

Introduction: Celebrating Graduate Scholarship

Penelope Ironstone

Department of Communication Studies
Wilfrid Laurier University

It is with great pleasure that I am writing this introduction to this special issue of *Stream: Culture/Politics/Technology* dedicated to the conference proceedings of the Graduate Masters Sessions (GMS) hosted by the Canadian Communication Association/Association Canadian de Communication (CCA-ACC) at our annual meeting with the Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Calgary in 2016. As the former President of the CCA (2014-2016), I worked for several years as a champion of the Graduate Masters Session, seeing them as a vital means of professionalizing young scholars in our discipline. Not only an opportunity for master's students to "experience" a large conference and develop the skills necessary present their research to a conference audience, the GMS provide early graduate students with an important opportunity to network, build a community, and see how their work participates in a conversation with students and more senior scholars of communication from across Canada. I have been delighted to oversee the GMS sessions over the last few years, in no small part because I, like my colleagues on the Board of the CCA, value that conversation and the critical contributions made at our annual meetings. Sibon Chen, the English Language Graduate Student Representative on the CCA Board (2015-2017), is to be credited with the idea to produce conference proceedings of the GMS as without his focused energy it would never have gotten off the ground. Further thanks must be extended to the Guest Editors for this issue, Philippa Adam, Chris Chapman, and Dugan Nichols of Simon Fraser University, for their work in cultivating the four papers that appear here. Their work has undoubtedly contributed greatly to the further professionalization of the contributors as they embark on extending the dissemination of their research through publication.

Each of the papers that appear in this issue sparked significant discussion when they were originally presented in Calgary, and it is my hope that they will continue to be catalysts for dialogue and the extension and development of ideas important to the study of communication in its many forms. All the papers in this issue reflect the importance of critical frameworks that see cultural texts and institutional articulations as deeply embedded in political and economic processes. In "Musical Artists Capitalizing on Hybrid Identities", Amara Pope of the Department of Media Studies at Western University explores the hybrid/intersectional identities of Drake as central to his appeal to a variety of audiences in an identity politics that is layered on top of (but does not conceal) the branding practices that serve as their base. Drake's appeal to identity is a self-branding, Pope

Corresponding Author: Penelope Ironstone (pironstone@wlu.ca)

argues, that capitalizes, in multiple senses of the word, on the “multimodal affordances of music videos” in the production of a fragmented and hybrid image. Brett Pardy of the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University looks to the transformation of obscure, niche cultural texts into mass market products through the example of Marvel’s cinematic superheroes in *The Avengers* (2011). Pardy importantly addresses the discourse of “militainment” as central to this translation and its opening up to larger Hollywood audiences, a move with profound ideological ramifications reflective of certain political and economic tensions of the contemporary North American moment. “The Commodification of the Body Positive Movement on Instagram” by Jessica Cwynar-Horta of the Communication and Culture Program at York University explores the implications of commodification on cultural and representational activism through social media. Using the case of the “Body Positive Movement” on the Instagram platform, Cwynar-Horta traces the influence of processes of commodification on the body positive narrative, showing how the introduction of advertising alters its activism, making it more amenable to the interests of contemporary markets by flattening out and redirecting its political message. Although aimed toward organizational communication, the contribution by Sarah Jamieson and Jenepher Lennox Terrion from the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa, continues the thread about the intersection of political and economic concerns through a study of “part-time” professors. “Building and mobilizing social capital: A phenomenological study of part-time professors” studies the experiences of new (less than 5 years) instructors, and provides a significant intervention into the discussion of the precariatization of the university that looks not only to how feelings of isolation, uncertainty, impermanence, overwhelm, and other effects of not being treated as full citizens of the university, with the rights and privileges this may entail, negatively affect the precarious instructor, but also students, and the life of the department and University as a whole.

The papers in this special issue reflect some of the concerns new scholars of the study of communication bring to the larger conversation happening in the discipline across Canada. It is my fervent hope that we will continue to see and support the interesting work coming from students in Canadian graduate programs through the Graduate Masters Sessions at the annual meetings of the CCA, and through the work of graduate students’ publications like *Stream*. It is my hope that this issue will be an inaugural one, with many more to come.

Dr. Penelope Ironstone
Department of Communication Studies
Wilfrid Laurier University
Former President (2014-2016)
Canadian Communication Association