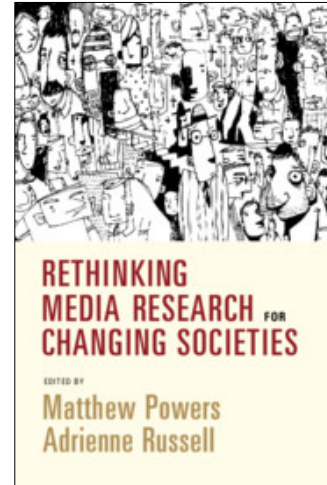


Matthew Powers and Adrienne Russell (Eds.), **Rethinking Media Research for Changing Societies**, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 233 pp., \$24.00 (e-book).

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Media research has been situated for decades at the center of various disciplines such as philosophy, communication, human-centered design and engineering, sociology, politics, and psychology. It has also been contextualized within different theoretical frameworks; for example, Pierre Bourdieu (1999), Herbert Marcuse (1964), and Jürgen Habermas (1989). Although interest in academic research about the media increased since the Internet was launched, discourses about the role of different forms of the media are imperative because societies are evolving. Despite the research contributing to changing societies, authors selected to contribute to **Rethinking Media Research for Changing Societies** identified urgent questions about the media and public discourse. Editors Matthew Powers and Adrienne Russell critically examine such queries in this volume, to figure out how scholars can rethink media research as they navigate the quickly evolving paradigm shifts within the spaces of media and politics, advocacy, and journalism. The book is divided into five parts with two or three chapters included in each part.



In the first part of the volume, consisting of chapters 1 and 2, the dynamics of the datafied world are critically analyzed within the context of how the corporate realm is changing various societies and how different cultures are being promoted through the discourse in the public domain. Chapter 2 highlights the role of research about datafied social structures and the role of various social actors as important players, while chapter 3 explains how social actors live in a myth about data created by private companies. One question that emerges is: How can media research contribute to change in the future of industries? This brings us to the next part about journalism in times of change.

The role of journalists and the values of news are at the center of chapters 4, 5, and 6. In chapter 4, Daniel C. Hallin compares historical scenarios about press freedom in the United States, Turkey, Hungary, Russia, and China (p. 53). Hallin explains that press freedom increased in China and declined in the West and argues that although research on ratings was done, media freedom, empirical research, and theoretical context is lacking. A Bourdieusian approach in chapter 5 explains the field on which journalists play the game. The “game” has constraints and some moves omitted. For example, journalists must improvise given the changes taking place within the “fields” (p. 68).

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Nevertheless, what are the dynamics regarding news these journalists must report? This question brings us to chapter 6. While Part I focuses on the role of data in the contemporary world, Part II (chapter 6) explores the concept of the nature and value of news.

The volume's editors pose a fundamental question about economic and cultural inclusion and exclusion in the media, technology, and racial hegemony. Where are these inclusions and exclusions occurring? The dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion can be observed in contexts such as blogging, documentaries, digital activism, and social media.

The discourse about race and technology is a worldwide phenomenon. Charlton McIlwain seeks to explore the impact of technological paradigm shifts on race, including how, as he considers it, people of African heritage are subjects of the technological revolution and not agents of it. Hence the theory "Afrotechlopolis" described by McIlwain as an American techno-racial formation (p. 110).

How could the authors in Part III further enhance the discourse in relation to including all stakeholders, especially the minority, marginalized groups in communication? This brings us to the discourse and paradigm shift from exclusion to engagement with the media in Part IV.

Hartmut Wessler in Part IV contextualizes media research for changing societies within the theory of constructive engagement, expression, acknowledgment, and exchange. The author argues for this focus on rethinking research within the social sciences from a lack of positive constructive engagement to behavior in communication among social actors, social institutions, and technological affordances. Wessler concludes that within the exchange theoretical context, even negative conflict communication, could contribute to positive communication and it could be contained even if it is robust. This "social science of the possible" emerges as a positive contribution for changing communities.

Lynn Schofield Clark's contribution on the role of youth in chapter 11 demonstrates what occurs when youth take action on issues affecting them and what the role of the journalist is in that engagement. Clark cites examples of youth action as voting in national and local elections, donating to charity, organizing themselves, events, and protesting about issues. The author's theoretical concern is that not enough research was done about new forms of youth engagement in politics.

In the last part of the book, the editors delve into the role of scholars, with the focus on communication research, communication as translation, and discourse about academia. Seth C. Lewis finds it difficult to understand what scholars are doing with communication research. The author identified two challenging areas, internally among disciplines and externally among the public. For example, internally U.S.-based communication research was mostly ignored because of dependence on government funding. Externally, for example, a very important ideology such as democratic liberalism is in withdrawal mode in many parts of the world. The author concluded that Mode 1, traditional scholarship, and Mode 2, publicly oriented work, could be blended in such a way that social change is promoted through public engagement by scholars to advance communication research. Guobin Yang locates communication within the discourse of translation, polarization, and transmission. The author argues that ethical and practical implications should not be ignored in communication as translation. Guobin Yang suggests methodological orientations

whereby the experiences of research subjects should take the lead in sharing their experiences, especially minority groups such as Black women and LGBTQ+ groups. For example, in a study by Lavinia Africa (2002), where the author explores the experiences of women in arranging and undergoing second-trimester abortions, women were interviewed pre- and post-termination to attach special sociological meaning within the context of stigma to their experiences. Hence, Black epistemological approaches are of utmost importance to social research and communication research. In the last chapter by Nabil Echchaibi, various scholars are discussed and compared in relation to the role of academia. Echchaibi highlights the Gramscian approach of organic intellectualism. For example, sociologists make visible the invisible by applying the organic public sociological methodology. Furthermore, the visibility of communication research will reach multiple academic and nonacademic networks, institutions, connections, and infrastructures.

Overall, this text by editors Powers and Russell makes an insightful contribution to the discourse on media research. The book also contains theoretical and methodological context about the phenomena of how societies are changing because of the complex evolution of the media. The 14 included studies are relevant to a broad readership ranging from beginners to experienced researchers in the fields of sociology, politics, communication, and technology.

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