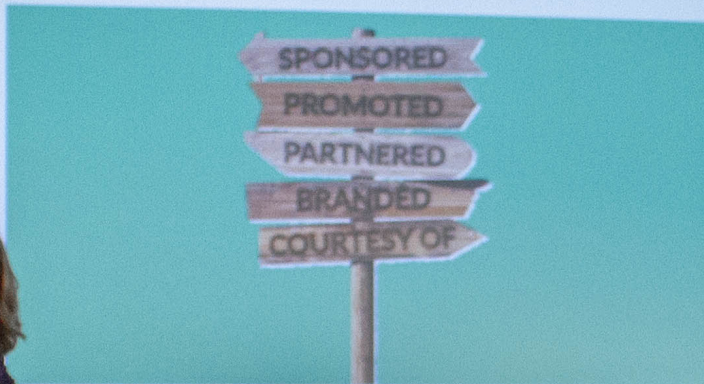


# COMCRC Newsletter

## Spring 2020

 College of Communication

### Native Advertising Recognition



BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY

 Communication  
Research Center



# About the CRC

**R**esearch is an integral part of faculty and student activities at Boston University. Researchers at COM use the most advanced theory and methods to examine communication phenomena. Addressing both theoretical and applied problems through a range of quantitative and qualitative perspectives, faculty and students engage in the most cutting-edge developments in communication research that provide an extraordinarily fertile ground for innovation and science.

The CRC was established in 1959 and reorganized in 1994. The CRC pioneered the use of television as a research tool, conducting systematic analyses on the effects of television on children and measuring political opinions and voting intentions. This early beginning led the CRC to develop a specialty in survey research methodology.

Today, the CRC has 40 research fellows who specialize in topics including: advertising, critical cultural studies, health communication, human-computer interaction, international communication, journalism studies, media entertainment, political communication, and public relations.

The CRC has recently updated a number of research tools such as the iMotions biometric research platform, which allows faculty and students to examine physiological responses to media (e.g., websites, ads, television programs, and video games). Other recent additions include a virtual reality system which aids faculty and students to investigate issues related to psychological presence, empathy, and immersive storytelling.

In 2009, the CRC established the Communication Research Colloquium Series consisting of monthly research presentations that highlight current and original research of faculty in COM. This forum provides an intellectual exchange of ideas and perspectives, features scholarship in several methodological traditions, and fosters discussions among faculty and students about a variety of research topics in the field of communication.

In 2011, the Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur Distinguished Lecture Series was established. Each year two distinguished scholars from outside of the university are invited to share their outstanding scholarship, expertise, and experience with the BU community. In recognition of the pioneering and inspirational contributions of Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur to the field of mass communication research and his service as a venerable and inexhaustible member of the CRC, the faculty members named this series in his honor.





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# Letter from the Co-Directors

**T**his past semester has been an unprecedented one for the CRC and beyond. Due to the escalating health crisis we have been facing, the center's onsite research activities were suspended in March to ensure the health and safety of the academic community. Despite the closure of the center through the end of the summer, many research faculty and students have taken advantage of online data collection opportunities to maintain research productivity, as well as new research projects investigating the selection, processes, and impact of communication messages on individuals, groups, and society at large as a result of the pandemic. In addition, we were fortunate to move some of our remaining CRC events online such as the March Colloquium and monthly work-in-progress meetings.

Although we needed to cancel the onsite biometric training workshops this semester, we are excited to announce that Susie Blair is coordinating a series of online workshops taking place this summer, in which the conceptual components of these biometric (i.e., facial expression, eye-tracking, galvanic skin response, and electroencephalogram) will be covered. We hope folks will take advantage of these summer training opportunities to learn about the capabilities of the iMotions platform.

In terms of facility updates, we renovated the B04 suite over spring break, installing a wall that separates B04D: Graduate Research Hub and B04E: Collaborative Research Area. This facility update provides many key benefits meant to accommodate the needs of our faculty and student researchers. Fully enclosing B04E permits the space to serve as a third optional room for human subjects data collection, provides researchers with a private room for training workshops and meetings, permits another private large-group observation space of research activities in B02B: Multipurpose Research Room (via the live streaming capability of the B04E wall-mounted TV), and allows B04D to have a more private space to optimize productivity.

As always, we would like to thank the work and commitment of Susie Blair, the center's Lab & Research manager, and our graduate student staff – Anran Xie who helped coordinate CRC events and produce video and audio recordings of research talks, and Maryam Alhabroosh and Jaxson Twine who assisted in the promotion of CRC research events as well as fellows' publications and other accomplishments via our social media channels. We're appreciative of all of their efforts and flexibility this past spring.

Finally, as we will be formally stepping down as co-directors of the CRC this summer, we wanted to take a moment to convey our deepest gratitude to all the research fellows for their support in the immense growth of the center over the past four years. It has been an absolute privilege to witness and experience the tremendous expansion in research productivity, the building of research culture, and the increase in the number of fellows joining and fostering this community. We are excited to continue to support the center over the next few months and beyond.

We hope everyone continues to stay safe and healthy as we head into the summer and look forward to reopening the center in the near future.



**JAMES CUMMINGS**  
*CRC Co-Director*



**MINA TSAY-VOGEL**  
*CRC Co-Director*



# Updates to B04 Space

Over Spring Break, the CRC underwent major construction. The B04 Suite, which was originally an open space, now has a wall separating B04D: Graduate Research Hub and B04E: Collaborative Research Area.

This facility update will provide a number of key benefits:

- Allow B04E to serve as a third optional space for data collection given the increase in lab-based research studies taking place in the center;
- Provide research faculty and students with a private room for training workshops and meetings;
- Complement B01A: Viewing Room in permitting a second, private large-group observation space of research activities in B02B: Multipurpose Research Room (e.g., focus groups, surveys, experiments, and interviews) via the live streaming capability of the B04E wall-mounted TV;
- Allow B04D: Graduate Research Hub to have a more private space to optimize productivity.



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## New Faculty Appointments

**Lei Guo** and **Chris Wells** have been appointed as founding faculty members of Boston University's new interdisciplinary academic unit, [Faculty of Computing & Data Sciences](#).

This unit has been created in tandem with BU's new state-of-the-art [Center for Computing & Data Sciences](#), due to open on the Charles River Campus in 2022.





# Announcing Summer 2020 Biometric Workshops

During the Fall 2019 semester, the CRC launched our first-ever series of biometric research workshops. Given that the Summer 1 semester has shifted to virtual learning, we have decided to continue these workshops into the summer remotely. While these new workshops won't have the same hands-on components as they did in Fall 2019, they will cover the fundamentals of each of the modules the CRC is equipped with via the iMotions biometric research platform—facial expression analysis, eye tracking, galvanic skin response (GSR), and electroencephalography (EEG).

In each of these free introductory workshops, participants will learn:

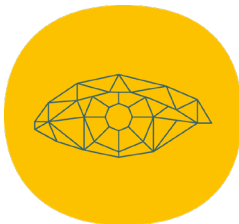
- The theoretical and technical basics of the biometric tool
- The ways in which the biometric tool can be used to augment traditional communication research methods (e.g., focus groups, interviews, and surveys) to form a more nuanced understanding of respondents' reactions and behaviors
- The various forms of data that can be gathered via the biometric tool

Registration is required via the [COMBeyond website](#). Each of the following workshops will be conducted via Zoom (link provided after registration) and will last one hour:



## ***Facial Expression Analysis***

**Dates:** Wednesday, June 3, 1:30 - 2:30pm  
Thursday, July 2, 2:30 - 3:30pm  
Friday, July 31, 3:30 - 4:30pm



## ***Eye Tracking***

**Dates:** Wednesday, June 10, 1:30 - 2:30pm  
Thursday, July 9, 2:30 - 3:30pm  
Friday, August 7, 3:30 - 4:30pm



## ***Galvanic Skin Response (GSR)***

**Dates:** Wednesday, June 17, 1:30 - 2:30pm  
Thursday, July 16, 2:30 - 3:30pm  
Friday, August 14, 3:30 - 4:30pm



## ***Electroencephalography (EEG)***

**Dates:** Wednesday, June 24, 1:30 - 2:30pm  
Thursday, July 23, 2:30 - 3:30pm  
Friday, August 21, 3:30 - 4:30pm



# Spring 2020 Colloquia

## **Persuasion Knowledge in an Era of Covert Influence**

February 2020

[Link to watch](#)

With the growth of “fake news” and other digital disinformation, media consumers have been inundated at an unprecedented scale with content that seeks to influence their attitudes and behaviors—much of it taking place covertly.

In this talk, **Dr. Michelle A. Amazeen** highlighted some of her research on the nature and effects of mediated persuasion that blurs commercial interests, journalism, and politics. Leveraging the Persuasion Knowledge Model—a theory of how people’s understanding of persuasion affects their ability to cope with persuasive attempts—her work expands what we know about the dispositional and situational factors that affect whether and when people recognize and how they respond to covert persuasion in persuasive attempts, Dr. Amazeen discussed the implications of this research on the journalism industry and policymakers who seek to make our media environment less deceptive.



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## **Toward Humanization: Exploring Relational Dynamics & Perceptions of Robots & Artificial Intelligence**

March 2020 (Virtual Presentation)

[Link to watch](#)

Society is currently facing two big technological changes: Robotization, which has the same dramatic potential for change in people’s lives as has the computer/Internet revolution; and Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration to existing technological applications. As this technology continues to develop, it is being designed to assimilate socially and serve as a communicative entity in its own right. Simultaneously, to a large degree robots and AI are put forth as yet another technological tool to aid us. The value proposition for AI and robots—their interactivity and relative autonomy—make them closer to “living” and social entities than any technology that has come before them, though. This ontological leap may create friction for people as they logically know and intend to treat robots as tools but are still confronted with their social cues that prompt emotional and social responses.



In this talk, Ph.D. Candidate **Kate Mays** reviewed her research on the social and relational perceptions of robots and AI. Based on a series of surveys (conducted with Dr. James Katz), her work draws on multiple models and theories—uncanny valley, media equation, apparatgeist, social distance, and social identity—to develop a framework for exploring the social implications of these technologies.



# Media Appearances

**Michelle A. Amazeen** was featured in BU's The Brink (*12 Breakthroughs That Wowed Us in 2019*, December 19, 2019, [link](#)), Yahoo! Sports (*Political storm hits Super Bowl as candidate ads make debut*, January 30, 2020, [link](#)), Yahoo! News (*Social networks on back foot as digital campaigns expand tactics*, February 28, 2020, [link](#)), Commonwealth Magazine (*Biden spent nothing on Boston TV ads: Was his approach unique, or is it sign of trouble for stations?*, March 11, 2020, [link](#)), and The Philadelphia Inquirer (*Pre-coronavirus TV commercials make us cringe; new ads reflect a time of threat*, March 31, 2020, [link](#)).



Research conducted by **Susie Blair**, **Anne Danehy**, and **Mina Tsay-Vogel** was featured in BU's The Brink (*What voters' sweat levels, facial expressions, reveal about their feelings for candidates*, March 3, 2020, [link](#)), State House News Service (*Biometrics study respondents feeling the Bern pre-primary*, March 2, 2020, [link](#)), and on WGBH (*BU biometrics study finds Sanders generates most intense emotional response in voters*, March 2, 2020, [link](#)).

**Rui Wang** was featured in The Economist (*Discovering Twitter: China finds a use abroad for a medium it fears at home*, February 22, 2020, [link](#)).



**James Katz** was featured in The New York Times (*Video Chats and Ordering In: Coronavirus Quarantine With a Smartphone*, February 18, 2020, [link](#)).



# 70th Annual ICA Conference

## Open Communication

Virtual Conference, 21-25 May 2020

### PRESENTATIONS BY CRC RESEARCH FELLOWS

**Amazeen, M. A.** (2020, May). *The Misinformation Recognition and Response (MRR) Model*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Cahill, T. J., & Cummings, J.** (2020, May). *Results of a Breaching Experiment in Virtual Reality: Presence and Sensory, Environmental, and Thematic Congruity*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Downes, E. J.** (2020, May). *Writings Unraveling the Congressional Press Secretary*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

Foley, J.M., & **Wells, C.** *Time-Series Analysis*. Panel session to be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Guo, L., Zhang, Y., Mays, K., Wijaya, D., & Betke, M.** *Agenda Setting as an Antecedent of Political Expression on Social Media: The Gun Violence Case*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Hair, L.** (2020, May). *Friends, not ATMs: Parasocial Relational Work and the Construction of Intimacy by Artists on Patreon*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Hair, L.** (2020, May). *Narratives of Identity, Persuasion, and Legitimization in Medical Crowdfunding: The Case of IVF Campaigns on GoFundMe*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

Krakowiak, K.M., & **Tsay-Vogel, M.** *How it Ends: The Impact of Narrative Closure and Character Outcomes in Series Finales on Viewer Responses and Coping Behaviors*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Krishna, A., & Kim, S.** (2020, May). *What's Yours is Mine: Understanding Australian Mobile Phone Customers' Reactions to Corporate Environmental Irresponsibility*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

Lei, Y., & **Cummings, J.** *On the Sexualization, Objectification, and Sexual Objectification of Female Characters: Exploring the Mediating Role of Dehumanization in Negative Player Outcomes*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Mays, K., Lei, Y., & Katz, J.** (2020, May). *Opening education through emerging technology: What are the prospects? Public perceptions of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality in the classroom*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Mays, K., Yiming, L., Giovannetti, R.F., & Katz, J.** *AI as a boss? A national U.S. survey of predispositions governing comfort with expanded AI roles in society*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

Menhart, S., & **Cummings, J.** (2020, May). *The Effects of Voice Qualities in Mindfulness Meditation on Enjoyment, Cognitive Demand, Perceived Usefulness, and Relaxation*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Prena, K.**, Cheng, H., & Newman, S.D. *Hippocampal Neurotransmitter Inhibition Suppressed During Gaming Explained by Skill Rather than Gamer Status*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

Tian, L. Liu, Y., **Mays, K.**, & **Katz, J.** *The Effects of Personal Traits and Robot Features on Robot Acceptability: A Comparative Study of Taiwan and Mainland China*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Tsay-Vogel, M.**, & **Wu, H. D.** *Enjoyment and appreciation of political advertisements: Examining effects of congruence between party sponsorship and affiliation on viewer responses*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Wertz, B.**, **Cahill, T. J.**, & **Hair, L.** (2020, May). *The Effects of Perspective and Choice on Agency, Transportation and Player-Avatar Relationships in Text-Based Games*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Zhang, L.**, & **Cummings, J.** (2020, May). *Delineating Accuracy and Distortion in the Third Person Perception: A Study on Perceived Relative Susceptibility to Social Bot Influence*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Zhang, L.**, & **Cummings, J.** (2020, May). *What's in a Name—Investigating Automatic Robot Personality Perception and Sound Symbolism in the HMC context*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

**Zhang, Y.** (2020, May) *Why We Stop Talking Politics Online: Examining the Influence of Network, Government, and Platform Factors on the Willingness and Behavior of Self-censorship*. To be presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (Virtual Conference).

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## OTHER CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Akyürek, A. F., **Guo, L.**, Elanwar, R., Betke, M., Ishwar, P. & Wijaya, D. (2020, July). *Multi-label and multilingual news framing analysis*. Proceedings of the 58th Conference of the Association for Computational Linguistics.

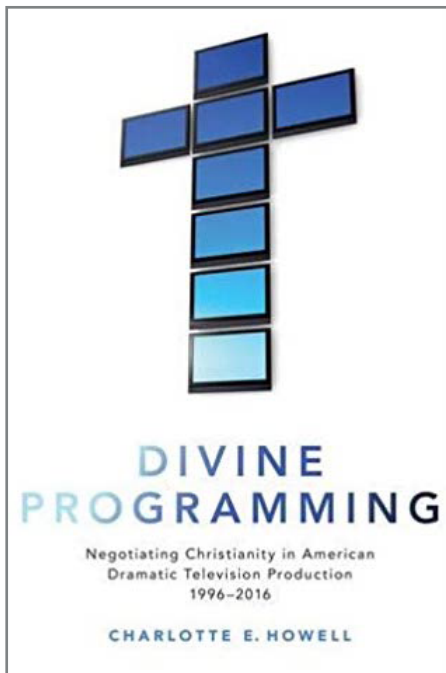
**Guo, L.** (2020, February). *Are mainstream media still setting the public agenda in a polarized media landscape?* Invited talk presented at the "Fracturing Democracy: The Erosion of Civil Society in a Shifting Communication Ecology" conference, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

**Mays, K.** (2020, January). *Mediated communication and customer service experiences: Psychological and demographic predictors of user evaluations in the United States*. Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

**Wells, C.** (2020, February). *A day of two trolls: The development of social media audiences by Russian disinformation accounts in Election 2016*. BU Data Science Day.



## BOOKS

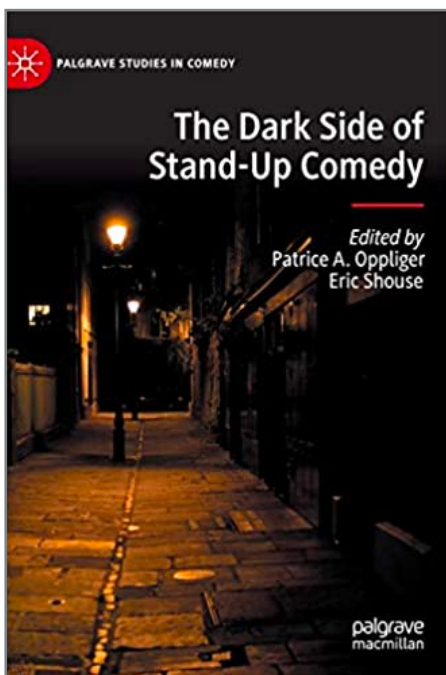


### ***Divine Programming: Negotiating Christianity in American Dramatic Television Production 1996-2016***

**Charlotte E. Howell** (Author)

April 2020

From the mid-90s to the present, television drama with religious content has come to reflect the growing cultural divide between white middle-America and concentrated urban elites. As author Charlotte E. Howell argues in this book, by 2016, television narratives of white Christianity had become entirely disconnected from the religion they were meant to represent. Programming labeled "family-friendly" became a euphemism for white, middlebrow America, and developing audience niches became increasingly significant to serial dramatic television. Utilizing original case studies and interviews, *Divine Programming* investigates the development, writing, producing, marketing, and positioning of key series including *7th Heaven*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Rectify*, *Supernatural*, *Jane the Virgin*, *Daredevil*, and *Preacher*.



### ***The Dark Side of Stand-Up Comedy***

**Patrice Oppliger** and Eric Shouse (Editors)

April 2020

This book focuses on the "dark side" of stand-up comedy, initially inspired by speculations surrounding the death of comedian Robin Williams. Contributors, those who study humor as well as those who perform comedy, join together to contemplate the paradoxical relationship between tragedy and comedy and expose over-generalizations about comic performers' troubled childhoods, addictions, and mental illnesses. The book is divided into two sections. First, scholars from a variety of disciplines explore comedians' onstage performances, their offstage lives, and the relationship between the two. The second half of the book focuses on amateur and lesser-known professional comedians who reveal the struggles they face as they attempt to hone successful comedy acts and likable comic personae. The goal of this collection is to move beyond the hackneyed stereotype of the sad clown in order to reveal how stand-up comedy can transform both personal and collective tragedies by providing catharsis through humor.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

**Jaramillo, D.** (2020). Twitter Watchers: The Care and Feeding of Cable News Flow in the Age of Trump. In J. Wasko & E. Meehan (Eds.), *A Companion to Television* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. ([link](#))

# Publications (cont.)

## GENERAL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

**Amazeen, M. A.** (2020, March 2). Campaign 2020: The Rise of the Influencer Election. *Truth In Advertising*. ([link](#))

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

**Amazeen, M. A.** (2020). Journalistic interventions: The structural factors affecting the global emergence of fact-checking. *Journalism*, 21(1), 95-111. ([link](#))

**Amazeen, M. A.** (2020). News in an era of content confusion: Effects of news use motivations and context on native advertising and digital news perceptions. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 97(1), 161-187. ([link](#))

Chen, H., **Guo, L.**, & Su, C. (2020). Network Agenda Setting, Partisan selective exposure, and opinion repertoire: The effects of pro- and counter-attitudinal media in Hong Kong. *Journal of Communication*. Advance online publication. ([link](#))

Freelon, D., Bossetta, M., **Wells, C.**, Lukito, J., Xia, Y., & Adams, K. (2020). Black Trolls Matter: Racial and Ideological Asymmetries in Social Media Disinformation. *Social Science Computer Review*. Advance online publication. ([link](#))

Freelon, D., & **Wells, C.** (2020). Disinformation as Political Communication. *Political Communication*, 37(2), 145-156. ([link](#))

**Guo, L., Mays, K.**, Sha, L., Jalal, M., Ishwar, P., & Betke, M. (2019). Accurate, fast, but not always cheap: Evaluating “crowdcoding” as an alternative approach to analyze social media data. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Advance online publication. ([link](#))

Huang, Z.A., & **Wang, R.** (2020). ‘Panda engagement’ in China’s digital public diplomacy. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 30(2), 118-140. ([link](#))

**Jaramillo, D.** (2020). Aging Into TV News. *Flow Journal: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture*, 26(6). ([link](#))

**Krongard, S.**, & **Tsay-Vogel, M.** (2020). Online original TV series: Examining portrayals of violence in popular binge-watched programs and social reality perceptions. *Psychology of Popular Media*, 9(2), 155-164. ([link](#))

Luo, Y., & **Wang, R.** (2020). Social network analysis of Belt and Road issues from the perspective of innovation diffusion. *Contemporary Communication*, 1, 52-57. ([link](#))

**Rochefort, A.** (2020). Regulating Social Media Platforms: A Comparative Policy Analysis. *Communication Law & Policy*. (Forthcoming)

Suk, J., Shah, D. V., **Wells, C.**, Wagner, M. W., Friedland, L. A., Cramer, K. J., Hughes, C., & Franklin, C. (2020). Do Improving Conditions Harden Partisan Preferences? Lived Experiences, Imagined Communities, and Polarized Evaluations. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Advance online publication. ([link](#))

**Wells, C.**, Shah, D., Lukito, J., Pelled, A., Pevehouse, J. C., & Yang, J. (2020). Trump, Twitter, and news media responsiveness: A media systems approach. *New Media & Society*, 22(4), 659-682. ([link](#))

## SPECIAL ISSUES

**Wells, C.**, & Freelon, D. (Eds.). (2020.) Beyond Fake News: The Politics of Disinformation [Special issue]. *Political Communication*, 37(2), 145-301. ([link](#))



# CRC Staff



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