

Woman on Twitch livestream: Between pleasure, work, vulnerability and marginalization.

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper we discuss the way that woman streaming on Twitch are marginalized on the platform because of different ways. Many authors have explored some grounds like being a woman (e.g., Ruberg et al. 2019), people of color (e.g., Gray 2016), Spanish speakers or streaming outside the Anglosphere (e.g. Catá 2019), or sex workers in relation with streaming and gaming culture (e.g. Ruberg 2022). For us, the main purpose is to explore Latinas gendered and racialized bodies, the marginalization and exclusion on Twitch and in streaming cultures build on existing work. We take as starting point a larger project which explores the complex interplay of streaming and sex work that focuses on streamers using both the Twitch and OnlyFans platforms, we also consider that the use of these strengthen marginalization on women.

We put emphasis on researching the work done by women who combine game broadcasts with erotic and sexual work on platforms such as the ones mentioned above, and the ones outside the USA, for which we conducted an in-depth follow-up about the complex interplay of streaming and sex work. This information was collected through qualitative social network analysis, for instance, many of the women use websites that link to the rest of their social networks; generally, these are Twitch, Twitter, Instagram, Only Fans, just to mention some of them. And digital ethnography to explore the social media presence and Twitch live-streams of nineteen self-identifying Latinas that are based in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, like Mexico, Brasil and others, who create sexual content on OnlyFans and promote that content on their social media profile.

During the research, we are interested in recognizing what is the connection between streamers and video games. To recognize if these are a way to take their practices to other spaces and gain popularity or if on the contrary, they are separate activities that attract more public to platforms where they openly present their bodies. To identify

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this, we track which social networks are the most active, what types of content they produce, how much time they spend on video games (if any) or whether these are just a reference that attracts more attention from male consumers. The hypothesis considers that since the beginning of the gaming industry, the link with the porn industry is present from the way in which the productions of both have been presented and the emphasis on the idea that -both industries- are exclusive for male consumption. Therefore, we consider that these streamers do not necessarily acquire popularity through the use of video games, but this is one of the key points that make them more popular.

By following the concept of “the visible self” from Paula Sibilia, we analyze the way the use their social media to manage the relationship between video games and gaming culture, their intimacy, and adult content as seeking to comprehend the significance of these intersections of marginalization for gaming cultures. As Sibilia (2008) argues, and in a situation of ambivalence between contexts, we consider that as part of becoming a streamer woman can also embrace a personal desire to show themselves openly and fearlessness, which extends to presenting themselves publicly as empowered, self-confident, entrepreneurial agents and in due time challenging the dominant whiteness and masculinity in live broadcast spaces.

CONCLUSION

Our main concern is to foresee that data collected contributes to the existing discussion of the gendered body on Twitch, because body is ambivalent, on one side it is very important part of the content and creation on this platform and on the other hand it gives place to increase the marginalization and exclusion. Also, we add another piece to this problematic: being outside the anglosphere and the idea of the collective imaginary about the Latina body. We infer that the use of the body molds their intimacies to increase or experience the preferences or their audiences, they are occupying live-streaming streaming in a sexualized and gendered manner that is expected, even demand, of Latina bodies (see: e.g., Molina-Guzman 2010) by the hegemonic white heterosexual masculinity that characterizes Twitch.

Assuming that the “normal” presentation of the self makes a hegemonic idea of this platforms, the rules and regulations increase tension for them, but also open a new and diverse strategies multi- and cross- platform social media entrepreneurship through the body. The viability of this cross-platform potential is cemented through the intimate performance of the Latina body, which is simultaneous made visible while rendered unremarkable through an overflowing of intimacy (Sibilia 2009, 318). We believe that delving into issues such as these allows us to understand deeply about the network that exists around the video game culture and the various ways in which, in this case Latina streamers, appropriate and re-signify this culture.

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