Participatory Culture in a Networked Era

Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, danah boyd

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A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics

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Preface

Anonymous, 4chan, Harry Potter Alliance, *Kony 2012*, Facebook, Instagram, Minecraft. In the twenty years since Henry Jenkins first began talking about what he termed "participatory culture," the concept – and the term itself – has gained wide traction across a range of disciplines as scholars have sought to respond both to new cultural practices and to the new affordances enabled by digital, networked, and mobile technologies. And, not surprisingly, participatory culture as a concept has also come under sharp criticism and even attack from some quarters. The goal of this book is to critically examine the concept of "participatory culture," tracing the ways our own thinking has evolved through the years in response to a changing media environment and to the shifting stakes in policy debates surrounding digital media. When the concept first emerged, no one knew what shape networked communication might take or how it would impact fields such as education or politics. After twenty years, we are in a somewhat different position, able to look back on what has changed and what has not changed as our culture has absorbed a range of new media platforms and practices. Throughout this book-long dialogue, the authors try to reconcile conflicting bids about what all of this means and where it may be going next.

The authors of this book – Henry Jenkins, Mimi Ito[1], and danah boyd – came of age at different moments in the rise of participatory culture and have diverse scholarly orientations and histories. Despite our varied backgrounds, our professional pathways are intertwined because of shared concerns, commitments, and interests concerning the social and cultural implications of emerging media. We

are friends and colleagues who have supported, challenged, and collaborated with each other over the years.

More concretely, all three of us participated in the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning initiative. Henry and his New Media Literacies team at MIT (Jenkins et al. 2007) developed a white paper that used the concept of participatory culture to describe the core social skills and cultural competencies that young people need to acquire in order to participate meaningfully in the new media landscape. Alongside Peter Lyman and Michael Carter, Mimi led a large-scale ethnographic study on youth, new media, and learning as part of this initiative; danah was brought in as one of the core graduate researchers on that study. Henry's New Media Literacy project and Mimi and danah's Digital Youth project were the first two major grants by MacArthur in what became the focus of the foundation's educational grant-making. Mimi and Henry have both served as participants in a MacArthur-funded research network focused on Youth and Participatory Politics, danah has worked with MacArthur on more policy-oriented research, and all three of us have worked together to help organize Digital Media and Learning conferences and mentorship programs.

The book reflects this history of working at the intersection of youth practices, participatory culture, and digital and networked technology. In addition to being the focus of our scholarly work, we believe this constellation of topics is timely and relevant as we navigate an important shift in our media and communications environs. The focus on the relationship between participatory culture and digital and networked technology reflects the historical moment in which we write this book – as ideas around participation, crowdsourcing, peer production, and Web 2.0 are moving from geek culture to a more globalized mainstream. Young

people remain a central focus of our research, in part because youth have been lead adopters of mobile, social, and gaming media. We see youth as uniquely positioned to effect social change, while also recognizing the conditions of oppression that they face in making their perspectives heard and appreciated. Our focus on the context of the US also deserves mention. While all of us have done international work, most notably Mimi in Japan, the center of gravity for our research has been in the US, and the book reflects this. Our discussions of US teens and the California tech scene no doubt reflect a degree of parochialism, but we hope these examples will have broader relevant readers outside of the US as well. We encourage scholars elsewhere to ask themselves similar questions about how these changes may be taking shape in their culturally specific contexts.

Each chapter in this book represents a shared topic of concern and begins with an introductory essay by one of the three authors, followed by a conversation between the three of us. Throughout, we weave together our personal experiences, perspectives, and research with a broader analysis of the issues at stake.

The first chapter, "Defining Participatory Culture," introduces the core concept framing this book. We then move, in "Youth Culture, Youth Practices," to a discussion of youth as a unique population that we have all studied in depth. From there, in "Gaps and Genres in Participation," we consider the diversity in forms of participation as it relates to issues of equity. These three chapters lay out the conceptual and topical terrain. There follow three chapters that delve more deeply into issues of concern and our investments as engaged public intellectuals. "Learning and Literacy" explores the implications of participatory culture for education and media literacy. "Commercial Culture" considers the complex dynamics between capitalism,

popular culture, and today's networked media ecosystem. Finally, "Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Activism" considers the intersection between these topics and participatory and networked culture.

This book departs from scholarly convention in many ways, having come together through a dialogic and interactive process. The conversations reproduced here took place in Mimi's house in Los Angeles – the three of us sprawling on furniture, chomping on snacks, dealing with interruptions from children and neighbors, distracted by text messages and phone calls, but, slowly and surely, working through our shared agenda together. Along the way, we reached out to our own constituencies through Twitter and blogs, seeking questions they wanted us to address, and we've woven them into these dialogues. Over time, thanks to Google Docs, Microsoft Word, and Dropbox, we've edited, reorganized, debated, and filled in gaps in the original transcripts to give more structure and clarity to our originally rather informal exchanges. Evelyn McDonnell, Quinn Norton, and Matt Rafalow provided invaluable editorial input into this process, as did our editors at Polity Press, Andrea Drugan and Joe Devanny. While every book is a collective enterprise, this one has emerged from a particularly lively participatory process.

As you read the book, you will quickly realize that the conversations presented here reveal the ways in which the three of us, all deeply engaged in these issues, still struggle with many aspects of participatory culture. There are places where we disagree with each other and topics where we struggle analytically and intellectually. Unlike a typical scholarly manuscript, this book is about our willingness to reveal the limitations of our knowledge and our collective struggles to work out what we're privileged enough to witness. Research is a process, and all too often we tend to emphasize the final output. As scholars committed to

participatory culture, we're also committed to opening up our practice and thinking. This book is our attempt to do just that. Enjoy!

1. Given the conversational nature of this book, Mizuko will be referred to throughout the text by the nickname "Mimi," the name by which she is most often referred to by friends and colleagues.

Chapter 1
Defining Participatory Culture

Introduction by Henry Jenkins

More and more organizations, institutions, and businesses have embraced a rhetoric of participation, yet it is abundantly clear that not all forms of participation are equally meaningful or empowering. Many of the core debates of our time center around the terms of our participation: whether meaningful participation can occur under corporately controlled circumstances, when our ability to create and share content is divorced from our capacity to participate in the governance of the platforms through which that content circulates. Does participation become exploitation when it takes place on commercial platforms where others are making money off our participation and where we often do not even own the culture we are producing?

I first used the phrase "participatory culture" in *Textual Poachers* (Jenkins 1992), when I was contrasting participation with spectatorship; I was really only making descriptive claims about the cultural logic of fandom. *Poachers* described fans (in this case, mostly female fans of science fiction and other genre television programs) not simply as consumers of mass-produced content but also as a creative community that took its raw materials from commercial entertainment texts and appropriated and remixed them as the basis for their own creative culture. My book showcased the relationship between fans, texts, and producers but also the social relations that emerged within fandom as fans created a shared space where their own creative and critical interventions could be

appropriately valued. This account of fan culture drew heavily on my own experiences of almost twenty years, at that point, of involvement in fan communities.

My ideas about culture come from Raymond Williams (1958), who defines culture as "ordinary," the "sum total of human experience," as everything that we as humans create or do together, from the most mundane aspects of our everyday lives to the most cherished expression of our artistic accomplishments or sacred beliefs. So, for me, a participatory culture describes what are sometimes very ordinary aspects of our lives in the digital age. A participatory culture is one which embraces the values of diversity and democracy through every aspect of our interactions with each other – one which assumes that we are capable of making decisions, collectively and individually, and that we should have the capacity to express ourselves through a broad range of different forms and practices.

My initial use of "participatory culture" to refer to fandom (Jenkins 1992) relied on a not fully conscious blurring between forms of cultural production and forms of social exchange; fans understood fandom to be an informal "community" defined around notions of equality, reciprocity, sociality, and diversity. The fans had a clear and (largely) shared understanding of what they were participating in and how their production and circulation of media content contributed to their shared well-being. And there was a clear tension between their culture and that of the commercial industries from which they took their raw materials. In this context, there are strong links between interpretation, production, curation, and circulation as potentially meaningful forms of participation.

The world I described in *Textual Poachers* was undergoing transition, as a community based on photocopiers, the

postal service, and face-to-face encounters was giving way to electronically networked communications. At the same time, I was undergoing my own transition, starting work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1989 during the first phases of the digital revolution. My work on fandom came out, for example, alongside Howard Rheingold's early writings about virtual communities (Rheingold 1993). At MIT, I had a ringside seat for debates about the role of new media in education, the promises of digital democracy, and the creative potentials of hypertext and interactive games. More and more people were using the concept of participatory culture to describe the new forms of cultural production and media-sharing that were taking shape in the early days of the internet. Much of what I was seeing in the emerging cyberculture reminded me of my own experiences in fandom. Critics of *Convergence Culture* (2006) have argued that I saw the new media landscape as fandom writ large, and I suspect this is a more or less fair criticism of where I was at when I wrote the book. I was not wrong to see fandom as one important element shaping contemporary participatory culture. Fans were often early adopters of new media platforms and practices and experimenters with modes of media-making. They were historically among the first to interact within geographically dispersed communities of interest. But they were simply one among many different kinds of communities that had been struggling throughout the twentieth century to gain greater access to the means of cultural production and circulation.

By the time I became involved in the MacArthur Digital Media and Learning initiative in 2005, my thinking about participatory culture operated on a much different scope and scale. I saw us entering an era when the public, at least in the developed world, would have access to much greater communicative capacity than ever before, where a

growing number of institutions were embracing more participatory practices, and where the skills and knowledge to participate meaningfully were unevenly distributed. I examined a range of different sites of participatory culture in order to identify the ways they were supporting peer-to-peer mentorship and were encouraging and scaffolding participants as they refined their skills and developed greater confidence in their own voices. The white paper *Confronting the Challenges of a Participatory Culture* (Jenkins et al. 2007), written for MacArthur, was addressed to educators and adopted a definition of participatory culture that places a strong emphasis on its pedagogical potentials:

> A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created).

Embracing Participatory Culture

Mimi: I was very influenced by Henry's work on fandom and his early writing on gaming when I was doing my dissertation work on children's software. It empowered me to pursue work on the participatory dimensions of media culture at a time when digital and online media were still emergent and not the focus of much scholarly attention. Back then, I wouldn't have positioned Henry as a researcher in my field of learning sciences, but I already saw the relevance. I was thrilled when he started doing

more and more work that was explicitly educational, looking to participatory culture for a set of positive values for learning and literacy. It was probably overdetermined by our backgrounds and interests, but Henry, Howard Rheingold, and I found ourselves seeing similar kinds of opportunities for participation and learning emerging from new digital and networked media. Where Henry focused on fans, I've tended to focus on geeks, but it feels part of a similar family and a shared tendency to celebrate certain kinds of activated media engagements.

Unlike Henry, however, I came at these issues through the learning sciences, not media studies. As a graduate student at Stanford, I worked out of the Institute for Research on Learning (IRL), where Lave and Wenger (1991) had written their *Situated Learning* book together. IRL was a research institute that focused on social and cultural studies of learning. Unlike traditional views of learning, which focus on pouring content into the heads of kids in a standardized and individualized way, this approach sees learning as an act of participation in communities of shared culture and practice. These theories of learning and participation grew out of anthropological work in settings where learning is embedded in the everyday life of communities rather than sequestered into educational institutions, and it's not accidental that we've all found ourselves working at a similar intersection. And we've benefited from the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning initiative giving us a context and resources for working together.

danah: I was first exposed to the notion of "participatory culture" when I took classes from Henry in graduate school at MIT. Then I moved to San Francisco in January 2003 and embedded myself within a network of entrepreneurs and geeks who would go on to form the startups that became the backbone of what is now described as "Web 2.0." The

emic language used in these crowds was that of "user-generated content." As I listened to what they were envisioning and what they were trying to create, I realized that the startup scene was imagining many of the same things that Henry had turned me on to. Initially, this crowd had many of the same sensibilities as the fan communities that Henry encountered – subcultural resistance mixed with the particular narratives of liberty that Biella Coleman (2013) picks up on in *Coding Freedom*, where there was a political desire to have software be free as in freedom, not free as in beer. But a lot of this is now forgotten. Where we're sitting now – with Facebook having become a public company, marketers trying to make memes go viral, and social media being a worldwide phenomenon – it's hard to remember what San Francisco was like even a few years ago.

Mimi: Ideas about participatory culture and communities of practice have spread and morphed radically in the years since I was in graduate school. What was once a set of theories at the margins of academia is now part of a common vocabulary in some sectors of the industry and in much of media studies and the learning sciences. As a more wide-ranging set of players started to engage with these ideas, it has forced a set of conversations about what counts as participatory culture or a community of practice. For example, many of the early studies of situated learning and communities of practice centered on relatively defined, face-to-face professional communities, such as tailors (Lave 2011), butchers (Lave and Wenger 1991), and copier technicians (Orr 1996). What does it mean to apply these ideas about learning and participation to classrooms, online communities, and large corporate work teams? Now an acronym, "CoPs," communities of practice have become a familiar buzzword among managers seeking to build cohesion and sharing in work teams. These shifts have

been a source of consternation to some of the pioneers in situated learning theory who feel the ideas have been watered down or misappropriated. It's heartening to see these frameworks resonate more broadly, but they've also fallen victim to their own success. Can we hold onto the core values that animated the early years of situated learning theory and participatory culture while also appreciating how they have spread and evolved?

Henry: I came to Lave and Wenger and the other CoP thinkers somewhat later. My own initial thinking about education and participation was influenced early on by one of my MIT colleagues, Seymour Papert. Papert (1975) had written about his visit to a samba school in Rio. The samba schools were informal gathering places where people living in a community developed their performances for next year's carnival. Papert stressed the informal circumstances through which dancers of very different levels of experience collaborated to construct collective performances. He asked whether educators might incorporate some of those same processes into the design and practice of schooling. Papert celebrated these moments of collective creativity, in part because his whole constructivist education paradigm emphasizes active participation and de-emphasizes formalized teaching.

When I went to Rio a few years ago, I visited one of the samba schools and I came away with a clearer sense of what Papert was talking about. At any given moment, there are many different modes of engagement: some are watching and observing, waiting to participate, while others are on the floor dancing and others are much more peripheral, watching from the balcony and texting their friends. There are announcers on a sound system actively soliciting participation, coaxing shy community members onto the dance floor. At one point, a group of people in what looked like police or military uniforms step-marched

through the space, grabbing people they suspected of not contributing to the collective effort. Eager to avoid being "arrested," I asked my host what to do, and he suggested putting on a festive T-shirt we had been given at the door. He figured that, even if I couldn't dance, I could at least be decorative. This was a great reminder both of the many different ways participants might contribute and of the need sometimes to invite, encourage, and, in this case, even coerce participation rather than take it for granted.

Mimi: Most forms of learning are much more integrated with the dynamic life of communities than our current formal education system. The samba school is a nice example of that. Even in our postindustrial society, most learning is still seamless with everyday life and sociability, whether it is picking up our first language, learning to cook, or figuring out how to build a house in Minecraft. The challenge is when these different modes of learning collide. Kids fail in their studies or get left out from collective practices because they don't have the necessary cultural knowledge or experience. Most educational settings aren't as successful as the samba school at meeting learners where they are and inviting different contributions. Whether it is in a classroom or a professional community of practice, we often see exclusion and marginality operating in less friendly ways when different ways of doing things butt up against one another. Often those dynamics that promote the cohesion of the "in" group are also barriers to entry for learners and newcomers.

Henry: As the samba school example reminds us, many core principles of participatory learning might have been understood by previous generations of folk artists. My grandmother was a remix artist: she was a quilter. She would take bits of remaindered cloth from the local textile mills and use them to create something new. She was able to express herself meaningfully through the appropriation

and recombination of borrowed materials. She would have learned these skills informally, observing the community of quilting women as they worked, gradually trying her own hands at the craft and learning through doing. Skills, knowledge, and traditions were passed from generation to generation.

These forms of creative expression were woven into the practices of everyday life. Yet, she was living in a society that was segregated by class and race and, in this case, also by gender. For her, quilting would have been her entry into a white, working-class, female culture, a source of solidarity with others in her community, but hardly open to all. And it is hard to visit the samba schools and not see them in relation to the economic and educational poverty and often racial segregation that surrounds them. So, in some ways, our goal of more diverse and inclusive communities of practice sets higher standards than anyone had achieved in the past.

That said, we might see the samba schools as an example of the ways aspects of traditional folk cultures persist in the eras of mass media and digital culture. As I suggested in *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins 2006), folk culture was disrupted by the rise of mass spectator culture across the twentieth century, but some aspects are returning in an age of digital culture. I am often asked whether all cultures are participatory, and the answer is that different configurations of culture invite or enable different degrees of participation. With digital culture, more people are making media and sharing what they made with each other. Grassroots and amateur forms of expression gained much greater visibility. Just as my grandmother took bits of cloth from the textile mills and remixed them, my friends and students take bits of media and stitch them together to create something new.

Right now, folk culture, mass culture, and digital culture co-exist. If we go back to the samba school, carnival takes on many of the traits of mass culture when it is broadcast on national television, thus shifting the focus from the yearlong process of getting ready to the specific event that is consumed as a product. You suddenly have many more consumers and potentially fewer participants, and the event gets inserted into a state or commercial context.

Now, consider what happens when we insert some of the mechanisms of the samba schools into a digital context. We are seeing street dancers, either individuals or in groups, across Brazil, create short YouTube videos demonstrating their moves to each other across a much more dispersed geography. Dance moves travel from one community to another with high speed and fluidity – indeed, the videos can travel to places where the dancers themselves could not safely go. The performers may well be dancing to mass-produced songs, and they may well be distributing their work through commercially owned platforms. But the ways they are producing these videos do not radically differ from earlier folk practices, except in the scope and scale of their circulation.

danah: As more corporations capitalize on people's practices, we've seen a significant shift in power. Although Henry's original work was intended to recognize and celebrate the practices of fans in response to media companies, the new media companies are now capitalizing directly on people's participation. This, in turn, angers many cultural critics, who reject the term "participatory culture" as outright capitalistic, failing to recognize the very cultural logic underpinning people's activities in the first place. As time has passed, my experiences with – and understanding of – participatory culture have become wrapped up in the tensions brought about by

commercialization, even as I watch youth engage for personal, educational, political, and social reasons.

I've come to think that the making of culture is inherently participatory, but I appreciate Henry's efforts to point out that this continues to be true in a media-saturated world where many people think that we are passive consumers of culture. (This was certainly true for TV and, to a lesser degree, the early internet.) Part of my struggle with the term itself is that Henry and Mimi both did a phenomenal job of illustrating this through many rarified practices (e.g., fan fiction, machinima) in ways that resulted in the concept of participatory culture being tied to those practices. I see mainstream practices – such as taking selfies for Instagram (or even more challenging practices like collectively producing a how-to-be-anorexic guide) – as deeply engaged cultural production too, but these are not the kinds of things that normally get labeled as "participatory culture," even if you would see them as such. This is one of the challenges of intending one thing when constructing a concept and then having it repurposed by others in unexpected ways. As a result, for better or worse, my general tendency is to avoid the phrase except when speaking specifically about your work on specific participatory culture activities.

Henry: I have no problem in thinking of taking selfies (or participating in online forums, regardless of the topics) as "ordinary" forms of participatory culture. I don't think the term refers simply to subcultures structured around specific forms of participation; it would certainly include more routine practices like taking selfies, though to be participatory these activities have to involve meaningful connections to some larger community (even if only the cohort of classmates at the local school). Part of the nature of networked culture is that even forms of expression that might have had a very limited audience in the past now

travel through networks and thus have bigger social consequences.

I also do not assume that participatory culture always has positive effects, so pro-ana sites are a great example of a community that probably meets all of my criteria for participatory culture but does not necessarily make the world a better place.

Participatory Media Platforms?

Mimi: As we see the term "participatory culture" migrate to other uses, such as logging clicks on a social network site, it's important to be clearer about its meaning. Henry, you say the concept of participation involves a cluster of characteristics that we took for granted. If we look at your pre-digital work on fan culture, or Lave and Wenger's work on participation, it is about being part of shared social practices, not just engaging with an online platform or piece of content. Looked at this way, participation doesn't just mean being active, it is also about being part of a shared practice and culture. Many technology-centric uses of the term implicitly define participation through the use of a platform, or a site, rather than a shared practice or culture. This is a critical distinction in what we mean by participatory culture versus how the term can often get used in the technology world. Henry's early work on fandom is a good example of strongly shared practice and culture that relied on conventions, snail mail, and non-digital media. I wouldn't say that today's more digital fandoms are more participatory, but the new technology has made it easier to access longstanding fan practices of the sort the Henry looked at in the 1980s.

Henry: There's been a tendency in some high-tech circles to act as if participatory culture originated with YouTube or social networking with Facebook. Instead, we need to place

these practices in a larger historical context. My grandmother's quilting was grounded in her lived realities, in the ways she worked, worshiped, and socialized with people in her immediate geographic vicinity. She and the other women were linked by a complex set of ties, including shared experience of poverty, which made it essential for them to construct their lives together. Such deep ties may or may not be experienced by those who are producing and sharing media content in today's online communities. Certainly, many teens associate online with people they encounter face to face in their own neighborhoods; others form strong emotional bonds with people they regularly encounter online. But there is an option simply to walk away from many of the communities we encounter online, which make them different from the world my grandmother grew up in as a poor dirt farmer in the American South, or from the favela residents in Rio's samba schools.

Though the term is often ascribed to me, I avoid the phrase "participatory media." I do not think technologies are participatory; cultures are. Technologies may be interactive in their design; they may facilitate many-to-many communications; they may be accessible and adaptable to multiple kinds of users; and they may encode certain values through their terms of use and through their interfaces. But, ultimately, those technologies get embraced and deployed by people who are operating in cultural contexts that may be more or less participatory. I do not think of platforms like Facebook or YouTube as participatory cultures. Rather, they are tools participatory communities sometimes use as means of maintaining social contact or sharing their cultural productions with each other.

We might understand what I mean by participation in contrast to the term "interactivity," with which it is often confused. Interactivity refers to the properties of

technologies that are designed to enable users to make meaningful choices (as in a game) or choices that may personalize the experience (as in an app). Participation, on the other hand, refers to properties of the culture, where groups collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experiences. We participate *in* something; we interact *with* something. There is clearly some overlap between the two, so, when someone clicks a button on a social media site, the interface is designed to enable their interactivity, whereas what they post might contribute to a larger process of deliberation and participation within the community.

Mimi: Prior to working on anime fandom, my work centered on games, online groups, and learning. I didn't use the term "participatory culture" to describe those practices. I used the term "interactive media" to designate the difference between games and multimedia that I was studying at the time and media forms such as books and television. This is similar to how Henry has described interactivity, in that it is a property of media technology, not practice. I was also studying online, networked groups and used the term "network communities" to designate the groups we were studying such as forums and online gamers. My conceptual vocabulary has tended to lean towards building distinctions between networked social forms and non-networked forms to answer the question of what is "new" about today's media. By contrast, the term "participatory culture" raises the question of what constitutes different levels or forms of engagement. It's important not to conflate the two by assuming that new interactive and networked media are always more participatory or engaging. The term "participatory culture" is valuable in helping us distinguish between different forms of engagement with similar media. It's not whether it is books or television or games that matters for

participatory culture, but how people are engaging with those media. I would also agree that taking selfies or being part of a pro-ana forum are examples of participatory culture. While there is a clear history of being associated with more nerdy content communities, I don't see any reason why the term needs to be restricted to them.

Participation is inherent in all forms of social practice. I would not want our use of "participatory culture" to imply that there are forms of culture that don't involve participation. I saw a similar dynamic with the term "situated learning," which was intended to signify how all learning is situated in culture and social practice. Often people would talk about how classroom learning was "not situated learning" when, in my view, even the most traditional classroom learning is situated, just in a different set of contexts than what you see in kids' peer culture or in the home.

Participation and Resistance

Henry: Going back to danah's experience in early 2000s San Francisco, any understanding of participatory culture today has to factor in the wave of commercialization that has impacted contemporary digital culture. Because some of the ideals of participatory cultures got so encoded into the language of the digital industries, it is increasingly difficult to imagine what a more "authentic" form of participation might look like. At the start, writers in the cultural studies tradition (see, for example, Cherny and Weise 1996) were drawn towards the internet for models of cultural resistance – ways that alternative online communities might challenge the control of powerful institutions or might pose critiques of the ideologies being circulated within commercial culture. My work, from the start, sought to describe a complex relationship between

fans and the culture around them. Fandom is born out of fascination and some frustration. If you weren't fascinated, you wouldn't continue to engage as a fan. If you weren't frustrated, you often wouldn't continue to rewrite and reinvent.

In *Spreadable Media* (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013), we make the argument that, today, an emphasis on participation has displaced this focus on resistance. There can be no easy separation between fans and producers; more and more, media producers embrace our participation as a means of increasing engagement in a highly competitive media system. Yet they also seek to shape and direct our participation into forms that they see as serving their own interests. I think the language shift from resistance to participation comes with some implications. Resistance to what? Participation in what? Participation implies some notion of affiliation, collective identity, membership, but, beyond that, we have much to figure out if we are going to continue to apply this framework to contemporary digital culture.

danah: We're all personally and politically drawn to communities that are resistant, but I want to take Henry's notion of "Resistant to what?" seriously. Does participatory culture have to be resistant to the status quo? And do communities have to form out of participatory culture or can people be a part of participatory culture without developing the deep connections that both of you highlight in your work?

Henry: My understanding of the term "resistance" comes from the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies (Hall and Jefferson 1993). It goes back to their original work on subcultures and appropriation. They were writing about the punk movement and the manner in which it appropriated and remixed symbols belonging to the dominant culture,

often in ways that signaled their opposition to core institutions and values of their parents' generation. So, Dick Hebdidge (1979) and Stuart Hall (1981) use the example of the swastika, which, for the punks, was chosen not because they were Nazis (many of them were strongly anti-fascist) but because they knew that their parents had survived the Blitz and that this symbol was thus sure to set their mums' and dads' teeth on edge. Hall argues that, if this highly charged symbol can be up for grabs, then any and all signs can be appropriated and reworked for expressive purposes.

Over time, the term "resistance" came to refer to symbolic gestures that questioned or challenged the values of the status quo. So, we might talk about feminist or queer appropriations of materials from mass media that encouraged the questioning of patriarchy or allowed for the expression of alternative sexual politics. These forms of resistance might be oppositional in the ways that media is produced and distributed, participating in an alternative economy which rejected the profit motive or refused to accept constraints on its use of intellectual property. These groups could be oppositional in the sense that they encouraged alternative social structures based on equality, diversity, and reciprocity or a refusal to make money off other community members. They could be oppositional in terms of the symbols used, the meanings their work evoked, or the ways their media practices pushed against censorship norms and taboos of the culture. Historically, subcultures defined their identities in opposition to their parent cultures. This focus on opposition differs from the ways I write about the samba schools, where we are seeing forms of folk production that are normative in Brazilian culture, or the ways we might now talk about niche culture, which may be distinctive to a particular group but positively valued within the creative economy.