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BETWEEN FLESH AND ALGORITHM: RESISTANCE STRATEGIES IN BRAZILIAN CAMMING

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This research investigates how Brazilian camgirls develop specific forms of techno corporeal presence that simultaneously incorporate and resist the logics of abstraction characteristic of platform capitalism. Camming constitutes a specific form of sex work where performers broadcast pornographic content live on digital platforms, creating embodied spaces that challenge conventional demarcations between body and technology. As Jones (2020) documents, this practice represents a distinctly embodied modality of digital labor that defies categorization, combining elements of performance, emotional work, and sexual labor within technically mediated environments.

Embodiment and Technological Mediation in Digital Sex Work

This research mobilizes what Sobchack (2004) theorizes as embodiment—a radically material condition that necessarily entails both body and consciousness—and what Haraway (2009) conceptualizes as the cyborg—a hybrid entity that challenges fundamental boundaries between human and machine, physical and non-physical. Both concepts offer tools for understanding how bodies and technologies are mutually constitutive rather than externally related, creating forms of techno-corporeal presence that resist Cartesian divisions.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the research investigates how these cyborg embodiments generate what Paasonen (2011) defines as "carnal resonances"—affective intensities that emerge through the intertwining of flesh and technology, creating shared experiences that transcend physical distance. The central problem guiding this investigation is: how do Brazilian camgirls develop specific forms of techno corporeal presence that simultaneously incorporate and resist the logics of abstraction characteristic of platform capitalism, especially considering their position in globally unequal digital infrastructures?

Methodology

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This research employs a qualitative methodology that triangulates virtual ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and the walkthrough method to capture the multidimensional

nature of embodied experiences in camming. Extended ethnographic observation in camming rooms provided insights into temporal structures and performer-audience dynamics, while in-depth interviews with nine Brazilian camgirls explored their lived experiences of technological mediation.

The walkthrough method (Light et al., 2018) was ethically adapted to analyze platform architecture without reproducing potentially compromising images.

Regulatory Imperialism and Platform Infrastructures

This research examines how Brazilian camming platforms and performers navigate the global impact of US regulatory frameworks, particularly SESTA/FOSTA legislation. Despite being American legislation, these laws have profoundly reshaped the Brazilian digital sex work landscape through what can be understood as regulatory imperialism, where US legal standards effectively govern global digital spaces. Bronstein (2021) demonstrates how this legislation extends American jurisdiction extraterritorially, affecting platforms and workers even in countries with different legal frameworks for sex work.

The empirical evidence gathered aligns with Blunt and Wolf's (2020) findings, showing how Brazilian camgirls experience increased financial precarity, platform exclusion, and diminished access to safety resources following SESTA/FOSTA implementation. As Are and Paasonen (2021) document in their analysis of content moderation practices, these impacts manifest in algorithmic governance systems that disproportionately target sexual content through shadowbanning and deplatforming. Platform terms of service of Brazilian sites like Camera Privê reveal voluntary compliance with American regulatory standards, demonstrating how SESTA/FOSTA's global reach restructures embodied possibilities regardless of local legal contexts.

Monopolization and Platform Governance

The platform structure of camming sites reflects broader monopolistic tendencies in digital capitalism. As Srnicek (2017) observes, platforms inherently drive toward market concentration by controlling essential infrastructures that mediate interactions. In the Brazilian context, Caminhas (2023) documents how Camera Privê and Camera Hot dominate the national market, extracting 50% commission while enforcing exclusivity requirements that Stegeman (2024) identifies as strategic control mechanisms. This monopolistic governance is reinforced through deliberately ambiguous terms of service that simultaneously distance these platforms from sex work while maintaining comprehensive control over performers' digital presence, creating what Stegeman characterizes as a paradoxical form of labor where performers are framed as "independent" while subject to increasingly restrictive platform dependencies.

Embodied Resistance and Infrastructural Circumvention

Interviews with Brazilian camgirls reveal concrete resistance practices developed against platformized control. In response to high commission rates (50%) and minimum token thresholds for withdrawal, performers frequently capture clients directly from platforms for private video calls conducted through other services. This disintermediation strategy constitutes a form of infrastructural resistance against the monopolistic practices of dominant platforms.

Another significant tactic emerges from the incompatibility between global payment systems and local economic realities. As many Brazilian consumers resist paying in dollars for digital services, camgirls have developed parallel systems using PIX (Brazilian instant payment system) during live broadcasts, deliberately circumventing platform rules. This practice doesn't simply represent a violation of terms of service but a strategic adaptation to the material conditions of global inequality in digital financial infrastructures. By developing alternative payment systems and parallel communication channels, Brazilian camgirls contest infrastructure monopolization, reasserting agency within systems designed to maximize value extraction.

International payment systems establish a particularly pernicious form of exclusionary governance for sex workers through systematic financial deplatforming, payment processors routinely block sex workers from accessing financial services, often confiscating accumulated funds without recourse—cases where workers lost thousands of dollars after being identified as engaging in sexual commerce. This financial exclusion represents "digital gentrification"—a process where whorephobic values are encoded into financial infrastructures (Blunt, Wolf 2020; Blunt, Stardust 2021; Franco, Webber 2024). The Brazilian PIX system offers a significant counterpoint by operating as a state-managed infrastructure outside corporate moral governance. Developed by the Central Bank of Brazil, PIX provides a technically neutral channel for financial transactions that doesn't discriminate based on source of income. This governmental governance model provides Brazilian camgirls a crucial advantage—conducting financial transactions without risking account freezes or financial bans creating an alternative financial ecosystem that leverages state-managed payment infrastructure against corporate platform control.

Conclusion and Implications

This research reveals how Brazilian camgirls navigate regulated embodiment—a condition where performers must simultaneously create affective connections through carnal resonance while adapting their bodily presentations to increasingly restrictive platform governance. The findings demonstrate three key dynamics:

First, performers develop embodied technical expertise that transcends the artificial separation between "content" and "infrastructure," revealing how deep technical knowledge becomes incorporated into bodily practice. Second, Brazilian camgirls engage in forms of "corporeal resistance" against algorithmic governance, developing strategies that maintain space for sexual expression despite increasingly restrictive content moderation. Finally, these performances challenge digital capitalism's logic of abstraction by insisting on the irreducible materiality of sexual labor that cannot be fully

captured by datafication processes (Saunders, 2023).

By examining how these embodied practices emerge within the specific context of regulatory imperialism and monopolistic platform control, this research contributes to understanding how global power structures materialize in intimate digital labor. Rather than treating platforms as neutral intermediaries, this analysis reveals how the technical architecture of camming sites concretizes specific power relations that Brazilian performers must navigate through their embodied labor. These findings suggest the need for regulatory approaches that recognize the embodied dimensions of digital labor and platform governance models that do not reproduce existing hierarchies of sexuality and geographic inequality.

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