

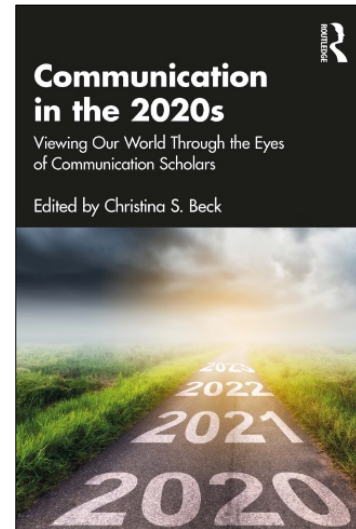
Christina S. Beck (Ed.), **Communication in the 2020s: Viewing Our World Through the Eyes of Communication Scholars**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 248 pp., \$160.00 (hardcover).

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It is undisputed that communication plays a key role in presenting identities, nurturing relationships, negotiating meanings, and building a better world. The year 2020 also matters because its consequences in relation to healthcare, social justice, politics, and environment have brought life-altering impacts globally and strengthened our heavy reliance on communication in times of crisis. Of these considerations, it is of great significance to reflect on the historical events of 2020 through the lens of communication scholars to better understand the lived experiences of 2020, respond to the possible scenarios of the years beyond, and explore their potential influences on the future of communication scholarship. Against such a backdrop, the publication of **Communication in the 2020s: Viewing Our World Through the Eyes of Communication Scholars**, edited by Christina S. Beck, timely addresses these needs.



The book provides a scholarly investigation into the changes, opportunities, and challenges within the field of communication studies in the 2020s. By weaving scholastic theories and concepts into their journeys through 2020, 24 noted communication scholars illuminate how they interpret their personal experiences in the turbulent year, strengthen readers' comprehension of communication expertise, and guide them through the daily communicative process and practice in an ever-changing dynamic world. The book also proposes to extend and expand the realm of communication scholarship from research and education to our daily life and offer meaningful insights into post-2020 communication studies.

The substantial collection begins with an introductory chapter. Beck contextualizes the book with a personal narrative of decisions her family made in 2020, to illustrate how these communicative choices shaped their identities, reactions, and relationships. The structure of the whole book and the underlying reasons are then briefly discussed.

The remaining 21 chapters of the volume fall into three sections. The first section (chapters 2–8) spotlights how communication constructs identities as we move through 2020 and beyond. Chapter 2 centers on the transnational population who migrated from their homelands to the United States for better lives. Through his experience of absence from his homeland, Ahmet Atay proposes that future communication study on traditional notions of home and belonging should be shifted to isolation and loss, which, during the pandemic, has become the factual identity of postcolonial people. Chapter 3 describes the changes in the author's way of performing her marginalized gender and sexuality and the persistent inequality she experienced in 2020. It calls for a research focus on the roles of communication in understanding gender

and sex and in challenging the relevant structural inequality. Couched in Georgy Floyd's murder, chapter 4 argues that public storytelling would be a new way for Black, indigenous, and other people of color to express and understand their identities. Similarly, communication scholars should be more concerned about these peoples' daily and academic work. In chapter 5, Jennifer Scott Mobley recalls her experience of the ongoing changes in religious rituals during the pandemic and suggests that future research should highlight how offline and online religious contexts "become bridged, blended and blurred over time" (p. 42). Chapter 6 illustrates how the pandemic awakened us collectively to the mortality of all bodies, thus providing the opportunity for a cultural shift from "compulsory able-bodiedness" to "hyper-embodiment" (p. 49). Future research, in turn, should engage with the expansion or resistance of such a shift. Chapter 7 proclaims that the events of 2020 exacerbated the complexity of claiming an identity as an ethical communicator. To address this, critical thinking and upholding universal values are vital when evaluating a message for ethical qualities. The last chapter reinforces the role of transparent process and realistic narratives in responsible risk dialogues and deems it necessary to delve into questions such as how risk tolerance changes, how to rebuild confidence in science, and how to respond to challenges from high-ranking officials.

Section II, covering chapters 9–16, examines how communication enables our connection to others and to the world in the context of dramatic social and political divisions in 2020. Chapter 9 declares that interpersonal communication scholars should strive to investigate the role of distance rather than closeness, the way to communicate taboo topics, and the experience of marginalized peoples. Chapter 10 targets the exacerbating social divide in 2020 and argues that an interdisciplinary approach to group-based identities would help bridge the divide. In chapter 11, with her adoptive-stepfamily experiences, Dawn O. Braithwaite illustrates the additional challenges faced by "discourse-dependent" (p. 101) or nontraditional families to maintain successful familial interactions, and reveals how families, via communication, shape our identities. In chapter 12, Tiffany R. Wang depicts the uncertainty she experienced as a faculty member in 2020 and reflects how she adapted her technology to her teaching rather than vice versa. This, she believes, entails future research efforts to provide equal access for students. In chapter 13, with the experience of supporting her daughter with mental disabilities in navigating online education, Diana Isabel Martínez demonstrates that the theory of rhetorical situation is helpful for marginalized students to proactively communicate their individual needs in the general education environment. By outlining American political history, chapter 14 argues that the growing popularity of social media accounts for the unprecedented political polarization in 2020's presidential election and envisions that more informative and meaningful communication among voters, candidates, and media contributes to a better American political culture. Chapter 15 shows the way we selected media to connect with the outside world during the pandemic by balancing our interpersonal and emotional needs with the capacity of media to convey information. Chapter 16 features sports as a "compelling site to evaluate communication in the 2020s" (p. 143) by detailing the rich symbolic meanings it conveyed to shape and represent our positions in political and racial justice issues.

Section III (chapters 17–22) addresses the transformative dimension of communication by highlighting scholar-activist efforts to grapple with the chaos of 2020. Chapter 17 argues that environmental communication manifested itself in 2020 as a discipline of care, where scholars should not only study crisis but also strive to honor environmental justice. Discussing reproductive violence against migrants and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic felt by marginalized laborers, chapter 18 initiates an intersectional, critical, feminist approach to health communication, which is deemed as more inclusive and equitable for

scholars and activists. In chapter 19, drawing on her online teaching experience, Leandra Hinojosa Hernández demonstrates that communication authenticity could generate agency among students, and that technology cannot replace human intentions and efforts because it alone may amplify existing inequities. Through a global comparison of workforce situations during the pandemic, chapter 20 blueprints new areas in organizational communication research, including precarity of labor, civic mobilization, and global workforce inequities. Chapter 21 examines the strategic communication mistakes made by officials and scientists throughout 2020. It urges strategic communication scholars to go beyond the theoretical realm to truly support onsite staff to better their work. The final chapter justifies the activist nature of the discipline and appeals to communication scholars to live both as researchers and activists.

Compared to other works on this subject, this book bears several striking features. First, it involves a wide range of subfields and a collection of scholars with diverse identities and personal background, some of whom are both members and scholars of marginalized populations. Such a multiperspectival discussion is valuable in facilitating a holistic and inclusive understanding of the realities and possibilities of communication studies in the 2020s. Second, the compelling, firsthand accounts of the contributors benefit this book. Specifically, authors engage personal narratives as a method to review and reflect on how they lived through 2020 and examine its communicative consequences, grounding abstract concepts and theories in real-life experience, thus making the material more accessible to a wide readership. It is also noteworthy that the style is quite reader friendly, as each chapter of the book begins with highlighted learning objectives.

Nevertheless, in a few aspects, the book can make itself more appealing. First, considering the important role of science in disinformation resistance, discussed in chapter 12, it is regretful that a chapter on the subfield of science communication is absent. Therefore, we are unable to appreciate how scientists should embrace this new decade by presenting their knowledge in new ways to a diverse audience, especially to the public. Additionally, the contributors all lived their year of 2020 in the United States. Given that the pandemic is a global event with profound impact, it would be more comprehensive if the book incorporated chapters by authors who reflect more international experiences during the pandemic.

Despite the quibbles above, the book is worth recommending to students and scholars interested in communication and relevant disciplines. It can also serve as a guidebook for a general audience intent on understanding and preparing for the complexity of 2020 and beyond.