

# Playlist

## Curating Care

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When I began to search the archives of the *Canadian Journal of Communications* (CJC) for this playlist on the topic of care, broadly conceived, I was initially worried because the *Journal* has not published articles explicitly about care. However, as I read through past issues of the *CJC*, I realized that this does not mean that Canadian communications scholars have not long been attuned to the kinds of concerns we mean when we talk about care, even if they have not branded it as such.

While care has been an animating concept within feminist approaches to media and communication, science and technology, and cultural studies for some time (Martin, Myers, & Viseu 2015; Mattern, 2018; Murphy, 2015; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2010; Sharma, 2018), the concept of care has become even more amplified and popularized in recent months. This is because at the beginning of North American lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was easy to note the state's failure to take care of vulnerable populations—and perhaps even easier to see that these same populations had been neglected for a long time (Bain, 2020; Mochama, 2020). Due to a massive increase in joblessness, dwindling donations to food banks, and slow responses to keeping already marginalized workers safe, caring for one another felt necessary. Columnist Vicky Mochama (2020) wrote in *The Walrus* that while widespread efforts for mutual aid may have garnered more attention since March, collective caring is not new for Black folks in Canada who have practised mutual aid as a way to deal with anti-Black racism for at least a century. Relatedly, Amanda Parris' (2020) recent interview with Black activists Syrus Marcus Ware, Rodney Diverlus, and Ravyn Wngz on the impact of COVID-19 on Black activism in Toronto reveals how those who were already marginalized feel better prepared to resist in ways attuned to survival and care.

Taking the lead from long-standing modes of communal care practiced by folks marked by race, class and disability, finding ways to care for each other has

become a dominant mode of both survival and resistance in recent months. People have taken to Facebook and Twitter offering to buy food for neighbours. There have also been more formalized coalitions to help unemployed food service workers access financial support. This idea of mutual aid has been widespread. For example, posters in my Toronto neighbourhood outline various ways of caring for neighbours. Google Docs and Facebook groups have been widely used to organize mutual aid across the world. For instance, people have organized porch drop-offs of home-cooked meals for those struggling to pay for food (Young, 2020). “Caremongering” Facebook groups, which originated in Toronto but now span the country, have become another mode of collective care (Star Editorial Board, 2020). The Disability Justice Network of Ontario, an organization based in Hamilton, organized a caremongering community support form. A simple Google doc allowed people to organize assistance for vulnerable community members who needed help accessing food, housing, and healthcare.

More media and communications scholars have also turned their attention to care in recent years. Hi’ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese’s (2020) special issue on radical care for Social Text frames care as “as a set of acts, ideologies, and strategies that offer possibilities for living through uncertain times” (p. 13); recent months have certainly shown why scholarship that focuses on concepts of care is urgently needed. The International Communication Association’s 2021 conference theme, “Engaging the Essential Work of Care,” and corresponding call for papers offer more evidence of media and communications studies scholars’ rising interest in care. Chris Russill’s July 2020 editorial for the *CJC* also sagely points out that communications scholars must not just consider care as an object of study but rather as “a condition of our work and life” (p. 196).

Given the resurgent interest in the topic of care, the purpose of this playlist is to capture how Canadian communications studies scholarship has considered the politics of care. This playlist consists of five articles that focus on a wide breadth of topics that show the longstanding and varied approaches to care that Canadian communications scholars have published in the *CJC*. The playlist includes elements that any good playlist should have: an old-school jam, a current hit, a sample, and a remix. The aim in compiling these articles is to show how communications and media studies scholars have been invested in connecting an ethics of care to communications research. Many of these texts were published by the *CJC* before it was popular to use the word care, but I hope that these texts will be read as oriented toward the kind of careful politics that feminist media studies enact in contemporary times. These articles are important to current and future scholarship because they provide us with openings for the continued study of technologically mediated care.

## Playlist

### Article 1: Old-school jam



Saunders, Eileen M. (1985). Teaching media and gender. *CJC*, 11(1), 35–50. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/325>

When an old-school jam comes on, everyone at the party knows the words. It is a track that people can sing along to, and it never quite goes out of style. Reading “Teaching Media and Gender” by Eileen M. Saunders, published in 1985, is akin to listening to an old-school jam. Saunders calls for the field of communications studies to take up a feminist perspective when designing academic courses. Following a tradition of Canadian media theory, Saunders suggests that rather than focusing on the relationship between representation, gender, and communication technologies, one should consider how material structures of power “reconstitute patriarchy” (p. 44). Saunders argues that students who learn to consider patriarchy as a power system that reproduces the social order will understand strategies for intervention differently than those who are concerned with gender as a representation or content problem. Thirty-five years after the publication of this article, this approach to teaching media and gender is a well-worn track that still resonates. Critical race and media studies scholars continue to take an approach to media that privileges media form over content as a way of understanding and intervening in the structures of power (Shade & Crow, 2004; Sharma, 2008; Towns, 2016). This line of thinking makes way for positioning care as an intervention in uncared-for infrastructures of power.

### Article 2: Current hit



Bivens, Rena, & Hoque, Anna Shah. (2018). Programming sex, gender, and sexuality: Infrastructural failures in “feminist” dating app Bumble. *CJC*, 43(4), 441–459. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/3375>

We do not have to search very far back into the archives to add Rena Bivens and Anna Shah Hoque’s “Programming Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: Infrastructural Failures in ‘Feminist’ dating app Bumble” to the playlist. In their study of the dating app Bumble, Bivens and Hoque show how it has been marketed as a “feminist dating app” designed in response to a growing demand for safe spaces for women. They show too how the app grew in popularity during the #MeToo movement in 2017. Because women can decide whether to initiate conversations with men, Bumble has been positioned as an app that affords women increased agency and control. As Bivens and Hoque put it, “Bumble’s uniqueness relates to the guarantee of safety on the platform” (p. 454). In other words, in ensuring the safety of its female users, Bumble positions itself as an app that cares. In reality, Bivens and Hoque present Bumble as the kind of uncared-for infrastructure that Saunders, au-

thor of the aforementioned article, would have wanted feminist media scholars to critique and question. The authors elucidate Bumble's uncareful technical infrastructure and the ways in which it entrenches gendered, raced, and heteronormative assumptions about its users. The result is that straight, White, and cisgender women are the only users deemed "worthy of control and safety mechanisms" (p. 455). Bumble's ability to "care" for women is not extended to all; rather, care is withheld from those who are not deemed worthy of it.

#### Article 3: Sample



Molyneaux, Heather, O'Dennell, Susan, Kakekaspan, Crystal, Walmark, Brian, Budka, Philip, & Gibson, Kerri. (2014). Social media in remote First Nation communities, *CJC*, 39(2), 275–288. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2619/2448>

A sample is an original track that lays the groundwork for future hits. Something in its tune inspires musicians to make something new. Samples can underpin a genre, such as the relationship between jazz music and hip-hop. In their in-depth study of social media use in remote First Nation communities in Canada, Heather Molyneaux, Susan O'Dennell, Crystal Kakekaspan, Brian Walmark, Philip Budka, and Kerri Gibson provide an understanding of how social networking sites mediate community resiliency. This foundational work is something Canadian communications and media studies scholars can build on, elaborate, and extend as they continue to study how digital technologies play a role in mediating care in particular communities. This article shows how social media is relied on to offer support between First Nation communities that are dispersed across rural locations. It argues that the preservation of culture, and indeed the care and maintenance of community resilience, is reliant on access to social media.

#### Articles 4 & 5: Remixes



Jiwani, Yasmin. (2009). Race and the media: A retrospective, prospective gaze, *CJC*, 34(4), 735–740. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2286/2128>



Magnet, Shoshana, & Mason, Corinne Lysandra. (2004). Of Trojan horses and terrorist representations: Mom bombs, cross-dressing terrorists, and queer Orientalisms," *CJC*, 39(2), 9–26. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2712>

Part of the pleasure in listening to a remix is recalling the song it references. Yasmin Jiwani's article is paired with Shoshana Magnet and Corinne Lysandra Mason's article for this reason. Combined, these two articles help us understand that sometimes, care resembles opacity, and they show us the dangerous effects of uncareful media representation. Using a comparative approach, Jiwani argues that different media representations of violence against females highlights how power is

“grounded in a racialized and gendered economy and reproduced in mediated landscapes that surround us” (p. 738).

Magnet and Mason draw on Jiwani’s work on representation in their study of a document published by the Department of Homeland Security in 2008 that warned of the possibility that women might use their burqas to hide bombs. This uncaring representation of the female Muslim terrorist, Magnet and Mason argue, produced “new gender and raced logics” (p. 11). Importantly, this article makes an argument tying the US State Department’s warning with the state’s preoccupation with making Muslim bodies visible and thus legible. Future studies in the field might take up Magnet and Mason’s research as a springboard to theorize how care, privacy, and surveillance are connected.

As these five articles published in the *Canadian Journal of Communications* illustrate, it is clear that care has always been a condition of possibility for social and political life, even if it goes by other names. Care is not something new to our political agenda, in fact it has long quietly shaped the ways that many people survive, which is seen in the relation between feminist practices of care and digital platforms (Singh, 2020). By design, care work is not typically amplified, as it has been over the past few months. Care cannot be relied on as a brand, it must be incorporated as a set of practices, politics, and discourses. This playlist highlights how a feminist care-centred approach to Canadian communication studies must be read as enduring—not as a one-hit wonder.

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## Website

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