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## **INSTAGRAM LIVE COMMUNITY: A QUEER ENTANGLEMENT**

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Digital community making through a live entanglement of the self and social media, offers up new pathways for thinking through human and nonhuman divides. Queer activism and feminist art on Instagram has made way for a reframing of what constitutes a 'digital community' (boyd 2011, Baym 2015, Oakley 2018). This paper thinks through the materiality of this feminist activist art community through the method of 'Instagram live interviewing'. Drawing from a larger project that aims to understand the ways activist art practice on Instagram subverts heterosexual norms and patriarchal representation, we argue that the 'live' nature (Back, 2012) of the Instagram live interview (Hickey-Moody and Willcox, 2019) mobilizes a new type of queer materiality. By applying Karen Barad's (2007) feminist new materialist theory of 'intra-action' to ways of thinking about human experience as intra-acting with aspects of the world that we classify as non-human, we reconceptualize some of the literature around digital community making to account for the needs of those often left out of heteronormative and mainstream narratives. Intra-action for Barad (2007) is a way of entangling through force, and in seeing how matter can affect and intra-act with other matter, we find a reconfiguration of boundaries. This entanglement of liveness and intra-action in our methodology explores the feeling of 'community' as being a feeling that is central to human subjectivity and experience. Through a lens of queer materiality, we suggest that community can therefore be produced by more-than-human assemblages, and argue that a more nuanced account of digital community making which accounts for live Instagram intra-actions is needed.

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Using live interview data with feminist activist Instagram artist Frances Cannon (@frances\_cannon) we draw into question the divide between human and nonhuman assemblages, as the boundaries are blurred between where the body begins and ends. For the feminist activist and queer artists in this study, community building through their art practice and online presence is their way of making a living, it enables them to connect with others through topics of gender, sexuality, race, body positivity, and it provides a place to feel seen, heard and represented. Therefore, we reconsider the idea of the digital community to assert that digital community making has become an essential human and nonhuman life form which is necessary for our times.

In an era of digital and technological advancement, and human to nonhuman relationality, posthumanist notions of community and identity are increasingly significant in defining the limitations of what social media can and cannot do. Prominent social media scholars, such as Hine (2015), Markham (2016, 2019), Hynnä, Lehto, and Paasonen (2019) and Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin (2020) have drawn attention to the affective politics of being a digital ethnographer, unpacking the ethics of constantly evolving our methodologies with technologies. As such, according to Rosi Braidotti (2013, 2019) posthumanism and the posthuman convergence are shifting towards thinking beyond the human, an affirmative ethics which decentres European humanism from its highest order. A posthuman is multiple, relational, embedded in and with. Braidotti never defines whom 'we' are in terms of human or nonhuman ways of being, but instead calls for a more transversal method for looking at human to nonhuman entanglement that accounts for the embodied complexity that comes with living in our times. This critical call, is one we answer through our methodological underpinnings of live interviewing within our participant's Instagram activist art spaces.

This project works with 10 internationally based feminist and queer Instagram activist artists that have over 20,000 followers, to better understand how they build communities and identities around their art. Drawing and representing those often left out of mainstream narratives, such as people of colour, trans, non-binary, fat, queer, and disabled people, these artists take on a role as community leader, activist, artist as well as identifying as feminist or queer. After conducting an interview in private we conduct a follow up interview through the participant's Instagram live platform to engage their entire community of followers in our research. Through this live entanglement, the researcher is thrust into a state of vulnerability and openness, one which shifts the researcher/subject power imbalance.

Artist participant Frances Cannon attempts to queer (Jagose, 1996, Ahmed, 2006) the way we use Instagram, in representing and connecting with those often left out of mainstream narratives (McInroy, et al. 2019). The idea of the digital community as being 'non authentic' (Lingel, 2017) seems to fall flat in this context. The reoccurring themes emerging from this data suggest that often these built digital communities better resemble the politics or sense of self for the participants involved than that of family relationships or even everyday interactions. This emphasis on feeling seen, heard and accepted through queer and feminist Instagram art suggests that more attention needs to be paid to those online communities that may differ from offline spaces. Looking at the materiality of the digital world, through a queer lens of live human and nonhuman intra-actions, we start to reconfigure the boundaries of the human in relation to the

feeling of community. With this theoretical frame in mind, we invite discussion on how we can redefine the ethics of digital community making through queering notions of online and offline material ways of being. After all, as new materialist digital ethnographers, it is through this constant becoming that we must endeavour to continually reconsider the boundaries of the human, one which at the moment, is entangled with the liveness of the digital.

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