Greetings from the New Editor-in-Chief

Rebecca J. Lester¹

Published online: 16 February 2019

© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2019

Dear Colleagues,

On January 1, 2019, I assumed the role as editor-in-chief of this journal, one of the world's premier interdisciplinary and international publications covering issues related to culture and mental health. I come to this task with excitement, enthusiasm, and a deep and abiding commitment to the journal and its mission. In this spirit, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself, and to tell you a bit about how I envision the future of the journal.

I am an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis specializing in medical and psychological anthropology, with a focus on questions of suffering, care, and transformation. Specifically, my work engages problematics of existential distress and the cultural practices through which individuals attempt to understand, communicate, and ameliorate this distress. I am particularly interested in the microcultures of various institutions—religious, psychiatric, social—that guide individuals in making sense of their suffering and its (often provisional and precarious) resolution, and what this can tell us about a society's broader social, cultural, and moral commitments. My most recent book *Famished: Eating Disorders and Failed Care in America* is based on over 20 years of work in the field of eating disorders, and is scheduled for publication in October 2019 from the University of California Press.

In addition to being a professor of anthropology, I am also a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) with specializations in the fields of eating disorders, trauma, and personality disorders. I pursued my MSW and licensure training after arriving at Washington University. In 2008 I opened a small private psychotherapy practice

✉ Rebecca J. Lester
rjlester@wustl.edu

¹ Washington University, Saint Louis, MO, USA

which I continue to run as a not-for-profit entity. Clients state what they are able to pay from a sliding fee scale—some pay full price, some pay a nominal fee. Occasionally, I see people for free.

This combination of academic and clinical work is profoundly important to me, and characterizes both my academic endeavors and my philosophies of care. My academic training and experience have taught me how to discern cultural patterns and dynamics, perceive structural inequalities and complex social relationships, and understand how cultural meanings and values become imbricated in everyday life. My clinical training and experience reminds me every day that big ideas may be important, and theory may be exciting, but it is the daily struggle and suffering of real people that matters, and to which our efforts should ultimately be directed.

My career trajectory, then, has been unconventional. In this regard, it in many ways embodies the spirit of *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* itself, as an interdisciplinary, clinically relevant, rigorously research-based, humanistically oriented enterprise. And, in fact, this journal has been central to my development as a scholar and as a clinician since I first became acquainted with it in graduate school.

I assume the editorship of *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* both humbled and inspired by the footsteps in which I follow and the shoulders upon which I stand. Arthur Kleinman, Byron and Mary Jo Good, Peter Guarnaccia, Anne Becker, and Atwood Gaines have been excellent and visionary stewards of this journal. I am extremely fortunate to be inheriting a publication that is widely circulated and highly regarded across a number of disciplines. It is a success.

At the same time, things continue to change, not only in the worlds of academic research and clinical practice, but in the domain of publishing and information technology. To remain current and relevant, the journal needs to keep pace. It needs to be nimble enough to respond to and leverage these changes, while continuing to meet the needs of its readership and upholding rigorous standards of serious and relevant scholarship.

With this in mind, my priorities for the journal going forward entail both content- and process-related changes, all of which are aimed at building and strengthening the journal's presence and relevance.

Content changes center on a commitment to diversify the journal in important ways:

- *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* prides itself on being an international and interdisciplinary journal, yet the majority of submissions continue to come from North American (mostly American) scholars. The journal is based in the U.S., so this is perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, increased international representation is a goal for the coming year.
- Similarly, the journal is known for its interdisciplinary character, yet many articles are situated squarely within one particular discipline (anthropology or psychiatry, for example). While these will remain important contributions to the journal, special consideration will be given to submissions that are produced by interdisciplinary teams or derived from interdisciplinary research projects.

- My vision for the journal is predicated on a deep commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and dialogue, and a belief that research should never be disengaged from its capacity to impact the real world. This does not mean that all good work must be “applied” in focus, but rather that special consideration will be given to work that articulates with (or could articulate with) real-world problems. I encourage authors to be thoughtful and courageous in how they think about their work in the context of such engagements.
- We will be bringing back the Book Reviews feature, curated by Professor Ted Gideonse at the University of California at Irvine.

Process changes are designed to improve and expedite the publication process:

- We have refined the categories of manuscript submission to make them more legible. We will be adding word count guidelines to the information for authors section of the website.
- We are updating and expanding our reviewer database in order to facilitate quicker review turnarounds.
- We are developing a more robust social media presence to increase visibility (interested in becoming the CMP Social Media Associate? Email me at rjlester@wustl.edu).
- We continue to use the Online First system to get manuscripts up on the website shortly after acceptance.

We could not do any of these things without the continued energy, investment, and expertise of manuscript authors, reviewers, and readers of this journal, as well as our top-notch editorial team at Springer. I extend my deepest appreciation to all of you. I also wish to highlight the crucial role played by my Editorial Associate, Lauren Cubellis, whose careful work and attention keep the journal running.

Over the coming year, we will share with you some truly excellent and important scholarship. I look forward to our ongoing conversations.

Warmest Regards,
Rebecca J. Lester