

## *ANZCA Editorial*

**Ziying Meng, Wendi Li, Guy Webster & Yuzheng Li**

– University of Melbourne

[platformjmc@gmail.com](mailto:platformjmc@gmail.com)

We are delighted to welcome you to this special issue of Platform: *Journal of Media and Communication*; a collaboration with the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA). The special edition showcases a selection of outstanding work by graduate students and early-career researchers presented at the 2021 ANZCA conference and hosted by the University of Melbourne.

The theme for the 2021 ANZCA conference was ‘Communication, Authority and Power’. Researchers were invited to consider how various forms, institutions and practices of communication are involved in, and affected by, systems of authority and power. How can we understand the function of communication in the construction and maintenance of power? How has this function and its effects changed overtime? What problems arise in using practices of communications to oppose or construct power dynamics? Our special issue includes five articles that explore these questions from a diverse range of perspectives and fields. Together, they examine how forms, institutions and practices of communication exercise power, challenge existing authorities, and reconfigure power relations.

The issue opens with an examination of civic power in a local community’s practices of communication. In their article, “Communicating as Community: Examining power and authority in community focused environmental communication through participatory action research in the Ourimbah Creek Valley”, Chloe Killen and her team reflect on their efforts to raise environmental awareness in the community in the Ourimbah Creek Valley on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Their project engages with key concepts rooted in Indigenous knowledges, employing a research methodology that reframes participants from “subjects” to co-researchers. The paper argues that the making of meaning is a powerful creative act that occurs within social and cultural contexts. These contexts, they propose, exist in a multi-directional flow, or as an assemblage of interconnected relationships within a system of communication. What Killen and her team propose is a method of fostering ecological awareness that understands, and attempts to mobilise, these relationships.

Continuing this focus on civic power, Caitlin Adams’ exploratory paper, “It’s so bad it has to be real: Mimic Vlogs and the Use of User-Generated Formats for Storytelling”, considers the character of communication in individualised digital interactions. Adams examines a vlog format she names as “mimic vlogs”. Using primary data from a selection of YouTube viewers, Adams investigates the methods audience members use to identify the authenticity of video content. Adams’ results illustrate the ways in which audiences “read” texts in different ways to better understand how contemporary audiences remain vulnerable to replica content online, in part, because of the ways in which such content performs authenticity.

In Amy Brierley’s article, “Communicating Love: Dialogue Icons, Control and Diminishing Social Complexity in *Cyberpunk 2077*”, we consider another digital interaction with a close-reading of CD Projekt Red’s 2020 game *Cyberpunk 2077*. Brierley analyses dialogue icons - including pictures, symbols or images - to evaluate the covert power dynamic of ludic communication in online game design. Her paper finds that dialogue icons diminish the game’s ability to represent the complexities of romantic intercourse and eradicate the possibility of unplanned queer in-game encounters.

The covert influences of various forms of media communication is similarly central to Muhammad Asim Imran’s paper, “News values, older people and journalistic practices in Australia and Malaysia”. By analysing 99 news articles from 8 mainstream Australian newspapers and 5 English-language Malaysian

newspapers, Imran draws on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis and Caple and Bednarek's discursive news values to explore journalistic practices that implicitly prioritise different actors in news stories. The paper finds that references to elite persons remains a uniform news value in both Australian and Malaysian newspapers. As a result, it speaks to the role of journalists in reflecting and reinforcing the status quo.

The final article in the issue addresses social media surveillance. In their piece, "The TraceTogether matrix has you – surveillance, rationalisation and tactics of governance in Singapore's COVID-19 app", Howard Lee and Terence Lee examine Singapore's contact tracing mobile app, TraceTogether. Their paper argues that the success of TraceTogether reflects a Singapore society that, through the *rationalisation* of surveillance, willingly participates in their own surveillance. The authors highlight that it is the regular *practice* of voluntary surveillance – of subscribing oneself to the apparatuses of state control rather than specific technologies – that characterises the Singapore surveillance state. The paper names this character as a 'matrix of reason' that is normalised through media discourse and exemplifies what Michel Foucault has termed "governmentality"; a government's power of control not over, but *within*, citizens.

As editors for this special issue, we would like to thank Ashleigh Haw and Geoffrey Hondroudakis for their assistance. We also extend our gratitude to Lauren Bliss, Bjørn Nansen, and Robert Hassan for their support. A special thanks too for the generous help of our peer reviewers and the hard work of the entire *Platform* editorial team.

We look forward to the coming discussion at this year's ANZCA conference hosted by the University of Wollongong.

Ziying Meng is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis explores video creators' cross-platform practices on Chinese and US-based social media services. Her research interests include digital platforms, creator cultures, Chinese social media and smart technologies.

Wendi Li is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her PhD project explores how young people in Hong Kong and Melbourne communicate about and relate to climate change. Her research interests include civic agency, youth climate activism, and globalised public communication.

Guy Webster is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. His work has appeared in *Textual Practice*, *Cambridge Quarterly*, *The Conversation*, *Cambridge Review of Books* and the *British Modernist Association*. His work researches conceptions of fear in the early 20th century and their function in the work of Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, May Sinclair and Mary Butts. He is Resident Arts Tutor at St Hilda's College, Co-Editor of *Platform Journal* and Vice-President of the Culture and Communication Graduate Committee (CCGC).

Yuzheng Li is a young graduate, teacher and editor from Melbourne. Her master's thesis explored Chinese fandom culture, para-social relationships, consumerist pseudo-feminism, and gaze study. Her proposed PhD research explores male beauty influencers' live-streaming e-commerce in China, focusing primarily on the gendered power dynamic, customer intimacy, and cultural identity presentation.