Theory Showcase: Foucault and theories of Power

Big data: shaping knowledge, shaping everything life

Knowledge about society recently taken a new direction, motiveted by the digital media. Unprecedented amounts of data make it possible to study in this area. BIg data research has enabled powerful advances in knowledge about the role that media plays in society, and how it reshap social science towards .

Defination of Big Data: Previously, collecting and analysing data on a sufficiently large scale was difficult, impractical or impossible. Hence, the definition of big data concerns how big data research advances beyond previous research.

Defination of Data: Data has three characteristics:

1. Data belongs to the object or phenomenon under investigation and it is material collected about the research object.
2. Data exists prior to analysis.
3. Third, data is the most divisible or atomized useful unit of analysis.

One question about how advancing academic knowledge about digital media fits into social science. Bakshy et al. researched on the 10 million American Facebook users and found that how different social meida are used in different contexts, combining their political uses and uses for socializing, could be one way to think about how new meida are both personal but also scale beyond personal messages[2]. Another example is about the mobile phones, research shows that the most frequent regular contact via mobile phones is with a small number of people.

Three limitations of big data in the social sciences:

Quantitative social science and efforts to introduce digital tools and data into research are nothing new. What is new in big data research are the data sources, which provide access to readily manipulable data. It is worthing noting that the data needs to be such that it meets the criteria of science, namly, being open to validation and replication. Besides, big data research is still largely in a phase of high task uncertainly and low mutual dependence.

The second limitation of big data is that findings in applied or commercial settings are often of limited significance because they are aimed at short-term prectical goals, when social media data are analysed for marketing purposes. This implies that the findings are unlikely to apply beyond a particular marketing campaign or a specific population[1].

Another limitations is that research in social science mainly has an impact in certain areas of policy even though soical science is marking great strides due to the availability of big data.

Competition for attention depends increasingly on analytics or metrics in a high-choice onliine media environment. But there is limited research on the conquences of whether analytics shape the news that is read or viewed. It will be useful to digress briefly to look at how big data analytics can be used for political mobilization. Technological shaping in relation to big data and digital media means that knowledge becomes more powerful or effective.

Future

The implication of account of the how digital media bring about social change in four countries:

- One of the implication is that social theory needs a theory of meida;
- At the macro level, the Web and its audience go against, for example, facile claims that information has become global[1].

Does technology lead to globalization?

YES

What role should theory play in our understanding of media and the internet, and where are the limits of theory?

Social theory focuses social science knowledge on paritcular problems and provides only general options for remedying them.

Does a theory of the internet influence policy or aim to intervene in social change?

YES

Does this mean that social theory therefore leaves everything as it is?

NO

In the case of information seeking, the author have seen that it is necessary to separate serious information from non-serious information. In relation to politics, the author have seen that new social forces have gained political power via digital media; they have circumvented the gatekeepers of traditional media to set new agendas[1]. Another, author tell us that social theory guides research, here, about digital media in society.

Technological determinism revisited

Technological shaping applies not only to everyday life, but also at various levels. For example, parties and leaders cannot obtain power without relying on media cam- paigns, and none of them can govern without managing media relations[1]. Caging can also be seen from the individual's perspective.

Reference:

[1] Schroeder, Ralph. *Social theory after the internet*. UCL Press, 2018.

[2] Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. "Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook." *Science* 348, no. 6239 (2015): 1130-1132.