

Introduction: Disciplinary, Geographic, and Linguistic Boundaries

Sean Chadwell, Guest Editor
Department of Language and Literature
Texas A&M International University

In January, 2004, the Dean of the newly-organized College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M International University announced that local community members had pledged financial support for the launch of a new academic journal to be based here. He convened a multidisciplinary committee, with representation from the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences, to create the journal, which was, at the committee's first meeting, dubbed *The Journal of Social and Ecological Boundaries*. The name alludes both to our situation in Laredo, Texas, a city sharing an international border with Nuevo Laredo, in Mexico, and to all other kinds of "social and ecological boundaries," the spectrum of inquiry we hope this journal will grow to contain. While the editors of *JSEB* are interested in border studies, we want, more importantly, to read this concept figuratively, to publish work that addresses or transcends disciplinary and cultural borders, as well as geographical borders. We mean not to suggest, that research modes and practices are or should be uniform across disciplines; on the contrary, we hope in *JSEB* to showcase new scholarship that recognizes the vital differences in researching, writing, and thinking in our respective fields—and which puts those differences to thoughtful use.

This first issue explores the scope of the intentions of the editorial board, in its presentation of articles addressing issues from forestry to education, from history to cultural politics. Indeed, in the first article here, historian Neil Larry Shumsky considers the response, over the last few decades, of a variety of humanities scholars to the social-scientific concept of sociobiology; he concludes by asking if sociobiology might provide scholars with a useful approach to human migrations, particularly those that involve border crossings. Christy Teranishi, in "Ethnic Flexibility," echoes some of the elements of Shumsky's discussion; however,

Teranishi—in the context of a psychological study seeking to learn what helps first-year minority college students to succeed—uses, among other approaches, statistical analyses to draw conclusions quite different from ideas generally held by proponents of sociobiology.

“Forest as *Volk*,” by Robert G. Lee and Sabine Wilke, is an example of the kind of interdisciplinary collaboration *JSEB* editors hope to publish: Lee is a professor of forestry, Wilke of German; their article, an analysis of the Nazi-era film *Ewiger Vald*, effectively applies the modes of film studies, history, and cultural studies. Miguel de Oliver’s provocative discussion of the outcomes of several decades of commitment to multicultural tourism in San Antonio examines a range of materials—from U.S. Census data to beer advertisements—in order to draw attention to social boundaries that have been elided, principally ethnic and economic ones. Finally, Terry Shepherd, Diana Linn, and Randel Brown look closely at the potentially devastating effects of the failure, among educational administrators, to understand the way linguistic boundaries are complicated by political boundaries.

Thanks to all those who have helped to ensure such an auspicious launch for *JSEB*. The project began with the generous financial support of George and Pamela Person and the encouragement and support of Nasser Momayezi, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences here at TAMIU. Thanks to the authors for allowing us to print their work—and to all of those who generously submitted their work to a new print journal. Thanks to the local associate editors, each of whom has helped to shape this new journal (and each of whom will, ideally, guest-edit a future edition of *JSEB*). And thanks, of course, to those external readers who provided blind evaluations of this first round of submissions; they will be acknowledged as part of the journal’s editorial organization in the Fall edition each year.

Each of us hopes you will find this first edition worthwhile and engaging.

Subscription information is provided inside the back cover.