

Entrevista

O cidadão à frente da produção de notícias: uma análise perspectiva¹

The citizen at the forefront of news production: a perspective analysis

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1 A originalidade dos conteúdos e o ineditismo da entrevista, realizada por e-mail, são de responsabilidade das autoras. Optamos por manter a entrevista no original em inglês para preservar os conteúdos das respostas dadas pelo entrevistado, que autorizou sua divulgação e publicação.

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Henry Jenkins é uma das autoridades mais importantes no campo das pesquisas de mídia. Como professor na Universidade do Sul da Califórnia (UCS), nos Estados Unidos, realiza a pesquisa "Mídia, Ativismo e Políticas Participativas" ("Media, Activism, and Participatory Politics – MAPP"), relacionada a ambientes colaborativos, à juventude e especialmente à convergência midiática, tendo publicado diversos trabalhos sobre o tema. A entrevista foi realizada em julho de 2014 e ganha relevância neste momento em que os resultados do trabalho mencionado acima foram publicados na obra *By any media necessary: the new youth activism*⁴. Na presente entrevista, o autor apresenta sua pesquisa mais recente e argumenta que vídeos amadores postados nas redes representam uma oportunidade para estudar a transformação pela qual esses materiais passam quando entram no universo profissional do jornalismo. O autor sublinha que há um viés político que prepassa a plataforma YouTube, mas que não tal fator não é inerente a ela, alertando para o fato de que os comentários postados sobre os vídeos não respeitam a dissidência e a diferença, criando muitas vezes um ambiente hostil na web. Quando questionado sobre a experiência brasileira com aplicativos para telefones celulares utilizados no recebimento de conteúdos informativos, Jenkins enfatiza que a imprensa em geral historicamente não se preocupa com o público mais carente, o que provavelmente valeria também no caso brasileiro. O autor destaca, ainda, que os jornalistas têm uma tendência a dar mais atenção à classe média do que à classe trabalhadora, de representar mais adultos do que adolescentes, mais homens do que mulheres, e mais pessoas brancas do que negros. Além disso, o pesquisador afirma que a mídia deveria fazer mais para educar e esclarecer o público do que ficar determinando o que "não tem qualidade" na avaliação da qualidade da informação. Segundo Jenkins, alguns jornalistas têm se esforçado pouco para chegar ao âmago dessa questão, mas apesar disso essa posição ajuda a vender jornais.

Juventude e política participativa

My research team was just finishing off the manuscript for *By Any Media Necessary: Mapping Youth and Participatory Politics*, which we will send to the press for peer review in another two weeks. This book emerged from my involvement in a multidisciplinary research network on Youth and Participatory Politics funded by the MacArthur Foundation. Collectively, we are trying to better understand the political lives of American youth. My team's task was to do ethnographic case studies of some key networks that have been deploying participatory practices and new media platforms to inspire young people to get involved in the political

4 O site com os resultados desse trabalho de pesquisa, que acompanha o livro, está disponível em: <http://byanymedia.org/>. Acesso em: 02 jun. 2016.

process. At the heart of the book is the concept of the Civic Imagination – that is, before we can change the world, we have to be able to imagine what a better world would look like, we have to come to see ourselves as political agents who can help bring about that change. For many American youth, the language through which they conduct their politics emerges from their creative appropriation and remixing of images from popular culture. This is certainly true for the forms of fan activism we examine but it is also true for forms of traditional identity politics work, such as what we've seen from the DREAMers, undocumented youth fighting for their citizenship and educations, or American Muslim youth simply trying to survive in America after 9/11. We are seeking to understand how a more participatory culture, one where many youth have enhanced communication capacities and greater access to the means of production and circulation, is changing the way we conduct politics. It starts in some ways where *Convergence culture* (2008) and *Spreadable media* (2013) left off – the first ends with some speculation that we will be using skills acquired through our recreational lives to achieve other goals including politics, and the kinds of movements we are seeing not only in the U.S. but around the world – Occupy, the Arab Spring, the kinds of political use of the World Cup in Brazil, illustrate this point nicely. The second spells out the importance of grassroots circulation as a key factor in shaping the national and transnational agenda in a networked society, and we have seen some spectacular examples of circulation-based politics in recent years, including Kony 2012 which is the focus of one of the book's case studies. So, we hope to have this book out there within another year or so, and we hope it will spark the same interest as my other recent publications.

As it turns out, for all of the talk about "Twitter Revolutions" or "Facebook Revolutions", YouTube may have been far more important as a platform for the people – some 200 plus young activists – we interviewed for this book. Our title, *By any media necessary*, is intended to signal that these youth are using any and all available platforms towards their ends, but we are definitely seeing that the ability to produce and share videos of all genres and of all degrees of technical quality is important for forging change at the present. For example, the young DREAMers have created a genre where they "come out" as undocumented, speaking directly to the camera, and telling their stories. These stories played important emotional roles for those involved – allowing them to acknowledge and confront their fears, to find others who have had similar experiences, to "come out from the shadows". They have also helped to reach people who have never knowingly had a conversation with someone who was undocumented and have a chance to hear their intimate stories without going through traditional gatekeepers. And

these videos have helped to keep the issue of immigration reform on the national agenda despite any number of set-backs on the level of governmental policy. We have seen similar uses by all of the groups we study – part of a larger push which sees governmental response to their core concerns as unlikely at the moment, but where there has been a push to shift public opinion through educational and cultural interventions. None of this is to suggest that YouTube itself is a particular hospitable space to civic action: for all kinds of reasons, it is a very anti-social place, where the comments posted are often deeply hostile to diversity and dissent, but because there are few constraints on what can be posted there, we are seeing it get used by many different groups for many different reasons. They are conducting politics through YouTube but not within it.

Mídia independente e telejornalismo

Among U.S. journalists, there's an expression – "if it bleeds, it leads". That is, the stories which will get the most play are those which center around trauma and loss, violence and bloodshed, pain and suffering, so it is not surprising that as these professional journalists look to grassroots media, they are plucking up the juicy bits where violence gets captured on camera. We can see the beginnings of this era by looking at the Rodney King video, which helped to spark the LA Riots several decades ago: shot on a handheld video camera, not yet a mobile phone, it showed what television cameras would never see – a powerful example of police brutality.

It was predicted at the time we would see more examples of street surveillance, surveillance by the people directed at powerful institutions. So, here, the most powerful examples of user-generated content to reach the news have been images of police brutality – or, say, the street protests of the Arab Spring, which also showed authorities crashing down on the masses. Many of these images would be unavailable to traditional journalists, because the police were unlikely to perform these acts with big professional cameras pointed at them, though when they did so, whether in the streets of Chicago during the police riots of 1968 or on the bridge at Selma when Martin Luther King and his followers sought to provoke racist backlash with the network news bringing what happened live to the nation. Whether any of this qualifies as transmedia is an interesting question: certainly we are seeing these videos emerge through multiple channels and platforms and this can often allow us to see more clearly how they are edited or reframed as they pass from grassroots media practices to professional journalism. Yet, we are still seeing very little efforts to meaningfully coordinate the storytelling across these various platforms in the ways that a more literal understanding of transmedia might require.

There is still a lot we don't know about this. *Spreadable Media* tries to describe some of the factors which insure that some videos travel further and faster than others. We argue that in order to become spreadable, content has to be available when and where audiences want it, has to be in a format which makes it easy to share, has to be open to multiple uses, meanings, and interpretations, has to be relevant to multiple audiences, and has to be part of a steady stream of material. We argue that people pass along media content as part of their ongoing efforts to communicate with each other; these videos constitute a kind of cultural currency in the era of social networking platforms. We also look at the many different kinds of social and emotional motives which might make some content more likely to spread, including the expression of nostalgia, humor, mystery, or controversy. But the leap to broadcast media requires different logics, those that emerge from the broadcast institutions, and may or may not simply reflect which videos are drawing the greatest number of eyeballs online. That is why I stressed that the focus on violence in the videos which the news media picks up may tell us as much about what the news media values as it does about what the public values. And so, I am not sure the answers we posed in *Spreadable Media* can fully address this question in terms of explaining the professional filters which shape the movement of media content from the Internet to television newscasts.

Literacia midiática, informação e cultura participativa

We see media literacy as a core set of skills and competencies which need to be integrated across all of the existing disciplines. Media change has impacted every aspect of our lives, every core institution, and so it can no longer be simply addressed through stand alone classes or be restricted to the arts and letters part of the curriculum. Modern science depends heavily on visualization and simulation technologies and so critical skills in understanding and deploying such tools need to be taken up in science classes, to cite simply one example. These skills require not only an understanding of how to use particular sets of tools but also a bigger picture understanding of the media landscape, how it is changing, and how it impacts our lives.

Our research suggests that American youth remain very aware and engaged with key issues of their times and often consume more news that has generally been acknowledged, but they do not tend to go to newspapers or newscasts directly to receive their information about the world. Most of what they know came to them through their inbox, through social media, and they play an active, albeit sometimes uncritical, role in passing along that information to others in their community. In that sense, news may well be in a post-network era (in so far

as they are less beholding to a specific Broadcast network) but not a post-network era (in that they depend on their social networks to keep them on top of issues they need to know about).

Some political theorists have talked about a shift from the model of the informed citizen, where everyone was expected to know everything about every issue (an impossible standard and one which leaves many youth feeling inadequate about entering political debates) towards one focused on the Monitorial citizen (where we each take ownership over keeping our social network informed about specific topics which matter to us and we count on others to do the same). In that way, the priorities of citizens start to supplant those of professional editors, but the content which travels is still very much the content produced by professional news gatherers. Things are evolving rapidly; we are in a hybrid system right now. But I don't see the public devaluing what professional journalists can do, but they are creating a different relationship to the flow of that information than has characterized news consumption in the past.

Intellectual property law has been heading towards a crisis point for some time. If more and more political speech is conducted through appropriating and transforming existing media images to speak to new concerns and perspectives, if news content gains currency by acts of often unauthorized circulation, then various forms of so-called "copyright infringement" are becoming fundamental to how democracy operates. And yet, there is widespread confusion over copyright and fair use, which can create a chilling climate for some forms of participation. I was excited to see the American public get actively involved in some recent legislative battles over copyright: more and more of them have come to value their communication capacity, to want to protect and extend their expression rights, and to question the assertions being made by corporate rights holders over what should be the limits on their use of pre-existing cultural materials.

Participatory culture is collective: we are participating in something and that has to do with our interactions with other people. As such, participatory culture goes beyond self-expression towards collective meaning-making. The term *Do it yourself* (DIY) is a tricky one since it can imply doing it on your own, when these forms of cultural production and circulation are far more effective when we are doing it together. There are some real limits to the idea of DIY citizenship when it implies that everyone is free to choose whatever identities they want. What our research is showing is that, say, American Muslim youth have no way to opt out of politics – their religious and cultural practices are always already political in a culture where they feel constantly watched and judged or that undocumented youth face clear restrictions in terms of what they can express about their identities and

where. By contrast, the fan activists we have studied in groups like the Harry Potter Alliance or the Nerdfighters often feel enormous freedom to get involved or not, to frame their actions as political or purely cultural, and often need ways to find their way into the political rather than having the political find them. So, we are seeing participatory culture blur over into participatory politics, which would incorporate many if not all of the examples of political practices that Boler and Ratto include in their book. But, the term, DIY Citizenship, comes with some baggage that I would want to examine closely before I would say that it describes the full range of groups and practices my book is going to document.

Jornalismo e o futuro das notícias

I am quite certain that one way or another news as an institutionalized practice will survive. The future of any given newspaper, say, is much more uncertain. I suspect we are going to continue to see the consolidation of newspapers in the U.S. context as we evolve away from a system based on local newspapers (once on multiple local newspapers in the major cities) to one much more focused on regional and national news sources. I have been predicting this for almost 15 years and we continue to see things evolving in this direction. We will see more examples of the disaggregation of the newspaper as individual stories become the focus of people's attention and where they are apt to get information from a broad range of sources, mostly curated within their social networks.

Yet, the skills which professional journalists bring, the infrastructural support, the sets of ongoing contacts, the ability to give something sustained attention, means that so-called "citizen media" will supplement but not displace professional reporting as the primary means by which we know about the world. We seem to have moved decisively away from a system based on "objectivity" or more accurately "neutrality" in favor of one based on "transparency", even if we do not yet agree on what criteria we will use to evaluate or demonstrate that transparency is what we are receiving.

A recent survey done by the MacArthur Foundation found that 85% of American youth know they need more help in assessing the quality of information they receive online. And while I have not seen the numbers, I suspect similar percentages of adults would express a similar desire. It is not that people are blind to the kinds of deceptions, petty and grand, they encounter online, yet they may not be as skeptical as they should be about information that aligns well with their world view and ideological perspective, they may lack the skills they need to investigate and critique information they receive. In such a world, the news media should be doing more to educate the public in the kinds of "crap detection" skills

(to use a term from Howard Rheingold) that they use in their professional lives to assess the caliber of information in circulation.

I know many journalists think it is inappropriate to assume a pedagogical role but for the adult population, they may be uniquely situated to do so. Just as they function now as “fact checkers” on claims being made by candidates for public office, a relatively new role that they have assumed in recent years, they should also be playing this role for the content most widely circulating online. But it’s clear that they have done anything but, using the circulation of information on the web as an excuse to report it, and then hiding behind “neutrality” as an excuse not to debunk it. No wonder so many Americans believe their president wasn’t born in the U.S. or that he is a Muslim, both claims which are demonstrably false, but which professional journalists have done little to puncture because they sell papers.

I can’t speak directly to the situation in Brazil which is beyond my expertise. But I would say that the press has historically not been fully accountable to the public it serves despite a rhetoric of representing the people in their clashes with the government. The press has historically ignored or under-served many key demographics within our society and thus important experiences go unreported. If such mechanisms can be used to expand coverage in new directions, they will be a huge asset to the journalism profession. But we need to keep in mind some key things which we worry about in the education sphere. The first is the digital divide which has to do with uneven access to new media technologies and the second is the participation gap, which has to do with uneven access to the skills, opportunities, and social networks required to meaningfully participate in the larger conversations of the culture.

Together, these factors insure that journalists are still more likely to hear from middle class or upper middle class patrons than working class readers, more likely to represent adults than youth, more likely to hear from men than women, and more likely to hear from white users than people of color. So, the danger is that the press will take such citizen media practices at face value and not recognize the need to continue to reach out and engage with under-served populations through a variety of other mechanisms.

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