

CHAPTER 11

MEDIA SOCIOLOGY UNDER DIGITAL SIEGE

Necla ODYAKMAZ ACAR¹, Şebnem ÇAĞLAR²

¹Associate Prof., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, Journalism, Turkey
e-mail: necla.acar@istanbul.edu.tr

²Prof. Dr., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, Journalism, Turkey
e-mail: caglars@istanbul.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

Media sociology is an effort to reveal the micro and macro effects that changes and transformations in the structure of the media cause on the social structure. Media sociology, which focuses on the products and consumers of printed or digital media and tries to identify and solve the problems that arise in the relationship between the media and society with a sociological approach, utilizes both cultural studies and critical theory as well as system theory. Media sociology studies, which have become an important sub-branch of sociology today, have saved the media from being a dependent variable and enabled it to be recognized as an independent institution on its own. Since it was accepted that “life is digital” in the 21st century, the center of media sociology studies shifted to digital technologies and the digital society created by using these technologies.

This study aims to reveal the definition of media sociology, its scope, studies that can be conducted in this field, and the concepts and theories that can be employed in these studies. Our study, which aims to fill the deficiency of comprehensive research in the field of media sociology, is based on the literature review as its method. We assume that our study, which explores the approaches and discussions that can be a guide in media sociology studies by compiling them from a certain perspective, will make an important contribution to the literature.

Keywords: Media sociology, social theory, new media sociology, digital society

1. Introduction

Social theory, which constitutes the theoretical basis that media sociology draws on the most, either did not focus on the social influences of the media until the late 19th century or developed theories suggesting that this influence was insignificant. The media became the subject of social theory when newspapers began to pay attention to the common man along with the improvements in democracy and human rights towards the end of the 19th century. This led the elitist view to see the media as a threat to democracy, a manipulation tool, as the public's poorly supervised access to representation and the symbolic.

The contribution of system theorists, who consider society as a system and view the media as a part of this system, to the studies of media sociology is undeniable. System theorists, who argue that society cannot be regarded as a whole consisting of juxtaposed individuals, suggest that society is shaped within the framework of communication processes and social systems network. Media sociologists' area of research focuses on revealing social systems that form around the meanings produced through the media. The "Critical Theory" shaped by the ideas of Frankfurt School philosophers and the "Cultural Studies" covering the work of Birmingham School philosophers are the studies that shed light on the field of work of media sociologists.

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In the first part of the study, which consists of five main sections, the foundations and development of social theory are elaborated, and the significance of social theory studies for media sociology is emphasized. In the second part, the studies of Chicago School sociologists are discussed; the third part questions the social position of the media within the framework of system theory, and the fourth part investigates the studies of the Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools and their influence on media sociology. The fifth chapter includes a sociological perspective on new media, which has started to be used more effectively than traditional media by the younger generation since 2000 and, therefore, should be an important research area for media sociologists.

2. Media Sociology Studies and Social Theory

Having limited power to influence the masses since its technology was not adequately developed in the 19th century, the media could not find a place within the research interests of social theory. In that century, the social theory either did not mention the social influence of the media at all or emphasized that it had little or no significance. As also discussed in Alexis de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America," which was published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840 and is considered one of the earliest studies of modern society, the generally accepted idea of that century was: "the press has enormous power in a democracy, but contrary to its general appreciation, not the power to manipulate consciousness: Although the press knows very well how to ignite human passions, it cannot create these passions alone" (in Maigret, 2014, p. 50). The social theory's inclusion of the media into research happened as a result of the development of industry and communication technologies in the late 19th century, as well as progress in democracy and human rights which made the ordinary citizens visible to the press. The fact that journalists started addressing other people, as well as the elites, frightened the elitist sociologists, and these sociologists regarded the masses manipulated by the media, which was beginning to be considered as the public's poorly supervised access to representation and the symbolic, and saw the culture of these masses as a threat to the high and elite culture they defended. Today, however, communication technologies have reached such a level that they can influence the masses on a global scale. The masses are now influenced, directed, supervised, and even controlled by the media. Therefore, examining the social effects of the media, which has become a means of social control under the authority of economic and political power centers, has become one of the main subjects of social theory and media sociology studies.

Being the most important background that media sociologists refer to when producing their thoughts on media and social relations and social effects of media, social theory feeds on a rich pool of thought formed by the work of many thinkers. The initial ideas that social theorists who addressed societies in an evolutionary approach were based on Auguste Comte's ideas, which separated the stages of human development according to the ways of thinking, and the ideas of Karl Marx, which classified the history of humankind according to the means of production.

Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann, and Jürgen Habermas, who developed their ideas within the framework of social theory, approached social transformation in the light of the theory of evolution just like Comte and Marx.

According to Spencer, evolving societies became different, or increased differentiation was indicative of progress. As a result of differentiation, just like in an organism, the elements became codependent, and, as was necessary, integration between the parts took place. The most significant point that distinguishes Spencer from Comte is that while according to Comte, theology or religion belonged to a social evolution phase that had been left behind; Spencer argued that religious feeling would never disappear. According to Spencer, religious emotion could change shape, but it would always continue to exist. Therefore, Spencer rejected Comte's positivist and rationalist Humanity Religion. On the other hand, Durkheim divided societies into two in terms of having "mechanical solidarity" or "organic solidarity." To Durkheim, mechanical solidarity was the result of similarity, and organic solidarity was the result of differentiation. In primitive society, individuals were alike, whereas, in modern society, the individual was differentiated from society. Among differentiated individuals, division of labor and consensus arose, whereas, in primitive societies, individuals could replace each other (Şentürk, 2019). The fact that Spencer considered social development equivalent to differentiation and Durkheim defined advanced society with differentiation between individuals calls for questioning the media's role in this differentiation because both thinkers argued that this differentiation would inevitably bring social solidarity and partnership. However, research on media's influence on individuals and society revealed that one of the most important effects of the media is stereotyping.

Stereotypes can be considered a certain subset of our social reality beliefs. Stating that the dominant understanding of a society tends to be the understanding of the dominant social groups of that society, Marx remarked that these groups had the power to determine common understandings and made definitions accepted in society indisputable. Communication technologies are undoubtedly the transmitter of the views that dominant groups want to impose on society. This means that the stereotypes in the media convey the message of what thoughts, actions, and roles are appropriate for members of the society. The actions of individuals manipulated in this way are made predictable, controllable, and preventable. The content of the media that creates discourse aimed at directing the actions of individuals has become an ideology that legitimizes the interests of the dominant groups whose views it conveys. The stereotyping effect of media is an important field for media sociology studies.

Unlike Marx, who classified society in terms of production types and argued that the existing contradictions in capitalism would necessarily bring socialism and that the West would overcome these contradictions with its internal dynamics; Max Weber held the view that 'the economy and the bureaucracy would gradually increase their control over society and

the individual, and this would eventually turn into an “iron cage.” “Taking everything under state control (socialism),” which Marx saw as salvation, meant the loss of the freedom for the individual and society to Weber. According to Weber’s sociological approach, East and West differ in terms of modes of behavior. While individuals of developed Western societies adopt rational behavior, individuals of the undeveloped East adopt value-dependent, traditional, and emotional modes of behavior. Rational behavior is rarely seen in Eastern societies, while in Western societies, value-dependent, traditional and emotional behaviors are rare (Şentürk, 2019). Rationalization as a social process involves the systematic application of scientific reason to the everyday world and the rationalization of routine activities through carrying systematic knowledge into practice. In general, social rationalization consists of the extension of bureaucratic control, construction of modern surveillance systems, dependence on the nation-state as a supervisory actor, and the emergence of new forms of administration. Therefore, rationalization, a dominant theme in Weber’s sociology, is often compared to the theme of alienation and reification in Marx’s works (Turner, 2014, pp. 37-38). Habermas objected to Weber and argued that the most rational behavior was communicative behavior. According to Habermas, human social behavior was divided into four categories: teleological, normatively regulated, dramaturgical, and communicative. Teleological (strategic or instrumental) behavior belonged to the objective world, normative behavior belonged to the social world, and communicative behavior belonged to the subjective world. True rationality was in communicative behavior, not teleological behavior, as Weber claimed because it constructed the world of life (Şentürk, 2019). However, system processes tend to colonize the world of life in the modern era, utilizing the tools of money and power that make language no longer a means. In the root of this problem lies the increase in differentiation and material production resulting from social evolution.

Emile Durkheim’s views on religion and ritual have guided media sociologists in studies on how mass media (and, later on, the media) influences society. In line with this view, it has been suggested that the media contents produce common meanings and then reinforce social cohesion. Media sociologists, especially focusing on Durkheim’s view that “society regularly needs to preserve and reaffirm the collective ideas that make up common senses, unity, and personality” have argued that media contents justify the social and economic status quo by multiplying dominant ideas or ideology (Matthews, 2017). Durkheim, who saw society as a biological organism composed of parts that were independent of the individuals who constituted it and had assumed different functions, commented on ‘social phenomena’ used by society to suppress individuals and limit their actions. Defining religious or moral rules

and cultural rituals as social phenomena used for social oppression, Durkheim's views led media sociologists to treat media contents as social phenomena that have manipulating and action-restricting effects on the individual.

In early research on how political and economic social contexts influence media organizations conducted as part of Max Weber's proposition to "focus on journalistic institutions and examine who owns or controls them, how they work in terms of politics and economy," Fred Seaton Siebert et al. claimed that "journalistic institutions take the shape of the social systems they operate in;" whereas Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini stated "the relations that media institutions have with the state (or the government) is a significant determiner in their activities," (Matthews, 2017). In addition, media is the most appropriate field for the condition that Weber conceptualized as 'social action' and 'social relationship' and interpreted action and relationship through the interaction with the other. People interact with each other, particularly through new media, and shape their actions with the information they acquire through the media. Being a structure that people both influence and are influenced by, the media is an ideal environment for the emergence of 'social action' and 'social relationship.' As media organizations are usually privately owned, profit-making commercial enterprises, they can often act under the direction of political power. Moreover, it is the political mechanism that determines the legal framework and the rules that media organizations have to follow and obey; however, the media is a force that the political system needs to manipulate, supervise, and use to monitor society. For this reason, politics and the media have turned into two social systems that act together and look after each other's interests.

Another view emphasized in media sociology studies is the concept of 'partnership,' which Karl Marx described as 'social as collaborative work' and Ferdinand Tönnies described as 'social as community' and which they considered as the power that created communities. Marx had the opinion that, through the collaboration of hand, tongue, and brain, societies "became capable of executing more and more complicated operations, and of setting themselves, and achieving, higher and higher aims" (Fuchs, 2014, p. 61) Tönnies expressed that it was the feelings of togetherness and values that kept communities together. These feelings and values created 'co-operation.' What Marx wanted to express with the concept of 'partnership' was people working together to produce the goods they needed and the common use of the means of production. However, the capitalist system has transformed the concept of 'partnership' to meet its own interests and resorted to filling many people into factories to produce goods. Nonetheless, workers have not been able to own any of the means of production. Thus,

they have become alienated to people, to the product, to themselves, and to their own labor. The question ‘Can communication tools eliminate this alienation?’ belongs to the study field of media sociology. Many studies on this subject indicate that the media cannot create a social action that leads to cooperation and partnership, even if they create interaction between people. Because even though the media leads to interaction between people, it cannot create a social action that leads to collaboration and partnership. This is because consciousness formed by the media is one that legitimizes the hegemony of power groups.

Although there were many studies on the influence of mass media in the pre-World War II period, the most important studies based on theoretical and conceptual foundations began in the 1950s. The social transformation created by modernization, and particularly the concept of “mass society” that was developed within the framework of Marxist thought, shaped the sociological thought on mass media until the 1950s. Media sociologists adopted this idea agree that the mass media, whose power was increasing day by day, would have negative effects on individuals who flocked to cities, broke with their roots, and became lonely. In particular, they argued that mass media was influential in the reproduction of the status quo. Media sociologists with a liberal pluralist approach adopted the idea that mass media would contribute to democracy by facilitating the circulation of ideas and bringing more people together. In the 1960s, the relationship between the media and power began to be emphasized. In particular, issues such as “the relations of media workers with power and to what extent they are independent of power” and “how much the media allows for different voices and thoughts in their contents” started to constitute media sociology. In the 1980s, the relationship between globalization and media, and audience studies became the most important subjects of media sociology. Since the 1950s, a growing body of media studies has focused on the ownership structure of the media, media employees, the organizational structure of the media, and the influence of the reader/viewer/audience on the media content.

Media sociologists working on the negative effects of the media’s ownership structure on the content claim that the horizontal integration (or merger) created by the gathering of small enterprises of the industry within holding companies as well as vertical integration resulting from media owners who also have businesses operating in many areas disproportionately increase the influence of the media. This structure also imposes a noncritical and politically reactionary media culture. Essentially, this media culture positions the media viewers as consumers, not citizens, and imposes the cultures of the developed countries on the underdeveloped countries (Matthews, 2017). Debating the social impacts of media technologies, Jürgen Habermas, one of the recent representatives of the Frankfurt School,

states that people are coded as consumers. Habermas argues that the distinction between the “system world,” which includes the state and capitalist organizations, and the “life-world,” which defines the world of individuals who are in social, familial, and face-to-face communication -which he considerably emphasized while explaining the communicative action theory-, is now abolished, and the life-world has been invaded and colonized by the system world. In the process of invasion and colonization, the media causes the destruction of the public sphere, and the multinational corporations that are the carriers of the capitalist system lead to the abolition of democracy. In this process, “passive consumers” take the place of active receptors and debaters (Alver, 2007, p. 155). In the words of Habermas: “Inasmuch as the mass media today strip away the literary husks from the kind of bourgeois self-interpretation and utilize them as marketable forms for the public services provided in a culture of consumers, the original meaning is reversed,” (in Kellner, 2016, p. 139). The public sphere, which is extremely important in the production of social awareness and creation of public opinion, is now occupied by the media, and the media directs society through content produced by professional perception managers. The new society established by a form of communication that allows no exchange of ideas and is transformed into propaganda through unilateral information flow has been transformed into a society defined as mass society or consumer society.

The most important subject of recent media studies is the research centered on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony.” The concepts of “globalization of capital,” “multinational corporations,” and “economic power,” which began to be expressed along with globalization, tell us that besides political power, capital has become more prominent in the structuring of power, because “the culture in which money is everything,” which Veblen explained as the “culture of money,” has become a global culture. The one who owns money owns everything. The media that positions the citizen as a consumer is a tool that produces and then reinforces the hegemonic power of capital. Economic infrastructure has become the main determinant of the social system. The biggest problem of the media, which is a part of the social system, is that it operates under the guidance of economic and political systems. The declaration of the Immediast Group, which was formed by Noam Chomsky, also showed that the most important problem of the media is to be under the direction of capital and political power. They underlined that the media should be freed from the capital and state control as soon as possible in order to carry out the task of informing the public and supervising the system on behalf of the public. Their studies dwell upon media employees, the obligation to produce media content as a “marketable product” and the problems that this obligation brings, such

as corruption, standardization, and banalization. Media sociology, whose research subject is what media employees take into consideration or ignore in order to minimize commercial risk while creating content, aspires to determine the structural positions of media employees as “gatekeepers.”^{1*}

While studies dealing with the social effects of the media with a liberal approach place great responsibility on the media for the protection of freedom of expression and securing freedoms, the work of those who adopt the Marxist approach suggest that the media supports the shaping of unequal social relations, images, and representations of ideological society (Stevenson, 2015, p. 25). The liberal approach deals with the effects of media on social life from a positive libertarian perspective and with the assumption that society and institutions are free. However, it ignores the property problem determined by the economic infrastructure as well as the social structure deteriorated by the relations of production. For this reason, optimism prevails in the predictions of society and communication established within liberal views. Those who produce opinions in line with liberal views have dreamt of a more tolerant, democratic, pluralist world where there are no limits, and people can easily access and share information. Concepts such as Marshall McLuhan’s “Global Village,”^{2**} Alvin Toffler’s “Electronic Cottage,”^{3***} and Etzioni’s “Active Society” have been produced with this optimism. However, the Marxist approach provided a more realistic analysis by establishing meaningful relationships between economic infrastructure, property problems, and the mass culture produced with media contents.

3. The Influence of the Chicago School on Media Sociology Studies

Holding a pragmatic approach, the Chicago School, which included the most significant representatives of the liberal approach, drew a positive picture of communication and

1 *Gatekeeper (Door Holder); The view that compares the job of the media owners or reporters, editors-in-chief, executive editors, other communication professionals working in the media who have the competence to gather, reject, approve, process and present news to the job of a janitor who monitors people coming in and going out of an apartment building (Çebi, 1996, p. 248).

Gatekeepers are people who make decisions in the first stage of the news production process. These people at the gate of the news channels choose which of the events that were sent to them will make the news and go beyond the gate and reach the audience through the channel. They decide which events will make the news in what order and for how long. Gatekeepers are usually news editors. These people primarily determine the agenda of the institutions they work for and thus contribute to the determination of the agenda of society (Yaylagül, 2006, pp. 72-73)

2 **Global Village; McLuhan’s idea that electronic media will reunite humanity and create a single state of consciousness globally by spreading culture.

3 ***Electronic Pavilion; Toffler’s prediction that in a society on the brink of the third wave, houses will be equipped with electronic devices, and art and craft, food production as well as other types of small scale production will be more home oriented (Görgün, 1992, p. 62).

communication technologies. While George H. Mead held the view “if communication between people were perfect, then democracy would be perfect too,” Charles H. Cooley saw the possibility of building a real secondary community in the technical revolution of the media. John Dewey, by deepening Cooley’s thesis, argued that instead of creating an unorganized and perverted mass, communication, in reality, opened up an authentic “public” space by enabling the individual who held expectations of having means of intellectuality, inquisition, and self-representation to understand the phenomenon of independence and, by giving institutions the legitimacy provided by real discussion. Robert E. Park, who laid the foundations of the ethnographic analysis of the press, pioneered actual sociological press sociology rich in terms of observing journalist behavior through field research. Park’s study of the division of labor in newspapers as well as his efforts to analyze the gaze of the journalist through the question “what do they choose as a case?” in order to prove the validity of the concept of *gatekeepers*, which was borrowed from Kurt Lewin and included in journalistic research, are important in media sociology studies (Maigret, 2014, pp. 58-60).

Harold Lasswell used the term “hypodermic needle” to describe the effect faced by passive audiences, the term “mass communication” to describe the boundaries of the field of research on the so-called mass media, and lastly, in 1948, he coined the famous term “communication model,” (Who says What to Whom in Which Channel with What Effect) which defined the sub-branches of this field (from the examination of the message formulator to the effect of the messages) (Maigret, 2014, pp. 78-79). Lasswell’s formula illustrated a typical feature of early communication models: the fact that the communicator intends to influence the receiver was acknowledged from the start, and from this, it was concluded that communication was a persuasive process. Such models have contributed to the tendency to overestimate the effect, and, particularly, the results created by mass communication. This formula was the result of Lasswell’s interest in political communication and propaganda and was very suitable for political propaganda analysis (Mcquail & Windahl, 2005, p. 29). While Lasswell approached mass communication as a planned application of certain technologies for the purpose of mass persuasion, information transfer, or control, and clearly demonstrated the concerns of the field through his formula, the dominance of the prevailing view on media’s influence prevented this consideration from being sufficiently taken into account. As Lasswell’s formula lost its influence, studies on communication shifted to the definition of “sender” and “receiver,” their roles in communication, and the influence of social structure and social forces in their relations with each other.

“The common ground between those who saw mass media appearing as a sign of a new beginning for democracy and those who saw the media as evil means was that they had the same understanding of the mass *communication process*. Their viewpoint was primarily formed by the assumption of a fragmented mass of millions of readers, listeners, and viewers ready to receive the ‘*Message*,’ then it was based on the idea that each Message was a powerful and direct stimulus for action that produces an immediate response. In short, communication media was thought to be a new unifying force that reached every eye and every ear in an impersonal society characterized by the scarcity of interpersonal relations” (Maigret, 2014, p. 104). As a result of the field studies on “influence” conducted under the leadership of Elihu Katz, Bernard R. Berelson, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld from Columbia University until the mid-1950s, it was determined that the influence rising from interpersonal relations played an extensive role in the transmission of information and changes in attitudes, the primary groups were significant, and the role of the mass media was limited. As a result of the findings of field research, the concepts of “two-step communication flow,”^{4*} opinion leadership, and gatekeeper began to be used in media research (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 2). With the two-step communication flow theory, the thesis of the unlimited power of the media was proven wrong. It was found that the influence of the media was indirect and limited, it was filtered by the cognitive abilities of the individual, and expanded horizontally within networks, not vertically from the sender to the receiver.

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz reiterated their “opinion leadership” and “two-step communication flow” theses with the research results and evaluations they presented in their book “Personal Influence,” and thus refuted certain theses, such as the direct influence and hypodermic needle. In their essay “Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action,” Lazarsfeld and Robert K. focused on *providing status, supporting social norms, and narcotic effect* as the main functions of mass communication in society. Regarding the ownership structure and functioning of the mass media, Lazarsfeld and Merton stated that the media was supported by large commercial industrial companies, so the media was naturally expected to contribute to the system by cultivating conservation (cultivation theory) or by preventing the development of real critical view, and that this was

4 *The Two-Step Flow Method consists of a combination of several approaches. Sociometry employs the questions asked about relationships in primary groups (Who meets whom? Who says who is influenced by whom? What is it about?) in parallel with the sociology of interests and consumption of media (Who reads, listens to, watches what?). The secondary wave of interviews is conducted with the same people, shuttling between the same interview, monitoring and influence questions (it is possible to identify influential people between family and friends networks), verification techniques, and re-evaluation questions on consumption questions (why has the behavior been changed?). It is concluded that the assumption of the superiority of interpersonal relations over the media is confirmed in the decision making (Maigret, 2014, p. 103).

normal (Erdoğan, Keloğlu, & Durmuş, 2005, pp. 11-12). Psychologist Elihu Katz started a discussion and stated that the media studies focused on the question of what the media does to people, whereas the question that actually needed to be asked was what people do with the media. “The Uses and Gratification” approach was based on Katz’s research and work. According to Katz, people have social and psychological needs. As a result of these needs, people build certain expectations from the media and other sources to meet those needs. As a consequence of being exposed to the media, they meet some of their needs (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 62). The “*Uses and Gratification Movement*” is an approach that treats media as a liberating environment. According to this approach, media consumers use the media to improve themselves in line with their needs and desires. This use makes the consumer active as an action taken by the decisions made by the consumer of their own free will. Media is an important part of society. It is indispensable for ensuring integrity when it acts in harmony with society. However, it is extremely dangerous for social cohesion when it acts together with different interest groups apart from society. If we define the media as the field of meaning-value production and power establishment, the importance of media as a field in which the culture that holds society together is produced and power relations are legitimized can be seen more clearly.

There are many studies aimed at determining the “use and gratification” of the viewers who received something from the mass media in the 60s and 70s. However, in these studies, almost no researcher has tried to answer the question “why we read the news.” This is because, with the development of communication technologies, the journalist has moved away from society, and the desires and needs of the individuals forming the society have lost their importance for the journalist. The needs of the boss have become more important for the journalist that neither receives nor needs feedback from the viewer/reader. As Herbert Gans pointed out, reporters and editors at news magazines and network television programs “had little knowledge about the actual audience and rejected feedback from it. Although they had a vague image of the audience, they paid very little attention to it. Instead, they filmed and wrote for their superiors and for themselves, assuming that what interested them would interest their audience” (Schudson, 1994, p. 319). The fact that media employees take care of the interests of their bosses rather than the public resulted from journalism’s neglect of its duties that are needed to be fulfilled within the framework of social responsibility theory, the duty to inform the public and to oversee politicians and bureaucrats on behalf of the public. Journalists under the capital’s control have begun to see the public as heaps that consume whatever you give, do whatever you want, and are easily manipulated.

Stuart Hall gave the most remarkable response to those who see the people as a homogeneous mass and a heap that acknowledges the content conveyed by the media unquestioningly, through a hegemonic reading. One of the most significant studies on media audiences is undoubtedly the “Coding/Decoding” by Birmingham School representative Stuart Hall. In this study, Hall presented some characteristics in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity for the way audiences react and interpret media content. The study also showed that media viewers interpret media content using a collective framework of meaning. These collective frameworks might arise from broader social, political insights shared by groups, or from more local perspectives, they form as part of their communities (Matthews, 2017)

In recent years, media sociology has focused especially on the audience’s resilience against, dependence on, testimony to, and fragility against media content in its studies on media’s social impacts. Particularly, in new media studies, there is evidence that users tend to adapt themselves to the content.

Another communication scientist who studies the consumption of media content, Sonia Livingstone, describes the act of consuming television content as an interesting process in which the viewer is active. In addition, Livingstone prefers to use the concept of ‘text’ instead of ‘message’ for media content. According to Livingstone, media content is more complex and open to interpretation than the ‘message’ suggests. Therefore, it would be correct to use the concept of ‘text’ to define the structure of media content, which includes signs and words that are open to layered reading incorporating all the meanings and implications.

Livingstone’s basic framework is centered on how people interpret a media text is based on a negotiation between qualities of the text and the qualities of the reader. Qualities of the text would include such things as how that text is structured, the form of the text, its degree of openness, and what sorts of social understandings are infused in the language of the text. Reader qualities would fundamentally include everything the individual reader brings with him or her at that time: cognitive skills, previous experience with the medium, a particular emotional state, and, more importantly, for this discussion, social history, and all the memory traces connected to it. The interpretation that comes out of this is the result of the text pulling meaning in some direction, and the reader working the meaning in another direction (Gorham, 1999, p. 238).

Tamar Liebes argued that the concept of “mass media audience” is problematic since it did not explain the common experiences of individuals who wandered in a forest of multiple TV channels, alternating between the “old media” and the “new media” every day (Matthews,

2017). Similarly, new media technology has made the boundaries between the content producer and the content consumer invisible, regarding the production of media content. Everyone in the new media can produce and share their own content like a professional message designer. This has made the research field of media sociology broader and more difficult. Media sociologists are now also investigating the problems arising from the fact that new media consumers are not only consumers but also producers in an interactive communication environment.

4. Considering Media Sociology within the Framework of System Approach

Before World War II, there had been attempts to handle scientific issues from a different point of view, and the scientific studies aimed at understanding the universe and life in the world acknowledged that everything was connected and complementary and that the whole had to be understood in order to be decoded. However, it was later suggested that the parts of the whole must be deciphered in order for the whole to be understood. The word “system” was chosen as the best explanation for this idea. As a result, the new school of thought known as the “System Approach” entered into the scientific world with the “General System Theory” initiated by the Austrian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1920s.

Bertalanffy postulated the existence of principles and laws that applied to any kind of system (at least in predefined classes of systems), irrespective of the nature of the system’s elements and specific properties. Bertalanffy’s “general systemology” aimed at their formulation. It should ideally reach the stage of a logico-mathematical theory, able to derive a priori from the abstract definition of a system and the introduction of special conditions, definite general laws of systems that apply not only to the natural sciences but also to the human and social sciences. This “systemology” is intended to be simultaneously logic and a methodology of system modeling, facilitating, and codifying the model transfers between different fields of research, enabling in that way to avoid superficial analogies while underlining the significant “homologies” and furthering the progress of non-physical sciences toward “exactitude.” Its major goal is to generate a new type of unity of science: not a unity based on the reduction of the concepts, methods, or even laws of all sciences to the ones of a single science regarded as more essential but rather a formal unity based on the generality and ubiquity of the system concept and on the “isomorphisms” it induces between sciences of which the logical and methodological autonomy is guaranteed (Pouvreau & Drack, 2007, p. 283). Those who used the system approach in sociology were Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann.

Focusing on the relations between systems and subsystems, Parsons firstly discussed society as a system in order to explain the social function and saw “integration” as the most important function of that system. Accordingly, the system approach is a model that is used to emphasize particularly the functional explanations as well as the continuity of the system. In this approach, society is described as a system comprised of related elements. Parts of the system cannot be understood separately from the integrity of the system; in other words, no parts are separate from the whole. On the other hand, any changes seen in any part of the system leads to an imbalance in the system (Çelik, 2007, p. 53). In *The Social System*, in which Parsons put forward his ideas about the social system, he discussed social action in three sub-systems. These were the social system, cultural system, and personality system. The behavioral organism, which was later added to these sub-systems, refers to the discussion of the individuals living in and constituting the social system -which is defined as a living system- as the major organisms that make up this structure. Thanks to the innate learning skills of these organisms and their ability to adapt to the feedback from their environment, the adjustment/adaptation process necessary for the social system can be achieved (Sarp, 2016, p. 19). Parsons’s Theory of Structural Functionalism, which proceeded towards the social system and general system theory by examining social action, proposed a holistic model of society, and placed order and balance at the center of the system. In structural functionalism, society is regarded as a system similar to the biological system, drifting apart from its environment and withdrawing into its own shell. Therefore, the social system tries to ensure integration in order to eliminate the disturbances in its environment, improve the interaction process between the system and the environment, and create relative stability (Alver, 2007, p. 98). An attempt to fill the gap that emerged in Parson’s theory of structural functionalism due to ignoring the system-environment relationship was made by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. In Luhmann’s theory, the formation of the system always required the limitation of the “environment,” which was not always included in the “system” in every stage. In other words, the concept of the system included the necessity of a distinction between the inside and outside of a system. Luhmann drew a boundary that separated the system from its environment and showed a clear distinction between those involved in the system and its environment. Therefore, no system structure could be understood without establishing a relationship with its environment (Çelik, 2007, p. 56).

At first, Luhmann disregarded social differences as the structural principles of society and, instead, paid attention to the different social systems (economics, politics, law, science) that he thought to be independent of each other, and described these systems, each of which

assumed important social tasks, as functional systems. Luhmann considered the media system as a social system similar to the economy, science, and religion systems. Elements of this system were communicative operations. Social systems created unique codes that determined what to communicate. In the case of media, these codes were named “information” or “non-information.” Only in the case of information, communication could be established. According to Luhmann, the three types of programs he identified as news, advertisement, and entertainment programs within the media system serve as carriers for the design of social reality. In line with this approach, the media directs society by designing reality. The communication media conducts the selection/elimination of events and directs others to accept the selection/elimination. It does this by creating symbols and codes. Luhmann argued that “world society,” which he defined as the unity of social sum, would be realized through communication, which, to him, was the basic operations of social systems (Alver, 2007, pp. 99-102). According to Luhmann, social systems do not consist of people’s activities but rather “communication” processes and networks between them. Society only exists when individuals communicate. Individuals cannot take part in society unless they communicate; their participation in society only occurs when they communicate. Individuals become visible through social communication. To Luhmann, society is not shaped as a simple collection of people but as a network of communication processes and social systems. The systems thus consist only of communication through meanings created by society. Humans affect systems in proportion to the communication (such as verbal, written, performative) that occur within different meaning systems and thus are interpreted in different ways (Çelik, 200, pp. 58-59). In societies consisting of individuals in contact with each other, changes occur in the codes of social participation of individuals. The development of communication technologies primarily leads to the facilitation of social participation and the elimination of hierarchies. In traditional societies, stratification based on the hierarchy is sharper, whereas, in today’s society, we cannot speak of stratification. Especially, the new media that has come into our lives along with internet technology eliminated hierarchical order. Any person can now communicate one-to-one with whomever they want. These developments have facilitated the inclusion of individuals in the system. While the individual feels that s/he is integrated with the system, s/he also feels important with the confidence of being able to communicate comfortably with everyone and therefore approves of the system. As Luhmann predicted, new communication systems have included people in the system, made them visible, and educated them to become world communities. Produced to form a global political, economic, and social system, “global culture” is transmitted to people through the global communication network, and this network also provides the legitimacy of this new system.

The structuralistic-functional social system approach developed by Talcott Parsons formed the basic theoretical framework of sociological research in the 1950s. In response to Parsons' approach that excludes the human actor, the "bringing men back in" approach has begun to dominate sociology since the mid-1960s. In this context, interpretative approaches such as ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism have emerged from the idea that the individual actor is the focal point of social theory. The structuration theorist Anthony Giddens, who developed a critical approach to classical social theory, emphasizes that while explaining what people do in real life, the structuralistic-functional approach disregards the reasons and goals of people, and therefore considers them "cultural puppets." According to him, structural forces do not externally determine or limit behavior. The focal point of social analysis is the reasons and motives of people, not social facts, structures, systems, or institutions (Yıldırım, 1999, pp. 26-27). Explaining the social system through structure and action, Giddens does not completely deny the social structure and its effects like interpretivists but states that without action, the structure cannot exist. As soon as the 'action' takes place, the 'structure' becomes meaningful, and the social structure can exist thanks to social action. Otherwise, there can be no mention of a 'structure.' While the structuralist and functionalist views do not see any difference between structure and system, Giddens renders structure and action interdependent and defines the phenomenon ensuring this interdependency as a system. From this point of view, the studies that have been done and to be done by media sociologists on the influence of the media on the social structure and its role in the formation of social action that ensures the existence of the social structure are extremely important in understanding the society and the individual. Since the media, which is a part of the social structure, is extremely influential in all kinds of decisions made by individuals who constitute society. Media sociologists are the ones who will reveal the rate, causes, and consequences of this influence.

Unlike structuralists, Giddens claims that the social formation of subjectivity does not require deactivation of the knowledgeable subject in social theory. Social life is the result of the ingenuity of knowledgeable social agents, and each social agent is a practical social theorist. However, Giddens then states that the knowledgeability of the human agent is always limited to subconscious on the one hand and unrecognized conditions/unintended results on the other (Yıldırım, 1999, p. 32). Among the most important obstacles to the agent's access to information and taking action are factors such as social structures and the power groups that hinder the actions of agents. To Giddens, the individual/agent is a knowledgeable person who has judicial power- who is able to think-, not passively receiving the impositions of the

social structure, on the contrary, influencing the structure with his thoughts, and is capable of resisting the limitations/constraints of social structure.

Talcott Parsons, who adapted the system approach to sociology, constructed the society as a social system but put knowledge and energy at the center instead of the individual. Like Parsons, sociologist Amitai Etzioni saw knowledge as a force in social change. Etzioni said that knowledge should be used as a way of putting the energy available in society into use. Knowledge is also needed to make energy usable. Scientific knowledge exhibits an active structure that ignites everything in society, thus leading to social transformations and constituting a source of power on society. This power can also manifest itself in governance, and with the use of knowledge, a society that can adapt more easily can be formed. Etzioni, who identified four types of society: “Passive Society,” “Over-Managed Society,” “Drifting Society,” and “Active Society,” stated that the society formed by knowledgeable individuals would be an “Active Society.” Active society members form social laws themselves, are creative, shape society in the direction they wish and act within the framework of reason. Therefore, they constantly need knowledge (Görgün, 1992, pp. 54-56). Technology depends on science. Science produces knowledge, and knowledge turns into technology. Therefore, knowledge is valuable. Since Francis Bacon stated that “knowledge is power” in the early 16th century, the value of knowledge has increased a great deal. Knowledge is now a treasure that is hidden with great care and not shared with anyone. The knowledge of technology and product, which is called “know-how,” has been transformed into knowledge shared between 2-3 people globally and hidden from society. Therefore, it is impossible for a society that cannot access knowledge to be active. The development and globalization of communication technologies have not made it easier for people to access information; on the contrary, this has caused some confusion about what knowledge is or is not under a bombardment of information and has paved the way for the society to get increasingly ignorant by deepening the knowledge gap.

5. Looking at Media Sociology from Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools Perspective

Undoubtedly, the most important analyses on the social impacts of communication technologies were made by the thinkers of the Frankfurt School. Unlike the thinkers of the Chicago School, which had a very positive approach towards the media and communication technologies within the framework of the liberal view, the thinkers of the Frankfurt School who adopted the Marxist thought were very pessimistic. The prevailing view among the

thinkers was that media technologies would lay the groundwork for ideological domination and hegemony and strengthen the domination of a small group rather than liberating people. In addition, the development of communication technologies would lead to the facilitation of similarizing, supervision, and surveillance of people. The concept of the “culture industry” produced by Frankfurt School thinker Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer made a significant contribution to the study of media sociology. With the concept of the cultural industry they used instead of mass culture, Adorno and Horkheimer wanted to describe the culture manufactured by sovereign powers and imposed on society through the media, manipulates society, produces false consciousness, and makes it uniform.

From the perspective of the classical Frankfurt School, commercial television is a form of “cultural industry.” The Frankfurt School used the term “cultural industries” to draw attention to the industrialization and commercialization of culture within capitalist production relations. In the 1930s, the Frankfurt School introduced a critical and trans-disciplinary approach to culture and communication studies, combining audience reception studies on social and ideological effects of mass culture and communication, criticisms on the political economy of the media, and text analysis. They used the term “culture industry” to point out the industrialization process of mass-produced culture and the commercial obligations that operate the system. Critical theory thinkers analyzed all cultural fictions that were massively transmitted in the context of industrial production (Kellner, 2011, pp. 118-119). In industrial production, the products of the cultural industry show the same characteristics as other products of mass production. These characteristics include commodification, standardization, and massification. The main function of the cultural industry in the capitalist system is to provide ideological legitimacy to existing capitalist societies and to integrate individuals into the social structure of that system. In the batch and mass production system called Fordist Production Form, capital owners holding the means of production started to run the cultural industry acting upon the idea that needs, thoughts, and behaviors should become the same in order to get the products they produced in their factories consumed at an equal rate. To stimulate the economy, televisions, radios, newspapers, and especially the film industry all mobilized to create a society of men and women who define and identify themselves with the products they use and compete to consume the same products. Frankfurt School thinkers, who had fled from Hitler and taken refuge in the United States, described this new society that consumed the same standard products and was very pleased with the situation as a ‘mass society’ and the thinkers conducted studies that reveal the power of the culture industry in creating this society.

Adorno and Horkheimer believed that the mass media was oppressive. While mass media instruments prevented criticism against the sovereign system, they also enabled the masses to integrate with the sovereign system. Members of the Frankfurt School (especially Adorno and Horkheimer) drew attention to two points about cultural industries. The first of these was that cultural industries became increasingly dominant and replaced traditional socialization institutions, and the second was the fetish character that cultural products assumed as a result of commodification. Adorno and Horkheimer thought that monopolies dominated the field of culture, which made the culture uniform. As a result of these technological developments, culture and industry were intertwined, and this caused the corruption of culture. Advertising became a significant and inseparable part of this new industry and culture, as well as an important factor in guiding the public (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 89). According to Frankfurt School thinkers, the mass media, which were run like industries, implemented a constant seduction because they made people relax, lighten up, dream, and hope. The stereotypes they transmitted reduced the complexity of the world, and their reassuring uniformity appealed to people. The identification models they proposed were simply funny, distracting things, a means of staying closed in a state of infinite passivity (Maigret, 2014, p. 88). The most important contribution of the Frankfurt School to the field of media studies was introducing ideology into media research and establishing a link between history and communication. By reflecting Marx's views on economic exploitation and his idea of economic and social sovereignty onto the cultural universe, the Frankfurt school argued that culture was not an innocent entertainment or a non-profit art but an area that determined power relations. Culture and economic or political sovereignty were closely interdependent, and the infrastructure (economy) determined the superstructure (culture). To them, the media had the same function as the concept of religion in Marx, as the new opium of the people. More research to be made in the field of media sociology will reveal the depth of many phenomena, such as reification, dedifferentiation, and alienation in the society through the media, whose technology is developing day by day. It is the research of media sociologists that will refute or validate the assumption that media is social opium.

Herbert Marcuse saw television as a means of managing, manipulating, and suppressing a one-dimensional society. According to Marcuse, when information and the individual started to be controlled by the mass media, information began to be managed and restricted. The individual was no longer aware of what was actually happening. As a result of the entertainment machine's overpowering effect, the culture emerged –an industry that brought the individual together with other individuals while also becoming an anesthetic environment

in which all destructive ideas were excluded (Kellner, 2011, p. 122). Frankfurt School thinkers agreed on the view that mass media invalidated dissident and marginal thought by ignoring them and compelling people holding those kinds of ideas to keep their silence while, on the other hand, reproducing the social and cultural environment of the capitalist world repeatedly.

Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, who influenced Frankfurt School thinkers with the concept of “hegemony,” which we can explain as the “organization of spontaneous consent” (Hall, Lumley & McLenan, 1985, pp. 12-13), tried to find an answer to the question of “how an elite minority dominates the rest of society (numerically, the majority) and how the majority agrees to be dominated and governed” in his work. In Gramsci’s conception, societies maintained their stability through a combination of “domination,” or force, and “hegemony,” defined as consent to “intellectual and moral leadership.” Thus, social orders are founded and reproduced with some institutions and groups violently exerting power and domination to maintain social boundaries and rules (i.e. the police, military, vigilante groups, etc.), while other institutions (like religion, schooling, or the media) induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony, or ideological dominance, of a distinctive type of social order (i.e. market capitalism, fascism, communism, and so on) (Kellner, 2013, p. 4).

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher who studied the Ideological State Apparatuses with a similar approach to Gramsci, argued that the Ideological State Apparatuses -which he defined as institutions such as educational systems, religious organizations, trade unions, the family, and media- taught what it meant to be something through the meanings and values they constantly conveyed to the people and tried to make them perform certain practices required for the role taught. To Althusser, ideology hid the relations of exploitation in societies. Advocating a structuralist cultural Marxism, Althusser emphasized the relationship between culture, ideology, power, and social structure. According to his views, the Ideological State Apparatuses cause people to have the wrong ideas about the world and the society they live in. Ideology is the imaginary relationship that individuals establish with the real social conditions they are in. Ideologies make people believe that they are free and autonomous. And to do this, ideologies turn people into subjects and allow them to see themselves as determining agents, although they are actually shaped by ideological processes (Yaylagül, 2006, pp. 102-103).

While dealing with the rise of Nazism in the theory of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt, who constitutes a source for media sociology studies with her studies on labor, work and action, and political theory of action, stated that “if absolute despotism was able to settle, it did so

by exploiting social rootlessness and the absence of community rules. The main character of the ‘mass man’ is the isolation and the lack of social relations.” In the same way, Adorno and Horkheimer positioned what they called social fragmentation at the source of the evils of modern societies: people were left to themselves, but they became “alienated” from themselves by losing their roots and communities. Therefore, the new forces governing the society were, in particular, directly manipulable by the media they were faced with. To them, there were two essential means of this manipulation: flattery and seduction. Mass communication led to the silence of the masses: it was the black sun of modernity; it generalized the lack of respect for critical reason and true culture by “deceiving” people (Maigret, 2014, pp. 87-88).

Certain critical approaches focused on the social effects of television, and excessive violence on television has often been blamed. Some articles on television and violence suggested that the representation of violence in the media would directly lead to social problems. However, George Gerbner and colleagues from the Annenberg School of Communication developed a more sophisticated social ecology approach to violence and media. Gerbner’s group investigated the “cultural environment” of television violence, followed the escalations in representations of violence, and explained the “message systems” describing the perpetrator of the violence, who the victim was, and what messages were linked to media violence. “Cultivation Theory” investigated the effects of violence and concluded that heavy viewers of the images of violence in the media intensively exhibited “mean world syndrome.” This syndrome has various effects ranging “from depression to fearful individuals voting for rightwing law and order politicians to the exhibition of violent behavior” (Kellner, 2011, p. 123). Cultivation Theory, an important study in media sociology, emphasizes that people who are heavily exposed to television content believe in the world transmitted from television rather than the real world, and these people evaluate the real world under the influence of this world. The ever-developing media technology makes it necessary to conduct Gerbner’s research repeatedly.

In its early periods, The Birmingham School (English Center for Cultural Studies), another school known for its work on the media, based their studies on Roland Barthes’ discussions about how reality and ideology were established in language, as well as Althusser’s suggestion that the media was the ideological apparatus of the state, Gramsci’s emphasis suggesting hegemony was established through cultural practices, the post-structuralist theories handling the subject as a process of comprehension, Ernesto Laclau and John Mouffe’s emphasis on the subject in discursive practices, and again Gramsci’s propositions on the concept of resistance (İnal, 1996, p. 43). The school’s leading thinkers, such as Edward P. Thompson, Richard

Hoggart, and Raymond Williams, believed that one must analyze popular culture products in order to understand the culture of the working class.

Williams, who considered culture as “a whole way of life of a community or a social group” (Williams, 1993, p. 10) based on the discontinuity and the necessity of continuous reconstruction of hegemony, pointed out the possibilities of intra-system opposition in “culture” and the multicultural dimensionality of culture, advocating the view that “In any society; in any time period; there are certain systems of values, meanings, and practices that we can definitely call dominant and effective. This dominant system is not a stable structure; it creates a continuous inclusion process. This combination looks extremely inconsistent and contradictory. Gramsci uses this combination in terms of the opposition of the lower classes to the dominant classes in hegemony. To me, the foundation of an effective and dominant system of values and meanings cannot be established only by an abstract construct; it is possible with a harmonious combination of reality and social system. That is why hegemony cannot occur only through ideas and manipulation imposed from above. Hegemony is realized only by combining all the experiences and practices of life and the mutual harmony between them” (In Arik, 2017). Hall followed Althusser and said that although building the truth, the media pretended to reflect the truth. Hall analyzed the media’s meaning production practice from Gramsci’s hegemony theory as well as Althusser’s Marxist culturalist perspective that allowed relative freedom to the media and operated as “ideological state apparatuses” in the reproduction of sovereign ideology. According to Hall, the media tended to reproduce interpretations that served the interests of the ruling class, but these interpretations were also an area of ideological struggle (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 115).

The early thinkers of the Birmingham School came up with similar ideas to the Frankfurt School thinkers. Both schools’ thinkers worked on the hegemony of the capitalist class and capitalist ideology, interclass inequalities, social inequality, and power relations. Birmingham School thinkers of the pre-1980 period, just like the Frankfurt School thinkers, attributed the integration of the working class to the capitalist order, and the impossibility of a revolution to the mass culture created by the mass media. They studied the consumer culture and the media culture that legitimized the hegemony of the ruling class. They established the connection between culture and ideology and considered culture as a type of reproduction of hegemony and ideology. However, after 1980, cultural studies in England and North America shifted to identity issues created by consumption, and consumption as a return of the postmodern world. However, scholars who took a less critical approach to research on the impact of media on consumption and identity formation almost ignored the content production of the media

and the factors affecting the content. Ultimately, the Birmingham School, which assumed that there might be dissident elements in the culture produced by the media, and the working class can increase their resistance opportunities, and the Frankfurt School, which argued that the culture transmitted from the media is homogeneous mass culture and does not contain differences and opposition views within itself, thereby making the revolution impossible, were drawn apart to different poles. Researches and studies carried out in both schools are extremely valuable for media sociology. The Frankfurt School's way of handling mass, mass culture, culture industry, cultural imperialism, public space, and many other similar concepts, along with research and comments in these fields, were the first examples of media sociology. It also provides resources and guidance for future studies. Likewise, the problem of popular culture and mass culture, which the studies carried out within the Birmingham School attempted to solve, and heterogeneous mass evaluation set out by Stuart Hall in his *Encoding/Decoding* article were pioneers for similar studies.

6. New Media Sociology

The development of Internet technology led to changes in the forms of communication and improvements in the reception and dissemination of knowledge and information. The facilitation of the flow of knowledge and information led to changes in people's lives, cultural patterns, and attitudes and behaviors towards events. This change triggered a social change, and the social change influenced different fields such as economy and politics.

Although the Internet has brought great and indispensable gains to our era, it focuses more on acts rather than probability, on reality rather than concepts, and consensus-shaped values rather than the inner world (Kissinger, 2016). The meanings and values formed by the increasingly expanding consensus on the Internet are overturning the values of Bourdieu's symbolic systems from the past that were formed by socialization and education, and creating a whole new system of values instead. Sociologists that started to work in this field with the prevalence of the Internet are primarily interested in trying to determine the influence of internet-based chat rooms and discussion forums on users' identities. Specifically, the identities created within these platforms by users who are living disconnected from society due to various reasons have attracted the attention of researchers. In addition, the social and psychological impact of the virtual reality created on the Internet has been of interest to sociologists. The political effects of the Internet and the use of the Internet by marginal groups, politicians, and activists have also been among the research topics. Common methods in this early phase of studying the online world include network analysis, which is adopted to

examine the links facilitated by the Internet between people, virtual ethnography in discussion forums and chat rooms, and content analysis of the information published online.

Max Weber underlined that parliamentary democracy formed a passive society; the people living in this system were uneducated, politically ignorant, and incapable of creating intelligent political judgments, and had no ability other than consenting to the policies produced, and were masses following a charismatic leader. Nowadays, there is an attempt to create a society of personalities who are incapable of even consenting and cannot do anything but passively adopt. The most important tool for the creation of passive societies is undoubtedly digital networks. New communication technologies that are monitoring individuals, recording their every movement, analyzing the reaction of the individual to the events in the light of the information they obtained about individuals, and foreseeing their thoughts are becoming a means of pressure for the power. Therefore, as one of the most accurate analyses for new communication technologies, we can adopt Kissinger's view (2016, p. 388) that "one of the most radical aspects of new technologies may be the power they will give to the small groups (the dominant class) at the top step of political and economic structures in the processing and monitoring of information, and forming of discussions and, to some extent, the truth." Although digital media allows people to let their voices be heard, react to injustice, and organize the reaction, the same media can also help the dominant groups monitor and suppress those who seek their rights.

Although we think that digital media allows individuals to share their ideas on anything they want at any time, the ideas usually belong to others, not to themselves. In fact, based on Bourdieu's concept of "received ideas," we can say that the ideas circulated in the digital environment are ideas that are produced or copied according to the mood of that moment rather than ideas created through consideration within the framework of logic because the views shared in the new media are mostly the views of the dominant class. In this way, just as in traditional media, every day, the digital media agenda is determined, and participants are manipulated. The received ideas also constitute the structural mortar of what Noam Chomsky calls a "powerful elite consensus." While the diversity in the new media discourse could lead to the formation of different views in society, thus causing the emergence of a debate environment, social awakening, and action, society is put to sleep with received ideas.

The key features of the new media include an open, network-based, unlimited, interactive, and decentralized structure combining different and interactive environments. In this regard, new media is sometimes also called multimedia. The new media that collects audio, video, and data content together to include the interaction elements can be defined as "environments

that cannot be created without the computing power of computers” (Aydoğan & Kırık, 2012, p. 59). With a technological determinist perspective, many communication scientists define this point of communication technologies as ‘media convergence.’ Stating that with technological convergence, there has been a change in the media industry’s operating logic, and thus, a change in the media consumers’ logic of processing news and entertainment, Henry Jenkins suggests that media convergence is more than a technological convergence, and this convergence has changed the relations between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and viewers. Jenkins (2016, p. 20) describes this convergence as a “cultural change caused by encouraging consumers to seek new information and establish links between scattered media content.” Underlining that the ‘convergence’ concept manages to define technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who is talking and what s/he is talking about, Jenkins argues that the media holdings desiring to expand their empire on multiple platforms, and consumers that desire to consume media wherever, whenever and in whatever format they want are shaping the ‘convergence culture.’ The convergence culture created and expanded by digital networks has completely changed the character of the traditional media consumer and the new media consumer. The traditional media consumer is defined as stable, passive, abstracted, and invisible, while the new media consumer is defined as active, nomadic (with no commitment to communication networks or media), linked, and visible.

While the Internet, in a sense, ‘isolates’ individuals by ‘confining’ them to a virtual environment and detaching them from the real world by interrupting their relationship with everyday life, it also keeps them in ‘safe detention’ thanks to the opportunity to access all kinds of information and personality profiles at any given time. In addition, as the Internet has the means to manipulate individuals at will in the virtual environment, it turns them into objects of ‘education’ through the knowledge and information it offers (Dolgun, 2004). Like a look from Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, communication technologies, which allow surveillance of the entire society and each individual, are the best environment for realizing the ‘society of control’ and ‘biopower’ that Michel Foucault used to define the sense of power adapted to the postmodern society. Describing the tool of sovereignty that destroys decentralized, landless nation-states as ‘Empire,’ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri acknowledge that communication technologies are the greatest power of the global empire, which has attacked with all its power to reach its aim in the near future. The power structure of this empire, which feeds on production, transportation, and communication technologies, is based on the biopower approach that Foucault also significantly emphasized. Hardt and Negri (2002, p. 48) state

that biopower, which they describe as a “form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it,” is of vital importance to the empire. As Foucault said, life has now become an object of power. The most important function of postmodern power is to encircle life in all aspects, and its main task is to manage life. Therefore, the concept of biopower describes a situation where what really matters for those in power is precisely the production and reproduction of life” (Hardt & Negri, 2002, p. 48). This new media, which incorporates global meanings and values and imposes a culture created by the global capitalist empire’s perception managers, and the new communication technologies as the transmission technology of this media need to be thoroughly analyzed in the context of individual-power relations. In order to do this analysis, it is necessary to have all forms of literacy, such as ‘technological literacy,’ ‘information literacy,’ ‘media literacy,’ and ‘network literacy.’

Conscious individuals who want to acquire all these literacies primarily need to know that new communication technologies are employed by power centers to create a society of surveillance and control. All of the personal information of digital media users is stored utilizing these technologies because the digital environment that creates user profiles for advertising, sales, or application development with user information is invaluable for capital power and political power that want to code individuals as consumers in every field. ‘Data mining,’ the process of storing data in a technological environment and using it as needed is considered among the most important professions of the future. ‘Data analysis,’ which is the work of analyzing and processing the big data stored in the digital environment using many methods and making it available to the use of power centers by building connections between the data, is just as important. However, probably because they do not want to leave the task of managing such information to people, the elites are also conducting artificial intelligence studies with all their power.

Another important point is that ‘knowledge,’ which has changed meaning with the culture of convergence, is no longer real knowledge, but it is transformed into the knowledge of reality imposed by digital technology. Pierre Levy claims that “no one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity” (Jenkins, 2016, p. 49). Another widely used concept for the new media in recent years that has increased the appeal of this environment is “collaboration.” Although it reminds the concept of ‘partnership’ formed by collaboration and Marx deemed important because it would bring social solidarity, the collaboration produced by the new media is adopted to describe a technological revolution that eliminates the ‘bureaucracy,’ which Weber used to define the hierarchical construct

in modern society. Communication technologies, voice recognition technology, three-dimensional object scanners, and the micromachines doing the work of human fingers, which are expected to deliver the big blow to the 'iron cage' established by bureaucracy, allow companies to distribute routine jobs efficiently. However, such technological capacity excludes those who do not have specialized human skills. While automation expands, the field of constant human skills narrows down. This structure defines a new type of individual who continually learns new skills and constantly changes the 'foundations of knowledge.' This individual, intertwined with the postmodern society structure that internalized intermediate communication, is forced to accept the idealized new self-conveyed through the new media. According to Richard Sennett (2009), this ideal self is guided by the obligation not to fall behind the machine. People with this idealized self-refrain from addiction, do not hold on to others, and are disconnected from the rest of the society. They experience relationships through the friendships that they form in the digital environment. Mary Chayko (2018, pp. 43-44) states that nowadays, by using new communication technologies, people construct the places in which they live and form their relationships, and make a great effort to maintain the relationships they have formed. According to Chayko, this new situation is 'social' in terms of interpersonal relationships and that it is 'mental' in the sense that constructing and preserving these relationships require mental activity. Therefore, the bonds created on social media are "socio-mental." Again, according to Chayko, society is a socio-mental structure that is united around a common consciousness and a common conscience, and social media groups, eliminating the need for face-to-face communication, can realize being a society. Manuel Castells (2013), who calls the techno-economic system shaped by new information technologies as informational capitalism and suggests that these technologies connect the world and people through a digital network, describes this digital society as 'virtual communities.' Whereas individuals of virtual communities experience deepened feelings of depression and loneliness, regression in family ties, and constriction in their social environment in the real world, they can communicate and form intimate connections with each other without a reserve in the virtual world. Virtual environments allow groups that are media-marginals in the real world to use their right to speak, communicate, unite, and be equal to the media-elites while, at the same time, causing an everlasting rupture in their connections at the slightest problem. Castells describes what he calls the "network society" as a capitalist society built around a network of global and financial flows. Castells suggests that historical evolution and technological change have gotten closer than ever, and therefore, social interaction and organization have assumed a wholly cultural form.

As a global digital network, the main feature of the Internet that connects isolated alienated postmodern society individuals is its “hyperlink” structure. This hyperlink structure not only connects one place, document, or resource online to another but also allows the users to make as many connections as possible by facing fewer technological obstacles between sites, sources, and people (Lievrouw, 2016, p. 19). Due to its hyperlink structure, the new media creates a contrast to the traditional media that transmits the ‘messages’ of a limited number of creators. The new media offers selectivity and access opportunities to its users much more efficiently than traditional media during the selection of information and cultural resources, as well as their personal interactions and expressions. Therefore, openness and easiness of interaction in the new media are crucial to the process of social and political change. The interaction of the user with the new media is based on participation/interaction, whereas it used to be based on exposure/receiving with traditional media (Lievrouw, 2016). The association of interaction, participation, and action in the new media brings Jürgen Habermas’s relation of public space, ideal speech situation, and communicative action to mind. According to Habermas (2001, p. 112), “the concept of communicative action relates to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of language and action (whether by verbal or non-verbal means) in an interpersonal relationship,” and the public sphere of Habermas is an ideal speech environment in which people have equal rights to speak. However, the public sphere that Jürgen Habermas idealizes as an “ideal speech space” is closed to disadvantaged groups. Even if they are taken into the sphere, these media-marginal people or groups are not allowed to speak; they are interrupted, or ignored. Even if everything is positive, these people or groups do not have the ability to find the right words to express themselves as they do not have the necessary knowledge. Therefore, they are bound to listen and approve of what is being spoken. As in the words of Nancy Fraser (2015, p. 113), “they were silenced, discouraged about improving their demands, and heard as if they said ‘yes’ when they said ‘no.’” The political negotiation made in the public sphere resulting in consensus led to the perception that everyone who was there approved the decision, and ‘I’ was transformed into ‘we.’”

Optimistic approaches predicting that new communication technologies will allow groups and individuals who are excluded from mainstream media, public sphere, and politics to participate in discussions and dialogue have argued that these technologies will facilitate access to information, which will, in turn, lead to a democratic society of individuals equipped with knowledge of politics, culture, and economy. However, for those such as Douglas Kellner (2015, pp. 861-862), who are cautious about new communication technologies, democracy is

based on political negotiation and jurisdiction and includes face-to-face discussion. Therefore, all media-based policies consist of the decline of politics involving rational negotiation and discussion processes; the media and now the Internet are degenerate forms of political debate drawn to a sensational, extreme, and manipulative sphere.

New media sociology or Internet sociology, which concentrates its field of study on how new communication technologies play a role in mediating and facilitating communication and interaction, focuses on how this technological structure influences and is influenced by the social structure. Digital sociology, which operates as a subfield of Internet sociology, observes the diversity of new communication technologies that drive our lives (such as smartphones, computers, tablets, wearable devices). While conducting research centered on the Internet of Things, digital sociology focuses on the diversity of the way we use them (such as communication, production, and sharing of cultural and intellectual content, entertainment, education, trade) as well as the meaning of these technologies for social life and society in general (such as identity, belonging, politics, security). The sociology of digital communication examines social events mediated by social media platforms and other digital communication technologies. Most researchers working in this field often employ the theories and concepts by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Among these theories and concepts, the “field” theory and the concepts of “capital” and “habitus” take the lead.

Bourdieu (2014, pp. 81-86), who defined the concept of “field” as “the network of objective relations between positions,” stated that the dynamics of a field lie in the distinct form of its structure, and in the distance between the different specific forces facing each other. “Though the borders between fields are porous, each field is characterized by its own logic (the ‘rules of the game’). Actors within fields struggle to accumulate and monopolize capital based on the field-specific rules of the game with more successful actors being more adept at both accumulating and reinvesting capital.” As Ignatow and Robinson pointed out, “For Bourdieu, actors’ positions within various social fields correspond with the volumes of the different forms of capital they possess. Capital has come to be a centrally important concept in studies of digital inequality, with sociologists developing and employing in empirical research concepts such as ‘information capital’ and ‘digital capital’” (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 952). For Bourdieu (2015), the capital was “what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to *exist*, in the field under consideration.” Media is a field that has rules in itself, and when its rules are not followed, it does not transfer what is desired to its user. The individual who wants to be active in this field must know the rules of the field

and how to use this field, as well as the advantages and disadvantages that the field will offer him/her. The complexity of digital media, especially when it comes to access information or the difficulty of accessing digital media, creates inequality among individuals. Inequality in entering the field and the coercivity of the rules are obstacles against individuals' benefiting from this field effectively. Having become the most important field of information for the individual who has lost communication and interaction with the other individuals constituting the society, media (especially digital media) is also the most important determinant of the individual's habitus, his perspective of the world.

Habitus is the internalization of the field; it is a series of historical relationships that are included in individual bodies in the form of mental and bodily schemes. These schemes are acquired through social interactions in everyday life and include schemes related to compatibility, aesthetic tastes, and undesirable things, as well as habitual linguistic practices. Employing the concept of habitus reveals the importance of Bourdieu's work in the field of digital inequality. Transferring a Bourdieusian framework to the digital field allows us to grasp how individuals relate to their sources of information and especially how information habits of people in different locations are manifested (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 954). Bourdieu's concept of habitus is indispensable for revealing actions, decisions, and orientations that help individuals identify their successes and future. Various studies have revealed that digital technologies are inadequate in situations requiring information habitus, such as career development and education, and even negatively affect the development of individuals.

One of the greatest sources of happiness and satisfaction for people is to communicate with others. The more people interact, the more they experience satisfaction. Today, people who are surrounded by a digital life meet their communication and interaction needs through digital networks. Today's individual, who is getting increasingly lonely and trying to satisfy the need to be together and safe by creating virtual communities, has to deal with more stimuli than traditional community individuals. Digital networks that have turned into a global network are conveying things to their users from all over the world. For the individual who has lost face-to-face communication, it is impossible not to be affected by the content imposed on him/her through communication. Interestingly, in many ways, social media has brought people together on a level like never before. Social media and people's interactions in it allow the expression of many different emotions and the development of relationships due to the easiness of interactions.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The media is a technological tool that produces, disseminates, and offers information and regulates human activities in this process while restricting these activities from ever so often. Communication technologies influencing human activities can be defined as techno-social systems. For example, drawing on Giddens's structure-action duality, the media (both traditional and new media) is a technological structure that influences and restricts human actions in the society it occupies, but it is also influenced by those actions. However, given its potential to influence and alter human actions, it is also a social structure. The situation that Weber conceptualized as 'social action' and 'social relationship' and described as an action and a relationship through interactions with the other precisely expresses the new media. Communication, which used to be one-way in traditional media as feedback was ignored, has been replaced by an interactive environment in the new media. This is an ideal environment for the emergence of 'social action' and 'social relationship.'

As Bourdieu explained through the concept of habitus, the media is trying to make the individual act in the interests of certain forces (global capital being the greatest power) by altering his/her world view. Digital media, or new media, is much more effective than traditional media in changing its habitus and directing human action because it is capable of catching the individual personally. Digital environments, functioning as public fields for 'the ideal types' of the 21st century, offer people techno-socialization. The actions of the individual who socialize through new media have become largely imprisoned or organized in digital media as well. The place for expressing discontent or rebelling against injustice in everyday life that is surrounded by new communication tools is the virtual public sphere.

In postmodern theory, where differences, diversity, and heterogeneity are glorified, the proliferation of differences and diversity in the new social order is described on the basis of consumer desires and needs. Described by postmodern cultural studies with the restructuring of global and local identities and new forms of resistance and struggle, forms of hybrid culture and identities correspond to global capitalism in which there is an intense flow of products, cultures, and human beings. Global post-modern discourse involves the pluralization of culture and the embracing of voices, differences, and marginalities that are excluded from the narrative of Western culture. However, according to the Frankfurt School's approach, global post-modern discourse serves to legitimize global capitalism through new media and its technologies. The influence of the media culture produced by the elite and transmitted through the media is profound in the realization of social control and capital accumulation. As Douglas

Kellner (2016, pp. 146-147) particularly emphasizes, the technology, culture, and politics of current global capitalism, which is the new world order, is portrayed as more diverse and pluralistic, enabling the voices of differences and marginalities to be heard; however, it is controlled and limited by international companies. Transnational companies narrow the limits of cultural narratives instead of expanding them and become the new, powerful determinants of culture. Globalization, which means the hegemony of the transnational cultural industries, is largely American. The cultural industries of the United States dominate the world market in terms of films, television, music, fashion, and other cultural elements. Although global postmodernism connotes diversity and differentiation, it should also be considered that it has a *pari passu* tendency towards global homogenization and uniformity, the themes that the Frankfurt School constantly emphasized.

Cyber-travelers or cyber-nomads, who spend most of their day in the new media, are facing excessive information transfer due to the hyperlink characteristic of the new media. Therefore, they cannot be expected to focus on or follow one particular event. Having short-term focus and multitasking consciousness, cyber-travelers act with the illusion that they must not miss anything shared on the Internet as well as the concern to be noticed and to look busy. Surely, every technology is useful when used wisely and consciously. Those who produce the technology and hold the ownership of the new media define this environment as a field of freedom, the environment that makes the oppressed heard. It is not rational for users to adopt the same discourse and approach the new media in this way. As it is impossible for people who get far from knowledge to produce ideas, it will become impossible to decide what is right and what is wrong when digital platforms are the only source of information for new generations born into the digital world. Those who will decide what is right are the owners of communication technology.

Unlike social theorists who ignored the social influences of communication technologies in the past, today, these technologies are considered to have significant impacts that cannot be ignored. Undoubtedly, the role of communication scientists and sociologists who produce ideas on communication has been essential in revealing the importance of the media. One of the biggest challenges for the early media sociologists is the exclusion of the media by social theorists who produce ideas about society, culture, and social change. Media sociology studies seeking to reveal the organic connection of media to individuals and society by drawing on the opinions produced within social theory have developed mediation theories known as “the mediatization thesis” and have emphasized the integration of media with society. Media sociology studies, which have become an important sub-branch of sociology today,

have saved the media from being a dependent variable and enabled it to be recognized as an independent institution on its own. Since it was accepted that “life is digital” in the 21st century, the center of media sociology studies shifted to digital technologies and the digital society created by using these technologies. There is an effort to explain various sociological issues such as family, science, health, knowledge, culture, economy, race, and many others in connection with digital technologies. Issues such as social inequalities, social networks, social structures, social institutions, self, and identity are now studied through digital society. The problems arising from the fact that new media consumers are not only consumers but also producers in an interactive communication environment are now made into research subjects by media sociologists. It is the task of media sociologists to analyze the media that plays the most important role in shaping the social structure. The way to understand the society and the individual, who is the building block of society, is possible with the theses to be produced within the scope of media sociology on the media-society relationship, the media-power relationship, and the media-capital relationship.

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