

Communication, Culture & Critique – issue 1, vol 1, March 08 - abstracts

Author	Title and abstract
Jacqueline Bobo	<p><i>Civil Brand and the Prison Industrial Complex</i> <i>Civil Brand</i> (2002) is a fictional narrative directed by Black female independent filmmaker Neema Barnette that focuses on the growth of prisons industries in the United States and the devastating effects on poor people and people of color. Basing the incidents in the film on interviews with incarcerated women in California, North Carolina and Tennessee, Barnette offers a corrective narrative about the abuse and exploitation suffered by imprisoned women of color, leading toward an expose of the legal establishment and prison industries which is an interlocking enterprise that has lead to the largest increase in the mass incarceration of specific social groups in United States history.</p>
Patrice Buzzanell	<p>Necessary Fictions: Stories of Identity, Hope, and Love This essay explores the ways in which individuals make sense of and construct their identities, agency, and identifications with others amidst everyday constraints on their preferences. In this story, I tell one version of how choices and dreams may unfold in an extended family when a beloved child has extensive disabilities. It presents not only family members’ struggles with caregiving and governmental services, but also their resilience, dreams, and love.</p>
John Downing	<p><i>Social movement theories and alternative media: an evaluation and critique</i> The very substantial research literature on social movements, mostly the work of sociologically-oriented political scientists, but also of some anthropologists and social historians, on the one hand, and the recent explosion of research on social movement media, as well as the smaller body of research on mainstream media coverage of social movements, often appear to live in separate universes. While social movement media researchers would do well to engage in depth with social movement research more vigorously than they currently do, this article argues that the greater losers at the present time are the social movement specialists. A critique from this perspective is offered of various approaches within social movement research since the gradual decline of the New Social Movements school. Five issues in particular occupy the argument: (1) media and social change; (2) media and political mobilization; (3) media and social movement framing; (4) networks and media audiences; and (5) transnational movements and media. In each case, the potential for cross-fertilization is evident, yet evidently unfulfilled. In summary, while media research needs to engage with social change processes much more energetically, social movement research needs to move away from treating human agents as mute, rule-bound chessboard pieces, and to engage directly with cultural and communication processes.</p>
Shelton Gunaratne	<p><i>Falsifying two Asian paradigms and de-Westernizing science</i> This essay makes a case for de-Westernizing science by releasing two Asian systems paradigms—the dependent co-arising paradigm and the Yijing [I-ching] paradigm—from the relative obscurity of onto-cosmology to the public sphere of epistemological discourse. The adoption or the adaptation of the Buddhist (dependent co-arising) paradigm, which denies a first cause, will substantially change the research methodology of specifying independent variables.</p>
Cees Hamelink	<p><i>On Being Critical</i> The essential clash we face in today’s world is a collision of mindsets that</p>

	<p>is more fundamental than rifts between cultures, ethnic backgrounds or religions. This is the clash between the absolutist mind and the reflexive mind. The reflexive mindset is currently under threat not only in politics but equally in the academy. Critique - the academic core business- is challenged by a set of converging driving forces. The key challenge for studies on communication and culture is whether this field of scientific enquiry can move beyond its epistemological brief into the adventure of questions about the ethics and perspectives of (human) life and thus accept responsibility for the social environment it investigates.</p>
Sonia Livingstone	<p>Engaging with media – a matter of literacy? This article considers the continued relevance of critical research on audience reception and audience ethnography to today’s study of complex media and communications environment. Although much of the work addressing people’s engagement with new media is now framed not in terms of audiences but rather in terms of literacies, there are many parallels between the critical analysis of literacy and of audiences. Both examine the interface between the interpretative activities of ordinary people and the powerful institutions, texts and technologies they engage with. Both identify forms of stratification and exclusion while recognising the micro-tactics of marginalised audiences/ the digitally excluded. On the one hand, the notion of literacy offers some advantages over that of audiences, for it draws on a long history of theorising knowledge in relation to emancipation and democratisation. On the other hand, literacy occasions critical scrutiny, particularly when, as today, it is mobilised in support of by neo-liberal, deregulatory policies in the media and communications sector. Insofar as audience research directs its energies towards the analysis of new media literacies, it is vital to follow the principles of critical analysis, explicating research assumptions, scrutinising how our work is used, and asking whose interests are thereby served.</p>
Robin Mansell and Charlie Beckett	<p><i>Crossing Boundaries: New Media and Networked Journalism</i> This paper examines the challenges associated with what is coming to be known as ‘networked journalism’. It considers some of the ethical issues that arise for news producers which come to the fore as a result of new forms of boundary crossing that are enabled by convergent media platforms. We critically assess the extent to which this new form of journalism offers a foundation for a form of public dialogue and translation that may enable stories about distant others to be told and better understood. We highlight particularly the need for new business models and for an extension of media literacies to support the expansion of this new form of news production. The argument is located theoretically in a discussion about the need to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of power relations which give rise to inequality and about whether the news media can play an important role in fostering actions aimed at reducing it.</p>
Vincent Mosco	<p>Knowledge Workers of the World! Unite? Research in communication studies has tended to cluster around the exploration of three interconnected topics: media, messages, and audiences. The field has produced rich and varied work, but one aspect has received little attention: labor. Intellectual and physical labour are required to produce messages and the technologies used to disseminate them. Receiving and acting on messages also requires labor. However, communications scholars rarely address the various forms of laboring. In addition, the organizations that represent media and information workers, and the presentation of labor in the media, also receive relatively little attention. It is with this in mind that we have taken on a research project</p>

	<p>that aims to expand the attention scholars pay to the laboring of communication and culture. Two recent collections demonstrate that research is growing in this area and this paper reports on how to build on this work by describing the growth of labor convergence among workers in the communication and information sector. It defines labor convergence, describes its expansion into the international arena, and outlines a set of case studies that test its significance for determining whether knowledge workers of the world will indeed unite.</p>
Radhika Parameswaran	<p>The other sides of globalization: Communication, culture, and postcolonial critique The new ICA journal "Communication, Culture, and Critique" offers postcolonial media scholars a much needed international critical forum to interrogate the politics of popular representations of globalization. Postcolonial critiques of mainstream media interpretations of globalization in South Asia can historicize the novelty of the current pre-occupation with modernization and question the gender and class hierarchies that structure the global economy's modes of production and consumption. Unpacking the limitations of Thomas Friedman's 2004 video narrative "The other side of outsourcing," this essay points to the dangers of overestimating globalization's potential to empower call center workers or poor Indian citizens, who do not belong to the transnational consumer and managerial classes. In conclusion, the essay suggests that postcolonial critiques of globalization's discursive forms in multiple sites can contribute to the interdisciplinary field of critical globalization studies.</p>
Dan Schiller	<p>The Militarization of U.S. Communications The militarization of communications constitutes a fundamental and yet nearly invisible process for Communication scholarship. While communications have intertwined with military purpose throughout U.S. history, emergent dimensions of this process have repeatedly appeared. After a brief sketch of developments prior to the 1980s, this article focuses on four key features of contemporary militarization: how the policy decision to liberalize telecommunications markets destabilized existing arrangements for joint military-corporate coordination of network infrastructures – and what was done about this; how capital investment and government subsidy flowed into information and communications, generating a widening array of networked weapons – to which civil society was rendered increasingly vulnerable; how, while the theater of U.S. military operations remained global, the orientation of forces has undergone strategic shifts as new adversaries have been identified; and how processes of ideological construction remained closed to meaningful discussion of the basics of U.S. foreign policy, so that war continued to be presented as a needful defensive measure.</p>
Slavko Splichal	<p>Why be critical? The paper answers the question of why to be critical in (communication) research. It is argued that since any empirical research unavoidably proceeds from certain normative (though often tacit) assumptions, it has to be guided by normative (critical) theory. Otherwise, we are facing the risk that research decisions are influenced by non-pertinent or biased assumptions and political or commercial interests. Social criticism in theory and research is not adverse to empirical research, including quantitative research methods. The problem of 'being scientific' by using quantitative methods does not rest in the methods themselves, but rather in the belief that the use of quantitative methods alone provides the "scientificity" (objectivity, validity, reliability) of research. The importance of being critical is illustrated with the norm of critical publicity as the fundamental and organizing principle of the public sphere.</p>

Linda Steiner	<p>A Manifesto for a Genderless Feminist Critique</p> <p>Given a variety of social changes, some of them wrought by the feminist movement itself, this essay uses the pornographic video series of Girls Gone Wild and Guys Gone Wild to argue for feminist critiques that focus on power and exploitation rather than gender per se. Both product lines purport to show ‘real’ college students sexually performing, for free. But the newer series Guys functions as a financial loss leader, its importance being its ability to secure cultural and political claims to “gender equality.” Arguably, key tasks for critical scholars now include revisiting the conceptual monopoly of gender and dismantling the conflation of sex-gender-sexual-woman-feminine-feminist. Breaking apart this series is crucial if feminist critiques are to be useful in addressing institutions, systems, and processes that are manipulative and exploitative. A universalized, unitarized woman, especially as the opposite of an essentialized man, no longer makes philosophical or empirical sense. Feminism has accomplished too much to assume that women’s interests always need special protection, but not enough to disregard sexism. Figuring out why people volunteer their bodies for pornographic spectacle and simultaneously broadening the terms of empowerment require a critique and intervention that does not rely on women and men as eternal opposites.</p>
Barbie Zelizer	<p>How communication, culture and critique intersect in the study of journalism</p> <p>This article discusses the ways in which the practice and study of journalism have been shaped by alternate and complementary notions of journalism as communication, as culture and as critique. It argues that the communicative role played by journalism has pushed aside both its cultural and critical functions, hindering a broader understanding of all that journalism does beyond the information relay established via its communicative role.</p>