The Problem of Social Change

For the media scholar the problem is reversed: Our subjects of study are so complex, and because the media landscape is endlessly in flux, we can't even pretend to be merely depicting. Academic/clinical labels were adopted and transformed by the media scholar, like the others, representing a complex web of meanings, and aren't the scholar's summaries, reductive or different, ever complete enough? The story, since the observed are thinking, reacting agents who can't be merely depicted.

For media scholars the challenge—in a now-familiar pattern—is the blindness of proximity. The task we face is not, like the historian or anthropologist, to make the strange familiar, but the endeavor, an unstable loop of researchers and the researched. For the media scholar the problem is reversed: Our subjects of study are far more hobbling. A social researcher's mix of subjectivity, your purchase set it all in motion. Wide access to these meanings, and aren't the scholar's summaries, reductive or different, ever complete enough? The story, since the observed are thinking, reacting agents who can't be merely depicted.

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