Editor’s Introduction to First Edition:
Eight Needed Developments and Eight Critical Contexts for Global Inquiry

Barry Thatcher
New Mexico State University, USA

Abstract
In this introduction, I articulate critical gaps, needed developments, and opportunities for rhetoric and professional communication in global contexts. My tone is intentionally provocative and personal, laying out my positions and concerns based on almost 20 years of experience working in both rhetoric/professional communication and intercultural/global studies. In this introduction, I also demonstrate the power (and beauty) of intercultural and global inquiry to expose unexamined assumptions and problems in current theory, research, and practice in rhetoric and professional communication. The first section introduces eight needed developments for global theory, research, and practice, based on current approaches in rhetoric and professional communication; the second section outlines an “Etic-then-Emic” frame for integrating these developments into a global rhetorical theory; the third section explores gaps and opportunities in eight professional global contexts; and the conclusion summarizes the article with a call to develop more research, theory, and practice.

Introduction
It is with great pleasure that I introduce our first edition of the Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization. This Journal realizes a dream for many of us who have worked hard in this area but understood the limited opportunities to publish in an appropriate venue. It is also important because now we have formed a community experienced in intercultural and global issues, so we can meaningfully discuss theory, research, and practice. We have our forum!
There are many people to thank, most notably those on the editorial board and especially Kirk St. Amant, Matthew McCool, Mak Pandit, Pam Brewer, and Constance Kampf. We also thank East Carolina University and Blake Smith whose technical development and coordination were critical. Also, we must thank the developers of the Open Journal Systems and the Public Knowledge Project, who have created the software platform for this open access, online journal. May the publications from this project achieve their goals for our community!

And with this introduction, I articulate critical gaps, needed developments, and opportunities for rhetoric and professional communication in global contexts. In this articulation, my tone is provocative and personal, laying out my positions and concerns based on almost 20 years of experience working in both rhetoric/professional communication and intercultural/global studies. I hope this introduction motivates further research and inquiry for our community; in fact, one of its major goals is to inspire special editions of this journal, based on the gaps and contexts explored.

In this introduction, I also demonstrate the power (and beauty) of intercultural and global inquiry to expose unexamined assumptions and problems in current theory, research, and practice in rhetoric and professional communication. Often, when placed in a comparative or global context, a good number of these approaches seem weak and un compelling, sometimes because of their implicit, naturalized U.S. approaches, but also because of their often untenable views on rhetoric, human agency, and cultural formations. This is perhaps my favorite part of intercultural/global rhetoric.

The first section introduces eight needed developments for global theory, research, and practice, based on current approaches in rhetoric and professional communication; the second section outlines an “Etic-then-Emic” frame for integrating these developments into a global rhetorical theory; the third section explores gaps and opportunities in eight professional global contexts; and the conclusion summarizes the article with a call to develop more research, theory, and practice. I invite rejoinders and rebuttals.

**Needed Developments for Global Contexts: Moving from Local to Global**

Despite a strongly emerging and complexly formed globalization, we still lack viable and productive models for exploring global rhetoric in professional contexts. Among the many reasons are the difficulties in defining globalization (Grewel, 2008) and assessing the roles of professional communication in its development (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008). However, the main reason is that much research and theory in rhetoric and professional communication still rely on outdated critical and cultural studies models that are based on local approaches (Scott, Longo, and Willis, 2007; Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000; Sullivan & Porter, 1998).

Not surprisingly, using local approaches for global inquiries presents serious problems, including ethnocentrism, methodological aporia, poorly theorized global-local relations, ignoring large-scale variables (such as global markets, outsourced manufacturing, and law), and unworkable ethics. Thus, professional communication scholars need to carefully re-develop these theories and methodologies to work successfully in global and intercultural professional contexts. This section explores eight critical developments for doing just that.
Development One: Moving from Local to Global Using Comparative Frames

First, the local approach is not designed to assess cultural and rhetorical interactions beyond the local level and across groups of people, two critical needs for global inquiry (Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Thatcher, 2001; Jarvis & Pavlenk, 2008; Hofstede, 2010). For example, in advocating their postmodern methodologies, Sullivan & Porter (1998) argue for the local approach, using the analogy of an NCAA basketball game. In this analogy, Sullivan & Porter carefully lay out the details of one women’s game at Purdue University and how each of the nine members of their two families perceived and documented the game differently. The rest of their book outlines the localized methodologies based on this one-game approach. This analogy hits home for me because my oldest daughter played NCAA Division I women’s basketball, and from many years of experience, I have never seen—nor do I expect to see—the same basketball game. All are highly unique. This is the fact of difference.

This unique, one-game approach, however, also belies or masks the consistency across basketball games or other sports. When I watched my daughter play Division I basketball, I recognized the incredible amount of consistency in her game as compared to my old high school days, the NBA, my son’s 8th-grade team, or a pick-up game at our city park. In addition, basketball games are so consistent that distinguishing them from a soccer or football game is remarkably, stupidly easy, something Sullivan & Porter (1998) never discuss. This internal consistency of basketball as compared to soccer or football is obvious even though all three sports are team-based, use a similar sized ball, have a field that is not that different, and score goals. This consistency is also not grounded in positivism, but rather a constructed methodology such as articulated by Bourdieu (1999).

Consequently, since these local methodologies rely on the one-game approach, ignoring the comparable consistencies across the games or sports themselves, they cannot situate the sports globally. For example, if I were to compare the sports of basketball and soccer in a global context using the one-game approach, I would examine the details of a basketball game, compare these details with a soccer game, and then I would try to assess fairly the similarities and differences, but these methods would fail quickly.

First, because I started with the basketball game, the details of the soccer game would be seen in light of the basketball game, a perfect example of orientalism. Second, since I did not set up beforehand variables that both sports share, I would face a methodological impasse due to the highly disparate and unique types and amount of data for both games. Third, because I compared only two games, I would not be able to assess ethical issues in performance (maybe I thought that all basketball—instead of soccer—games ended in brawls). Fourth, because I compared only two games, I would not be able to adequately understand performance of the players in light of the sports (Since player X scored only two soccer goals, and player Y scored 22 basketball points, player X is much worse than player Y). Fifth, since I saw only two games, I would not understand how the performance in these games compares to other games at local, regional, national, and international levels. Sixth, since I cannot assess performance beyond the local level, I would not be able to understand how large economic, political, and social structures affect both sports. In other words, the local approach is almost completely inadequate for global inquiries.
Instead of the one-game approach, viable global inquiries are like comparing the sports of basketball and soccer because global inquiries focus on how different cultures, groups of people, or regions relate to each other, based on sustained interactions and formations (Bourdieu, 1999). Generally, for this method, researchers need to create and assess variables that the cultures share and then integrate these variables into the local cultures, which, as explained later, is the Étic-then-Émic approach. For example, when comparing basketball to soccer, I could compare the field/court, ball, scoring, typical offensive movements and defensive responses, objective of the games, and rules of engagement. Next, I could examine these variables across number of games, teams, and leagues. Third, I could integrate this analysis into a global comparison of other sports, including their relations to market structures, politics, finance, and other cultural phenomena. Finally, I could integrate these comparisons into the local cultures. For many reasons, this comparative frame provides not only a valid, ethical, and balanced approach to global inquiry, but it also helps us understand better the local situation.

Despite these advantages, however, many cultural-critical studies scholars resist the comparative frame. First, it draws on somewhat of an empirical epistemology, that is, of deciding what is comparable before doing the research. As is extensively documented, the cultural studies model inherits a strong distrust of empirical designs, which it defines as “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 4; see also, Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000). Second, the comparative frame probably hints at objectivity and universality (albeit constructed), which are two attributes that cultural and critical studies scholars historically distrust and are the main reason for their favoring the local approach.

Rarely, however, do these scholars reflect upon the disadvantages of this local thinking, but when they do, they often revise their positions. When the critical studies scholars Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith (2008) moved from local to global inquiries, they began urging scholars to think that empirical research “does not have to be a dirty word” (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith (2008, p. ix). Rather, empirical work is essential in the comparative context of “merging critical and indigenous methodologies,” but only if done with an appropriate comparative framework, or it can easily “perpetuate neocolonial sentiments” (p. 4). Similarly, as explained later, key critical theorists including Bhabha (2003) and Latour (2003) argue for moving beyond local methodologies in order to understand our global context.

Furthermore, a large variety of empirical designs can be—and have been—modified for intercultural and global professional contexts. These include not only the more “local” ethnographies (Scollon & Scollon, 2001), but single and multiple case studies (Brewer, 2008; McCool, 2007; Melton, 2009; Thatcher, 2006); contrastive survey research (Ulijn & Strother, 1993); meta analysis (Cardon & Okoro, this RPCG Edition); large-scale rhetorical comparisons of texts (Reppen, Fitzmaurice, and Biber, 2002); and experiments (McCool, this RPCG edition; Swaak, de Jong, and de Vries, 2009).

Development Two: Moving beyond Monocultural Methods
The second development is to draw on methods that are designed for intercultural/global inquiry and by more than U.S. scholars. Although many cultural-studies scholars in rhetoric and professional communication (Scott, Longo, and Willis, 2007) drew upon the eclectic approaches of cultural studies around the world (Turner, 1992), all their methodologies (Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000).
2000; Sullivan & Porter, 1998) were designed by U.S. scholars in the United States and for use in monocultural inquiry. They simply were not designed for, drew upon, or were intended for intercultural or global research. This monocultural genesis combined with the lack of a global framework and a penchant for local views creates significant risks for neocolonialism (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008), orientalism (Said, 1979), or ethnocentrism (Thatcher, 2001; Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Stewart & Bennett, 1991), all of which mean viewing other cultures in light of the first or predominant culture or not appropriately unmasking the lenses of inquiry, thus favoring one culture over the other. The intercultural research literature is replete with examples of this type of U.S. colonialism (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

**Development Three: Methods and Courage to Act in Global Contexts**

Global researchers must move beyond the methodological aporia and fear involved with comparing cultures. Because most postmodern and postcolonial scholars so intensely focus on the local nature of cultures (see, Scott, Longo, and Willis, 2007; Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000), these theorists often advocate for the *incommensurability* or incomparability of cultures. As exemplified by Harris (2005), incommensurability is the snowflake theory of culture, meaning that cultures are so unique that comparing one snowflake (or culture) to another is simply not possible; in fact, it’s an absurdity. Further, any act of cultural comparison is an act of colonizing because it represents the instantiation of the “always already” power-laden relations, producing a great deal of fear among scholars from “privileged” cultures (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). Consequently, most postmodern and postcolonial scholars lack the courage, theory, and methods to carry out viable and ethical intercultural or global inquiries.

Although some critical and cultural-studies scholars acutely sense this fear, they maintain that the need to understand global discourse and culture is more important than fear and methodological aporia (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 14). In addition, many leading scholars now acknowledge that our current globalized world demands courage to reflect upon methods and seriously engage in intercultural and global inquiry. This change was especially evident in discussions of the September 11th attacks. In a 2003 Symposium hosted by the Journal *Critical Inquiry*, prominent scholars openly questioned the relevance of postmodern and postcolonial theories, perhaps for the first time. Bruno Latour, an influential postmodern theorist of the epistemologies of science, asks a simple question:

> What has critique become when a French general, no, a marshal of critique, namely, Jean Baudrillard, claims in a published book that the World Trade Towers destroyed themselves under their own weight, so to speak, undermined by the utter nihilism inherent in capitalism itself—as if the terrorist planes were pulled to suicide by the powerful attraction of this black hole of nothingness? What has become of critique when a book can be a best-seller that claims that no plane ever crashed into the Pentagon? I am ashamed to say that the author was French too.

Throughout this symposium, key critical, postmodern, and postcolonial theorists began to revise their local-only, power-relations emphasis to better assess global inquiry, including revisions for comparative frameworks involving the environment, outsourcing, government, and markets.
Likewise, one goal of RPCG is to draw on current postmodern and postcolonial methods but adapt them with the appropriate cross-cultural methods, a combination that will allow for the kind of cross-cultural theorizing and research methods necessary to understand the relations of rhetoric and culture at truly a global level (see Lett, 2010; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis 1996; Thatcher 2006; Thatcher, 2011).

**Development Four: Moving from Western Individualism to Multi Levels and Structures**

Global scholars must avoid using approaches that implicitly espouse U.S. or western cultural values, most notably individualism. This problem of ethnocentrism is well documented in intercultural research (Stewart & Bennett, 1991), but, in rhetoric and professional communication, it is still readily apparent (Thatcher, 2001). The problem has many roots, especially that of drawing on monocultural methods, as discussed earlier. However, one main cause is that U.S. and western individualism correlates strongly with the local views of postmodernism and postcolonialism. Put simply, the snowflake or incommensurable approach to cultures strongly correlates to seeing people as incommensurable or unique and, as a consequence, not grounded in anything other than the local situation. These features perfectly exemplify U.S. individualism (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Hofstede, 2010; Stewart & Bennett, 1991), which is not surprising, given the U.S. foundation for these theories.

U.S. and western individualism has many problems for intercultural research, but as exemplified in the sports analogy, the most damaging is that the highly localized approaches simply cannot account for discourse influences beyond the local level, such as organizational, regional, national, or international (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Thatcher, 2001). In other words, this approach cannot assess how people share discourses at many levels, forming a flat rhetoric. This conflation of personal with other levels also strongly works against understanding global rhetorical strategies such as purpose, audience, information and organizational needs, and style.

For example, as I show elsewhere (Thatcher, 2000), South Americans in a multinational organization drew on collective, particular, and high-context communication patterns, which their U.S. counterparts never connected to South American culture. Consequently, the U.S. personnel perceived their S.A. colleagues as bound in group-think, too context sensitive, and illusive. However, the S.A. personnel perceived themselves as building consensus, contextualizing well the issues, and being sensitive to the intelligences of their U.S. counterparts. These rhetorical assumptions were grounded in the U.S. and South Americans’ broad—not local—cultural patterns.

Further, this flat rhetoric also prohibited these same U.S. employees from understanding the difference among local, personal, discipline specific (such as accounting) or organizational patterns of South American discourse as well. All were lumped into one incoherent category. Thus, rhetorical strategies are understood only in the light of the variously structured cultural background from which the communicators are drawing them, and thus, a viable global rhetorical inquiry must assess a variety of levels of discourse working in a local situation, including personal, organizational, discipline, regional, language (such as English or Spanish), and international (Thatcher, 2000; Thatcher, 2011).
As mentioned, some current critical studies scholars are moving beyond the flat rhetoric and trying to situate various levels of culture and discourse in the context of globalization. In the same 2003 symposium, Bhabha explains that instead of seeing culture as the highly localized *bricolage* at the marketplace, we must view global culture in the context of hybridized governments, markets, financial flows, and outsourcing, which are four discourses that connect beyond the local, comparing what cultures (and people) share and do not share in a complexly structured global context.

Although some work in rhetoric and professional communication looks at more than the local level (Ding, 2007), most seems stuck there. For example, Hawisher & Selfe’s (2000) collection *Global Web Literacies* explores ten local situations of web use around the world, drawing on a potentially useful line of inquiry known as the New Literacy Studies (Street, 2001). This approach appropriately rejects the “autonomous model” of literacy (universal-decontextual) and situates literacy in prevailing social and ideological contexts; and much of the New Literacies Studies has a global focus. However, like the postmodern approach, New Literacy Studies is prone to unreflexively embracing the local-only approach, a weakness that Brandt & Clinton (2002) have been criticizing for almost a decade.

Consequently, despite their goal of theorizing global web literacies, Hawisher & Selfe (2000) cannot connect any person in the ten sites to anything larger than the local situation, which not only fails to define a global web literacy, but is also a validity error because the local is not contextualized in the regional, national, or international web context (Thatcher, 2010).

**Development Five: Basic Quantitative Literacy**

Next, global researchers need a modest amount of quantitative literacy, something that is increasingly uncommon in rhetoric and professional communication (Charney, 1996). Frequently, the hegemony of the local approach is made worse by the scholars who simplistically conflate a cultural generalization with a stereotype or static, monolithic culture, demonstrating what Pinker calls “innumeracy” (2003, pp.197-218). Most of the key intercultural researchers such as Hofstede (2010), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2000), and House, et al (2005) use quantitative descriptive methods to explore bell-curve values or norms across cultures, looking for predominant patterns as well as the ranges and types of exceptions.

However, the cultural patterns that are presented as bell-curve statistics are often read erroneously as monolithic traits (perhaps as a result of the flat rhetoric tendencies). The problem is compounded even more because frequently these same critics of intercultural research have never read the primary texts and make claims based on the textbooks or secondary sources.

**Development Six: Humility, Reflexivity, and Flexibility**

Global rhetoric researchers need humility, reflexivity, and flexibility, attributes that greatly facilitate intercultural inquiry (Bennett, 1998). Some critical and cultural studies scholars, however, reveal a smug insularity as they advocate for their own methods. For example, the term “always already” is commonly used in critical and cultural studies arguments, usually pertaining to the connection among methods, culture, and power. However, the level of surety in the “always already” construct is rarely, if ever, seen in other disciplines. For example, a recent Google Scholar search for the phrase “always already” yielded 46,300 results, and while I did not check all of them, the first 100 results were all based upon critical and cultural studies *Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization* December, 2010, Volume 1, Number 1, 1-34.
Theories and textual methodologies. This seems to be the only discipline that has a 100% level of surety, which is amazing, given the complexities of culture, rhetoric, and power relations.

Because of the surety and simplicity of this one-to-one correspondence between method and culture (innumeracy), these critical and cultural studies theorists can simply critique the results of any work as simply hegemonic, racist, reductionist, or binary, not understanding the constructed framework from which many intercultural studies are housed and the epistemologies that are used to report the results. For example, Zhang (2008) criticizes the intercultural field of contrastive rhetoric (discussed later) as developing hegemonic powers for speakers of English in developing areas such as India, China, and other parts of Asia. Zhang also claims:

> Furthermore, the overemphasis on cultural difference in contrastive rhetoric can lead to regressive, limiting, and even blinding stereotypes and unwarranted categorical distinctions among groups. For example, the categorical distinctions to which contrastive rhetoric seems to be prone may have a distancing and exoticizing effect, leading to native English speakers to experiencing themselves as the norm, as straight-line, direct writers, and constructing cross-cultural students as the exotic Other and as irrelevant, though perhaps also quaint and thus appealing. (p.18)

Drawing on Foucaultian and postcolonial methods of textual criticism, Zhang makes these large claims of “social control” without any evidence other than textual interpretations of research reports. She does not theorize or explain the cultural connections between the rhetorical patterns and cultural backgrounds; she never engages contrastive rhetoric methodology; she never argues why her methods are better, more valid, or more accurate; and she never feels it necessary to qualify the very strong language of her claims. She derives all her results from textual interpretation. Her thinking grossly oversimplifies the connections between culture and writing, becoming more problematic than the contrastive rhetoric patterns she seeks to critique. As Bennett (1998) so aptly explains, this approach provides “little light and much heat” (p. 11).

Finally, in addition to the “always already” surety, the tone in many of these approaches seems like proselytizing. For example, in the introduction to their collection Critical Power Tools, Scott, Longo, and Willis (2007) say that “This collection testifies and responds to our field’s needs for more teaching and research approaches that historicizes technical communication’s roles in hegemonic power relations” (p. 1). The word “testify” hints of the rhetoric researcher as missionary, which is problematic in a single culture (Segal, et, 1998), but could be disastrous in cross-cultural research, which needs significant flexibility and tolerance, not missionary zeal.

**Development Seven. Effective Theory and Practice**

As its purpose statement explains, this Journal seeks a balance between theory and practice or praxis; consequently, it needs to work against the privileging of cultural theory in much rhetoric and professional communication. To demonstrate this need for global praxis, I will narrate one of my many U.S.-Mexico border experiences.

In spring 2006, I was working on an interdisciplinary study of U.S.-Mexico border health and found myself (as usual) in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (adjacent to El Paso, TX) talking to a director of a large state hospital. That same week, New Mexico State University held its J. Paul Taylor
Symposium on Social Justice, which that year, focused on promoting justice for the more than 500 women and girls murdered in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City since 1993. The crowning event for this symposium was to place hundreds of small pink crosses covered with the personal data and photos of murdered women on a beautiful, cemetery-like lawn at NMSU. This scene garnered much media attention, especially in Mexico. Although I strongly agreed with the cause, I was embarrassed by the approach and worried it would be problematic for my Mexican colleagues. I thought of sharing my worries with the symposium directors, but I felt it would be useless.

At this large state hospital, after I conducted my scheduled interview with the Director, I simply asked for her thoughts of the pink crosses. In her role as Director, she was intimately involved in the treatment of many female victims of violence in Cd. Juárez and was acutely aware of the femicide problem. At first, she was hesitant to speak because she knew I was an NMSU professor, but when I hinted that I was embarrassed by it, she unloaded: She was deeply offended by the approach. First, it was done by sanctimonious Americans who had little more than newspaper knowledge of the events. Second, it was cowardly because it was carried out in a safe place with the supporters risking nothing. Third, the publicity did nothing to improve the situation; in fact, it probably emboldened the perpetrators. Fourth, as naïve academic symbols, the crosses were too weak to make any real statement. Fifth, of course people in Cd. Juárez were aware of and deeply missed these young women and did not need Americans to remind them. I was stunned, not because of her anger and frustration, but because of the clarity and cogency of her response. Based on much experience and like many of my Mexican colleagues, she clearly perceived it as another U.S. neo-colonial approach to Mexican situations.

I asked her what she would have our NMSU faculty and students do. She said: support women’s shelters concretely with resources; work through well established venues of public outreach against female violence; work through Cd. Juárez non-profit agencies that investigate and ameliorate judicial and police incompetence in Cd. Juarez; and perhaps work towards improving the safety of public transportation to and from the manufacturing plants (maquilas) where most of the murdered women worked. I agreed.

After the symposium, the pink crosses were discussed just a few more times in the media, and the incident was reported in one academic article. That’s it. Thus, as Stuart Hall explains, when working in cultural studies, scholars must honestly problematize their methods if they are not producing grounded, tangible, and effective results; otherwise, theory is letting them off the hook:

At that point, I think anybody who is into cultural studies seriously as an intellectual practice, must feel, on their pulse, its ephemerality, its insubstantiality, how little it registers, how little we’ve been able to change anything or get anybody to do anything. If you don't feel one tension in the work that you are doing, theory has let you off the hook. (p. 285)

Frequently, theory lets many cultural studies scholars off the hook because they do not have to offer alternative methods or ground their conclusions in anything other than a theoretical interpretation of the local situation. This is very easy, safe research that while offering some

Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization
December, 2010, Volume 1, Number 1, 1-34.
considerations, does not have the courage to ground itself sufficiently in methods and qualified conclusions, which then serve as something with which others can engage meaningfully beyond the local situation. The pink crosses seem to be such an approach: abstract yet personal, safe but useless, and seemingly politically correct, yet strongly ethnocentric.

Furthermore, as Bhabha (2003) states earlier and explored throughout this article, this local-only approach is further weakened when connected to issues of power and domination at a larger than local level. In other words, despite all of the grandiose claims of examining power relations (Scott, Longo, and Willis, 2007), cultural studies and critical theory seems poorly situated to observe power relations beyond the local-level. It simply presents pink crosses ornamented with personal pictures and data on a lawn, safely away from the problem, instead of aggressively interrogating the judicial, police, industrial, cultural, and transportation powers tied to the unresolved murders.

**Development Eight: A Workable Ethics for Global Contexts**

The eighth development is the most important: constructing a workable ethics for global contexts, which is difficult in the postmodern framework. Although the work in postmodern ethics is complicated (Porter, 1998; Dombrowski, 2000), three key concepts can be traced. First, as Scott, Longo, and Willis (2007) explain, critical and postmodern discourse often views humanity as fragmented and often just as much “the object of discourse” as the producer of discourse (p. 4). In addition, much postmodernism situates ethics in the dialogic relations of the local context (Porter, 1998; Sullivan & Porter, 1998), reducing ethics to local choices. And third, since these two concepts combine to situate the application of ethics to the local context, outside views of ethics are not allowed to interfere.

As most human rights scholars maintain, the local, postmodern ethics might seem palatable theoretically, but it is a disaster for dealing with human rights (see, for example, Sutch, 2001, p. 20. Also see McCormick, 2009; Twining, 2000; Higgins, 1999; Glendon, 1999). First, “the postmodern agent (the liberal ironist of Rorty or the itinerate condottiere of Ashley) struggles against orthodoxy of any kind” (Sutch, 2001, p. 20). In other words, because the human agent is both the object and subject of discourse and culture, the agent has little ability to effect change against a strong cultural formation.

Second, the postmodern approach avoids the search for human rights in the “larger community” or “human solidarity” and replaces it with “post-philosophical hermeneutic textualism and thereafter with postmodern pragmatism” (Sutch, 2001, p. 20). From this perspective, the “postmodernist attempts to engage the political and ethical are schizophrenic” (Sutch, 2001, p. 22). This is because reducing the definition of ethics to textual interpretation (usually resulting in derridian nihilism) and reducing practice to local dialogue are both universal in an abstract and ephemeral form and concretely local in application, much like the pink crosses. Because of its schizophrenic disjuncture between an abstract nihilism and local practice, postmodernism is very ill-equipped to connect ethics to anything beyond the local situation, including politics, larger-than-local cultural forms, and nation-states (Sutch, 2001; Higgins, 1999; Glendon, 1999; McCormick, 2009).
The third problem is that because of its textual hermeneutics and disjuncture with other-than-local situations, postmodern ethics has to assume that whatever local cultures and situations (such as female circumcision) have deemed correct (in their dialogic relations) is not subject to intervention from outside forces (McCormick, 2009; Twining, 2000; Higgins, 1999; Glendon, 1999). From this view, activists and scholars have almost no hope for changing some of the most abominable treatment of human beings.

Because of these serious problems, even the most thoroughly postmodern human rights scholars and activists are now openly constructing what they believe all humanity should share, regardless of the cultural differences (Donnelly, 2003; Higgins, 1999). These constructed universals then become the benchmark for evaluating local human rights violations such as genocide, de facto slavery, and forced immigration. Much like the earlier discussion of fear and aporia, most human rights scholars acknowledge the inevitability of postmodern critiques (Higgins, 1999), but they simply “put their helmets on” and believe that addressing human rights is more important.

In conclusion, the predominant local approaches present serious challenges to overcome with global inquiry in rhetoric and professional communication, including ethnocentrism, validity of constructs, conceptualization of global-local dynamics, balance and fairness for cultures being examined, and ethics (Morris, et al, 1999; Lett, 1996; Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Hussein, 2000; Muntarbhorn, 2000; Thatcher, 2001; Thatcher, 2006; Thatcher, 2010; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Pinker, 2003; Higgins, 1999; Twining, 2000; Tamanaha, 2006; and McCormick, 2009).

The next section explores a specific theory and methodology for overcoming these challenges.

**Emic and Etic as a Broad Conceptual Frame**

There are a great variety of approaches to intercultural theories and methods (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005), including constructivist; coordinated management of meaning; cultural dimensions; cultural convergence; decision-making; inter-ethnic adaptation; intercultural adaptation; and others. All these theories differ according to ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology (see Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005; See also Thatcher, 2011). However, despite the great variety of perspectives, almost all intercultural researchers at least reference a kind of tension between emic (local-insider) and etic (outsider-universal) constructions (see Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990). Since these concepts are so critical to intercultural and global inquiry (but mostly grounded in the fields of communication studies and linguistics), I will define and operationalize them here, drawing on work that will appear soon (Thatcher, 2011).

Emic and Etic are terms first developed by the linguist Kenneth Pike (1967). Emic derives from the term phonemic and etic from phonetic. A phoneme is the smallest linguistic unit of meaningful sound, depending on language and culture. Phonetic is the smallest unit of language sound that can be made by humans across all languages. For example, English and Spanish speakers (not writers) have different phonemes for the same letters in the alphabet. For many Spanish speakers, the consonants S and C or B and V often sound the same and are used more or less the same in spoken, but not written language. Thus, it is common, for example, to see
Spanish signs in stores that have mixed these pairs up, using “serrado” (closed) for the correct “cerrado” or “avierto” (open) for the correct “abierto.” Since most Spanish speakers cannot tell a difference between these two consonant pairs, each pair is usually a single phoneme, in other words indistinguishable in spoken language. However, English speakers distinguish between C and S and B and V, so each of the pairs is a separate phoneme forming four phonemes instead of two. This difference between Spanish and English phonemes is a culturally specific difference, or an emic difference, based not on universals but on cultural evolution and use of the two languages.

This “emic” approach has been operationalized in anthropology as “the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to only the members of a given society in the same way that phonemic analysis focuses on the intrinsic phonological distinctions that are meaningful to speakers of a given language” (Lett, 2010; see also Lucy, 1996). Thus, only members of a given culture can judge the emic descriptions of their culture or language because this knowledge is insider-based, or only available to those from that culture. In other words, a Spanish speaker would have to learn that the English pairs B and V and C and S are separate phonemes—mean something different as compared to Spanish.

As mentioned, the etic approach derives from the term phonetics, which is an area of linguistics that studies the physical elements of speech sounds and their processes of production, reception, and perception. A phone is a specific speech sound made by a distinct working of the mouth, tongue, throat, and air. Unlike phonemes, phones are not language or culture specific; in fact, any normal speaker of a given language can physically articulate all of the phones available to the human species. Thus, phonetics is not cultural specific; rather it is universal and often explores how different languages utilize phones to form phonemes, exemplifying the etic-emic approach.

These emic and etic distinctions developed into competing paradigms. The emic approach argues for the intrinsic incomparability of one culture to another culture, while the etic camp argues for the need to provide neutral frameworks or approaches for comparing cultures. This division focuses squarely on epistemology. Emics argue that knowledge is fundamentally local based and culture specific, while Etics argue that just like possible speech sounds, in the human race, there are similar universals of knowledge and behavior across cultures (see Morris, et al., 1999 for a better discussion of this distinction). Despite these often stark differences, most anthropologists and linguists agree that researchers should use both emic and etic approaches (Lett, 2010; Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Morris, et al, 1999). Emic gets at the intuitive and empathic elements of culture and is critical for carrying out ethnographic fieldwork. In addition, emic often produces important variables for later etic hypotheses. Etic approaches, on the other hand, are essential for cross-cultural comparison but need to be qualified with emic details.

For intercultural and global research, etics are best operationalized as “common human thresholds of interaction” (Thatcher, 2011) that all humans share, regardless of their culture, much like the shared variables when comparing basketball and soccer. From this perspective, they are not viewed as positivistic, modern narratives, but rather, as dynamic frames constructed through constant cultural development and structuring (Bourdieu, 1999; Deacon, 1998). For example, I draw on a variety of intercultural researchers (House, et al, 2005; Hofstede, 2010;
Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; and Hall, 1976) for my etic frames, which usually include: relations between the group and one person; rules/norms; public versus private boundaries; status; source of virtues or guidance; time; role of context in communication; and handling of inequality in communications. Each frame is universal to humanity; for example, all cultures create and apply rules, show how a person relates to others, and deal with time or the role of context in communication. However, the ways cultures conceptualize and operationalize these common human thresholds are unique and dynamic, and thus, they are effective for comparing cultures and then enriching these comparisons with emic details.

Much of this research, however, draws heavily on common human thresholds from western studies, so we still need to make sure these thresholds work as well in other contexts such as Asia (Ishii, 2006). For example, Stewart & Bennett (1991) prefer more abstract common thresholds such as perception and thinking; language and nonverbal behavior; forms of activity; forms of social relations; and perceptions of the world and self. These more abstract constructions, however, are more difficult to operationalize in global contexts. Much more research needs to develop an effective array of etic frames.

Using the etic approach in global professional communication research and then qualifying it with emic details improves the logistics, fairness, and validity of the research (Thatcher, 2001). For example, in previous research (Thatcher, et al, 2007), I teamed with nine other scholars to examine 27 public university websites in nine countries. However, before we selected the sites, we setup criteria for comparability of the universities (public, mid size, comprehensive curriculum); we selected universal features of the websites for analysis (language, layout, colors, links, html programs, etc); and then we analyzed the cultural values of the website using the common human thresholds of interaction or etic frames.

We set up all three etic layers (site comparability; web units of analysis; and thresholds) beforehand as a way to ensure validity. For example, had we compared private, religious, or very large websites to these public universities, we would most likely have conflated a difference in the university culture with the website design. Finally, we integrated the etic data into the local universities themselves. From this integration, we could view commonalities among all the Latin American websites, for example, but we were also able to complicate these commonalities with more emic differences.

In addition to validity, using the etic approach to frame cross-cultural research and then qualifying it with emic details works against analyzing one culture in light of the other culture; it provides for a viable comparative methodology that is not lost in the aporia of details; it highlights differences among levels of discourse and human agency; and it provides a basis for effective practice and ethical discussions (Morris, et al, 1999; Lucy, 1996; Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Thatcher, 2011). This is why Hofstede (2010), Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2000), House, et, al, (2005), and many others use the dimensions, value sets or intercultural traits, for these serve as etic frames for understanding cross-cultural differences. This is precisely the frame that could have allowed Hawisher & Selfe (2000) to develop a truly global (not local) theory of web literacy.
Thus, we have a large task ahead of us: to develop and operationalize models of intercultural rhetoric and professional communication in the context of globalization. From my perspective, the challenge is to fruitfully reconcile emic and etic approaches, drawing on models of existing intercultural research, but also integrating those models with many other compelling theories and methods of intercultural inquiry.

**Adding Border to Balance the Theory and Practice of Globalization**

In this article, I have not defined or explored globalization, so there is much work to do on this topic. Here, however, I will briefly explore how the U.S.-Mexico border is an excellent testing ground for globalization and the general fields of rhetoric, literacy, and professional communication.

For example, recently, I teamed with health educators and ESL researchers to pilot test a health literacy curriculum for adult ESL students in my U.S.-Mexico border area. I watched as a follower of New Literacy Studies was stunned when she realized that the levels of literacies obtained by Mexican nationals in Mexico had much to do with their developing appropriate English literacy on the U.S. side of the border, offering much evidence for revised versions of the autonomous-situated binary; put simply, there was transfer or some autonomy of literacy capacities.

Further, after some sparked debate with a postcolonial theorist who kept arguing that Spanish speaking border residents (mostly Mexicans) would not want to learn English because it’s the language of their colonialization and exploitation, in two days, our project team received 600 applications to fill 40 spots in the exploratory ESL class. And when I conducted interviews with some participants, including an M.D., registered nurse, and numerous business owners and high level personnel from government, academia, and industry. I noted their desire to work along the border both bilingually and bi-culturally, eschewing easy definitions of the postcolonial effect.

Thus, the U.S.-Mexico border is a great place to ground theories of globalization, rhetoric, and professional communication. Many current globalization theories would have us believe that globalization means a significant amount of cultural blending, hybrization, glocalization, and cross-border flow of rhetorical and cultural patterns with geopolitical borders relatively meaningless, and as such, an out-dated mode of inquiry. After ten years of systematically working on both sides of the border, that’s not my picture. For example, currently, El Paso, Texas is the safest city in the United States (for cities over 500,000 inhabitants) with a murder rate of three or four a year. Right across the border, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico (1.5 million) is the most dangerous city in the world, with an average of 12 murders a day. So much for the free flow of cultural practices across borders. Ghemawat (2007) similarly argues

> Globalization has bound people, countries, and markets closer than ever, rendering national borders relics of a bygone era—or so we're told. But a close look at the data reveals a world that's just a fraction as integrated as the one we thought we knew. In fact, more than 90 percent of all phone calls, Web traffic, and investment is local. What’s more, even this small level of globalization could still slip away.

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*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*  
December, 2010, Volume 1, Number 1, 1-34.
A more viable, compelling globalization theory would examine the relevance of the border for rhetorical and cultural patterns. For example, many cultural values and practices move back and forth across the U.S.-Mexico border rather seamlessly such as food and language, while others are refracted or reconstituted differently on the other side (such as time or collective relations), and still some, such as violence, have not crossed at all. Thus, much like my colleague, Pablo Vila (2000), the postcolonial and postmodern views of the U.S.-Mexico border are very un-compelling in light of my experience, so I call for more research: how do geo-political borders mediate globalization? How do different political, legal, and economic institutions structure the cross-border flow of rhetoric and cultural patterns? And how can a cross-border analysis influence prevailing theories of rhetoric, globalization, and professional communication?

Eight Global Contexts for Rhetoric and Professional Communication

This section explores eight critical contexts of research and practice for global professional communication. I could have easily focused on many more, including: translation theory; the rhetoric of science and technology; global politics and governance; outsourced manufacturing; economic development; global finance; energy; environment; international criminal justice; language policy and use; education; and others. This is just the start of our efforts, but it is meant to further research and inquiry and inspire more special editions of our journal.

Drawing on Second Language Studies and Neuro-Sciences

An important line of inquiry for intercultural professional communication is the theory of linguistic relativity (see Lucy, 1996) or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Generally following the poststructuralist idea that language creates or shapes subjectivity, this theory states that distinct features of human languages might encourage corresponding cognitive, and therefore, cultural and rhetorical patterns (see Thatcher, 2011). In the 1956, Benjamin Whorf describes the theory this way:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language… all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. (pp.134-136)

Eventually, Whorf and others embraced two versions of the hypothesis: The strong version maintains that one’s native language determines thought and linguistic categories, while the weak version simply argues that a language encourages certain usage and perceptions. Most researchers are arguing for the weak version. For example, Japanese and Russian have more linguistic structures for detailing complex social relations than English; thus, it is not surprising that Japanese and Russian culture is more particular and collective in their social orientations.
This hypothesis has fascinating ramifications for global inquiry because human language is the medium of most intercultural communication, and thus, it is important to understand how one language might predispose communicators to connect with cultural values differently than speakers of another language. This language-rhetoric connection can also significantly influence how communications are developed, translated, and used in cross-cultural contexts.

For example, after teaching ESL writing for a number of years, the American scholar Robert Kaplan noticed distinct paragraph organizational patterns in his students based on their native language. He set up a simple (and perhaps non-rigorous) study examining nearly 600 essays written in English by non-native speakers of English. In his now famous 1966 article, Kaplan attempted to capture the language-rhetoric correlations in paragraph organization of students from simple drawings, now infamously known as his “doodles,” which are shown below in Figure 1:

Figure 3-2. Kaplan’s visual depiction of paragraph organization of ESL writers.

Kaplan explicitly drew upon the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to argue for the differences among the paragraph organization of five groups of ESL writers. He then named his study or theory “contrastive rhetoric.” His methods lack transparency and rigor because he did not describe how he came to build these visual depictions of language, and many times after, he argued that these doodles are theoretical representations of what he found, not exclusive categories or generalizations.

Kaplan’s work has been significant, because it opened up avenues of inquiry for both his supporters and critics. He has been widely criticized as being reductive, simplistic, ethnocentric, and behavioral, which it is (and I did hesitate to show the doodles). However, there is still broad-based, general support for the idea of contrastive rhetoric (Moreno, 2008), when these rhetorical patterns are correlated, not only with language, but with a multiplicity of social and cultural variables (Thatcher, 2011). For example, the Asian doodle above strongly correlates with diffuse, high context, and outer-directed cultural patterns, not just Asian languages, while the English line correlates with individualism, specific orientation, and low-context communications (Thatcher, 2011).

For global researchers, contrastive rhetoric can influence writing pedagogy, showing students how to develop different writing patterns, based on cultural expectations. And if specific languages correspond differently to culture, then language domination might lead to cultural domination, a line of research that is very critical because of the spread of English as a second language and Chinese. For example, the very simple correlation between native English

Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization
December, 2010, Volume 1, Number 1, 1-34.
countries and high levels of individualism (U.S., Canada, and Australia) are fascinating, from a chicken and egg theory—which came first, English or individualism?

In addition, some of the neuro-biology work examining the neuroplasticity of the brain as related to bilingualism and second language studies has much to offer in this discussion. For example, some research examines the co-evolution of language and brain (Deacon, 1998), showing the differences between humans and chimpanzees and providing compelling evidence for how rhetorical practices can, through time, shape the evolution of the brain. This research provides dynamic models for understanding language, culture, and cognition, an important line of inquiry for intercultural rhetoric.

Other second language research uses magnetic resonance imaging to understand how different languages, such as Chinese, map onto—and influence—brain circuitry (Li, 2009). This research can allow us to re-theorize how language and brain interacts and their potential effects on culture. Further, work in linguistics (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008) has developed sophisticated and compelling theories and research methods for assessing cross-language transfer, both negative and positive, in second language environments. Finally, a huge body of research in ESL, including English for Specific Purpose and English for Science and Technology, interrogates the cultural, linguistic, and rhetorical patterns that cut across multiple languages in specific intercultural professional situations.

These lines of inquiry and research provide a needed theoretical and methodological antidote to the extreme local views of some in the New Literacy studies, post colonialism, and postmodernism. Current intercultural rhetoric and professional communication research could draw upon and extend this research, examining, for example, the influences of intercultural rhetorical patterns on decision-making in global organizations, or the positive and negative transfer of genre knowledge in dual manufacturing.

**Information/Communication Technologies**

In addition to language, a growing number of researchers (see, for example the collections of Spilka, 2010; and Ball & Kalmbach, 2010) argue that newer communication media such e-mail, hypertext, and social media can similarly encourage our mental and corresponding rhetorical and cultural patterns. For example, in his *The World is Flat* (2005), Friedman argues that newer information and communication media might be flattening hierarchies and democratizing relations. Friedman specifically identifies the role of the web in this influence, theorizing that the web creates a triple convergence that will flatten the world: information access, more horizontal ways to collaborate, and opening up of new cultures (pp. 176-181). However, this triple convergence presupposes mostly U.S. and Western cultural values such as individualism, achievement orientation, low power distance communication patterns, and universalism, all of which are strongly rooted in the United States but not elsewhere. Further, a long history of media scholarship in Latin America shows how supposed democratizing media can actually strengthen status-quo oligarchies (Martin Barbero, 1988).

Consequently, just like languages, communication media are not neutral devices that correspond equally and favorably to all rhetorical and cultural traditions. Instead, communication media restrain and reinforce certain communication possibilities and corresponding rhetorical and
cultural patterns, thus developing complexly different relations to each cultural/rhetorical tradition across the globe (Thatcher, 2010). In some cultures, the Internet may in fact be strengthening status quo hierarchies.

This connection between communication media and cultural patterns is a critical aspect of intercultural professional communication, but like Friedman, most U.S. scholars fail to situate how they situate their own theories. For example, I recently published articles in these two collections on technology and rhetoric (Spilka, 2010; Ball and Kalmbach, 2010). However, (besides mine) the articles in these collections never situated their constructions of rhetoric and technology in U.S. cultural contexts. Consequently, they most likely commit the same kinds of ethnocentric theorizing about the new media that have occurred with other media-culture theories, especially those applied outside the United States.

Some research in the field of rhetoric and professional communication is beginning to interrogate the intercultural dimensions of the technology-culture inquiry (see the 2005 special edition of the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication; St Amant, 2007), but much work remains. For example, how does computer-mediated-communication differ across cultures? How do information and communication technologies influence countries “in development?” Can human rights and social justice be connected to information and communication technologies?

Organizational Behavior and Complexities of Global Relations
The majority of key intercultural research originated in the field of organizational behavior. These include Hofstede (2010), Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2000), and House, et al (2005). These models have pushed forward the research using a great variety of methods; and remarkably, although the methods differ, they significantly validate each other’s results. These models also have received significant criticisms for using national cultures as a measure; for looking at too narrow of a data set; for over-generalizing and over-simplifying cultures; and the list goes on and on. These researchers are the first to acknowledge, however, their limitations and weaknesses. The most significant problem is that most scholars who apply or critique this work do not appropriately situate the work itself. This is a large problem that needs addressing with much more careful theory and methods development.

In addition, one pressing global issue involves the culture assumed by many of the international standards and transparency initiatives that evaluate organizational behavior across culture. As I found in four manufacturing plants in northern Mexico (Thatcher, 2006), many Mexican personnel drew upon U.S. rhetorical approaches just to obtain their ISO 9000 and 14000 Certifications, which seemed to be the most influential mechanism of organizational change. Much research needs to address this relation, especially because these certifications are process-heavy, and rhetoric and professional communication mediate many of these processes.

Another weakness of current organizational research is its failure to assess the complexity of organizational relationships in a global context, much as Ding (2007) assesses with the global SARS incidence. We simply have little data about multi-organizational intercultural situations.

For example, in 2008, I coordinated an EPA-sponsored evaluation of the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technologies to track the cross-border transportation of hazardous materials.
Mexico is home to about 2,600 border manufacturing plants or maquilas, and they receive significant amounts of hazardous materials for their manufacturing from the United States. And during manufacturing, the maquilas produce a significant amount of hazardous waste, which returns to the United States. Needless to say, the U.S.-Mexico border region is a hazmat corridor of great vulnerability. Our goal for the project was to improve the monitoring of hazmat flow, as a way to reduce this vulnerability.

As I explain more fully elsewhere (Thatcher, 2011), the global difficulty in this study centered on the cross-border legal and organizational complexity of hazmat regulation and corresponding responsibility and roles of the US and Mexican federal, state, and local authorities. There were at least seven federal and state agencies from the Mexican government and six from the US government that were responsible at some point and in some fashion for cross-border hazmat flow. And in almost every case, the responsibilities and roles overlapped, often in ambiguous ways. The following Figure 2 is a Venn diagram of the organizations and their relations to each other.

Figure 1. Venn diagram of cross-border hazmat relations.

I don’t have the space here to define each organization and its roles and responsibilities, but I present this rather ugly Venn diagram to demonstrate the organizational complexity of a global issue in my U.S.-Mexico border area. The diagram also shows the need for communication between agencies, both across the border and between Mexican and U.S. federal, state, and local agencies. Not only do communicators need to understand the different organizational cultures in both the Mexican and U.S. organizations, but also how these cultures influence the complexly distributed regulations. Current research in intercultural organizational theory has not addressed this level of complexity, but globalization requires it.

Understanding global organizational complexity is very challenging work. Despite almost 20 years of experience working in U.S.-Latin American contexts, this cross-border EPA project
stressed my intercultural abilities because of the complex organizational relations it entailed. I also learned that many times, international communications between U.S. and Mexican agencies were far easier than inter-agency communications between U.S. (or Mexican) federal, state, or local agencies.

Much work remains when examining global organizations and professional communication. For example, how do predominant professional communication genres influence some of the traditional value sets such as individualism-collectivism? How do these genres influence organizational behavior and decision-making such as those manifested in policies and procedures documents? How are these genres connected to power structures across organizations? A special edition of this Journal will examine the relation of organizational training across cultures and will be published in summer 2011. I would encourage more editions looking at organizational complexities as related to key globalization issues such as energy, health, environment, etc.

**Distance Education and E-Training across Cultures**

In the light of the massive, worldwide distance education initiatives, distance education and e-training/e-learning is currently a relevant area of intercultural research. However, although some research contextualizes e-training from intercultural perspectives (Edmundson, 2007; Carr-Chellman, 2004), the vast majority ignores it, especially when connecting culture to more than superficial taboos and Do’s and Don’ts across culture. Further, none of the current work examines the roles of rhetoric and professional communication in distance education and e-training across cultures.

Further, in rhetoric and professional communication, much has been written about distance education, especially in light of professional communication, including some work about the international elements of distance education (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008; St. Amant, 2007). However, little of this work systematically evaluates e-learning curriculum and programs from an intercultural perspective. The Starke-Meyerring & Wilson (2008) collection theorizes globalization from an academic perspective and explores issues of global communication technologies and professional communication. However, this collection does not develop and then operationalize a theory of intercultural rhetoric and professional communication and only minimally grounds the work in distance education. Likewise, the work of St. Amant (2007a) looks at some features of intercultural education but does not focus on some of the deep structural issues related to curriculum development and cultural values. Thus, we do not understand adequately how intercultural rhetoric is influencing the design and delivery of distance education and e-learning.

Consequently, intercultural professional communication educators and trainers working in distance or e-learning settings have little guidance for developing programs, courses, and training materials. For example, how do instructional designs for technical information across cultures differ according to the common human thresholds or other key indicators? How are problems of space, personal presence, motivation, and communication mediated by e-learning technologies? How much does the communication technology of e-learning influence learning and classroom management? How does technology transfer relate to curriculum design for implementing new
manufacturing procedures across cultures? And how is knowledge managed across different countries and organizations?

Even more critical research should address the relation of distance education to economic, social, and legal development around the world. UNESCO, for example, has developed extensive research of appropriate distance education curriculum for global initiatives (2003), but this research has not adequately grounded the curriculum in intercultural rhetoric.

**Legal Traditions**
One of the most untapped, but potentially rich, intercultural rhetorical areas is comparative and international law. First, only a few legal scholars are making a rhetoric-law-culture connection. For example, the U.S. scholar White (1985) argues for intimate connections between law and culture, and he claims that the connection between these two is accomplished through rhetoric. In 1985, White argues that

> Law is most usefully seen not, as it usually is by academic and philosophers, as a system of rules, but as a branch of rhetoric; and that the kind of rhetoric of which law is the species. It is most usefully seen not, as rhetoric usually is, either as a failed science or the ignoble art of persuasion, but as the central art by which community and culture are established, maintained, and transformed. So regarded, rhetoric is continuous with law, and like it, has justice as its ultimate subject. (p. 684)

Similarly from the UK, Neil McCormick's *Rhetoric and the Rule of Law* (2009) examines the rhetorical structures of legal reasoning and law, arguing “the whole enterprise of explicating and expounding criteria and forms of good legal reasoning has to be in the context of fundamental values that we impute to legal order” (p.1).

Many of these works argue that rhetoric and law are connected to justice, that is, a sense of fairness, ethics, and rule of law, over rule of will (Tamanaha, 2006). McCormick (2009) explains that despite the current skepticism of values in the postmodern world, “that some arguments are genuinely better than others” (p.2). He centers this discussion of “better” in terms of argumentation (rhetoric) and grounds them in universal applications. In a more developed way, Twining (2000), argues that the emic-like features assumed by postmodern law cannot provide the foundation for law in the age of globalization, a point discussed earlier in this article.

Despite these groundbreaking inquiries by White, McCormick, and others, there is relatively little discussion of rhetoric, culture, and law in professional communication. And despite the growing body of research connecting law and rhetoric, little research connects international law to intercultural rhetoric, let alone professional communication. Consequently, the current state of scholarship in law, culture, and intercultural professional communication leaves many questions unanswered.

For example, as explained earlier in the EPA-sponsored evaluation of RFID technologies, we learned that the technology is clearly capable of monitoring cross-border hazmat flow, but the local, state, and federal laws and regulatory regimes are so mismatched, not only between Mexico and the United States but also between each country’s federal, state, and local agencies,
that viable regulation is difficult. Almost all of the work now done on cross-border environmental regulation focuses on reconciling the differences in laws, which have significant connections to culture. In another project, I am currently developing a system that will share hazmat compliance data between Mexico and the United States, which could significantly improve prosecution of offenders. However, data sharing is fraught with so many legal, political, technological, and security issues, all of which are grounded in concretely structured cultures, that the project is on hold until the legal ramifications can be worked out.

Thus, as scholars and practitioners, we have many pending questions about global law and professional communication: how do different legal systems influence professional communication patterns in predominant genres such as policies and procedures, technical specifications, copyright/intellectual property, and joint business ventures? And how can scholars and practitioners be assured that their communication approaches adhere to the rhetorical assumptions related to these patterns practices? And how do different legal traditions structure the rhetorical approaches to very critical global discussions of human rights, health, energy, economic development, environment, immigration, privacy and others? Do rhetorical and cultural differences influence the development and application of law in these areas, and if so, how do the global and local approaches compare?

**Health Literacy and Medicine across Cultures**

Now, it is widely recognized that medicine and health care are not universal but intimately connected to local cultures and medical traditions (Purnell & Paulanka, 2008). Consequently, health and medical services are best delivered using the cultural and communication patterns of the patients (see, for example, Purnell & Paulanka, 2008; Tseng & Streltzer, 2008). The intercultural dimensions of health and medical treatment have undergone extensive research and practice, not only in the United States, but around the world.

Much of this research has focused on improving “health disparities” using culturally competent health care. In other words, low levels of health for many populations have been correlated with similarly inadequate cultural approaches to delivering health care for a population. This move towards “culturally competent health care” is so critical to reducing health disparities in the United States that it is mandated at the federal and many state levels. For example, the U.S. government has developed (and mandated) 14 dimensions of “culturally competent health care” for the four major U.S. minority groups ([www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence](http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence)).

The 14 standards are organized by themes: Culturally Competent Care (Standards 1-3), Language Access Services (Standards 4-7), and Organizational Supports for Cultural Competence (Standards 8-14). As an example, *Standard One* states: “Health care organizations should ensure that patients/consumers receive from all staff member's effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a manner compatible with their cultural health beliefs and practices and preferred language.”

These 14 standards present a comprehensive approach to the cultural competence, but their theories and methods of application rest on outdated conceptions of cultural competence, including 25-year old readability formulas and decontextual health assessments. Thus, I question many of the assumptions of these standards, including their definitions of culture, culturally
appropriate communications, relations between group behavior and demographics, and translation. Other scholars are similarly concerned. Pappen (2009) describes the state of the field as follows:

Health literacy is frequently defined as an abstract skill that can be measured through individual performance tests. The concept of health literacy as a skill neglects the contextual nature of reading and writing in health care settings. It risks ignoring the many ways in which patients access and comprehend health information [and] make sense of their experience and the resources they draw on. (p. 19)

Consequently, Pappen (2009) and others (Shohet, 2004) draw on the New Literacy Studies (Street, 2001) to appropriately situate health literacy and health communications. For this context, the New Literacy Studies approach is groundbreaking and badly needed. However, as mentioned earlier, these approaches are excellent at understanding local situations, but in practice, are poor at moving beyond the local.

Some of my recent research efforts are beginning to develop intercultural health literacy. As mentioned earlier, I teamed with a group of health education and literacy scholars along the U.S.-Mexico Border, and we secured a larger NIH (National Institute of Health) grant to develop health literacy training for Spanish-speaking border through Adult ESL courses. We are drawing on the New Literacy Studies, but grounding this local approach with intercultural and border rhetoric. This the first study of its kind to ground health literacy in a comprehensively intercultural way, and the preliminary results look promising.

However, much work remains in international health literacy and communications, including the developing appropriate usability methods for culturally appropriate communications; intercultural training materials in new procedures; informed consent; machine-human interactions; translation; and corresponding inquiries into the rhetoric of global medicine and health care.

**Instructional Designs across Cultures**

Despite the relevance of instructional design for intercultural organizational training, outsourced manufacturing, health care, and distance education, little work has been carried out. The work that exists includes Honold (1999) who compares Chinese and German cell phone manuals and argues that Chinese cell phone manuals were often a very terse in explaining many of the functions, because they assumed or even asked the users to seek help from their friends. On the other hand, the German manual tried to create an independent cell phone user because the quality of the German manual rested on its ability to independently provide all of the necessary information. Dong (2007) compared Chinese and U.S. heater manuals, positively correlating the cultural values of China and the United States to the different instructional designs.

In earlier work (Thatcher, 2006), I analyzed the different approaches to manufacturing instructions that came from the United States and were implemented in Mexico. Not surprisingly, the U.S. instructions strongly reflected U.S. rhetorical and cultural values, including individualism, universalism, achievement orientation, low context communications, and lower power distance. Consequently, the instructional materials were difficult to deploy in Mexico.

*Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*
December, 2010, Volume 1, Number 1, 1-34.
My forthcoming work (Thatcher, 2011) also shows significant correlations between car repair manuals, medical instructions, and simple grill assemblies and corresponding intercultural values.

However, despite this minimal work, we have not systematically assessed elements of instructional design for cross-cultural contexts. For example, I recently started a project to educate residents of U.S.-Mexico border colonias in water sanitation and appropriate septic system use. Colonias are undeveloped, poor, and often rural communities that generally lack water and sewer infrastructure, and as a correlation, have higher incidences of infectious and gastro-intestinal diseases.

Much work has focused on colonia health with many instructional materials developed to educate colonias residents. The following Figure 3 shows two pages of a fotonovela (drama-pamphlet) developed by the University of Texas-El Paso’s Center for Environmental Resource Management http://research.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=research.utep.edu/cerm. This Center develops and distributes this and many other educational documents for distribution to colonias.

Figure 3. UTEP pamphlet on Water and Sewer Sanitation.

The left page shows how to sanitize water, and the right page discusses water safety and sewer (which I probably did not need to translate because the pictures are highly illustrative). This instructional pamphlet follows many of the cultural patterns of Mexico, including its collective, high context, polychronic, and relations-based discussions (see Thatcher, 2006). It is also more
visual than verbal, meeting the needs of a semi-literate population. The fotonovela is a very standardized approach in the border area for instructional contexts.

The instructional design, however, has many potential problems. First, it makes the mistake of treating the semi-literacy adult population like children, not adults. This is like teaching adults a second language using the same methods as with children. Much research in adult education and second language studies severely critiques this approach.

Second, and perhaps just as important, the instructional design does not counter-act some of the problems with the cultural design. As Stewart & Bennett argue (1991), “Each culture possesses integrity, and generally speaking, is neither inferior nor superior to any other culture. But in a structured situation and for a specific purpose, one cultural system may in fact work better than another” (p. 175). In other words, cultural values have pros and cons in specific structured situation. And in this situation, some of the cons of Mexican culture are apparent in the instructional design.

First, the narrative, drama-like approaches are very effective for demonstrating a problem, but often very weak at solving it, especially in situations that are minimally different, often inspiring an “exceptions to rules” mentality (Thatcher, 2000). Second, the relations-based approach is effective at modeling responsibilities and tasks, but when these exact relations models are not in place, users are resistant to perform work based on different models because they feel unempowered to do so. Third, and similarly, when high-context approaches are used (showing specific contextual details), transferring the instructions from one context to another is difficult (see Thatcher, 2001; Thatcher, 2006). What we don’t know, however, is how to develop alternative instructional designs for this context, which is the purpose of this project.

As is evident, we have much work to do for intercultural instructional design, including internationalizing many design components such as curricular assumptions, user-author (or student-teacher) interactions, assumptions about technology, layout, language, flow, feedback, and assessment, all of which are significantly connected to cultural values. Further, how do instructional designs across cultures differ according to the value sets or other key indicators? How do these differences affect dual manufacturing or outsourcing? How are instructional materials related to international certifications of management and environment and how can these certifications assure culturally sensitive approaches? How does technology transfer relate to curriculum design for implementing new manufacturing procedures across cultures?

Developing Intercultural Communication Curriculum and Research
It seems surprising that despite the growing body of literature that addresses the practices of intercultural professional communication and establishes the need to teach and research it, little research and theory actually explore teaching methods and assessment. Recently, I developed with Kirk St. Amant a collection on teaching intercultural professional communication, but this book focuses more on how it is taught around the world with less discussion of assessment and curriculum design (Thatcher & St.Amant, 2010). In addition, a number of textbooks on intercultural professional communication have been developed, but sufficient research and theory are not available to guide and evaluate their use. In recent research, Matveeva (2007) explored the teaching of intercultural professional communication in popular textbooks, and her
results were a bit disturbing. In addition to a very limited approach, many of the textbooks draw on outdated and anecdotal cultural traits, reflecting poor theory and practice. Fortunately, Scott’s article in this *RPCG* edition addresses the state of curriculum in intercultural rhetoric and professional communication.

Further, in my forthcoming work (Thatcher, 2011), I broadly frame curriculum and research in terms of outcomes or objectives, focusing on the following indicators of intercultural competencies in both the classroom and field research:

1. Accurately and ethically generalizing about other cultural and rhetorical traditions without falling into damaging stereotypes.
2. Connecting the common human threshold/value sets to rhetorical and literacy traditions.
3. Understanding the fit, reciprocity, and kairos of communication media and technologies to rhetorical and cultural traditions.
4. Connecting fit, reciprocity, and kairos to rhetorical purpose, audience-author relations, information needs, organizational strategies, and stylistic preferences.
5. Transforming “taboo” knowledge into effective and ethical rhetorical strategies

These core competencies become the reference points or criteria for assessing other elements of intercultural curriculum and research. In this work (Thatcher, 2011), I also carefully explain a sophomore intercultural writing class that I have taught for ten years. In this class, I demonstrate how to meet these criteria in an academic context.

This work, however, only lays out these competencies or outcomes in one academic context. This lack of assessment tools for evaluating teaching and research leaves us with a number of critical questions inadequately explored:

- How do we know that our teaching and research of intercultural professional is communication is not ethnocentric, using U.S. or western research values?
- How do we know that our research designs of intercultural professional communication are generally valid, that is, assessing what we plan to assess?
- How do we know that our conceptions of effective intercultural communication for a target culture are valid, ethical, and effective?

In short, we have a significant amount of work to do to appropriately develop curriculum and research tools for global contexts.

**Conclusion: Call for Research, Theory, and Best Practices**

This introduction has articulated far more problems, gaps, and needs than developing appropriate models for research, theory and practice; but that is its purpose. But in summary, I think the following are most critical:

**Common human thresholds development.** As explained in the “Etic and Emic” Section, intercultural and global research needs to develop better etic frames for intercultural study. Although I strongly disagree that the etic frames developed by Hofstede (2010), for example, are
static or monolithic representations of culture, I do agree that other common human thresholds would round out the approaches to intercultural study. As I articulate elsewhere (Thatcher, 2010), we need to especially pay attention to how new communication and information technologies require different etic frames for common human thresholds of interaction. Other etic frames could assess common human problems such as environment, health, economic development, human rights, immigration, and languages (such as English and Chinese).

**Intercultural rhetorical and global theory.** One need is developing effective theory for intercultural and global rhetoric. I have (almost unrelentingly) criticized the local approaches to cultural and rhetorical theory. This is mostly because my greatest worry is that our field will fall back on these outdated and problematic local theories, which are seductive because of the rhetorical heat they generate and the facile, safe results they produce, but in the global context, they are of little use and cowardly. Given the stakes of globalization, in terms of environment, social justice, health, and human rights, we cannot allow these theories to let us off the hook; we must move beyond them and develop more productive theories.

Because of my perceived need to outline the problems of local approaches, I have not been able to sketch out more clearly a more viable global rhetorical theory, which I do elsewhere (Thatcher, 2011). However, a significant amount of work remains for this important task, especially as related to globalization. I hope that rhetoric and professional communication scholars react strongly (positively or negatively) to my critiques of the local approaches and use this reaction to continue developing theory, appropriately drawing on the eight contexts or related areas of research as well as many others. Presently, I feel that some of the most fruitful areas are law (McCormick, 2009), linguistics (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008), and evolutionary psychology (Deacon, 1999).

**Best practices: Professional communicator’s guidelines for crossing cultures.** With such a dearth of research and theory, we are still far from developing best practices guidelines. For example, how do we assess communicative purpose and media selection in global contexts? How do we plan for audience-author relations, especially as mediated by new communication technologies? How can we understand differences in information needs and knowledge management? Or organize messages across cultures and through different media? Or adapt to stylistic preferences across cultures? We are starting to think about these issues, but we have a long way to go.
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Barry Thatcher is an associate professor of rhetoric and professional communication at New Mexico State University, USA. He works mainly in intercultural rhetoric and professional communication, history of rhetoric in Latin America, and cross-border, U.S.-Mexico rhetoric.