
Lidia Marôpo

lidiamaropo@gmail.com
Assistant Professor and
Postdoctoral Researcher.
Universidade Autónoma de
Lisboa, Departamento Ciências
da Comunicação.
Universidade NOVA de Lisboa,
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e
Humanas. Portugal.

Ana Jorge

anajorge@fcsh.unl.pt
Postdoctoral Researcher and
Guest Assistant Professor.
Universidade NOVA de Lisboa,
Departamento Ciências da
Comunicação, Faculdade de
Ciências Sociais e Humanas,
Portugal.

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At the heart of celebrity: celebrities' children and their rights in the media

Abstract

Based on a comparative analysis of celebrity magazines in Portugal and Brazil, this article analyses the representation of children of celebrities. Those magazines privilege an extreme personalisation of the stories and a strong valuation of the photographic image, representing children as a source of happiness and affection within the family. Nonetheless, drawing on celebrity studies and on children's rights and their implications for journalism, we concluded that this positive representation frequently collides with the children's rights to privacy, to be protected from public embarrassment and to be heard in the issues that affect them.

Keywords

Children's rights, journalism, celebrities, magazines.

1. Introduction

Even though they take different shapes in each country, celebrity media are a pervasive trait of media cultures across the world. Whether in the form of tabloids, 'prensa del corazón' or 'society' magazines, the topic of celebrity finds great visibility in the media space, attracting massive audiences and proving to be a very lucrative segment of the media industry, even at a time when journalistic companies are dealing with difficulties in Western countries. Although one can understand the economic relevance of celebrity among cultural industries, other areas of social life have also been conquered by this logic, from politics to sports, for instance. While some celebrities deliberately want to appear in the media, others are forced to by paparazzi and sensationalistic reporting. Moreover, other involuntary participants in celebrity media are those indirectly related to celebrities and 'dragged in' by the representation the media impose on the former, or even elicited by the celebrities themselves. This is the case of the children of celebrities, who appear with them as a secondary or sometimes primary focus of the celebrity news.

This article proposes to discuss the media visibility of celebrities' children based on a perspective of celebrity culture and industry, on the one hand, and on children's rights and their implications to journalism, on the other. In a comparative and exploratory study, looking at the media cultures in Portugal and Brazil, nations with a common language but very different cultural, social and economic realities, we confront the different regulatory and self-regulatory frames in each country. This discussion is preparatory for our

analysis of the representation of celebrities' children, and of the conceptions of childhood that are promoted. More significantly, we question whether the rights and the best interests of the children are taken into consideration.

This is, we believe, a topic that has not been reflected neither in the field of journalism nor celebrity studies. Nevertheless, fundamental questions are involved in what concerns the best interests of children, regardless of the visibility and social position of their parents. Furthermore, comparative research allows us, we believe, to discuss in different contexts the complexity of the issues involved and also to raise different kinds of questions regarding media, journalism, children and celebrity. The article draws some conclusions regarding the differences between the two countries and also the different media outlets used in the sample, as well as different patterns between types of celebrities and different children.

2. Children and celebrity

Celebrity culture is becoming ever more pervasive, involving all media forms and cultural industries (Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000; Turner, 2014) with the rise of lifestyle and consumption aspects as strategies of media commercialisation in Western societies, where individualism has become a core value (Marshall, 1997). Young people and adult women (Couldry & Markham, 2007) tend to be identified as special audiences for this culture due to their low levels of 'classic' news consumption (Buckingham, 2000). Celebrity is connected with the more commercial media discourse of these magazines and relies on a 'youthful' and 'feminine' aesthetic. Even if audiences of celebrity culture cannot be reduced to the youth and adult women, the emphasis on private and intimate issues on which celebrity culture is based seems to be particularly appealing to them.

The convergence of informational and entertainment-oriented content (Thussu, 2000; Conboy, 2014) makes celebrity an omnipresent category in a broad spectrum of media culture and a hybrid form accumulating contradictory meanings that mix the public and private realms. P. David Marshall (1997) relates the rise of celebrity culture to a long cultural tradition of individualism in Western societies and cultures, which also works as the basis of democratic systems. The author claims that it is the dimension of recognition by an audience that constitutes the celebrity since it embodies the ideas of success, merit and access to consumption which are embedded in capitalistic and democratic values. While celebrities hold a cultural power that stems from their public recognition, paradoxically, the attention seeps into the private aspects of their lives –so much so that some celebrities become famous solely due to their lifestyle of conspicuous consumption.

However, it can be arbitrary to reduce celebrity culture to gossip. It would 'be a mistake to assume that all coverage of celebrities from non-political occupations is frivolous, apolitical and purely self-interested', states Lumby (Turner et al., 2000: 135). Often, gossip itself works as an important forum for private issues seen as public (Turner et al., 2000: 151). Moreover, meanings are not univocal but engage audiences in a negotiation (Marshall, 1997), which opens the possibility that the same celebrities can suggest different receptions and meanings to different audiences. In a Foucauldian approach, celebrity discourse 'allows for the configuration, positioning, and proliferation of certain discourses about the individual and individuality in contemporary culture' (Marshall, 1997: 72).

Marshall argues that 'celebrity offers a discursive focus for the discussion of realms that are considered outside the bounds of public debate in the most public fashion and (. . .) is a way in which the sphere of the irrational, emotional, personal, and affective is contained and negotiated in contemporary culture' (Marshall, 1997: 72-73). Furthermore, others consider that the tabloidisation in which celebrity culture is embedded can be interpreted as a counter-discourse to an elitist model of the public sphere. It promotes, as Catharine Lumby (1999: xiii) argues, 'a diversification not only of voices, but of ways of speaking about

personal, social and political life', making it possible that 'apparently banal stories about celebrities (. . .) often intersect with deeper social and political issues and frame these issues in a way many people find easier to digest' (Lumby, 1999: 17), even if this is not explicit.

On the other hand, we also have to acknowledge that celebrity can, at the same time, function as an ideological discourse, promoting specific configurations of what a person should be, thus especially stressing the neoliberal individualistic culture. In other words, celebrity can come to work as crystalliser for particular ideological configurations about what an individual should be in contemporary society. The feminist author Angela McRobbie calls attention to the way in which female celebrities promote a 'double entanglement' that combines women's autonomy with the continuation of their traditional family role (McRobbie, 2009).

In what concerns celebrity culture and children, there can be several intersections that help us to find the specific space of children of celebrities in the broader media culture. Although children and young people cannot be said to be the only audience of celebrity culture, as we have pointed out earlier, they are highly attracted to it. In fact, it is among young people, in the context of their leisure activities and identity formation processes, that one can find greater involvement with the media (Bailey, 2005). On another level, there is both a cultural enchantment with talented children and young people who are capable of adult deeds and a great production industry which sells teen stars to both young people and adult audiences. Examples of this, just to name a few, are Drew Barrymore, who became famous at the age of five for her appearance on the successful movie *E.T.* from 1982; Macaulay Culkin, the *Home Alone* star in the early 1990s; and Miley Cyrus, the actress and singer behind *Hannah Montana*, a Disney franchise, at the end of the 2000s. These cases pose the question to what extent they are manufactured by big cultural industries and corporations and to what extent does their success stem from a natural talent and a personal will to work in this field, some of them being children of actors and people working in the entertainment industry. At the same time, the personal issues which they face growing up in the limelight silence the debate on the compatibility of childhood and labour within the cultural industries.

Moreover, in recent years there has also been increasing attention to children as subjects of advocacy by celebrities. After Mia Farrow's focus on children in 'developing countries' and in war scenarios, today it is Angelina Jolie and Madonna who bring the topic to the media with their adoption of children of different ethnicities (Cooper, 2008). The attempt to bring political issues to the public sphere through celebrities, especially with the United Nations communication strategy (Alleyne, 2005), can be discussed under the tension between the increased visibility given to social issues and the superficial frames which they tend to receive.

As far as celebrity magazines and media are concerned, family and private issues are privileged within the interest of private life, relationships and consumption, thus making children a dear topic. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Marshall's seminal analysis (1997), consumption is also a related issue, and often the representation of the rich and famous lifestyles places their children in the media limelight. The personal and familiar narratives of celebrities often include their children, directly or indirectly, with or without their parents' or their own consent, around consumer lifestyles.

Two models of celebrity magazines can be distinguished: a consensual and a tabloid model. In the first type, there is a higher level of intimacy represented in the magazines, through families and their home portraits, which also show the celebrities' luxurious lifestyles not accessible to common people (Souza, 2004; Coelho, 2011). This type of magazines is targeted at higher socio-economic groups, and especially women. This can also be seen in the kind of celebrities they include, which are the A-class celebrities in each country, coming from social elites or television. In the tabloid type, the magazines privilege

the scandal, the exclusive news and the everyday life of media figures (Miranda, 2007). This type of magazine targets women, but also men, from the lower to middle classes. They tend to give relevance to celebrities from television, including reality television.

Another debate on celebrity media is that they are not always perceived as a purely journalistic product; rather, they are viewed as more of an entertainment one. However, they are regulated as such and respond to the basic rules of journalism, and applicable laws. For the media with more consensual representation of celebrities –such as *¡Hola!* in Spain and *Hello!* in the UK– or for those with more tabloid formats (Miranda, 2007), it is presupposed that journalistic rules and codes should apply. Moreover, celebrity news does not concern only celebrity media declared as such. In fact, the intermingling of entertainment and news means that this kind of content often circulates through different media with distinct editorial statutes, often through news agencies, where paparazzi photos and the first media to make information on celebrities available are sometimes hard to trace back.

Since it is important to take into account the journalistic culture and regulations that apply to each media, we look next at the intersection between journalism and children's rights, specifically focusing on the representation of celebrities' children considering the two contexts in our study: Portugal and Brazil.

3. Children's rights and journalism

Studies on children and young people in the news show that this group has gained visibility over the last two decades (Ponte, 2009; Hammarberg, 1997; ANDI 2005; Canela, 2006; Muleiro, 2006; Tobin, 2004; Von Feilitzen & Bucht, 2001). On the one hand, these studies highlight the positive aspects of this media visibility: that there are more reports of violence against children such as maltreatment or sexual abuse; there is more public debate on access to child care, children at risk, healthcare and other childhood topics; and there is more respect for the privacy of children in the news. On the other hand, however, only seldom does the news present children issues from a rights' perspective, opting instead for sensationalistic and dramatic framings without a demand for public policies to address the causes of these problems. There is a scarcity of the children's point of view (or they appear as a cute curiosity) and of representation of the problems that affect their everyday lives. Moreover, there is still frequently the depiction of children in situations that are harmful to their development. At the same time, consumption and lifestyle news related to children have also gained more attention as one can see namely within celebrities' media or lifestyle publishing.

This increased media coverage of childhood issues has roots in the beginning of the 20th century, when the previous invisibility of children in the international agenda changed drastically due to several factors, including reactions to child labour, sexual exploitation, international child trafficking and children as war victims (Alston & Tobin, 2005). The children's protection was demanded in different spheres: home, work and State, whereas the World Trade Organization adopted measures to restrain children's exploitation and consolidated the notion of children's rights in this field, state Alston and Tobin (2005).

After the Second World War, when human rights became the focus of international attention, a similar approach to children's human rights emerged and culminated with the approval in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This new treaty, a document with legal effects for the signing countries (all except the USA and Somalia), had many articles that have proven to be fundamental for the debate on the relationship of children with the media: non-discrimination (Preamble and Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), respect for the child's opinions (Article 12), freedom of expression (Article 13), respect for private life (Article 16), and access to information and

protection from harmful media contents (Article 17). Article 16 is of particular importance to the issue we are discussing in this paper:

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation.
2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

All of these rights have direct implications on media action and ought to be transposed within national legislation of the UNCRC's signing countries. Accordingly, in Brazil, the Child and Adolescent Statute (Law 6069/1990, with the Portuguese acronym ECA) ensures the right of every child and adolescent to freedom, respect and dignity 'as human beings in their development process and as subjects of civil, human and social rights guaranteed in the Constitution and laws' (Article 15). This entitles children to the right of opinion and expression (Article 16) as well as to rights of image, identity, autonomy, values, ideas and beliefs, personal objects and spaces (Article 17). ECA claims, in Article 18, that it is 'everyone's duty to ensure children's dignity and save them from any inhuman, violent, terrifying, vexing or compelling treatment'. Although these Articles have indirect implications on the relationship between children and the media, other more direct Articles (74–80) address the protection of youngsters from harmful contents in public or media shows.

In Portugal, the Constitution ensures rights to personal and family privacy, development of personality, civil capacity, citizenship, good name and reputation, image, voice and legal protection against any discrimination (Article 26). More specific legislation concerning children, the Law for Protection of Children and Youth at Risk (Law 147/99, with the Portuguese acronym LPCJP) prevents media from identifying or transmitting elements that could identify children or youths at risk (Article 90). The Young Offenders' Law (*Lei Tutelar Educativa*) stops the media from identifying young people aged 12 to 16 who committed illicit acts, even if the latter wish to be identified (Article 176).

In the journalistic field, at the self-regulatory level, we can highlight the initiatives of the International Federation of Journalists to promote a children's rights-based perspective. The organisation implemented the 'Child Rights and the Media' project in the 1990s with several resolutions and guidelines on coverage involving children (International Federation of Journalists, 2001; International Federation of Journalists, UNICEF, 1998; International Federation of Journalists, 1997). Respect for privacy and protection of identity, as well as the incentive to promote children's voices in the media, are central issues in documents such as *Child Rights and the Media—Putting Children in the Right*. These guidelines for journalists and media professionals affirm 'the respect for the privacy of children and protection of their identity unless it is demonstrably in the public interest' and also 'the need to consider the consequences of publication and to minimise harm to children' (International Federation of Journalists, 2002: 6). These recommendations, however, appear to have little visibility in Brazil and Portugal. Since the documents are not translated into Portuguese, there are no references to them on the websites of the respective trade unions or in the ethical debates produced by the National Federation of Journalists (Brazil) and the Union of Journalists (Portugal) (Marôpo, 2013: 66).

Internationally, one can refer to a lack of awareness regarding the discrimination of children and young people as great part of the professional ethical codes advise against social discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, language, civil status, religion or political affiliation but rarely include references to age; and, when these do exist, they are interpreted more as a defence for prejudice against the elderly. This happens in both the Portuguese and Brazilian journalistic ethical codes, although these two are among

the few in the world which mention children directly. The Portuguese Journalists' Code (approved in 1993 before LPCJP, which was passed in 1999) shows limited concern with the privacy of youngsters, and only mentions 'victims of sexual abuse' and 'juvenile offenders', ignoring victims of other crimes, children at risk or those experiencing sensitive situations. However, it also states that it is the journalist's duty to neither humiliate people nor disrespect their mourning, taking into account citizens' privacy. The Brazilian Code, in its turn, cites the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to declare the professional duty to defend citizens' rights, especially those which include women, the elderly, People of Colour and other minorities –as well as children and young people.

In both countries, we have not found any references –whether in children's rights legislation, in journalists' self-regulation or in media regulation– to media representation of children of celebrities or famous children.

In contrast, besides broader references to special care in dealing with minors ('not taking advantage of those who may be too young to make legitimate judgments; protecting the reputation of someone who may be too young to know better'), the British Press Complaints Commission Code of Conduct includes special reference to children of well-known adults: 'Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life' (Frost, 2007: 135). Because of a strong tabloid culture and formal complaints by Prince Charles regarding William's mediatisation as a teenager and former Prime Minister Tony Blair's complaints over the visibility of his children in the media, public discussion emerged around this topic. When youngsters are considered celebrities, whether in their own right or just because of their parents' fame, it 'is usually less of a concern than most other coverage of minors. In the main it is accepted, even welcomed' (Frost, 2007: 140). This regulatory pressure aims at making journalists 'aware that (. . .) [children and young people] are often more vulnerable and less able to protect themselves and their interests, and therefore require special consideration' (Frost, 2007: 140).

In California, a law was passed in September 2013 (with effects from January 1 2014 on) to forbid photographers to photograph the children of celebrities, considering children as individuals under 16. 'Kids shouldn't be tabloid fodder nor the target of ongoing harassment', said Senator Kevin de León, the author of the bill (Appleby, 2013).

As can be seen from the reality of these countries, the debates on children's rights in the media vary according to different contexts, receiving distinct attention from journalists and children's rights activists. In Portugal, for example, critics tend to be focused on the victims' identification by the media, whereas in Brazil, activists fight against discrimination and stigmatisation of poor young people, calling for more rights-based perspectives and political framings in the news (Marôpo, 2013). As previously mentioned, in the United Kingdom, on the other hand, special attention has been devoted to the topic because of a strong tabloid segment in the country's media system. In the United States, the state of California, the cradle and the heart of celebrity industry, has promoted a particular intervention regarding the privacy protection of celebrities' children in the media, whose efficacy is still to be assessed.

However, it can be stated that protection and privacy are still fundamental topics of discussion on the media representation of children internationally. The media focus on childhood issues (also advocated by the rights' activists) frequently leads to a children's privacy exposure. The intense competition and the commercial purposes of the media industry, the lack of regulation (despite the international legal framework), journalism's professional routines and also the tension between the rights to protection and participation are some of the reasons that make it difficult to find equilibrium between the public debate and the right to privacy (Moeller, 2002; Hamelink, 2008; Tobin, 2004). The defence for an absolute prioritisation of privacy could block news stories where young

people take up an exceptional agency and, therefore, it is not possible to guarantee an absolute respect for privacy without restricting children's participation. These are the cases of the 10-year-old girl in Yemen who was the first to get her wedding annulled, teenagers wanting to travel around the world alone, the legal fight of a British 13-year-old girl to deny continuous aggressive cancer treatment, and the media/judicial battle of a Portuguese 15-year-old against her two-year-old son being given up for adoption (Marôpo, 2013, p. 9).

4. Methodology

In order to reflect on the specific tensions that are involved in the media representation of children of celebrities, we conducted an exploratory comparative analysis of celebrity magazines. We considered these to be at the centre of the celebrity media and system, often being sources or repetitions of celebrity news in other media. Therefore, analysing celebrity magazines can reveal many of the tensions involved in the visibility of children of celebrities overall in the media.

Our governing questions were to understand in what ways the representation of children feeds into celebrities' narratives, what conceptions of childhood are promoted, and whether children's individual rights and best interests are respected based on the UNCRC, national legislation and journalists' self-regulation codes.

This comparative analysis between Portugal and Brazil contributes to international understanding of this topic while allowing to find similarities in different cultures. Two celebrity magazines were analysed in each country, corresponding to two major profiles of celebrity journalism: a consensual model, which includes *Caras*, edited in both Portugal (PT) and Brazil (BR), and a tabloid model, including *Nova Gente* (PT) and *Quem Acontece* (BR). All weekly editions of these four magazines were analysed throughout the months of January and February of 2011 in a total of 16 editions (summer vacation in Brazil and wintertime in Portugal). The sampling followed an efficiency principle, considering that more months and more issues would not necessarily show greater diversity, since the media work with global agencies and follow editorial patterns. Hence, the focus is to raise questions on this largely unexplored topic of the relationship between children and the media in terms of children's rights.

In a first screening, we distinguished between celebrities' offspring, famous children and other kinds of children. Several aspects of the items in which children of celebrities were involved, in the text and/or image, were then categorised in order to study those magazines' representation of children of celebrities through a content analysis. Formal categories were created covering the issues raised by ethical and legal issues, as well as journalistic characteristics (Marôpo, 2013), and child(ren) and celebrity features. Each item was thus coded according to its position on the cover (without mention, text mention, text and image mention and headline), the space occupied in the magazine (short news – less than a page, full page, two pages, three–four pages and five or more pages) and their investment on image (no image, with image, photographic image produced for the magazine, paparazzi image, agency image, family album, news report or other). As far as the content is concerned, we coded the child(ren)'s identification by image or name, as well as the child(ren)'s gender and age; we also analysed whether the child appeared alone or with other family members and if the child(ren) was directly quoted. Regarding celebrity parents, their prevalent professional or public area was assigned (cinema, sports, television, fashion, music, royalty/nobility, political, other), as was their origin (domestic or foreign, regarding the magazine in which it was found) and gender. In a deeper analysis, we categorised the items by themes or situations (leisure, births, family and loving relationships, professional activities, everyday situations and other) and issues related to patterns of parenting/family (same-sex families, reconstructed families, assisted reproduction, adoption and divorce).

Coding reliability was ensured by the conjoint coding process for two issues of each country by the two researchers, clarifying possible discrepancies; then each worked on their own to code the issues of one of the countries; finally, researchers gathered the coding material by discussing problematic cases and double-checking in two additional issues of the other country.

5. Children of celebrities in celebrity magazines

The representation of children in these celebrity magazines is largely of children of celebrities; that is to say, one of the most relevant results that give strength to the analysis is that celebrities' children constitute by far the largest group of children appearing in celebrity magazines (88%). In fact, famous children, who we initially thought would be frequently portrayed, do not account for more than 6% of the total corpus of the news referring children. Other children, usually anonymous, had the same insignificant presence in magazines (also 6%). As we shall see, this indicates that children do not have visibility on their own behalf, but rather in relation to adults.

Looking specifically at children of celebrities, there doesn't seem to be a pattern between consensual and tabloid magazines, nor between countries, at the quantitative level. We identified a total of 342 items with references to celebrities' children, which represent an average of 21 pieces per issue in each magazine. The Brazilian *Caras* accounts for more than a third of those items (128), followed by *Nova Gente*/PT (88), *Caras*/PT (64) and *Quem*/BR (62). There is not an editorial identity provided by the format of *Caras*, as, although in Brazil *Caras* is leading, in Portugal it is the tabloid magazine *Nova Gente* that exhibits more pieces on children of celebrities.

These are mostly short or one-page news pieces, following the pattern of this kind of magazine where the few extensive items are usually exclusive productions highlighted on the cover page. In fact, despite the expressive large number of references, only 12% stories of celebrities' children are mentioned on the cover. Therefore, in spite of being present in these publications as children of celebrities, children only rarely occupy its main or more relevant spaces.

Given the great television industry in Brazil and the place television personalities occupy in celebrity culture overall, it is no surprise that the famous parents come mostly from television (46%) and cinema (15%), leaving sports, music and monarchy (from other countries), for instance, in a secondary role. This may also mean that children tend to be associated more with celebrities from those fields, who usually are involved in a greater exhibition of their private and daily life.

The use of paparazzi photos or exclusive photo-productions and the highlight given by the magazines also reveal different framings assigned to female and male celebrities, their field of work (television, cinema, fashion, etc.) and their local or foreign origin. While tabloid magazines use paparazzi for national celebrities (often obtained through arrangements between magazines and celebrities that are not obvious for the audience), consensual magazines also use paparazzi photos, but limit these to foreign celebrities. These patterns demonstrate the political economy of celebrity media production, which is based on global agencies, paparazzi, and exclusives that are often aligned with agreements between media companies with common interests (for instance, both the Portuguese magazine *Caras* and the broadcast SIC are part of the same conglomerate).

In addition to this relatively significant visibility, the representation of celebrities' children leads to them being valued by their role in the family. This is made evident in the parents' expressions to describe them: 'company', 'a present', 'much wanted', 'happiness', 'pleasure', 'the best thing that happened [to me/us]', 'joy', 'passion' (*Caras* and *Quem*, BR), 'joy of my life', 'my princess' or 'special' (*Caras* and *Nova Gente*, PT). Those are references to

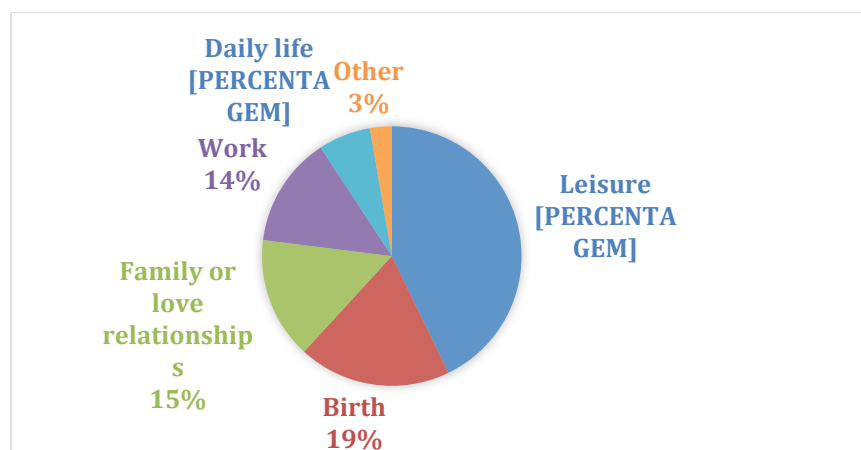
children as the focus of parents' central attention, concern and desire, framing them as our children (Ponte, 2009) and the most wished for in an attempt to promote identification among the readers. These are the children who are wanted and desired, unlike threatening children or the ones at risk, who are often in the anonymous register in the 'world news' section of these magazines.

This investment in the family child (Ponte, 2009) allows the public exposure of a pseudo-intimate relationship between parents and children in a celebrities' apparent real-life portrait. However, a significant part of the photos in the pieces was specifically produced for the magazines (18% of the news with photos). There is a great contingent of makeup artists, designers and producers who work to obtain 'natural' and 'spontaneous' portrayals for the readers. Moreover, and as mentioned above, behind the images supposedly produced by paparazzi (26%) or in news reports (29%), there are often negotiations between the magazines and celebrities –or their agents– on the photos' exclusivity, the place where they will be taken, who will be in the picture or what will be shown (Turner et al., 2000). Celebrities and their agents are therefore often in control or take part in the production of their own image in these magazines, who depend on them to reach their audiences.

Therefore, the abundance of arranged images depicting celebrities and children in private situations is confirmed by the scarce representation of the latter in work events of their parents (13%), like premières or award ceremonies. These are then usually treated as hooks to talk about celebrities' intimacy, including relationships and sometimes children. This constructed intimacy is also rarely revealed in spontaneous day-to-day (6%) moments, like shopping or school-home trips. In fact, it is the representation of the hedonism associated with celebrities' lives, including in their parental roles, which is prevalent.

Leisure (a category created to gather vacations, fun, and weekends) shared by parents and children (in the Brazilian *Caras* staged in the magazines' owns islands and castles) is the most addressed topic, accounting for 43% of the corpus.

Graph 1. Celebrities' children coverage - topics



In this sense, pleasure and personal satisfaction associated with parenthood, on top of the apparently successful careers celebrities hold, are quite prominent in the parents' statements, especially in the Brazilian magazine *Caras*, which accounts for more than a third of the celebrities' children news corpus, as we have mentioned.

'Being a mother is the most wonderful thing in the world'. (Patricia Poeta, journalist, *Caras*/BR, 14/01/2011)

'Motherhood made me more interesting, humane and generous'. (Virginia Nowicki, actress, *Caras*/BR, 21/01/2011)

'The best thing about being a mother is the child itself. You have this little person to be your friend, our life changes, the heart expands'. (Jennifer Garner, actress, *Caras*/BR, 21/01/2011)

'I do everything to be with them. My two daughters were the best thing that ever happened to me'. (Rodrigo Faro, TV presenter, *Caras*/BR, 28/01/2011).

After leisure, child birth (or the first public appearance) is the second most discussed topic (19%), giving body to the discourse focused on the celebrity's happiness provided by the new-born.

'I'm thrilled. It's an endless and incomparable love. It's such a strong feeling that only those who go through this experience know what I'm talking about'. (Benedita Paes, Brazilian TV presenter, *Nova Gente*, 31/01/2011)

'I watched the birth. It was the most amazing thing I felt, something indefinable'. (Fernando Pavão, actor, *Caras*/BR, 04/02/2011)

From this perspective, there is a predominance of younger children in the corpus, from the new-born (13%) up to six years old (36%), who seem to fit better with the romantic ideal of the role of the parent as a devoted and loving carer. There is also the depiction of the child and his/her siblings (25%) as a group that is only visible because of the famous parent.

Family and loving relationships among celebrities is the third most recurring topic (15%). In this perspective, it is worth noting that *Quem* (BR) magazine, which seems to support a less Olympian representation, frequently highlights the celebrities as models regarding how to educate children. The dedication as parents, the harmony in reconstructed families, the investment in education and the coexistence between former couples are values that appear in texts and statements which are closer to a representation of everyday life and ordinary family dilemmas.

'I would love to stay in Brazil, but classes start in the next 10 days and we have to recover and to do homework'. (Susana Werner, actress, *Quem*, 07/01/2011)

'I think raising a child is a big adventure and requires a lot from the parents, you always have to pay attention to get them to be people with values'. (Bárbara Guimarães, TV presenter, *Nova Gente*, 31/01/2011)

'I am passionate about my children. I know that sometimes paternity is difficult and complicated, but you are helping to educate a person'. (Thiago Lacerda, actor, *Quem*, 04/02/2011)

Following intimacy as a priority frame –discussed above in relation to the valorisation of children's role in the family, the fabricated images and the prevalence of leisure, birth and relationships as topics– it is also relevant to discuss the family structure within which it is portrayed. References to diversified family structures were found in 14% of the items. In those 'contemporary' families, marriage stability is secondary and new values favour love and affection bonds between couples and between parents and children rather than matrimonial or familial obligations. This seems in line with the transformations of intimacy that Anthony Giddens signals as being typical of contemporary societies (Giddens, 1995).

In this respect, 13% of all the items address divorce or blended families, most of them highlighting the harmonious relationship of former couples, with custody conflicts being less frequently reported. Although references to adoptive parenthood are exceptional (2% of the corpus), the few cases are mostly international examples of celebrities who have adopted children from different ethnic origins, like Angelina Jolie.

Nevertheless, other topics remain invisible in the magazines. For instance, assisted reproduction seems to be a taboo and is not mentioned when it comes to heterosexual couples. The theme appears only once, in *Quem* (BR), referring to the same-sex couples

Elton John/David Furnish and David Burtka/Neil Patrick and to Ricky Martin, all of them international celebrities and parents due to surrogacy. Elton John and David Furnish mention their failed attempts to be adoptive parents in different countries due to legal constraints, and this can be seen as an attempt to promote the debate on the non-recognition of same-sex unions and parenting. This same-sex couple also stresses a value that is often highlighted in these magazines: the father's dedication to his children.

'We do not want to put the child's education in the hands of nannies and maids; we want to be active parents'. (David Furnish, partner of Elton John, singer, *Quem*, 01/07/2011)

This dedication can also be found in the representation of more affectionate and participative fathers than would usually exist in traditional patriarchal families. In 29% of the items there was only the (famous) father with his children, we can see some signs that contribute to a more progressive portrayal of the relationship between (famous) fathers and children, even in tabloid magazines, which favour more conservative framings – by affirmation or contrast. Artur Garcia, a Portuguese popular singer, talks about his adopted son – 'My son is special' – on a trip to Madeira Island with the boy, telling the magazine about the process of adoption (*Nova Gente*, 31/01/2011).

The examples above also lead us to consider that international stories fit better in the magazines' agendas to bring up sensitive issues concerning family values, despite the fact that they are less visible in the magazines (31%) than domestic celebrities. Local and closer celebrities' stories seem to be quite often represented in consensual and staged stories.

5.1. *Visibility, privacy and voice*

While, on the one hand, it is possible to notice the child as a source of happiness, affection and the subject of dedication from the point of view of his/her parents, on the other hand, the children's visibility in magazines may raise questions about respect for their right to privacy and the appropriate criteria as to whether the youngsters should be identified or not.

The standard representation of celebrities' children stories is to be accompanied by images (only 1% of stories do not have pictures of some sort, which seem to be equally or more important than the text) and to mention their names (92% of the cases). If the majority of the items identify celebrity's children directly, through the publication of their names (92%) and/or images (63%), or indirectly, through identification of their parents in all cases, to what extent can this public exposure represent a disregard of children's privacy rights?

Most of the items are paparazzi photos: if they were not authorised, one can question the public interest of their exhibition, even if in public spaces. Is it possible to consider those images 'an arbitrary or unlawful interference with children's privacy' as mentioned in CRC? For the magazines, this concern only seems to be the case when celebrities clearly express their will not to expose their children. In these cases, the children's image is blurred, whereas the other images appear normal. So this may indicate that if children are clearly identified, the parents may have implicitly or explicitly approved of it.

Despite this debate, it is not easy to establish in a legal perspective a boundary between public visibility as recognition of their identity as children of public figures and the disrespect of their right to privacy. There is a Brazilian example in the magazines *Caras* and *Quem* (28/01/2011) which illustrates this problem. The ex-soccer player and global celebrity Ronaldo, known as 'The Phenomenon', officially recognised a boy as his son when the boy was five years old. He publicly introduced the boy, giving him the same status as his other children, who usually appear in the media. Paradoxically, this invasion of the child's privacy can also be seen to represent the public's recognition of the child's importance.

In the Portuguese sample, on the contrary, no similar examples were found. In contrast, what we frequently found were children in photographic editorials, particularly in the Portuguese *Caras*, but also in the Brazilian edition. In these editorials, produced exclusively for the magazine, there is a degree of explicit consent and engagement by the famous parents and a desire to show their children with them. While this kind of representation has the goal of displaying a lifestyle image, and of showing a staged portrayal of the celebrity and their family, we can also raise the question about whether it is legitimate for the parents to involve their children in the celebrity industry. This is the case in the Portuguese *Caras* with the cover of Alexandra Lencastre and her two teenage daughters, who are models for the photo production in a vacation paid by a sponsor; they are mentioned in the celebrity interview and title ('they [the daughters] try to find me a boyfriend'), but are not interviewed themselves, despite the article being nine pages long (08/01/2011). While we could say that very young children are not articulate enough to be interviewed, these teenage girls were not considered either. In these editorials, the adults' points of view are the central focus of attention; in turn, the children are usually only exhibited while their voices are silenced.

If the International Federation of Journalists affirms 'the need to give children access to media to express their own opinions' (International Federation of Journalists, 2002: 6), in the case of celebrity magazines, where intimacy is a central news value, this recommendation for children's participation could frequently collide with other guidelines which highlight the protection of children's identity. The recommendations by the IFJ stress the need to balance public interest and privacy rights, taking into consideration the consequences of the publication (International Federation of Journalists, 2002: 6). In other words, the participation of children in the media is not a value in itself but rather should be appraised in context –the children and the media where it takes place.

In the corpus of this study, children's voices appear directly in only 3% of the items, usually as cute quotes. It is important to note, however, that even the celebrities, the main theme of those magazines, are frequently silenced in news items which are based on paparazzi photos without consent. It could also be argued that most of the children can be considered too young to be heard. Nevertheless, we found a few examples of older children talking about their family experience in a more reflexive framing, as the example below shows:

'At home, daddy and mommy taught me to be polite and respect others'. (Livia, 11 years old, daughter of a Brazilian humourist, *Caras*/BR, 14/01/2011)

If this example apparently does not raise controversy about a possible breach of privacy, there is a Brazilian case which illustrates the kind of problems children's participation can evoke in celebrity magazines. A 16-year-old boy denounced the aggression by his mother, an ex-top model, against him and their maid (*Quem*, 18/02/2011). On the one hand, the way the article was framed raises problems concerning the child's privacy rights: the young person's identity (his image was blurred, but he could still be directly identified) and the possible embarrassment caused by the public display of his family problems. On the other hand, this is also the only item found in the corpus where the viewpoint of a child (in this case, a teenager) appears in a priority position. In this sense, it was his perspective of the events that was highlighted in the title ('My mother is bipolar') and in the text: 'the crisis has worsened since the first half of last year. If I did nothing, the next attack could cause a disgrace', said the boy to the magazine.

If we consider this as a news story where a young person takes up an exceptional agency, can we go so far as to say that his (indirect but obvious) identification has been revealed in the name of public interest? Can this identification be considered embarrassing

for the boy, something the Brazilian Law forbids? Did the magazine consider the consequences of the release or calculate the benefits for the public? Despite the boy's apparent maturity in the news, he had to deal in public with family conflicts, including his mother's statement that he was homosexual and a drug user. In the magazine he answered 'I'm gay, I don't use drugs', lamenting his mother's refusal to get medical treatment and, according to the publication, declined to say more on the subject. His father, a famous ex-soccer player and a sports broadcaster, also avoided commenting, according to *Quem*. In spite of this emotional and dramatic framing, this case is exceptional in the Brazilian and Portuguese celebrity magazines not only because of the boy's agency, but also for involving institutional spheres outside the family border. The article reported the protection measures the teenager received under the supervision of the Public Prosecutor and mentioned the legal debate on who would get his custody, temporarily given to the maternal grandmother.

6. Final remarks

The visibility of celebrities' children in the media usually occurs within family life: children in fun family moments, children visiting parents at work, the child's first public appearance and family routines and also focuses on stories about different kinds of families and their relationships. The representation of these situations within the media usually reveals an emphasis of children's roles within the family structure. The magazines privilege the individual child, in his or her relationship with the family's experiences and concerns, over the children as a social group that would call for a collective and political responsibility. It also highlights an idealised form of parenthood as a pleasant experience and the personal satisfaction in playing the role of a parent.

This individualised childhood and idealised parenthood are connected with the individualism that is the basis for celebrity culture, and result from common characteristics in the four magazines: the representation of a forged intimacy (real life is staged in images obtained at the expense of a big production apparatus which includes extensive negotiation between magazines and celebrities); hedonism as a strong news value (the supremacy of fun and pleasure moments at the expense of professional life and day-to-day experiences); the overvaluation of the younger children (who seem to fit better with this idealised parents' roles as a devoted and loving care-givers) and a under-representation of older children; and the predominance of harmonious representations of the families (independently of whether it is a 'traditional' one: stable, mononuclear and composed of biological parents and children or a 'contemporary' one: divorced, same-sex, reconstructed).

There is, thus, an underlying model of a famous family where children have less voice and agency, and where the famous adult is shown as the centre of the family. Furthermore, in the four magazines, the children and young people have news value only as celebrities' children. It fits into this pattern that 'other children' have a residual presence and that even children and teenagers who have fame in their own right as a result of working in television, music or cinema, are also rarely represented. We can explain this through three possible reasons, drawing on studies on the news making process: the publications assume the celebrity of these young people is not interesting to their readers, so they don't subject them to the same editorial treatment they give to adult celebrities; connected to this, it can be that young celebrities have a niche status and constitute a topic relegated to teen magazines; lastly, these magazines restrain themselves from overly exposing or scrutinizing young people's lives, which could mean to some extent the recognition of the young celebrities' right to privacy.

On one hand, celebrities' children's visibility attests to the appreciation of the children as a source of happiness and affection within the family. On the other hand, it seems to be

very difficult to reconcile this positive representation with children's rights to privacy and to be protected from public embarrassment. It also raises doubts regarding how to deal with the children's rights to participate in the media, especially concerning the coverage of issues that affect them. Since those magazines privilege an extreme personalisation of the stories combined with a strong valuation of the photographic image, celebrities' children are identified directly or indirectly in almost all items, although their voices are only seldom heard.

To address this problem, we discussed two kinds of approaches; each one raises different questions concerning children's rights. In the consensual model, which we detected in the Brazilian and Portuguese versions of *Caras*, where the celebrities willingly stage intimate moments to be displayed, decisions regarding the children's public exhibition seem to be automatically left up to the parents by the journalists. But can we consider these to be legitimate representations of family moments in public, or are the parents illegitimately using their children to promote themselves in the fame industry? Issues such as this do not seem to be attracting the interest of scholars, journalists and activists of children's rights. This lack of debate may echo the idea of the child as property of their parents. It also leaves open the discussion about whether this kind of representation can be considered disrespectful to the privacy of children (parents and journalists being responsible for this) and to what extent their rights of participation are involved. Should children decide whether or not to be exposed? Should they give their opinion on issues or not? And if so, from what age? As 'celebrity news constitutes a serious challenge to media laws and professional codes of conduct, [reflecting] tensions between public interest and protection of privacy' (Dubied & Hanitzsch, 2014) that are especially acute in the case of celebrities' children.

In the approaches without consent, such as those exemplified by *Quem Acontece* (BR) and *Nova Gente* (PT) the children as property of their parents also seems to be a prevalent idea. Only when celebrities clearly express their will not to expose their children is the children's image blurred (although frequently it is still possible to recognise them), while normally they appear in clear definition. The public debate about these situations seems to be growing, as rigorous legislation in California and England indicates.

In this respect, differences between countries also have to be considered. Besides a general trend for media to protect the children of national celebrities more (or for media to protect themselves from legal suits), magazines in the two countries also presented differences that are beyond the editorial models. These seem to derive from cultural and social aspects. In Brazil, greater importance is given to the emotional aspects around the child and the children's image is also more abundant, while also allowing for more possibilities for the young people's voices to be heard. On the other hand, in Portugal, we found a greater concern with the children's privacy in frequently blurred images. This is probably related to the wider social concerns about children's rights in the media. While in Portugal there is public pressure for children's privacy in the media, in Brazil this is not a central issue to the child rights activists, as Brazilians are more concerned with the media stigmatisation of children from low socio-economic backgrounds (Marôpo, 2013).

The topic of the representation of children of celebrities could be further explored by focusing on representation, on a longitudinal perspective (to understand changes in patterns of representation, possible pressure by the economic forces in the media industry but also by cultural and social changes) or on a broader cross-cultural comparison. It could also be expanded to a study on the meaning-making processes of the representation of children of celebrities in the media, be it in adult or young audiences (the meanings assigned by audiences to the value or detriment of the visibility of children of celebrities in the media). Finally, it would be certainly useful to expand the legal framework used in this study to a more in-depth ethical approach able to promote a normative discourse. New

situations also pose challenges to the consent issue, namely around the recent trend of celebrities sharing their children's photos through social media, that the media pick up for wider release.

We hope to pursue these lines of research in order to present some recommendations for the media and journalists as well as to regulators and the celebrity industry in the future.

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