



Book Review Symposium for Juliane Jarke and Jo Bates (Eds.). (2024). *Dialogues in Data Power: Shifting Response-Abilities in a Datafied World*

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Introduction (Petar Jandrić)

Datafication and technologies built on datafication, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and educational genomics, are amongst the hottest topics of the day. Whilst the hype around Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) (Jandrić 2024) has (predictably) started to fade (Acemoglu 2024), the most recent AI Summer has resulted in some important lessons. Datafication brings along a lot of baggage. Self-driving cars arrive with a set of hard ethical questions, including the proverbial moral dilemma when the technology needs to decide whether to kill two passengers or a pregnant pedestrian. Datafication of teaching and learning, in diverse contexts from GAIs to neurotechnology, brings heaps of questions from the nature of authorship (Peters et al. 2023; Bozkurt et al. 2024) to the ethics of ‘proposals for genetically informed interventions in education policy and practice’ (Williamson et al. 2024). We do not know much, and what we do know is subject to rapid change.

In this context, an inquiry into the basics (datafication), rather than hyped applications of datafication (such as the usage of this or that AI system), maintains some much-needed stability required for systematic inquiry. Focusing on fundamental questions pertaining to datafication—the power of data and response-abilities for that power—*Dialogues in Data Power: Shifting Response-Abilities in a Datafied World* (Jarke and Bates 2024) offers a deep insight that can be used across the disciplines. In our postdigital world (Jandrić 2023), where areas of human activity

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untouched by digital technology are becoming increasingly scarce, these questions are literally of everyone's concern.

Questions of everyone's concern require everyone's input. Admirably, the book's editors Juliane Jarke and Jo Bates put this principle into action by tapping into the power of the collective. Inspired by earlier experiments in collective research (see Jandrić et al. (2023) for a comprehensive overview and Peters et al. (2021) for an example of collectively written book), '[t]he book itself is an experiment in facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue and collective scholarship among 80 researchers through nine collectively authored chapters' (Jarke and Bates 2024: 1). The editors are predominantly interested in the topic of data power, and their collective writing experiment remains a touch undertheorized. Nevertheless, I would like to congratulate the editors for employing the right tool for the job.

Book reviews serve two main purposes: one purpose is to introduce the book and congratulate the editors and authors on their achievements, and the other purpose is to make one more spin on the wheel of knowledge development through constructive critique and postdigital dialogue (Jandrić et al. 2019). For a collectively authored book, it is only appropriate to move things forward through collectively written feedback. This book review symposium responds to that need.

The (Re)Construction of Responsibility

Forging Response-Abilities for a Just and Flourishing World (Helen Manchester)

As we hurtle towards ever more datafied futures and the tentacular invisibility of our data trails and traces haunt our everyday lives, this book is an important one. The book asks the reader to consider a shifting sense of 'response-abilities' in a datafied world. Response-abilities involve a commitment to radical deconstruction in critically questioning the assumed inevitability of the datafied present and of the futures being imagined.

The format of the book supports this critically deconstructive approach. A group of authors from different countries, with diverse identifications and disciplines have collaboratively written chapters that offer the reader a kind of 'bitesize' view of their work. The book therefore provides a 'chocolate box' introduction to various different fields that intersect in the 'Data Power' community. This approach allows for a wide range of empirical work, theoretical ideas, and themes to emerge. The effect of this is often to 'make strange' and visible connectedness across and between ideas and disciplines.

For instance, Chapter 1: 'Configuring Data Subjects' (Dalmer et al. 2024) deconstructs how individuals are re-configured as 'subjects' of datafication through methods of quantification and explores the societal and individual implications of this (re)configuration, particularly in respect of questions of power. This is achieved through a discussion of the history and power of data (Denis Newman-Griffis), everyday power dynamics in self-tracking practises (Xiufeng Jia), a specific look at older adults as data subjects (Nicole Dalmer), and the creation of data subjects in the design and development of autonomous vehicles (Mergime Ibrahimi). Discussants

then carefully draw out the frictions and ambivalences in datafication processes and practises that create data subjects.

Across the chapters, we learn how data-driven technologies, and the practises and configurations around them, serve to iterate patterns of discrimination, marginalisation, and inequalities. Whilst not surprising, the variety of forms of data, stories, and models that all echo this idea build a strong sense of the violence and injustices written into our social structures and technologies that are being perpetuated through dominant present-day practises and future datafication imaginaries. In reading the evidence presented, the reader is encouraged to consider, as Haraway (1991: 181) suggests, that ‘[t]he machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us’.

Whilst the focus on critical deconstruction is important, the book goes further in marrying this with a radically reconstructive commitment to considering how things might be otherwise and to building alternative imaginaries that might tip the balance towards a more just and flourishing world (Braidotti 2022). In Chapter 2 (Smith et al. 2024), Karen Louise Smith and Leslie Regan Shade, for instance, explore forms of resistance and data justice for children, seeing datafication as a site of struggle rather than surrender. Neil Selwyn and Luci Pangrazio call for a ‘counter imaginaries of datafication’ (in Smith et al. 2024: 44) in order to develop alternatives to dominant imaginaries perpetuating the inevitability of forms of datafied futures. In Chapter 4 (Crooks et al. 2024), meanwhile, McQuillan encourages collective resistance through the prefiguration of alternatives, both politically and technically.

The editors of this volume should be congratulated for pushing boundaries in academic writing with a focus on building dialogue and collective knowledge-making to both radically deconstruct what is happening now in the world whilst also developing a reconstructive approach that clearly sets out the pressing question of how we might develop a sense of the ‘response-abilities’ required to collectively resist dominant, unjust datafied futures.

Reading for Responsibilisation (Jen Ross)

My experiment with the experimental form of this book was to build on the editors’ introduction by looking across chapters to glean insights into one of the key ‘cross-cutting concerns’ they identified. I read for responsibilisation, broadly defined, as ‘a governance praxis that operates through ascribing freedom and autonomy to individuals and agents ... while simultaneously appealing to individual responsibility-taking, independent self-steering and “self-care”’ (Pyysiäinen et al. 2017). Responsibilisation, as a critical concept, has relevance to thinking about data power and its workings, highlighting the risks of failing to designate responsibility in meaningful ways, leading to people having a sense that they must navigate the risks of datafication alone. We see this urgency around responsibility, for example, in the context of rapid development and adoption of AI technologies in education (McGrath et al. 2023).

Dialogues in Data Power (Jarke and Bates 2024) identifies many specific and intriguing examples of responsibilisation enacted through the exercise of data power,

including the responsibility of people in their personal, educational, and professional lives to age successfully (Dalmer et al. 2024); preserve selfhood (Smith et al. 2024); mediate data in the home (Smith et al. 2024); anticipate potential divergence from achievement targets (Smith et al. 2024); give informed consent (Crooks et al. 2024); deliver social good (Beresford et al. 2024); and review and keep others' behaviours in check (Brevini et al. 2024). Even enumerating this list demonstrates the incredible demands made on individuals in different spheres of their lives.

Many authors in the book recognise that, as Jansen puts it (in Crooks et al. 2024: 88), 'when state power becomes enabled and enacted through data systems, the power asymmetry between the individual and the state increases ... we need to move away from the notion of individual empowerment through data literacy to collective agency'. However, such moves may be hampered, in part, by the philosophical and legal assumptions that inform the structures we operate within, for instance, legal framings of 'intelligent, autonomous subjects' who must act in their own self-interest (de Groot in de Groot et al. 2024) and philosophical investment in democratic influence on algorithms to minimise harms of commercial platforms (van Maanen in de Groot et al. 2024). Furthermore, responsabilisation for some seems to enable others to unsee or refuse responsibility (for example, the elected officials discussed by Renkema and Muis in Beresford et al. (2024)). For these people, a lack of perceived expertise translates directly to a lack of perceived responsibility to know or decide about forms of data power.

In relation to responsabilisation, I found much to think about. The richness of the picture built up by reading the book in this way highlighted for me the valuable insights it affords.

Exploring the Critical Interplay Between Activating Data and Data Activism (Sarah Hayes)

As we each add more textual data to this dialogue about the power of data, I am aware of our collective *activation of data* in this book review, but also our different degrees of *data activism* (Milan 2022). I am intrigued by an interplay between the two, as we both initiate and critique data flows. What, for example, do each of us—with our own diverse postdigital positionalities (Hayes 2021) towards data power—actually experience at the intersections where we make choices between our own activation of data and enacting forms of data activism? By data activism, I refer to a critical appreciation of how data may either promote or undermine social justice and a critical resistance to data power that infringes on our perceptions of human rights.

With these ideas in mind, *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) plays an important part in surfacing and swelling varied contributions to our understanding of the fluidity of power in our datafied world. In particular, by raising questions around 'response-ability' which reflects the involvement of each of us in growing and critiquing data. Alongside other recent books like *Data Lives: How Data Are Made and Shape Our World* (Kitchin 2021), *Data Power in Action: Urban Data Politics in Times of Crisis* (Söderström and Datta 2024), and *Human Data Interaction, Disadvantage and Skills in the Community* (Hayes et al. 2023), to name but a

few, these collections all bring *named authors* to this broad contributory postdigital dialogue (Jandrić et al. 2019).

Named individuals remain important because their viewpoints can become lost in nominalised terms like ‘datafication’. Higher Education has been complicit in churning out the policy that has lumped young people together and datafied them as ‘the student experience’ or ‘graduate attributes’ (Hayes 2019). Yet, as the discussants of Chapter 2, Neil Selwyn and Luci Pangrazio point out, ‘it is well worth retaining hope that the dominant forms of datafication currently to be found in young people’s lives are *not* a done deal. Instead, we need to take the accounts present in this chapter as a basis from which to anticipate better data futures to come’ (Selwyn and Pangrazio in Smith et al. 2024: 44).

Therefore, awareness and ‘response-ability’ concerning our own decisions at our very point of interaction with data in terms of *agency*, *legibility*, *negotiability*, and *resistance* (Mortier et al. 2014) remain paramount, as does the inclusion of all sectors in this debate and not just academia (Hayes et al. 2023). Our human reasoning, between the interplay of data activation and data activism, needs to inform our data processing systems and data sets, via a critical appreciation of how data may either promote or undermine social justice. Given that ‘data are the medium through which individuals’ identities and experiences are filtered in contemporary states and systems, and AI is increasingly the layer mediating between people, data, and decisions’ (Newman-Griffis et al. 2024), we cannot permit Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and algorithms to ‘do the ethics’ for us. People still need to advocate for the vulnerable through critical resistance to any data power that infringes on our perceptions of human rights.

The Power of Collective Research

Unherdable Cats (Felicita Macgilchrist)

The ‘cats’ in the final chapter’s title reminded me of Marilyn Strathern’s (2020) work on relations that provides—for this reviewer—a helpful set of terms to review *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024). In their final chapter, the volume’s editors, Bates and Jarke (2024), reflect on the collective writing process, including a sense of ‘herding cats’. In her book, Strathern (2020: 2) reflects on ‘relations as a tool of inquiry, a target of scholarly knowledge and a slippery concept that defies easy theorising’. Relations are simultaneously ‘confined and unruly’, they are ‘dog-leads wrapping themselves around every foothold; unherdable cats going off in every direction’. Relations ‘organize the sequencing of arguments and marshalling of ideas, quite as much as they weave through whatever material is to hand, sneaking up on one, springing surprises’. ‘It seems pointless’, Strathern continues, ‘to imagine gathering such a multitude under a single rubric’, and yet.

the word [relations] is an attractor: a term that engages other terms, a concept in a field of concepts, an idea that draws in values and disseminates feelings, a substantive from which adjectives (relational) and abstractions (relational-

ity) can be made exactly as though everyone know what was meant. (Strathern 2020: 2)

Indeed, an ambitious project like *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) positions ‘data power’ as a tool of inquiry, a target of scholarly knowledge, and a slippery concept. The book’s chapters show how data power is confined and unruly; how it confines (us) within systems, structures, and metrics and also enables unruliness, resistance, and activism. The contributions might seem more like unherdable cats to some readers. But the way the contributions weave across materials (including springing surprises on the reader, like the relevance of Ellul’s (1954/1964) seven decades old book *The Technological Society* is precisely what enables the book to gather a multitude of perspectives, issues, and disciplines under the single rubric of ‘data power’. Individual chapters explore single concepts (data subjects), issues (environmental data power), arguments (against data colonialism), and categories of people (children) or fieldsites (Parc-Ex). Yet the volume’s approach through collective writing also makes the multiplicity explicit. In *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024), scholars of, for instance, childhood will see overlaps in their research with scholars of ageing, health, migration, autonomous vehicles, and more.

The volume demonstrates how data power, as an idea and attractor, operates as a crucial concept weaving together further concepts to make sense of contemporary society. The contributions discuss values and affects. They configure adjectives (datafied) and abstractions (datafication). Taking a final idea from Strathern (2020): a regular edited volume *on data power* could tease out what everyone thinks they know is meant. But instead—and this is a key strength of this book—this collective volume *on Dialogues in Data Power* enables a probing and questioning of what it is that everyone thinks they know about the meanings, values, and effects of data power.

I very much welcome this book for its content, which is ideal for gaining an overview of current debates, issues, ideas, values, and critiques in critical data studies. But I also welcome its relational, dialogical approach that further develops previous approaches to collective writing, as seen, for instance, in performative social science (Gergen and Jones 2008) or in concepts such as interthinking (Mercer 2000). It remains important to explore collaborative modes of writing and thinking that have the ‘potential to disrupt, challenge and open possibilities, both in the academy and in the wider world’ (Wyatt and Gale 2014: 295).

A ‘Layperson’ Academic Turned Data Practitioner: A Postdigital Journey (Benjamin J. Green)

The collective methodological foundation of *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) aims to deliver an interdisciplinary dialogue surrounding the central themes of data power and ‘response-ability’ (Haraway 2016). From a postdigital educational standpoint (Knox 2019), this contribution contains cross-cutting critical data science insights that speak directly to the developing sphere of higher education (HE) in the age of AI (Hayes et al. 2024).

To begin, most of the chapters highlight important (if not well-hewn) contemporary educational debates surrounding data privacy, the subjectification-agency paradox involved with AI usage, surveillance capitalism and neoliberalized data analytics within educational institutions, and the environmental impact/role of AI as relates to education for sustainable development (ESD). Moreover, the book contains both novel critical data science methodologies and practises, alongside examples of participatory research/community activism towards data justice in the face of rapacious, extractive, and unethical educational algorithmization/datafication.

Notwithstanding, for any academic within the field of education still considering themselves a 'layperson', seemingly far-removed from the practise of data science in their teaching and research, I recommend reading Chapter 5 first (see discussion by Todd 2005 on 'moments of intentionality' and identity change). Beresford et al. (2024) convincingly argue (in line with a central aim of the text) that laypersons within our increasingly datafied global society must position themselves as 'data practitioners' in one form or another. As such, the central aim of this text, vis-à-vis its interdisciplinary dialogic aims, seeks to fill an important gap that has arisen as a result of an emerging postdigital process of biodigital becoming (Reader 2022). One that, welcomed or not, is unfolding in almost every facet of our datafied postdigital lives (Wilde et al. 2024).

This unfolding process is particularly true for those of us within the academic profession who have witnessed how the continued proliferation of socio-technical imaginaries of AI-driven EdTech development have impacted teaching/learning/research within and across our respective disciplines. The most prominent of these can perhaps be best understood through Knox's (2023) work describing how China and the USA have uncritically bought in to rival visions of AI-driven scientific cum geopolitical dominance. The impact of these imaginaries, as driving developmental forces, can be felt quite clearly within the further datafied responsabilization of the academic profession.

As an academic within the field of education, who once considered themselves a member of this layperson grouping, I have been increasingly tasked with developing teaching/learning pedagogies and practices that promote ethical forms of AI usage in support of student wellbeing/knowledge acquisition. In my editorial capacities, I am asked to strike a fair balance between rigour and the utility of AI-driven research methods in scientific research. As a researcher, I now pursue lines of inquiry that confront AI-driven EdTech reforms as an inexorable facet of contemporary higher education (HE) development. For those of us within the academy who now find ourselves being dragged into the messy sociotechnical assemblages that define the post-digital condition (Traxler et al. 2021), *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) represents an accessible yet foundational critical data science text cum interdisciplinary dialogic space in support of neophyte data practitioners.

That being said, I have previously critiqued the usage of the kaleidoscope as an appropriate metaphor to define an interdisciplinary research focus (Jopling et al. 2024). I have also maintained that we have yet to witness a truly transdisciplinarity dialogue manifest against/within/across the siloed boundaries of the 'hard' and 'soft' sciences (Green 2022). Nevertheless, the fractal yet cohesively accessible

nature of this interdisciplinary critical data science text may provide an emergent transdisciplinary foundation upon which data scientists, elected officials, ‘lay-person’ academics, community organisers, and citizen scientists can both better understand the multi-fractal nature of contemporary data power and more effectively agitate towards a collective pursuit of human-centred data justice.

Some Downsides of Collective Research

Spotting Presences and Absences in a Kaleidoscope (Daniel López Gómez)

The kaleidoscopic and dialogical design of the book offers an introduction to the field of critical data studies, especially useful for readers who are not native to the field, as is my case. It does not demarcate a territory with its theoretical and methodological milestones from an omniscient voice of authority, as often happens in many introductions. It offers us a field we can traverse through many paths, each traced by the always-situated and incarnated voices of data practitioners, scholars, and activists with different backgrounds. Drawing on the singularity of their practises, they collectively respond to questions related to the power of data: individual and community accountability, resistance, the design of accountable data systems, and critical studies of accountable data.

This has a dual effect: on the one hand, the book is a showcase of the issues, practises, and methods of the field; on the other hand, the book represents the field as a kaleidoscope whose overall definition is a polyphonic effect of singular voices articulated around a series of shifting issues and questions. In this sense, it is an ambitious book in terms of the number of voices, themes, and questions it contains and the range of effects it seeks to produce, including, for example, experimenting with collective writing whilst creating a community of people with very diverse backgrounds and interests.

At the same time, it is a modest book: it works with and assumes partiality, and shuns any pretence of completeness. As someone who does not work in this field but shares the authors’ and editors’ ethical and political concerns, I think this design seems very much to the point. However, for those already working in the field, the book may be unsatisfying. To articulate so many contributions, voices, and themes, the descriptions of the projects and works are often very brief and general. The arguments and key concepts are presented but hardly developed. At times, the constant need to summarise and synthesise so many voices leaves the reader with a sense of excessive redundancy and insufficient depth.

The most interesting aspect of the book, in my opinion, is that the editors propose a techno-feminist view of critical data studies (based on Haraway, Barad, etc.). However, this proposition could be more developed. For example, it is unclear how much this approach differs from other frameworks that advocate responsible innovation, such as the EU’s Responsible Research and Innovation (Rip 2014). Moreover, whilst this ethical and political sensibility is presented as a shared and common approach when we read the chapters, some contributions deploy notions of responsibility

coming from very different political epistemologies. Given that response-ability is such a central concept, these differences could have been pointed out and discussed.

In my opinion, the most interesting chapters are those that explore in more detail the dynamics of data power in the datification of the world (Fahimi et al. 2024; Crooks et al. 2024; Beresford et al. 2024), specifically issues of resistance, visibility, colonialism, and extractivism. Chapter 1 (Dalmer et al. 2024), on the other hand, is poorly articulated, perhaps because the themes and approaches of the contributions are too different from each other.

Importantly, one would expect to find more empirical contributions on the impact that processes of datafication have on minority and subaltern collectives, as well as their possibility of agency. Furthermore, given the book's topic, the absence of contributions by researchers living realities other than those of the global North is surprising. If, as the book argues, the power of data is configured in colonial power structures, having more voices of those who suffer its violence and who are subalterned by this power would have enriched the dialogues and strengthened the book's aims.

Absent Voices in Data Power (Kalpana Shankar)

The book is a testament to the creativity, labour, and reflection on the part of the editors and many authors. *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) brings together a variety of methods, disciplines, and perspectives where each chapter is written as a dialogue within (if not always across) chapters.

A major disappointment for me, and a significant flaw considering the topic of the book and the commitments of the editors and authors, is the lack of institutional representation from the Global South. Although there are authors who hail from the Global South and whose research engages practises and policies around the world, the lack of institutional representation is somewhat jarring. Even the chapter that critiques data colonialism does not include an author who represents an institution in the Global South. As many of the authors of this book and others have written, the full stack of digital technologies, from the undersea cables to data centres to the mining of rare metals to the (often invisible and thankless and often exploitative) labour in data work, are built upon and perpetuate global inequality. That inequality has enormous implications for where and how data power is wielded. I found myself wanting to know how these chapters and topics land with those in the Global South themselves. What would citizens, researchers, and educators of the Global South contribute? I think the book is sadly poorer for this omission.

As someone who has edited collected volumes (if not at this scope and scale), I read the 'Herding Cats' (Bates and Jarke 2024) reflection with recognition, understanding, and an occasional chuckle. However, I would have appreciated a more scholarly/academic reflection on the book's content from the editors. Perhaps in such a reflection, I would have learned more about who was included and why, what the editors felt the book had accomplished vis-à-vis what they wanted to accomplish, what they felt the gaps were, and where others might further the discussion.

That said, I recognise that the very nature of the book precludes it from being one that can appeal to all readers. I see this volume as an introduction to many relevant things: what data power is and could be, who wields data power and who does not, (re)introducing ‘responsibilization’ as a key component of understanding the extent of data power. Some other readers might see this breadth as a flaw—that the book does not know who its audience is and is thus too diffuse, too basic, and undertheorised. I am comfortable with that. I see that breadth as a strength, particularly as it leverages the power of dialogue and collectivity. This book represents an important first step in engaging across educational and career stages, activists, scholars, and practitioners, and opening up new questions for data power research, activism, and teaching.

Moving Beyond Herding Cats (Deborah Lupton)

This book brings together a terrific group of scholars, many of whom are well-known in the field of datafication/critical data studies. Inevitably, an ambitious attempt to include so many authors in a collaboratively written initiative such as this volume raises difficulties with the coordination of content. For the most part, however, the editors have managed to avoid too many overlaps, and the collection has admirable breadth. But what is missing is depth and substance: both in the very short chapters and in the book as a whole. Most chapters are descriptive rather than theoretically substantial.

As someone who, over the past few years, has employed more-than-human theory to analyse human-digital-data assemblages, it was heartening to see a major emphasis on this theoretical approach from the first, introductory chapter by the editors, Jarke and Bates (2024). The sub-title of their chapter and the third sentence use the word ‘response-ability’ from Donna Haraway’s (1991, 2016) scholarship. A few paragraphs down, they refer to a ‘diffractive reading’ they undertook in the introduction chapter of the other chapters—a term, of course, introduced by Karen Barad (2007).

There is an extensive literature in post-qualitative methods on how to do diffractive inquiry, which would have been helpful for readers unfamiliar with this term and approach to explore in greater detail. Further explanation of what not only Haraway but other sociomaterialist theorists define as response-ability would have been good to see. Carefully distinguishing between response-ability, responsiveness, responsibilisation, and responsibility—all terms used in this short overview—would also have helped the reader. Bringing in Rosi Braidotti’s (2019) concept of affirmative ethics, in which she argues for adopting an approach that goes beyond critique, would have provided further depth to what is otherwise a very descriptive and brief summary of the book’s theoretical perspectives. Finally, some discussion in this introduction and throughout the book of non-Western and First Nations’ materialisms, rather than leaning predominantly on Western feminist ‘new’ materialism (actually, not very new at all compared with these other materialisms), would also be useful.

Staying on a discussion of theoretical depth, the brevity and ‘bittiness’ of each chapter, which typically involve numerous scholars providing short vignettes from

their own research, as well as respondents' brief comments attempting to summarise these diverse contributions, unfortunately, does mean that the chapters read more like blog posts than fully realised scholarly chapters. The book is more 'kaleidoscope' than 'braiding' (both terms used in the introduction), as there is little sense of coherence across the volume.

I do wonder what the intended readership of this collection is and who will benefit from it. As a volume of short, snappy introductions to the different topics of 'data power' addressed in the contributions, perhaps this collection is best suited to first-year undergraduates or even senior school students studying digital cultures. A conclusion chapter (Bates and Jarke 2024) that did more than discuss the nuts and bolts of 'herding cats' but instead provided a coherent analysis of the chapters' content, applying the more-than-human lens promised in the introduction chapter, would have enhanced the book's contribution.

These reservations aside, the editors and contributors deserve kudos for attempting a new mode of scholarship.

What's Next? (Petar Jandrić)

In public, the academia is all about creativity, originality, and innovation. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the easiest path to a successful academic career is one of conformation to generally accepted rules of conduct, loyalty to our mentors and colleagues, and observance of excellence frameworks used in the evaluation of our work. As we publicly celebrate those who dare to be different, the academia silently punishes everything and anything that deviates from the norm. In a complex dialectic between capitalism and schizophrenia (Deleuze and Guattari 1972/2004, 1980/2004), our creative juices are being suppressed in the service of normalisation and control.

Despite all the glam and glitter, centres of academic 'excellence' have always been vulnerable to challengers arriving from their gloomy margins (Jandrić and Hayes 2019). Not unlike the famous fictional boxer Rocky Balboa, an academic underdog has little to lose and much to gain. Indeed, early collective articles, in the large series started with Michael A. Peters and the Editorial Collective (see Jandrić et al. 2023 for an overview), were much more experimental. In this phase of early accumulation of knowledge, pieces of collective writing that did not work so well were as valuable as successful pieces of collective writing. After all, we needed to learn both *how to make* collective writings and *how not to make* collective writings. As collective writing has slowly entered mainstream—and *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024) is a clear testament to this mainstreaming—the aura of experimentation, and the tolerance to mistake, has faded. Now, as can be seen from this collective review, collective works such as this are being evaluated with the same rigour as any others. In the process, we lost a bit of tolerance for negative results, as if those are not a part of a collective learning process. This is a natural development and the one that testifies to the success of collective writing approaches.

This review has been organised for the purpose of evaluating *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024), and this evaluation has revealed a mixed bag of more successful and less successful elements. But this evaluation is not a verdict, and its results are not cast in stone. Postdigital dialogue (Jandrić et al. 2019) is a continuous process. The book is an important milestone, and the one that needs to be celebrated, yet as soon as the book is published, the dialogue moves on. This review responds to the book. Now, authors and editors will respond to the review—either in writing, perhaps in *Postdigital Science and Education*, or in their next writing projects, or indeed in some other way. Someone else may respond to this too, directly or indirectly, by taking in these messages as they will plan their next collective writing project.

Academic life is one of constant roleplay. Today I am reviewing your book; tomorrow you will be reviewing my book. Reviewers are not judges; authors and editors are not defendants. We are all partners in a wide postdigital dialogue aimed at improving our knowledge of the world. Juliane Jarke, Jo Bates, and all authors in *Dialogues in Data Power* (Jarke and Bates 2024), have dared to produce a non-mainstream book. Their courage is to be admired; any mishaps should be interpreted as lessons for the future. As Robert F. Kennedy (1966) said in his affirmation address at the University of Cape Town, ‘only those who dare to fail greatly, can ever achieve greatly’. I congratulate the authors for their amazing work, and I look forward to continuing this important scholarly dialogue about data, power, and ways in which those and other important topics can be researched collectively.

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