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The Intercommunication challenge: developing a new lexicon of concepts for a transformed era of communication

By P. David Marshall

 Abstract:

The paper develops a new lexicon for communication theory that makes sense of the changes in the way that we use new media and digital forms. The key term the paper advances partially through a series of other concepts is "**Intercommunication**". What this term identifies is that we now see not only the convergence of technologies but a layering of media *and* communication where multiple registers from the highly mediated to the interpersonal are now regularised in our uses of social media. Intercommunication specifically identifies the breakdown of our **representational media**, where our media forms attempted to embody the populace collectively – to something that can be labelled as **presentational media**, where the personal becomes the channel and the filter of media and communication. The paper maps the value of these new terms for describing a transformed contemporary culture and thereby points to the value of developing this new theory of communication.

Key words: Intercommunication, representation media, presentational media, micropublics, social networks

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In the last two decades, profoundly different relations to media and communication have been developing. With the emergence of the Internet and mobile communication along with the mutations of what could be called twentieth century media forms such as radio and television, the concepts and theories that have been deployed to understand these changes have relied on media theory, the broader communication theory and to a degree, the theoretical underpinnings of cultural studies. Theoretically, as these new relations and uses of media and communication have advanced, there has not been the same development of concepts to explain these changes and an over-reliance on existing paradigms to understand the new. This article proposes three key points. First, that collectively we need to be developing a new conceptual lexicon to help understand the changes in media and communication. Second, that at the very base or core of these changes in use, exhibition, exchange, distribution via online and mobile cultures we have the blending of what has been formerly identified as "media" with "communication". Our analysis has to acknowledge this other form of convergence, where the separation of media from other forms of communication cannot be made as clearly and cleanly. Third, that to describe this change the key term developed here is the concept of Intercommunication where the layering of communication, the intersection with interpersonal forms of communication with highly mediated components, where image, text, moving image, voice communication and interaction is very much routinely manifested by users. What follows is building a theory around the concept of Intercommunication as a way to explain the current and emerging generation of media and communication.

Past the Post-theory: the Postmodern moment

Although throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century there were many competing and sometimes complementary social and cultural theories designed to describe the differences in contemporary culture, post-modernism perhaps best captured a certain intellectual currency in its capacity to describe the then structure of feeling. Even within postmodern theory, there were many permutations from its origins in architecture (Jencks 2005) and art theory to the very influential Jean Francois Lyotard's *The Post-modern Condition* (1984) and David Harvey's geographically inspired *The Condition of Post-modernity* (1990). Lyotard described that one of the key changes was the decline in what he called "meta-narratives" that no longer worked as the social and ideological glue of society. Meta-narratives were overarching belief systems that could be derived from religion but also could be at the base of capitalism or democracy. Harvey's reading of the post-modern provided a similar reading of the shattering of coherence. One of his central insights derived from his extension of "post-Fordist" production patterns, where products were differentiated and seriated in quite different ways than the assembly line of production in the early twentieth century that was part of an elemental breakdown in coherence driven by constructing consumer taste. Postmodernity and postmodernism in many extrapolations were further illustrated by a similar polyglot of architectural styles sometimes in the same building, a pastiche in artistic expression, and a popular culture driven by parody and self-reflexive and self-conscious stories. If modernity provided a commentary on the social experiment of social, technological, and economic progress, postmodernity no longer accepted the unilinear constitution of progress and in its positive affirmations as a way of seeing the world actively celebrated and saw the power in the breakdown of these former unities.

Postmodernism has provided a particular reading of the contemporary that underlined incoherence as opposed to coherence. Although some writers such as Kroker (1992) identified the post-modern as part of other epochs, as a cultural theory it betrayed a claim to the end of theory, not exactly as Daniel Bell proclaimed in *The End of Ideology* (1962) but nonetheless a sense that the effort to

understand and group cultural activity into an analytical pattern or a form of progression was

exhausted and no longer valuable - and potentially dangerous in its formation into ideologies of

repression. What has ensued from the heyday of postmodern theorization is a relatively quiet

period of empirical investigation and the general avoidance of making sense and constructing

theories. With and because of the post-modern moment - at least as it has impacted communication

and cultural theory -there has not been a successful attempt at providing something comprehensive

or what could be called big theory.

Cultural change – representational media and representational systems

Despite this quiet moment where grand theory is avoided, there have been quite profound cultural

changes. And there have been three perhaps related cultural changes that have generated

incremental theorization over the last 15- 20 years that demand some sort of larger attempt to

comprehensively understand, interpret, forecast and sometime prescribe change. Although I will not

deal with these three changes with equal weight in this paper, it is worthwhile to identify them

because in some ways they have similarities in their push towards the need for a grander theory.

Globalization is one of these changes and the ensuing shifts in economic and perhaps cultural power

that are developing in the new flows of capital and in the reorganisation of wealth, economy, and

consumer flows within nation-states and between nation-states has generated some of the most

interesting theorisation from research on creative classes to post-colonial extensions, to

interpretation of the global and the local (Appadurai 2001; Hassan 1994; Miller et al 2008; Said

1997)(Related to creative classes and industries see Florida 2003, 2005; Hartley, 2005). The

environment and its degradation which has now been reformed under the banner of climate change

is the second apparent change that demands larger theorization in the intersection of human activity

with the earth's survival (Hansen 2010; Katona, Sullivan & Intriligator 2010; Maser 2010). In many

ways, climate change has become a meta-narrative that matches Lyotard's definition. The third is

the transformation of our communication systems which can be highlighted in the relatively rapid

development in use, exhibition and exchange of the Internet over the last 25 years. There are of

course intersections in these large cultural changes, but what I want to explore more fully here is the

communication step-change represented by the Internet and online culture and propose a

theorization that will help us understand how profound the change is.

All three of these major changes have led to popular literature that forecast various dystopian to

utopian futures and near-presents. In terms of the Internet, there has been a series of efforts to

theorize where it is going and these attempts have been advanced by both popular futurists and

academics. Different intellectual traditions have emphasised distinctive aspects of the development

and expansion of the Internet. For instance, political scientists have explored its democratic

potential (Jordan 1999; Loader 1997). Journalists and media studies approaches have extended this

analysis to a study of the forms of participation via blogs and perhaps user-generated media (see

Turner 2010 for the most sophisticated critique; Bruns 2005, 2008 for its developed celebration).

Popular economists have investigated its transformation of the movement of goods and the

expansion in the forms of exchange (Brousseau & Curien 2006; Castranova 2005, 2008). Because the

Internet has produced virtual variations of many aspects of contemporary life and engagement, it

has become ubiquitous and in many cases ordinary, everyday and mundane in its effect. Thus the

routines of banking and paying bills online, booking travel and plotting driving directions, checking

the weather, shopping in all its auction and non-auction forms rub shoulders with the elements that

we have normally associated media and communication such as news feeds, conversation, finding

and listening to music, streaming videos, text-chats and so on.

To establish that these virtual "transactions" in all their many manifestations are different than the

past on one level seems easy to verify. After all, a greater and greater portion of our lives are being

mediated by screens of one sort or another. On another level, the ordinariness of the activity produces a *vraisemblance* of the past and particularly how the twentieth century operated in its construction of contemporary engagement in western culture.

The key change that demands our theorising is that through the various devices from online structures to mobile communication, from social networks to video aggregate services, from migration of traditional media into new hybridized delivery of their content, we are witnessing a shift that is best described as a partial breakdown of forms of *representation*. Representation can be thought of as techniques of embodiment, where the culture attempts to have certain institutions, stories, and people stand in for the populace. In that embodiment, the various forms of representation assume a collective power. In a political sense, politicians represent the people and the leading politicians attempt to embody the collective will. And our systems of representation then have worked to legitimize these embodiments in their various configurations. In the most general sense, our systems of representation have been our media forms.

The systems of representation, I am arguing, reached their zenith with television in the late 20th century. Television provided the best techniques to embody a populace and those techniques and technologies of representation were working at their best in the 1970s and 1980s in North America and most of Western Europe. Slightly different forms of representational regimes operated in other cultures and were refracted through different systems of political embodiment and obviously different but parallel timeframes. Although these differences are significant and worthy of exploration, my intention here is to map a general theory of how representation worked as a system that was supported by a representational media system. From that vantage point, I want to make the claim that that system of representation is breaking down. The breakdown of the representational media system and its related representational regime is by no means complete, but

nonetheless the changes indicated a slippage and a weakening of the power of representation. Emerging through the new technologies and applications of online and mobile culture were techniques which dispersed the formerly more coherent messages of a representational regime and refracted through the increasingly individualised uses made of media and communication.

The blend of media and communication

The representational regime had been consolidating its organisation of power for more than two centuries through various media, cultural and political forms. The changes I am identifying have been emerging over the last twenty years and in many ways remain minor but ascendant and therefore point to perhaps more profound change and our need to work out what may be going on more specifically. I am reluctant to move to a technological determinist argument and rather would identify these changes as occurring at both technological and cultural levels. What we are more than witnessing and in fact are experiencing is an interesting alchemy of communication. Media in its various forms (radio, television, film, novels, newpapers, and magazines) structured its address in terms of the collective and mythical "we". In most instances, that collective identification and register of address worked through national media cultures and worked to reinforce their legitimacy. Effective techniques of analysis included ideological readings of media, from manipulation theses to sophisticated political economic readings of the power of the media to shape politics and culture. [1]
Media's form of register is one general type of communication albeit a very powerful one. What is developing in both a technological and cultural sense is a blending of media *and* communication

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[1] Ideological analyses in the study of the media are legion which could be said to emerge with critical theory's approach (Horkheimer and Adorno,2002) and Mander's(1978) critique of television. The political economic critique of the media's power can also be aligned with Murdock and Golding (1997) from a British perspective and the long North American tradition which would include Smythe(1981), Herman and Chomsky(2002), McChesney(2000), and Mosco (2003) among many others.   The idea of the media as the mythical centre of a culture and close to the collective "we" has been developed by Couldry (2003) and has given the ideological analysis a new generation of scholarship.

through new media forms(Author, 2009, 89). I will explore these two types of convergence –

technological and cultural – in media and communication individually.

Technological convergence

Technologies of connection developed and operated quite differently between efforts to connect

people interpersonally as opposed to groups. Telephony and its associated telecommunications

industry and network was designed for one-to-one forms of communication and allowed the

conversation to operate at a distance. From the late 19th century to most of the twentieth century,

telecommunications provided the main wired way of connecting businesses and households (Coe

1995; Huudeman 2003).

Although there were notable exceptions to this practice, broadcast media developed through

wireless technology and operated as a distinctive system of connection into the household from the

1920s onwards (Inglis, A. 1990; Wood 1992). Twentieth century broadcast media drew on the

historical construction of audiences for similar messages that had been developed for centuries via

print media in all its forms (Briggs 2010; McLuhan 1964). Similarly, film's technology of exhibition

relied on the technical conventions of theatre and performance to position its audiences and their

expectations.

A great deal of hype has surrounded the idea of technological convergence, where the distinctions

between different technologies of communication and connection are dissolved. The convergence

of television and online computers was seen as inevitable and in that blend of technologies (see the

many futurists such as Gilder 1994, Jensen 2010, Watson 2008), hard-drive television or replay

television became the intermediate technology. In similar ways, telephony became possible through

VOIP and other technologies. In terms of text, the graphic internet stage (Author, 1997) that

emerged in the early 1990s through the world wide web replicated the production of text in its

various forms in newspapers, magazines and books. The capacity to livestream video which has

depended on the speed of connections further builds the online computer as a source for all forms

of media and communication.

Cultural convergence

Cultural convergence has been explored most vigorously by Henry Jenkins in his research into

collaborative developments online. From Jenkins' perspective and based on his original fan culture

work (1992, 1995, 2006a, 2006b), there is evidence of Levy's (1997) collective consciousness in the

various efforts by groups to work together towards a common end or direction. In a wider and more

general sense, greater aspects of everyday life are channelled through our electronic devices.

 Increasingly, those electronic devices are interconnected and synchronised in the most basic

structures of diaries and address books to emails and social network sites. Cultural convergence in

some ways identifies how there is often – though not universally and certainly not in equal measure

internationally – an integration of life patterns that spans work and leisure through electronic and

online communication applications. The dimension of cultural convergence also identifies quite

specifically how in the uses of these applications, there is now fluidity between what would have

been construed as different registers of communication. We will elaborate on this further through

the idea of intercommunication, but in terms of cultural convergence what we are seeing is a

comfortability in integrating conversation with media forms and allowing both of these types of

communication to move more widely across communities. Online culture can be defined as a

"linkage" culture, where one of the key defining activities on the web is the production of sites and

locations that are intersected via hyperlinks to other sites, people and locations. Linking provides

one of the ways that a form of cultural convergence becomes both possible and enacted. The variety of software applications is another way in which cultural convergence is developing between and among online media and communication forms. Applications allow users to be more comfortable with the different platforms of communication. For instance, Skype allows video chat and thereby makes video much more mundane and everyday. Also, sites such as blogger make the production of an online diary or magazine more possible through the elimination of the need to know html tags and codes to organise its presentation. Video- editing applications also simplify the means through which one could post a constructed video on Youtube. Generally, applications have allowed the easier manipulation of the forms and formats of communication and have thereby flattened many of the former hierarchies of production involved in mediated communication forms such as video or even print production. It should be added that this cultural convergence is not always used by members of online cultures: its ultimate is that the flow of messages moves more fluidly between voice, image, moving image, and text as all these techniques become more naturalised extensions of individuals' everyday communication.

The rise of presentation – Presentational media through social networks

The convergence of media and communication is developing into a fundamentally different communication ecology. As we have described above, the nineteenth and twentieth century were organised into a representational cultural regime. The communication environment supported and legitimized structures and filters in representation, both political and cultural. In contrast to this system of representation, what is emerging is much more filtered and transformed through the individual. The origins of this quite profound shift from a representational regime to what can best be described as a *presentational* regime are emerging from a variety of sources that emphasize some aspect of individuality and differentiation. Thus, consumer capitalism as it is re-read and

repositioned in terms of communication can be seen as moving towards the personalisation of a media/communication connection. In a progressive transformation, entertainment and communication devices have individualised from mobile phones with their guarantor that you will reach the one and only owner of the phone, to Nintendo DS and and Sony's PSP which redefine gaming into a privatized relationship to the screen. Less dramatic individualization can be seen in television on two levels: the proliferation of channels restructures the organised often national network delivery of entertainment, sports, and news into interest area channels via pay and subscription television that balkanize the source and use patterns of messages; and the proliferation of screens transforms the television into a multi-platform device that supports broadcast television, recorded replay television, personal videos and movies, along with the range of game devices from Nintendo Wii to X-Box which possess Internet capabilities that further allow the user to transform the television screen to personalised uses (Author, 2009a).

The individualisation of the technologies of communication describes only the groundwork for the presentational media difference. What has developed in the first decade of the 21st century that has been generally described as part of Web 2.0 is the quite dramatic proliferation of social media. Understanding social media from a communication perspective is in some ways to look at the patterning of communication and structure of communication forms. And here we can see the clear difference from a representational era to a presentational era. Facebook, Cyworld, Bebo, Myspace, Twitter and many other micro-social networks that built on the connections developed by chatrooms and instant messaging services, are organised around the public presentation of the individual. As other new media scholars have discovered, Erving Goffman's work on the presentation of the self in everyday life comes close to capturing the nature of the online construction of identity. (Goffman, 1990)   Defining the nature of that public and the formation of a new dimension of publicity will be explored later in this paper; what needs to be focused on here is how these sites are

sophisticated frameworks for revealing aspects of the self. Like television networks, social networks

sites are partially branded by their company owners where the logo of Facebook for example is

prominently displayed; however the Facebook brand is a housing architecture for the more

elaborate branding of the self. Facebook sites are individual expositions interspersed with personal

comments and reactions from friends, links to others, connections to media clips often via Youtube

and photo slideshows that further define the person. Facebook's architecture provides techniques

to produced indirect forms of interpersonal communication – or what we can describe as meta-

communicative devices such as simple games and standardized ways of alerting friends ('poking') of

your presence and desire to maintain connections.

The sheer dimension of social media where in excess of 500 million people are using Facebook

(Facebook 2010), while Mini-Hompy in Korea is accessed by over a third of the total population daily

(Hjorth, Na & Huhh 2009, p. 251), identifies a transformation in the communication ecology that

demands this re-theorization of media and communication. In addition, these individualised sites

are now one of the principal ways in which media and ideas move through a culture. Presentational

media, although not supplanting the power of representational media – is in ascendance as more

people present themselves and allow other ideas, information and entertainment flow through their

identity formation structures. Presentational media implies the public performance of the self

through the accoutrements of links and commentary. By these means we are moving to cultures

where the production of an online public persona becomes a routine expected by the vast majority

of the populace. The performance of the self identifies one of the central tropes that is able to

describe the emerging difference the presentational regime produces and thereby transforms the

structure of power of representation and embodiment that have been part of the organisation of

culture and politics for the last two centuries.

From subcultures to micropublics

Representational media has a clear relationship to producing a mythical public sphere. Advertising through television or radio perhaps relies on this connection of a constructed large audience roughly listening to the same messages. Political bodies similarly depend on the movement of their ideas and policies into the public sphere in order to represent widespread and ultimately legitimising forms of communication for the structure of power. With the individualised filter of presentational media, the production of a coherent representable public sphere becomes problematic to maintain as a mythic structure of rational debate. What is developing instead are *micropublics*. We can define micropublics as those organizations of people grouped around a particular individual and thereby share the flow of communication in some way. This is a transformation of a Habermasian public sphere of representative publicness(Habermas, 1989) to a Goffmanesque public sphere of presentational public (Goffman, 1990). Social network sites establish various forms of "friendship" which connect the individualized experience into elaborate networks of people. Thus on Facebook friends become aware of when other friends are also posting online. Emerging from these friendship networks is a clustering of interests that might be organised along familial, generational, educational, and/or experiential lines and patterns. The closest past form of analysis of micro-publics emerged best in the sociological and ethnographic study of youth subcultures derived originally from cultural studies. (See Hebidge, 1981 and the more recent update Thornton, 1996) The process of making sense and remaking cultural artefacts and commodities to new meanings in a subculture is close to how micro-publics establish their internally coherent forms of communication and exchange. Micropublics, however, are not necessarily in opposition to a dominant culture and

do not play in the same and relatively coherent representational system as in subculture's

oppositions to those dominant representations.

The intersection of micropublics – memes and the movement between

Presentation and performance of the self as we can see is a very social activity that produces micro-

publics of interests and connection. What is interesting about these networked cultures is that they

intersect when one friend crosses between friendship circles and there is the movement of ideas,

information, jokes, and images outward in a connected way. Once again, it is important to

understand that these presentations of the self are designed for the public world – albeit often a

micro-public world. Nonetheless as friendships intersect, the development of an intersected

patterning of micro-publics creates something that is very large. For example, in recent years there

have been moments where a particular video on YouTube attains an enormous number of hits – in

the 10s of millions (Burgess & Green 2009). In some cases, these popular videos originate with

relatively unknown people; and yet they can move dramatically through these micro-publics that are

passed on through the individuals' social network sites. Others have written about the movement of

memes – virally exchanged and shared content online and what is evident is that this produces a

different constitution of connection to the social world. It is very true that the movement of memes

through micro-publics may have easily started from mainstream media; however in its reformulation

it adapts to the lengths and patterns of online movement of cultural forms. Links in social networks

sites or embedded videos or images are part of this movement. Similarly, aggregators and RSS feeds

sometimes situate these sources that are derived from micro-publics in equivalent status

relationships to traditional and powerful news sources of information and entertainment. It is also

important to realize that these movements of cultural moments such as a videoclip are surrounded

with other forms of communication – primarily of a conversational nature among friends.

Defining Intercommunication

From these critical new terms and concepts and from the analysis of the transformation of our communication ecology, we can identify a qualitatively different structure of communication which demands an equally powerful and accurate concept. I am proposing the concept of *Intercommunication* to make sense of this shifted communication environment and to help us build the analytical tools that can be applied to its analysis. To summarize, we are in a communication environment that is a blend of representational media and their logics with constructing embodied publics and presentational media and the logics associated with its personalization and related intersecting micro-publics. As I have indicated, presentational media is in ascendancy with greater aspects of our lives coordinated through personal media forms that are designed to perform and present the self to others regularly and often. Nonetheless, representational media is linked clearly with existing political, economic and cultural institutions and organisations and thus exerts profound power in its capacity to shape public discourse and what is conceived of as significant and important.

There are several dimensions to the concept and theory of Intercommunication and I will deal with each of these separately.

First: *Intercommunication implies an understanding of the flow between representational and presentational media*

What is becoming increasingly evident is that both representational media – once again forms such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and film – and presentational media – social networks, video aggregators, online blog culture, game culture, online virtual worlds – rely on each other for

content. The most exchanged content on YouTube via social networks is often commercials. In studying Twitter which can gage the salience of particular themes, it is evident that a major political event covered by television such as an election, determines predictably the activity and discussion through the microblog service. Similarly, television news networks such as CNN rely on surveying what is often called the blogosphere for commentary that can be generated in their 24-hour television news service. Likewise, blogs are generated by newspapers to become highly prominent parts of the blogosphere and an element in their formation of ideas. Television and radio have also transformed themselves in multimedia ways with sophisticated web sites to allow a shift in the forms of communication and exchange outside of the delivery of broadcasting. Viral moments online, where a particular phrase or clip of video becomes exchanged across micro-publics become the source for expansion via traditional representational media.

Second: **Inter**communication implies that the **inter**personal has now moved to a pivotal role in the contemporary communication ecology

To capture the movement towards the personalization of media and the translation of this personalization into communication more generally, Intercommunication highlights that interpersonal communication is at its centre. As a concept, it demands greater investigation of conversation and the interplay of exchange between textual, audio, and visual versions of the self as a persona and a form of interaction. Interpersonal communication in intercommunication is an acknowledgement that the interpersonal is now mediated into images for exchange, text interplay between social networked friends and beyond, and levels of intimacy and interpersonal registers that are now routinely employed in online culture from game player connections to following and commenting on tweets.

Third: *Intercommunication identifies not only the blend of representation and presentation, but equally significantly it identifies the simultaneity in online forms of communication of the increasingly normal and mundane movement between media and communication. Intercommunication implies the intertwined nature of media and communication as the new reality*

There are two elements here. It is important to see - as we have identified above - that personal social network sites are often the way ideas that come in highly mediated form are exchanged and passed on to others. In this sense, media and communication are with more difficulty separated from each other. Likewise intercommunication indicates that because this separation is of a more minor order, media that is re-mediated in a sense and surrounded by personal reflections and interspersed with conversation is also appropriated in a different way than in the past: it is integrated more fully into a public display of personal identity and in some cases group identity. There is a loose and shared (open source) relationship to ownership in the appropriation of highly mediated cultural forms such as music.

The second element related to this blending of media and communication is that communication has appropriated its mediated forms for the more regular interpersonal forms of exchange. Earlier in this essay, I have described this as the flattening of media forms. This expression of flattening can be understood that levels of literacy related to different media forms have expanded because of the simplicity of use. While well produced films and television programs remain valued, it has to be acknowledged that the use, editing and exhibiting/exchanging of audio and video has started to become like other more natural forms of verbal communication. To an even larger degree, the use of photo-images has expanded the repertoire of interpersonal communication through a particular mediated form.

Analysing Intercommunication

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The conceptual development of intercommunication as an explanatory tool to help explain the contemporary moment, points to the related need to develop appropriate analytical techniques. Given the complexity of the new layering of communication with its multiple and simultaneous registers and formats, it is important to look at the flows of communication. One technique is to follow closely the intercommunicative flows of a news item. In those flows, we can imagine that there are different layers of communication added on to the particular news item that allows it to proliferate through the various interconnected micro-publics. One way of analysing those layers of intercommunication is to imagine the intersection of the interpersonal forms of communication with those of the highly mediated as semiotic chains of signification where the meaning is transformed through its interaction and shared interpretation. This form of content and contextual analysis begins to decipher the complex interplay of media and communication in the Intercommunication era.

Forms of affective Connection and contagion – interpersonal patterning and scripting

As much as our contextual content analysis above uncovers the flow of intercommunication, it does not address how this form of communication leads to sometimes powerful and influential outcomes. What needs to be integrated into our analysis is a way to understand the movement of ideas and apparent viral quality that describes the translation of content from micro-public to micro-public and occasionally into and out of the representational media and back into presentational media forms. Affect theory could be used to describe these quite different structures of interaction that are fundamental to the flows of intercommunication. For instance, affect can help describe the weak bonds that knead together the kinds of associations that "friendship" connotes on social network sites. Affect helps us uncover the movement from the highly personalised and individualised media and communication structures of intercommunication online through other people. We can address through affect theory what can be described as forms of affect clusters and potential for emotional

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transfers of contagion through online culture. The work of Tomkins (1992) on scripting in affect allows us to look for patterns in online culture that are beginning to be replicated in the development of influential affective moments around particular viral movements of information, ideas, and cultural forms.

Analysing the Intercommunication industry

It is very important to see that there is a related shift in the understanding of the industries of media and communication and the economic models of production. The divides between telecommunication and media industries make little sense. More pointedly, companies that work in developing and fostering intercommunication are increasing in their influence and power. Those corporations that understand the critical dimensions of intercommunication – the move to the personal and interpersonal, the flow between representational and presentational, and the new ways of providing affective connections among and across micro-publics from an individual starting point – are growing rapidly. What needs to be developed is a complete political economy of intercommunication to understand how these commercial enterprises are involved in the entire restructure of our public presentation of self, our conceptualization of privacy, our new comfortability with making affective connections between ourselves, others and – from a business point of view – products and services that are related to our emotional needs.

Conclusion: A New Communication Theory

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I began this essay identifying how big theory was no longer at the centre of cultural debates and how the theories of the post-modern failed to help comprehend the contemporary condition. Instead of an abandonment of theory towards a new pragmatism of incremental knowledge, I am advocating a bolder move to develop new theories that can make sense of the current moment. What I have proposed in this essay is that communication which has become so central to the organisation, economy, politics and culture of contemporary life, needs to develop a theory that helps explain one of the key transformations of the last 20 years. Online culture and its subsequent mobile reformation demands a reworking of our ways of conceptualizing interaction and communication. My proposition developed here is that we need a new lexicon to describe these changes and help us interpret their implications for the future. I have grouped my new conceptual lexicon around the idea of *Intercommunication*. Intercommunication helps us rethink the layering of our patterns of communication as they move from the interpersonal to the highly mediated and often back again. As a term, it also allows us to understand the convergence of media and communication in the contemporary moment and begin to comprehend how new ideologies form in and through these signifying practices and layers, how new hegemonies of the political economy of communication flourish, and how certain approaches – in particular interpersonal communication and its theory – now inform much more centrally the movement of ideas, information, entertainment and knowledge through this ecology. I have also developed the associated terms of *representational media* and *presentational media* in order to isolate on the shift from embodiment in our media system and its power to organise us ideologically in its representative publicness, to personalization and the performance of the self and its overt public presentation. Emerging from thinking about the new forms of interconnection, I have highlighted the term *micro-publics* and employed affect theory to help us understand the interconnecting social bonds of Intercommunication. This new lexicon is only the initial stage in building communication theory that describes the contemporary moment and quite clearly positions us as the valued interpreters and

analysts and, in some cases, the implementers of how other ideas move through this complex

communication environment that is even further challenged by the international and intranational

differences in how these technologies that have blended media and communication have been

appropriated, valued, integrated, desired, overlooked, overdeveloped and underdeveloped in

various parts of the globe.

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