rotman et al., 2012), and data logs (Geiger & Ribes, 2011); and smaller-scale digital ethnographies have explored more particular, niched groups (e.g., Laquintano, 2010). To these ends, digital ethnographic methods can be mixed qualitatively and quantitatively, combining with social surveys, policy monitoring, web archiving, focus groups, technology prototyping, and statistical analysis (Walton, Putnam, Johnson, & Kolko, 2009). Such promiscuousness can encourage the cross-disciplinary collaboration often requisite for studying technology and communication across cultures (Ess & Sudweeks, 2012).

A second reported strength of digital ethnography is ontological and epistemic proximities. As they shuttle between the global and the reflexive (Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005, p. 35), digital ethnographers can gather rich, thickly contextualized data on participants' lifeworlds, including ways of being and categories of knowledge (see Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 3; Hine, 2000; Murthy, 2011; Pfister & Soliz, 2011). These subjectivities might involve local interactions of transnational, macroeconomic forces (Pfister & Soliz, 2011), polyvocality (Mitra & Watts, 2002), and sensory, sociotechnical experiences beyond the scope of other research

methodologies (Pink, 2009). As a result, digital ethnographers, though digital ethnography, can make the research process more transparent (Murthy, 2011), recognize tensions and complexities that shape value-sensitive work (Walton & DeRenzi, 2009), and be empathetic, helping to improve people's lives (Putnam et al., 2009).

### **Reported limitations of digital ethnography**

One reported limitation of digital ethnography is the ambiguity of digital environments, which are of special interest in IPC (St.Amant & Sapienza, 2011). Contributing to this ambiguity, the fieldsite may prove to be conceptually problematic, and the human instrument—researchers themselves—introduces recurrent problems of representation, perspective, and participation (Dominguez et al., 2007). Beneito-Montagut (2011) has resultantly critiqued the work of digital ethnographers who presupposed a virtual-real dichotomy, theorized a digital environment as if it had physical boundaries, struggled with the speed and reach of digital phenomena, or overemphasized textual data to the neglect of other, multimodal possibilities. Researchers might further bias their data through their personal histories, agendas, and social norms (Dicks et al., 2005, p. 129), biases that can be exacerbated in intercultural work.

Within digitally mediated, ambiguous environments, a particularly pressing limitation is access. Digital technologies can certainly expand a study's sample population, yet technological diffusion has occurred at unequal rates (Walton et al., 2012), so access is stratified, still, by class, race, gender, region, and other identity markers—markers that do not, in digital environments, disappear (Cheong & Gray, 2011; Murthy, 2008). Relatedly, power differentials can mediate access through available resources, freedom of action, imagination, and commitment (Jordan, 2002); the researcher-participant relationship (Murthy, 2008); or the seeming ease of data collection (Dominguez et al., 2007). Indeed, data available for collection might not be ethically suitable for research (Hine, 2013), and with much digital ethnography taking place covertly (Murthy, 2008), there are additional issues of informed consent, privacy, and intellectual property (Murthy, 2011), all of which may vary locally, even individually, and require that researchers account for decisions made *in situ*. Digital information ethics, an emergent discipline, has begun to address these issues both normatively and descriptively, but the demands of *on-the-ground* research have invariably tended to outpace any formalized system of research ethics. Thus, digital ethnographers must strive to make contextually appropriate decisions while in the field (Markham, 2006).

Another reported limitation of digital ethnography is the challenge of generalization. Researchers of intercultural communication have long been interested in comparisons across cultures, and some (Connor, 1996; Moreno, 2011; Thatcher, 2010b) have suggested principles for generalizing findings. These principles have not been widely adopted, however, and much of digital ethnography's foundational work (Coffey et al., 2006; Dicks et al., 2005; Dicks et al., 2006; Hine, 2000; Howard, 1998; Masten & Plowman, 2003; Miller & Slater, 2000) has not been explicitly intercultural, apart from researcher-participant relationships. Even ethnographers have expressed skepticism over the validity of ethnographic data beyond a particular case (e.g., Hammersley, 1990), a conundrum in social research writ large (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 234). Given this history, the move from thick, emic description to grounded, etic theory will likely always be contestable. Digital ethnographers may subsequently be hard pressed to justify

their methods in detail (Hine, 2013, p. 33), find defensible bases for generalizations, and respond to charges that ethnographic research is unscientific (Bloomfield, 2009). These reported limitations and strengths must be acknowledged if digital ethnography is to be effectively and ethically applied in IPC.

### **Applications of digital ethnography in IPC**

As part of intercultural communication more broadly, IPC needs greater attention to subjectivities (Gudykunst et al., 2005, pp. 25-26) and more data grounded in real-life intercultural encounters (Agboka, 2013; Carbaugh, 2007). Real-life intercultural encounters often are digital and highly mediated, and following from the discussion above, core literature relating to digital ethnography suggests the methodology's potential to address these two needs. Although environmental ambiguity and access will require due consideration throughout a digital ethnographic project, promiscuity and proximities can allow researchers to capture, detail, and analyze data as part of local, intercultural contexts. More difficult is the building of indigenous theory, which depends on some degree of generalization.

By no means is indigenous theory building a clear-cut process, especially for intercultural research on scales broader than case studies. Yet, research landscapes are changing. With time and space compressions caused by transnational flows, the global has become increasingly inter-embedded with the local (Appadurai, 1996; Burawoy, 1998), the principal domain of digital ethnography. Perhaps as a result, generalizing from qualitative data has become increasingly admitted as valid (Halkier, 2011). To do so, researchers must accept two premises. The first is that to generalize does not mean to universalize, and the second is that generalizations may be unstable or contextually variant (Halkier, 2011; cf. Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Both of these premises align with digital ethnography's ontological relativism, which stresses the contextual character of data while rejecting the assumptions of antifoundationalism<sup>2</sup>.

In research discourses particular to generalizations across cultures, the emics/etics debates have suggested the utility of demonstrating functional and conceptual equivalence. According to Berry (1990), a cross-cultural psychologist, functional equivalence involves ensuring that behaviors under comparison function similarly across cultural groups; and conceptual equivalence involves ensuring that the research instruments, across those cultural groups, hold similar meanings. While both equivalences necessitate rigorous observations and interviews, intercultural work through ethnography is nonetheless possible. Ember and Ember (2009) expressed similar views, noting that ethnography produces descriptions in words, and words are comparable, generating variables for methods, such as surveys, that are better suited to large-scale comparative analysis. Hence, ethnography, digital ethnography included, might not simply be beneficial in intercultural research but imperative for indigenous theory building.

As IPC is also an applied discipline, encompassing communications professionals who work across digital and cultural borders, good theory must be accompanied by sound practice. Yet,

---

<sup>2</sup> Halkier (2011) delves into additional detail, explaining three ways that researchers can generalize from qualitative data. The first way is ideal typologizing, as illustrated in Hall's inferences on encoding and decoding or Fiske's work on media use. The second is category zooming, or the fine-grained comparison of single points across studies. The third is positionality, which stresses the unstable and context-sensitive nature of any inferences drawn.



*what theories and practices, more specifically, are needed in IPC, and how might digital ethnography assist in building them?*

### **Need for more good theory**

Given that IPC centers on culture, communication, and technology, indigenous theory building should serve to illuminate these intersections. These intersections have received considerable attention internationally during the past decade (Ess & Sudweeks, 2012, p. xiii), but IPC researchers still must navigate two pressing concerns: the intricacy of local contexts, and the temptation to overemphasize culture (Hunsinger, 2011). Digital ethnography might help researchers to navigate both.

Because local contexts are richly intricate and variable, culture and technology can affect a multiplicity of rhetorical dimensions “on the ground.” There is thus a great need to study rhetorical contrasts across cultural groups (Barnum, 2011), including differences in communicative purpose, author-audience relationships, perceived information needs, and stylistic preferences (Thatcher, 2004). Local contexts are not limited to rhetorics alone, however; researchers might also need to consider sociotechnical frames that capture both individual and institutional influences. Various bounded, sociotechnical frames can account for academic and professional values (Gu, 2011); political organs, legal frameworks, historical fields, and economic conditions (Goggin, 2010; Hunsinger, 2011); social hierarchies and project stakeholders (Gu, 2011; Walton & DeRenzi, 2009); and technological features (Andersen & van der Velden, 2010) such as digital power relationships encoded in the technology itself (Beer, 2009). Wheeler (2006) is a case in point. Her digital ethnography of the internet considered political history, economics of the oil trade, military movements, censorship practices, cultural power relationships and values, gender, everyday life, and related factors in Southwest Asia, in Kuwait particularly. From these considerations, Wheeler could then highlight the general epistemological challenges of studying locally mediated, nonlinear digital phenomena (pp. 189-198). Such local to global, emic to etic moves permitted contextually nuanced generalizations, suggesting that indigenous theory building might be grounded, at least initially, in sociotechnical frames, concepts, categories, and mediational relationships—which digital ethnography can capture in rich detail and on multiple scales.

Although “culture *does* make a difference” (Ess & Sudweeks, 2012, p. xiii), it can be overemphasized in IPC theory building. A common theoretical system deployed in IPC research, for example, is Hofstede’s (1984) cultural dimensions, and these can indeed explain some cultural variations. Yet, as Hunsinger (2011) noted, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions tend to portray subjectivities, such as individual or collective expectations, as overly abstract, context invariant, and wooden. These and related difficulties, added to the research demands of digital environments—where users’ cultures are recurrently remediating and hybridized—have subsequently heightened the exigency to reconsider the culture’s variable relationship to technology and communication. To address the exigency, IPC researchers should carefully account for their own assumptions, which are significant in any intercultural work. Work on intercultural communication, in particular, long has been divided by competing assumptions regarding ontology, power, knowledge structures, and research goals, and Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2010) have proposed intercultural dialectics as a way forward. These dialectics highlight

*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

tensions, pervasive in digital ethnography because of its proximities to people and their lived subjectivities, between the cultural and the individual, personal and contextual, different and similar, static and dynamic, privileged and disadvantaged (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). While finer-grained than Hofstede's cultural dimensions, intercultural dialectics, if applied carelessly, risk the superimposition of researchers' *a priori* assumptions over participants' real-world subjectivities.

More broadly, then, IPC researchers might require an "orienting ideal" (Hunsinger, 2011, p. 24) that tempers etic theory with contextualized, emic experience, as Fraiberg (2013) and Agboka (2013) described. In their respective studies, Fraiberg explored the uses of Hebrew and English at an Israeli start-up company, and Agboka investigated the localization of sexuopharmaceutical documentation in Ghana. Both used digital ethnographic methods to research how a variety of individual and institutional agents—not simply etic understandings of culture—interacted in complex, mediated ways. Fraiberg resultantly called for a less bounded, more fluid conceptualization of digital technology, communication, and culture that pays "close attention to the manner in which they are rewoven, remediated, remixed, and reassembled across local-global contexts" (p. 24). Resisting the temptation to overemphasize culture in IPC research can thereby contribute to indigenous theory building and, additionally, elucidate the needs of in-the-shop professional communicators.

### **Need for more sound practice**

In the wake of globalization, professional communicators are increasingly called upon to work across cultural borders, performing tasks, such as translation (Gnecchi, Maylath, Moustén, Scarpa, & Vandepitte, 2011), that require intercultural competence. Challengingly, however, scholarship shows little consensus as to what, precisely, intercultural competence includes<sup>3</sup>, and IPC training programs have generally not kept pace of workplace exigencies. This lag has resulted, at least in part, from difficulties concerning teacher preparation, lesson objectives, and teaching methods and materials (Matveeva, 2008). For example, as Matsuda and Matsuda (2011) found, popular technical writing textbooks tend to center on North American contexts and portray international audiences as *Other*, focusing on mere awareness rather than actual competence. Training for intercultural competence, however defined, will likely require greater attention to subjectivities and more data grounded in real-life intercultural encounters. Indeed, contextualizing etics with emics, IPC trainers can ground their practices in data culled from twenty-first century workplaces, nuancing, fortifying, and challenging current training programs and models. Digital ethnography might, in this way, prove highly useful in practice development.

Assessing intercultural competence and other situated proficiencies has proven difficult, however. Addressing this difficulty, Yu (2012) discussed nine possible assessments, among

---

<sup>3</sup> Part of the non-consensus results from terminology, with many writers preferring related terms such as cross-cultural communication, cultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, effective intergroup communication, ethnorelativity, intercultural cooperation, global competitive intelligence, global competence, international competence, metaphoric competence, etc. (Fantini, 2009, p. 457). Despite their divergences, though, a close reading of scholarship on intercultural competence and related terms reveals common categories of knowledge, motivation, macro-level skills, interpersonal skills, and situated proficiencies (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

them observations and interviews—ethnographic methods—but stopped short of recommending digital ethnography explicitly. Since the field of intercultural training commonly implements ethnographic methods and digital technologies but seldom invokes the term “digital ethnography,” this absence is somewhat unsurprising. It should not be read as a disavowal. To be sure, with its combinatory potentials and ontological, epistemic proximities, digital ethnography might be a valuable supplement to IPC classrooms, perhaps serving to realize Cleary’s (2011) framework for teaching international communication. That framework has several key processes: integrating intercultural issues into the classroom, encouraging students to interact with numerous cultural groups, facilitating intercultural collaboration among faculty, and involving industry in debates over intercultural communication (p. 17). With the requisite access negotiated, digital ethnography can contribute to each of these processes, providing entree into real-world intercultural issues, culturally diverse groups and worksites, collaborations across borders, and professions involving intercultural communication. Digital ethnographic assessment of intercultural competence, then, might be based on students’ written artifacts (field notes, theoretical memos, personal reflections, formal reports, etc.), demonstrated abilities with research methods and project design, or other indicators of intercultural savvy. Such emics-then-etics possibilities remain to be explored in greater depth, though ethnography has already proven effective as a training tool outside of IPC (see, e.g., Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001). Digital ethnography might be equally, or even more, effective.

Digital ethnography might therefore contribute much to IPC research and training, to IPC theory and practice. Of course, as with all methodologies, IPC professionals should judiciously weigh reported strengths and limitations when considering the use of—or whether *to* use—digital ethnography. In light of this discussion, it might now be possible to distill some best practice principles, which can help make digital ethnography not simply effective in IPC but rigorously ethical as well.

### **Some best practice principles**

Any best practice principle for digital ethnography must operate both etically and emically. Etically, IPC trainers and researchers are bound to the ethical codes that guide their professions (see Ess & AOIR, 2002). They are also bound to research standards of their local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), which will require thoughtful consideration, at minimum, of 1) the rights and wellbeing of the participants; 2) the appropriateness of the methods used to obtain informed consent, especially in intercultural work; and 3) the balance of hazards and potential benefits of the research. An IRB, in particular, might be sensitive to how digital technologies are shifting discourses from “a longstanding emphasis on possibility, novelty, adaptability, and openness toward current preoccupations with risk, conflict, vulnerability, routinization, stability, and control” (Lievrouw, 2010, p. 617); consequently, researchers should be prepared to justify their project designs in detail and make principled adjustments as the project evolves, perhaps in unanticipated, emic ways. With these concerns acknowledged, at least three overlapping principles for best practice can be distilled from core literature relating to digital ethnography: accountability, transparency, and care.

**Accountability.** This entails thorough knowledge of ethical codes, IRB requirements, and means of minimizing risk to participants. Digital environments can change unexpectedly, as in

the case of Facebook's privacy policies (Rotman et al., 2012), but researchers are nonetheless responsible for their project preparations, in-field decisions, data security, and published accounts. Subsequently, researchers should be competent in the methods and digital technologies they intend to use. They should also be well versed on critical issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, copyright, mediated identity, public-private boundaries, and justness of participant selection (Buchanan & Ess, 2011)—all of which may be compounded across cultures.

**Transparency.** As with accountability, transparency operates on numerous levels, scales, and contexts. Accordingly, Hine (2013) has listed a series of questions that, though specific to the internet, apply to a range of digital environments. These questions were written to readers of research, supplying etic and emic criteria for evaluating digital qualitative studies:

- “Can I tell clearly what the research did and what limits there are on a study?” (p. 124).
- “Was the research population appropriate to the question and did the use of [digital qualitative] methods impose unacceptable or unacknowledged biases?” (p. 124).
- “Was the medium of interaction appropriate to the population and the topic?” (p. 125).
- “Are the interpretations plausible and do they feel authentic in light of the particular qualities of [digital] data?” (p. 125).
- “Has the response been presented to the participants and what was their response?” (p. 216).
- “Is the research well-founded on existing knowledge going beyond the specifics of a particular [digital] situation? Is the contribution to existing knowledge clearly articulated?” (p. 127).
- “Is there a methodologically defensible reason why [digitally-]mediated interaction was deployed?” (p. 127).

Answering these questions affirmatively, or making provisions so that they can be answered affirmatively, can increase transparency throughout a digital ethnographic project. Since generalizations from ethnographic data often are unstable or context relative (Halkier, 2011), transparency might provide some bases for building indigenous theory from thick description.

**Care.** As Boellstorff and colleagues (2012) explained, care is key to principled action because, without care, other principles become effete. Care arises from an awareness of mediated, asymmetrical power relations with participants, who, compared to researchers, may be less likely to benefit from the study, belong to different cultural groups, and lack the privilege of covertness. Thus, care entails more than simply doing no harm; rather, care entails ensuring that participants benefit from the digital ethnography to the greatest extent possible (Boellstorff et al., pp. 129-130). In that light, care involves an obligation to secure informed consent (which might be as contextually variant as any research findings), mitigate institutional and legal risks, protect sensitive information, create fair and accurate portrayal of participants' lifeworlds, and resist any enticements to deceive—despite the capacities of digital technologies to conceal, added to the

*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

complexities of dynamic, multinational organizations common in IPC research. Care also involves doing good.

In a recent article, Beneito-Montagut (2011) specified some recommendations for navigating ethical problematics, illustrating some basic ways that accountability, transparency, and care might be at least minimally combined. First, apprise all focus participants of the research goals, and resist, as controls for potential reactivity permit, the adoption of covert positions. Second, obtain informed consent before the research starts, and assure confidentiality, privacy, and anonymization where necessary. Third, notify participants of the research results. Fourth, only use information cleared through informed consent. Of course, these recommendations are not a panacea, and they might not always be possible. Beneito-Montagut recognized, for example, that some participants, such as those co-observed, cannot always be apprised of the research goals or results, but, providing that these participants are not the research focus, ethical problematics can be reasonably minimized.

Doubtless, despite thorough preparation, digital ethnographers must invariably make in-field, contextually appropriate decisions (Markham, 2006). Not all research elements can be controlled or even anticipated, but they can be handled in a principled manner. Formalized ethical codes will likely always lag behind the evolving demands of in-practice research, but as digital ethnographers commit themselves to accountability, transparency, and care, they can help satisfy the need, as Himma (2008) explained, to build an intercultural ethics agenda that is normatively and descriptively robust. Given these best practice principles, intercultural research ethics merits sustained consideration for both profession-wide, etic standards and for particular, emic applications. To be sure, as research and training contexts continued to evolve, understandings of best practice principles must ineludibly adapt with them.

### **Summary and conclusion**

With ongoing globalization, IPC must address three disciplinary needs: the need for additional indigenous theory, for greater attention to subjectivities (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005, pp. 25-26), and for more data grounded in real-life intercultural encounters (Agboka, 2013; Carbaugh, 2007). Digital ethnography can help address these three needs and, relatedly, provide an essential, emics-then-etics counterbalance to Thatcher's (2010a) proposed etic-then-emic approach. Thus, I have argued that digital ethnography might contribute much to IPC, developing more good theory and sound practice. In terms of good theory, the methodology might serve to illuminate the intersections of communication, culture, and digital technology; account for the intricacies of local contexts; and avoid the temptation to overemphasize culture in theory building. In terms of sound practice, the methodology might enhance the training of IPC professionals, who increasingly work across digital and cultural borders. These discussions grew from core literature relating to digital ethnography, including the methodology's conceptual freight and reported strengths and limitations.

Moving forward, applications of digital ethnography should be principled. Hence, digital ethnographers should adhere to, and contextually adapt, best practice principles of accountability, transparency, and care, which can help ensure that applications of the methodology are both effective and rigorously ethical. Yet, these best practice principles are

*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

only points of departure, and a fuller research agenda, at once normative and descriptive, is needed for intercultural research across disciplines (see Capurro, 2008; Himma, 2008). All in all, then, I hope this article will encourage further thought on how to do IPC in a compressing, often-ambiguous world where principled research and practice are not merely ideals. They are necessities globally, locally, and in the blurred, digitally mediated areas in between.

## References

- Agboka, G. Y. (2013). Participatory localization: A social justice approach to navigating unenfranchised/disenfranchised cultural sites. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 22, 28-49.
- Andersen, S. T., & van der Velden, M. (2010). Mobile phone-based healthcare delivery in a Sami area: Reflections on technology and culture. In F. Sudweeks, H. Hrachovec, & C. Ess (Eds.), *Proceedings, Cultural attitudes towards communication and technology 2010* (pp. 53-68). Australia: Murdoch University.
- Appadurai, A. (Ed.) (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization* (Vol. 1). U of Minnesota Press.
- Atkinson, P., & Hamersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248-261). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Barnum, C. M. (2011). What we have here is a failure to communicate: How cultural factors affect online communication between east and west. In K. St.Amant & F. Sapienza (Eds.), *Culture, communication, and cyberspace: Rethinking technical communication for international online environments* (pp. 131-156). Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Baron, N. S. (2011). Concerns about mobile phones: A cross-national study. *First Monday*, 16(8). Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3335/3032>
- Baron, N. S. (2013). Do mobile technologies reshape speaking, writing, or reading? *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1, 134-140.
- Baron, N. S., & Segerstad, Y. H. (2010). Cross-cultural patterns in mobile-phone use: Public space and reachability in Sweden, the USA, and Japan. *New Media & Society*, 12, 13-34.
- Beaulieu, A. (2004). Mediating ethnography: Objectivity and the making of ethnographies of the internet. *Social Epistemology*, 18, 139-163.
- Beer, D. (2009). Power through algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious. *New Media & Society*, 11, 985-1002.
- Beneito-Montagut, R. (2011). Ethnography goes online: Towards a user-centred methodology to research interpersonal communication on the internet. *Qualitative Research*, 11, 716-735.
- Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition/culture/power*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

- Berry, J. W. (1990). Imposed etics, emics, and derived etics: Their conceptual and operational status in cross-cultural psychology. In T.N. Headland, K.L. Pike, & M. Harris (Eds.), *Emics and etics: The insider/outsider debate* (pp. 84-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Bloomfield, R. (2009). How online communities and flawed reasoning sound a death knell for qualitative methods. *Terra Nova* blog. Retrieved from [http://terranova.blogs.com/terra\\_nova/2009/03/do-online-communities-sound-a-death-knell-for-qualitative-methods.html](http://terranova.blogs.com/terra_nova/2009/03/do-online-communities-sound-a-death-knell-for-qualitative-methods.html)
- Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C., & Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton University Press.
- Buchanan, E. A., & Ess, C. (2008). Internet research ethics: The field and its critical issues. In K. E. Himma & H. T. Tavani (Eds.), *The handbook of information and computer ethics* (pp. 273-292). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Burawoy, M. (1998). The extended case method. *Sociological Theory*, 16, 4-33.
- Capurro, R. (2006). Towards an ontological foundation of information ethics. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 8, 175-186.
- Capurro, R. (2008). Intercultural information ethics: Foundations and applications. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 6, 116-126.
- Carbaugh, D. (2007). Cultural discourse analysis: Communication practices and intercultural encounters. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 36, 167-182.
- Cardon, P.W. (2008). A critique of Hall's contexting model: A meta-analysis of literature on intercultural business and technical communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 22, 399-428.
- Cheong, P. H., & Gray, K. (2011). Mediated intercultural dialectics: Identity perceptions and performances in virtual worlds. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4, 265-271.
- Cheong, P. H., Martin, J. N., & Macfadyen, L. P. (2012). *New media and intercultural communication: Identity, community, and practice*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Cleary, Y. (2011). An integrated framework for teaching international communication. In B. Thatcher & K. St. Amant (Eds.), *Teaching intercultural rhetoric and technical communication: Theories, curriculum, and practices* (pp. 15-29). Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.



- Coffey, A., Reynold, E., Dicks, B., Soyinka, B., & Mason, B. (2006). Hypermedia ethnography in educational settings: Possibilities and challenges. *Ethnography and Education, 1*, 15–30.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing*. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizations information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science, 32*, 554-571.
- Daft, R. L., Lengel, R. H., & Trevino, L. K. (1987). Message equivocality, media selection and manager performance: Implications for information systems. *MIS Quarterly, 11*, 355-366.
- Deardorff, D. K., & Jones, E. (2012). Intercultural competence: An emerging focus in international higher education. In D. K. Deardorff, H. de Wit, J. D. Heyl, & T. Adams (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of international higher education* (pp. 283-304). SAGE.
- De Freitas, A.C. (2010). Changing spaces: Locating public space at the intersection of the physical and digital. *Geography Compass, 4*, 630-643.
- DeLuca, D., & Valacich, J. S. (2005). Outcomes from conduct of virtual teams at two sites: Support for media synchronicity theory. In *HICSS'05, Proceedings of the 38th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. IEEE.
- Dennis, A. R., Valacich, J. S., Speier, C., & Morris, M. G. (1998). Beyond media richness: An empirical test of media synchronicity theory. In *Proceedings of the Thirty-First Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 48-57). IEEE.
- DeSanctis, G., & Poole, M. S. (1994). Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: Adaptive structuration theory. *Organization Science, 5*, 121-147.
- Dicks, B. (Ed.) (2012). *Digital qualitative research methods* (four volumes). London: SAGE.
- Dicks, B., Mason, B., Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (2005). *Qualitative research and hypermedia: Ethnography for the digital age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dicks, B., Soyinka, B., & Coffey, A. (2006). Multimodal ethnography. *Qualitative Research, 6*, 77-96.
- Ding, H., & Savage, G. (2013). Guest editors' introduction: New directions in intercultural professional communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 22*, 1-9.

- Dominguez, D., Bealieu, A., Estalella, A., Gómez, E., Schnettler, B., & Read, R. (2007). Virtual ethnography. *FQS: Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 8(3). Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0703E19>
- Ember, C. R., & Ember, M. (2009). *Cross-cultural research methods*. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press.
- Ess, C., & the Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Working Committee. (2002). Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee, Approved by the AoIR, November 27, 2002. Retrieved from <http://www.drury.edu/ess/aoir/ethics.html>
- Ess, C., & Sudweeks, F. (2012). Forward. In P.H. Cheong, J.N. Martin, & L.P. Macfadyen (Eds.), *New media and intercultural communication: Identity, community, and politics*. (pp. xi-xx). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Fantini, A. E. (2009). Assessing intercultural competence: Issues and tools. In D.K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 456-476). SAGE.
- Fraiberg, S. (2013). Reassembling technical communication: A framework for studying multilingual and multimodal practices in global contexts. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 22, 10-27.
- Garcia, A. C., Standlee, A. I., Bechkoff, J., & Cui, Y. (2012). Ethnographic approaches to the internet and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38, 52-84.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Geiger, R. S., & Ribes, D. (2011, January). Trace ethnography: Following coordination through documentary practices. In *System Sciences (HICSS), 2011 44th Hawaii International Conference on* (pp. 1-10). IEEE.
- Glass-Coffin, B., & Kiiskeentum. (2012). The future of a discipline: Considering the ontological/methodological future of the anthropology of consciousness, part IV: Ontological relativism or ontological relevance: An essay in honor of Michael Harner. *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 23, 113-126.
- Gnecchi, M., Maylath, B., Mousten, B., Scarpa, F., & Vandepitte, S. (2011). Field convergence between technical writers and technical translators: Consequences for training institutions. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 54, 168-184.
- Goggin, G. (2010). Global internets: Media research in the new world. In I. Volkmer (Ed.), *The handbook of global media research* (pp. 352-264). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

- Gu, P. (2011). Challenges to project-based computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for professional communication in China. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 54, 225-243.
- Gudykunst, W. B., Lee, C. E., Nishida, T., & Ogawa, N. (2005). Theorizing about intercultural communication: An introduction. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 3-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Halkier, B. (2011). Methodological practicalities in analytical generalization. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 787-797.
- Hammersley, M. (1990). What's wrong with ethnography? The myth of theoretical description. *Sociology*, 24, 597-615.
- Hammersley, M. (2006). Ethnography: Problems and prospects. *Ethnography and Education*, 1, 3-14.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Himma, K.E. (2008). The intercultural ethics agenda from the point of view of a moral objectivist. *Journal of Information, Communication & Ethics in Society*, 6, 101-115.
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hine, C. (2007). Connective ethnography for the exploration of e-science. *Journal of Computer-Mediated communication*, 12, 618-634.
- Hine, C. (2013). *The internet: Understanding qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.
- Howard, A. (1988). Hypermedia and the future of ethnography. *Cultural Anthropology*, 3, 304-315.
- Humphreys, L., Von Pape, T., & Karnowski, V. (2013). Evolving mobile media: Uses and conceptualizations of the mobile internet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18(4), 491-507.
- Hunsinger, P. R. (2011). Using global contexts to localize online content for international audiences. In K. St.Amant & F. Sapienza (Eds.), *Culture, communication, and cyberspace: Rethinking technical communication for international online environments*, (pp. 13-37) Amityville, NY: Baywood.

- Huysman, M., Steinfield, C., Jang, C. Y., David, K., Poot, J., & Mulder, I. (2003). Virtual teams and the appropriation of communication technology: Exploring the concept of media stickiness. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)*, 12, 411-436.
- Hymes, D. (1996). What is ethnography? In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice* (pp. 3-16). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Jenson, J., & de Castell, S. (2004). "Turnitin": Technological challenges to academic ethics. *Communication and Information*, 4, 245-267.
- Jordan, T. (2002). Cyberpower. *The Electronic Journal of Communication*, 3-4 (12). Retrieved from <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/012/3/01239.html>
- Kellner, D. M. (2004). Technological revolution, multiple literacies and the re-visioning of education. *E-Learning*, 1, 9 -37.
- Kock, N. (1998). Can communication medium limitations foster better group outcomes? An action research study. *Information Management*, 34, 295-305.
- Kock, N. (2001). The ape that used email: Understanding e-communication behavior through evolution theory. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 5, 1-29.
- Kock, N. (2002). Evolution and media naturalness: A look at e-communication through a Darwinian theoretical lens. *Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Information Systems*, 372-382.
- Kock, N. (2005). Media richness or media naturalness? The evolution of our biological communication apparatus and its influence on our behavior toward e-communication tools. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 48, 117-130.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2003). *New literacies: Changing knowledge and classroom learning*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2006). *New literacies: Everyday practices and classroom learning*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.
- Laquintano, T. (2010). Sustained authorship: Digital writing, self-publishing, and the ebook. *Written Communication*, 27, 469-493.
- Lievrouw, L. A. (2012). The next decade in internet time: Ways ahead for new media studies. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15, 616-638.
- Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

- Mao, L. (2013). Beyond bias, binary, and border: Mapping out the future of comparative rhetoric. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 43, 209-225.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- Markham, A. (2006). Ethic as method, method as ethic: A case for reflexivity in qualitative ICT research. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 15, 37-54.
- Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (1999). Thinking dialectically about culture and communication. *Communication Theory*, 9, 1-25.
- Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2010). Intercultural communication and dialectics revisited. In T. K. Nakayama & R. T. Halualani (Eds.), *The handbook of critical intercultural communication* (pp. 59-83). Blackwell.
- Masten, D. L., & Plowman, T. M. P. (2003). Digital ethnography: The next wave in understanding the consumer experience. *Design Management Journal*, 14, 75-81.
- Matsuda, A., & Matsuda, P. K. (2011). Globalizing writing studies: The case of U.S. technical communication textbooks. *Written Communication*, 28, 172-192.
- Matveeva, N. (2008). Teaching intercultural communication in a basic technical writing course: A survey of our current practices and methods. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 38, 387-410.
- McEwan, B., & Sobre-Denton, M. (2011). Virtual cosmopolitanism: Constructing third cultures and transmitting social and cultural capital through social media. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4, 252-258.
- McGrath, J. E. (1991). Time, interaction, and performance (TIP): A theory of groups. *Small Group Research*, 22, 147-174.
- McGrath, J. E., & Hollingshead, A. B. (1993). Putting the "group" back in group support systems: Some theoretical issues about dynamic processes in groups with technological enhancements. In L. M. Jessup & J. S. Valacich (Eds.), *Group support systems: New perspectives* (pp. 78-96). New York, NY: MacMillan.
- McGrath, J. E., & Hollingshead, A. B. (1994). *Groups interacting with technology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Miller, D., & Slater, D. (2000). *The Internet: An ethnographic approach*. New York, NY: Berg.

- Mitra, A., & Watts, E. (2002). Theorizing cyberspace: The idea of voice applied to the internet discourse. *New Media and Society*, 4, 479-498.
- Moreno, A. I. (2008). The importance of comparable corpora in cross-cultural studies. In U. Connor, E. Nagelhout, & W. V. Rozycki (Eds.), *Contrastive rhetoric: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric* (pp. 25-41). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & Franko, W. (2013). *Digital cities: The Internet and the geography of opportunity*. Oxford University Press.
- Murthy, D. (2008). Digital ethnography: An examination of the use of new technologies for social research. *Sociology*, 42, 837-855.
- Murthy, D. (2011). Emergent digital ethnographic methods for social research. In S.N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *The handbook of emergent technologies in social research* (pp. 158-179). Oxford University Press.
- Norman, D. A. (2002). *The design of everyday things*. Basic Books.
- Orgad, S. (2006). The cultural dimensions of online communication: A study of breast cancer patients' internet spaces. *New Media & Society*, 8, 877-899.
- Pfister, D., & Soliz, J. (2011). (Re) conceptualizing intercultural communication in a networked society. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4(4), 246-251.
- Pink, S. (Ed.) (2009). *Advances in visual methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Poor, N. D. (2007). A cross-national study of computer news sites: Global news, local sites. *The Information Society*, 23, 73-83.
- Putnam, C., Rose, E., Walton, R., & Kolko, B. (2009). Mobile phone users in Kyrgyzstan: A case study of identifying user requirements for diverse users. In *Professional Communication Conference, 2009. IPCC 2009. IEEE International* (pp. 1-13). IEEE.
- Roberts, C., Byram, M., Barro, A., Jordan, S., & Street, B. (2001). *Language learners as ethnographers*. Multilingual Matters.
- Rotman, D., Preece, J., He, Y., & Druin, A. (2012, February). Extreme ethnography: Challenges for research in large scale online environments. In *Proceedings of the 2012 iConference* (pp. 207-214). ACM.
- Rückriem, G. (2009). Digital technology and mediation: A challenge to activity theory. In A. Sannino, H. Daniels, & K. D. Gutierrez (Eds.), *Learning and expanding with activity theory* (pp. 88-111). Cambridge University Press.

- Sade-Beck, L. (2004). Internet ethnography: Online and offline. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3, 45-51.
- Scholte, J. A. (2008). Defining globalization. *The World Economy*, 31, 1471-1502.
- Schroeder, R. (2010). Mobile phones and the inexorable advance of multimodal connectedness. *New Media & Society*, 12, 75-90.
- Short, J. A., Williams, E., & Christie, B. (1976). *The social psychology of telecommunications*. London, UK: Wiley.
- Shuter, R. (2011). Introduction: New media across cultures—prospect and promise. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4, 241-245.
- Spilka, R. (Ed.) (2010). *Digital literacy for technical communication: 21<sup>st</sup> century theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Spitzberg, B., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In D.K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-52). SAGE.
- St.Amant, K. S., & Sapienza, F. (2011). *Culture, communication & cyberspace: Rethinking technical communication for international online environments*. Baywood.
- Takashi, T. (2010). MySpace or Mixi? Japanese engagement with SNS (social networking sites) in the global age. *New Media & Society*, 12, 453-475.
- Tapscott, D., Lowy, A., & Ticoll, D. (2000). *Digital capital: Harnessing the power of business webs*. Harvard Business Press.
- Thatcher, B. (2004). Rhetorics and communication media across cultures. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 3, 305-320.
- Thatcher, B. (2010a). Editor's introduction to the first edition: Eight needed developments and eight critical contexts for global inquiry. *Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization*, 1, 1-34.
- Thatcher, B. (2010b). Understanding digital literacy across cultures. In R. Spilka (Ed.), *Digital literacy for technical communication: 21<sup>st</sup> century theory and practice* (pp. 169-198). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thurlow, C., & Mroczek, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. Oxford University Press.
- Vadén, T. (2004). Digital nominalism. Notes on the ethics of information society in view of the ontology of the digital. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 6, 223-231.
- Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
February, 2014, Volume 5, Number 1, 67-89.

- Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research*, 19, 52-90.
- Walther, J. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1992). Relational communication in computer-mediated interaction. *Human Communication Research*, 19, 50-88.
- Walton, R. (2013). Bridges & barriers to development: Communication modes, media, and devices. *Kairos*, 17(3).
- Walton, R., & DeRenzi, B. (2009). Value-sensitive design and health care in Africa. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 54, 346-358.
- Walton, R., Putnam, C., Johnson, E., & Kolko, B. (2009). Skills are not binary: Nuances in the relationship between ICT skills and employability. *Information Technologies & International Development*, 5(2), 1-18.
- Walton, R., Yaaqoubi, J., & Kolko, B. (2012). What's it for? Expectations of Internet value and usefulness in Central Asia. *Information Technologies & International Development*, 8(3), 69-84.
- Warschauer, M. (2003). *Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the digital divide*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Westlund, O. (2010). New(s) functions for the mobile: A cross-cultural study. *New Media & Society*, 12, 91-108.
- Wheeler, D. L. (2006). *The Internet in the Middle East: Global expectations and local imaginations in Kuwait*. SUNY Press.
- Yu, H. (2012). Intercultural competence in technical communication: A working definition and review of assessment methods. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 21, 168-186