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## Introduction

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# Introduction

## Social Media and Society

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Social networks allow many of us to experience the world, to test our identity and to be with others in new ways compared to the past. The complex media and communication environment in which we live has become ubiquitous. Various works in this field have made it possible to recognise how much this environment, particularly social media, conditions our participation in the everyday life in modern society (Livingstone, 2011). Social networks, then, represent a privileged point of observation for understanding social change and the changing relational dynamics that do not end within platforms.

Building onto Martin's notion of the evidence of a wired society emerging and characterised by the use of mass communication networks (1978), 'the network' is the most widely used metaphor in recent years to describe these changes and the paradigms that result from them (Rossiter, 2006). Jan van Dijk (1991) introduced the term 'network society' – which would be taken up and made more famous by another author, Manuel Castells (1996) – which currently represents a useful concept to describe a social system that presents important features of discontinuity with respect to classical modernity (Castells, 1996). Talking about a networked society means observing the most recent changes with a keen eye on technological changes, without being technologically determinist. As Castells himself would say, it means looking at the new social morphology, intertwining cultures, and a more flexible and horizontal organisation of society capable of adapting to changing environmental conditions. There have been technological, economic and social/cultural processes which generated a new social structure, the information society; a new economy, the informational economy; and a new culture, that of real virtuality. As a result, the economy, work, state, culture, cities and so on are increasingly informational (Castells, 2001) and sociality itself is becoming reticular.

Shifting our gaze to dimensions closer to the everyday experiences of individuals, we can identify further changes that have reconfigured our way of being together in an increasingly connected world. The use of resources that digital media provide creates spaces for self-expression and allows users to make sense of their daily lives and forms of social action (Scarcelli &

Mainardi, 2019). Physical and digital spaces, therefore, become part of a continuum (boyd, 2007) in which the distinctions between real and virtual, and between online and offline, lose their most rigid meanings. Users move easily from one dimension to another, mixing different forms of communication, whether mediated or face to face (Ling & Haddon, 2008).

This fluidity is connected to three central considerations. Firstly, online interactions are part of the meaning horizons of a unitary experience in which the online is an essential part of the offline and vice versa. Secondly, we cannot forget that what happens online is shaped by variables such as gender, age, and social and cultural capital, and that the online experience is an essential part of the offline experience. Thirdly, we must consider the fact that digital platforms and spaces have their own peculiarities, mechanisms, and rules. We are not, in other words, talking about neutral environments.

The pervasiveness of mediated communication in everyday life and the effects that interaction through social media can have on personal relationships and identity also prompt us to reflect on changes from a more 'micro' point of view. In this regard one of the most flourishing readings is that given by the so-called networked individualism (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). In his oeuvre, Barry Wellman suggests focusing on the relationships that develop within digital environments without contrasting them with face-to-face ones. Social relations develop as a consequence of interactions utilising digital media, through the intersection of different networks, and the influences between their nodes (e.g. Wellman, Quan-Haase & Harper, 2020; Wellman, 2018, 2015).

With the concept of networked individualism, Wellman explicates a new way of organising social relations. These relations are based on a networked structure of which the centre is the individual. Each person can be part of different networks, independently choosing which networks to belong to, according to his or her own interests and entering and leaving them with relative ease. As argued earlier, in this interpretation the online and offline dimensions are deeply intertwined, creating a whole new experiential web. Therefore, the network replaces the group, and the individual takes on greater power, freeing oneself both from the constraints of physical space and from those that linked one to one's ascribed status. Social networks, the pivot around which our reasoning in this book revolves, represent one of the examples of the network built around the individual (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002).

This approach brings with it an important theme: the expansion of the individual's possibilities of choice – a typically modern trait that has found a sudden acceleration in the network society. In the network society, practices of reflexivity also change. While in modernity practices of reflexivity were viewed as individual actions, in the network society – in tandem with the development of platforms that become experiential contexts – these practices become connected. Social network sites bring the individual's inner conversation, their inner reflexivity, into a context in which the social relations – to which this reflexivity is oriented – are recognised and become visible and

explicit. Content posting on any social network often implies that the individual incorporates reflective (connected) work in which the individual's experience finds meaning in the relationship with others and in which each person also looks at themselves in relation to other users' gaze.

Moreover, in social media there are expectations of reciprocity. We create content so that there are reactions from other users, a comment, a like, a share, a reaction. Publishing something becomes a performative act that concerns the self, the way this self is represented online and the strategic management of different audiences. To help understand digital practices of representation and interaction, Erving Goffman's (1959) *The presentation of self in everyday life* has been used for some time. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor is still valid, though it needs to be refreshed in view of the changes that have taken place since its appearance. We are no longer talking about an audience that is co-present with the performance, but about networked publics (boyd, 2010). Compared to the publics described by Goffman (1959), networked publics are first and foremost audiences that are often, at the very least partially, invisible. We cannot know who is currently viewing our Instagram or Facebook profile, and when preparing our posts, we do not actually know who will be viewing that content. Additionally, the audience for our posts is selecting itself which posts to view and which ones to potentially engage with. Lastly, this networked audience is somewhat amorphous and asynchronous in its interactions and responses. This causes different contexts to collapse: our audiences are part of different social contexts, which can easily overlap. Finally, the separation between the limelight and the backstage loses its strength and, consequently, some private dimensions become public.

Following the definitions we have just outlined, it is easy to project an image in which connected reflexivity, reticular individualism and connected publics compose a picture in which each user is potentially constantly watched by the other individuals who make up the networks in which they may be embedded, be they friends, parents or peers in general or unknown individuals who have different roles.

Surveillance in this context is not only that of institutions or platforms (Van Dijck, Poell & de Waal, 2018), but also that which refers to decentralised power and is found within interpersonal relationships. What Marwick (2013) called social surveillance, which Rainie and Wellman (2012) termed 'coveillance', thus consists of surveillance carried out by relatives, friends or other users in general. This surveillance does not so much aim to control the person observed, but aims to get to know better the social context referred to for relational purposes. This control is not only operable in one way, and all users potentially have the same tools to surveil or 'control' others. Each person then finds oneself showing one's self, coming to terms with one's own performance – looking at others in a process in which different practices conflict with strategies useful for preserving their own image and representations.

There are several strategies to manage one's online presence. Lange (2007), for example, distinguishes between 'publicly private' and 'privately public' communication. In the first case, individuals use social networks as private spaces in which to communicate with their friends, and thus share information about themselves, making communication accessible only to a restricted group of users. In the second case, however, social networks are seen as a platform on which to stage a performance that is not directly linked to the identity – understood as the name and surname – of the person who created the content, but to nicknames or fictitious identities. Hence, a sense of potential anonymity of the performer is created and/or an additional persona/identity by which the performer is identified in this context and, perhaps, subsequently recognised by the audience.

What we have described so far is a new culture of connectivity (Van Dijk, 1991), which has been grafted onto our lives and around which new ways of being together revolve. At the centre of this discourse, we find social network platforms. Hinton and Hjorth (2013) point out to us that many social networks incorporate similar features, such as profiles with name, picture and biography – more or less short contact list, comments and private messaging. Connecting has become, according to Van Dijk (1991), a human necessity in a society where everyone's life is embedded and, to some extent, validated in technology-mediated communication. This has led to social platforms having a great deal of power and making it more complicated to give up social media use than refusing to engage with other media such as television (Langlois, 2013). In fact, social media allow people to come together, build networks and mediate emotions (Fuchs, 2014).

As Baym (2010) points out, social media are not an entirely new phenomenon. We can already find traces of these media in cave paintings or in the telegraph, according to Standage (2013). This is because social media, in their essence, represent useful interfaces that facilitate connection and promote interpersonal contacts (Miguel, 2018). However, if we refer to contemporary social media, boyd and Ellison (2007) trace the origins of these platforms to 1995, the year in which Classmates was created, and 1996, the year in which SixDegrees took off. The latter allowed its users to create a list of friends and, from 1998 onwards, to browse this list (boyd & Ellison, 2007). The first successful social networks were Friends Reunited (2000) and Friendster (2002), which allowed users to share photographs with each other. In 2004 Facebook appeared, initially a network dedicated to university students, which in September 2006 opened to a wider audience. Thus, we can assume that the evolution of social networks has led these networks to transform from platforms that allowed communication between users, in a horizontal way, to much more complex tools that are grafted onto the social reality, and connect individuals, institutions and companies.

## Digital Media, Gender and Sexuality

To better understand the relationship between social media, gender and sexuality we can start from considering sex, sexuality and gender as socially constructed (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Consequently, we can assume that they are (re)produced by media and popular culture (Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Gauntlett, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1994) including social media.

Digital media represent an important arena for shaping, articulating, representing and performing gender, sexuality, and intimacies (Attwood, 2018; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2022; Scarcelli, Krijnen & Nixon, 2021). Despite the fact that traditional views still prevail in certain contexts, meaning that questions connected to sexual identity and gender are constantly under attack in both a political and cultural way, these topics are much more open for discussion when compared to the past, and, as a rule, we are more aware of the issues that gender and sexuality bring into our lives.

In recent years online and mobile digital media spaces have increasingly become sites where sexual cultures and gender expressions are made visible. Digital technologies play an important role in such interpretation and remediation, adding new challenges around discourse and a point of observation for the study of the intertwining of media, gender and sexuality. Websites, apps, social networks and so on become ambivalent spaces where we can find support, activism, information and identity expressions, but also abuse, harassment and other negative aspects. Studying digital media today has become a central facet in the analysis of society, allowing an amplification of focus on privileges, power, differences, stereotypes, scripts and so on.

Research on digital culture produced many studies with a focus on the intersections between gender, sexuality and the digital media (Van Doorn & Van Zoonen, 2008). Initially the work in this field optimistically stressed the possibility for gender fluidity, underlining, at the same time, the risks of reinforcement of a deterministic conception of gender roles connected to technology (Wajcman, 1991). Indeed, starting in the 1990s many internet scholars, using Butler's (1990) work as a starting point, tried to understand online identity, helping to create the so-called 'disembodiment hypothesis' that held that – liberated from the constraints of the body – the users could choose their own gender or sexuality, creating alternative identities. This process is conceived as an active choice that permits people to adopt, experiment with and play with different identities, disrupting binary conceptions of gender and sexuality and encouraging fluidity (see for example Turkle, 1995). When writing about positive cyber-theory it would be remiss of us to exclude Haraway's cyborg (1991), a concept that described a new way of thinking and being, beyond the dichotomy of nature-technology. This concept was widely adopted by scholars in the 1990s, including by advocates of cyberfeminism who consider technoscience as liberating for

women and technology as intrinsically connected to women's ways of being (Plant, 1998).

More recently, media, gender and sexuality researchers, among others, started to ask new questions related to gender and sexuality in these spaces (Albury, 2018). Such questions focus on how technologies and affordances shape the user's experiences of gender and sexuality; how users interpret the codes and conventions of different platforms; how digital spaces could help or discourage non-normative expressions or sexual subcultures; how datafication and platformisation are affecting gender and sexuality; the entanglement of gender and sexuality with the sociotechnical and political aspects of platforms, and so on (for some examples see the special issue of *Social Media + Society* edited by Jean Burgess, Elija Cassidy, Stefanie Duguay & Ben Light, 2016).

Following Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2022), we can identify at least three important levels of connections between digital technologies, gender, and sexuality. The first one relates to infrastructures: "digital media are built and conceptualised in a way that influences the way we use them and they contribute to our idea of gender [and sexuality]" (p. 124). It is important to question who built the algorithms that we use every day and how the values of their creators are encoded within the algorithms, and thus impact and condition society's use of social media. The second level is related to the platforms. The focus here lies with the question on how digital media incorporate barriers that discriminate against certain groups of users. As De Ridder (2015) explains, gender and sexuality are mediated by the software's architecture of the platform. The third level is connected to the affordances of social media platforms that, on the one hand, allow for a more varied performance and fluid conception of gender and sexuality, while on the other hand they reproduce and reinforce more traditionally conventional gender logic.

Ultimately platforms and their affordance, the access to mobile media, the different use of the apps, and so on show us the ambivalence of digital media that represent new structures of surveillance and reproduction of power but, at the same time, permit the visibility of specific content and bring a political potential.

We attempt to showcase these more contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality and their relation to mediated content in this special edited collection. In Chapter 1, 'Whitewashing and the Meme-ability of Scarlett Johansson: Online controversy surrounding *The Ghost in the Shell* remake', Anna Wald examines the 2016–2017 controversy surrounding the 'whitewashing' of the role played by white American actress Scarlett Johansson in the live-action remake of the original Japanese anime film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). Examining the relationship between international media, racial representation, online discourse and science fictional imaginings of technological futures, this chapter illustrates the nuanced and complicated nature of this memetic event. Exploring the specifics of this moment of racial

controversy by examining the arguably ‘ambiguous’ racial categorisation of the media discussed, and fan activists arguing for diversified casting. Delving into the history of yellowface and Hollywood whitewashing discussions of racialised animation and social media campaigns to bring attention to the whitewashing of Asian characters, the author opens up the larger and more contentious issue of Hollywood casting choices.

The following chapter, by Arianna Mainardi and Tonny Krijnen, is “‘My Parents Check My Profile’: How Italian girls negotiate parental discourses in online activities’. In this chapter we can see how girls’ online activities are a topic within often heated debates on sexualisation, debates in which girls’ own voices are rarely heard. The authors elucidate on two aspects of these debates. First, there seem to be opposing perspectives on the position of girls as either ‘girl-at-risk’ or as ‘empowered girl’. Mainardi and Krijnen adopt a poststructuralist approach and attempt to empirically contribute to a dialogic understanding of agency and structure. Second, the sexualisation debate is embedded in a specific neoliberal climate that is locally nuanced. The Italian context magnifies the double standards at play and emphasises the importance of the family, constructing a complex power system which girls need to navigate in order to ‘be’. In this chapter, the research highlights how girls negotiate their online identities (on social network sites such as Facebook) in tandem with potentially conflicting parental discourses. Interviews with a total of 32 girls between the ages of 15 and 18 years of age were used to show that parental discourses often take different shapes but always intervene with girls’ online activities. Simultaneously, girls find direct and indirect strategies to attempt to circumvent these structures. This shows not only girls’ ability and capabilities to handle the ‘risky’ online environment and the multiple shapes of agency within a specific power configuration, but also that local spaces intersect in interesting ways.

Chapter 3 sees us shift continents to explore the world of online advice and influencers in China. In ‘Counselling Marriage and Love through Live-streaming in China: Douyin, relationship counsellor and the affective public’, Zhen Ye and Qian Huang demonstrate how, throughout modern Chinese history, media have been affording spaces which have been used in the production and shaping of relationship-related values and practices. Intimate relationship and marriage counselling has become a popular topic in various media formats, evolving with the development of media technologies. Emotional counsellors, or what we might term influencers, appear on social media platforms to produce monetised content aimed at women who seek success in romantic relationships in a time of change in economic and gender norms in China. Examining a self-proclaimed relationship counsellor, Xianjing, whose practices are afforded by the social media platform Douyin, this research reveals how Xianjing builds affective connection with her followers, and discursively rebrands their subordinate position in marriages as a natural result of traditional virtues, enabling Xianjing to monetise her followers’ intimate feelings and affective attachments.



Ben De Smet and Frederik Dhaenens examine the notion that “‘Music Makes the People Come Together’”: Spotify as an intimate social media platform’ in Chapter 4, taking the example of music-streaming platform Spotify not only as a platform for music consumption, but one which also affords (algorithm-driven) playlist and public-profile features via which users can engage in curation, social interaction and self-presentation, akin to ‘traditional’ social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This chapter examines Spotify’s relations to intimacies and identities via a social media lens. While popular music and social media have both been lauded as spaces for tolerance and democracy, the relations between Spotify, which operates at the intersection of both, and notions of identities have been more complex and less unilaterally positive. As exemplified in the chapter, Spotify, via its use of algorithms, interferes with the music discoveries and practices of users. Spotify mediates intimacies when users curate and engage with music to make sense of the self or to navigate moods, emotions and everyday life. Users also negotiate what ought to be shared and what should be kept private with context collapses potentially leading to unintended disclosure of intimate aspects of one’s music taste, personal situation or social-political identities. The authors show how in attempting to understand the relations between social media and people’s everyday lives, emotional worlds, intimacies and identities, the role of Spotify should not be overlooked.

Chapter 5 by Burcu Korkmazer, Sander De Ridder and Sofie Van Bauwel gives us an insight into how young people define and curate notions of sexual reputation through their social media activities. Entitled ‘Sexual Reputation, Intersectional Intimacies and Visual Social Media: Exploring young people’s mores on “good” versus “bad” online sexual reputations’, the chapter seeks to address the urgent need to problematise the current emphasis on digital reputation, specifically related to sexual and intimate practices on social media. The authors attempt to understand how a focus on digital reputations potentially produces reputational harm to those young people who do not conform to the particular sexual norms of their peer groups, social and family ties, and wider culture and society.

Victoria Andelsman examines the production of knowledge and authority in sex and relationship vlogs in Chapter 6, “‘You Live and You Learn’”: Sex and relationship vlogging and the production of knowledge’. Using YouTuber Hannah Witton’s #TheHormoneDiaries series as a case study, the chapter demonstrates how the knowledge production process transcends the YouTuber’s body in sex and relationship vlogs, and how knowledge and authority are produced through bodily experience. Andelsman posits an analysis of vlogs as technological and affectively networked material including the YouTube comment section. The chapter shows how when users relate to Hannah’s sensuous experiences, particularly her pain, and share their personal realities in the comment section, the boundaries of individual experiences is exceeded by the collective body of knowledge which is created. This chapter then draws on the findings from the case study and

reflects on the propagative qualities of sex and relationship vlogs and how they may both produce and afford spaces for intimate publics.

Chapter 7 is 'Webisodes as Different Subversive Forms of Representation of Gender and Sexuality' by Pernilla Jonsson Severson. It is a study of webisodes as subversive forms of representation of gender and sexuality often under the realm of fan activism. The webisodes are, for the fans, going beyond both 'for the youth' and the local contexts. Social media and comment sections are often aligned to the webisode as a validation choir, furthering the notion of 'for the fans'. These short videos, often targeted at niche audiences as a community, invite interactivity, comment and reinterpretation. Webisodes democratise access, usage and production, unwrapping subversive aspects, forms and potentials of representation of gender and sexuality. Within the chapter a content analysis is made of four webisode contexts which are beneficial to understand varieties of subversive forms of representation: the Swedish youth series 'Eagles' on youth and sexuality; the American and Canadian LGBT and queer webisodes like 'Platonic'; gender-bending fan-edits like the German 'Crolli' vlog from *Verboten Liebe*; Islamic comedy on the French website 'A part ça tout va bien' constructing gender and sexuality on Islamic culture from a French perspective. The analysis focuses on local constructions, and resistance to representations of gender and sexuality. Findings show variations of destabilisations and legitimisations of gender and sexuality constructions. These identity constructions are adapted, functioning as reference points for resistance, forging new normative gendered identities related to sexual identity communities.

The next chapter is an examination of men's rights groups by Manolo Farci. 'No Country for Men: Negotiating men's rights activism in digital spaces' shows us how the numerous discussions about men's behaviours, which have been widely recognised as being a key issue in terms of the drive towards gender equality, can lead to some form of positive transformation. Examining the so-called 'manosphere', which is most widely recognised and researched in anglophone societies, Farci seeks to broaden this research by taking as the focus of his study the emergent anti-feminist and men's rights groups in Italy. This chapter showcases how men's rights activism within the Italian digital environment is constructed and detects three key interpretative repertoires employed by Facebook users in discourse, while questioning men's issues within these groups: the nice guy discourse, the liberationist rhetoric and the hybrid style of activism. Farci then shows how members within this manosphere can use diverse, and sometimes conflicting, interpretative repertoires to conceptualise and justify their participation in anti-sexist, anti-feminist and pro-male groups. The author posits that one can differentiate those activists who are positively concerned with campaigning on issues related to men's rights from those activists who may be better categorised as holding views which can be considered to be expressive of a more negative, anti-feminist stance.

Chapter 9 is “Hello My Lovelies!” Conflicted feminisms and the neoliberalisation of Portuguese activist influencer practices’ in which Sofia P. Caldeira and Ana Flora Machado put forward the complexities and tensions that mark Instagram as a site for contemporary feminist practices and discourses. The chapter addresses the growing popularity of feminist discourses on Portuguese social media, critically exploring the Instagram presence of Portuguese psychologist, sexologist and self-identified feminist Tânia Graça, who has been gaining popularity by advocating for women’s sexual empowerment, pleasure and women’s rights more broadly within the context of a still largely conservative Portuguese society. Her Instagram presence is an example of activist influencer practices – marred by tensions between its essentially feminist aims and Instagram’s dominant logics of popularity, visibility and commercial success. Its embodiment of feminist politics – focused on issues of bodily experiences and pleasurable sexual experimentation, and visually expressed through practices of self-representation – also chafes with Instagram’s platform politics, which often deplatform ‘objectionable’ content. In addition, this chapter posits how popular feminist expressions can rely on gendered conventions of communication, privileging a personal and intimate tone to build a sense of perceived interconnectedness with followers. This aligns with notions of popular and spectacular feminism that tend to privilege ‘cute’ expressions of feminism and centre individual issues, in line with expressions of neoliberal feminism.

Our tenth chapter examines the rapidly developing notion of the monetisation of citizen-produced digital sexual content. In ‘Digital Sex Work? Creating and selling explicit content in OnlyFans’, Daniel Cardoso, Despina Chronaki and Cosimo Marco Scarcelli illustrate how research on/with young adults and sexual(ised) media is often framed in terms of empowerment or victimisation, while media use is often reduced to media effects (assumed to be either positive or negative). Equally, work on porn production and online sex workers is still limited, and there is a dearth of research connecting the two and addressing young adult content producers. Thus, this chapter takes as its theme OnlyFans, a platform where content is monetised for the producer and is most famous for its sexual content. Focusing on women who sell their own sexual(ised) content on OnlyFans, the authors analyse how the women make sense of their online activity, and how they (dis)identify with the category of ‘sex worker’. The chapter interweaves discourses around sex work and media/digital media studies, to attempt to understand how digital environments’ affordances and constraints impact on how the meaning of sex work and content creation are negotiated and internalised. It takes note of the concept of immaterial labour and the many ways in which digital work on social media involves a constant stream of affective labour within a neoliberal system. Furthermore, the chapter shows perceptions of how ‘work’ is defined, and how digital content creation interacts with

long-standing cultural narratives about ‘art versus pornography’ and ‘artistic creativity versus money-generating content’.

Debates over the positioning of trans people and gender rights is the subject of Chapter 11, ‘Trans-Exclusionary Discourses on Social Media in Spain’. Here Cilia Willem, R. Lucas Platero and Iolanda Tortajada explain how since best-selling author J. K. Rowling outed herself as a ‘TERF’ (trans-exclusionary radical feminist) in 2019, the term has been used both as a slur by those who advocate trans inclusion in feminist/female spaces and acclaimed by those who push for the exclusion of trans individuals, specifically trans women, from female-only spaces. In Spain, a cultural war has been taking place since 2018 mainly on social media between ‘TERFs’ and ‘Transfeminists’ – trans activists and trans-inclusive feminist collectives. This chapter sheds light on the specific affordances of social media for discourses on gender and sexual identity, including misinformation and hate speech, regarding the new Trans Law to be adopted by the Spanish Parliament. This law aims at depathologising transness and securing the right to gender self-determination of trans individuals, following the path set by laws passed already in seventeen Spanish regions. The proposal has become controversial, not only among the conservative and extreme right, but also among certain sectors of traditional centre and progressive parties. This explores how the narratives of opinion makers and influencers on transgender rights are crucial aspects in determining public opinion on feminist, queer and trans theory.

Bringing the collection to a close, in Chapter 12 ‘The Rise of Bimbo TikTok: Digital Sociality, Postfeminism, and Disidentificatory Subjects’, AP Pierce brings us a vivid examination of how one set of social media adherents are using TikTok to redefine the previously pejorative notion of a ‘bimbo’. This chapter explores the community of ‘BimboTok’ and its feminist and political potential (and the limits thereof), showing how these activists are leaving behind previous models of feminism concerned with ‘girlboss’ capitalism, the notion of having to conform to patriarchal ideas of success and ‘how one should be’, and reclaiming the concept of the bimbo – not only reclaiming it but transforming what was once viewed as an extremely negative portrayal of femininity into a positive one by creating an online community re-envisioning and politicising the figure of the bimbo as an empowered expression of modern-day femininity through their own performances. As the author explains in their analysis, the BimboTok subcommunity sits neatly on a fence between normative and resistant in its hyperfeminine aesthetic and embodied performance. The author ultimately rejects understanding BimboTok through an oversimplified empowerment/subjugation dichotomy in favour of examining the complex queer disidentifications being performed when these users take to TikTok to revel in displaying themselves as the antithesis of the ‘girlboss’ and other more widely accepted notions of feminist portrayal.

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