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## Book Review

# Crossing Boundaries and Weaving Intercultural Work, Life, and Scholarship in Globalizing Universities

Edited by Adam Komisarof and Zhu Hua, Routledge (2016)  
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As a part-time lecturer at various universities in Japan, I recently uncovered three acts of plagiarism in an academic writing course. Feeling disheartened and confused, I consulted a trusted colleague, who also happened to be a Japanese national and full-time professor. After receiving much encouragement and praise from her, I was told, “Thank you for your support and hard work with our students.” Though her statement was well intentioned, it left me feeling as a visitor to the college, though in fact, this is my third year working part-time at this institution. Why is it so hard for foreign lecturers, both full- and part-time, to achieve a sense of belongingness at colleges and universities in Japan? What can be done to shift the language from “our” students to “your” students?

*Crossing Boundaries and Weaving Intercultural Work, Life, and Scholarship in Globalizing Universities* presents personal accounts from transnational scholars about the challenges they have faced working abroad at institutions of higher education. The scholars hail from Belgium, China, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Iran, and the United States. These individuals work

in such diverse locations as Australia, England, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States. Each author shares the path they followed, including the hurdles they encountered, while acculturating to their foreign work environments. The employment of various strategies led to a sense of belonging and inclusion for many of them, and that contributed to their professional success.

The editors and their contributors are clearly accomplished scholars. Editor Adam Komisarof is a professor in Keio University's Faculty of Letters. He has authored many publications including two recent books, *On the Front Lines of Forging a Global Society: Japanese and American Coworkers in Japan* (2011), as well as *At Home Abroad: The Contemporary Western Experience in Japan* (2012). Editor Zhu Hua is a Professor at Birkbeck College, University of London, where she is the Head of the Applied Linguistics and Communication Department. Professor Zhu has also authored and edited numerous publications including *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication: A Practical Guide* (2016) and *Exploring Intercultural Communication: Language in Action* (2014). The editors' impressive credentials and their first-hand experience as transnational academics should not be overlooked when reviewing this book.

The editors excelled at allowing the contributors to share their individual stories yet brought the pieces together by highlighting common themes in the final chapter. This collaborative work captures the multifaceted process that is involved with globalization at the university level by looking at the experiences of transnational faculty members in various countries as they deal with life and work in a foreign culture.

The book is organized into three sections: acculturation dynamics, negotiating identities, and language and interaction, and it is further divided into 13 chapters. Each chapter is written from an auto-ethnographic approach highlighting pivotal moments in the authors' experiences while they progressed along a path in transnational academia. The chapters are a mix of personal anecdotes balanced with conceptual and theoretical discussions along with a common thread of acculturation and negotiation throughout the book.

Scholars in the intercultural relations field as well as researchers interested

in qualitative research using auto-ethnographic methodology (Ellis et al., 2011) will see this book as a useful source for their own research. In addition, those currently employed or looking to be employed in institutions of higher education both in their home countries and abroad will find this book to be both an informative and an inspiring read. Transnational educators and their peers will be able to identify with aspects of the lived experiences shared by the authors which will likely lead to some inner soul searching as to one's own experiences and to the feelings of one's international colleagues.

The introduction includes a useful discussion of acculturation, culture, and auto-ethnographical methodology used by the authors of the individual chapters. As stated in the introduction,

we believe that this reflexive analytical stance fits the purpose of the present collection, which aims to investigate, through contributors' self-accounts, how their work, lives, and scholarship intertwine and impact each other, and how that nexus has impacted their interpersonal relationships in their university communities, and vice versa. (p. 11)

Auto-ethnographical methodology strives to portray and analyze personal encounters and events in a systematic way with the aim of gaining insight into culture (Ellis et al., 2011). The decision by the editors to have all the authors use auto-ethnography as their methodology was an insightful choice, as it created a synthesized book which allowed for rich personal narratives. In addition, the final chapter successfully linked common concepts and themes that surfaced and presented them in academic terms providing this book with greater depth. The intercultural concepts and theories that were incorporated succeeded in providing a useful framework for which readers are able to make sense of the anecdotes shared by the authors.

Five themes emerged from the book and are discussed by the editors in detail in the final chapter. The themes are as follows: aspects that influence the scholars' experience of inclusion or exclusion at work, techniques used by the scholars for coping with their foreign work environment, advice for host institutions to maximize the benefits of the diversity of transnational educators, links between one's research and learning to one's intercultural experience, and

ways that culture is understood and researched. The editors also build upon the experiences of the authors with reference to other research, thus successfully providing a wider understanding to the key points that emerged from the auto-ethnographies.

The most refreshing aspect of this book is the frank and honest way in which the information is presented. I appreciated the discourse presented by the authors on causes of exclusion. The concept of racialized identity, meaning being labeled as a visible minority based on the race society assigns to you, was one example as to why some scholars felt excluded in their work or living environments.

Functioning in a foreign language is another example of a challenge encountered. Even scholars who achieved near-native-like skills were still stigmatized by their foreign accents. Hua discussed “accent hallucination” which she describes as native speakers hearing non-native accents that are not there for ethnic minorities (p.157). She also addresses (chapter 11) the challenging question that many are asked about where they come from. The book addresses the fact that unfortunately all foreigners are not treated the same in every society. An important distinction is made between the differing experiences of “valued” and “devalued” immigrant groups based on the host country’s mentality and its impact on the acculturation process. Valued immigrants are those seen as fulfilling an important role in society such as native English teachers in Japan. Devalued immigrants are those viewed as a burden to society, such as refugees in Japan. Marginalization and liminality are explored along with the process of negotiating one’s identity.

Perhaps even more valuable to many readers will be the section on coping strategies used to facilitate a smooth acculturation process. Just one of several examples provided is Maryam Borjian’s chapter on hyphenated identity. Hyphenated identity refers to living with two identities, that of one’s home country and that of the host culture, and feeling at ease in both. Gracia Liu-Farrer (chapter 4) capitalized on her perceived difference and turned it into an asset. Zhu Hua (chapter 11) showed strength in her ability to resist the cultural norm of her host country to use first names when she was more comfortable being addressed and identified by her surname. She later resisted the norm to

change her surname to that of her husband's upon marriage. Zhu showed that drawing one's own line as to how far you wish to adapt and change your identity is acceptable. She went on to show an ability to compromise when she later chose to use her husband's name in certain situations but continued to use her maiden name for business purposes.

The editors themselves acknowledge the limitation of this project as focusing on only "elite scholars" that have overcome the odds and achieved great success. Many of the contributors have Ph.D. credentials and strong local language skills that have helped them achieve integration into various types of institutions of higher education abroad. Some readers may be left feeling like they are in a different league. Yet, as Komisarof has proven (chapter 2), the rice-paper ceiling can be broken in Japan with the appropriate skills and strategies. This book's appeal is not limited to only foreign faculty members. Japanese scholars and administrators will gain valuable insight into the lives of transnational scholars which may generate ideas on how to better utilize the foreign faculty members at their institutions to allow them to contribute to their fullest potential. In addition, Japanese who are considering a post abroad will gain a clear understanding of the potential challenges that would come with such a move.

The key point that I took away from this book was that foreign faculty members must demand to be held to the same standards as their local peers to avoid being treated as outsiders. As local colleagues begin to recognize a strong work ethic in their foreign peers and a genuine concern for the students, foreign faculty members will then begin to move closer and closer to being treated as insiders. Thus, I conclude this book can serve as a useful resource for scholars who are looking to have a successful career as a transnational academic.

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