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Assignment #3

**Bloggers: Democratization of Journalism**

Democratization is a process of making something accessible to everyone. Due to its broad definition, this paper will be focused on journalism. It is important to discuss the democratization of journalism because it will eventually create unemployment and damage professional journalists’ credibility. The Cambridge Dictionary defines journalism as the work of collecting, writing, and publishing, or broadcasting news and articles. Unfortunately, the internet is directly impacting this profession. Today, the scholarly process of becoming a journalist has lowered its standards. The internet is currently giving users the opportunity to express themselves by sharing their opinions on blogs or videos. However, the democratization of journalism succeeded on discussing politics, economics, and social issues within a diverse and young community.

Technology is making journalism accessible to everyone resulting in a more informed society, albeit, informed in a different way from the past. It allows underrepresented communities to have a public opinion on social and political issues. Since most of the members of these communities do not have the economic possibility to pay to be heard in mainstream media, technology promotes free speech and an intellectual exchange of ideas. A democratized culture, defined as giving all individuals a fair opportunity to participate, is an outcome of technology influencing journalism.

Older generations and conservatives might perceive traditional mainstream media as “good” journalism because they often promote conventional values and ideologies shared among the educated and wealthy social class. In the United States, the conservative population is defined as the citizens who have European Christian background and tend to lack of cultural awareness. Simultaneously, conservatives prefer their economic interests to social issues and community development. In contrast to mainstream media, social media and blogs are competing against it. Supporters of traditional journalism refer to social media news as “bad” journalism due to the lack of academic and professional preparation of its journalists, commentators, correspondents, reporters, and producers. However, younger generations embrace democratized journalism because it promotes diversity, such as news in different languages.

Furthermore, attacked minority groups in the country have been benefited by democratized journalism. For example, due to many current politic and social views, Islamophobia is an increasing threat in American society. This prejudice against Muslims is fueled by the hate rhetoric frequently used by Donald Trump, the Republican Presidential Candidate, as part of his political platform. The hatred promoted by Trump gave Univision Communications, an American Spanish language media company, the opportunity to give a voice to Muslim Americans. As a result, Fusion, a satire channel owned by Univision, hired Bassem Youssef to cover the 2016 Presidential Elections.

Youssef is an Egyptian satirist, columnist, and former cardiac surgeon. He started his career as a cardiac surgeon after going to medical school in Cairo for thirteen years. After working as a physician for seven years, he applied to a pediatric cardiac surgeon position in Cleveland. Unfortunately, the Arab Spring started after he got the job offer. As a result, Egypt’s political instability interrupted the bureaucracy to receive his work visa. As a member of the educated class in Cairo’s society, he felt the responsibility to inform Egypt’s society about mainstream media biased information. Consequently, he started posting videos on YouTube satirizing Egyptian politics and encouraging the movement. Due to dissatisfaction, his videos became popular among the government’s opposition. After the political scene came to a halt, the former physician started his satirical television show, *Al Bernameg* (“The Program”), sponsored by an Egyptian billionaire.

In June 2013, Youssef invited John Stewart, an American comedian, writer, and television host, to his show. During an *Al Bernameg* episode, the Egyptian host satirically introduced Jon Stewart as an American spy. As a result, Youssef was arrested and interrogated for six hours after his American counterpart left the country. Fortunately, he was not imprisoned. However, his show was cancelled. Finally, Fusion offered him the opportunity to relocate to the United States. Youssef gladly relocated to avoid further issues with Egyptian government.

In contrast to the unconventional way Youssef became an Univision employee, Jorge Ramos, author, journalist, and news anchorman, pursued the scholarly path for reporting news. Ramos studied an undergraduate degree in Communications at the Panamerican University in Mexico City. After graduation, he worked in the largest multimedia mass media company in Hispanic America that is known to influence public political opinion and support presidential candidates: Grupo Televisa. When working in Televisa, he produced a story that criticized and exposed the Mexican government. As a result, the company censored Ramos’ work. The journalist argued that Televisa oppressed his constitutional right of freedom of speech. Consequently, he moved to Los Angeles with a student visa.

In California, he took Journalism and Television classes at the University of California – Los Angeles. Later, he obtained a Master of Arts in International Studies from University of Miami. Since 1985, Ramos has worked in Univision and, eventually, promoted to anchorman for the nightly Spanish language newscast. Ramos’ academic knowledge in Communications, Journalism, Television, and International Studies led him to a successful career in the United States. Besides his national career, he has gained international respect by covering the fall of the Berlin Wall, Salvadoran Civil War, Persian Gulf War, the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan War, and 9/11 terrorist attacks.

After winning eight Emmy Awards and the Maria Moors Cabot Prize for his outstanding work in the journalism realm, he was selected by Times magazine in 2015 as “The World’s 100 Most Influential People”. Likewise, Bassem Youssef was recognized in the same list by Times magazine for his ideological support in Egypt. Ramos’ success is a proof that becoming a journalist through education and experience in the field will eventually lead to the desired career path.

Although democratization of journalism has had a positive impact on Internet users and has promoted a voice for minorities, in several situations it can produce unfortunate outcomes. The most regrettable result is Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy. Trump posted messages on Twitter a year before his presidential announcement. His tweets were against Mexico after Alejandro González Iñárritu, a Mexican film director and screenwriter, won several Academy Awards. Using this platform, Trump created his public persona to share his views on Mexico.

After his presidential announcement, he tweeted racist remarks on Hispanic, Chinese, and Arab culture. Moreover, the Republican Presidential Candidate shared on social media offensive images and messages about the other candidates who competed for the republican nomination, political opponents, and journalist who questioned his messages and statements. Trump tweeted a picture where he humiliated Ted Cruz’ wife. Senator Cruz, who sought for the republican presidential nomination, used the same social media to politely defend his wife.

However, the democratization culture on social media reacted against Trump. Recently, a video was released where the businessman bragged about sexually assaulting a woman. Since social media users condemned this act, supported women’s rights, and promoted consent culture, women who were previously sexually assaulted by Trump shared their experiences on mainstream media. The main platform used to share all the information about Trump’s sexual assaults was Twitter. The response of the internet users is an example of the different ways in which democratized journalism criticizes the same person who previously gained popularity by social media users.

Another instance where technology impacted politics and journalism is Bernard “Bernie” Sanders campaign. Earlier this election cycle, technology divided the Democrat Party by generational differences. Millennials, who get their news from different social media platforms, tended to support Bernie Sanders. Furthermore, Sanders’ supporters would share their opinions online and promote his rallies by creating Facebook events. In contrast, older generations, who will watch the news on CNN or read the newspaper, supported Hillary Clinton.

After Secretary Clinton won the Democratic Presidential Nomination, mass media attempted constantly to discredit her political experience due to an email scandal. Clinton used a private email server for confidential communication and the Federal Bureau of Investigation was investigating the case. The astonishing response produced by the social media supported Clinton. This led to public rejection to mass media opinions on the scandal. Additionally, Internet users endorsed her by using creating method of promoting her on social media, such as creating videos and posting them on YouTube.

As discussed in the aforementioned paragraphs, a democratized culture will succeed depending on the audience. Therefore, a mass media company needs to study and understand its audience demographics and age if it wants to integrate technology. Corporate media, mass media dominated by corporations and their CEOs, will not be successful among young people who rather get informed using social media. In contrast, it is difficult to reach an elder audience by means of the Internet. Overall, positive outcomes from democratization of journalism outweigh the negative aspects.

There are constructive outcomes of democratized journalism. The most noticeable one is Bassem Youssef and his vital voice to Arab Americans and Muslim Americans in present day politics. Besides Youssef, social media has empowered everyone to share their opinions on different social and political issues, such as Trump’s sexual harassment and millennial support for Clinton. Despite the majority of the population who prefers mainstream media, technology will continue to make freedom of speech more accessible to underrepresented communities and people who are not represented by mass media. Consequently, democratized journalism will keep on displacing traditional journalism and newspaper. However, it will diversify the viewpoints on journalism resulting in a progressive and broad perception that will report the news holistically.

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