

## Vingar e punir: motivações para a prática do *spoiling*

### Avenge and punish: motivations for *spoiling*

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**Resumo:** *Através de um survey com fãs brasileiros de séries televisivas americanas (n = 1.805), buscamos lançar luz sobre a prática do spoiling. Sabendo que a prática realizada pelos fãs é constituída por discursos enraizados no capital cultural e subcultural e, em negociações de poder dentro de cada comunidade, procuramos entender o espectro de toxicidade por trás do spoiling. Os resultados indicam que o spoiling tornou-se uma fonte de sociabilidade, troca de conhecimento, bem como prazer para o fã brasileiro. Porém, a prática também é utilizada por vingança ou até mesmo para “punir” espectadores atrasados. Observou-se que os fãs se aproveitam da possibilidade de mostrar mais conhecimento entre si, levando a conflitos nos fandoms e revelando o potencial tóxico por trás da difusão de spoilers.*

**Palavras-chave:** *spoiling; séries; fãs; práticas tóxicas.*

**Abstract:** *Through a survey with Brazilian fans of American television series (n = 1,805), we seek to shed some light on the practice of spoiling. Having in mind that fans' spoiling practices are made up of discourses rooted in cultural capital or subcultural capital, and in the dynamics of power inside communities, we seek to understand the spectrum of toxicity behind the practice of spoiling.*

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*The results indicate that spoiling has become a source of sociability, knowledge exchange, as well as, pleasure. However, the practice is also used for vengeance and to “punish” tardy viewers. It was observed that fans take advantage of showing more knowledge among each other, culminating in conflict in the fandoms and revealing the toxic potential behind the circulation of spoilers.*

**Keywords:** *spoiling; series; fans; toxic practices.*

## Introduction

In the current media context, spoilers have become a relevant issue for fans and consumers of audiovisual narratives, especially television series. In a simple way, spoilers are defined as an “information that anticipates an ending or an important event” in a narrative (PASE; SACCOMORI, 2015, p. 189). Even though the subject have been approached by some studies (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007, PERKS; MCELRATH-Hart, 2016a), the most part of literature reflects a focus on the dimension of reception and consumption of this paratext. However, in this study we chose to focus our analysis in a face that is still not very explored of the theme: the issue of spoiling, or, the production and circulation of spoilers.

The predominance of academic studies in the dimension of spoiler reception is related to the fact that is culturally accepted that the consumption of this paratext can impair the experience of consumption of text, mainly because this action entails a breach of expectation and suspense (JOHNSON; ROSENBAUM, 2015). Recently, this negative view has been questioned by some authors that propose the possibility of a positive engagement with spoilers (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007; HASSOUN, 2013).

At the same time, the issue became more complex with the arrival of social media, which allow fans to group collectively and share information online without restrictions or limitations. The lack of identification of posts with spoilers on Facebook and on Twitter alters the dynamic around the discussion in a way that previous studies may not be capable of resolving. Because fandoms commonly operate in social media, the dichotomy between people who love or hate spoilers become extremely problematic when gathering these individuals in the same online community, creating, thus, a space of dispute and conflict between both views. The situation becomes very intriguing when it is understood that part of the pleasure of consuming a television narrative is found in the dialogue between fans and other viewers about these productions (BAYM, 2000).

Recognizing that the practice of spoiling is as important as the reception of the paratext, we made a study with Brazilian fans of American television series ( $n = 1.805$ ) through a survey available on 10 Facebook groups. American TV shows have been popularized in Brazil in the last decade, despite the difficulties some individuals find in getting access to these narratives. Many fans still depend on pirate links and would wait for days to get subtitles in Portuguese. In this context, we observe that Brazil has the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest number of internet users<sup>3</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest number of users on Twitter<sup>4</sup>. This increase of interest for American TV series, and the strong online presence allows Brazilians to be exposed to spoilers on their social media, coming from American fans and even other Brazilian fans that consume these narratives through live pirate links, thus generating numberless conflicts.

Since fan's spoiling practices are constituted of discourses rooted in cultural capital, subcultural capital (THORNTON, 1995; CASTELLANO *et al.*, 2017) and in power dynamics within the fans community, we seek to understand the spectrum of toxicity in spoiling practices. Results indicate that, although a vast majority said only they only give spoilers when the paratext is requested, a relatively significant part enjoys the possibility of showing more knowledge among peers. Therefore, the spoiler can be configured as a mechanism used in the struggle for power, as well as, social and subcultural capital in series fandoms. At the same time, we understand that, due to the particular cultural interpretation that Brazilian have of the practice, they take advantage of supplying spoilers, affecting another individual's experience for their own personal pleasure or even to reveal the access to a material good, network television.

### **Spoilers: definition, reception and function**

Despite being culturally accepted as paratexts that impair the consumption of a narrative, spoilers are not as studied in academic literature,

3 <https://goo.gl/FWhVy6>

4 <https://goo.gl/TMJ4DT>

given that most part of the existing studies emphasize empirical analysis that have inconclusive or discordant results. The struggle of studying spoilers occurs due to different factors, among which the arrival of time shifting technologies (GRAY, 2010), the asynchronic distribution of content (NEWMAN, 2011), and the technologic advances of the last decade which allowed viewers to have the opportunity of watching (again) shows after their endings (PERKS; MCEL RATH-HART 2016a). To better approach the subject, we will cast a light over the three main points we consider important to understand the complexity of the theme: definition, reception and function.

*Spoilers are a particular type of paratext that does not have a clearly established definition.* Gray and Mittell (2007, p. 2) argue that the definition is variable from person to person. There would be those who believe that any information could potentially be a spoiler, while for others spoilers could only be important information of narrative endings. At the same time, there are multiple definitions in the Academy. Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a) say that for many years, researchers had a perspective that spoilers would only be relevant information given before the show is on. With that in mind, after the exhibition of the episode, these pieces of information would stop being considered spoilers. With the arrival of new technologies and the popularization of time shifting practices, these view became obsolete, since these narratives can be consumed days, weeks, months or even years after the exhibition.

Secondly, we observe that literature has been overly concentrated in the reception of the paratexts and in the consequences of its consumption for the approval of a narrative (BAYM, 2000; JOHNSON; ROSENBAUM, 2015). Recently, through a multidimensional perspective, researchers have argued that spoilers can be voluntarily consumed, and its consumption can even be pleasurable (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007; HASSOUN, 2013). Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a) go beyond talking about the existence of a certain ambivalence in relation to the consumption of spoilers. According to the authors, the bigger the investment of a viewer in a narrative, the bigger it is their desire to avoid spoilers. Thus,

one only viewer can receive the paratexts in a favorable and unfavorable manner depending on how invested they are in a given narrative. Alternatively, in the empirical study performed by Gray and Mittell (2007), authors propose that the search for spoilers is born by the raise of interest of the viewer for a show, in this case, the drama *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010). The apparent contradiction between both studies reveal the complexity and ambivalence behind the reception of spoilers.

Finally, it is necessary to consider that spoilers have different functions. Hassoun (2013), when analyzing the consumption of this paratexts, argues that they can quench fans' curiosity and intensify the anxiety. Gray and Mittell (2007), in turn, identify a preparatory function since that when consuming a spoiler, *Lost* viewers claimed they could pay more attention during the presentation of the episode, since the suspension of chock would allow them a bigger focus on details that were happening in the episode. Similarly, Williams (2004, p. 7) found a different preparatory motivation by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fans (WB, 1997-2001/UPN, 2001-2003), who consumed spoilers as a way to emotionally prepare for future events in the series, as for example, the death of a character.

Bearing in mind this brief landscape and understanding that most part of the analyses focused on paratexts and in its reception are contradictory, we understand that the academic discussion around the issue has to look for new analytical paths, it cannot remain limited to the paratexts, while the sphere of diffusion and circulation of spoilers remain relatively underestimated.

### **Spoiling, power and disputes**

This study approaches a specific group in its analysis: Brazilian fans of American TV series. The criteria which define the fan still varies a little in the academic reading. In this study, we assume that fans are different from the general audience due to their special relationship with a given story, marked by an admiration for the text and involvement with it through different practices. Jenkins proposes the following definition:

Someone becomes a ‘fan’ not for being a regular viewer of a certain show, but for translating that experience into some type of cultural activity, sharing feelings and thoughts about the content of the show with friends, joining in a ‘community’ of other fans that share common interests. (2006a, p. 41, our translation)

In Brazil, the area of fan studies counts with many quality studies that approach themes that are similar with the discussions presented in this article (CAMPANELLA, 2012; CASTRO, 2012; FECHINE, 2015). Some studies seek to present and discuss fan practices in the context of digital culture (AMARAL; SOUZA; Monteiro, 2015). Among the practices that normally receive attention, for example, fanfics, fanarts and even fan activism, the practice of spoiling between fans remains not as explored.

In order to understand the motivations fans have to perform spoiling, it is important to understand that if spoilers have individual inherent quality and meaning (HILLS, 2012), Brazilian fans may have a different interpretation of the practice, therefore having different motivations. In Brazil and in other countries, it is common to face the issue of temporal disparity as the main motivation behind spoiling between fans, since the sharing of spoilers was always motivated by temporal issues (JENKINS, 2009). Currently, while sharing online files through the “peer-to-pee” model (P2P) have “solved some of the temporal problems” related to the asynchronic distribution of global content (NEWMAN, 2012, p. 465), this practice have been heating the debate about spoiler around the world.

In the Brazilian case, we observe that for many years, individuals depended on cable television or the “charity” of open channels, that frequently showed incomplete, to consume foreign series. Despite the popularization of cable TV in Brazil, we can observe that that reaches a relatively small quantity of the population (LÓPEZ; GÓMEZ, 2017). Therefore, Brazilian fans at times depend on pirate downloads of the access of streaming services, like Netflix, to consume their shows. At the same time, we observe that due to the fact that only a limited amount

of the population has access to cable TV, these productions gained a certain status and prestige in the country. This is relevant because it will influence the particular relationship that Brazilians have with spoilers and the way they interpret and translate the practice of spoiling, as we argue ahead.

Although the justification of temporal disparity is plausible, we cannot consider it the only answer to this issue. It is necessary to understand that the practices in digital culture are coordinated entities that call for performances and these can be the same or not according to the same practice of appropriation (WARDE, 2005). Using the Practice Theory, Sandra Montardo (2016) defends that there is the need to define and distinguish consumption of practice in the digital culture. According to her, it is possible to understand “consumption as a factor of performance in the practice of online socialization, in a way that consumption in this sense, consists in the access, the availability and the sharing of digital content” (MONTARDO, 2016, p. 14). In this perspective, consumption is the enabler element in the practice of online socialization that is given within practices, being necessary the application of knowledge on behalf of those who practice, inferring over the perception of social capital about them (RECUERO, 2009).

That being said, we observe that “in the informational economy of the internet, knowledge equals prestige, reputation and power [...] So there is a compulsion for being the first to share new information and being the first to have it” (JENKINS, 2006b, p. 125, our translation). Despite of the difficulties in defining spoilers, it is uncontroversial to think of spoilers as information around a certain text. Bearing in mind that the “control of knowledge is one of the main forms of social power” (BROWN, 1994, p. 132, our translation), we can affirm that the accumulation of information through consumption of spoilers shows a concentration of knowledge that gives the individual a bigger subcultural capital within a determined fandom.

The term subcultural capital was coined by Sarah Thornton (1995) and is similar from the notion of cultural capital theorized by Bourdieu



(1989). While cultural capital is gathered through the concentration of knowledge, subcultural capital works in a similar way, however, instead of coming through learning, the individual who accumulates this capital has a knowledge valued by a certain subculture. Therefore, in the case of communities of fans of television fiction series, the individuals can take advantage for showing subcultural capital and accumulating power over the less knowledgeable fans through sharing spoilers (WILLIAMS, 2004).

In that same thought, when the fan posts spoilers in the community he acquires power, since they become a source of information. According to Williams (2004, p. 8) fans who knew spoilers from *Buffy* were considered more “knowledgeable” than fans who didn’t consume and/or shared spoilers. Thus, the author establishes that information = control = power. Alternatively, Perks and McElrath-Hart argue that in the current television context, the isolation is also a way of conversational control, and therefore, power (2016a, p. 6-7). Thus, the authors argue that many viewers are assertive about the amount of information they want to have access to and fight for the establishment of norms and ethics that protect them from spoilers.

Considering the temporal disparity and the dispute for power are only some of the possible reasons for spoiling and bearing in mind the specific use Brazilians do of the practice, we seek to problematize the issue and investigate the existence of other motivations behind the practice.

## Methodology

In order to perform this study, we elaborated a survey with 23 open and closed questions, distributed into 10 groups<sup>5</sup> of series fans on Facebook of different formats and genres, looking to reach a wider audience and obtain a bigger degree of variability in the sample. It is important to

5 The questionnaire was published in the following Facebook groups: *Grey’s Anatomy You’re My Person*; *Viciados em Séries e Sagas*; *How I Met Your Mother Brasil*; *Glee Brasil*; *Game of Thrones da Depressão*; *Game of Thrones Brasil L&S*; *The Big Bang Theory Brasil*; *Netflix Brasil Assinantes*; *Netflix Brasil – Assinantes*; *Séries da Depressão*.

reinforce that we chose not to restrict our analysis to a determined group of fans, but rather we performed a study with a wide group of avid consumers and viewers of television series, because we believe certain productions can lead their fans to relate in different forms with spoilers. In total, we've collected 1,805 valid answers. The survey received answers throughout 10 days between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The questions were divided into: i) profile of the respondent, ii) consumption of voluntary spoilers, iii) involuntary consumption of spoilers and iv) production of spoilers<sup>6</sup>. In this total sample, 71.6% (n = 1,293) are female, 28% (n = 506) male and 0.3 (n = 06) non binary. The minimum age of the responders was 11 years old and the maximum was 62 years old. About series consumption, most of the respondents (41.7%) watches up to five series currently and dedicate from one to two hours to series consumption a day (36.5%).

Through that, it was performed a crop about respondent who said they usually give spoilers, main issue for the discussion of this study, totalizing 787 (n = 787) respondents, representing 43.6% of the total of collected answers. In this sample, there was performed lexical and semantic categorization for content analysis (BARDIN, 2011), from the type of answer given were indicated seven wide categories, split into "Non-toxic practices": Accidental (26.3%), politically correct (37.9%), Sociability (23.8%), Informative (8.76%), and Others (4.06%), and "Toxic Practices": Pleasure (17.9%) and Revenge (5.46%). You must observe that as questions are open, some answers could be framed into two or more categories, as, for example, Paula's<sup>7</sup> answer: "Sometimes it is involuntary, sometimes as a joke and sometimes it's because the person is asking for it" (woman, 29 years old).

6 In this study, we will focus only in the issue of spoiling.

7 All the respondents received pseudonyms. We included the genre and the age to refine any patterns related to the condition of the subject.

## Discussion/Analysis of the results

The word “toxic” comes from the expression developed by John Suler (2004), in which he writes different effects of disinhibition on online environment. According to Suler, anonymity, invisibility, asynchrony, introjection and the reduction of authority are elements that affect an inhibited behavior in online environments, in both ways: positively, a benign behavior based on acts of kindness and generosity; and negatively, like a toxic behavior of interactive practices. As indicated by the psychologist, the toxic behavior in online environments can be understood as a cathartic act of pleasure motivated by unpleasant necessities and desires without any personal growth.

Although we discuss that disinhibition is not the only element that supplies toxic behaviors in online environments, as we’ve showed during our analysis, we shared data in two categories based on Suler’s definition: Non-toxic practices - understood by us as any activity which there’s no intention of generating conflicts in a interpersonal relationship and/or within certain community, specifically, the non-intentional circulation of spoilers and/or the intentional circulation of spoilers - and Toxic practices - understood here as any activity that intentionally lead to conflicts within an interpersonal relationship and/or a particular community, specifically, the intentional circulation of undesired spoilers.

### Non-toxic practices

#### Accidental

Many respondents (n =207) said they gave spoilers “unintentionally” as we can see in Rebecca’s response: “Normally it is an accident” (woman, 32 years old); or Bárbara: “It is rare for it to happen and usually it is not intentional, it happens because I think the person already watched that episode” (woman, 20 years old). There is also those individuals that claim not to be paying attention and end up slipping out a spoiler, as in João’s discourse: “Lack of attention” (male, 21 years old). We observe that some respondents said the existence of an “expiration date”

for spoilers, quality already indicated in Castellano et al.'s work (2017), as, for example, Thais's answer: "They escape. But sometimes I assume someone saw something that came out five years ago and they didn't" (woman, 26 years old).

### **Politically correct**

The category with the biggest number of answers was the politically correct (n=299) in which respondents indicated to give spoilers only if someone ask them, as it could be evidenced in Daniel's answer: "Only when they ask" (male, 28 years old; or Alessandra's: "Because people ask. I wouldn't give a spoiler without someone's consent" (woman, 26 years old). In some cases, respondents reaffirm their status of knowledgeable as in Daniela's discourse: "Since I Know a lot about series, people always ask" (woman, 30 years old), indicating the existence of a dispute of information around subcultural capital (THORNTON, 1995), present amongst TV series fans, to be analysed in future studies.

### **Sociability**

The category of sociability comprises the answers (n =188) which indicated the need/anxiety to talk about events of a certain series, as in Alex's discourse: "Due to the anxiety of commenting some event that happened in a series" (male, 26 years old). Many indicated an "excitement" and a difficulty to get abstained as in Simone's answer: "I like sharing my happiness in relation to someone that happened. When it's something bad, I want to see if the person would get the same reaction as me. I give my all not to share spoilers, but, sometimes, I am so excited that some friends end up giving in" (woman, 19 years old). With that, Simone indicates the necessity to have an audience or an outlet for your thoughts about the show she's watching.

At the same time, some respondents reinforced that the exchange of spoilers would happen, because they had the need to talk about the series, exchanging hypothesis, ideas and assumptions of what is coming

next in the production, as Beatriz says: “I give spoilers for anyone who wants to hear. Therefore, I supply it to discuss and create hypothesis around situations” (woman, 22 years old). In other cases, respondents claimed spoilers belong in the conversation about fiction television series, as in Luiza’s discourse: “Because I want to talk about the show, and I cannot discuss about certain subjects without giving away some spoilers” (woman, 20 years old).

The necessity of an audience can, sometimes, lead a fan to more extreme measures, with interviewees indicating that sometimes they threaten their friends and acquaintances with spoilers so they “keep up” and consume the series in the same rhythm, as we can observe in Afonso’s speech: “I threaten more than I speak, with the intention that my friends watch it quickly so we could talk about the show” (male, 24 years old); and Denis “Just kidding, maybe that way the person watches right away and keeps up, so we can chat about the whole episode” (male, 16 years old). These “threats” bring up the issue of sociability, invariably associated with television consumption. However, a fan takes advantage of having “more knowledge” than the other and “blackmail” them so they can watch the series at the same pace. The information present between this group integrates a web of power relations in which different subjects act, through different social dynamics, for which processes of negotiation and information have some type of value and interest, especially local. More than wanting to be one of the firsts to circulate the information, as Jenkins studied (2006b), spoiler is also seen as a mechanism of sociability built in their own dynamics beyond the prestige between their social group.

### **Informative**

The ‘informative’ category (n =69) comprises answers that indicated in the practice of spoiling the functionality of informing and transmitting information about any determined production for other individuals, as it can be observed in Thiago’s speech: “I normally give spoilers about some event of the series to increase someone’s curiosity about the show.

In my circle of friends this is something common, we always recommend series to each others sharing spoilers” (male, 19 years old), and Eduarda: “Need to share information” (female, 23 years old). At the same time, many respondents indicated they give spoilers as a form of “seducing” their friend’s curiosity, motivating them to start or continue to watch some series, as indicated by Bruno: “Instigating someone to watch the next episodes” (male, 21 years old).

### **Others**

The “others” category (n = 32) comprises a small percentage (4.06%) of answers that in general lines were individuals that did not exactly know why they gave spoilers as we can see in Ligia’s response: “I don’t know why” (female, 28 years). However, Davi indicated he gives out fake spoilers so “people would get upset and then get surprised” (male, 18 years old). However, other respondents said not to care with the paratexts and, because of that, they suppose others would also not care, as Pedro said: “Generally people don’t care a lot with that, the same way I don’t, so I don’t necessarily give out spoilers but I don’t necessarily not give them as well”. (male, 21 years old).

### **Toxic practices**

#### **Pleasure**

Among the toxic practices, the category that received the biggest number of answers was “pleasure” (n = 141) in which the respondents said to have feelings of “fun” and “happiness” in the practice of spoiling, as we can observe in Raquel’s discourse: “It is funny” (female, 17 years old); and Talita’s discourse: “It’s cool to see your friends angry” (female, 15 years old). Cristal goes a little deeper when she says that: “Because it’s good to see people suffer!!” (female, 16 years old). Similarly, some respondents indicated to be pleasurable to frustrate other’s experience, like Ana: “Because it’s a good feeling to take away someone’s pleasure of getting surprised with something while watching” (female, 15 years old);

Isabella: “To spoil the expectation of our friend” (female, 37 years old). As we can see, it is not a behavior instigated by disinhibition or anonymity, as presented by John Suler (2004) while analyzing the psychologic dynamic in cyber space, but a practice that reinforces the distinction of having knowledge between peers instead of pleasure. Showing that this pleasure is both a psychological phenomenon and a practice sensitive to context subjugated to a cultural behavior of the Brazilian people, some of the respondents used the Brazilian expression “zoeira”, because they would practice spoiling only to have fun with their friends.

The notion of pleasure linked to a bigger knowledge of a fan can be observed in Gustavo’s discourse: “It is pleasant to show you’ve got more information than another fan that doesn’t know” (male, 33 years old). The fact that cable TV in Brazil is still restricted to a small part of the population that can pay for it, contributes for the thought that whoever has access to this content would have “more rights” than other fans, as it could be evidenced in Thales’ answer: “To boost my ego, and show my poor friends I’ve got cable TV with premium channels” (male, 19 years old). The youngster certainly seeks to stand out for having access to this service in Brazil, a distinction that is not only comprised in economical capital, but to a multidimensional space with different forms of capital (social, economic, symbolic...) Is manifested by the social reaffirmation of appropriation of different goods. According to Bourdieu:

The social world could be conceived as a multidimensional space built empirically by the identification of the main factors of differentiation that are responsible for differences observed in a given social universe, or, in other words, by the discovery of powers or forms of capital that can begin to act, as ases in a game of cards in this specific universe that is the fight (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods... (BOURDIEU, 1987, p. 4, our translation)

Despite expressing pleasure revealing spoilers, Rafael’s discourse demonstrates the negative reaction of his friends when he says: “I like to tell my friends that didn’t watch yet, just to make them angry. People insult me a lot of the time” (male, 30 years old). What we perceive from

this discourse is that the disputes around subcultural capital are not restricted solely to status or prestige within a social group (BOURDIEU, 1979), but also refer to a dynamic in which hierarchic distinction are built through informational dominion, regardless of being positively recognized among their peers, contrary to a bias in which it points to legitimacy of the subject within a fandom. Therefore, it is not about a legitimation among subjects (BOURDIEU, 1987), but rather disputes around the information as a valuable good and instrument of power, reinforcing the studies developed by Williams (2004) and Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a), mentioned earlier.

### Revenge

What we can observe is that in toxic practices - the information being an instrument of distinction, as previously reinforced - social dynamics are built in a constant negotiation between fandoms, establishing political relations among knowledges. The category “revenge” (n = 43) is considered by us the one who demonstrates the biggest toxic potential in the practice of spoiling. In this category, the respondents indicate using spoiling as a way of getting revenge from other individuals that already said unwanted spoilers in the past as in the discourse of Carol: “I usually give spoilers back for someone who gives me a spoiler that I don’t want” and Adriana: “Usually as a form of revenge for receiving some other spoiler before” (Female, 20 years old).

In this sense, spoiling becomes a mechanism of justice in which people who were “betrayed” (received a spoiler) feel they have the right to punish others. However, this motivation isn’t found only linked to previous incidents with the paratexts, some respondents got further and said they give out spoilers for other reasons, as in Caio’s discourse: “Usually I give out spoilers about things I heard about or something I already watched if the person is very annoying or I don’t like that person too much. When I get angry of seeing a spoiler without wanting it I tell somebody took, Because that way the anger will be shared (donn’t judge me, thanks)” (male, 22 years old). It is implied in the young man’s



answer that he considers his action toxic, and even can feel shame from them - “don’t judge me” -, but he still feels comfortable enough to use spoilers as a way of generating conflicts in social relationships.

The practice of spoiling, thus, is used as a social mechanism not only for justice, but for punishment, as we can notice in Camila’s discourse: “Because sometimes, friends that doesn’t like spoilers do or say unpleasant things to us” (female, 26 years old); and Gabriel: “Only when a friend makes some type of action I dislike!” (male, 16 years old). Lilian’s discourse is particularly clarifying about how the practice of spoiling can be used as a mechanism of revenge and punishment: “Revenge. When someone does that to me I only return the ‘favor’. Seeing the expressions on someone’s face when we give a spoiler like “it was Glenn who died” is priceless. Or when your boyfriend does something wrong, sometimes it isn’t worth the fight, I just say a massive spoiler from Game of Thrones and that’s it” (female, 24 years old). Through Lilian’s quotation, we also can observe that the attainment of knowledge is not only an important element of social capital, but it is used as a coin of exchange in the revenge category. This negotiation is not solely restricted to the dynamic of consumption of audiovisual production, but it can serve for other daily disputes. We also can see the cultural representation of toxic behaviors as part of Brazilian cultural identity, reflected in Rodrigo’s answer when he uses his nationality to justify his vengeful spoiler: “Because I am a typical Brazilian guy that, when he suffers from something, wants to create a victim of the same suffering” (male, 16 years old).

What we can verify is that in this category, spoiler exceeds the narrative. In this case, it is not only seen as a paratexts of fictional production. It is not only about experiences related to contemporary narratives and textuality in the digital era, but to a set of social practices and dynamics, in which the information is central for disputes around subcultural knowledge.

## Final considerations

This study had the intention to cast a light over the phenomenon of spoiling in Brazilian communities of fans of American series. The research concluded that among the multiple motivations for spoiling among fans, there would be practices that can be considered as Non-toxic and toxic practices. We observe that soiling a practice of interpersonal communication, based in exchange of knowledge and intentionality, can enable social and cultural disputes when the attainment of knowledge is more than just a mean to gain prestige among peers, which can potentially be used as a bargaining tool in social relationships.

It reinforces studies that indicate the use of spoiler as a symbolic capital of distinction in negotiations within fandoms, at the same time the category of Toxic practices is revealed as a real empirical finding in our analysis. Even though it represents only 23.37% (n = 184) of the analyzed sample, toxic practices show the use of spoiling as a form of fun in the behalf of the Brazilian viewer, that takes advantage of the fact that only a limited amount of people have access to cable television and uses spoilers as a way of standing out in fandoms. At the same time, these viewers use spoilers as a social mechanism of punishment and revenge in fans' interpersonal relationships that may be used for reasons related or not to the television programs.

Again, it is important to reinforce that spoiling is also a manifestation of social and cultural phenomena that can reflect the cultural behavior linked to the social dynamic established by the practice. We understand that spoilers are sensitive to context and can be subjugated into a cultural manifestation of Brazilian behavior, "zoeira". The same way, it is also a social capital linked to the attainment of knowledge, in addition to being used as an economic distinction to those who have access to cable television in Brazil. Therefore, it is important to reinforce that the literature about spoilers shouldn't generalize online behaviors without considering the complexity of each cultural context, especially about the issue of distribution and access to content is different from the countries who produce these TV programs.

We observe that among the nontoxic practices, spoiling showed positive potential of paratexts in interpersonal relationships within fan communities in which they exchange information and mutually motivate themselves to continue to watch series. Evidently, it is necessary to point out that the methodology applied here must be validated in other procedures that supply a more robust subsidy to deeply understand the motivations of viewers in the production of spoilers, since despite the surveys anonymity, the application of this method cannot understand more complex feelings that wouldn't be verbalized through a survey. Understanding spoiling as a cultural and social phenomenon, additional studies are also necessary to see whether other countries viewers share the same motivations to reveal spoilers as Brazilian did in this study.

The possibility of getting pleasure in spoiling re-structures our understanding of these practices, as well as allow us to think about the cultural capital of spoilers as profoundly variable and sensitive to context, indicating new issues and perspectives beyond those already evidenced in researches raised in this study.

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