

**INSTA-FEMINISM: UNTANGLING THE MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE FORCES OF
GIRLS' FEMINIST ACTIVISM ON INSTAGRAM**

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Abstract

This dissertation untangles the intricate networks of material things, discourses, times, and spaces which co-create girls' Instagram feminism and feminist collective identities. Informed by a feminist posthuman framework, I ask: *What material-discursive forces shape how girls and young women experience and reflect on feminist activism and feminist collective identities on Instagram?* My diffractive qualitative methodology includes in-depth content analysis of 26 Instagram accounts created by girls, 27 digital interviews with some of the girls 'behind' the Instagram accounts, and two follow-up group interviews with some of the interviewees. I read this data with and through theory to discuss three interwoven patterns. In chapter three, I articulate the relational becoming of girl and feminist identities, arguing that they are multiple and contextual material-discursive performativities rather than essentialist categories or identities neatly contained in individual human bodies. In chapter four, I trouble an understanding of digital feminism as the result of human agency, by tracing the messy human and non-human forces and timespaces that constrain and enable the possibilities for girls' Instagram feminism. In chapter five, I engage with Instagram accounts run by collectives of girls and propose a rethinking of girls' Instagram feminism as cyborg feminism – collective, situated, ironic, and partial human/non-human becomings. Overall, I argue that girls' Instagram feminism is complicated, messy, and continuously reconfigured in entanglements of humans and non-humans, where forces such as gender, age, feminism, girlhood, and technologies are differentiating. There are many digital feminisms proliferating on Instagram, and girls' experiences and meanings of them are nuanced. These feminisms emerge through practices of collective identity, where girls and Instagram content demark boundaries between desirable and undesirable feminisms. I argue that girls respond to the multiplicity of Instagram feminisms by developing ambivalence around feminism. In this ambivalence, some girls distance themselves from feminism and feminist identities, despite mobilizing feminist politics on-and offline. My analysis underscores how girls' Instagram feminism is far more compelling and intricate than overstated debates which fix it into binaries of activism/slacktivism, online/offline, and individual/collective.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Like many girls (e.g., Keller 2016; Mendes, Keller and Ringrose, 2019) in my tween years, some of my earliest encounters with activism and feminism happened in digital spaces like Tumblr, individual blogs created by girls and women, and websites like UpWorthy. My curiosity about girls' feminist activism on Instagram stems from my own girlhood experience, and has been an evermore research interest. Beginning with my undergraduate thesis, I have explored girls' activist blogging to better understand what it is like to grow up as a girl, into activism online. In my Master's work (see Sheppard and Raby 2022), I wanted to build upon my focus on discourse, to consider the complexities of the materiality of girls' activist blogging. I used Karen Barad's posthumanism to map the materialities, discourses, times, and spaces that co-create girls' activist blogging. I paired content analysis with interviews with the bloggers, and learned about the ways girls are mobilizing across digital spaces. The girls I spoke to emphasized the role of Instagram in their online activism, for building community, more spontaneous or "authentic" posting, and sustaining their followings. Thus, building upon my previous work on girls' activist blogging, my doctoral research un/tangles the material things, bodies, spaces, times, and discourses which create the possibilities for girls' Instagram feminism.

Admittedly, I spend too much time on Instagram, and thus, echoing arguments made by Morrow, Hawkins, and Kern (2013), my research is shaped by my experiences as an enthusiastic Instagram user. Building on my Master's research, my dissertation adds specificity to a study of digital feminism by considering how they work, the cultures they co-produce, and human-technology relations (Poell 2014). Examining young women's feminist activism on Instagram, a social networking platform that involves posting photos and videos with captions, is timely, given the site's popularity as a space for social justice activism. In the research entanglement

with Instagram, I considered posted images and videos, in Instagram Story, Story highlights, Reels, and carousel Post formats, as both materialities and discourses, and wondered how feminists' Instagram accounts might act as archives or memoirs of feminist activism.

Various questions fuel my curiosity about girls' Instagram feminism: What is it like to grow up as a girl into/with Instagram feminism? What and who is "girl" on Instagram? What and who is feminist or feminism on Instagram? Is girls' Instagram feminism about individual actors and identity, or collectives, collective action, and collective identity? Using a multi-method qualitative approach, my PhD project explores the human and non-human forces that shape girls' Instagram feminism and feminist identities. The research question that underpins my project is: *What material-discursive forces shape how girls and young women experience and reflect on feminist activism and feminist collective identities on Instagram?* As I explain in the following chapter, my dissertation uses a feminist posthuman theoretical framework and a diffractive methodology to consider patterns of difference. A diffractive methodology resists a representational understanding by tracing the effects of patterns of difference, or diffraction patterns (Haraway 1992), which co-create subjects and objects in research entanglements (Barad 2007). Diffractive methodologies resist fixing data into neat themes by engaging with patterns of difference and excess that are not neatly categorizable (Haraway 1992). I read data and theory with and through each other to trace patterns of difference, or diffraction patterns, in the co-constitution of feminist activism and feminist identities on Instagram, entangled material-discursive contexts like girl, girlhood, age, feminism and feminist, and girls' meanings and experiences of them. I aim to decentre individual girls as agentic human actors, and consider how things, ideas, times, and spaces beyond girls shape their Instagram feminism.

I try to resist representational framings which strive for neat definitions and conceptualizations. Thus, I approached my research with an openness such that participants could define what girl, girlhood, feminist, and feminism meant to them. While I review some conceptualizations of such phenomena here, as it becomes clear in this dissertation, there are no cohesive or singular definitions of them.

Like Braidotti (2022:3), I understand feminism to be an established social movement, with a nuanced history, that is “greatly diversified across multiple constituencies and locations,” thus making its scope difficult to capture in a singular, closed definition. Braidotti explains that there are multiple feminist positions, including, “the quest for equality between men and women, the recognition of multiple genders, the abolition of gender identities altogether, the intersectional connections across gender, race, and class, and more” (2022:3). As I expand in my literature review, feminism has been taken up, including by girls online, in various, sometimes contradictory ways. Mendes and colleagues (2019:2) position digital feminism as the use of “participatory digital media as activist tools to dialogue, network, and organize to challenge contemporary sexism, misogyny, and rape culture.” Thus, digital feminism can be understood as “collective action within the broader trajectory” of feminist social movements (Loney-Howes, Mendes, Fernández Romero, Filebornd, and Núñez Puente 2022:1346).

My thinking about girl and girlhood is influenced by scholars like Driver (2024), McDermott (2018), and Pomerantz (2024), who trouble essentialist and binary conceptualizations. In her work on girl climate activists, Driver (2024) makes clear that she troubles a rigid or representational understanding of girl. Recognizing that some of the climate activists who might appear to be “girls” do not necessarily identify as a girl or use she/her pronouns, Driver (2024:177) notes “it is important to recognize that many of the climate activists

do self-identify as girls, and their experiences, stories, and collective ties are shaped by their social relations and perceptions as girls.” Rather than representing young and girl climate activists under “the gender-neutral notion of “youth,”” Driver “highlight[s] the present of girls while also remaining aware of the contingency and fluidity of gender identity” (2024:177). While my dissertation is an entanglement with girls’ Instagram feminism and feminist identities, like Driver, I recognize how many of the “girls” who engage in feminism on Instagram have varied, dynamic, and changing relations to girl and girlhood.

As Pomerantz (2024:99) explains in her theorizing of immanent girlhood, girl and girlhood are assemblages that are felt and endured through “its permeation of people, places, temporalities, and objects,” rather than a developmental period with a beginning and end. McDermott (2018:56) also troubles the beginning and end of girlhood, arguing that “girling practices are relevant to female subjects regardless of age, as postfeminist cultural norms dictate, not that girls learn to become women, but that both women and girls learn how-to-girl.” Like McDermott (2018), my project considers how Instagram affects “girling practices,” recognizing as Mulari (2020) argues, that gender is an experience and unfolding in space.

Instagram has been at the centre of many research projects (e.g., Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022; Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, 2020; Stanley 2019; Wellman 2019). Instagram began as an iPhone only application created as a “check-in app called Burbn, based on locating and sharing details of the best bourbon locations” (Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin 2020:21). Burbn’s creators realized the app was unlikely to compete with other location-based check-in apps, so they pivoted the app to focus on photos, comments, and geolocate tags, and changed its name to Instagram (Leaver et al. 2020). The aim was for users to harness Instagram to share photos and memories instantly. Since its launch, Instagram has remained a “visual social media

culture,” but has grown to include short-form videos called Reels, temporary photos or videos called Stories, and broadcasting channels where users can host livestream videos called Instagram Lives (Leaver et al. 2020). In its infancy, Instagram was developed to include an Android version and later sold by the creators Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, to Facebook (Leaver et al. 2020). Joining the Facebook ecosystem meant that Facebook acquired Instagram users’ data, and Instagram’s platform affordances shifted to limit cross-platform posting between Twitter and Instagram (Leaver et al. 2020). Instead, it became easier for Instagram users to cross post between Instagram and Facebook.

Despite Mark Zuckerberg’s insistence on Facebook that users should only have one account linked to their “true” identity, Instagram users began to develop “Finstagrams” (Leaver et al. 2020). “Finstagrams” or “Finstas” were accounts where users concealed (or not) their identity, had a small number of followers who were usually close friends, and posted content that was less polished, ironic, or sarcastic in ways that disrupted the “curated” space of idealised Instagram accounts (Leaver et al. 2020). As the media ecosystem changes, Instagram continues to reconfigure the affordances of the app, including adding the ability for users to switch between their Instagram and Finstagram accounts without logging out, switching from a chronological to an algorithmically sorted timeline, and to post ephemeral Story content for specific “close friends” (Leaver et al. 2020). While Instagram can be accessed through a web browser, the app is best experienced on a smartphone or tablet, where users can scroll, tap, and post with ease (Leaver et al. 2020). Instagram has become a hub for advertisement, micro-celebrities called “influencers,” and monetized content creation (Cotter 2019; Leaver et al. 2020). More recently, Instagram has introduced “business” Instagram accounts which allow influencers or businesses to label paid advertisements, to see more detailed engagement metrics and follower analytics,

and makes it easier for other Instagram users to contact them through email (Leaver et al. 2020). This evolution means that while some users use Instagram to “archiv[e] keepsakes,” others see Instagram as a tool for “circulating and amplifying content for maximum reach and visibility” (Leaver et al. 2020:82).

Importantly though, Instagram is “more than one thing” (Leaver et al. 2020:17). Instagram is an app, a program, an amalgamation of algorithms, user data, photos, videos, hashtags, location tags, comments, likes, shares, views, reposts, and advertisements (Leaver et al. 2020). Instagram as a bundle of technologies changes often, as do the ways that people use Instagram (Caldeira, De Ridder, and Van Bauwel, 2020; Leaver et al. 2020). There were changes on the affordances (i.e., what you could do) of Instagram during my dissertation. For example, shortly after I completed data collection, Instagram introduced “teen accounts” which aimed to encourage more close monitoring of teens’ Instagram practices by parents, and limited their abilities to access “sensitive” content, including content about politics (Demopoulos 2024; Wong 2024). I elaborate on this shift towards teen accounts in the methodology and conclusion chapters.

Reflecting users’ varied relations to and engagement with Instagram, there are different subcultures on Instagram, including those that post around specific content (e.g., *bookstagram*, *studygram*), each with their own particular norms and vernaculars for Instagram content and engagement. Instagram aesthetics and vernaculars seem to be shaped by forces like age and generation (e.g., Landesman et al. 2024; Leaver et al. 2020), gender, and sexuality (e.g., Adams 2022; Caldiera, et al. 2020; Schwartz 2020). As Instagram’s capabilities evolve, users’ engagement with the app shifts. However, like others (e.g. O’Meara 2019), I caution against a framing of Instagram users as mere dupes of the app’s affordances. Instagram users develop

strategies for manoeuvring Instagram's algorithms (Cotter 2019; O'Meara 2019) and shaping their self-presentations (Caldeira, Van Bauwel, and De Ridder 2021), have complicated relations to engagement metrics such as comments, likes, and reach (Caldeira et al. 2021), and strategically engage with content in attempt to tailor their algorithms and Instagram feeds to mould the content they are "fed" (Caldeira et al. 2021; Landesman et al. 2024). Instagram users report feeling that attempting to attract likes or engagement with Instagram content is 'cringe,' while at the same time also downplaying the affective force and importance of likes as social currency on Instagram (Caldeira et al. 2021). More recently, Instagram introduced an affordance that allows users to hide the number of likes on each Instagram Post. Instagram positioned this feature as an attempt to minimize competition around engagement metrics and make Instagram more fun and carefree. However, as Caldeira et al. (2021) argue, hiding Instagram likes may not have altered the platform culture drastically as online popularity and virality is reconfigured by algorithms which rank and sort content with implications for its visibility.

My project considers entangled clusters of agencies (Barad 2007), which emerge relationally to shape the possibilities, meanings, and experiences of girls' feminist activism on Instagram. Attention to the intertwining of human and non-human agency importantly illustrates how contexts and forces beyond the girls themselves shape their digital feminist activism and identities. Thus, I aim to understand how girls' digital feminism on Instagram and their digital feminist identities, as both individual and collective, are in a continual process of becoming (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2003; Haraway 2016) which unfolds in specific material-discursive contexts, including around technology, gender, age, and feminist activism. This approach is useful for thinking about feminist activism and feminist identities, especially girls' activism, which I detail in the literature review, because it pushes beyond humanist approaches which

centre on discourse, and risk reproducing an individualized understanding of activism (Harris, 2004; Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano, 2018; Horton, 2018; Keller, 2016). My dissertation's feminist posthuman re-thinking of girls' Instagram feminism intervenes in framings of girls' and young women's activism which tend to downplay the complex non-human contexts which shape their work, including those which focus on the efficacy of their activism through human-centred approaches to agency. By decentring individual girls as sole actors, we can attend to the intertwined forces which constrain or enable particular feminist becomings.

My dissertation thinks with and speaks to various literatures, including girlhood studies, youth studies, social movement studies, feminist media studies, science and technology studies, and digital sociology. I see this dispersed engagement as an asset to the project, deepening existing discussions of girls' digital feminist activism. Importantly though, my dissertation intervenes in these literatures through its specific feminist posthuman and diffractive approach, which engages with the material-discursive complexities of girls' Instagram feminism. The literature review that follows includes five sections: digital cultures and technologies; digital activism; girls and activism; collective identity; and digital collective identity.

Literature Review

Digital Culture and Technologies

It is beyond the scope of this literature review to provide an overview of the growing body of scholarship on digital technologies and digital cultures. For the purposes of my dissertation, I detail some key conversations around algorithms, power and shadow banning, human-technology relations, influencers, and influencing culture.

Algorithms

Instagram, like other social media apps, is configured by algorithms. Algorithms can be studied and conceptualized through various approaches, including computationally, materially, and ethically (Kitchin 2017). While commonly referred to as “black boxes” because their workings are concealed behind proprietary application program interfaces (APIs), my understanding of algorithms is informed by scholars like Bhattarai (2017), Bucher (2018), Cotter (2024), Gerrard and Thornham (2020), Kitchin (2017), and Siles, Valerio-Alfaro, and Meléndez-Moran (2022). Algorithms are socio-technical assemblages (Bucher 2018; Kitchin 2017), which are dynamic (Bucher 2018; Kitchin 2017), affecting and affected by human-technology relations (Bhattarai 2017; Bucher 2018; Cotter 2024). Algorithms are never acting on their own as various networks of human bodies and data shape their iterative unfolding (Bucher 2018; Kitchin 2017). As Bucher (2018:55) explains, algorithms do different things for different users and are “not given; they are not either mathematical expressions *or* expressions of human intent but emerge as situated, ongoing accomplishments.” Oftentimes, algorithms are understood as mathematical expressions which are trained through the programming of “source code” or predictive models (Bhattarai 2017). Bhattarai (2017:3) troubles the myth of source code, arguing that algorithms make difference by marking relevance and marginality, and that the “instructions in a “source code”” are not mere predictors of algorithmic outcomes. Algorithms are agential and have “performative capacity” (Gerrard and Thornham 2020), but “their agency is constrained and enabled by the social relations within which they are embedded” (Bhattarai 2017:3).

Power and Shadow Banning

Algorithms, like other technologies, are not neutral, rather, mark difference with effects (e.g., Noble 2018). Noble (2018), for example, illustrates how Google’s algorithms perpetuate anti-Black racism, thus, advocates for understanding algorithms as “machines of oppression.” In

another example, Gerrard and Thornham (2020) position content moderation on platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, and Tumblr as sexist assemblages. They argue that platform guidelines that determine “appropriate” and “inappropriate” content are biased and political, despite being framed by the platforms as politically neutral and in the interests of safety and community.

Others, like Wajcman (2010) assert that “we need to understand technology is neither inherently patriarchal or unambiguously liberating,” (148) as technology and social forces like gender “are products of a moving relational process” (150). Social media users, including some of the interviewees in my project, talk about practices of shadow banning on Instagram as evidence of the relations of power and marginalization in digital space. Shadow banning is the “(perceived) suppression of one’s post(s), such that a user becomes virtually invisible to others” (Cotter 2019:904). Curiously though, platforms like Instagram tend to denounce or dismiss practices of shadow banning, arguing instead that content is removed from Instagram when it is in breach of the community guidelines (Cotter 2023). According to Instagram, lower than usual engagement is a result of the content being poor quality or uninteresting, chance, or glitches with the algorithms (Cotter 2023).

Human-Technology Relations

Social media users interact with, affect, and are affected by algorithms. For example, Alper et al. (2019:1) examine the ways that TikTok and TikTok users co-create an “algorithmic identity of the individual user constructed from their trace data.” In another example, Ringrose, Milne, Horeck, and Mendes (2024:1059) present the “postdigital “algorithmized self” to consider how social media platforms feed users with recommended content, continuously adjusting users’ interests and likes, creating a feedback loop that can intensify both positive and negative experiences on these apps.” Social media users also gain practical knowledge and understandings

of algorithms, including how to accomplish specific tasks through the available features, or in attempts to circumvent the limitations of the algorithms for the content they encounter (Cotter 2024; Siles et al. 2022). Human-technology relations are unique to particular digital spaces, as individuals' participation in digital spaces are shaped by the imagined audience, platform culture, affordances, and vernaculars (Davidson and Joinson 2021; Stsiampkouskaya, Joinson, Piwek, and Stevens 2021).

Digital spaces and technologies have a “platform vernacular” (Keller 2019), or a specific digital culture that results from the affordances of the technology, including contents' topic and form (visual or text), and conversation conventions (Sciberras and Tanner 2022). While there are different approaches to understanding affordances, generally, they describe “what material artifacts such as media technologies allow people to do” (Bucher and Helmond 2018:235). Platform affordances and vernaculars might be understood as constraining, as they shape the possibilities for users' engagements, but also work to construct boundaries of “normal” or “ideal” online engagement (Bucher and Helmond 2018; Davidson and Joinson 2021; Holowka 2018). For example, while Instagram facilitates a particular visual culture that includes photos, videos, and art-based content sharing (Sciberras and Tanner 2022), it would be peculiar to share this type of digital content on a platform like Twitter, which fosters a more text-based digital culture. In another example, Feraday (2018) explores the ways that non-cisgender and non-straight youth engage with Tumblr to cultivate their self-presentation and language of identity. Feraday (2018) argues that Tumblr allows for a particular kind of anonymity that facilitates identity and self-presentation differently than in other digital spaces where users are more visible. Taken together, these examples reveal how certain digital spaces facilitate particular kinds of engagement, content, and networking, all with effects for the ways that digital participation unfolds.

Influencers and Influencer Culture

As mentioned above, Instagram has become a digital space for advertisements, micro-celebrities, and monetized content creation (Cotter 2019; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; O'Meara 2019). There are distinctive links between neoliberal branding, social media, and micro-celebrity status, wherein "micro-celebrity is a mind-set and a set of practices that courts attention through insights into its practioners' private lives, and a sense of realness that renders their narratives [and] their branding, both accessible and intimate" (Khamis et al. 2017:202). In this digital culture, micro-celebrities learn the "rules" of the algorithmic "games" of Instagram, including what hashtags to use, when to post content to get the most engagement, and how to increase audience engagement (Cotter 2019; O'Meara 2019). Cotter (2019) reveals that influencers sometimes develop "influencer pods" where influencers form groups in direct messages or group chats, to notify each other when they have posted new content, and to engage in reciprocal liking, sharing, and commenting on fellow pod members' content. These influencer pods attempt to boost content's reach and engagement, which is rewarded algorithmically.

Taken together, this scholarship emphasizes the relational unfolding of technology, as networked systems of algorithms, human bodies, source codes, and affordances affect technology users' experiences. The human-technology relation is bidirectional though, as technology users' continuously train algorithms, manoeuvre affordances, and strategize around community guidelines. This intertwined, relational unfolding of humans and technology underpins my approach to understanding digital feminism in this project, which I elaborate next.

Digital Activism

My dissertation also adds to existing scholarship on digital activism, including debates about whether digital activism is a legitimate or slack-form of activism (Cabrera et al. 2017;

Fullam 2017; Holowka 2018; Mina 2019; Odağ, Uluğ and Solak 2016), discourses and practices of performative activism (Wellman 2022), and the effects of memes which use humour and satire to critique social and political issues (Mina 2019). My work speaks most directly to the growing posthuman and new materialist scholarship of digital activism and technology, which I review below.

Posthuman and New Materialist Approaches to Digital Activism

Posthuman and new materialist approaches position activism as emerging through relations between human and non-human actors, as well as entangled materialities and discourses (Bivens 2015; Dahlberg-Grundberg 2016; Martinsson and Ericson 2022; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2019; Milan 2015; Renold 2018; Sciberras and Tanner 2022). In the context of digital activism, these approaches illuminate the force of technology as an actor, or a “doing” with effects for how digital activism unfolds (Dahlberg-Grundberg 2016; Kavada 2015; Martinsson and Ericson 2022; Milan 2015). Dahlberg-Grundberg (2016) seeks to understand the hybrid and relational human-technology of Telecomix – a “digital activist cluster” mobilized around free and open access to the Internet (524). Informed by Star’s (2008) ecological perspective, they push past a framing of media and digital communication as mere “extensions or prostheses through which human agents operate as political subjects” (Dahlberg-Grundberg 2016:3). Instead, media and digital communication “embeds and proceeds us” with effects for self-expression, relations to others, and environments (Dahlberg-Grundberg 2016:3). The activists involved in Telecomix challenged online/offline binary constructions of activism, articulating how their organizing and mobilization traversed online and offline spaces, and included playful experimentation with activist strategies and tactics. Similarly, informed by Bruno Latour (2011), Mendes and colleagues (2019:28), argue that “the individual who is plugged into digital devices

is always more than human and more than an individual,” thus, in the context of digital activism, “agency is distributed not only between humans but between humans and technology.”

Technology, including social media, has been well positioned as an actor that shapes the contexts and possibilities for digital activism. For instance, Kavada (2015) explores the role of social media in shaping the collective identity and action of the Occupy movement. Positioning technology as an actor, Kavada details how technology shapes the temporality and spatiality of conversations between activists which were vital for the movement and its visibility. For Milan (2015), it is important to think about the materiality of online platforms, including the devices themselves, “but also the messages, images and ‘datafied’ emotions and relations brought to life on those platforms” (890). This approach considers how online platforms can facilitate a particular engagement by humans in terms of content, emotions, and sociality (Milan 2015). Thus, online spaces and technologies like social media platforms, are actors that shape meaning-making processes (Milan 2015). These arguments are echoed by Mendes et al. (2019) in their project on digital feminisms. Mendes and colleagues (2019) explain how digital spaces and technologies, including their affordances, shape how digital feminism unfolds and how technologies evoke affect which materializes. In their project, they explain how technology users learn how the technology works, and use this knowledge to improve the visibility and virality of their content, arguments echoed by others (Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022; Cotter 2019; O’Meara 2019; Semenzin 2022).

In addition to thinking about how technology as an actor facilitates particular human-technology engagements, sociality, and digital cultures, scholars have discussed the ways that technology complicates agency in activism. For example, Martinsson and Ericson (2022:4) investigate the role of technology in the mobilization of anti-gender rhetoric in Sweden, arguing

there is an “intertwining of actants” including Twitter itself, nationalist rhetoric, anti-feminist ideologies, space, time, and humans. Echoing arguments made by others (Mendes et al. 2019; Milan 2015; Sciberras and Tanner 2022), they ask “what is the performativity of the technology?” (Martinsson and Ericson 2022:2), and grapple with the effects in an activist assemblage. Thus, conceptualizations of digital activism require us to think about the ways that human and non-human agencies emerge together (Martinsson and Ericson 2022; Milan 2015). I build on this approach in my project.

The force and agency of technology is also evident in its configuring of time (Lupinacci 2024; Martinsson and Ericson 2022; Weltevrede, Helmond, and Gerlitz 2014). Time is a key actor in any assemblage, but particularly in a digital context, as digital time – as both material (e.g., process and product of algorithms) and discourse (e.g., boundaries of “viral”) – marks the relevance of digital content and trends. Virality, Mina (2019) argues, should not be understood as a passive action, as people choose to share, reblog, remix, and send content. Further, digital time is shaped by broader social, political, and cultural contexts, which shape online engagement including which topics and memes spread.

Technology can both stretch and shorten time. Weltevrede and colleagues (2014:23) argue that pace and time are specific to platforms because of the “interplay of content, its storing and algorithmic processing, interfaces, search and rank algorithms, queries, user activities, but also time and date.” They conclude that there is no universal timeline on social media platforms, suggesting that “real-time is a socio-technical arrangement” (Weltevrede et al. 2014:9) that is “assembled through the technicity of platforms” and human-technology relations (Weltevrede et al. 2014:4). Similarly, Lupinacci (2024:4080) argues that the temporality of social media platforms is best understood through “algorhythms,” which understands temporality as “both

subjectively experienced and also always orchestrated in certain ways by the platforms themselves.” Digital artifacts, like pieces of Instagram content, are not neatly contained in specific times or spaces. For example, in her research on queer youth’s selfies, Driver (2024) advocates for an affective, new materialist approach to challenge the framing of selfies as “static images.” Instead, Driver (2024:68) argues, new materialist approaches grapple with the complicated ways that “[selfies] flow and get stuck, are mobilized or forgotten within and across platforms,” and their affective capacities and intensities to affect, connect, reverberate, and become anew.

My dissertation speaks to these new materialist and posthuman framings of technology, which tune into the ways that technologies act and affect digital activist possibilities. I aim to map the ways that technologies, human and non-human bodies, space, time, and discourses including of gender, age, and feminism, collide and co-create each other. Following this contextualization of technology and digital activism, now I review scholarship on the intersections of gender, technology, and activism.

Girls and Technology

Discussions of youth’s technology use are popularly couched in reductionist binary approaches which either celebrate their “natural” technological skill and savviness or position them as dupes to technological systems and cultures that are governed and surveilled by adults and corporations (Driver and Coulter 2018). Girls’ and young women’s use and experiences of technology have been at the centre of several research projects, many which focus on their activism. Researchers have detailed how girls and young women learn about feminist activism and feminism through their encounters on digital space like e-zines (Kempson 2015), blogs (Bimm 2018; Dejmanee 2018; Hill 2017; Keller 2016; 2019; Kim and Ringrose 2018), Twitter

(Mendes et al. 2019; RÚDÓLFSDÓTTIR and Jóhannsdóttir, 2018), Instagram (Holowka 2018), Facebook (Clark-Parsons 2018), and YouTube (Garcia and Vemuri 2017). Further, scholars have articulated the ways that access to and experiences with technology are shaped by nuances of power and marginalization (Blunt, Duguay, Gillespie, Love and Smith 2021; Linabary and Corple 2018), and that technologies and digital space are couched in broader systems of inequality (Bucher 2018; Benjamin 2019; West 2020). Here, I will overview some of this literature, paying particular attention to discourses of technofeminism (England and Cannella 2018) and neoliberal girl power (Bimm 2018; Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018), and relations between gender-bodies-digital space-technology (Bimm 2018; Driver 2018; Keller 2019; Mendes et al. 2019).

In their research about girls' experiences at a technology camp, England and Cannella (2018) draw on Judy Wajcman's (2007) technofeminism to challenge gender essentialism and technological determinism. Rather than positioning technology as inherently bad and gender as fixed or connected to a narrow experience with technology, England and Cannella (2018) invite us to consider how technology and gender are experienced relationally. They ask, "what does it mean to be a girl in the digital age?" (England and Cannella 2018:77). Wajcman's (2007:293) technofeminism provokes thinking about the ways technology shapes and is shaped by girls, and how "gendered identities and discourses [are] produced simultaneously with technologies" (as cited in England and Cannella 2018:77). Such an approach can counter popular utopian and liberatory discourses of technology that emerged in the rise of 1990s cyberfeminism, and also reductionist discourses that position digital space as dangerous and risky for women (England and Cannella 2018). Narrowing in on gendered subjectivity and sexting, Gill-Peterson (2015:154) cautions against limiting understandings of digital girl as merely an "agentic subject

waiting behind the shimmering surface of the image of a sext.” Relatedly, Hart, Lamb, and Cader (2017) worry about adopting “protectionist approach[es] to girlhood” that overemphasize the dangers and risks of girls’ online participation, arguing instead, that girls should be encouraged to develop technological skill, and that their online engagement should not be dismissed as frivolous.

Neoliberal girl power narratives construct an idealised, individualized girl who is increasingly tech-savvy, has a social and political consciousness, and is motivated to use technology “to do something for the greater good” (Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018:110). Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano (2018) connect the expectations of neoliberal girl power to constructions of “good citizens.” While girls and young women are positioned as equipped and individually responsible to use their technological savviness to contribute to social change, they are caught in a bind between the expectations of popular girlhood and reactions to their online engagement (Bimm 2018). Bimm (2018:224) connects this contradiction to Sara Ahmed’s (2010) feminist killjoy, wherein:

girls who take up space online in ways that are reminiscent of the killjoy are caught in a kind of double bind; not only do they push against patriarchal expectations of happiness and amicability, they are also acting in direct contradiction to expectations of girlish passivity and positive affect.

Bimm’s (2018) arguments are echoed by the teen feminists in Mendes et al.’s (2019:170) project who worry about posting too much feminist content online out of fear of being perceived as “this horrible person whose life is so sad.” Girlhood studies researchers have also discussed the force of neoliberal girl power narratives in girls’ offline activism (e.g., Bent 2020; Taft 2020), which I will elaborate later.

Girls' use of technology is best understood through relational approaches that consider how materialities and discourses including of gender and technology, bodies, and space, shape their experiences and others' perceptions of it. For example, Bimm (2018) complicates utopian conceptualizations of digital space, particularly of online fandoms, as hubs for girls' identity work and community building, by arguing that these places of presumed "autonomy" and "empowerment" are saturated with misogynist rhetoric and surveillance. It is also important to consider how a particular representation of femininity or girl dominates popular discussions about girls' and technology (Driver 2018; Kennedy 2020). For example, Driver (2018:60) explains that much of the focus on youth selfie centres on white, middle class, popular femininity. Importantly though, selfies as artifacts, are at once dismissed through adult-centered understandings of rationality for being frivolous self-engagements, but even more so when they are created and shared by girls (Driver 2018).

The intertwinement of discourses and practices of gender and technology are also evident in "not like other girls" memes (Janckila 2019; Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen 2025), girlboss memes (Zeng and Xue Chen 2024; Xue Chen and Zeng 2024), and TikTok girl celebrities (Kennedy 2020). At the time of my writing, "other girls," are framed in memes as "basic" girls who are into "stereotypical" feminine things (Janckila 2019; Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen 2025). "Other girls" are framed as unlikeable and dull and thus are not aspirational. Instead, Janckila (2019) explains, girls engage in self-presentation practices on/offline that seek to distance themselves from "other girls," commonly justifying their interests with the tagline "I'm not like other girls." Relatedly, in their work on girlboss memes, Zeng and Xue Chen (2024:3) detail the relational discursive production of "that girl" and "this girl," wherein the former is "an ever-moving goal post, an unattainable figure with which the feminine self is, once again, defined in

contrast to.” Related to the digital discursive construction of girl and girlhood, Kennedy (2020) is critical of the ways that TikTok celebrity girl and girlhood reproduce can-do (Harris 2004), normative, white, and middle-class girlhood, wherein privileged, ambitious, and successful girls are idealized.

Read together, the literature in this section underscores the ways that technology affects meanings and experiences of gender, but also how gender shapes girls’ online participation and others’ perceptions of it. I continue to contextualize gender and girlhood in the following section, by reviewing some of the literature on girls’ activism.

Girls and Activism

There is a plethora of literature on young people’s activism, including discussions around intersections of age, gender, and race (e.g., Baily, Wang and Scotto-Lavino 2020; Bent 2020; Huang and Bent 2022; Driver 2024; Taft 2017), discourses of apathy and innocence (Raby and Raddon 2015), the implications of positioning youth activists as “exceptional” youth or “activist heroes” (Bent 2020; Taft 2020; Sheppard and Raby 2021), the complexities of intergenerational activism (Bent 2016; Edell, Brown and Montano 2016; Taft 2015; Wyness 2012), and youth’s online activism (e.g., Cabrera et al. 2017; Fullam 2017; Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Keller 2016, 2019; Mendes et al. 2019). Here, I narrow in on some of the prominent patterns and key debates in research on girls’ activism. I begin with reviewing some of the key framings of girls’ activism and girl activists, and the implications of gendered and aged narratives. I also review literature about girls’ digital activism, including posthuman and new materialist approaches.

Understandably, one might ask why it is useful or insightful to explore activism through a gendered lens. Drawing on interviews and focus groups with youth activists, Kennelly (2014) reveals that activism work is gendered, particularly activists’ motivations to participate and their

related affective responses to their experiences. In Kennelly's (2014) research the girls and young women felt an individual responsibility and culpability which motivated them to get involved in activism. Whereas the boys and men in the project explained that they were involved in activism because they wanted to meet and connect with other people. Similarly, Craddock (2019) argues that the construction of the 'ideal activist' is gendered. Drawing on ethnographic field work and interviews in Nottingham's anti-austerity activism, Craddock asserts that:

the 'ideal activist' is male, given how the identity is narrowly defined by doing 'enough' of the 'right' type of activism (direct action), which results in women feeling guilt and blaming themselves for their perceived failure to achieve the identity (138).

Drawing on DeJmanee (2018) to discuss girls' reactions to celebrity feminism, Jackson (2021:1073) argues feminism has become linked to popular culture, and "intrinsically" "girl-centred."

Girlhood studies scholars, like Bent (2020) and Taft (2020), have discussed the framing of girl activists in the media, and their effects for popular discourse. Taft (2020:2) challenges the position that there is a recent, dramatic, increase in activism by girls, instead argues that "changes in the political, social, and cultural landscape have made girls activists more legible and more desirable for media attention and public consumption." Girl activists, thus, become a figuration in media and popular discourse, as *hopeful* when they call us to think about creating a better possible future, as *harmless* when their work and identities are depoliticized, and as *heroic* when they are individualized (Taft 2020). The framings of prominent girl activists resonate with earlier discussions of neoliberal girl power, wherein individualized 'empowerment' has contributed to a shift "from girls can do anything, to girls can save the world... [to] girls must

save the world” (Taft 2020:11). This pressure to be exceptional activist heroes was felt by the girl climate activists in Huang and Bent’s (2022) project.

Bent (2020) adds some nuance to Taft’s (2020) discussion in her focus on the youth activist, and Parkland school shooting survivor, X González. Bent (2020:796) positions X González as a public feminist intellectual to complicate the ways that media framed them as “a celebrity leader, a media spectacle, and a cautionary tale for girls who push too far beyond the boundaries of normative girlhood.” Bent argues that there is little leeway in representations of girls’ activism. Commonly, they are celebrated when their identities and activism is “palatable” and “age appropriate,” or they are dismissed and delegitimized when their activism and identities are “too radical,” or they threaten “nice” girlhood (Bent 2020). These limiting framings alongside increasing celebrity culture, may lead some activist girls to work to “to garner support for their activist endeavors, [by] sell[ing] the girl-power story: the more their activism is represented as specific and in support of individual market capital, the more likely they are to appear favourably across different media sites” (Bent 2020:798). Drawing on Berlant’s intimate publics (2008), Driver (2024) proposes challenging the neoliberal girl activist framing of girl climate activists, by attending to the ways that they create relations of care and community. Importantly, intersections around race, class, and sexuality shape how individual girl activists are represented in the media, and the resultant discourses that emerge (e.g., Bent 2020; Huang and Bent 2022; Raby and Sheppard 2021; Taft 2020). Overwhelmingly, the activist work of white, middle-class girls is heralded as exemplar of youth activists, and the activism of racialized, Indigenous, and working-class girls are dismissed or not represented at all (Bent 2020; Huang and Bent 2022; Driver 2024; Raby and Sheppard 2021).

Girls and young women think about their activism and activist identities in ways that reproduce gendered and age-related narratives, with effects. For example, Bernier and Winstanley (2021) discuss how girls critique rape culture, but do not necessarily use the language of rape culture in their critiques. In her research project with teen girl activists, Taft (2017) illustrates that many of the girls reproduced a narrative of “becoming” activists rather than “being” activists. Similarly, girls in Jackson’s (2018) research saw themselves as becoming feminists, and hesitated to self-identify as feminists in the present. For Taft (2017:28), while this understanding of activists offers promise for positioning activist identities as part of an ongoing, dynamic process which might motivate peers to join in, it “also has the unintended consequence of contributing to their own invisibility and to the widespread dismissal of young people’s politics as merely practice for the future.” Relatedly, girls in Baily and colleagues (2020) project talked about how activism could help give them credentials for school and jobs, resonating can-do girlhood (Harris 2004). While some of the girls in their project felt uncomfortable with this framing of activism, sometimes this future-oriented approach helped girls garner parental support.

Girls’ and young women’s digital activism have been at the center of numerous research projects (e.g., Dejmanee 2018; Edell, Brown and Montano 2016; Gabriel 2016; Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Hill 2017; Horton 2018; Jackson 2018, 2021; Jiménez 2016; Keller 2012, 2016, 2019; Kim and Ringrose 2018; Mendes et al. 2019). Digital space and technology offer promise of community and access to resources which introduce girls and young women to activism (Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Jackson 2018; Keller 2016, 2019). Girls also argue that certain technologies, including social networking sites, offer them space to explore issues of social injustice, without the presence of “all knowing adults” (Keller 2016).

Reflecting my previous discussion of platform vernaculars, Keller (2019) highlights how teen girl feminists strategically choose how to mobilize their feminism differently in particular digital spaces. In Keller's (2019) project, the teen girl feminists positioned Facebook as a place where they were less likely to share overtly feminist content because they were Facebook "friends" with parents, siblings, and school peers who might have aversive reactions to this content. Interestingly, the teen girl feminists shared that their perceived ability to manage others' responses to their online content shaped what they posted about in which digital spaces (see also Jackson 2018). These findings are echoed by Mendes et al. (2019) who contend that we must think about how intersections of power and marginalization, as well as peer culture, shape girls' experiences with technology and digital feminism. Specifically, they found that "some of the more popular girls felt confident and able to engage their feminist politics in potentially hostile or risky environments, such as Twitter, while others experienced anxiety and fear of saying the "wrong thing," or being trolled" (Mendes et al. 2019:182).

Much of the literature on girls' digital activism adopts humanist approaches to understanding their engagement, centred on post-structuralist discourse analysis around age, gender, and activism (Dejmanee 2018; Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018; Jiménez 2016; Keller 2016; Kim and Ringrose 2018). More recently, there is a shift in the literature on girls' and young women's activism to explore the intertwining of discourses, materialities, space, time, bodies, and affect as they shape activism (Coffey and Kanai 2023; Mendes et al. 2019; Renold 2018; Sheppard and Raby 2022). My dissertation adds to this growing scholarship, through its feminist posthuman lens. The following section on digital feminism, adds to previous discussions of human-technology relations, and the intersections of gender, age, technology, and feminism.

Digital Feminism

Mendes et al.'s (2019) research on girls' and young women's digital feminism is the first book-length project that centres feminists' experiences with digital activism, and is most closely related to my dissertation. Given its novelty in the literature and its relevance to my work, I begin this section with a brief overview of it. Mendes et al. (2019) mobilize multiple theories in their work, but centre on affect and affective relations of girls, technology, and feminism. More specifically, they mobilize various theories of affect, digital media theories of affordances and vernacular, and Dean's (2009) communicative capitalism. Mendes et al. (2019) explore four main research questions, including what types of gendered inequalities girls respond to in their digital feminism, how they use technology, why they use technology in certain ways, and how they experience their digital feminism. They analyse specific cases of feminist activism (Hollaback!; Everyday Sexism; Who Needs Feminism?; #BeenRapedNeverReported) and various self-identified feminists on Twitter, online interviews, and interviews with school-based feminist groups. Mendes and colleagues' overarching argument is "that digital feminist activism can only be comprehensively understood via affective, material, technological, and cultural lenses" (2019:5). They provoke thinking about how digital feminism shapes and is shaped by participants' lives, and illuminate through their theoretical lens, that it is more complex and nuanced than many understand it to be (Mendes et al. 2019).

Digital feminist engagement, Mendes et al. (2019) argue, is shaped by social capital, as well as intersections of power and marginalization (see also Fallon and Boutilier 2022; Rúðólfssdóttir and Jóhannsdóttir 2018; Morrison 2021). Importantly, Mendes and collaborators (2019:9) reveal how there are various barriers to participation in digital feminism, including access to technology and leisure time, as well as the intense "labour involved in digital feminism,

which is highly precarious, affective, invisible, and time consuming.” The digital labour of digital feminism is often downplayed by the affordances of digital platforms, including, for example, anonymity which can obscure how many bodies are involved. Mendes et al. (2019:186) attend to the ways that girls and young women build affective solidarity through digital storytelling and re-presencing, practices which they argue are “ultimately a collective activity” that involves creating connections which are powerful even when they are “temporary and ephemeral.” Echoing arguments made by others (Caldeira 2023; Jouët 2018; San Cornelio and Oberta de Catalunya 2021; Semenzin 2022), Mendes et al. (2019:178) note that digital feminists “engage in a type of tradeoff” wherein they “strategically navigate their own use of commercial platforms – and the patriarchal contexts in which they are created – in order to harness the lucrative visibility and spreadability that commercial platforms offer.” I also engage with this tension in the subsequent chapters.

I recognize the significance of Mendes et al.’s (2019) work for girlhood studies research on girls’ digital activism. I argue, however, that my dissertation research is distinct theoretically, and my attention to understanding processes of feminist collective identity through social movements literature will add to and deepen their discussion of digital feminism. While they engage with affect and materialities, including how affect materializes in technology, they do not adopt a posthuman approach that decentres humans in analyses, or challenges a separation of materiality and discourse.

As I argue throughout this dissertation, digital feminism is not one thing (Mendes et al. 2019), and feminists disagree on the boundaries of feminism and feminist (Kempson 2015; Morrison 2021). Teen girls argue that generational and age-based differences differentiate feminisms (Morrison 2021; Rúðólfsdóttir and Jóhannsdóttir 2018), wherein they position

intersectionality as a key difference between younger and older feminists' beliefs (Morrison 2021). Teenage girls also report concerns about celebrity and popular feminism (Jackson 2021; Keller and Ringrose 2015), and the implications of self-identifying as a feminist among peers who might perceive them as confrontational to other non-feminist girls and detached from popular femininity (Mendes et al. 2019; Ringrose and Renold 2016), resonating Bimm's (2018) discussion of the double bind.

Dean and Aune (2015:12) argue that "feminism is not simply an "outward facing" movement [...] [it] is itself a site of intervention and critique, such that much feminist activism is oriented towards reshaping the identity, status, and boundaries of feminist communities." One way that feminists and feminism are renegotiated online are through memes (Holowka 2018; Xue Chen and Zeng 2024). For example, Xue Chen's and Zen's (2024) exploration of girlboss memes illustrates how memes:

allow girls to interrogate the contested capacity for feminist identification within digital publics, where, on the one hand, feminism is seen as a naturalized aspect of contemporary girlhood while it is simultaneously read as a source of trouble that girls much push away from (155).

In other examples, Yang (2022) and Pierce (2022) consider the use of sarcasm and satire in digital feminist activism and bimbo TikTok respectively.

Echoing previous discussions, feminist content creation should be understood within the broader digital culture wherein engagement is social currency (Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022; Mahoney 2022). Technologies, including affordances like hashtags (Baer 2016; Clark-Parsons 2021), norms around engagement, and algorithms are "powerful actors" (Semenzin 2022) which affect which feminisms and feminists flourish. Strategic self-representations are

used by feminists on Instagram to “attract attention, to sustain readership, and also to present feminist ideas in a more ‘approachable’ way (Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022:158). Instagram feminism in Portugal, often included calls to online/offline action, used stock photos or reposted photos accompanied by lengthy captions which became the key space for “sharing feminist knowledge” (Caldeira 2023:8). Curiously, Caldeira (2023) also found that seemingly non-feminist content became linked to feminism through hashtags, and that text-heavy carousel (i.e. collections of photos) Posts used emojis and arrow drawings to prompt users to read and engage with the content. Feminists embrace the temporality of Instagram Stories, and sometimes share more “serious” content in this form (Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022). Perhaps unsurprisingly, digital feminism is entangled with neoliberalist notions of individualized responsibility and choice (Mackay 2015; San Cornelio and Oberta de Catalunya 2021; RÚDÓLFSDÓTTIR and Jóhannsdóttir 2018) and is most ‘successful’ when it is closely aligned with cisheteronormativity (Mahoney 2022; Moksnes Barabala 2024; Semenzin 2022).

Responses to and experiences with digital feminism are also couched in binaries of online/offline and activism/slacktivism. Some feminists and scholars (e.g., Jackson 2018; Mahoney 2022) argue that digital feminism is not an effective site of feminist protest or intervention because they are “constrained by the parameters” of digital space, including algorithms which “ha[ve] the potential to suppress images and voices that deviate from the prevailing norms” (Mahoney 2022:531). Others, like Gaybor (2022:900) argue that we need to “disassemble the assumption that political practices are significant only if they lead to publicly visible outcomes, and if they are meaningful for institutionalized power.” Relatedly, Loney-Howes and colleagues (2022) argue that the early digital initiatives of the #MeToo movement were essential for its global reach. Baer (2016:30) argues that we need to recognize the tensions

and ironies of digital feminism in neoliberal times, as “activists are confronted with the necessity of doing feminist politics in the face of its impossibility.” Similarly, Jouët (2018) advocates for understanding online and offline feminism as complementary, noting the importance of online communities and action frames for propelling individual and collective action.

The research in this section highlights the complexities and multiplicities of digital feminism. Resonating arguments made by scholars in the previous sections, digital feminism is not immune to binary conceptualizations of online/offline, is shaped by intersections of power and marginalization, and is affected by age, generation, and neoliberal girl power rhetoric. Furthermore, echoing earlier discussions of space and time, digital feminism unfolds in particular digital spaces differently, and often seeps into aspects of offline life. I echo arguments around the need to understand the material, discursive, and technological intricacies of digital feminism, and hope that my feminist posthuman analyses do just that.

Collective Identity

So far, I have detailed some relevant literature on technology and human-technology relations, youth’s activism, intersections of gender, activism and technology, and digital feminism. In addition to these literatures, my project adds to existing social movement scholarship on collective identity. Related to earlier discussions, I aim to consider girl and feminist as collective identities which become through processes that congeal a “we” – as girls, and feminist girls – on Instagram. In addition, in line with my theoretical approach which works to decentre individual human actors, I turn to collective identity to consider how multiple humans and non-humans like technologies, might co-create a sense of “we” as digital girls, and feminists. In what follows, I provide an overview of some of the key definitions and debates of

collective identity in social movement literature, including how they have been explored empirically and in digital contexts.

Activism and activist identities are taken up in many ways in social movement literature. Some scholars attend to collective action and collective identity (Melucci 1989; Stalker and Wood 2021; Tilly 2005), and others approach activism and activist identities through a more individual lens (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). Collective identity is a conceptual tool that provokes analyses that consider the ongoing processes in which various actors recognize relations between themselves, others, and their environments (Melucci 1989). Through processes of collective identity, social movement actors develop and mobilize a sense of “we,” shaping collective action and activist tactics (Melucci 1989). Thus, collective identity and collective action shape and are shaped by each other. While digital space can offer repositories of resources and communities necessary for collective identity and collective action (Milan and Halleck 2013), scholars note the increasing prevalence of personalized politics (Bennett and Segerberg 2013) and individualized collective identity in digital contexts (Milan and Halleck 2013).

Melucci’s approach to collective identity is foundational in social movement literature and greatly informs my own understanding. Melucci (1989:4) explains that collective identity is “a movable definition of themselves and their social world, a more or less shared and dynamic understanding of the goals of their action as well as the social field of possibilities and limits within which their action takes place.” For Melucci (1989), collective identity is not a thing, rather a dynamic process wherein individuals come to recognize themselves as actors, distinguish themselves from others, and their environments. Collective identity is linked to collective action, as processes of collective identity establish collective goals and appropriate tactics. Much of the identity work, including at the collective level, that is integral to social

movements, occurs in what Melucci calls “submerged networks” or “cultural laboratories” (Mueller 1994). In submerged networks or cultural laboratories, individuals and collectives come to understand and evaluate their contexts, in often invisible and transitory ways (Mueller 1994). Collective identities often experience an “incubation period” where they are reworked and repackaged. The cultural laboratories or submerged networks where processes of collective identity occur can be understood as comprised of disparate groups, spaces for cultural experimentation and resistance, networking and relationship building, and information-sharing (Mueller 1994). Melucci positions these spaces as sites of cultural change and counter-hegemonic discourse creation, thus, advocates for examining the more “hidden” or “behind-the-scenes” work of social movements (Mueller 1994). In my dissertation, I wonder how digital feminist collective identities might emerge on Instagram, including through Instagram content, memes, or aesthetics.

Taylor and Whittier (1992:105) propose another significant framework of collective identity explaining it as “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity.” For Taylor and Whittier (1992), collective identity has three components: identifying with a collective; familiarity with the collective frames established by the collective; and clear opposition to the dominant order. In addition, they argue that three overlapping factors – boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation – are important for processes of collective identity. Boundaries “promote a heightened awareness of a group’s commonalities and frame interaction between members of the in-group and the out-group” (Taylor and Whittier 1992:111). Thus, an oppositional identity, or an identity that is constructed in opposition to the dominant group is important in collective identity. Consciousness involves the struggle to realize and redefine “common interests in opposition to the dominant order” (Taylor and Whittier

1992:114). Taylor and Whittier (1992) explain that these interpretative frameworks of collective identity can become enmeshed with dominant culture if a movement has a strong and successful collective identity. Importantly, the third factor of collective identity, negotiation, posits that the boundaries and expectations of collective identities are in flux, always renegotiated and reworked across time and space (see also Gomgaware 2021).

For Tilly (2003), identity processes are not merely individual processes, rather, become through boundaries, relations, and stories. Through such processes, Tilly argues (2003:609), “identity claims and their attendant stories constitute serious political business.” Social movements help to create recognizable political actors, through program and existence claims (Tilly 2003), which involve detailing the aim of the movement through “we demand” framing, and by articulating a collective’s right to existence, attention, and justice. Identities involve four parts: boundaries between actors; relations within boundaries; relations and across boundaries; and stories about relations and boundaries (Tilly 2003). Collective political identities congeal relationally, as actors negotiate shared responses to questions like, “who are you?”, “who are we?”, and “who are they?” (Tilly 2003:608). These shared responses are developed relationally, through stories, boundary-making processes, interactions, and relations between members of a collective, and across collectives. As social arrangements, collective political identities are thus, always contingent, negotiated, and consequential (Tilly 2003). While Taylor and Whittier (1992) and Tilly (2003) similarly position collective identities as dynamic, relational processes that include negotiating boundaries of “us” and “them,” I find Tilly’s (2003) attention to stories compelling. Tilly’s triad of boundaries, relations, and stories is particularly useful for considering the relations between human and non-human actors which affect stories about collectives, in processes of digital collective identity.

In my dissertation, I think with Melucci's, Taylor and Whittier's, and Tilly's frameworks of collective identities. I recognize girl and feminist collective identities as dynamic and unfinished practices and processes (Melucci 1989) which reconfigure boundaries of "us," "them," and "we" (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003). As I detail in chapter 5, these collective identities are continuously becoming and negotiated (Taylor and Whittier 1992), within specific digital contexts by human and non-human forces. Instagram accounts and pieces of content, as well as interview and focus group transcripts are artifacts which can co-create the relations, boundaries, and stories (Tilly 2003) of girl and feminist collective identities.

Theories of collective identity have been critiqued by social movement scholars, who argue that they downplay the complexities of power relations and shifts across time and place. For example, Mueller (1994) contends that Melucci's collective identity is too fixated on the private or "submerged," interactional, and cultural elements of collective identity processes, and overlooks the implications of collective identities when they enter the public sphere. Mueller (1994) argues that social movement research should engage with how collective identities can be distorted, reworked, and co-opted when they enter the public realm. Importantly, Jenson (1995/2013:108) reminds us that "the constitution of a shared collective identity involves the exercise of power." According to Jenson (1995/2013), analyses of collective identity must consider how representations of collective identities in the public sphere, for example, in mainstream news media, shape movement recruitment and support (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Thus, analyses of collective identity should focus on "the consequences of particular collective identities *for* the structures and outcomes of politics" (Jenson 1995/2013:115). Collective identity is also critiqued for its inability to "capture the shift from solidarity to fluidity, from collective identity to public experiences of self and other" as networked movements involve

people flowing in and out of social movements (McDonald 2002). Others, like Loney-Howes et al. (2022), Ravira-Sancho (2023), and Jouët (2018), are critical of digital collective identity, a point I elaborate below, because of the ways that technologies work to platform marketable, privileged voices, and reproduce hegemonic power relations which affect membership and participation. These critiques problematize the possibility of developing collective identity in hierarchical, discriminatory, and individualizing digital spaces.

The frameworks of collective identity I detailed above have been taken up in many ways in empirical research. Here, I foreground some engagements with collective identity, specifically in research that considers feminism (Guzik and Gorlier 2004; McClelland-Cohen and Endacott 2020; Trumpy 2016), and youth's participation in social movements (Taylor 2022). Through focus group interviews with pro-abortion feminists, Trumpy (2016) aims to understand how pro-abortion feminists respond to the rhetoric and claims of anti-abortion activists. Trumpy (2016:168) suggests that focus group methodologies are useful for understanding processes of collective identity, including how collectives cultivate in/out group boundaries and their force for framing the collective's aims. In Trumpy's research, it was clear that the pro-abortion activists used their feminist collective identity as a referent for evaluation and a tool for distancing themselves from opposition. Processes of collective identity "influence how actors conceptualize responses to oppositional frames," which becomes complicated when "potentially effective responses [to counter frames] are not congruent with the feminist identity pro-choice movements actors wish to embody" (Trumpy 2016:165).

Researchers have also considered how collective identity is created and sustained by youth. For example, Taylor (2022) engages in offline and digital ethnography to consider the force of discourses of age in the collective identity of youth activists. Echoing previous

discussions, Taylor (2022) outlines that the youth activists used “we” to create in/out group boundaries as part of the process of their collective identity. These in/out group boundaries were created through interaction between the youth activists, and while they spoke of “youth identity as collective” such collective is shaped by intersections including of race, class, and place (Taylor 2022). In my project, I consider how age and generation co-create collective girl and feminist identities.

Guzik and Gorlier (2004) and McClelland-Cohen and Endacott (2020) engage with the debate of individual/collective identity in social movement literature. Guzik and Gorlier (2004) contend that while scholars position frames within collective identity as useful for understanding membership and solidarity, these approaches are not helpful for understanding individual identity-work, experiences, and motivations. They argue that through stories, feminists “simultaneously create their selves and their group” (Guzik and Gorlier 2004:104), and thus, advocate for theorizations which attend to the connections between individual narratives and identity work, and solidarity and collective action. Researchers are concerned however, about the potential for collective identity to become increasingly individualized in a shifting social movement landscape. For example, McClelland-Cohen and Endacott (2020) argue that the increase in new social movements, which tend to be more closely connected to identity-politics, result in a more individualized collective identity (McClelland-Cohen and Endacott 2020). This is further complicated in a digital context, a point I elaborate in the following section on digital collective identity.

Digital Collective Identity

Milan’s (2015) cloud protesting is a significant theoretical engagement with digital collective identity in social movement scholarship. Milan argues that cloud protesting, as a

theoretical tool and metaphor, allows us to think about how technologies and their affordances (what they enable and *do*) enact force in the process of collective agency and identity. Cloud protesting involves an imagined space that “stores” information relevant to activist identities and communities. As a metaphor, cloud protesting connects devices, platforms, and people (Milan 2015). As previously discussed, Melucci articulates how collective identity is an active and ongoing process that is often less visible due to its reworking within “submerged networks” (Mueller 1994). Milan (2015) engages with Melucci’s arguments, contending that social media makes the processes of collective identity visible and tangible. The participatory nature of social media fosters a “flexible, real-time and crowd-controlled” collective identity (Milan 2015:894). This fragmentation and virtuality poses some challenges, however. Milan (2015) argues that digital space might lead to a more elusive sense of belonging with effects for degrees of responsibility and collective action. The group or collective that emerges through cloud protesting is “heavily dependent on the provision of an experience” (Milan 2015:20). Milan interrogates the “group” in cloud protesting, articulating that it “becomes the means of collective action, rather than an end in itself” (2015:896). The digital culture that favours individualism and “politics of visibility creates individuals-in-the-group rather than full-fledged groups” (Milan 2015:896). How, then, are collectives created, sustained, and experienced in a digital space that is increasingly individualized? Furthermore, if digital collective identity requires “provision of an experience” (Milan 2015:20), how might the risks of vulnerability in a digital space complicate who participates in collective identity? I engage deeply with these questions in the analysis chapters that follow.

Like Milan (2015), Bennett and Segerberg (2013) grapple with the implications of the increasingly individualized nature of collective action and identity that emerges in digital

contexts. They propose “connective action” to discuss the complexities of digitally mediated collective action and identity. Connective action, which is mediated by technologies and their affordances, is often organized around more personalized action frames which gain traction and support. For example, “we are the 99%” is a personalized action frame, as it personalizes a political issue and creates a shared symbol which calls others to identify with the collective by connecting their own narrative and experience to the frame (Bennett and Segerberg 2013:37). The success of a personalized action frame thus depends on its relatability through symbols and themes, its openness for others to add to it, as well as its ability to be digitally circulated and digested by broader networks (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). Bennett and Segerberg (2013:197) argue that personalized action frames “travel more easily across network barriers than more exclusive collective action frames that require more cultural production work to get people to adopt or at least acknowledge, a collective identity.” Relatedly, Shahin and Ng (2022) argue that if the motivation of digital activist participation is to share personal stories or testimony, actors’ needs may be fulfilled in a one-time testimony, making it difficult to sustain a collective. However, we must recognize that these “personalized action frames do not spread automatically” and that connective action, collective action, and collective identity require labour and organizing on- and off-line (Bennett and Segerberg 2013:39; Ravira-Sancho 2023).

Milan and Halleck (2013) add to Bennett and Segerberg’s arguments, by challenging some of the definitive claims that technology, media, and the digital world have led to a weakened or absent collective identity. Drawing on the example of community radio, they explain that “personal engagement (the “I”) becomes meaningful in interaction with the group [...] The “I” is experienced through the “we”” (Milan and Halleck 2013:71). The opposite also is true, however, which they discuss through the example of radical tech-users (e.g., activist-

hackers). In the case of radical tech users, Milan and Halleck (2013) contend that there is a reversal in the common understanding of collective identity, wherein the “we” is the centre reference point. Radical tech-users come to be part of the “we” through their own experiences, thus, the “we” is experienced through the “I” (Milan and Halleck 2013).

Increasingly, social movement scholars position technology as an actor in movements, for example, enacting force in the unfolding of collective identity. For instance, Martinsson and Ericson (2022) position Twitter as an actor in the creation of anti-feminist, anti-gender rhetoric and regressive activism in Sweden, as its algorithms mould how Twitter tracks and tailors content for users. Affordances like hashtags compile individual stories to create a collective narrative and agenda (Alingasa and Offreno 2012; Baer 2016) and co-create meeting spaces for movement members to identify participants and oppositions (Karataş 2021; Kavada 2015). Similarly, Coretti and Pica (2015:953) contend that analyses should attend to how “protocols embedded in technological artefacts” have implications for collective identity processes.

Treré (2015) argues that different digital spaces might offer different opportunities for collective identity. For example, in their work on the #YoSoy132 movement they found that the “backstage” (via Goffman) or collective identity work occurred on WhatsApp because it was constructed as a “safe” space among activists, where they used humor to build trust and solidarity. Both Coretti and Pica (2015) and Karataş (2021) illustrate how social media like Facebook and Twitter, respectively, are crucial for sustaining collective identity in more latent periods of social movements. It is important though to think about the porous boundaries of digital space, such that collective identity processes of a particular movement are not necessarily neatly contained in one platform (Kavada 2015; Rone 2022). As Rone (2022:35) explains, “there are no longer discussions ‘only among us.’ [...] someone might repost a Facebook post, a Tweet

or a whole discussion in a different context and provoke comments from an audience very different from the one originally intended.”

Related to earlier discussions of digital neoliberalism and influencer culture, Jouët (2018:141) argues “the explosion of collectives and blogs is, in a sense, inspired by the model of small start-ups in the digital world.” Challenging utopian framings of technology as an equalizer for social movement participation, Kavada (2015:882) argues that even in movements like Occupy, that reject a “spokesperson” model, “the design of social media platforms meant that the administrators of social media accounts had a significant role in shaping the collective voice.” These arguments are echoed by Yuen and Tang (2021), who articulate that the organizational scheme among teenage activists in Hong Kong were hierarchical, despite framings of networked movements as having more horizontal and decentralized organizational structure.

Echoing arguments made by scholars in previous sections of this literature review, social movement scholars explain how technologies affect the possibilities for collective identities. The affordances and cultures of digital spaces shape the processes of collective identities, including how their boundaries are reconfigured (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003), how members of the collective interact, and what stories congeal the “us” and the “them” (Tilly 2003). My dissertation adds to these existing theoretical and empirical accounts of collective identity, through its attention to the materialities and discourses which co-create collective girl and feminist identities on Instagram.

The Project

My dissertation speaks to the various literatures detailed above, including conversations about age, gender, and politics (e.g., Bent 2020; Raby and Sheppard 2021; Taft 2017, 2020), the complexities of digital activism and feminism (e.g., Dejmanee 2018; Jackson 2021; Keller 2019;

Mendes et al. 2019), and the nuances of collective identity in a digital world (e.g., Baer 2016; Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Kavada 2015; Martinsson and Ericson 2022; Milan 2015; Milan and Halleck 2013; Treré 2015). I add to new materialist and posthuman understandings of girls' digital activism (Mendes et al. 2019; Sheppard and Raby 2022), through my attention to the processes of collective girl and feminist identities. This theoretical intervention is unique, bridging techno-social approaches to technology (e.g., Bucher 2018; Faulkner, Vis and D'Orazio 2018; Kitchin 2017) girlhood, youth, and social movement studies. Through a feminist posthuman and diffractive approach informed by Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, and Rosi Braidotti, I ask: *What material-discursive forces shape how girls and young women experience and reflect on feminist collective identities on Instagram?* Through a multi-method, diffractive qualitative methodology that includes interviews, focus groups, and analysis of Instagram accounts, I trace the patterns of difference that shape the possibilities for girls' Instagram feminism. Theoretically attending to "differences that matter" (Barad 2007: xx), I grapple with the dynamic precarity and metamorphosis of digital space, girl and feminist performativity online, and encounters with digital feminist content and communities.

Crucially, my theoretical approach allows me to engage with technology as an actor, that enacts difference in the possibilities for girls' digital feminism and feminist collective identities on Instagram, as well as how they experience and reflect on them. Holding onto the intertwinement and openness of these material-discursive contexts aims to reveal the multiple agencies at work in any given encounter with girls' feminist activism on Instagram. Such an approach works to challenge limited conceptualizations of digital activism that are couched in binaries of online/offline and activism/slacktivism which tend to downplay the intensity of engaging and sustaining in a digital activist practice. Further, I have yet to see scholarship that

considers the complexities of age, gender, feminism, and technology that engages with theories of Barad, Braidotti, or Haraway.

Echoing arguments made by others (Coretti and Pica 2015; Kavada 2015; Martinsson and Ericson 2022; McClelland-Cohen and Endacott 2020; Milan 2015), my project illuminates the dynamic, intertwined human and non-human material-discursive contexts that shape digital collective identity. My theoretical attention to entangled human and non-human agency for example, with Barad's agential realism and becoming (2007), extends existing humanist understandings of gendered feminist identities. I seek to disentangle the configurations of materialities, discourses, times, and spaces which congeal boundaries of "girl" and "feminist." My theorizing presents an understanding of intersectional gendered identities, including "feminist girl," "teenaged girl feminist," as well as processes of collective feminist identities as entangled, material-discursive phenomena that are iteratively becoming.

In what follows, I trace patterns of difference that affect the material-discursive becoming of girls' feminism and feminist identities on Instagram. Overall, I argue that girls' digital feminism is multiple, complicated, and emerges messily through constellations of humans and non-humans. As I write in the following chapters, a feminist posthuman approach is best able to hold onto the messy (see Law 2004), human and non-human complexities of girls' Instagram feminism, and trace the patterns of difference that affect who and what becomes feminism and feminist. Multiple feminisms and feminists become together, on Instagram, with effects. These messy becomings co-produce ambivalence – in feminist Instagram content, and girls' experiences with it. Ambivalence, here, understood as tensions and contradictions in meanings and practices of girl, girlhood, feminist, and feminism, underpin the analyses that follows. Instagram content and girls muse about what different feminisms and feminists do, and congeal

boundaries of desirability through material-discursive processes of collective feminist identities. Girls and Instagram content become more or less feminist through these practices, sometimes becoming *non-feminist* feminists by co-creating feminist activism but distancing from a feminist identity.

My argument becomes through the following intra-acting chapters. In the following chapter, I detail my theoretical framework and describe my diffractive (Barad 2007; Crinall 2017; Haraway 1911a; Lenz Taguchi 2012; Pomerantz and Raby 2018) and slow (Law 2004) qualitative methodology and methods. Chapter three disentangles the relational, entwined becoming of girl and feminist identity. In this chapter, I write about shifting boundaries of girl, girlhood, and feminist identities, including participants' messy engagements and experiences with them on Instagram. I consider the force of trends and memes for girl and feminist identities, and articulate the importance of tracing relations of power and marginalization in the relational becoming of girl and feminist. I present an understanding of girl and feminist identity as material-discursive practices that are not neatly contained in individual human bodies.

In chapter four, I write about the complexities of girls' Instagram feminism. I aim to better understand the particular configurations that co-constitute Instagram feminism. In doing so, I position Instagram feminism as a multiplicity that is remade through collisions of girls' bodies, technologies like algorithms, hashtags, memes, and emojis, and material-discursive contexts like age, gender, activism/slacktivism, and online/offline. I articulate the force of Instagram, as an entangled phenomenon, for feminist possibilities, including in the co-creation of multiple timespaces that emerge messily and at once.

Building on arguments in the previous chapters, in chapter five I think with Donna Haraway to present girls' Instagram feminism as cyborg feminism, a concept I begin to develop

in the theory chapter that follows. I engage deeply with the complexities of Instagram accounts run by collectives of girls, and girls' experiences with them. I consider the entangled becoming of collective feminist identity with oppositions, and trouble neat divisions between individual and collective in digital feminism. In this chapter, I argue that cyborg Instagram feminism is multiple, relational, and an embodied, embedded, and material-discursive mapping of individual-collective, human-machine feminist becomings. In the concluding chapter, I read these arguments together, muse about my methodological and theoretical contributions, consider the limitations of my research, and pose questions for future work.

Chapter Two: Theory and Methodology

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin my research. I draw on Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna Haraway to explain feminist posthumanism, and detail its fit for my dissertation. I begin with a discussion of intra-actions, entanglements, relations, material-discursive practices, and a feminist posthuman rethinking of agency. Next, I draw on Barad (2007) to discuss timespacemattering, agential cuts, and apparatuses. Then, I read Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway together to consider a feminist posthuman approach to power, bodies, identities, and becomings. Following this, I write about the framing of sex, gender, and figurations in a feminist posthuman approach. Before discussing the relevance of this theoretical framework to my project, I present the theorists' approaches to ethics, as well as critiques of feminist posthumanism and their work more specifically. In the following intra-acting section of this chapter, I explain my diffractive methodology and methods. I untangle the intra-activity of the research assemblage to discuss the unfolding of the project, including some of the glowing and more difficult moments.

Theoretical Framework

A feminist new-materialist and posthuman orientation, informed by Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna Haraway, informed my ontological and epistemological approaches to this research. There are many approaches to posthumanism (see Fox and Alldred 2017), however, Karen Barad's is distinguishable for their engagement with quantum physics. Acknowledging the ambiguity of "posthuman" in academic and popular discourse, Barad explains that their use of "posthumanism," "marks a refusal to take the distinction between 'human' and 'non-human' for granted, and to found analyses on this presumably fixed and inherent set of categories" (2007: 32). Rosi Braidotti's posthumanism is in conversation with Karen Barad, but as Braidotti argues

(2022:2), much of “mainstream posthuman scholarship has neglected feminist theory, while in fact feminist theory is one of the precursors of the posthuman turn.” For Braidotti (2022:2) feminist posthumanism recognizes feminism and posthumanism as “two sides of the same coin,” arguing that a feminist project “means creating the alternative visions of ‘the human’ generated from people who were historically excluded from, or only partially included into, that category” (2022:3). Feminist posthumanism thus brings feminist theory and posthuman theory into conversation with each other, to trouble representationalism and neat divisions between human/animal, human/non-human, human/technology, and nature/culture (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991; 2016). Such theorizing decentres an autonomous, liberal, political human subject, instead, focuses on “heterogeneous assemblage[s] of embodied and embedded humans” (Braidotti 2022:6).

While Barad’s and Braidotti’s work builds on the theorizing of Donna Haraway, Haraway does not consider herself a posthuman theorist. In an interview with Nicholas Gane (2016), Donna Haraway explained that she no longer uses the term “post human” in theorizing because it “is much too easily appropriated by the blissed-out ‘Let’s all be posthumanists and find our next teleological evolutionary stage in some kind of transhumanist technoenhancement.’” Instead, Haraway turns towards companion studies, arguing that the crux of new-materialist and the “post human” theorizing she critiques is a question of “species.” Whereas companion studies “inquires into the projects that construct us as a species, philosophical or otherwise,” (Gane 2016:140), “‘post human’ is misleading” and has the potential to suggest “anthropomorphiz[ing] or zoomorphiz[ing]” as responses to challenging liberal humanism. Instead, Haraway argues, “we need new category work. We need to live the consequences of non-stop curiosity inside mortal, situated, relentlessly relational worlding” (Gane 2016:143). So, while I engage with Barad’s,

Braidotti's, and Haraway's work in an approach, like Braidotti, that I call feminist posthumanism, I recognize that this categorization is imperfect.

A feminist posthuman framework is best suited to address my research question which asks: *What material-discursive forces shape how girls and young women experience and reflect on feminist activism and feminist collective identities on Instagram?* This theoretical approach, which I detail below, is best able to grapple with the various intertwined materialities (e.g., technologies, algorithms, emojis, memes) and discourses (e.g., age, gender, feminism, feminist) which shape the possibilities for girls' Instagram feminism. While I am interested in how girls think about and experience Instagram feminism, at the crux of my dissertation is a curiosity about the specific configurations of various things, ideas, and forces beyond girls themselves, which shape how feminists and feminisms unfold on Instagram. I argue that girls are not acting on their own to create Instagram feminism, an understanding of agency that is supported by feminist posthuman scholars. This theorizing recognizes that technologies, like algorithms, as well as the affordances and content of Instagram are not neutral pre-existing things, rather, are agentive forces that do something. Human bodies and non-human bodies like Instagram, are understood as relationally becoming, an approach which I argue is apt for a nuanced understanding of human-technology relations.

Intra-actions and Entanglements

A key component of feminist posthuman thinking is attention to how entanglements and intra-actions co-create emergent phenomena and meanings (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022). Inspired by Neil Bohr's quantum physics that revealed how photons can act as waves or particles depending on the tools of observation, Barad contends that "theorizing must be understood as embodied practice" (2007:54). Thus, the tools of observation co-constitute the emergent

phenomena. Beyond research contexts, Barad draws on this example to illustrate that the meanings and possibilities for phenomena do not pre-exist their engagement in material-discursive contexts. Unlike *interaction* which posits that pre-existing things come together with resulting effects, Barad's (2007) *intra-action* asserts that things and meanings do not exist in an ontological hierarchy. Rather, meanings and "things" are created intra-actively, within specific configurations of materialities and discourses that co-create their possibilities. Thus, matter and meanings are not separate pre-existing entities, instead, they are intra-actively created (Barad 2007). Barad (2007) calls these material-discursive configurations entanglements. Entanglements do not necessarily shift across time or place, rather time, space, matter, and meaning do not pre-exist "the intra-actions that reconstitute entanglements" (Barad 2007:74). Thus, for Barad, materialities and discourses are inseparable, because "the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity" (2003:822). Understanding phenomena requires grappling with the specificity of entanglements. Importantly, for Barad (2007) intra-action is not merely a theoretical tool or abstract idea, it is how the world is.

Like Barad (2007), Braidotti (2003, 2022) understands matter and meaning as becoming through their entwinement. As Braidotti explains (2022:94), "for Barad (2003, 2007) a relation is intra-active and performative; for me it is materially embedded and differential." A relation is "a transformative bond that defines – by hybridizing – the 'nature' of each component" (Braidotti 2022:94). Relations are the "middle ground of the 'milieu' of new modes of human/non-human interaction," but they are not "intrinsically positive," a dynamic I elaborate later (Braidotti 2022:94).

Material-Discursive Practices and Entangled Agencies

An intra-active and relational approach demands a specific conceptualization of materialities, discourses, and agency. Barad proposes a non-representational realist account that shifts away from Ian Hacking's (1982) "realism toward entities" towards agential realism, "realism toward phenomena" (2007:56). Agential realism is concerned with material-discursive practices, how they come to matter through processes of mattering, and what differences they make in the co-constitution of the world and experience (Barad 2007). In agential realism, phenomena are not individual entities, mental representations, or accounts. Phenomena are "entangled material agencies" (Barad 2007:56), and thus, knowing, being, and thinking are always engagements from within. Such an approach positions matter as "produced and productive, generated and generative [...] agentive, not a fixed essence or property of things" (2007:137). Therefore, agency is not a "trait" or "characteristic" that can be bestowed upon humans or non-humans, it is the result and product of ongoing reconfigurations (Barad 2007).

While Barad (2003, 2007) proposes intra-actions and material-discursive practices to recognize the entangled co-constitution of matter and meaning, Braidotti details ontological relationality. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's theorizing (1987), Braidotti (2022) attends to how matter is re-materialized and de-materialized. In processes of re-materialization, matter becomes "embedded and embodied" for example, through environmental change, climate disasters, and pandemics. At the same time, de-materialization occurs when matter is "abstract[ed] into another kind of matter: numbers, storage, cables, codes, etc," for example, "through advanced bio-genetic intervention" (Braidotti 2022:112). According to Braidotti (2022), posthuman feminism needs to grapple with these simultaneous processes of re-materialization and de-materialization, including considering how they affect relations between humans and non-humans. Both Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) challenge understandings that pin matter

and meaning, and human and non-human, as ontologically separate and fixed, instead arguing that they are entangled, open, and dynamic. While Barad (2003, 2007) attends to the multiple messy agencies that emerge through intra-actions in posthuman performativity, Braidotti's ontological relationality posits that affect is what bonds humans and non-humans. Ontological relationality is thus, "the capacity to affect others and be affected in mutual interdependence" (Braidotti 2022:137).

TimeSpaceMattering

Building on Haraway's early work (1992), Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) emphasize the importance of understanding patterns of difference and their effects for constructing boundaries, meaning, and phenomena. At the crux of Barad's posthumanism, is attention to how agential intra-actions shape what comes to matter, how boundaries are reconfigured, and how these emerging meanings and boundaries become meaningful. Intra-actions thus constantly shift possibilities, "constraining but not determining" material-discursive practices (Barad 2007:177). Intra-activity always involves exclusions, but an intra-active world does not mean that anything is possible at any moment (Barad 2007). Intra-activity constrains such that "possibilities aren't narrowed in their realization; new possibilities open up as others that might have been possible are now excluded" (Barad 2007:234). Thus, intra-activity entails an iterative becoming. For Barad (2007:234), "becoming is not an unfolding in time, but the inexhaustible dynamism of the enfolding of mattering." Informed by Haraway (1992), Barad (2007) attends to diffraction or patterns of difference's effects in becomings. I expand this discussion of becoming later, and elaborate on diffraction in my methodology and methods section.

Time and space are not contained and do not exist outside of intra-activity (Barad 2007). Time and space are intra-actively produced and ongoingly "reconfigured in the materialization of

phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions” (Barad 2007:234). Time and space, like matter and meaning, emerge through intra-actions, or entangled practices of timespacemattering (Barad 2007, 2017). Barad troubles linear perspectives of time, asserting that through intra-activity pasts, presents, and futures are co-existing and co-constituting (2017). For Barad, theorizing time is connected to possibilities and visions for justice. Positioning “time [as] unstable, continually leaking away from itself” (2017: 63) troubles rationalized linear progress and absolute erasure. Instead, “new” and “old” can exist at once, and “what is erased is preserved in the entanglements, in the diffraction patterns of being/becoming” (Barad 2017:76). Put differently, the reiteration of past-present-future in any given intra-action reveals that becomings are not marked by disjuncture, rather are enfolded through configurations of space-time-matter, in practices of timespacemattering. This means that “the past is never finished” and undeniably shapes “possibilities of justice-to-come” (Barad 2017:62).

Apparatuses and Agential Cuts

Given the intra-activity of the world and its iterative becoming, Barad recognizes that understanding phenomena requires a temporary isolation or cutting of intra-activity to disentangle specific material-discursive entanglements (2007). This theorizing is related to Braidotti’s (2022) and Haraway’s (1992) attention to the effects of difference, and partial, situated knowledge. Acknowledging that measurement tools or apparatuses matter, Barad (2007:106) cautions that “the nature of the observed phenomenon changes with corresponding changes in the apparatus.” Apparatuses themselves are not fixed rather are “open-ended practices,” and “are phenomena themselves” (Barad 2007:170). Apparatuses thus co-create the meanings and boundaries of intra-actively produced phenomena (Barad 2007). Barad (2007)

explains this through agential cuts, which temporarily isolate intra-activity and disentangle material-discursive entanglements to “produce determinate boundaries and properties of “entities” within phenomena” (2007:148). Agential cuts, including those of apparatuses, temporarily make distinct categories of material/discursive, nature/culture, human/non-human (Barad 2007). While these agential cuts are necessary for understanding intra-activity and the iterative becoming of the world, Barad (2007) reminds us that through these cuts, the openness, intertwinement, and dynamism of the world are simplified.

Topologies of Power

Feminist posthumanism recognizes power as emerging through intra-actions, entanglements, and relations between materialities and discourses, rather than something that is neatly contained in human/non-human bodies, discourses, or timespaces. For Barad (2007, 2014, 2017), power emerges through intra-activity, and is co-constitutive of apparatuses and agential cuts. Barad counters a framing of power as existing in contained “structures” or institutions, and pushes beyond relational approaches to power which are grounded on pre-existing meanings and boundaries interacting with effects (2007). Power is a force in intra-activity that co-constitutes the making of subjects, matter, and meanings (Barad 2007). The “causes” and “effects” of power “are intra-actively demarcated through the specific production of marks on bodies” (Barad 2007:236). Thus, disentangling material-discursive configurations and the effects of apparatuses allows one to trace the materialization of power and its implications. Through a shop floor analogy, Barad complicates categories and positions (e.g., “worker”) as fixed, unitary, and non-material. Barad (2007:243) argues that categories and positions like “gender, class, and community are enfolded into, and produced through, one another.” For Barad, understandings of identities, including around gender, race, age, and class, must recognize their intra-active,

entangled, material-discursive becoming. Identity, is thus, not fixed, essential, categorical, uniform, or detached from relations with other human and non-human bodies (Barad 2007).

Topologies of power, like patriarchy and capitalism, are not neatly contained, rather are contested, dynamic, intra-active spatiotemporal apparatuses (Barad 2007). Power is a relational material-discursive intra-activity (Barad 2007) that co-constitutes becomings by leaving marks on bodies (Braidotti 2003, 2022; Haraway 1991). The intra-activity of apparatuses and relations of power co-create timespacematterings (Barad 2007), creating difference which constrains and enables possibilities and becomings, including for example, through processes of de-materialization and re-materialization (Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991).

Bodies

In posthuman feminism, bodies are not neatly contained in the boundaries of fleshy skin (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991). Bodies, like matter, do not pre-exist intra-action (Barad 2007), or as Haraway argues, “their boundaries materialize in social interaction” (1991:208). Bodies are posthuman because they are “are heterogenous genetic and bacterial assemblages modulated by social and technological infrastructures” (Braidotti 2022:113). Thinking with Deleuze, Braidotti (2022) argues that a body can be anything – human, non-human, code – but always has leaky boundaries. Bodies have a “porous membrane that is open onto the outside world” (Braidotti:142), “can be accelerated through technological enhancement” (Braidotti:142), and are “maps of power and identity” (Haraway 1991:180). Bodies, Braidotti (2003:21) argues, are “not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces, a surface of intensities, pure simulacra without originals.” Bodies are material-discursive phenomena (Barad 2007), “interfaces,” “thresholds,” “field[s] of intersecting material and symbolic forces,” (Braidotti 2003:25), that mutually co-constitute other entangled becomings. In

my research, I consider the force of entangled human and non-human bodies in the co-constitution of girls' Instagram feminism and feminist collective identities.

Identity and Becoming

Posthuman feminists reject humanist conceptualizations of identity. Identity iteratively becomes within material-discursive practices in intra-activity (Barad 2007), in affective, embodied relations between bodies (Braidotti 2022), and is personal, collective, and re-constituted (Haraway 1991). Identity is not fixed, essential, or categorical (Barad 2007; Haraway 1991; 2016). Identity is material-discursive, embodied, relational, and in a continuous becoming through intra-action (Barad 2007). Posthuman feminism refutes divisions between self/other and interiority/exteriority (Barad 2007, 2014; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991). In the ethos of intra-activity, for Barad, “the self is itself a multiplicity, a superposition of beings, becomings, here’s and there’s, now and then’s” (2014:176). The self, then, does not end at the parameters of the body, rather is porous, open, and shaped by other bodies. As Barad asserts, “the outside is always already inside” (2014:178). This framing of self is true for human and non-human selves, revealing the ways that bodies, matter, and meaning are endlessly entangled. Barad contends that “I” does not proceed or supersede action, the “I” is an iterative becoming, and each intra-action the “I” emerges in “are sedimented into our becoming, they become us” (2007:394). For Braidotti (2014:171), a turn towards becoming requires “emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the ‘outside.’” Therefore, our intra-active becoming can never be separate “from the intra-active becoming of the world” (Barad 2007:394).

For Braidotti (2003:12) a “location” like gender or age, “is not a self-appointed and self-designed subject position. It is a collectively shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatiotemporal territory.” Braidotti (2014) cautions against conflating subjectivity with an

individual subject of individualism. For Braidotti (2014:168), subjectivity is “a socially mediated process of entitlements to and negotiations with power relations.” Subjectivity is an ongoing process that is “consolidated by habits and flat repetitions” (Braidotti 2014:174). Identities and subjectivities, like bodies, are an iterative process or becoming (Braidotti 2003, 2022). The becoming of subjectivity involves the process where bodies negotiate power, and each of these negotiations create a “fictional unity of a grammatical ‘I’” (Braidotti 2003:22). Braidotti (2014:173) argues that it is necessary to consider how becomings are collective processes, as “‘others’ are the integral element of one’s successive becomings.”

Building on Deleuze’s theories of immanence and nomadology, Braidotti (2014) presents nomadism as an approach to becoming that resists hegemonic representation. Nomadic subjects are not nomad in the sense that they are travellers without fixed locations, rather are nomads because they “subvert[t] [...] set conventions” (Braidotti 2014:182), thus, are an “alternative subjectivity” (Braidotti 1994:1). Nomads are figurations, a point I elaborate below, which “express[] the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes” (Braidotti 1994:22). Nomadic becoming, Braidotti explains, “is neither a reproduction nor just an imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive inter-connectedness” (2014:182).

Gender

As I noted previously, feminist posthumanism and new materialism also offers a rethinking of gender, that goes beyond liberal humanist and representational understandings (Braidotti 2003, 2022; Haraway 1991, 1997). Haraway (1991:131) contends that gender is “a concept developed to contest the naturalization of sexual difference in multiple arenas of struggle.” Haraway (1991:138) contrasts the idealized Woman as an “imaginary being” with women, who are framed as “the product of a social relation of appropriation, naturalized as sex.”

Haraway challenges essentialist understandings of sex and gender, asserting that “there is not even such a state as ‘being’ female” (1991:155) which binds individuals, as these categories are created and contested in scientific and social discourse, and practice. Gender, for Haraway (1997:28), is “always a relationship, not a performed category of beings or a possession that one can have.” Gender identities, like all identities or locations are “always partial, always finite” (Haraway 1997:37).

Like Haraway, Braidotti challenges the universalized Woman, and the centring of white masculinity in liberal humanism (2003, 2022). In theorizing becoming woman, Braidotti (2003:11-12) argues that the subject of feminism might not be “a she,” but rather “a subject-in-process, a mutant, the other of the Other, a post-Woman embodied subject cast in female morphology who has already undergone an essential metamorphosis.” Becoming woman is a multiplicity, relationally assembled away from Woman as representation and as negative difference to Man. Building on Haraway, Braidotti (2022) also troubles the sex-gender binary, arguing that all matter are sexuate, positioning “sexuality as a force before, beyond, and beneath gender” (2022:206). Gender, Braidotti argues “as a tool of governance reinstates the distinction between nature (sex) and culture (gender), which does not work if you start from the assumption of sexuate differential matter as a vital continuum” (2022:188). Gender is not the cultural representation of sex, and sex is not the biological representation of gender, instead, “the two are points in a parallel dimension that entails a continuous set of variations of bodies” (Braidotti 2022:189). Gender is “multi directional and dispersed, not linear; multiple, not binary; relational and interconnected, not dialectical; and in constant flux, not fixed” (Braidotti 2022:191). Gender is not neatly contained in individual fleshy bodies, rather is an entangled material-discursive becoming (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022).

Figurations and Cyborgs

Haraway (1992, 1997) and Braidotti (2003, 2022) present figurations like cyborg, womanist, and nomadic feminist, as diffractions from hegemonic subjectivities. Figurations are “materially embedded cartographies” (Braidotti 2003:13), which are “performative images,” and “condensed maps of contestable worlds” (Haraway 1997:11). Braidotti (2003:13) explains that figurations emerge from a self-reflexive process that “relies upon a social network of exchanges,” and that this practice can “illuminate [...] blind spots.” Figurations are not metaphors, rather are “materially embedded, embodying accounts of one’s power relations [...] [and] they express the rate of change, transformation or affirmative deconstruction of the power one inhabits” (Braidotti 2003:13). Figurations can be thought of as “theoretical fictions” that seek to “dismantle the posture of scientific objectivity, academic hierarchies and lethal binaries” (Braidotti 2022:213) for example, of man/woman, nature/culture, human/machine (Haraway 1997). Where cartographies map the material present, “figurations are the projective anticipations of what can be done about them” (Braidotti 2022:213). In posthuman feminism, feminist subjects and bodies are experiments of becoming “with alternative modes and figurations of becoming posthuman” (Braidotti 2022:142).

Two figurations Haraway (1991, 1992, 1997, 2016) writes about are FemaleMan and cyborg. FemaleMan, Haraway (1997:22) explains, is a feminist figuration who is “about the contingent and disrupted foundation category of woman, doppelganger to the coherent, bright son called man.” Haraway’s cyborg troubles the boundaries between human/animal, science/fiction, and human-animal/machine (1991). Born out of “militarism and patriarchal capitalism” (1991: 151) that have narrowed the gap between bodies and machines, cyborgs “[are] our ontology; [they] give us our politics” (1991:150). Cyborgs invite a reimagining of

public/private, imagination/material reality, as well as social relations, including between various bodies and matter. But cyborgs are not mere hybrids of human-animal/machine (Haraway 2016).

Haraway explains:

[cyborgs] are not hybrids at all. They are, rather, imploded entities, dense material semiotic “things”—articulated string figures of ontologically heterogeneous, historically situated, materially rich, virally proliferating relatings of particular sorts, not all the time everywhere, but here, there, and in between, with consequences (2016:104).

Cyborgs are about “partial connections” that do not always add up to wholes, but rather are active in the worlding of “nonoptional, stratified, webbed, and unfinished living and dying, appearing and disappearing” (Haraway 2016:104). Haraway argues that the cyborg is outside of Foucault’s biopolitics, rather “simulates politics” (1991:163). Cyborg is thus “a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self” (1992:163), that includes social relations of power and marginalization.

Cyborgs occupy a “time-space regime [...] called technopower” and their temporal mode should be understood as “condensation, fusion, and implosion” (Haraway 1997:12). But Haraway clarifies that in the time-space of technopower, “the Machine and the Human” and “Things and Subjects” do not “universally exist[]” (Haraway 1997:51). Cyborgs are “multilayered, complex, and internally differentiated [subjects] that [are] structurally interconnected to technological elements or apparati” (Braidotti 2003:17). So, cyborgs then, “are about specific historical machines and people in interaction” often in counterintuitive, messy, and ironic ways (Haraway 1997:51). Cyborg bodies, like any bodies, are partial and multiple “maps of power and identity,” they “are not innocent” and they “do not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends)” (Haraway 1991:180).

Cyborgs, Haraway (1991:180) argues, might exist in a post-gender world that challenges restrictive gender dualisms, and “consider[s] more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment.” In some ways, a cyborg world is about reclaiming the appropriation of women’s bodies from the control of the patriarchal planet, especially given the ways that communication technologies and biotechnologies “recraft” women’s bodies and become tools that reconfigure gendered social relations (Haraway 1991). Furthermore, a cyborg world imagines realities where beings would be unafraid of their relations to other bodies (human, animal, machine), and embrace “permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (Haraway 1991:154).

Difference and Feminist Posthuman Ethics

Central to a feminist posthuman approach is an ethical attention to difference (Barad 2007; Haraway 2016). Difference is generative, affecting the entanglement of materialities and discourses which shape the unfolding of the world (Barad 2007; Haraway 2016). Patterns of difference, or diffraction, affect processes of mattering which create matter and meaning (Barad 2007; Haraway 2016). Diffraction is “an iterative practice of intra-actively reworking and being reworked by patterns of mattering” (Barad 2014:187). As Haraway (1997:268) explains, “diffraction is the production of difference patterns in the world, not just of the same reflected – displaced – elsewhere.” Diffraction is thus, an interruption, intervention, and reinvention of practices of mattering (Haraway 1992). Or, as Barad (2014:169) explains, diffraction is an iterative threading through, disentangling and re-entangling of “moments – places – matterings.”

In line with a diffractive attention to patterns of difference, Barad proposes an “ethico-onto-epistemology” (2007:185) that is grounded in the belief that ethics, becoming, and knowing are deeply intertwined. Barad calls for attention to how specific intra-actions necessarily exclude,

thus, shaping matter, meanings, and that which come to matter. Barad aptly describes this as a shift “toward an ethic of mattering” (2007:391) that provokes “responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part” (2007:393). Such an approach to ethics compels us to “[be] alive to the possibilities of becoming,” attentive to our enmeshment with bodies beyond our own, and to “meet the universe halfway” through ethical responsibility and accountability for the world’s iterative becoming (Barad 2007:396).

Resonant with Barad’s ethics, Haraway argues that “diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogenous history, not about originals” (1997:273). Tracing diffraction patterns demands an attention to the effects of difference, but also to ongoing relational unfoldings across spaces and times. As Haraway (2016:58) explains, “nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing.” Thus, Haraway argues that “critters—human and not—become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff” (2016:97). In other words, becomings are shaped by the intertwinement and intra-activity of various bodies (human and non-human), time, objects, and spaces. This attention to intertwinement and difference is crucial in Haraway’s plea to “stay[] with the trouble” (2016:1). In urgent or pressing times, Haraway advocates for staying with trouble, rather than disconnecting from pasts or the troubling present in search of or longing for a “safe” future (2016). Staying with trouble requires that we tune into connectivity, difference, and response-ability (Haraway 2016). Haraway (2016) proposes that in staying with trouble, we can counter the reductionist claim that technological innovation will “save” the future, as well as the belief that things are too far gone to create any meaningful intervention in the present.

Part of “staying with the trouble” (Haraway 2016:1) of the Anthropocene involves making kin. For Haraway (2016), making kin is not limited to genealogy, rather involves an ethical engagement and commitment to “make-with—become-with, compose-with” those who we are entangled with (102). By making “oddkin” and tuning into the ways that matter and bodies are made with each other, it is possible to engage Haraway’s response-ability (2016). Response-ability considers how in any given moment, through entanglements, meanings and materials traverse boundaries, “infect[ing] processes and practices that might yet ignite epidemics of multispecies recuperation and maybe even flourishing on terra in ordinary times and places” (Haraway 2016:114). Haraway cautions that different bodies are differently response-able, given that differences in any entanglement shape becomings (2016).

For Haraway (2016), knowing also evokes ethics, as in coming to know and sharing stories, we co-create the reality in our curious encounters. Knowing, through curious practice, engages an “‘ongoingness’: that is, nurturing, or inventing, or discovering, or somehow cobbling together ways for living and dying well with each other” (Haraway 2016:132). The knower is thus not separate from or unaffected the phenomena under inquiry, arguments echoed in Barad’s (2007) theorizing of apparatuses and intra-activity. Rather, “we relate, know, think, world, and tell stories through and with other stories, worlds, knowledges, thinkings, [and] yearnings” (Haraway 2016:97).

Critiques of New Materialism and Posthumanism

So far in this chapter I have provided an overview of some of the key theoretical concepts and frames that guided my feminist posthuman dissertation. There is a breadth and history to this thinking, which I cannot capture in its entirety here. Further, new materialist and posthuman theorizing has been taken up widely by researchers, including in scholarship about and with

young people (e.g., Davies 2014; Huuki and Renold 2016; Murriss 2016; Pomerantz 2022; Pomerantz and Raby 2018), girls' activism (e.g., Ringrose and Renold 2014; Renold 2018), and girls' digital activism (e.g., Mendes et al. 2019). Importantly, however, new materialist and posthuman theories have been critiqued, for example, by scholars in science and technology studies (e.g., Hollin et al. 2017), feminist scholars (e.g., Ahmed 2008; Braunmühl 2018; Puar 2012), post-colonial scholars (e.g., Willey 2016), and Indigenous feminist scholars (e.g., Todd 2016).

These critiques take issue with claims of novelty in posthuman theories of matter (Ahmed 2008; Hollin et al. 2017), as well as the erasure of Indigenous knowledges and scholars who have long advanced relational becomings (Todd 2016; Willey 2016). For example, Ahmed (2008) dissents Barad's claim that feminist scholars like Judith Butler, have reduced bodies to discourse in social analyses. Ahmed (2008) argues that in Barad's provocation to "return to matter" the history and diversity of feminist theories which have attended to materialisms are contorted. Suggesting that matter is missing from feminist theorization "can actually work to reify matter as if it could be an object that is missing or present" (Ahmed 2008:35). Ahmed takes issue with the way that new materialism and posthumanism have been "represented as a gift to feminism" (2008:24), arguing that "we should avoid establishing a new terrain by clearing the ground of what has come before us" (2008:36). These arguments are echoed by Hollin and colleagues (2017:933), who note that while Barad's intra-activity offers "a neat neologism" distinct from interactive approaches, "intra-active conceptions of the world do not appear to be wholly novel."

New materialist and posthuman "returns to matter," including Barad's theorizations, have been critiqued for re-establishing the binaries they purport to trouble. For example, Braunmühl (2018:226) argues that Barad's troubling of the division between matter and discourse, fails to

articulate “how a relationship between them could be specified that does not ultimately involve equating the two.” Additionally, Braunmühl (2018) asserts that Barad vilifies passivity in ways that reproduce “masculinist discourses” in their articulation of the force of matter. Braunmühl disproves of Barad’s agential realism, arguing that it is necessary to conceptualize human agency as qualitatively different than that of matter. I am sympathetic to concerns raised by Ahmed (2008) and Braunmühl (2018) about the potential to re-inscribe boundaries of nature/culture or to fetishize and reify matter in posthuman theorizations. My diffractive reading aims to stay with the mess of entanglements, and to be specific in my discussion of their doings and effects, to resist reifying matter or materiality. My granular engagement with the data seeks to offer a non-representational understanding of girls’ Instagram feminism that is always moving towards difference and its effects.

However, I think Braunmühl (2018) misreads Barad’s (2007) agential realism in their critique around human privilege and passivity. As I elaborated earlier, Barad’s agential realism shifts away from conceptualizing agency as a trait or characteristic that can be ascribed to humans or non-humans, towards understanding how entanglements and intra-actions produce messy agency. Agency then, does not belong to humans or non-humans, but is a product and result of ongoing configurations (Barad 2007). As both Haraway (2016) and Barad (2007) argue, we (humans and non) are differentially response-able for the effects of intra-actions. Agential realism, thus, does not overlook “human privilege” as Braunmühl (2018) suggests, rather attends to the configurations that differentially produce agencies that constrain and enable particular human and non-human becomings. Furthermore, given the porous boundaries of individuals and bodies, power and inequality are not neatly contained in individual bodies but are marked in specific intra-actions (Barad 2007). An agential realist and posthuman approach, I argue, is apt

for tracing relations of power and inequality in material-discursive entanglements, as well as the effects of difference, inclusions, and exclusions. My PhD research aims to offer a conceptualization of agency that decentres individual girls and articulates how material-discursive entanglements produce messy agencies, where relations of power and marginalization differentially constrain and enable girl, feminist, and feminism becomings. Like Puar (2012) who advocates for an intersectional assemblage approach, informed by Barad (2007), I trace *intra-sections*, and write about the ways that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, disability, and religion are intra-actively created through specific material-discursive constellations.

The critiques of posthumanism that shake my confidence most, are those that talk about its role in the academy's ongoing colonial project. Theories of relationality which are proclaimed as key posthuman insights, have been theories and ways of living long cherished and practiced by Indigenous peoples (Todd 2016; Willey 2016). Todd (2016) importantly notes that binaries of nature/culture and human/non-human which posthumanism promises to trouble, are not universal truths, rather are Eurocentric and Westernized notions. While Todd (2016) and Willey (2016) are critical of the ways that posthuman and new materialist theorists downplay or dismiss its relation to Indigenous knowledge and its emphasis on positivism, they argue that posthumanism has potential to be part of a decolonizing toolkit when it aims to articulate "proliferating materialisms rather than telling the truth about matter" (Willey 2016:1001).

Relatedly, Cox (2018) argues that while Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* cites feminists of colour, their articulations are downplayed or overlooked when Haraway is positioned "as a white saviour of decolonial queer feminism." Ahmed (2008:26) shares a similar concern in her critique of Barad's posthumanism, asking "in reading one book as a symptom of a trend, what are we doing?" Like Cox (2018), DeCook (2021) critiques the figuration of cyborg

for being born out of Western colonialism and for centring a particular kind of human – white, cisgender, able bodied male. DeCook (2021:1160) wonders who can be a cyborg and critiques the “universality” of the figuration of the cyborg, arguing that “the concept of the cyborg has continued to allow for the centering of whiteness and white identity and a techno-utopic worldview where technology is seen to be emancipatory, rather than oppressive.” The cyborg, like the posthuman, DeCook argues, exist in a mythical utopia, “that is being perpetuated and shifted by those who already benefit from hegemonic paradigms of what counts as being *human* in the first place” (2021:1164).

I share Ahmed’s (2008) concerns around the implications of only reading one posthuman scholar, which risks being unable to understand the genealogy of new materialisms and feminisms, and their relation to Indigenous scholarship, decolonial feminisms, and feminist science and technology studies (Todd 2016; Willey 2016). In fact, my Master’s research, which engaged a Baradian framework, was doing exactly what Ahmed (2008), Todd (2016), and Willey (2016) caution against. I see potential for my dissertation to disrupt a detached or decontextualized approach to posthumanism by reading insights from Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway through each other, an approach which Willey (2016) recommends. While I fail in this project to mark parallels between these theorists’ conceptualizations and many Indigenous scholars who are doing similar work, I am committed to learning more deeply about these connections to cite them in future work.

I also take seriously Cox’s (2018) and DeCook’s (2021) concerns about the way that cyborg has been taken up and positioned in research. I share their concerns about the violence of technology and centring of white masculinity in techno-utopic imaginings, arguments that Haraway has detailed at-length (1991, 1997), which have been echoed by others (Benjamin

2019; Noble 2018). My diffractive analysis muses about the implications of patriarchal, colonial, and environmental violence in the creation of technologies like Instagram, and the complexities of using tools co-constitutive of these contexts for digital feminism. As I will elaborate throughout my project, my use of “cyborg” and “cyborg politics” is not marking a mere human-machine hybrid, rather, is in line with Haraway’s (1991, 1992, 1997) conceptualizations of figurations as potential counter-hegemonic performativities. Counter to the ways Haraway’s cyborg has been taken up and critiqued, including by Cox (2018) and DeCook (2021), the goal of cyborg and cyborg politics is not to suggest that we are all cyborgs in an increasingly digitized world. Rather as Haraway explains, to recognize cyborgs as “imploded entities [...] ontologically heterogeneous, historically situated, materially rich, virally proliferating relatings of particular sorts” (2016:104). The value of cyborg, is thus, not identifying who is cyborg, but rather tracing the entanglements, including relations of power and marginalization, which constrain or enable cyborg becomings in specific times and spaces. Further, how embracing cyborg politics as counter-hegemonic imaginings might be fruitful for recognizing and mapping the proliferating feminisms and feminists on Instagram, and articulating their response-abilities (Haraway 2016) for past-present-future worlds (Barad 2007).

Thinking with and through Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway prepares me to think deeply about the ways that relations of power co-create becomings, including to interrogate and trouble the violence of liberalist notions of “human.” As I detailed above, Barad (2007), Braidotti (2022), and Haraway (1997) all begin with the critique about the “human” which DeCook (2021) writes about (see also Gane 2016). As noted above, given Barad’s, Braidotti’s, and Haraway’s differing embrace or resistance to “posthuman” and “posthumanism” I potentially make a gloss of their articulations in re-presenting my theoretical approach as feminist posthumanism.

Echoing their claims, I see value in posthuman theorizing for troubling liberal humans/humanism, boundaries between individual and collective bodies, and better understanding the mutual co-constitution of materialities and discourses.

As detailed in the literature review, while there is a plethora of scholarship on girls' activism and girls' digital activism, these analyses tend to explore through post-structural, new materialist, or affect lenses. To my knowledge, in the timespace of my writing, my dissertation project is the first project to mobilize a feminist posthuman approach informed by Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway to understand girls' Instagram and feminist collective identities, thus, makes important theoretical interventions. By troubling neat divisions between humans and machines and decentring human agency, my project offers a rethinking of girls' Instagram feminism that attends to multiple entangled more-than-human performativities of girls, feminists, and feminisms. Such theorizing propels an understanding of human-technology that pushes beyond the disembodied mystification and fascination of technology advanced through foci on Big data and artificial intelligence (Driver and Coulter 2018). Thus, I respond to Driver and Coulter's (2018:2) call for "materially and relationally honed, along with empirically detailed and ethically nuanced, ways of understanding" technology, that foreground "the voices, embodiments, feelings and practices of youth [online]." Importantly, my theoretical framework is not just the lens in which I analyse the data. As Augustine (2014:751) argues and I elaborate below, "data were no longer just words in interview transcripts. Theory too was data that I was reading, collecting, and analyzing simultaneously."

Diffraction Methodology

In line with Donna Haraway's (1991, 1992, 2016) and Karen Barad's (2007) theorizing, I used a diffractive methodology. Crucial to a diffraction methodology is attention to patterns of

difference as affecting and co-creating objects and subjects (Barad 2007; Haraway 1992). Unlike representationalism which believes that knowers can neatly describe reality, objects, and subjects through semantics or referents, diffraction advocates for a non-representational approach that grapples with the excess and difference that are not neatly captured or understood through semantics (Haraway 1992). Haraway explains diffraction as “a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction” (1992:300). Mapping diffraction patterns “does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear” (Haraway 1992:300). Diffraction troubles pre-existing boundaries and contends with the ways that tools of knowing, as well as knowers (e.g., scientists) actively co-create the objects and subjects they seek to understand (Haraway 1992). Haraway, thus attends to articulation practices, rather than representation, through engagement with diffraction patterns, wherein “boundaries take provisional, never finished shape” (1992:313). In my project, I engage a diffractive reading which reads theory and data through each other, to map the effects of difference (i.e. diffraction patterns).

Barad (2007) expands Haraway’s (1992) diffraction. Barad differentiates diffractive and reflexive methodologies, arguing that the latter relies on mirrors and representations that can be understood from outside. Whereas diffraction considers how making knowledge always happens within entanglements, that include the knower, and ultimately, co-create the emergent phenomena (Barad 2007). Barad (2007) draws on a wave metaphor to detail the effects of difference. Just as a boulder in the ocean can create difference in wave patterns when they crash into the boulder, different intra-actions shape becomings. In the context of research, diffraction contends that different ideas, theories, methods, and researchers, thus, intra-act with effects, just as the boulder intra-acts with the waves to bend, merge, divert, spread, and collapse wave

patterns (Barad 2007). Therefore, a diffractive methodology is centrally concerned with understanding research as intra-activity, as an entangled material-discursive context that enacts “patterns of difference that make a difference to the fundamental constituents that make up the world” (Barad 2007:72).

As Barad (2014:181) states, “there is no ‘I’ that exists outside of the diffraction patterns, observing it, telling its story.” Thus, I recognize that my body, as a late twenty-something, white, middle-class, ciswoman researcher, is entangled with and becomes in the intra-activity of the research and the emergent story of girls’ Instagram feminism that I write. Each moment in the research entanglement involved collisions which co-created my body, participants’ bodies, technologies, and the emergent material-discursive transcripts and fieldnotes. My becoming with the research undoubtedly affects the questions I ask of Instagram content and participants, and participants’ reactions to me in the research encounter. Further, my own ongoing history and experiences with feminism and as a feminist undeniably affect the research encounter, including for example, which stories and Instagram content affect, trouble, or surprise me.

I sensed that participants felt the collisions of our bodies and becomings in interviews, for example, when they hesitated before sharing what they saw as “controversial” opinions, or seemed worried or shy about saying the “wrong” thing about feminism. In other moments, our becomings were entangled, when participants critiqued “older” generations but then clarified they saw me as one of the “good” millennials. I know too, that my whiteness and my becoming as a researcher in a Western context shapes the feminisms and feminists I entangle with in this project. Participants in Zoom interviews spoke directly about their experiences with racism and sexism and talked about their hijabs and experiences as Muslim girls, moments which were differentiating in our conversations. Further, while sampling, it was often North American or

European feminist content that was marked as “relevant” through Instagram’s algorithms. In the subsequent chapters, I enact agential cuts to trace the effects of patterns of difference in the research apparatus, as Instagram, participants and I, intra-act to co-create the story that I write here, about girls’ Instagram feminism.

My diffractive methodology is also informed by Law’s (2004) slow method. Slow method encourages a separation from rigid procedural inquiry and dogmatic approaches to data collection (Law 2004). Instead, Law (2004) positions methods as an assemblage, like a radio receiver, which is tuned to register certain noises. Engaging slow method involves holding unto uncertainty, grappling with silence (e.g., in an interview), sitting with unstable conclusions, and abandoning the idea that researchers have “special” or elitist insight into understanding the social world (Law 2004). Law is not advocating for a dismissal of or complete rejection of qualitative methods, but rather, wants us to “subvert method by helping to remake methods” (2004:9), that see methods and processes of knowing as political and creative endeavours that are dynamic. Slow method rejects universalism, is a “slow and uncertain [...] risky and troubling process [...] mak[ing] realities and hold[ing] them steady for a moment against a background of flux and indeterminacy” (Law 2004:10). Slow method invites researchers to challenge fixed, pre-existing boundaries, and to attend to what noises (e.g., data) are made loud and quiet by their methods. Law’s (2004) slow method is not suggesting that we approach qualitative research without a plan (e.g., interview guide) but rather are open to the research encounter diverting our initial plans. Through slow method, research agendas and aims evolve as the project unfolds. This approach to qualitative methodology and methods requires that we lean and tune into what methods are doing for the research processes and its emergent data.

In line with a diffractive methodology and Law's slow methods (2004), my orientation to qualitative research is also shaped by Ellingson and Sotirin's (2020) data engagement model. Ellingson and Sotirin propose data engagement as a way to bridge the post-qualitative critiques that argue that data is not useful conceptually because of its connections to positivism, and social constructionist approaches which tend to neglect attention to how data is made through entanglements with the researcher. Their approach posits that "data are made rather than found; assembled rather than collected or gathered; and becoming or dynamic rather than static" (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020:iii). A qualitative methodology that advances a data engagement framework asks: "What do data do?" and also "What are possibilities for 'making' data?" (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020:1). Such an approach thus understands data as "fantastically unstable" (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020:1) as it is made in specific research contexts. This framing of data, I argue, is especially important in a digital context when researchers are often only engaging with traces of phenomena as they diffuse in digital space.

There are many fascinating projects which engage diffraction as methodology, which inform my approach (e.g., Crinall 2017; Davies 2014; Khatun and Logan 2023; Pomerantz and Raby 2018). For example, Pomerantz and Raby (2018) return to two interview transcripts from a bigger research project on smart girlhood, to consider the effects of difference. As they write, researchers are co-producers of the interview and transcripts, and thus, cannot engage with transcripts as if they are ontologically separate. Lenz Taguchi (2012) argues that diffractive methodology understands research as an entangled engagement with data, recognizing data as active and agentive. In this way, diffractive methodology is relational, entangled, and "always becoming" (Clark and Thrope 2020).

Diffractive Methods

With the growing body of posthuman, new materialist, and post-qualitative research, there are lively debates about whether projects that engage posthuman theorizing can also engage qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups. For example, St. Pierre (2018) advocates for post-qualitative inquiry that loosens its grip or abandons all together traditional methods. Instead, St. Pierre (2018) argues that theory must guide inquiry. Others, like Fox and Alldred (2022:629) challenge such arguments, arguing that methods need to be understood as composing a “research-assemblage each enabling particular research capacities within a methodology.” Like Fox and Alldred (2022), and others whom I discuss below, I do not see methods like interviews, focus groups, or content analysis as incompatible with a feminist posthuman theorizing. Methods are intra-acting constellations of bodies and material-discursive contexts within a research apparatus, with effects. Understanding methods, researchers, participants, and data as co-constitutive and entangled, rather than existing as ontologically separate, opens possibilities for exciting diffractive methodologies and analyses (see also Augustine 2014; Fox and Alldred 2022; Kuntz and Presnall 2012; Levy, Halse and Wright 2016; Petersen 2014; Pomerantz and Raby 2018).

My dissertation aims to better understand the material-discursive contexts of girls’ (aged 15-23) Instagram feminism, digital feminist collective identity, and the girls’ experiences and meanings of these phenomena. My attempt to understand the relational, material-discursive, human, and non-human forces that co-constitute girls’ Instagram feminism includes multiple qualitative methods: digital fieldnotes from more unstructured scrolling on my research Instagram account for the duration of “data collection,” and more focused analysis of girls’ feminist Instagram content; digital semi-structured interviews and focus groups; and my research diary. Inspired by Murris’ (2016) diffractive journal, I filled two notebooks or research diaries

with writing and drawings about the becoming of the research entanglement. I understand my research diaries as a series of “agential cut[s] that maps ‘the’ history of the multitude of intra-actions as [I] travel the course [of my dissertation]” (Murriss 2016:40). In what follows, I elaborate on each of these methods, and the becoming of my diffractive analysis.

I distance myself from more positivist approaches to data collection and sampling, through a diffractive and theoretically informed practice of data co-creation, which I map in the following sections. As previously discussed, I followed Ellingson and Sotirin’s (2020) data engagement model, which recognizes that data is made rather than found, assembled through material-discursive entanglements, and in a continuous process of becoming throughout the research process. Thus, in what follows, I elaborate on the various components and material-discursive practices of the data engagement (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020) and research apparatus (Barad 2007). I do my best to decentre myself as the sole actor, and articulate the various diffraction patterns (Barad 2007, 2014; Haraway 1992) and agential cuts (Barad 2007) which co-create the research assemblage.

Instagram Accounts

Despite the recent popularity of the platform TikTok, including as a space for activism, I chose to explore Instagram because of its platform affordances and culture (Keller 2019). Further, I was not ethically comfortable engaging digital fieldwork in the timespace of TikTok, because I did not use app for leisure. The style and pace of Instagram seem to be much “slower” than TikTok, in my view (see also Pomerantz 2022), which I argue is conducive for a diffractive (Lenz Taguchi 2012; Mazzei 2014) and slow method (Law 2004) entanglement with feminism and digital feminist collective identities. Importantly, my selection of Instagram as the site of analysis is shaped by my own experiences and curiosity as a user (Linabary and Corple 2019).

Instagram's platform interface and its digital culture involve posted photos on a "feed" or in a users' "Story" which disappear after 24 hours if not saved to a highlight, as well as short-form videos like Reels. I engaged with each of these formats in my analyses. Instagram accounts sometimes have a certain aesthetic style or feel and are more or less professionalized or serious. Presented like a visual diary, feminist Instagram accounts might be "read" as a scrapbook or memoir of sorts of girls' feminist activism and feminist identities, resonant with Taylor's (2008) work on memoirs of feminisms and feminists.

In July of 2023 I created an Instagram account (@lindsaysresearch) for my dissertation project, to mark myself as a researcher, engage in the 'data collection,' and also share snippets from my research process in a digital diary format for friends, family, and the several participants who follow the account. I spent the summer of 2023 searching hashtags, looking through comments, and following feminist accounts. I aimed to immerse myself more deeply into pockets of digital feminist communities on Instagram before I began the more formal data collection and analysis phases of my project. As Georgakopoulou (2017:272) explains, the scrolling and hanging out on Instagram that I did during the digital fieldwork of this project is resonant of my own "immersion and participation in social media culture with processes of catching up, sharing, and real-time tracking," and is crucial in developing an "ethnographic understanding." Although I participate in digital feminism, the goal was to familiarize myself with the broader scope of feminisms and feminists on Instagram. The scrolling and "hanging out" that I did was important because it was shaping the algorithms of @lindsaysresearch, including which accounts were "suggested" to me by Instagram. I did my best to map my traversing on Instagram in my research diary.

I aimed to analyse 20-30 public, English language, Instagram accounts (including Stories, Posts, Reels, and comments) run by girls aged 15-23. Buzzing with excited and nervous energy, on Tuesday August 22, 2023, I began a more formal process of assembling the data by searching “feminist,” on Instagram and toggling to look at the accounts that were listed. The first account I stumbled upon was not recently active, so I searched their following list and began scrolling through different profiles. As I scrolled and clicked onto different Instagram accounts, I was suggested accounts by Instagram’s algorithms. I moved across, between, and within accounts, following and follower lists, content, and comment sections. Indeed, it was an entangled and intra-active process. I spent many hours over the course of a week traversing hashtags, posts, comments, and Instagram accounts. While I did not “actively” engage with the content by liking it, when I was following accounts that I found curious or looking at content, the Instagram algorithms of my research account were re-configured and re-configuring. Each move, or diffraction between my body as I scrolled, swiped, and tapped created difference in the data assembling practice. Through these moves, my smartphone, my research Instagram account, the content and accounts I intra-acted with, and the algorithms, are enfolded through each other, co-creating a messy agency that affects the feminisms and feminists I stumbled upon.

Admittedly, assembling the Instagram accounts for analysis was a particularly stressful component of the research entanglement. I worried about not “finding” anything which felt particularly daunting because of how quickly digital cultures shift. I worried about whether girls were no longer mobilizing feminism on Instagram, or whether Instagram was becoming less of an activist space in the increasing proliferation of TikTok. On my second day of working to collate Instagram accounts to analyse, I had a breakthrough moment via the hashtag #feministgirly. I looked at the top post under this hashtag search and scrolled through the

account. Through my scrolling on this account, by Instagram's algorithms, I was suggested ten accounts which were particularly curious and seemed like they might be a good "fit" for my project. In my research diary, I wrote:

[I] found all of these [accounts] via this one post!!! [I am] really following the flow of [Instagram] [...] [I'm] almost afraid to break [or] stop [scrolling] because once I get on a 'good' track I worry about finding it again.

This entry in my research diary underscores the intra-activity of my research process. I was not acting on my own while trying to collate Instagram accounts to include in my project. Instagram algorithms, hashtags, and content were all doing things for the possibilities of the research entanglement. This doing included leading me to different accounts, suggesting content, and sorting content based on perceived 'relevancy' when I used search features. I re-member (Barad 2017) feeling like I was being carried through Instagram feminism, in a process that I was not in control of – gathering Instagram accounts was unruly. Algorithms, content, and my body diffracted. Possibilities were opened up, when Instagram and I found a "good fit" for the project which then led to similar content. But possibilities were also foreclosed too, when Instagram and I failed to collate accounts or content through particular search results, or stumbled upon inactive or less relevant content.

Hashtags proved to be an affecting force in the data assembling (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020) timespace of the research entanglement. Some hashtags I entangled with include #feministteen, #feministteenager, #teenfeminist, #feministgirl, #feministgirly, #teenactivist, #abortionishealthcare, #girlpower, and #feministforall. These were hashtags that I noticed in the captions of content in my scrolling. While I did my best to map my journey through Instagram accounts, content, and hashtags, I needed to loosen my grip on having a rigid or strategic

approach to assembling the data. I began to approach the practice of data assembly (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020) as I would as an ordinary Instagram user – going down rabbit holes of hashtags, scrolling through profiles, clicking on suggested content, and reading comment sections (see also Markham 2018; Postill and Pink 2012). This co-creation of data emerged through a theoretical and methodological research apparatus (Barad 2007) – where my research questions, theories, algorithms, Instagram, and I, entangled to shape the inclusion and exclusion of particular content and Instagram accounts.

The data of my dissertation was thus co-created and assembled algorithmically (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020), through traversing and diffracting across the timespacemattering of Instagram – they were entangled, iterative becomings. The collection of Instagram accounts I analysed became through diffractions, between myself, the algorithms of my research Instagram account, and excel documents where I listed usernames and demographic information. The data was assembled in multiple timespaces, slipping across boundaries between my personal and research Instagram accounts, as Instagram started to suggest feminist content and accounts to me on my personal Instagram page too. I did all my digital fieldwork on my personal smartphone, so switching between my personal and research accounts was nearly seamless – tapping twice on the profile icon in the bottom right corner of my Instagram timeline. On my research Instagram account, I followed 93 Instagram accounts, and created an excel document to record the usernames, try to identify some demographic information about the account user(s), and the date of their latest post to discern active from inactive accounts. As argued by Mendes and colleagues (2019), identifying demographic information on platforms like Instagram can be challenging, as users can conceal their identities. Thus, I considered self-identifications including around age and gender pronouns in users' profiles, as well as the username they select (e.g., @feministgirls).

I ranked the Instagram accounts based off my perception of their “fit” for the project, prioritizing Instagram accounts I felt fit the demographic parameters, who were more recently active, and whose feminism was explicit and curious.

I then sent a direct message or email, or both, to all the Instagram accounts that I was keen to include in my project. The messages introduced myself and my project and invited them to participate in an interview (see Appendix A). In total, I sent invitations to 53 Instagram accounts, received 15 keen responses, and five indicated they were not interested in participating in an interview. Again, I was not acting on my own in this timespace of the research entanglement. Many of the accounts that I was curious about had their Instagram settings configured to limit people’s abilities to send them direct messages. In these cases, I had to send a “message request” before I was able to send the whole invitation, or I replied to their latest Instagram Stories to signal that I wished to send them a direct message. In other cases, I was able to access their email address through the “linktrees” in their biographical statement, or through the button in the banner of their “business” Instagram account. While most of the Instagram users did not respond to the messages or emails, or the several follow-up messages I sent, I felt this was a necessary ethical practice to signal to the Instagram users that I was following and interested in their account for the purpose of my research. I was not necessarily seeking permission to engage with the content of their account, as they are public digital artifacts, however, I would not continue to include any Instagram accounts in my project if the user responded to the invitation with anger or hostility. Luckily, I did not receive any hostility. Each Instagram account was assigned a pseudonym Instagram username, which I use when diffracting content analysis. Overall, I conducted an in-depth analysis of 26 Instagram accounts, including

approximately 270 pieces of Instagram content by hand. I elaborate on how this analysis unfolded later in this chapter.

Interviews

From September 2023 to March 2024, I facilitated 27 semi-structured in-depth digital interviews with some of the girls and young women co-creators of the Instagram accounts in my sample. Of the 27 interviews, 19 were facilitated through Zoom, four through email, and four through direct messages on Instagram. Zoom interviews lasted about 60 minutes. The length of the text-based interviews through direct messages or email were negotiated with participants. I explained that I would ask various questions, and I would send them sets of questions at a time to respond to, in line with practices by other digital scholars (e.g., Moore, McKee and McLoughlin 2015; O'Connor and Madge 2003; Williams, Giatsi Clausen, Robertson, Peacock, and McPherson 2012). I often asked follow-up questions and then sent additional questions in my replies. I frequently checked-in with participants who were participating in a text-based interview about their time commitments and asked if they wished to continue throughout (Mann and Stewart 2000). One participant decided to terminate our email interview early but provided enthusiastic consent to include their story in my project. Most interviews facilitated through email and direct messages occurred over several days or weeks. In one case, an interview through Instagram direct messages spanned nine weeks and three days, because of the lengthy delays between messages which may be connected to a nine-hour time zone difference. In this case, I checked in frequently with the participant about whether she wanted to continue, and if she was spending too much time on the interview. Each time, she was clear sharing that she was really enjoying the conversation and wished to continue. Excitingly, one interview that was facilitated through direct messages was spontaneously synchronous, where the participant and I

were on Instagram at the same time and messaged back and forth, sending voice and text messages for an hour.

As per ethics review protocols, participants provided written and verbal consent, and those under 16 had written parental consent, and provided their own written and verbal assent. The Zoom interviews were audio and video recorded to my laptop rather than the Zoom cloud service, and participants chose whether they wanted to have their camera turned on. In several cases, participants kept their video off, however I kept my camera on throughout all Zoom interviews. Participants chose their own pseudonyms. Each interview was transcribed by listening to the audio recordings and/or re-reading the emails and direct messages, and in one case, listening to the voice notes. In a member-checking process, participants reviewed and edited the transcripts before analysis.

At the time of our interview, 11 participants were living in Canada, three in the United States, 10 in Europe, one in the Caribbean, and two in South Asia. One participant was 15 years old, six were 16, three were 17, four were 18, two were 19, four were 20, three were 21, three were 22, and one was 23 years old. Seven interview participants self-identified as white, three as Asian, three as South Asian, two as Brown, two as Black, two as Chinese, two as African, one as Indian, one as Persian, one as Korean, one as Arab, one as mixed, and one as a woman of colour. Most participants self-identified as middle class or upper- middle class. Thirteen participants self-identified as straight, eight as bisexual, two as pansexual, one as questioning, one as not labelled, and two did not respond to the question about sexuality. Importantly, however, in line with my theoretical approach, I do not see these demographic characteristics and social forces like gender, age, race, class, and sexuality as neatly contained in individual human bodies.

Instead, they emerge through intra-actions of bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces, with effects (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2003, 2022; Haraway 1991, 1997).

Table 1. Interview Participants and Self-identified demographics (in their own words).

Pseudonym	Place	Age	Gender	Sexuality	Race or Ethnicity	Class
Jenna	Ireland	18	Girl/woman	Questioning	White	Working
Anne	Ireland	22	Woman	Fluid/bisexual with family & friends, but straight online	White	Middle
Go	Ontario, Canada	16	Girl	Straight	Brown	Middle
Mira	Texas, USA	15	Girl	Heterosexual	Asian	Upper-middle
Valeri	California, USA	21	Girl	Bisexual (but most people don't know this yet)	Black	Poor
Estelle	New York, USA	21	Girl/woman	Bisexual	Indian	Upper-middle
Nora	Germany	20	Woman/girl	Bisexual	White	Middle
Jacinta	Ontario, Canada	19	Young woman/girl	Heterosexual	South Asian	Middle-upper middle
Esti	Ontario, Canada	16	Girl	Straight	Chinese	Upper-middle
Ally	Ontario, Canada	20	Girl	Heterosexual	Chinese	Middle
Ava	Ontario, Canada	16	Girl	Unlabelled	Persian	Middle
Safa	Ontario, Canada	20	Girl/young woman	Heterosexual	Brown	Working-middle
Gwen	Ontario, Canada	20	Young woman/girl	Straight	Korean	Upper-middle
Juliette	Ontario, Canada	16	Girl	Straight	White	Upper-middle
Crystal Waters	British Columbia, Canada	17	Girl	Straight	Asian	Middle
Fatima	Pakistan	22	Girl/woman	Heterosexual	South Asian	No response
Amina	Pakistan	23	Woman/girl	Bisexual	South Asian	Middle-upper middle

Farah	England	16	Girl	Straight	Arab	Working
Bea	England	17	Non-binary	Pansexual	White	Lower-middle
Frankie	Ireland	21	Girl	Bisexual	White	Middle
Poppy	United Kingdom	17	Woman/sapphic	Pansexual, queer	African	Working
Rose	England	18	Girl/woman	Straight	Black	Middle
Lola	Ireland	22	Girl	Bisexual	White	Upper-middle
Essa	Saskatchewan, Canada	16	Girl	No response	African	Middle
Quinn	Jamaica	18	Demi-girl	Bisexual	Mixed, Afro-Latina	Upper-middle
Sylvia	Ontario, Canada	18	Girl	No response	Asian	Middle
Zara	London, England	19	Woman	Straight	Woman of colour	Upper-middle

Interview conversations were diverse but generally included discussions of meanings and experiences of girl, girlhood, feminism, and feminist identity, the process of posting on Instagram, reflections on growing up with social media, algorithms, shadow banning, digital feminism, and online community. In some cases, I had finished the analysis of participants' Instagram accounts before our interview, and in other cases I was less familiar with their Instagram content, which affected how the interview unfolded, including the types of questions I was able to ask about certain pieces of content or the material-discursive process of their content creation. Please see Appendix B for the semi-structured interview guide. Congruent with my theoretical framework that understands phenomena as becoming (Barad 2007), my questioning aimed to evoke discussions of material processes and practices, relationality among human and non-human forces, continuity, and difference. Following Ringrose and Renold (2014), my methodological approach to interviews was "unfolding," meaning that I tried to create openings for participants to share experiences they found important or necessary in a discussion about their feminist Instagram. I also tried to follow narratives that struck me, even when they might

divert from the semi-structured interview guide or seem disconnected from my research question.

Inspired by Jørgensen's (2016) "media go-along" method, at the end of most interviews, I invited participants to engage in a simultaneous scrolling of their Instagram account. In this timespace, participants chose one or two pieces of content which they felt were most significant or meaningful to them. Resonant with photo-elicitation techniques (Raby et al. 2018), I asked participants to describe the content, explain the creation process, and reflect on whether the content said anything about themselves or their feminism. In the Zoom interviews, the participants and I would use our phones to scroll together-apart (Barad 2014), and in the text-based interviews participants would send the Post or a screenshot of the Post through direct messages or email.

Striking TimeSpaces in Interviews

After each interview I wrote my immediate reflections in my research diary. These notes included musings on curious moments, quotations that struck me, moments where my facilitation could have been improved, or where I felt the effects of diffractions. My becoming with the research entanglement, through body-pen-diary, mapped sticky and wondrous moments, and diffraction patterns which affected our entangled becomings. In subsequent chapters I write about many of these wondrous (MacLure 2013), sticky, or affective moments in interviews (see also Ringrose and Renold 2014). Here, I highlight a few of these moments that seem more about my methodological framework and methods.

One of the more difficult moments in the research entanglement was in my 'recruitment' and interviews with girls who were part of collectively run Instagram accounts. As I discuss more in the chapter on cyborg feminism, I did not initially propose to engage with Instagram

accounts run by collectives of girls. As discussed previously, I shared recruitment messages through direct messages on Instagram or email, with Instagram accounts I was keen to include in my project, as well as an invitation to participate in an interview. In the case of collectively run Instagram accounts, I similarly shared the initial recruitment message and the girls that read the direct messages or emails volunteered to share the invitation to participate with the members of the collective. Those who were interested in participating were to then reach out to me through email for more information. In one case, one of the “leaders” of a collective circulated the link to the Google consent form with the members of the collective, and many girls filled in the consent form before I had made contact with them directly. So, I had to awkwardly reach out to them and ask which Instagram account they were associated with. This felt like a bit of a backwards or messy approach, where I would have wished to talk to participants a bit more before they signed the consent form, to ensure they had space to ask questions first.

Perhaps one of the messiest moments of my research involved a collective of girls who similarly received the invitation to participate from the co-leaders of the collective. When the leaders responded to my initial email, they asked if participants could receive cash (via e-transfer) instead of the gift card. I clarified that each participant receives a gift card of their choice, as per the ethics protocol at my university. Something felt a bit off about our conversation through email around the gift cards, but I felt assured that we had established a common ground. However, in my interview with one participant from this collective, I heard that members of the collective were told differently about the gift cards by the leaders of the collective. Quite anxiously when I asked her what gift card she would like, one participant told me she did not know she got to keep the gift card for herself. She explained that the leaders of the collective Instagram account told members that participated in my project to donate their gift

cards towards their campaign to buy period supplies. I was taken aback by this moment in our interview. I felt upset that the leaders of the campaign might be pressuring members of the collective to participate in my research as a sort of fundraising opportunity for their campaigns. I worried that some might feel pressured to participate to bolster their status among the collective, or to contribute to their fundraising efforts. But on the other hand, I felt strongly that if girls wanted to use their gift card towards their feminist organizing, they should do so. In the timespace of our interview, I assured the participant that the gift card was for her personally, her participation was confidential, and that I had communicated this to the leaders of the collective in our initial communications. I re-iterated this messaging to subsequent participants who were part of collectives. Following the interview, I emailed the leaders of this collective to ask them not to ask members of the collective if they have participated in the project to protect their confidentiality and anonymity, and to clarify that the gift cards are for individual participants to use how they wish. Ethically, this was a tricky moment in my research. Re-turning (Barad 2017) this timespace, I see it as illustrative of the research entanglement. As the researcher, I am not in control of the project, rather the intra-active becoming of the project emerges through a constellation of bodies, like those of the “leaders” of the collective, other members of the collective, direct messages, emails, and groupchats, timespaces like Zoom, and material-discursive contexts like research ethics and fundraising.

Some other affective moments (Ringrose and Renold 2014) in the intra-activity of this project included feeling frustrated around the time delays for text-based interviews, not knowing when to follow up with these interviews, and sensing how the participants were experiencing them (see also Mann and Stewart 2000; Paulus and Lester 2021; Salmons 2016). I leaned into Law’s (2004) slow methods and saw the timespace of the text-based interviews as enabling

different becomings. For example, Essa and I talked through email over the course of three days. Writing to me from Saskatchewan, Essa told me about how she prefers another digital timespace, VSCO, more than Instagram. I followed her interest and asked her more about VSCO, and because of the timespacemattering of our email interview she was able to send me screenshots from her VSCO to explain her story. In another example, my interview with Valeri ‘began’ quite spontaneously. After waiting several days to hear back from her to schedule an interview, Valeri responded to my direct message. At the time of her message, we were both logged onto Instagram at the same time, and Valeri asked if we could just proceed with the interview in that moment. From her bedroom in California and my desk in Toronto, Valeri and I talked back and forth through voice notes and text messages in situ, through Instagram direct messages. The affordances of Instagram direct messages meant that Valeri could send a series of voice notes, I could listen to them, react to them with emojis like 👍 and ❤️, and send follow-up questions right away. It was as if our conversation was happening in “real time.” When we wanted to continue a thread of conversation, we could swipe the message to ask a follow-up question or add more details. Technology was not passive in the research entanglement, echoing arguments made by Ellingson and Sotirin (2020). Shaky wifi, audio glitches, emojis, Zoom video filters that blurred backgrounds, audio-only Zoom calls, the chat feature on Zoom, and in one case, sending a participant the wrong Zoom link, all affected how the interviews unfolded.

As I elaborate in a subsequent chapter, I also felt sticky about how to engage with participants in interviews through direct messages on Instagram. The timespacemattering of Instagram felt more casual than email and Zoom. The timespacemattering of Instagram direct messages is also one that co-creates a posthuman performativity of digital culture, including through the exchange of memes and content casually between friends and family. I wondered

how the timespacemattering of Instagram direct messages, might affect the participant-research relations and the unfolding of the research. What would it do to react to a direct message with the standard red heart emoji in the timespacemattering of the interview? Or, like Valeri's use of the 🍷 to "like" Instagram direct messages during our synchronous interview in direct messages, should I customize my settings to have a more neutral emoji like 😊? I also had to consider how to demonstrate active listening and interest in participants' stories through text-based interviews. I tried to do this by "liking" messages to signal that I had read them, even when I was not following up directly with them, or to include pieces from their messages in my follow-up and subsequent questions.

Follow-up Focus Group and Pair Interview

Following the interviews, I wrote to participants who expressed interest in participating in a focus group. Scheduling the focus groups was challenging (see also Moore, McKee, and McLoughlin 2015), but I used a Doodle poll to coordinate. The focus group and pair interview groupings emerged through participants' availability in their responses to the Doodle poll. Two focus groups emerged, each with three participants, however, one participant did not show up to the Zoom focus group, so I ended up with a focus group of three and a pair interview. By happenstance, the focus group and pair interview participants were part of the same collective, so they knew or knew of each other, and worked together in various ways as part of the collective, but they were not necessarily friends. I saw this as an exciting opportunity to hear about the collective and their collective identity (Trumpy 2016), as the members of the collective talked between each other in the focus group and pair interview.

There are debates in the literature about the ideal number of focus group participants, specifically in an online context (Fox et al. 2007; Moore, McKee and McLoughlin 2015; Turney

and Pocknee 2005). For example, Fox and colleagues (2007) argue that digital focus groups might be best if they are smaller than focus groups that occur offline, especially if there is only one facilitator, and if the focus group is text-based. They recommended a maximum of three or four participants in a text-based focus group with one facilitator. Both the focus group and the pair interview were facilitated through Zoom, and lasted approximately one hour. Re-turning (Barad 2017) these follow-up interviews, I feel that the small number of participants allowed for robust conversation and debate between participants and ensured that participants had the time and space to talk. A larger focus group on Zoom would need to be longer in duration and would benefit from having more than one facilitator. These conversations were audio and video recorded to my laptop. In the pair interview, both participants had their cameras on. Curiously, in the focus group, two of the three participants did not have their camera on.

As I elaborate below, the focus group and pair interview emerged through an entanglement with the interviews and the Instagram content analysis. The various methods diffract each other (Barad 2007). While I intended to follow a semi-structured focus group guide (see Appendix C), I became quite interested in the memeification of girlhood and girl on Instagram, and participants were quite keen about discussing this in interviews. So, I adapted my approach to expand on some of the interview discussions, and to follow focus group participants' lead in the focus groups. Our discussions included broad thoughts about Instagram, age, digital culture, and feminism. We also spoke at-length about whether there are collective feminist identities on Instagram, and participants' hopes for the future of technology and feminism. As I have written elsewhere with Raby, focus groups are fruitful for understanding how participants make meaning together, and more flexible facilitations can open possibilities for fruitful discussions that might feel at first, "off track" (2024).

My approach to interviews and focus groups is informed by scholars like Kuntz and Presnall (2012), Levy and colleagues (2016), Fox and Alldred (2022), Petersen (2014), and Pomerantz and Raby (2018). Informed by Barad's intra-action, both Kuntz and Presnall (2012) and Petersen (2014) propose an understanding of interviews as intra-views, that "bring bodies to the surface and in fact, treats words as bodies with material effects" (Kuntz and Presnall 2012:726). Intraviews are "more than interactions-between [they] are enactments-among" (Kuntz and Presnall 2012:743). Like Kuntz and Presnall, Petersen (2014) argues that we must consider the space, objects, and bodies of an intraview as co-constituting. As Petersen (2014:41) explains, an intraview is a "set of material-discursive intra-actions allowing certain relata to emerge instead of a situation where the main focus is on how two (or more) distinct human beings interact with each other." Noting however, that it is "impossible to spot and specify all intra-active agencies intra-acting in the intraview apparatus," Petersen (2014:42) argues that attention to the co-constitutive, intra-acting components and their effects for emerging data troubles a representational understanding of data as "something collectable." Similarly, Lenz Taguchi (2012:267) presents a "transcorporeal process of becoming-minoritarian with the data," wherein "the researcher is attentive to those bodymind faculties that register smell, touch, level, temperature, pressure, tension and force in the interconnections emerging between different matter and discourse, in the event of engagement with data." In the following section, I elaborate on how these re-framings of interviews and focus groups, affected the unfolding of my diffractive analysis.

Diffractive Analysis

Diffractive methodology and methods attend to patterns of difference and their effects (Lenz Taguchi 2012; Pomerantz and Raby 2018). As argued by others (e.g., Augustine 2014;

MacLure 2013; Mazzei 2014; Ringrose and Renold 2014; Lenz Taguchi 2012), conventional approaches to qualitative inquiry, including interviews and focus groups, are often coded after data collection for emergent themes, which are then presented as the base of analyses. Coding helps researchers to make sense of their data, and to repackaging it into neatly categorized patterns that produce an easily understood, representational narrative of the data (Mazzei 2014). As a result, scholars have advocated for a move beyond coding as the dominant approach to engaging with qualitative data, including interviews and focus groups (e.g., Augustine 2014; MacLure 2013; Mazzei 2014; Ringrose and Renold 2014; Lenz Taguchi 2012).

Informed by Lenz Taguchi (2012) and Mazzei (2014), I used a diffractive analysis of the Instagram analysis notes, interview and focus group transcripts, and my ongoing research diary to understand what the data is doing. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, and Barad, Mazzei (2014) explains that a diffractive analysis involves reading theory and data through each other, “plugging in” the texts together, to consider how they intra-act with each other to pose new questions and lead to new potentialities. In practice (e.g., Ringrose and Renold 2014; Lenz Taguchi 2012), a diffractive engagement with interview data asks, “how does it work?” and “what does this text or data produce?” rather than “what does this mean?” (Lenz Taguchi 2012: 268). At the crux of a diffractive methodology and analysis is a critical attention to patterns of difference and their effects in the intra-activity of research (Lenz Taguchi 2012).

A diffractive analysis goes beyond an “easy sense” (Mazzei 2014) of the data by refusing to find a “truth” or representational understanding. Rather, diffractive analyses understand research as intra-activity (Barad 2007), wherein the data is a co-constituting force, as researchers, data, and theory become-with each other (Lenz Taguchi 2012). A diffractive analysis is not conducive to a strategic, step-by-step processes, rather involves a continuous process of reading,

writing, and theorizing (e.g., Augustine 2014; Ringrose and Renold 2014). A diffractive analysis might also involve attention to how data is felt and sensed by researchers and participants (Levy et al. 2016; MacLure 2013; Ringrose and Renold 2014). As MacLure (2013:662) advocates, researchers might tune into data that “glows” or is especially captivating, as well as data that feels uncomfortable because it “resists analysis, refuse[s] to render up meaning, and confound ‘good sense’ or ‘common sense.’” Diffractive analyses enact agential cuts (Barad 2007) within the intra-activity of research, temporarily disentangling phenomena from the research apparatus to explore the co-creation of matter and meaning.

In the intra-activity of my research, my diffractive analysis involved entwining with each piece of data (i.e. interview transcript, piece of content, Instagram account, research diary) theory, and literature of girlhood, youth, technology, and social movements. While I tried to resist a prescriptive or procedural approach, in the following section, I explain the material-discursive practice of my diffractive analysis. I begin with my diffractive reading for each type of data, and then how I read them together-apart (Barad 2014).

Instagram Accounts and Content

I spent about eight months hanging out and scrolling on my research-specific Instagram account, drifting in and out of more engaged deep analysis, and more casual immersion and observation. This latter engagement was necessary because early in my entanglement with the digital feminisms on my research Instagram account, I was confronted with a need to stay informed about current trends, debates, and controversies between feminists and feminisms to understand the broader material-discursive context of digital feminisms. Overall, I wanted to be able to describe what digital feminism looks like, identify and explore what technologies are used, and understand how feminism, identity, and community unfold.

While some researchers use data scraping tools to collect and sort online content, I assembled and sorted all the Instagram content by hand, because I wanted to get close to it, and think deeply and slowly. Such an approach, I argue is also an attempt to trouble the use of data scraping technologies which I argue perpetuate quick, low-effort, mass surveillance and commodification of social media content in the context of Big data (see also Caliandro and Gandini 2017). I see my diffractive analysis as in line with Law's (2004) slow methods and Ellingson and Sotirin's (2020) data engagement framework, and a feminist posthuman ethics that considers our entwined response-ability, and a critique of technologies of violence and surveillance (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 2016). In this project, I entangled deeply with 26 feminist Instagram accounts created by girls or collectives of girls aged 15-23. For each account, I would scroll through all the content, or as much as I could, and use Instagram's "save" feature to bookmark content that I thought was curious or was explicitly about feminism or feminists. The "save" feature allowed me to co-create a folder of content on my Instagram account, viewable only by me, to re-turn (Barad 2017) to later for more detailed analysis.

I did a more in-depth analysis of the content that I had "saved." While the number of pieces of content that I "saved" from each Instagram account in my sample varied between accounts, I did a more in-depth diffractive reading of around 10-15 pieces of content from each Instagram account. I noted what the content (Reel, Story, Post) was about, what technologies were used (audio, hashtags, tags, video, memes), how feminism and feminist were framed, references to self, other, and community, and my reactions to it. Please see Appendix D for the analysis frameworks that guided this analysis. I used these as guiding questions to help me ask similar questions of each piece of content, however, I was flexible in my approach. As the research unfolded and Instagram feminism shifted, some of the guiding questions became less

relevant. For example, it became impossible to know the number of likes on a Post, as many Instagram accounts disabled the visibility of likes. Further, some questions were less relevant depending on the piece of content I was entangling with. In this way, the content and analysis were diffracting – colliding with each other, with effects. Interestingly, I tended to write the most about my reaction to the content, including how it diffracted with other content on the Instagram account, or on other accounts in the project, as well as the affective tone of the content and comment sections.

In many cases, it was difficult to choose which posts to engage with more deeply, as I was moved and affected by, or curious about so much of the content I stumbled upon. This was a very involved and emotionally intense period of my research, as the timespacemattering of Instagram was politically charged amidst the ongoing violence and genocide in Palestine, Sudan, and Congo, as well as the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in America, and rising transphobia and homophobia transnationally. Many days it was hard to spend several hours each day watching and reading about horrifying violence and injustice in the girls' Instagram content. However, I also felt really immersed in the digital feminist communities that I was exploring and noticed the ways feminisms and feminists changed in the timespace of my fieldwork. Overall, at the end of my content analysis, I had over 300 pages of digital fieldnotes, typed in a single word document.

As I elaborate below, I diffracted the fieldnotes, theory, and literature on technology, social movements, and girlhood. Using Microsoft's comment feature, I annotated the fieldnotes document to flag moments that were curious, moments that were contradictory, and those which affected me. I also annotated moments where I "felt" theories of intra-action, entanglements, and becomings. Then, I made a separate memo document that tried to condense the diffractive reading of my digital fieldnotes. In this document, I was diffracting anew. Focused on what the

data was doing, and how it was colliding or intra-acting with my research question, I organized my diffractive reading to position data in relation to other data, noted moments of difference, and questions about the specificity of the entanglements.

Interview and Focus Group Transcripts

Like others (Clark and Thorpe 2020; Lenz Taguchi 2014; Pomerantz and Raby 2018), I understand interview and focus groups, as well as emergent transcripts as iterative becomings. As the researcher, I re-turn and re-member (Barad 2017) the interview encounters, co-creating the story that emerges on the transcript in the material-discursive practice of transcription. The emergent transcript and participants' stories were felt by me (MacLure 2013), and I tuned into moments that were frustrating, contradicting, and fascinating (see also Pomerantz and Raby 2018). As Pomerantz and Raby (2018:6) write, in a diffractive methodology:

while we cannot point to something in a transcript as an ontologically separate component, we can intra-actively highlight entanglements to show how ideas interfere with and complicate each other, thus generating a method that allows differences to become noticeable – not as fixed findings, but as waves of interrupted meaning.

I transcribed each interview, however, I did not follow a traditional approach to qualitative coding. Each interview and focus group transcript was formatted in a word document. Then, I read through the transcript while listening back to the audio recording, where applicable. In this initial read through I was trying to re-member (Barad 2007) our conversation. I used the comment feature on Microsoft word, flagging moments in the interview that were curious. When I read the interview a second time, I was thinking about my guiding research question and asking what the data was doing in relation to my question. Again, using the comment feature in Microsoft word, I made annotations about what the data was doing for each component of my

research question: material-discursive contexts of age, gender, feminist, feminism, and collective identities. In practice, this involved writing annotations like “curious,” “this reminds me of...”, as well as questions that emerged as I thought about participants’ stories and theory. Many of these annotations included identifying the entanglements and intra-actions at work in participants’ stories. As I was entangling with the research transcripts, I was simultaneously re-reading my notes on Barad’s, Braidotti’s, and Haraway’s work (see also Augustine 2014). My reading of theory and data were colliding, as I noted intra-actions, becoming, difference, and figurations in the transcripts, and thought about participants’ stories and Instagram feminist content as I read theory (see also Augustine 2014).

In addition to diffracting each interview and focus group transcript with theory and literature, I also diffracted them together-apart (Barad 2007, 2014, 2017). My annotations in the margins of the transcript documents included musings about how the transcripts were colliding with each other, opening new possibilities, or moments when they were in tension. This was especially curious for the follow-up focus group and pair interview, as I could diffract them with the participants’ interview transcripts. Throughout this diffractive reading I was creating many mind-maps to try to plot the story the data was co-creating. Once I had annotated and diffracted each interview, I drew several cartographies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Davies 2014; Latour 2005) in my research diaries and on loose pieces of paper or sticky notes, to try to identify the key clusters of ideas in the interviews. These were messy, entangled, hand-drawn mappings of the patterns of difference in the data that affected intra-actions within/of the research. In some ways, this dissertation feels like a collaging of the pages of my research diaries and the numerous sticky notes where I wrote, mapped, and wondered.

Once I finished my diffractive reading for each interview, I created another word document, which I described as a “memo,” to include some preliminary musings about what each interview was doing. I also noted passages or quotations that particularly moved me. I had three separate memo documents: one for content analysis, one for interviews, and one for focus groups. This helped me to organize thinking about the diffractive readings of each interview, focus groups, and digital fieldnotes from content analysis together in documents. These three documents were agential cuts (Barad 2007) which condensed and contained the patterns of difference in the transcripts and fieldnotes. They were continuously diffracted as I read them with and through each other, theory, and literature in the becoming of this dissertation. This iterative processes of reading, writing, and thinking are resonant of Locke, Feldman, and Golden-Fiddle’s (2022) proposition that iterativity is a research practice. My research apparatus was an iterative becoming of fieldwork, interviews, transcription, reading, writing, mind-maps, and analysis. My iterative process echoes the writing assemblage Augustine (2014:749) writes about. As Augustine (2014) explains, “writing became my first analytic stance toward the data [...] I wrote memos after interviews, added insights to these memos during transcription, and wrote a chapter describing my interpretation of data using interview data and these memos.”

There is a tension, in a more-than-human project aimed at decentring individual humans, to rely on the stories of girls in individual, pair, and focus group interviews. In the diffractive reading that follows, I work hard to decentre individual girls, including in their own stories, to illustrate the range of relations, material-discursive practices, and desires which co-create the possibilities of their Instagram feminism. As Kuntz and Presnall (2012:736) explain in their turn towards *intraviews* as “enactments among,” participants are “no longer understood as subjects,” rather as “an assemblage of multiple historical, present and future encounters.” I also follow Fox

and Alldred (2022:631), who argue that interviews are useful and appropriate in posthuman or new materialist work, as long as interviewees are understood as interlocutors or “key informants” in contexts, rather than “privileged actors in a socially constructed setting.”

In my project, words in interviews, focus groups, and in Instagram content are bodies (Kuntz and Presnall 2012) – bundles of relations, materialities, discourses, times, and spaces. While I disentangle the timespacematterings primarily through girls’ words and stories, I trouble the framing of individuals as neatly contained, and illustrate entangled becomings between girls, technology, and Instagram feminism. While words do not matter most and indeed are representations that flatten infinite possible realities (Barad 2007; Lenz Taguchi 2012), girls’ stories about girlhood, Instagram, and Instagram feminism are important to me. Their stories offer a small narrative approach (Georgakopoulou 2016) in a growing sea of disembodied data mining and Big Data approaches to understanding digital phenomena and human-technology relations. My multi-method approach, I argue, allows me to engage with the textures of girls’ experiences while also decentring them as individualized actors through attention to the force of material-discursive bodies like photos, memes, emojis, algorithms, and affordances such as likes. This research apparatus (Barad 2007) that involves a dense mapping of girls’ words, allows me to diffract girls’ stories about their Instagram and feminism with my own experiences of their content and accounts. In what follows, I share many long excerpts of interview and focus group transcripts, in attempt to resist a representational or de-contextualized framing of the conversations. My hope is to let the girls’ words and stories reverberate through these pages. I share them at-length as an invitation to let them affect you, as you diffract them anew.

While girls’ stories are necessary for adequately responding to my research question, the research apparatus is also constraining. In this project, I am not studying the material, political or

social contexts or conditions of the girls' online/offline lives beyond their becoming in interviews, focus groups, and in my deep reading of their Instagram accounts and content. I am also not studying the material conditions and effects of digital activism on a Meta Platform like Instagram, including by tracing relations in digital capitalism or the co-production of climate disasters. My research apparatus also excludes network analysis or mapping diffusion or spread of content, as well as deeply studying the advanced technicalities of how Instagram and its technologies work. However, I muse about each of these material-discursive phenomena as they emerge in my diffractions of participants' stories, Instagram content, and digital fieldnotes from my deep engagement during the project.

Research Diary

My research diary is the iterative cartography of the research entanglement – a mapping of intra-actions, diffractions, and agential cuts in the timespacemattering of this project. As aforementioned, I wrote in my research diary throughout the data co-creation timespace, and I returned (Barad 2017) to it while working with my digital fieldnotes and the transcripts. My research diary housed my musings about the data, theory, and mind-maps. As I elaborate below, I diffracted my research diary, digital fieldnotes, and interview and focus group transcripts to understand the intra-actions in the research.

Reading Data and Theory Together-Apart

As Barad explains, through intra-acting diffractions, cutting matter and meaning together-apart happens in one move “in the (re)configuring of spacetime-mattering” which are practices of “differencing” (Barad 2014:168). After engaging a diffractive reading of digital fieldnotes, interviews, and focus groups, and mapping the data in several hand-drawn mind-maps with various branches and nodes, I sensed that the data was co-constituting five key patterns of

difference: becoming girl – becoming feminist; digital girlhood; dynamics of Instagram; dynamics of Instagram feminism; and building/blurring the boundaries of individual/collective. As aforementioned, throughout the research encounter I was continuously asking myself what the data was doing, including in response to my overarching research question. When I read the various memo documents, cartographies, and transcripts together-apart (Barad 2014) I felt these five patterns emerging as entangled phenomena which could help me respond to my research question. Not to be confused with themes, these five patterns of difference are not neatly contained, but were repetitions that were continuously becoming in the timespacemattering of my research, over and over again. Importantly, there is difference in girls' Instagram feminism that occurs outside of these key patternings, and becomings that were constrained by the research apparatus (Barad 2007) that could not become and thus, were not recognizable by my approach. Furthermore, in classifying these patternings, I am obfuscating difference, enacting agential cuts (Barad 2007) that temporarily disentangle the complexities of their entangled becomings.

An important part of my diffractive analysis involved writing a report for interview and research participants with preliminary findings. In the material-discursive practice of writing the report, I began to write the story of this dissertation. After writing the report, I realized the exciting breadth and depth of the data co-created in this research project. I am excited and deeply interested in all the differentiating patterns or doing of the data but also feel overwhelmed by the possibilities in a diffractive methodology to continuously diffract theory and data anew. However, in what follows I narrow in on three key diffraction patterns: the relational becoming girl – becoming feminist; the intra-activity of Instagram feminism; and towards cyborg feminism. These three diffraction patterns – or maps of difference – are most closely related to my research question, so I engage most deeply with them in what follows.

The subsequent chapters emerged through further diffractions, collisions between transcripts, digital fieldnotes, and entries from my research diary. I continuously re-turned (Barad 2017) to transcripts, fieldnotes, mind-maps, and the memo documents in the material-discursive practice of writing this dissertation. While I have disentangled the messiness of this practice in the timespace of the chapter, in practice, it was unruly, dynamic, and at times quite difficult, uncertain, and overwhelming. Like Augustine (2014), in this project, a diffractive methodology and analysis was an iterative process of reading, writing, re-reading, and re-writing. At first, it was uncomfortable and nerve-wracking to relinquish the safety of more traditional and familiar approaches to qualitative analysis, like open and axial coding. But leaning into diffraction as methodology and analysis allowed me to follow the doing of data, recognizing its agential force to diffract researcher-participant performativities and the unfolding of the project and data. Diffraction as methodology and analysis requires researchers to lean into unknowing (Levy et al. 2016; MacLure 2022), and to continuously re-turn, re-member (Barad 2007), and “make matter intelligible in new ways and to imagine other possible realities presented in the data” (Lenz Taguchi 2012:267). This perhaps, is my aim, in the diffractive reading I offer in this project.

By way of in/conclusion, in this chapter, I have detailed the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my sociological inquiry in this project. Engaging a feminist posthuman and diffractive methodology is messy, imperfect, and sometimes limited by the nature of language and writing (Braidotti 2014; MacLure 2013). My aim is to trace patterns of difference and their effects, and to temporarily untangle the material-discursive entanglements in girls’ Instagram feminism and their stories about it. As I elaborate throughout this project, things and ideas are not neatly contained as individual pre-existing entities. While I enact various agential cuts in the research apparatus (Barad 2007), I try to underscore the constellation of

bodies and timespacematterings that affect becomings. Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway, among the others I cite throughout my dissertation, are my thinking companions in my diffractive reading. Transcripts, fieldnotes, memos, diary entries, theories, and previous research, intra-act, collide, and diffract anew. They are not passive, but affecting and co-creating the story I write about girls' Instagram feminism. In what follows, I do my best to offer a muddy and non-representational conceptualization of girls' Instagram feminism. While I offer my diffractive reading throughout the timespace of this dissertation, I also aim to open possibilities for you, the reader, to diffract anew.

Chapter Three: Becoming Girl-Becoming Feminist

This chapter traces the relational becoming of girl and feminist. I diffract interview and focus group transcripts, digital fieldnotes, my research diaries, and theory. More specifically, I read the data with and through Haraway's (1991; 1997) figurations, Braidotti's conceptualizations of becoming woman, body, self, identity, and figurations (2003; 2022) as well as Barad's entanglement, intra-action, self, and spacetime-mattering (2007). This diffractive reading troubles conceptualizations of identity as fixed or contained in fleshy human bodies. Instead, I aim to illustrate how girl and feminist emerge through their entwinement within specific material-discursive configurations.

In what follows, I trace the relational, material-discursive becoming of girl and feminist and mark diffractions in my reading through subheadings. In line with my diffractive methodology, these subheadings should not be understood as themes or subthemes, rather, as signposts which mark turns in the becoming of my entangled thinking with theory and data. Each signpost can be understood as an agential cut (Barad 2007) which disrupts and diverts the entangled becoming of girl and feminist, and co-creates the story I write here. My diffractive reading begins with dis/re-entangling boundaries and relations of girl. Then, I muse about the difference of age, and the ways in which digital hot girl co-constitutes technology. I think about the intra-activity of gender and disability in becoming girl – becoming feminist, and re-turn (Barad 2014) my sticky relations with feminist and feminism in my analysis. Next, I consider the entanglements of gender, age, and family which create the possibilities for becoming girl-becoming feminist, and the force of material-discursive contexts like neoliberal can-do girlhood (Harris 2004). Following Barad (2007), I consider the ways that intersections of power and marginalization co-constitute intra-actions, in what I am calling *intrasections* of power. I diffract

Haraway's and Braidotti's figurations with participants' meanings and experiences of figurations of feminists. Finally, I consider the intra-activity of age and gender in the relational becoming of girl-feminist-Instagram, and boy feminist-girl feminist.

Shifting Boundaries and Relations of Girl

Some of the most wondrous (MacLure 2013) data in my dissertation is in the conversations around gender, girl, and girlhood. I asked interview participants if they self-identified as girls which often propelled energized discussions about gender, patriarchy, age, peers, popular culture, and social media. In the very first interview of this project, I spoke with Jenna. Jenna and I talked through Zoom technology – a multiplicity of material-discursive contexts like wifi, laptops, microphones, cameras, minerals, and fibre optic cables in the ocean floor – connecting us between Dublin and Toronto. Jenna spoke to me from her family's home a few days before resuming her university studies. When asked if the category of "girl" resonates with her, Jenna replied:

Yeah, yeah, I would say [...] that resonates a lot with me. Uhm, even though, like not in the way society sees it. I think we have a very specific ideas of what a girl is. (Lindsay: hmm). So, I don't really identify with the 'social girl,' because I've always been, not tomboyish, but kind of in between what people would say is tomboyish and girlish. So, in that sense, I have never really been the 'social girl' [...] I don't wear makeup for instance. But with time, I kind of found my own version of 'girl.' And feminism has helped me a lot in shaping that, and kind of dismantling the ideas of what a girl is supposed to be and stuff. But I am proud of saying 'yeah, I'm a girl.'

Jenna's story underscores the relational becoming of girl and feminist. "Girl" and "feminist" are not pre-existing in an ontological hierarchy (Barad 2007), rather are phenomena that become

through their mutual entwinement (Barad 2007). “Girl” is material-discursive (Barad 2007), as “social girl” and “tomboyish” emerge through gendered discourses and stereotypes, as well as material artifacts and practices like makeup. For Jenna, feminism collides with her (re)conceptualization of girl and “social girl” (read: popular femininity). The boundaries of girl emerge through the entanglement of Jenna’s body-feminism-social girl-tomboy-girlish-girl.

Talking over Zoom from her bedroom in Toronto that was filled with posters, ivy plants, and fluorescent lights, Ava responded to a question about whether “girl” fits with her:

That’s a good question. I went through many phases where I didn’t (Lindsay: Right). And I’m not saying that like I didn’t identity as a girl. I’m just saying like I didn’t necessarily fit the stereotypes, or I would be like, ‘oh, I really much rather, like prefer the boy style of life.’ But now, at the moment, I would say yes.

Ava added, “I think, even it might sound superficial, I am just a teenage girl. I match the stereotypes perfectly [...]” Laughing, she said:

I am a teenage girl who loves to go shopping with her friends. I love to gossip. I care deeply about my outfits and my makeup, my [bedroom]. Things I spend my money on other than food, obviously, is clothes and makeup, right? I [sometimes] have like, a boy obsession that I like talk to my friends about. It’s just like, what’s a teenager. I feel like I fit into that, you know. I love being girly.

Girl is an entanglement, a constellation or “relational component within colliding affective forces rather than a self-contained entity rooted in essentialism or locked in a binary pairing based on gender alone” (Pomerantz and Raby 2018:5). The boundaries of girl are dynamic and in flux, and necessarily material-discursive (Barad 2007). In the specific entanglement in Ava’s story, time-

space-gender-stereotypes-fashion-makeup-bedroom-money-desire-gossip-friends-teenager intra-act to co-produce her “girly” subjectivity.

Zara and Frankie were the most explicitly enthusiastic and passionate about being girl. As Zara said, “I absolutely love being a girl and I enjoy typical stereotypical girly things. Like the hyper-feminine things like painting, baking, makeup, stuff like that. I’m quite, as society says, a girly-girl.” Curiously, I could not see Zara during our Zoom interview, as she used the audio-only feature calling from London, UK, but I could feel her excitement. She spoke with cadence and intonation, a buzzing energy that affected me and propelled our conversation. While she said that she “absolutely love[s] [the] label” girl, Zara clarified that “there’s no specific way to define a girl even if someone doesn’t fit into girly-girl, societal expectations.” Similarly, Valeri told me that she does not “have any interest in identifying as anything other than a girl” because she is “very feminine,” but noted that things like makeup and tight clothing are “not specific to femininity or cisgender or womanhood.”

From Dublin, through Zoom, Frankie’s face lit up when I asked her about the category girl. Frankie said, “I love being girl, like I feel like such a girl.” Tumbling over and through words, Frankie continued, “like, it’s like, we were, like 2023 was like the year of the girl [...] I feel like 2024 [] maybe even more.” For Frankie, girl is not merely an identity or experience, “like we use it as a like, like a verb.” She explained an instance where one of her girl friends was talking to one of their guy friends and said, “‘oh like you’re so not girling out right now’ [...] [and] all knew when she meant. We all knew that she was kind of just being like ‘chill out.’” Here, girl is a doing not confined to the sex-gender binary (Braidotti 2022) or contained in the flesh boundaries of particular bodies. Girl is a becoming or unfolding in timespacematterings (Barad 2007). Becoming girl and becoming “girling” are posthuman performativities (Barad

2003) that include configurations of bodies, spaces, times, materialities, and discourses. In our conversation, I was still stuck on Frankie's use of *girling*, which I re-turn later (Barad 2014), however, before I could ask more about it, but she quickly added:

I love, I love, I love being a girl, like I feel like girlhood is so exactly, this, I'm used to so many moments in a day when I'm just like, 'I love being a girl' [...] like I feel when I'm with my girlfriends [...] it's just like endless. You don't feel that, I don't think people feel it that way, I don't know, it feels like very precious the way that women are together.

Talking from Ireland, Lola also spoke about friendship, saying "with other women, like we often very, out loud, are grateful for one another and really like, they like, you know, I love my friends, but like I *love* my female friendship."

For Frankie and Lola, it seems that girl and girlhood are not neatly contained in fleshy bodies or fixed to an essentialist understanding of gender. Girl and girlhood become in a specific spacetime-mattering (Barad 2007), which Frankie describes as "the year of the girl." With Barad (2007, 2017), time is not a pre-existing entity or a linear progression through history. Instead, time is out of joint, troubled, and marked through intra-activity (Barad 2007, 2017). "The year of the girl" is a particular timespace-mattering. Material artifacts like the popular Barbie film and the proliferation of girl and girlhood in digital culture (more on this later) reconfigured individual and collective meanings and experiences of girl and girlhood. For Lola, "girlhood is it's, like a funny dual-sided thing" where the embrace of girl and girlhood feels good, but unfolds within "like a framework that, it's obviously like to do with like a patriarchal standard" that includes on/offline trends like "girl hobbies," "girl pretty," and "boy pretty." Importantly, Lola reminds us that the intra-activity of girl and girlhood is not detached from the ongoing intra-activity of the world (Barad 2007), including material-discursive contexts of patriarchy.

I talked to Essa over a few days through email, often exchanging several emails each day. Writing from Saskatchewan, she told me that while she felt like a girl, she said, “to be honest, identify[ing] as a girl has nothing to do with my identity. I do get that I am female[,] and I won’t change that.” Essa seemed critical of how “people tend to dwell on the idea that being a girl means you get this[,] and you get that,” suggesting that she did not have this experience. On her identity, Essa said “[it’s] knowing who I am, knowing what I want as a person, knowing w[h]ere I’m going in life. Being a ‘girl’ does not have that much of an impact on me as it does to others.” Admittedly, I was a bit puzzled by Essa’s thoughts here, as they contrast the embrace of girl and girlhood by others like Frankie and Zara, within a spacetime-mattering (Barad 2007) where girl and girlhood seem to be flourishing, for example in popular culture and discourse. My girl and girlhood subjectivity also diffract Essa’s story, making this moment particularly striking in our interview. I find it curious how Essa seems to embody an ambivalence around “girl,” while simultaneously co-constituting a different girl and girlhood experience that is necessarily material-discursive because of its relation to the other girl bodies, and narratives of girlhood. I am also wondering if the girl and girlhood that emerges in Essa’s story is indicative of a postfeminist ethos wherein gender inequality is dismissed or deemed a struggle of the past (Gill 2007).

Other participants, like Farah, Poppy, Quinn, and Bea felt differently about girl and girlhood. Farah and I talked through Zoom video, connecting us between the UK and Toronto. When asked if she self-identifies as a girl, Farah said, “Yeah, I would [...] but I don’t know if I would self-identify as feminine [...] like I don’t think I go out of my way to act feminine.” Farah, who told me that she was passionate about sociology, elaborated:

feminine and masculine have always been acts [...] so it kind of depends on the day, not in like a gender fluid [way], but just more of a thing of like, I feel like I am just a person (Lindsay: yeah) and then like some days like I'm feeling more feminine and sometimes like not, I'm less. You know?

Poppy, from the UK, whom I spoke to over Zoom audio, shared that “because of [] how I present [...] I feel like a lot of the experiences that comes with being a girl is something that I have as well, but it's not fully, if that makes sense.” As Poppy explained, “for me, I find gender more like a fluid thing rather than like a box that you put yourself into.” Rather than identifying as girl, Poppy said “I would say more sapphic identity, yeah. The more I've grown older, the more I've kind of started thinking about it more, but I haven't put too much thought into it.” Over several emails from Jamaica, Quinn talked about why they “prefer not to self-identity as ‘girl’.” Explaining how she “feels in the middle of things relating to gender,” Quinn embraces being a demi-girl. Quinn elaborated “being a demi-girl for me means embracing both girl and non-binary identities without limit[ing] myself to just one.” Also through email, Bea explained what their non-binary identity means to them. As Bea said, “I have a complicated relationship with the term ‘girl.’ I do not feel entirely detached from femininity and still consider it to be an important part of me, although I wouldn't consider being a ‘girl’ or ‘woman’ my overall identity.”

I diffract Farah's, Poppy's, Quinn's, and Bea's stories with Braidotti's becoming woman (2003) and becoming posthuman (2022). As Braidotti (2003:11-12) explains, becoming woman “may no longer be a she, but the subject of quite another story: a subject-in-process, a mutant, the other of the Other, a post-Woman embodied subject cast in female morphology who has already undergone an essential metamorphosis.” Through this theorizing, becoming girl can be

understood as something that is not neatly contained in biology or essentialism, rather as a relational component in a field of intra-acting agencies (see also Pomerantz and Raby 2018). Becoming girl is a multiplicity and an iterative unfolding, wherein humans and non-humans differentially relate to and affect its intra-activity. As explained by Farah, Poppy, Quinn, and Bea, while they feel distanced from girl and girlhood or complicated about their boundaries, they all position themselves in relation to the material-discursive contexts of girl and girlhood. Becoming girl, then, might be thought of as a “multiple experiments with alternative modes and figurations” (Braidotti 2003:142). Becoming posthuman girl, Braidotti (2022) might argue, includes attention to which entanglements and diffractions constrain and enable particular becomings of girl. Becoming posthuman girl (Braidotti 2022) troubles sex/gender, nature/culture, human/non-human binaries (Barad 2007) by traversing boundaries, embracing a nomadic subjectivity (Braidotti 2003).

Read together-apart (Barad 2014), my diffractive reading in this section illustrates the multiplicity of girl and girlhood and participants’ varied understandings, embrace, or distancing from them. Participants’ stories highlight the material-discursive complexities of girl and girlhood, emphasizing how they are entangled phenomena that become through specific configurations of materialities, discourses, times, and spaces. Rather than an identity fixed to fleshy human bodies, girl and girlhood are felt, experienced, and understood through the multiple ways that girl and girlhood map onto materialities like fashion and makeup, discourses like “tomboyish” and “girly-girl,” and timespaces like the “year of the girl” that Frankie celebrates. In the following section, I consider the ways that intra-activity of age makes difference for girl and girlhood.

Age as Difference

Some participants self-identified as young woman, making age-based arguments around when girlhood ends and womanhood begins. For example, Jacinta, who I spoke to through Zoom video-call, from a cold basement classroom in her Canadian university argued, “like when you think about it legally, like, you know, you’re technically, you become an adult at 18.” Safa, preferred to identify as a young woman, explaining, “I mean, I’m not that old (Lindsay: yeah), I’m 20, but just in general I think girl is just for young kids [laughs].” I pushed Safa a bit, wondering if there was a certain age when someone was no longer a girl. Safa replied, “I don’t know if there’s a certain age, but I also think it’s just maybe, maybe I would say 18.” She thought high school graduation and starting university were significant because “there is a bit of a ‘you’ve grown now,’ and you know, you’re no longer a little girl.” Similarly, Gwen, a twenty-year old in Canada, thought that “within like from the teens to twenties” is when someone shifts from girl to young woman, but she added that she “wouldn’t be able to pinpoint an exact age.”

Barad (2007, 2014, 2017) troubles time, positioning time as leaky and unstable, and as emerging only through intra-actions. The past, Barad (2007) argues, is never finished because it iteratively unfolds and leaves traces in diffraction patterns to come. Reading Barad’s conceptualization of time (2007, 2014, 2017) through and with Jacinta’s, Safa’s, and Gwen’s stories of age complicates the beginning and end of girlhood, arguments that have also been made by girlhood studies scholars (e.g., McDermott 2018; Pomerantz 2024). If the past is never finished, the boundaries of girlhood might not be as rigidly tied to chronological age as suggested by Jacinta, Safa, and Gwen. Becoming girl through a feminist posthuman framework turns towards gender, age, girl, and girlhood as intra-active and intra-acting phenomena that are remade in specific spacetime-matterings (Barad 2007). This is not to suggest that Jacinta’s, Safa’s, and Gwen’s thoughts about the boundaries of girlhood are wrong or incomprehensible through

posthuman feminism. Instead, I suggest that they point to the ways in which boundaries and material-discursive practices of age and gender collide with, diffract, and complicate each other. As I elaborate below, the collision of age and gender enact force in the relational becoming of girl and feminist.

Frankie told me about an experience she had in a nonfiction class at university in Ireland, where one of her classmates did a presentation on the complexities of being labelled a girl or a woman. Frankie explained how the classmate crossed out “girl” on the chalkboard and wrote “woman” below. Frankie said that she “so get[s] the complexity of like, ‘Am I a girl or am I a woman?’” Frankie elaborated:

I’m like, well 21, so I guess like I, in some ways I feel like I’m a woman, like I’ve been through puberty, and like I’m an adult, I guess. And like you know, women three generations above me would have had kids by my age [...] but, and also, you know, if like a man was to call me a girl, it would feel this mess [...] like, the connotations of that word coming out of like a 60-year-old man’s mouth, I’d be like, ‘are you trying to like put me in my place a bit?’ But [...] [if] a girl in their twenties called me a girl, I’m like ‘yeah, I’m a girl.’ Like, we’re like ‘you’re one of the girls!’ [...] So, it’s there’s definitely different ways of saying it. Like I feel like it could be not a great thing, but I, I think it is. In this entanglement, girl emerges through a configuration of chalkboard-peers-woman-age-man-space. The boundaries of girl and woman are marked through their intra-action (Barad 2007) in the spacetime-mattering of Frankie’s nonfiction class. Here, becoming girl is also detached from rigid essentialist framings of age. Age, girl, and woman are mutually co-constitutive (Barad 2007). Becoming girl is a multiplicity, as Frankie’s and her peer’s understandings and experiences of girl collide and diffract. The self, in this instance of becoming girl and becoming

woman, Barad argues “is dispersed/diffracted through being and time” (2017:80). Frankie evokes human bodies in her thoughts around puberty, but in this entanglement, becoming girl and becoming woman are not contained in the flesh boundaries of Frankie’s body. Frankie’s body might be better understood as an interface (Braidotti 2003:21), “a transformer and a relay point for the flow of energies: a surface of intensities” in which material-discursive practices and locations of girl and woman are iteratively reconfigured. Locations like girl and woman, Braidotti (2003:12) would argue, are not self-appointed or contained, rather are “collectively shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatiotemporal territor[ies].”

Through Zoom from the desk in her bedroom in Canada, Juliette also shared her thoughts around girl and woman, grappling with the effect of age. Resonating with others, Juliette said, “when I think of girl, I think of someone that’s a little bit more immature than like a woman, right.” Explaining that girl “feels really comfortable” for her, Juliette said, “girl kind of has a sense of [...] maybe it’s not immaturity, maybe it’s like a naiveness, or like a, how do I explain this? It’s like, I don’t know, childhood wonder with it?” While she has seen critiques around girl on the Internet, for example “people saying like ‘oh, I don’t want to be called a girl because it’s offensive,’” Juliette added, “for me, I’m still young so I feel like a girl. COVID might have also shifted my time perception or something (Lindsay: me too, yeah), but I still, yeah, I still feel very young at heart.” Juliette thought “[sometimes] instead of girl as a word being used as something of empowerment [...] many times it can be said as a way, or perceived as way that is kind of diminishing the accomplishments that a woman has been able to achieve in her life.” She laughed and said things might change when she is older, “but for now” as a 16 year-old, Juliette shared, “I don’t see myself being offended by someone saying girl.” Again, Juliette’s story underscores the relational becoming of girl and woman. Girl and woman are not

fixed or detached from the ongoing intra-activity of the world (Barad 2007), including the intra-active unfolding of the Internet, and the material-discursive contexts of the COVID-19 pandemic that reconfigured space, time, and mattering (Barad 2007). Age is also a material-discursive phenomena, including marking boundaries of “accomplishments,” “young,” “childhood wonder,” and “immature.” Girl, woman, and age are intra-active and intra-acting – colliding and co-creating their boundaries.

In conversation with Jacinta, boundaries between girl and woman were also marked through material-discursive contexts of age, and through relations with other bodies. Jacinta said:

if I talk to someone casually, like I'll be like 'hey girl,' you know, whatever (Lindsay: right). But I think the word of girl also has like [...] not a negative connotation in a way or a positive connotation, just like the context of [...] you're new to the world, you're still figuring stuff out. So in like that sense, I feel like I do relate to it. But [...] you're also like coming into your own, like I'm figuring out what I don't like [...] going to university, so I am like [...] experiencing the world in a totally different way than like high school [...] so I feel like I'm turning into a woman, a young woman, if you will. I think that's [...] the meeting of like both words, because I feel like woman is like really old [laughs].

Here, girl is material-discursive, including naiveness and discovery (i.e. “new to the world,” “figuring stuff out”). Becoming young woman emerges through configurations that involve the timespacemattering of university and worldly experiences. Jacinta suggests a continual becoming in her story wherein becoming girl and woman are enfolded. Becoming young woman, Jacinta argues is a liminal space, a “meeting of like both words” – girl and woman.

The messiness and blurred boundaries of girl and young woman were also evident in Esti's and Rose's stories. Rose, for example, who spoke to me from England, was uncertain about whether she felt a girl or young woman. She decided on girl, saying "I feel like, I'm I just turned 18 so I think I'm still like, you know, still a bit young." Rose thought that she might feel less close to girl when she is "like 20 or something, I'd probably feel like a woman. I'm still in school, like, I feel like a girl." For Rose, age and girl seem to be developmental and chronological, but also an affective "feeling" that emerges relationally. Age also becomes in the timespace of school, where she "feels like a girl" because she is "still in school," she is "still a bit young." Esti also wavered around what makes someone a girl and/or a young woman. Speaking over Zoom through her bedroom in Canada, Esti said, "I feel like there's a difference between like girl and like a woman [...] [but] I don't know, I don't really like draw the differences between them like that often." Then Esti said, "when I think of the word girl, I think younger," but it was not just about age, "it's also like your maturity inside [because] like someone's who's like I don't know, like 25 could still be like a boy, right?" Then, Esti thought once you turned 18 "it should be like a woman." When I asked how she felt about either category, Esti laughed then replied, "I'm like okay with anyone, like if you call me a girl or if you call me a woman [...] both [are] fine, but like I think it's just personal preference." I am intrigued by Esti's positioning and repositioning here because her wavering is illustrative of the shifting, embedded, and relational nature of age, girl, and woman.

Safa, similarly, swayed in relation to girl and girlhood, and articulated the force of her South Asian culture in becoming girl. Safa said, "in South Asian culture, like you kind of like as a girl, you're kind of [...] when you get a little bit older [...] like 16 or 17 [...] like [...] you're like a young woman." Safa demonstrates the need to consider what patterns of difference

constrain and enable particular becomings (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022). Resonating other girls' stories, for Safa, girl and girlhood are material-discursive phenomena that are created in specific timespaces, rather than identities couched in developmentalism. For Safa, her South Asian culture diffracts and collides with her gendered and aged body, leaving marks on her body (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2003, 2022; Haraway 1991) which position her as either a girl or a young woman. Safa's story troubles universal or developmental understandings of girl/girlhood and young woman, by underscoring the ways that race and culture affect boundaries and expectations or girlhood. Here, I am reminded of arguments made by others (Epstein, Blake & Gonzalez, 2017; Teshome & Yang, 2018), about the ways that racialized girls are adultified more than their white peers. Race and culture, thus, as material-discursive phenomena, are part of the intra-actions and entanglements which co-create meanings and boundaries of girl and girlhood. These material-discursive forces are not neatly contained in Safa's body, thus, highlighting the ways that the intra-activity of the world, including around race, racialization, and culture, affect the entanglements which co-create gendered and aged bodies.

Throughout this dissertation I will continue to untangle and tangle the relational becomings of age and gender. So far, I have troubled an understanding of age and gender as tied neatly to human bodies or biological developmentalism. While some participants hold more tightly onto these representational framings than others, I have aimed to illustrate how aged and gendered boundaries emerge through collisions between human/non-human bodies and forces outside of any individual human body. I continue to develop this argument in the following section, about the material-discursive practices of digital hot girl.

Becoming Digital Hot Girl(ing)

Now, I re-turn (Barad 2014) to Frankie's proclamations around "girling" and the "year of the girl." While diffracting Frankie's interview and writing this chapter, I was reminded of McDermott's work. McDermott (2018:56) proposes a turn to exploring girling practices in the postfeminist impasse, wherein "postfeminist cultural norms dictate, not that girls learn how to become women, but that both women and girls learn how-to girl." Through practices of girling, McDermott argues, feminine subjects regardless of age, become girl. I also diffract Frankie's "girling" and "year of the girl" with Pomerantz's (2024) theorizing around immanent girlhood and entangled temporalities. Pomerantz (2024:101) argues, "girlhood may be experienced by anyone or anything affected by its intensity" as it is held together in specific moments through assemblages of materialities, discourses, times, and spaces. To be(come) "girling" and "the year of the girl," as Frankie puts it, moves beyond essentialist or age-based understandings of girl, towards recognizing how "girlhood continues to magnify its relevance and significance through its permeation of people, places, temporalities, and objects" (Pomerantz 2024:99).

Diffracting Frankie's "girling" and "the year of the girl" with my digital fieldnotes, I wondered, can we be(come) "girling out" on Instagram? Is Instagram "girling out"? Can Instagram be girled? Is Instagram co-constitutive of the timespacemattering (Barad 2007) of "the year of the girl"? Using Frankie's words, I argue that "girling" and "the year of the girl" are material-discursive, human/non-human phenomena that emerge with and through the intra-activity of the Instagram content in my project. Instagram, as an intra-acting material-discursive force (Barad 2007) emerges through the platform affordances, cultural vernacular, technologies like algorithms, hashtags, memes, and multiple human and non-human bodies like software engineers, social media influencers, and social media users. These material-discursive forces co-create, affect, and are affected by broader material-discursive contexts such as neoliberal

capitalism and patriarchy. With Barad (2007), I argue that the intra-activity of Instagram collides with the intra-activity of girl and girlhood to enact patterns of difference that mark boundaries.

Hashtags like #girlpower and #girlboss were prominent in the Instagram Posts I analysed. I found this curious, given the critiques of post-feminist narratives in popular culture and by feminists online. I began to wonder if #girlpower and #girlboss were used to increase the reach of Instagram feminism. Even more so, I was curious about how the seemingly ironic and satirical use of #girlboss and #girlpower in the feminist content I encountered was part of the digital performativity of a particular girl and girlhood. The neoliberal post-feminist ethos of “girlboss” is also heavily critiqued by scholars (Zeng and Xue Chen 2022; Zue Chen and Zeng 2024). Originally used as a noun to describe a successful girl or woman challenging patriarchal standards in capitalism (Amoruso 2014), girlboss became a verb on TikTok to denote a doing of toxic (white) post-feminism (Abad-Santos 2021; Zeng and Xue Chen 2022; Xue Chen and Zeng 2024). Girlboss (verb) was linked to gaslight and gatekeep on TikTok and Twitter/X in examples like “gaslight every moment, gatekeep everyday, girlboss beyond words” (Abad-Santos 2021:np). In many cases, to girlboss is to engage playfully, ironically, and sarcastically with post-feminism, which Zeng and Xue Chen (2022:1) position as indicative of an “emerging form of online feminist consciousness.” This ironic and satirical engagement with girlboss on TikTok “intertwines with existing regimes of femininity and girlhood, producing a fraught environment within which establishing a young, feminine identity is particularly precarious” (Zeng and Xue Chen 2022:1).

This performativity of girlboss, or to become girlboss, was entangled in the intra-activity of @femme_fm, one of the Instagram accounts in my sample. The Instagram account @femme_fm was used primarily to promote the creator’s associated podcast about “the unspoken histories of

girls, gays & non-binary slays” (@femme_fm). In a play on “gaslight, gatekeep, girlboss,” an Instagram Post about guerilla activism was titled, “gaslight, gatekeep, guerilla.” Understanding girl and girlhood as entangled phenomena works to decentre humans in analysis by recognizing the “constellation” of human and non-human bodies, and material-discursive forces that co-create girl and girlhood (Pomerantz and Raby 2018). Here, girl is not just a human body but is a posthuman performativity (Barad 2003) that includes material artifacts like Instagram, TikTok, #girlboss, and #girlpower. Importantly, Instagram, TikTok, #girlboss, and #girlpower are not merely material artifacts but are material-discursive practices that work to co-create girlboss performativity. Here, material-discursive contexts of girl (i.e., girl boss, girl power) and age (i.e., satirical engagement with girlboss) are relational becomings.

Another prominent example of digital girl(hood) performativity is the “hot girl.” Remixed from the Hot Girl Walk trend on TikTok (Moniuszko 2023), the “hot girl” phenomena and identity intra-acts with feminist identity and Instagram. In the content I encountered, one Instagram account used “hot girl” as part of the moniker and branding of the Instagram account. The creator made frequent reference to the material-discursive contexts of “hot girls” which worked to co-create a relatable and trendy digital girl and girlhood. “Hot girl” performativity (Barad 2003) involves prioritizing mental health and wellness, outdoor exercise often in the form of walks, and being unbothered by others’ reactions to you. In Instagram content, “hot girl” also became a tagline in campaigns around voting in the 2020 American Presidential election, for example through content that included “hot girls vote” and “join the hottie voting universe.”

Related to “hot girls” are “gorgeous girls.” Inspired by the viral TikTok video’s audio “gorgeous gorgeous girls love soup” and the resulting hashtags #gorgeousgorgeousgirls and #gorgeousgorgeousgirlslovesoup (Zhou 2021), “gorgeous girls” traversed timespace to Instagram

affecting the relational becoming of girl and feminist. In an Instagram Post, @girlagainstpatraichy shared a screenshot of a Tweet reading “gorgeous gorgeous girls advocate for gender equality.” The Post was captioned “where my gorgeous girls at 🤔.” In another moment, in a collage posted to their main feed announcing a new podcast episode, @femmefm wrote in the caption, “what I do know is tiktok girlies loveeee calling themselves delulu [read: delusional].” Here, girl and girlhood are necessarily more than fleshy human bodies, rather co-create technologies like hashtags and viral trends. The iterative spacetime-mattering of technologies like Instagram continuously remix and reconfigure the possibilities for girl and girlhood, underscoring their relational becoming. Becoming feminist through and with the intra-activity of Instagram troubles a separation of human and non-human. The entanglement of on/offline girl, girlhood, and feminism illustrate how “there is no absolute outside; the outside is always already inside” (Barad 2014:178). Hot girls, gorgeous girls, and delulu[sional] girls are both human and non-human: fleshy bodies, digital bodies in TikTok and Instagram content, as well as material-discursive bodies of Instagram and TikTok and their co-created algorithms, trends, and hashtags. The multiplicity of girl and girlhood performativity in timespaces like TikTok and Instagram reverberate girling practices (McDermott 2018) in which girls and women regardless of biological age, are taught how to be(come) girls – hot girls, gorgeous girls, and delulu[sional] girls. Furthermore, these posthuman performativities resonate Pomerantz’s (2024) assertion about immanent girlhood which is felt over and over again. These digital girl(hood) performativities are as much about gender as they are about age and generation, in what Frankie calls “the year of the girl.”

In focus groups, I asked participants for their thoughts on aforementioned digital trends like Hot Girl Walk (Moniuszko 2023), as well as “girl dinner,” which began on TikTok

describing a snack-plate style meal (Clements 2023), “hot girl summer,” which emerged out of Megan Thee Stallion’s fandom (Jennings 2019), and “girl math,” a meme from TikTok that pokes fun at girls’/women’s justifications for their spending habits (Willingham 2023). These conversations were energetic and contentious. In their pair interview, both Jacinta and Safa, who made age-based distinctions between girl and young woman in their interviews, engaged messily with digital trends of girl and girlhood. I asked them if they had any thoughts of people of all ages engaging in the trends like “hot girl walk.” Jacinta shared that it’s not about age, or pretending to be younger, instead “it’s part of a community almost [...] Like everybody calls each other girl [...]” Jacinta said girl is “almost like a term of endearment at this point, like I think it’s more like a slang almost more than like an actual word depicting like a child.”

Safa agreed with Jacinta that girl has become a slang term, adding that she has started to use it more recently from “subconsciously” picking it up. Safa then re-turned (Barad 2014) her previous comment in our interview:

But I know that when I spoke to you earlier, I had mentioned that I kind of don’t really identify as a girl sometimes (Lindsay: right) because I think I feel I’m not in that age group anymore, because girl seems like it’s more a younger group or like a younger generation [...] But I think it’s interesting how on Instagram when the trend kind of happened, we just sort of, I personally feel like I’m now like, ‘yeah, girl dinner, that’s me!’ But like, I just said that I don’t identify as a girl [laughs]. So, I think that’s interesting that I just kind of went along with it. But also, I think it’s also that online, I feel like you know don’t know the exact ages of people and you kind of sort of picture them as like however you might kind of reflect yourself onto them [...]

Moments like these, where participants re-turned (Barad 2014) things they said earlier in our conversation, or previously in our interview were very curious. In re-turning they aerate, open up, and turn over ideas and stories, like a gardener aerating soil to allow sunlight and nutrients to feed new growth (Barad 2014). In the spacetimemattering (Barad 2007) of the pair interview, Safa re-turns our previous interview conversation, but in re-turning she is not reproducing or reflecting on her previous thoughts, rather diffracting anew in the intra-activity of the pair-interview, as her thoughts collide with Jacinta's. In Safa's story, technologies like Instagram, the girl dinner trend, and material-discursive contexts of age including generation, young, and twenties, intra-act to reconfigure her meaning of girl. The "girl dinner" trend, is an entangled material-discursive phenomena that includes human bodies (the body in the video, and the body watching), plates with snack foods, Instagram, platform affordances, algorithms, audio and/or text within the Instagram Reel about the meal being girl dinner, and related hashtags of #girlsdinner in the caption to link it to similar content. Each of these components co-create each other, and together temporarily congeal a figuration of girl and girlhood that does something for Safa. While she previously felt detached from girl and girlhood because she thought she had aged out, seeing "girl dinner" on Instagram had affective force (Barad 2003, 2007) to reconfigure girl, girlhood, and her relations to them. As Pomerantz (2024:91) argues, Safa's differential relation to girl and girlhood through digital trends like girl dinner, illustrate how girl and girlhood are felt over and over again "through material and temporal relations."

This section has underscored becoming digital hot girl as a human/non-human phenomenon that unfolds in particular timespaces. Intra-actions of gender, age, and technology collide to co-create particular gendered and aged digital performativities of "hot girls," "gorgeous girls," and "girl bosses." Girls are not acting on their own, instead, these aged and

gendered performativities are made possible by intra-actions that co-create algorithms, digital trends, social media users, and fragments of digital content which are remixed and traverse digital timespace. I have also pointed towards the ways that these digital hot girl(hood) performativities are co-creating feminist possibilities, a point I elaborate in the following section.

Entanglements of Gender-Age-Girl-Girlhood-Disability

The relational intra-active becoming of girl, girlhood, and feminism were also resonant when I asked participants if they thought their gendered experiences shaped their feminism. Frankie, for example, shared that she was “baffled when girls, women, whatever, are like voting for people who [are] like against their [...] self-interests,” a position which was echoed by Zara. Frankie positioned feminism as her entry-point into politics, saying:

I know it was definitely about being a girl and like [...] when I started realizing [there] were like different things expected of me, or like you know, stuff stacked like against me, and like maybe [in] some ways that’s when I started to like care and get angry and then realize [...] the breadth of issues at hand [...] I think being a girl has been like instrumental to why I like care about politics at all.

Quite directly, Frankie references the relational and intertwined becoming of girl and feminist.

Gwen, who was “vice president” of one of the collective Instagram accounts in my project, shared how her experiences as a menstruator affected her activism around periods. Safa felt similarly, sharing that she experienced taboo and shame around having a period, so she had “personal experience [and] personal desire” to join a collective of young people organizing around periods. Safa explained that she is tuned into politics around abortion rights because she is “like a female who also in the future like maybe hopes to have children [...] and then believes it’s [her] choice.” For both Gwen and Safa, their experiences as menstruating bodies affects their

becoming feminist, within a specific material-discursive timespace that includes period poverty, shame, and precarious abortion healthcare. Recognizing the multitude of political issues, Safa shared “there are really important things that are happening, but I think I might be dismissive of them because they don’t see[m] as relation[al] to me, perhaps.” Like Frankie, Safa’s and Gwen’s stories highlight the entangled unfolding of girl and feminist bodies. As Safa explains, material-discursive contexts, like abortion and menstruation, that are closer to her becoming as girl, have more force in her activist and feminist performativities. The boundaries of their girl bodies are leaky (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991) and their gendered and political selves are not neatly contained in the fleshy boundaries of their skin. The intra-activity of their socio-cultural and political worlds, including forces like patriarchy, leave marks on their bodies that might urge them to become feminist.

My email conversation with Bea was particularly captivating. From England, Bea wrote: due to describing myself as nonbinary, I find that my point of view can be ignored as people seem to believe I don’t have the right to comment on women’s issues if I don’t see myself as a woman. For this reason, I find myself being pushed away from a lot of feminist spaces, even though I present as, and experience life as a woman. I also find that my disability can influence my experience with social media feminism. I am diagnosed autistic, and I find that people use this to misrepresent my experiences and knowledge as me ‘misunderstanding’ things if we don’t completely agree. I have also found that lots of feminist spaces tend to leave disabled women out of the[ir] activism (except for some chronic illnesses to do with female anatomy), so I have been particularly focused on inclusion and acceptance of disabled women in these spaces.

Unfortunately, my conversation with Bea was quite short, as they chose to terminate the interview mid-way through. However brief, I was struck by Bea's story, not only because of their clear critique of the limits of digital feminism, which they elaborate below, and their lived experiences as an autistic and non-binary person, but also how their story might be read through Braidotti's (2003) becoming woman to reimagine becoming girl and becoming woman beyond cisheteronormativity. The subject in becoming woman, Braidotti (2003:11-12) argues resists cisheteronormativity, becoming "no longer be a she [...] a subject-in-process, a mutant."

When I asked Bea about their thoughts on the framing of girl in digital spaces, including through aforementioned digital trends like "hot girl walk" and "girl math," they replied:

I find that in political online spaces the term 'girl' is often used to infantilise women and people who present as women, either by people spewing misogynistic rhetoric, or occasionally in some niche feminist spaces. [F]or example, I have seen the term used in bimbo feminism, which impacts the feminist movement by playing into misogynistic stereotypes of women being dumb, over-emotional, childish, etc. I think there is a fine line between trying to reclaim terms in a political space and playing into and reinforcing the stereotypes; unfortunately, through online trends such as 'I'm just a girl' and 'girl math' unfortunately, the latter seems to be true.

Bea's thoughts, when read with Barad (2007) illustrate the intra-active becoming of girl in particular timespaces. Bea also points towards girl as a multiplicity and phenomena beyond the human body, when they articulate the risk of girl becoming within digital trends, in online spaces, and the feminist movement. Girl is an entangled network of materialities (e.g., online trends, human bodies, technology), discourses (e.g., over-emotional, dumb, childish), times (e.g., virality), and spaces (e.g., online political spaces).

Girl is not just one thing, neatly contained in a developmental period, or in human bodies. Girl is felt, known, and recreated through entanglements and intra-actions which include multiple human/non-human bodies, discourses, and timespaces. The stories in this section have highlighted the ways that girl bodies are marked by contexts like shame and patriarchy, which leave marks on their bodies and diffract their gendered, political becomings. Additionally, material-discursive forces, like age, disability, and gender affect how girl and girlhood unfold. As I continue to argue in the following section, girl and feminist becomings are relational – shaped by and shaping each other through intra-actions and entanglements.

Entanglements of Gender and Feminist

Throughout the research encounter I had some uncomfortable encounters with conceptualizations of gender and feminism. Following MacLure (2013), Mazzei (2014), and Ringrose and Renold (2014), these uncomfortable or sticky moments in data co-creation and analysis are fruitful opportunities to engage in a diffractive reading. For example, I spoke at-length with Amina through Instagram direct message. She wrote to me from Pakistan over two months, with several pauses between replies. Amina's Instagram is overtly positioned as a radical feminist account, with anti-gender and "gender critical" ideologies in a lot of the content. I was apprehensive to ask Amina about gender. At the beginning of the interview, in response to demographic questions, Amina replied:

I'm female. And I'll say I 'identify' as a woman. Although I consider myself a radical feminist and as [] radical feminists we believe in sex-based oppression and don't think anyone can change their biological sex. Gender is performance based on stereotypes (often very sexist stereotypes) associated with the sex you are born with. I don't believe in 'gender identity' or 'affirmation' because people argue genitals don't define gender, but

then why do they feel the need to change it? And if the answer is dysphoria, why do they cancel us for saying it may be a mental illness issue? A[nd] despite what a person perceives their gender to be, their sex is a fact. I don't believe sex is 'assigned' at birth, it is rather just observed at birth. And thinking of it being as just a 'feeling' deeply harms women and women's experiences with misogyny which are sex based. I wouldn't like pronouns written next to my name, but if you really must[,] and to answer your question, they are she/her.

Becoming radical feminist affects a particular becoming girl and becoming woman. While Amina's story and thoughts about gender and identity would seem irreconcilable with a feminist posthuman approach which troubles binaries, including of sex and gender, I recognize how Amina's experiences with and meanings of radical feminism enact a diffraction pattern (Barad 2007, 2014) that creates difference for sex and gender identities. For Amina, becoming woman and becoming radical feminist are entwined and co-constitutive of an entanglement of biological sex-bodies-stereotypes-genitals-dysphoria-mental health-misogyny-pronouns.

When asked if she identifies as a feminist online and offline, Amina replied, "yes [...] I couldn't imagine not being one." Amina moved to Pakistan as a teen, and grew up in Dubai, Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK. She felt this shaped her "journey as a feminist" because she saw different cultural contexts but also "the misogyny that was always present, everywhere I went [...] it's different, but really not that different everywhere." In her own words, Amina's "journey as a feminist" is resonant with Braidotti's (2003) becoming, in which identity is an iterative unfolding across timespace. Rather than a fixed identity that is contained in individual human bodies, feminist identity folds with and through timespace. I have wondered whether Amina's becoming girl and becoming radical feminist are particularly moving for her, because of

the non-Western timespacematterings of Dubai, Saudia Arabia, and Pakistan which re-entangle them. As Barad (2007) argues, each intra-active encounter leaves a mark in the intra-actions to come. Thus, Amina's "feminist journey" can be understood as a dynamic unfolding and refolding through timespacemattering, rather than a linear process with a beginning and end. Each geographical context of Amina's "feminist journey" leaves imprints in the ongoing reconfiguration of her girl and feminist identities. In these stories, Amina details the ways that past-present-futures are simultaneously present in any given moment (Barad 2017), with effects for how her becoming girl and radical feminist unfold.

I tangle and untangle Amina's story here, as one example among many which illustrate the intertwined and relational becoming of girl and feminist. For Amina, becoming radical feminist and becoming (cis)woman are mutually co-constitutive. Compared to others I spoke to, Amina seemed to have a confidence and ownership over her feminist identity – as radical feminist. She strongly opposed liberal and Western feminism, as I elaborate later, and seemed proud about what radical feminism and feminist identity mean for her understanding of herself as a woman, and of patriarchy. The intra-activity of radical feminism and ciswoman in Amina's story makes difference – marking boundaries and bodies of woman, girl, and feminist.

Becoming Young Girl-Woman Feminist

In this intra-acting section, I engage a diffractive reading of relations between becoming young girl and woman feminist. I aim to articulate the tangled unfolding of aged, gendered, and feminist identities. In one instance, when I asked Jacinta if she thought being a girl or a young woman affects her politics, the intra-activity (Barad 2007) of age created difference. Jacinta replied:

I think it does. I feel like, just like being in the category of like being identified as young [...] plays a role because I feel like, like my generation, or like a lot of my generation would have different views and just values in general (Lindsay: hmm), regarding to politics or just like [...] social identity [...] And I feel like having that bit of a differentiation between like woman or young woman versus like girl [...] It still freaks me out that there's like a next generation now (Lindsay: laughs, right). Like I worked as a camp counselor over the summer and then I would see like [...] [information forms] and it would be like 'born in 2018.' I was like 'and you're like, you can go to camp? Like what do you mean?' (Lindsay: laughs). There are people younger than me [...] like it does make a difference adding like the young tag to [woman]. Cause it's just like, you know, there's like a whole new like you know, identity of like people my age versus someone like, I know you're not old, but I feel like, you know.

I find Jacinta's story here particularly curious. Jacinta's age and her realization that there are people younger than her seemed to materialize when reading campers' information forms. Pages marked with "born in 2018" enact force in her understanding of her age. This moment also seems to mark generational boundaries for Jacinta of older and younger, which she also speaks to at the end of this quotation when she differentiates between people her age, and someone like me, who is "not old" but not young like herself and her peers. I keep re-turning (Barad 2014) Pomerantz's (2024) immanent girlhood. Boundaries of age and generation are marked in Jacinta's differentiation between herself, kids at camp, and me. What might a turn towards immanent girlhood as an affective force rather than a stage of life or identity with a beginning and end, do for understandings of intergenerational feminist organizing? If we understood our young selves

not as past, but as becomings that are continuously felt and folded into our “now,” how might we become differently with younger people?

The intertwinement and co-constitution of age and feminism also came up in my conversation with Ava. When I asked Ava what feminism meant to her, she seemed to get a bit nervous, saying, “I’m so scared that, what if like I say something wrong?” I reassured her that there were no wrong answers, and she replied, “‘cause I would say I know, it’s just like, I [...] have an impressionable mind at this age. Maybe in 10 years I’m like, ‘what is she talking about?’” Ava seems to suggest that becoming feminist is something that will continue to unfold as she grows up, as her understanding of feminism will expand when her mind is less “impressionable.” Resonating earlier discussions, Ava’s becoming girl and feminist are unfoldings in timespacematterings without beginnings or ends, as past-present-futures are present in each intra-action. Ava’s aged and gendered becoming collide with her feminist becoming. Her understanding and experiences of feminism will shift as her aged and gendered body continuously evolve.

Mira and I spoke through Zoom video. She was sitting in an empty room at her American high school, during one of her free periods. At 15, Mira was the youngest feminist I spoke to. Mira was keen to start a feminist club at her high school after having participated in a similar club in middle school. However, Mira shared that she struggled to find a teacher to endorse and supervise the feminist club, and recruit peers to join. When I asked Mira if she would prefer being called a feminist girl or feminist young woman, she replied, “if it was in terms of feminism, I would say young woman just because, the more, it’s like considered older, more mature.” In response, I asked Mira if she had any experiences where people perceived her feminism in a certain way because of her age. Mira replied:

I would say in middle school it was like, there are just some teachers who [...] they say [...] ‘you’re too young to be doing this.’ Like your age is just a huge factor in what you do, like [people think] your worldview is not correct just because (Lindsay: hmm) of your certain age. Yeah, I had that happen[] once.

In Mira’s story, age, feminist, and feminism intra-act (Barad 2007) and become together. In the timespace of middle school, teachers, material-discursive contexts of age including ideas around being “too young” and of worldview, collide to create a boundary of feminist that is marked by the intra-activity of age. Echoing research from others (Bent 2020; Raby and Raddon 2015; Taft 2020), in Ava’s and Mira’s stories, a narrative of childhood innocence and youth apathy emerges, positioning politics and feminism as incompatible or strange within childhood and youth. Not only does this discount the political knowledge and experiences that young people have, but it can also contribute to a framing of activist and feminist identities as out-of-reach for youth, which might lead them to discount their contributions or distance themselves from claiming activist and/or feminist identities (Kennelly 2014; Taft 2017). A posthuman feminist approach to becoming works to trouble the fixing of identity as something that just is and instead recognizes that it is a continual unfolding (Braidotti 2003; 2022) in particular timespaces. Echoing arguments I have made in previous sections, here, we see how age is a material-discursive force that is more complicated than a fixed developmental stage. Age is not neatly contained in fleshy bodies but is a force that gains meaning through entanglements and intra-actions which leave marks on bodies. Similarly, feminist identity is not contained in fleshy bodies (Braidotti 2022) but is assembled through intra-actions and relations that include multiple human bodies, discourses, materialities, and timespaces. As Mira explains, material-discursive forces of age and relations with teachers, in the timespaces of middle school constrain her

becoming feminist. In this timespacemattering, Mira wants to be seen as a “young woman” in relation to her feminist identity, rather than a girl feminist, whose politics might be dismissed.

Interestingly, Mira’s Instagram account was originally created for the feminist club at her middle school. However, when the club dissolved and Mira graduated middle school, she kept the Instagram account and began to post more explicitly about political issues. At the time of my analysis, she was not prominently featured on the account, as Mira said, “I do have my name on there, like it’s in like the kind of description.” Since taking over the account, Mira explained she is more confident having her name associated with it. In Mira’s words:

it’s like, ‘hey, this is my opinion.’ I want it out there and so I’m okay with having it. But I don’t know, I feel like I don’t want people to be biased with the fact that, hey, [...] this is a 15-year-old girl who’s posting this content, who’s expressing her opinions.

As previously discussed, for Mira, becoming feminist-becoming girl is sticky. While she seems comfortable having her name linked to her account through the biographical statement, she also seems somewhat hesitant to be featured overtly in photos or through more personal writing on her account. As Mira explains, marking herself as young, through a biographical statement or through content, affects how others respond to her account and content. I wonder too, if Mira’s previous experiences with her teachers, who thought she was too young to be political or feminist, affect her digital feminism. Age is thus not merely a developmental differentiation, rather is co-created by discourses around politics that affect which subjects are understood as political and/or feminist. Age is a doing, enacting difference in becoming feminist-becoming girl. Mira’s Instagram content, age, gender, and audience can be understood as co-constitutive of the emergent Instagram account and content. Mira’s relational becoming feminist and girl are not the

result of only her doing, instead, they are entanglements that produce a messy agency, with effects.

Entanglements of Age-Gender-Family-Feminist

So far in this chapter, I have illustrated the shifting boundaries and relations of girl, gender, feminist, and their relational becoming with the intra-activity of age. Rather than pinning these identities down to stark categories contained in individual human bodies, I have articulated their enmeshed, intra-active, and material-discursive complexities. I continue to develop this discussion here, with a focus on entanglements of gender, age, family, and feminist.

When I asked Ally if she felt like the leader of the collective Instagram account and activist community she created in Canada, she replied, “I definitely feel like a leader. I was a bossy kid, so I guess that makes me a bossy adult [laughs].” In our discussions of girlhood and activism, Ava felt that “of course” being a girl shaped her involvement. Ava elaborated, “‘cause look, for me personally, it’s different.” Now living in Canada, Ava shared that she previously lived in Iran until she was 11 years old, a country that she positioned as “all about gender inequality.” Ava said, “so from the second I heard that like oh, women are forced to wear a hijab when they grow up [...] as a girl I was like, this is not right [...] I want [to] do something about this.” She spoke about a “family history” of activism on her mom’s side, saying “so I feel like it’s kind of in my gene[s] at this point, to want to stand up for myself.” Juliette also explained that her parents have been “very socially, social justice motivated for a very long time.” Juliette said feminism “was kind of like ingrained into me [laughs] since birth.” She couldn’t remember a moment or time where she thought or realized “like ‘oh I am a feminist’ or ‘this is what I believe in’” but she thinks “so much of [her] environment supported and reinforced that.”

Ally's, Ava's, and Juliette's stories remind me of Murriss' (2016) becoming childadult, which I have written about elsewhere (Sheppard 2025). Inspired by Barad (2007), Murriss proposes childadult as a figuration of the relational becoming of adult and child, wherein child is understood as an entanglement of bodies, materialities, and timespaces. Becoming childadult troubles stark beginnings and ends of "child" and "adult" that are prominent in developmentalism, but also provokes rethinking child and adult as a material-discursive entanglements that include multiple bodies, and timespaces, rather than as neatly contained in a fleshy individual body (Murriss 2016). For Ally, becoming bossy childadult (Murriss 2016) can be understood as affecting and co-creating her activist organizing. For Ava, becoming feminist-becoming girl is an entanglement that includes the timespacemattering of her childhood in Iran, multiple bodies including her family members, histories of activism in her family, and the material-discursive contexts of gender in Iran such as rules and practices of hijab.

Ava's and Juliette's reference to feminism being "in my genes" and "ingrained into me since birth" also reminded me of Barad's (2007) matter/meaning wherein genes transferred through familial histories and particular timespaces are entwined with meanings of feminist, activism, and social justice. Ava's and Juliette's becoming feminist might be understood as a multiplicity that includes biology, identities, and experiences of their ancestors. Their becoming feminist then, is not neatly contained in their fleshy bodies, rather is a congealing of matter and meaning over the timespace of their familial history. As Braidotti (2022:137) explains "there are no unitary subjects [...] no self-referential entities locked up in their own truth. The subject at work in [...] assemblages is transversal, heterogeneous, molecular and collaborative." Ava's and Juliette's fleshy bodies are thus, not individualized subjects, rather are assemblages of their past-present-future families.

“We’re Just Girls”: Re/learning feminist

I also noticed the entanglement of gender and feminist becomings in Instagram content, for example, in carousel Posts that were framed as short and snappy educational lessons about a specific topic. In these moments, girl and gendered identities, co-created by technologies (e.g., hashtags, bio statements, trends), enacted force for co-creating a feminist identity in-progress. In one example, @feministcrafters had an infographic style carousel Post with the title “what actually is the patriarchy?” In the Post, @feministcrafters write, “I’m no sociologist, but this post is about breaking down the term patriarchy.”

Biographical statements were also part of the intra-activity of girl, feminist, and politics. For example, @activistnewsgirl’s biographical statement read, “just a girl trying to raise awareness as best as she can.” @feministrage’s biographical statement includes “constantly learning and unlearning,” and @girlagainstpatriarchy’s reads “one brown teen fighting the patriarchy one post at a time” and “activist in progress.” @feminista was an active Instagram account that frequently reposted and created timely social and political content in Stories and Posts, as well content about film, television, and her podcast, short films, and newsletter. In the audio of the Post announcing her podcast launch, @feminista said, “if you’ve come across this podcast then I assume you are either a feminist-in-progress, or a person who simply wants to know what the hell is going on in the feminist mind.” The goal of the podcast, as @feminista describes it, is “to learn and unlearn things together.” In these examples, becoming girl – becoming feminist are co-created through particular timespaces on Instagram where materialities like writing, photos, audio bits, biographical statements, and discourses of gender and age around becoming political, co-create girl and feminist identity.

A few participants, like Quinn, Safa, Esti, Jacinta, and Jenna emphasized that they are continuously learning about feminism and feminist identity. As Quinn said:

feminism for me, began as a challenging topic due to the stigma surrounding women's rights in Jamaica. Growing up in communities where being a girl or woman was frowned upon presented significant difficulties. That's why I became interested in feminism. So yes, I do identify as a feminist. However, I always feel that there's much for me to learn about being a feminist.

Quinn's story is poignant, illuminating the relations of power and marginalization that affect becoming girl-becoming feminist. Reading Quinn's story with Barad (2007) attends to the patterns of difference that propel and constrain particular becomings. The material-discursive contexts of gender in Jamaica intra-act with Quinn's becoming girl-becoming feminist, such that they are affecting and affected by each other. Quinn, like the others, also reference the open-ended and dynamic nature of becoming feminist, echoing arguments made by others (e.g., Mendes et al. 2019; Taft 2017).

Like others, @feminista created many informative infographic and essay style Posts. In one carousel Post, that included illustrations of different pride flags and descriptions of them, @feminista wrote in the caption “* note: I mistakenly used the genderfluid flag as the bicurious flag.” In another example, one of the oldest Posts on @proudprochoice includes the caption: “Hi everyone! I'm a newbie, here to spread awareness and care for pro-choice peers and discuss other topics. This whole thing [is] a WIP [work-in-progress] so bare with me for now ^^.” Read together-apart (Barad 2014), these pieces of Instagram content illustrate the ongoingness of a feminist identity, as a doing that includes mishaps and diffractions, rather than something that is a static position.

Relatedly, on the collective account @feministstreetart, one Post includes a meme from The Parent Trap (1998) that includes screen captures from the scene with the standout moment, “hello, pet, you can call me aunt vicki.” This line from The Parent Trap became a meme – as a photo meme with the freeze-frame of the scene, and as an audio on TikTok – which was then integrated in everyday conversation. @feministstreetart use this meme to announce a new series on their page which they call Agony Aunt, where community/audience members can submit their experiences with gender and sex-based violence or harassment, to talk to the collective and/or to participate in street art where they chalk the location of the incident with their story. The caption of this Post reads, in part:

also as a disclaimer – we are just girls 🚫 none of us have a degree in being an agony aunt but we’re hoping our combined trauma will more than make up for it. And we promise to be better than aunt vicki xoxo big love and stay tuned 🍄.

Becoming girl is an entanglement of material artifacts like memes, audio bits, written texts, and emojis like shy faces and big red lips, as well as discourses that emphasize humility in popular girlhood and femininity (Keller 2016; Taft 2017). Together, these material-discursive contexts work to produce a boundary of girl identity and girlhood that is recognizable, relatable, and spreadable on Instagram. To be(come) “just a girl” on Instagram is a never-finished posthuman performativity (Barad 2003), that includes constellations of remixed memes, emojis, and the cultivation of a “we” amongst many human bodies. To be(come) “just a girl” is both an embrace of girl and girlhood, but also a satirical deprecation of girlhood success in neoliberalism, that co-creates feminist possibilities. I build on this argument in the following section.

Becoming Can-Do Girl Feminists

Related to the relational becoming of “just a girl” and feminist identities, the intertwining intra-activity of gender and age were also evident in material-discursive representations of “successful” or “can do” girlhood (Harris 2004). In these moments, can-do girlhood celebrates a particular feminist performativity that idolizes ambitious, well-networked feminist girls. Surprisingly, I learned that many interviewees from Europe who participated in feminist or activist collectives found the collectives through LinkedIn. I was shocked by the use of LinkedIn by girls, a technology-human relation I had associated more with post-university networking. When I asked them about LinkedIn, they told me it was popular among their peers in the UK and was encouraged by teachers for networking. Zara, who was particularly animated about her LinkedIn account, told me, “my LinkedIn is my child. I’m always making sure it’s perfect.” At first, I laughed at Zara’s comment which figured her LinkedIn profile as her child. But a diffractive reading with Braidotti (2003) and Barad (2007) recognize the affective force of LinkedIn as material-discursive phenomena wherein gendered narratives of girlhood success (Harris 2004), child-rearing, and childhood become legible through their entwinement. It is also striking to consider the weaving of discourses of neoliberal individual success and feminist identity and activism. The girls who spoke of LinkedIn, spoke about it passionately and with some anxiety about its stakes. Thus, it is more than a passive material object, or a socially constructed meaning, rather an entanglement of agencies (Barad 2007) that co-create the possibilities for becoming (successful) girl and feminist.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the intensity of neoliberalism, several participants who were members of feminist and/or activist collectives saw their membership as related to their future educational and career trajectories. For example, Farah told me that she “really like[s] independent outspoken women,” and had been communicating with her parliamentary

representative [in England] in the wake of the “Palestine conflict” who later offered her work experience. Farah said, “if someone was to check my CV they’ll be like ‘oh, she’s like worked with [a] feminist organization, like, respect her.” Echoing Zara’s story, Farah’s narrative underscores the agential force (Barad 2007) a CV takes on in the relational, intra-active becoming girl-becoming feminist. For Farah, becoming girl-becoming feminist is not neatly contained in the flesh boundaries of her body, rather is an intra-active unfolding that involves relations between multiple bodies (e.g., politicians, emails, CV) and material-discursive contexts including gendered narratives around outspoken women, the respectability of feminist organizations and political involvement, and the genocide in Palestine. Similarly, when I asked Esti about her participation in an activist collective she laughed and said, “I knew I had to do like something to get more involved before, obviously like university applications.” When Crystal Waters was describing the activist girl collective she was part of, from Canada, she recited, “uhm, I say it’s a digital [...] platform that’s committed to amplifying young women’s voices. Yeah, that’s usually what I say [...] in my university applications [...] that [was] like my first sentence.” While I was cautious in our conversations to not make evaluative statements about their linking of collective organizing and action to individualized future-oriented success, I am struck by the tensions. This is a sticky point (Ringrose and Renold 2014) in the data, wherein the individual/collective binary seems to be re-articulated, and collective action in digital timespace is experienced and positioned as increasingly individualized (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Milan and Halleck 2013).

It also seemed that becoming girl co-created and collided with “intelligible” or “good” feminist. Becoming girl and “intelligible” or “good” feminist were relational entanglements of technologies like Instagram and Instagram accounts, web pages, artifacts like research

documents, and discourses of gendered guilt, humility, and expertise. Farah told me how it took her around three hours to research, write, and design an Instagram Post on the political violence in Sudan. She felt this was a lot of time but said, “I wanted to like completely understand the problem and the conflict so that I didn’t make any mistakes in the way I wrote about it.” Crystal Waters, who was a writer for an online collective seemed to have a similar experience. Crystal Waters told me about her hesitancy to post feminist or political content on Instagram before she has done extensive research, as well as her anxiety around speaking up and sharing ideas as a member of her city’s youth advisory committee. Crystal Waters said, “whether or not it’s because I’m a girl or my personality [laughs], I do feel like I need to have this abundance of knowledge before I engage in anything because I almost feel guilty if I don’t.” In another instance, Nora told me that she was debating creating a feminist Instagram account for some time before she decided to do it. Writing from Germany, Nora elaborated, “I wanted to make sure that I’ve already learned enough to speak on these issues.”

Intrasections of Power

Importantly, relations of power and marginalization enact force in the unfolding of girl and feminist identities, which was evident in some Instagram content and noted by many of the girls I spoke to. In this section, I continue to articulate the relational becoming of girl and feminist identities by tracing the effects of power and marginalization in intra-actions. Echoing Barad’s intra-activity (2007), I call this section *intrasections* rather than intersections of power, to recognize power as material-discursive and intra-actively created through entanglements, rather than existing in relations between detached, pre-existing humans and non-humans.

The complexities of power and marginalization emerged in Frankie’s wonderings around becoming political as a girl. Frankie said:

knowing that I came from a place where like probably, you know, the biggest if anything that was like against me was my gender [...] being white, I didn't feel like my race was against me, like being middle class [...] I wasn't suffering from classism. So, I was very aware of that [...] I don't know if that's fueled my activis[m] even more knowing that I like should use the privilege that I have for the right reasons.

Here, race, class, and gender, are material-discursive (Barad 2007). Frankie's white skin, her middle-classness, and her cisgender identity are bodies, artifacts, and relations which emerge through the intra-active unfolding of sexism, racism, and classism. Recognizing these social factors as material-discursive, relational contexts of power and marginalization illustrates how they exist outside of individual human bodies, but also articulates how particular bodies (e.g., human and non-human) are differentially marked by their effects. Further, building on the previous discussion about can-do girl and girlhood (Harris 2004), girls seemed to have a sense of themselves as a "good person" who should be activists or participate in activism (Einwohner 2008; Meyers 2008). This was a belief that was especially potent for more privileged girls, like Frankie, who spoke about themselves as needing to use their positions or platforms to do something "good."

In another instance, Jenna shared how she sometimes wonders if she should post about certain social and political issues online, especially if they are more distanced from her lived experiences. Jenna explained:

I've made some posts about queer rights, and even though I am questioning [my sexuality], I still am not like openly anything, so I cannot speak for the LGBT community. I want to amplify what they say though. So, when I do post about that, I always ask myself, can I do a Post about this even if it's not about me? Or, should I just

put it in my Story and amplify it that way? So, I'm still kind of exploring that, to what extent it's my right to talk about it. I follow a lot of pages that are educators as well and they teach a lot about these things, how to amplify without speaking over somebody [...] because I like, I don't want to do that [...] that happens a lot, especially when you have a lot of privilege and all that [...].

In Jenna's story, an entanglement of Instagram affordances (e.g., Stories, Posts), queerness, creator-audience relations, LGBTQ communities, and material-discursive contexts of privilege, intra-act to reconfigure Jenna's becoming feminist. Jenna references Instagram affordances as material-discursive contexts. For example, Stories, which disappear after 24 hours unless saved, and can include photo, video, text, and audio. Instagram Stories are viewed in rapid succession through swiping and skipping forward, and are frequently positioned as "less serious" than main grid posts, a point I discuss in the following chapter.

When talking about her sexuality Anne said, "outwardly, say straight," whereas "inwardly, I think, like with friends and closer people I think it's definitely a bit more fluid, maybe bisexuality." Anne clarified, "but I'm not on the internet being like 'bi pride' (Lindsay: right), so that's, I guess pretty important, I guess uhm, thinking about digital feminism and how I present online." For Jenna and Anne, queer girl and feminist are entangled becomings, that differentially unfold across timespace (Barad 2007).

Both Safa and Farah talked about how their becoming girl and becoming feminist were entangled with their cultural and religious backgrounds. Safa said:

I am [...] South Asian. I'm a hijabi, you can see that. People believe that I come from a conservative background, and I think while that is true [adjusts computer screen for the light streaming in through the window] I just got (Lindsay: that's okay, I've got light on

me too, so I'm just embracing it) Oh yes, golden hour [both laugh] [...] People think that I'm from a conservative background and maybe I don't believe in like female rights or etc. And while it's true that I am from a conservative background, I do not, you know, associate with those ideolog[ies].

In another poignant moment, Farah shared:

I think personally, being a Muslim has had an effect, because Islam especially has like stereotypically meant that like, [there] is like a stereotype surrounding it that like women are restricted (Lindsay: hmm) And I think that like, I think that being a Muslim means that my feminism has had to go further than most people [...] like when [...] my mom's friend would like have an argument with her husband and my mom's like 'just say sorry to him, even if you're [not] wrong, like just say sorry.' And I'm always the one who's like 'no, like if you didn't do anything, don't say sorry.' And [my] mom's like 'not that again.'

Safa's and Farah's reflections on wearing hijab and being Muslim remind me of Braidotti's (2003:21) understanding of bodies as "a transformer and a relay point for the flow of energies: a surface of intensities." Braidotti (2003:21) argues that "the body as the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces: it is not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces." I recognize that Braidotti is not foreclosing the body to a human body. However, in the context of Safa's and Farah's stories, their bodies which are adorned with hijabs, become sites or surfaces of agential forces or intensities, including stereotypes of feminists, hijabs, and for Farah, Muslim traditions and ideologies. As Braidotti (2003:25) explains, "the body [...] is a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces; it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed." Material objects like hijabs are not merely material objects, they have affective and agential force, they become both

matter and meaning (Barad 2007) which co-create power, marginalization, and the possibilities for becoming girl-becoming feminist.

Read together, Jenna's, Anne's, Frankie's, Farah's, and Safa's story underscore the ways that intra-actions are mutually co-constitutive of relations of power and marginalization. In the intra-activity of becoming girl-feminist, power leaves marks on human and non-human bodies, constraining and enabling particular girl and feminist becomings. Relatedly, as discussed earlier in the context of Amina's resistance of "gender ideology" and her embrace of radical feminism, each participant becomes girl and feminist in specific timespaces, including material-discursive contexts of geography and geo-politics. As I elaborate in the following chapters, meanings and experiences of girl, feminist, and feminism – including on Instagram – are not separate from on/offline geographies, politics, or social worlds.

Figurations of Feminist: Uncool, cool, unfeminine, angry, crazy, unlikeable, extreme, anti-men

My diffractive reading has underscored the material-discursive and entangled becomings of age, gender, girlhood, and feminist. Participants' stories have shown how the boundaries of these performativities are fluid and participants' meanings and experiences of them are multiple. In this section, I engage a diffractive reading of the figurations of feminist emergent in my project, to consider what differences they make. Figurations, according to Haraway (1997:11) are "performative images" and "condensed maps of contestable worlds." Famously, Haraway (1991, 1997) presents the figuration of the cyborg as an alternative becoming that recognizes the impossibility of binary framings of human/machine (e.g., technology), human/animal, and science/fiction. For both Haraway (1991,1997) and Braidotti (2003, 2022), figurations are partial, relational, dynamic, and situated. Figurations are can both recapitulate and disrupt hegemonic framings of subjectivity, and are thus, best understood as expressions of "materially

embedded cartographies,” or material-discursive constellations in which particular becomings are loosely congealed (Braidotti 2003:13).

I was stunned by the figurations of feminists emergent in the interviews, focus groups, and in content analysis. In our interview, Jenna, told me that she “grew up in a high school that was very homophobic and sexist, which was even enforced by the teachers who didn’t really support their student[s].” Jenna shared that in high school “feminism was very uncool at the time, so being one of the very few open-minded people in high school was very bad.” But when she “discovered feminism” Jenna explained how she realized “like oh, I’m not crazy. It’s a good thing to be like this. I am not the problem.” Jenna told me that this was “like a re-awakening” because she realized “there is a problem with the world, and the way these people at school are treating me, like this is mainly because of that.” Jenna, who studies film in Ireland, enthusiastically said “now being in art college where everyone’s a feminist now, I feel like it’s a common interest that binds me to other people.” In Jenna’s stories, feminist and feminism in the timespacemattering (Barad 2007) of her high school are “uncool” or othered. Figurations are not fixed, rather are intra-actively emerging constellations of materialities and discourses, which is evident in Jenna’s experiences at art college. In the timespacemattering of art college, a feminist figuration emerges as “popular,” familiar, and is collectively reconfigured, felt, and embraced. Jenna described her Instagram account as a timespace that’s “very unapologetically feminist [...] where I’m like a nerdy feminist.”

Frankie was passionate about embracing both a girl and feminist identity and seemed annoyed by a figuration of feminist in mainstream media, which she summed up as “just these like ridiculous things, uhm like a caricature almost.” Frankie elaborated:

Uhm, I, I don't really get when people don't really think they are feminists. (Lindsay: Really? Okay) [...] I kind of would respect it more from someone who actually didn't believe in women's rights than someone was like, 'I'm just not a feminist because of that' (Lindsay: Right). You know, like, 'what are you talking about?' Like, yes, you're getting swayed by right wing media, and you're like scapegoating, and, and like, dramatizing, what you're saying [...] like you know, when [...] people [say], '[I'm] pro women's rights, but I'm not a feminist.' That, I don't get, I don't respect that. [both laugh] Like I just, I don't understand.

Frankie thought "the connotations of [feminist]" is what stops people from embracing the identity. She laughed and then elaborated:

Let me just describe myself: shave your head, grow your armpit hair [laughs] (Lindsay: Right. Hmm) be like not feminine, like [...] we're taught from such young age, even like, even I didn't think I was taught this, but like of course I was taught this [...] You exist to be seen, you exist to like not take up much space, be quiet, speak when spoken to. I mean I could do the whole, it's like the whole monologue from Barbie, do you know what I mean? (Lindsay: Right) Like it's all of those things. And being a feminist maybe doesn't, being a feminist in the way that feminism [in] the media has been shown maybe not the media now, but like the media like 6 years ago maybe, that doesn't necessarily align with what [...] you've been told to be if you're being a woman. Do you know what I mean?

Through processes of de-materialization and re-materialization, Braidotti (2022) accounts for the ways in which broader material-discursive contexts differentially affect the iterative becoming of bodies – moving them away from what they once were, and towards that which they are now becoming with. In each account, bodies cannot become outside of the

entanglements and networks around them. Here in Frankie's story, feminist is both material-discursive, figured as non(hegemonically) feminine – buzzcut haircut and hairy armpits – and within a broader context of the “year of the girl” that Frankie elaborated earlier, which was co-created by the momentous monologue in the Barbie film. I think Frankie is also inviting us to think about the way in which multiple feminist figurations exist at once, are entangled, and creating difference for their relational becoming. Boldly and sarcastically describing herself when asked about the stereotypes of feminist, Frankie points to the ways that figurations of feminist and girl are remade in specific material-discursive contexts, which include friction and resistances.

Frankie continued to elaborate on the stereotypes and figurations of feminist. She extended one hand and said, “this is the image of feminism,” and then she raised her other hand at a distance and said, “this is the image of women, and they're not they're not sitting next to each other.” Critiquing this position, Frankie commented:

And [if] you're going to be a feminist, you have to sacrifice some of your femininity, I think. Uhm and maybe that's why women are, I don't know. And then there's this connotations of like it's like, it's so funny because you know, I saw something the other day, which was like, ‘you know the best trick like the men have like pulled on us is [making us believe] that like anger isn't an emotion' like [laughs], and was thinking about how like really people have a problem with anger when it's coming, I mean specifically from Black women, but like when like angry women, definitely more from Black women, but this idea of like an angry feminist. But actually, anger is like a very productive emotion I think, when used in the right way. But that's, I can remember being like 15 and going to my friend's house for like a party and like I was like, I, you know, I'd say I'm

vocal now, I was *very* outspoken as like a 15/16 year old [laughs]. And we just get in arguments, like every house I'd go to be talking with the whoever's dad [...] was there [both laugh]. Look, [I was] just ruining [laughs], ruining summer parties like left, right, and centre. And [at the party] I was having like an argument with this boy that [I] used to go to school with because he was like, 'oh are you a feminazi?' And I was like 'what?' I was like, 'did you just align like an ideology that supports the equal rights of like of women with like, with genocide?' [...] He was a 15-year-old boy, he's actually a really nice boy. (Lindsay: Right). But that's the media he's being fed. So, I guess, sorry, I'm going to shut up. I'm sorry, sorry.

I report Frankie's story at-length here, because I find it so striking. Our interview included several moments like this, where Frankie spoke in detail, at-length, and with enthusiasm and sarcasm about her thoughts and experiences. These were momentous in our conversation, enacting diffractive patterns (Barad 2007) that shifted the trajectory, cadence, and flow of our interview. Here, feminist is figured as "feminazi," unlikeable, potentially violent, and angry. For Frankie, becoming girl and becoming feminist are relational unfoldings, marked by the differences co-created by specific intra-actions. Her retelling of the summer parties where she debated with peers' fathers and had one striking interaction with a boy, illustrate the inseparability of past-present-future in Frankie's becoming girl and becoming feminist. As Barad (2007) argues, the past never ends because it leaves traces which are co-constitutive of the ongoing intra-activity of the world. In other words, Frankie's 15-year-old, "vocal" feminist self who was "ruining summer parties," critiquing figurations of feminists as "feminazis" and their spread through media, are part of the intra-activity which affects her older feminist self. Frankie's story here also illuminates the figuration of feminist as differentially material-

discursive (i.e., age, angry, femininity, summer parties), affective (i.e., angry, outspoken), embedded in relations with other human/non-human bodies (i.e., boys, fathers, men, media), and embodied. Frankie also reminds us that the material-discursive contexts of racism are differentiating in becoming feminist and the figurations of feminist, including problematically constructing Black women as too angry.

Doing my best to follow Frankie's energy and interest, I then asked her if she ever felt the disconnect between feminist identity and femininity that she described above. Frankie replied, "I don't know if I ever have." Frankie said she understood why people might hesitate to identify as feminist, "even if they literally are a feminist [by] definition but they don't like identify as a feminist because uhm they associate it with those like negative connotations [...] like smelly hippy or like whatever it is." Frankie critiqued "the separation between like feminist and woman," where "traditional" women embody "politeness." Quickly, Frankie told me, "I don't see [politeness] really in any of the women I look up to [...] I don't think that women have an obligation to be palatable." Laughing, Frankie said, "I think my favourite women are unpalatable, like, whatever that means." Rather than seeing these as socially constructed ideas, I argue for recognizing these figurations of feminists that Frankie explains as "smelly hippies" and as "unpalatable," as both material and discursive, relational becomings which have agential force in reconfiguring the possibilities for gendered and feminist identities. When read with Braidotti (2003:13), these figurations of "smelly hippy" and "unpalatable women" which Frankie embraces, can be understood as her embodiment of "a subject position towards all that the phallogocentric system does not want it to become."

Lola also spoke about how her school experiences growing up shaped her introduction to feminism. Lola told me that she "went to like a very conservative private boarding school" in the

UK. At this school, there was a feminist club that met weekly, and peers would “like make fun of it being feminist.” Resonant with Frankie’s experiences, Lola shared, “I don’t know if you ever would have experienced anything like this, but being a feminist was like a really crazy, crazy thing to be (Lindsay: mhmm), you know, people would be throwing terms around like ‘feminazi’ like ‘oh yeah, equality is so crazy.’” These earlier experiences were important for Lola’s current feminist organizing, where she runs a collective Instagram account with her friends that calls out gendered harassment and catcalling. Curiously, when I asked Lola if she would self-identify as a feminist, she said yes, but there were some things she wanted to clarify “because people use feminism [to mean] a lot of different things.” Lola said that someone claiming a feminist identity does not automatically make her trust their beliefs or politics because “feminism can be a term that’s used to defend maybe, I don’t know, lifestyles or things or like ideas that are actually [...] very specific to one section of that [...] feminism.”

Commenting on the multiplicity of feminisms, which I discuss in the following chapter, Lola also references the potency of multiple entangled and contradictory figurations of feminist. Perhaps, Lola is signalling towards the spacetime-mattering of becoming feminist, in which becoming feminist emerges through specific configurations. For Lola, it seems that she does identify as a feminist, but her proclamation and embodiment of feminist, including how she engages with others who self-identify as feminist, shifts across contexts.

Quite explicitly, Estelle said, “I guess like being a strong feminist is, you know, not everybody’s cup of tea.” Estelle had multiple Instagram accounts at the time of our interview and was an active abortion rights activist in her community. Estelle spoke candidly during our interview and on her Instagram accounts about her experiences as a survivor of sexual assault and rape. Much of her organizing was around resources for survivors and protesting the

overturning of Roe v. Wade, which she explained, “became very personal very fast” and acted as a catalyst for her feminism and activism. Over Zoom, from her college bedroom in New York, Estelle said:

though I do get support, there’s also a lot of harshness thrown at me (Lindsay: hmm) [...] just people being rude or like, people saying horrid things [...] the biggest thing is the fact that I’m feminist and that’s what bothers people because there’s like a dirty association somehow with the word feminist. Like [...] people think like ‘oh, you just care about like women and you wanna like erase men out of the picture.’ But that’s not what like taking down the patriarchy is. Like it would help men too (Lindsay: right). And I don’t think they see that benefit.

When we were talking about her experiences being overtly feminist online, Estelle described it as “like liberating and freeing, and at the same time it also feels like [...] you’re putting yourself really out there (Lindsay: hmm) because there is so much hate towards the word feminist.”

Estelle shared that “it can be hard when like guys will like make jokes like ‘oh, like you’re the crazy feminist,’ or stuff like that.” But Estelle said, “like I don’t think it’s crazy. I don’t think it’s a crazy notion that we should all be treated equally and with respect. Like I think that’s pretty normal, so yeah.”

Echoing Frankie’s and Lola’s stories, Estelle critiques a figuration of feminist as a crazy. I am also struck by the word “dirty” which Estelle uses to describe others’ reactions to the word feminist. “Dirty” is material-discursive and blending of matter and meaning (Barad 2007) – having material debris, tarnished, uncomfortable, unclean, and/or revolting. “Dirty” feminist emerges through and within a socio-political context of patriarchy where girls and women are expected to care for and about their appearance and strive towards humble perfection materially

in the ways they care for and dress their bodies, and morally. Importantly though, women and girls are expected to disguise the emotional toll and effort of this work. Perhaps it is not surprising then, that feminist is figured as unfeminine, dirty, smelly, and hairy, in its opposition to humble girlhood and popular femininity (see also Bent 2020; Huang and Bent 2022; Taft 2020).

During our interview through Instagram's direct messages, Amina sent me a Post from her Instagram account of art she created during Kesha's court case accusing Dr. Luke of rape. The post was a drawing of singer Kesha, shaded in grey and white using pencil, with a piece of tape covering her mouth that read "SONY." About the art and her Post on Instagram, Amina said, "I supported [Kesha]. And I remember the next day I walked into class and was booed when I walked in. Because I spoke so openly [] against rape, and the other kids thought I was too extreme." Amina's becoming feminist is affected by material artifacts like the hand-drawn art she created with pencil and paper and later shared on Instagram, relations with other human and non-human bodies (i.e., her peers, Kesha, Sony, Dr. Luke), the timespace of Kesha's trial and her school, and material-discursive framings of feminists as extreme. Similarly, Farah shared, "I know that in my old school, I had a reputation of kind of being like, I mean, feminists in general, there's kind of like this like stereotype of like angry." Farah said, "because I was openly feminist, that was kind of like that label was put on me of like 'she's always angry.'" Again, in Amina's and Farah's stories, angry feminist becomes within the timespacemattering (Barad 2007) of secondary school.

Much of the Instagram content that I analysed was concerned with reclaiming feminist identity and critiquing problematic figurations and stereotypes of feminists, sometimes simultaneously. For example, in the caption of carousel Post titled "you can still be a feminist

even if you...”, @feministcrafters write “you can still be a feminist even if you.... Which of these misconceptions were you taught to believe about feminists? I remember telling a friend I was feminist & she said ‘I want to renounce men from my dating life too’ ... 🤔.” The Post used coloured backgrounds and bold text to trouble boundaries and stereotypes of feminists. The catchy-ness of the phrase “you can still be a feminist” is reminiscent of snappy list-style writing pieces in magazines/zines and fashion and lifestyle blogging. In part, the text reads “You can be a feminist even if you: don’t can’t engage in protest [...] date [...] need a break from activism [...] are still working on dismantling your internalised misogyny [...] aren’t a cis woman [...] don’t have an online presence.” @feministcrafters assert that “the stereotype of what a modern feminist does or supposedly ‘should’ look like has been constructed over years both by anti-feminist views & a narrow, western white view. They’re not the standard.” Instead, ‘good feminists’ have “an intersectional mindset, respect for others, and a desire to advocate for equal rights.” I noticed a tendency for main grid Posts to include this list-style form of writing, perhaps indicative of the swipe-through nature of carousel Posts, but also perhaps co-creating a shareable digital feminism.

In another example, @activistnetwork had a Post in a recurring series titled “let’s talk about gender equality” where they discuss different issues related to gender and gender inequality. One Post in this series was “let’s talk about gender equality: feminist is not an insult.” On a purple background, in black text, the Post reads, “for the longest time I thought being a feminist was an insult, and so did many others.” As I swiped through the Post, there were short bits of text on each slide, troubling aforementioned framings of feminist, including asserting that “no, feminists don’t hate men.” I want to suggest here, that Instagram is a space where digital artifacts (i.e., Posts, Stories, Reels, text, audio, video, art), discourse, texts, bodies (human and

non-human) and technologies intra-act to reconfigure figurations of feminist. While I present only a few examples of content here, Instagram can be understood as a timespace where multiple and alternative figurations of feminists might emerge. The particular timespace of Instagram might open possibilities for feminists to play with, co-create, experiment, and embody multiple feminist figurations in their becoming. Importantly though, intra-actions always involve exclusions (Barad 2007), so anything or everything is not possible on Instagram, a point I elaborate in the following chapter.

While there was a tendency for many of the participants I spoke to, and the content that I analysed, to trouble framings of feminists as anti-men, there were some exceptions. Most resonant was in my interview with Amina, a 23-year-old, overtly and proud radical feminist who was living in Pakistan at the time of our interview. Amina said:

Okay, so I'd say I am quite the misandrist. And I don't necessarily blame myself or any woman for being one. I know the usual thing is to sugarcoat feminism and make it palatable to men by saying feminists don't hate men. But I don't necessarily believe in that. I think anger is a healthy emotion that tells us we deserve better and aren't being treated like a human on this earth should be. I feel like we have a right to be angry towards our oppressors and to expect women to suppress that anger is just misogynistic.

We don't want to do that and sit still and look pretty. I'm angry.

Here, the boundaries of Amina's feminism and feminist becoming are marked by anger, misandry, and anti-men rhetoric, entangled phenomena which become together. Amina's feminism and feminist becomings are also positioned as oppositional and distanced from "sugar coated" feminism. In contrast to others, Amina seems to celebrate and embrace figurations of feminist that materialize feminists as anti-men. In another moment, when talking about her

sexuality, Amina said, “men are pretty much our predators and to still be attracted to them and want to be in a relationship with them to me, is embarrassing.” In both moments, Amina’s becoming bisexual girl and becoming radical feminist are intra-actively co-produced, they are entangled and become legible through their co-creation (Barad 2007). Amina’s becoming girl emerges with and through an entanglement that includes material-discursive contexts of misogyny, misandry, hetero- and bisexuality, radical feminism, and “sugar coated” feminisms, and affective forces like anger, embarrassment, and blame. This entanglement also includes relations between multiple material-discursive bodies – men, women, predators, and oppressors.

Fatima, who was also living in Pakistan, described herself online and in our interview as a radical feminist. She explained:

Radical feminists don’t include m3n in their feminism and regard women as an oppressed class while m3n as oppressors. Moreover, I also identify as an eco feminist because I believe that oppressions of women and nature are interconnected under m@le supremacist systems. Women are most affected by environmental issues.

When I asked Fatima what it has been like posting as a radical and eco feminist on Instagram, she said, “it’s not positive most of the time[] because people call you a manhater when you’re just standing for your rights as a woman, but I am so glad that I was able to make real life feminist friends.” For Fatima, becoming feminist is a multiplicity that includes embracing radical and ecofeminist. Radical feminists are figured as women that become through oppressive relations within men and patriarchy. Here, Fatima censors “men” (m3n) and “male” (m@le) in our conversation through Instagram’s direct messages, a tactic used by social media users to avoid having their account flagged for problematic content, and to minimize the likelihood of shadow banning (see for example, Gerrard and Thronham 2020). Such material-discursive

practices underscore that Instagram does not sit still, rather enacts force through surveillance, and algorithmic sorting and ranking systems that co-constitute visibility, creating difference for the becoming of feminists and feminisms in the Instagram timespace. In Fatima's story, becoming radical and ecofeminist involves multiple human and non-human bodies such as nature, environment, "m@le supremacist systems," women, men, friends, online hate, material-discursive contexts of "man-hating," and "real life" friends.

In this section, I aimed to pull apart the entanglements which co-create multiple feminist figurations. Instagram content and participants' stories, when read with and through Haraway, Braidotti, and Barad illustrate how figurations of feminists as uncool, cool, dirty, angry, unfeminine, and man-hating/haters emerge in specific timespacematterings. This reading troubles framings which fix feminist as an identity or performativity neatly contained in human bodies but also illustrates how particular material-discursive contexts constrain and enable various feminist cartographies. Holding onto the potentialities of multiple feminist figurations, in the following intra-acting section I consider Instagram as an intra-active phenomena, which shapes becoming girl and becoming feminist.

Becoming Girl-Becoming Feminist-Instagram

The intra-activity of Instagram created difference in relations of becoming girl – becoming feminist. For example, when talking about her experiences being a feminist in the UK, Rose said, "everyone who I have on my Instagram is probably also a feminist", so identifying as a feminist on her Instagram was "not that deep." Offline, however, was more complicated as she intra-acts with girls who do not see the point of feminism or claiming a feminist identity, something she often debates with her peers. The intra-activity of Rose's Instagram includes the entangling of algorithms which sort, rank, and classify content (e.g., Bhattarai 2017; Cotter 2019;

Gerrard and Thronham 2020; Gillespie 2014; Linabary et al. 2020), other feminist accounts, feminist content, and the co-creation of a material-discursive context wherein multiple feminist bodies (human bodies, Instagram, Instagram affordances, Instagram content, feminist Instagram content) intra-act and become together.

In our pair interview, both Jacinta and Safa felt that Instagram had muddled their understanding of feminism and affected whether they would self-identify as feminists. Jacinta shared how she felt there were “so many specifications” of feminisms and feminists now, that she “didn’t know about before [she] was on Instagram.” Jacinta continuously struggles to figure out her own definition of feminism and feminist, amidst the multiplicity on Instagram. As Jacinta explained, “I feel like people don’t realize that like subconsciously Instagram is changing the way you think, the way you act.” Agreeing with Jacinta, Safa added, “prior to Instagram I think I had like a little bit more of a clear-cut definition of like what feminism was, or, you know, whether I identified as a feminist.” Again, Instagram, is an intra-active phenomena that co-constitutes human bodies, non-human bodies like Instagram photos, Stories, Reels, videos, audio, emojis, hashtags, algorithms, virality, and trends, which entwines to create difference for the becoming of feminism and feminists. Instagram does not sit still, rather produces an entangled agency that affects which feminisms and feminists become, and how Instagram users see, relate to, and experience them. As Jacinta put it, “Instagram is changing the way you think, the way you act.” Related to my diffractive reading of feminist figurations in the previous section, each human Instagram user is one material-discursive force in a human and non-human cartography of Instagram feminism.

Writing to me in direct messages on Instagram from Germany, Nora said that she “definitely self-identif[ies] as a feminist [...] it’s a huge part of [her] identity.” Interestingly,

Nora said, “I identify as a root feminist online” meaning that she “wants to get to the root of the problem, which is patriarchy/male supremacy, and ideally wish that the current system can be overthrown and [re]placed with an anti-patriarchal one.” She clarified though, writing that “offline [she] just identif[ies] as a feminist because it’s easier to communicate and doesn’t spark too much controversy 😊.” Similar to Jacinta’s and Safa’s stories above, Nora illuminates the differentiating effect of the intra-activity of online timespace for her feminism, wherein it seems more possible and less problematic to identify as a root feminist. Timespaces like Instagram open opportunities for Nora’s becoming root feminist.

Over email, when I asked Essa if she would self-identify as a feminist, she replied “no, I don’t think so. If I do try to self-identify as a feminist[,] I feel like it’ll be too much for me as I won’t get the reviews I want or the change I want to make.” Writing from Canada, Essa clarified:

Like for my Instagram posts I want specific people to see it and like it, but when that doesn’t happen, it’s also part of the reason why I archive [Instagram Posts] because they are not reaching who I want them to reach. If I do start actively posting on Instagram about women’s rights and equality, I will be moved to do more depending on the likes I get or the number of shares I get.

This was a glowing moment (MacLure 2013) in our interview. I felt both shocked and saddened by the affective force of Instagram likes in Essa’s becoming on Instagram. By archiving Posts, they become invisible to Essa’s audience, and accessible only to her in an archive folder. For Essa, becoming feminist emerges through a network of human and non-human bodies, including peers, Instagram content, Instagram likes and comments, virality, reach, and Instagram’s archiving functions. Likes and comments mean something to Essa, and do something for propelling or restraining her becoming feminist. Essa is not acting on her own. Likes, comments,

and reach co-produce a messy entangled agency that affects if and when Essa will become and embrace feminist.

Becoming Ambivalent Girl Feminist

While I've written about participants' multiple meanings and relations to feminist and girl identities, and the ways in which these were messily remixed on Instagram, I sensed that girls are not always loudly or proudly claiming themselves feminists, or positioning their digital organizing and creations as feminism. The way girls and Instagram content danced around and away from feminist and feminism was fascinating to me. I began to wonder (and still do), what does feminist do? Or, what does feminist become? In this section, I muse about these questions in a discussion of an alternative feminist becoming that emerged in my project – ambivalent girl feminist.

Resonating finding from my Master's research, girls in this project had complicated feelings about and relations to feminism and feminist. In this research project, I was struck by the intricacies of the networks which reconstructed their boundaries and relations to feminist. In my Master's work, the activist girl bloggers were uncomfortable positioning their blogging as activism but saw themselves as activists, echoing arguments made by scholars about discourses of ideal activists and the effects of gender in activist self-identifications (Bobel 2007; Craddock 2019). Whereas in this project, their relations to feminism and feminist were much messier. For example, Farah thought that because feminism and feminists are "online now, it's like among women [it's] socially like, it's not even a thing to say you're feminist because you just assume everyone's feminist." Here, becoming feminist is necessarily beyond an individual human body, as it involves an entanglement and co-creation of women bodies, on/offline timespacematterings, the affordances and cultures of specific online spaces, and expectations around feminist identity

and practice. Becoming girl and becoming feminist are positioned as deeply linked – to become girl in the timespacemattering of the digital is to become feminist.

An ambivalent feminist girl performativity also emerged in Juliette’s story. When asked whether she claims a feminist identity, Juliette explained, “I don’t really go around [saying] like ‘oh I’m a feminist.’ Like I would identify with that word, but I don’t tend to tell people. Like hopefully from my actions [and] beliefs they can tell.” This was motivated in part, from negative experiences where peers have “preconceived conceptions” of who she is, if she identifies as a feminist. Becoming ambivalent feminist girl involves a relational dance away from claiming a feminist identity, despite engaging in the politics or activism of a feminist. In Juliette’s story, *feminist* is not merely a socially constructed discourse, or a material, embodied identity, rather is a material-discursive force that does something for Juliette’s becoming.

Similarly, Jacinta explained:

The term feminist [...] has become so hostile, like people like just involuntarily just like attack anyone that comes out as feminist (Lindsay: right). Like before, I feel like when it was like ‘oh like, you know, she’s being bold, like she’s standing up.’ Now [it] just seems like you’re someone that whines about the life you live. (Lindsay: right, hmm). I want to [self-identify as feminist] but the light that paints too [...] people will start to, you know, like the opposite of feminism [...] like they’re gonna start creating biases about like [...] who you are or like what you stand for. So, I honestly, don’t know.

Here, “feminist” is a material-discursive practice (Barad 2003; 2007) that marks particular bodies as “bold,” “whiny,” and sites of hostility and disapproval from others. “Feminist” is understood within configurations and shifts across timespace, as Jacinta explains how feminist was once applauded and is now annoying. Jacinta continued to share how she felt self-

identifying as a feminist as a woman in STEM was particularly risky and not good professionally. Feminist according to Jacinta, “has just changed like drastically as I’ve grown up.” She thought she might use “maybe like a synonym to that” to describe herself, but she admits “like definitely in an ideal world, like I would be more comfortable using [feminist].”

In another instance, Ava told me:

nobody goes up to someone to say, ‘I am a feminist’ (Lindsay: okay) you know, you just say like oh, ‘I think women should have equal rights.’ Because I feel like we’re too young of an age to like say ‘I’m a feminist’, you know? If we were like to talk about feminism a bit too much, you’re just gonna be called chronically online [laughs].

For both Jacinta and Ava, becoming girl and becoming feminist are entangled, as the material-discursive contexts of age, including being “too young” to be feminist, and wanting to become “professional” and thus, non-feminist. I also understand “chronically online” to be a particular material-discursive practice of age, that is intra-actively produced through an entanglement of bodies, age, technologies, time, and politics. Chronically online is produced through an entanglement of agencies: technology-algorithms-political digital content-screen time-age - young bodies – a point I develop throughout this dissertation.

In our interview, Gwen shared how she thought feminist can be “a bit of a turn off,” resonating arguments made by Ringrose and Renold (2016) about the bad affect of claiming a feminist identity. When I asked her if she would self-identify as a feminist, Gwen was unsure, explaining, “it just depends on the societal definition. I think if we’re talking about feminist today – no [...] like what’s represented on social media. But in terms of a feminist who’s like fighting for women’s equal rights – yes.” If someone asked her if she was a feminist, Gwen said

she would respond by asking “what do you mean by that?” For Gwen, “feminist” is a multiplicity that is reconfigured in specific timespaces, with effects (Barad 2007).

When I asked Esti if she self-identified as a feminist, she replied, “uhm, well, yeah, but I don’t think I’m like crazy, like, [...] actively, uhm like an active activist. Does that make sense? [laughs]” Esti continued saying:

Like I do stand for it, but it’s just like, I don’t feel [...] like I really show it on the outside that much [...] I kind of just get that feeling inside, like I don’t know, I wouldn’t really portray it outward. Like I wouldn’t say I’m like a huge, I don’t know, [...] if I’m a feminist, does that mean like I have to say it out loud? Like [laughs].

I responded to Esti’s question with, “I don’t know. I think it means something different to everybody.” Then, Esti said:

Okay, so yeah, I think I am, but just like when I think of the word feminist, I like think [of] someone who very actively like uhm stands for [...] women’s rights. But for me, like I don’t know, I guess I’m just very, I don’t know, conservative, I guess.

Resonant with the figurations of feminist I diffracted earlier, multiple feminists emerge in Esti’s story, including those who “show it on the outside” and those who “feel it inside.”

Zara felt she was “a large part of [the] feminist movement,” but like Esti, made distinctions between feminists. Zara said:

but I would not like, I, and I have gone, I have protested on the streets, but I would say that [...] undeniably there are so many like women [with] even more life experience and who have done even more than me [...] there’s like millions of people doing more than me. But I say I’m still quite, I don’t know if I’m the large part, I’m not really sure whether I have or not, but, because I could see [...] that would be kind of biased.

(Lindsay: right). But I would say that I am quite engag[ed] with [the feminist movement], and upon first sight, I'm pretty sure people would, you know, assume that I'm feminist. While Zara thinks that she is part of the broader feminist movement, she seems clear to clarify that there are other feminists who are doing more than her, sentiments that are echoed by teenage girls in Taft's (2017) project. Curiously, however, Zara, like Juliette, suggests that others would be able to tell that she is a feminist based on her actions. Perhaps then, becoming feminist girl can be understood as a posthuman performativity that includes a particular reconfiguring of material-discursive contexts of gender and feminist that are both visible and discrete.

Valeri's Instagram account was comprised of carousel Posts with solid-coloured backgrounds and paragraphs of text which read like short essays around various social and political issues including: anti-Black racism, the normalization of cultural appropriation in digital trend, intersections of sexism and racism, police violence, gun violence, and abortion rights. I was struck by Valeri's rich critique, but also the timeliness of the topics and trends she remixed. I spoke to Valeri through Instagram direct message over the span of one-hour where we sent text-based and audio note messages. Valeri, whose Instagram account name references her identity as a Black woman and a feminist, surprisingly had some ambivalence towards the feminist identity in our interview. Laying on her bed in California, in a voice note, Valeri said:

Uhm, do I self-identify as a feminist? Honestly, I would say I'm, I consider myself to be a womanist, which is basically feminism, but for Black women. Just because historically, uhh Black women, and Black marginalized genders have been uhm, seve- like marginalised, like pushed to the margins by white women. So, I would say I'm a womanist instead of a feminist even though I have no issue with Black women or women of colour who identify themselves as feminist because really, to each's own. And I also

have no problem with marginalized women, racially marginalized women who don't identify with feminism either.

Valeri's story and Braidotti's conceptualization of becoming woman and figurations are twisted in a diffractive reading. Distancing herself from feminism as a Black woman, Valeri becomes Black womanist, which Braidotti (2003:13) positions as a "'figuration' of alternative feminist subjectivity" alongside figurations of "the lesbian, the cyborg, the inappropriate(d) other, the nomadic feminist and so on." Braidotti argues that these alternative figurations of feminist subjectivity are cartographies that emerge through social relations and map "materially embedded, embodying accounts of one's power-relations" (2003:13). For Braidotti (2003:13) embodying an alternative figuration of feminist subjectivity like womanist, can work to "express the rate of change, transformation or affirmative deconstruction of the power one inhabits." Read together-apart (Barad 2014), Valeri's proclamation of womanist and Braidotti's (2003) alternative feminist figurations underscore the ways that power leaves marks on bodies, affecting which bodies become (or not) feminist.

Becoming Boy Feminist- Becoming Girl Feminist

Related to the previous discussion of becoming ambivalent feminist girl, in what follows, I talk about the affective force of gender for relations of gendered feminist bodies. As I have written throughout this chapter, gender is an intra-active material-discursive context beyond fleshy bodies, that constrains and enables feminist possibilities. In a striking moment, Rose, an 18-year-old Black girl living in the UK, shared that she did not understand her gendered experiences or identity as relevant to her politics. There was, however, a tendency among some interviewees to argue that becoming girl meant that you were expected to be a feminist, and that for guys, becoming feminist was different. For example, Ava, a 16- year-old Persian girl in

Toronto, did not feel that girls got any kind of status or clout from being a feminist, “because it’s kind of just expected that [girls are] feminist when [they’re] born.” Ava continued, “for guys, I feel like if you talk [about it] too much, [people are] gonna think you’re like annoying, which is kinda unfortunate.” Later in our focus group, Ava argued:

sometimes when like guys speak out on issues surrounding feminism, they’re like praised so much for it [when] it could be just like [the] bare minimum. You’d be like ‘you’re such an amazing person because you believe that women should also have the right to vote,’ like, I think it’s worse that they don’t think that [...] The way most men view other feminist guys is like, I don’t know if it’s too informal to say, but like a lot of people say men are just feminists to get laid, right? [...]

While Ally seemed to agree with Ava, in the same focus group, she added:

I think in a different like, if I see like a guy defending a girl on Instagram, like in the comments and the girls are really pretty or something, people start calling the guy ‘simp,’ saying like ‘oh, like she’s not gonna like you’ [...] Especially [if] she was like a popular person [talking] about the hate [she was] seeing and then the guys defend her, then it’s not a good reaction for him.

Gwen countered this framing, arguing that her guy friends that are feminists do not receive this kind of pushback. Gwen explained:

I think it depends [...] And the way that their guy friends react to it is not in a negative light at all. It’s kind of just like a ‘oh bro, like that person’s a feminist like yo, yo’, kinda like they’re just like kind of joking around but like they’re being serious about it at the same time, but it’s more like positive rather than condescending. But I do totally see other guys being like, ‘bro, like how are you supporting this kind of thing?’ And more of like

the I don't know how else to word it other than like the testosterone side of being like, 'what do you kinda like, what are you doing kind of thing?' (Lindsay: Right.) In terms of women, yeah, I don't see other women looking at other women being like, 'what are you doing?' (Lindsay: Hmm). But I can see other men looking at some women again if it is on that extremist side being like, 'bro, like you're a feminist?' Like I literally don't know how to explain it, but you know [laughs]

These exchanges between Ava, Ally, and Gwen provoke me to think with Braidotti (2003, 2022) and Barad (2007) about the deeply contextual and material-discursive nature of becoming girl feminist and becoming boy feminist. Their discussions bring forth several entangled material-discursive phenomena, such as "simp" and "bro." "Simp" and "bro" are both material artifacts when they are written in comments in Instagram and tangible bodies on/offline, but also discursive forces that mark boundaries of appropriate practices of gender, sexuality (i.e. "to get laid") and feminism. Gender is intra-active, continually becoming, and intra-acting within broader contexts that reconfigure on/offline worlds. Gender, like feminist, is an entanglement of bodies, hormones (e.g., "testosterone"), desires, technologies like comments and Instagram content, and timespaces.

During our Zoom interview, from the UK, Farah similarly said:

if there's a man who goes out of his way to express that he is feminist (Lindsay: hmm) it's always met with [...] two reactions. If he's attractive, then everyone accepts it. But if [...] he isn't like conventionally attractive, there's always an idea of like [...] [he's] only saying that to attract women, like you don't [actually] care about women [...] Even in my [sociology] lesson, my teacher, we were talking about feminism, and this boy put his hand up and he was like, 'I'm not a feminist, why should I be a feminist? I'm a boy,

feminists should be girls,’ and my teachers was like so bamboozled, [asking] ‘what are you talking about?’ Like it’s literally about equality [...] like equality is about both sides of the story.

Reading Farah’s comments through Barad’s (2003) posthuman performativity illuminates how gender performance and identity emerge through intra-actions of desire, material-discursive contexts of heterosexuality and beauty, ideas and practices of feminist and feminism, and relations between multiple human boy bodies, girl bodies, and teacher bodies.

Quite vulnerably, Estelle shared her experiences at a pro-abortion rally at The Capitol in Washington. Underscoring the complexities of becoming girl-woman-feminist, Estelle said:

At first [anti-feminists and pro-life supporters] used to really get to me, and I guess it depends on the severity of what they’re saying (Lindsay: totally). But like now, if someone says like anything, like I usually have like a counter to it. Oh like, this girl at The Capitol, when I was protesting, came up to me and said like, ‘well, if women like just close their legs, then we wouldn’t need abortions.’ And I was like, at first, I let it go, and she walked away. Then she came back, and she wrote [...] ‘just close your legs’ [on paper] and I tried to snatch it from her. She didn’t let me and then I was like, ‘have you ever been raped?’ [...] because like people don’t think about that. And, and she said, ‘why would I ever put myself in that position?’ And like, I like lost it in the moment and I was just like, ‘god will literally spit on you if he ever sees you.’ And like her family had to like carry her away and it was just like a whole scene. And like, things like that, like that really got to me because I’m a survivor, like you just saying, ‘close your legs,’ how is that possible when someone’s forcing them open? Like you know, like that’s not a realistic statement, and that’s, also, you’re a woman, you know. So, that was like

definitely really hard and it, it just does get hard as a feminist in general when people don't think even, even women are brainwashed into thinking that they don't deserve rights. Like they don't understand when they're voting pro-birth, that they're like voting against themselves. Like if they're bleeding out, they're gonna die too. Their Republican vote won't save them, you know?

In this glowing moment, (MacLure 2013), Estelle troubles some participants' earlier claims that women and girls do not need to claim themselves as feminist, because it is assumed they are. In this story, I am drawn to the affective force of the paper that read 'just close your legs.' This paper, marked with ink, is both material and discursive. Reading the words on the paper, in her encounter with the pro-life woman enacted force for Estelle's becoming girl-becoming feminist. 'Just close your legs' co-creates the material-discursive timespace of a pro-abortion rally and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, marking boundaries between pro and anti- abortion narratives, identities, and bodies.

Participants' stories, theories of becoming, intra-activity, and figurations, as well as Instagram content, when read diffractively, articulate the ways that meanings and experiences of gender co-constitute the relational becoming of girl-feminist and boy-feminist. While in the previous section I write about performativity of ambivalent feminist girl as participants distanced themselves and their Instagram content from feminism and feminist, my diffractive reading here has added complexity to this ambivalence. While some girls seem to embrace feminism and feminist in their on/offline performativities, others do not. As some girls shared, gendered expectations of girl, girlhood, and femininity can feel irreconcilable with feminist identities, yet girls also felt that it was expected or understood among girls that they should be feminist.

Becoming girl and becoming feminist are messy, ironic, and deeply contextual unfoldings. I hold onto and add to this mess in the subsequent chapters.

In/Conclusions

In this chapter, I have aimed to trace the entangled, dynamic, relational, intra-active, material-discursive becoming of girl and feminist. I have argued that girl and feminist emerge intra-actively through specific configurations of bodies, materialities, discourses, times, and spaces. Like Pomerantz and Raby (2018), I advance an understanding of girl as material-discursive phenomena that emerges through and beyond an essentialist (i.e. gender binary, age-based) framing, arguing that girl is a particular material-discursive practice, a posthuman performativity (Barad 2003) that emerges in spacetimematterings through constellations of entangled agencies. I also advance feminist as a material-discursive practice and entangled phenomena, rather than an identity contained in fleshy, individual human bodies. Like girl, feminist is multiple, dynamic, and intra-actively re-constituted in timespacematterings (Barad 2007). The multiplicity and material-discursive nature of feminist is illustrated in the figurations of feminists that participants spoke about, critiqued, and embraced, and in the many pieces of Instagram content I diffract in this section. Throughout this chapter, I have attended to the complexity of material-discursive forces like age, gender, race, sexuality, disability, and culture which emerge in the intra-actions that enable and constrain particular girl and feminist becomings.

Chapter Four: The Intra-Activity of Instagram Feminism

In this chapter, I hope to illuminate the fluctuating and porous nature of the boundaries of Instagram feminism. Here, as throughout my entire dissertation, I enact an agential cut to temporarily isolate the intra-active becoming (Barad 2007) of Instagram feminism so I can disentangle some of the configurations that co-constitute its becoming. I argue that Instagram feminism is re-configured iteratively in timespacematterings (Barad 2007), affecting and affected by the timespaces of Instagram, multiple bodies including technologies, and various material-discursive contexts. I often diffracted with content that was reposted from other accounts and sometimes from other digital spaces, thus, I recognize that Instagram feminism does not sit still, and is always open – moving, remixing, and intra-acting within the timespace of Instagram, and the broader intra-active unfolding of the world. This iterative unfolding and differentiating means that a representational understanding is not sufficient. Instead, I try to map difference or patterns of differentiating (Barad 2007), to understand what particular bodies (human and non-human), discourses, material things, spaces, and temporalities do for the unfolding of Instagram feminism.

My diffractive reading aims to deepen existing conversations about girls' digital activism which tend to focus on discourses of age, gender, and activism (Dejmanee 2018; Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018; Jiménez 2016; Keller 2016; Kim and Ringrose 2018). Rather than understanding technology as a pre-existing tool that humans interact with to mobilize digital activism (e.g., Caron et al. 2018; Karataş 2021), I position technology as a never-finished, entangled, intra-active phenomena that mutually creates many bodies, things, and ideas (see also Bivens 2015). Technologies, like Instagram, are more than one thing, are leaky, unstable, entangled material-discursive phenomena. Building on Mendes and colleagues'

(2019) arguments for a materially engaged framework of digital feminism, I trace the material-discursive practices which constrain and enable human/non-human feminist becomings on Instagram. My diffractive reading unfolds in three intra-acting parts: boundaries of feminism; technology as doing; and the multiple timespaces of Instagram feminism.

Boundaries of Feminisms

Differentiating Instagram Feminisms

In this section, I aim to trouble rigid boundaries between different feminisms by articulating how in their entangled multiplicity, they iteratively become together. Different Instagram accounts and Instagram users co-constituted different feminisms, and despite the frequent use of Canva templates, there was no monolith style, form, or design of Instagram feminism. Instagram feminism is not one thing, or merely a discursive context that can be easily re-presented. Instead, it is a multiplicity that is differentiated through the congealing of particular agencies, including intra-acting materialities such as technologies like Canva, graphics, photos, screenshots of Tweets, typed words, colours, and hashtags. These materialities become with and through their intra-actions with discourses of feminism, gender, age, and digital culture. In this multiplicity, I noticed a tendency for content to focus on education around what feminism is, including its history and prominent key figures, to debunk myths around feminism and feminists, and to offer how-to advice, guides, and resources about feminist ideology and political participation.

Several accounts used their Instagram biographical section (commonly referred to as “bio”) to home linktrees (webpages with hyperlinks), frequently directing their audience via phrases like “link in bio” in their Instagram Stories, or in the captions of Posts. I was struck by the linktree on @feministpoet’s page, which included detailed excel documents and charts with

contact information for American representatives. Linktrees as materialities, connect creators and audiences to various timespacematterings (Barad 2007), such as websites and forms. They also seem connected to discourses of activism and politics that centre how-to advice around political action, as well as entrepreneurialism and hyper-responsibility within a broader digital micro-celebrity culture that co-creates digital activists, and valorizes digital engagement (Cotter 2019; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Semenzin 2022).

While the boundaries of feminisms were contentious and dynamic, I noticed that accounts and content that were positioned as radical feminism often had clearer and more rigid boundaries around what characterizes feminism. For example, @feministcat, @flowerfeminist, and @radecofeminist repeatedly positioned feminism as anti-porn, anti-sex work, and including only cisgender women, who they saw as “real” women. There were several moments in my ‘data collection,’ where I was confronted with unsettling framings of feminism that opposed by own feminist becoming. For example, a carousel Post by @flowerfeminist included a quotation defining “woman,” and screenshots of Tweets and Tumblr threads debating whether trans men are women. In this Post, instead of using “trans man” to recognize the experiences of folks assigned female at birth that have transitioned, the Post uses “trans identified woman.” I was taken back by this framing which I felt to be transphobic, and I wrote in my fieldnotes how the framing was sneaky and confusing for a non-radical feminist, like me, to understand. These affective intensities (Ringrose and Renold 2014), in the research entanglement, reminded me of Haraway’s staying with the trouble, visiting, and co-creating a curious practice (2016). In my becoming with digital feminism, the intra-active unfolding of my feminism collided with feminisms and feminists that were different, and at first, I felt hesitant about these relations. Haraway argues that staying with the trouble is not about disconnecting with a present or past, or

transporting to somewhere “safer” or more familiar, instead, it is about tuning into connectivity, difference, and relational response-ability. As Haraway (2016:4) states “we become with each other, or not at all.” Rather than producing a re-presentation of digital feminisms that holds onto stark divisions between different typologies or engaging with feminisms which feel more familiar to me, I aim instead to consider how these various digital feminisms are always becoming together in entanglements. My diffractive reading works to trace the patterns of difference in these entanglements, to consider their effects for propelling particular feminisms on Instagram.

Hashtags, as material-discursive contexts, were also differentiating in the unfolding of feminisms. Radical feminism was repeatedly marked in Instagram content through repeated use of hashtags like #transideologyismisogyny, #gendercritical, #genderisasocialconstruct, and #sexnotgender. These hashtags overtly differentiated feminisms, compared to other hashtags like #femaleempowerment or #feminism, which seemed less pointed. Hashtags, as I elaborate later, are material-discursive practices (Barad 2007) that are differentiating. As materialities, hashtags re-configure Instagram’s affordances by grouping and connecting similar content and users, or connecting diverse users to specific content through the hashtag searching feature. These affordances are not merely materialities however, as they become legible through discourses of reach and virality, they affect and are affected by shadow bans and Instagram’s community guidelines, and they co-create solidarity among communities and movements. In articulating the inseparability of materiality and discourses, Barad says “discursive practices are themselves material (re)configurations of the world through which the determination of boundaries, properties, and meanings is differentially enacted” (2007:151). A posthuman rethinking of

Instagram feminism then, attends to the intra-acting material-discursive practices like hashtags, which de/stabilize boundaries and re/congeal agencies in iterative intra-activity (Barad 2007).

Other content critiqued trans-exclusive and/or radical feminism quite intensely. For example, on @feministrage a screenshot of a Tweet written by someone else read, “you’re not feminist if you’re transphobic.” In another example, on @queerfeminist, a Post with a white background and black text reads, “If your feminism does not include trans women, then you aren’t actually a feminist.” The accompanying caption, in part, argued for the need to “include trans women in your activism!! They brought us here, we need to make sure we are all being represented.” There was also repeated critique of “choice feminism” and “popular feminism” in content. For example, in a caption @rebelgirl wrote, “popular feminism has to stop being so focused on individual freedom of choice and concern itself with the greater good. It’s a social movement – it’s not just about you.” In another carousel Post, @rebelgirl wrote, “it truly makes me doubt someone as an activist when they only speak when it is convenient for them or when they may gain societal power from it.” “White feminism” was repeatedly positioned as “fake feminism” by Instagram users like @feministunicorn in carousel Posts which included screenshots of Tweets. Further, amongst these intra-acting digital feminisms, intersectionality seemed to gain traction as a buzzword including through use of hashtags like #intersectionalfeminism and #intersectionalfeminist. Curiously, however, intersectionality was also muddled throughout my content analysis. Intersectionality was frequently referenced superficially in hashtags, or in the title slides of carousel style text-based Posts, or in the use of graphics and emojis that have different skin tones and bodies. Content that I read as more overtly political and unashamedly critical of intersectional inequalities was more likely however, to be “read” by Instagram and its users as less palatable, and perhaps more likely to be reported or

flagged as “offensive” or as in breach of Instagram’s community guidelines, a point I elaborate later. Intersectionality then, as it becomes through content, hashtags, and relations between humans-Instagram guidelines-social (in)justice-digital space-time is differentiating for the unfolding of feminism, including which feminisms gain traction and are algorithmically rewarded (Mahoney 2022; Semenzin 2022).

The boundaries and multiplicities of feminism and digital feminism were also emergent in interviews and focus groups. It was curious to see participants re-turn (Barad 2014) their thinking about and experiences of feminism, to hold contradictory views, or to seem “stuck” or ambivalent around what Instagram feminism is or might become. Jenna, an 18 year-old girl from Dublin, who told me she was a proud and unapologetic intersectional feminist, spoke about the multiplicity of feminism on Instagram:

So, feminism itself has become very branched out in a negative way. An example are TERFS [trans exclusive, radical feminism], or feminists who are exclusionary of sex workers for instance. (Lindsay: Hmm). The more socially conscious feminism has become, the more it has branched itself out and become more difficult to associate yourself with in the right label that is inclusive of everyone, which is intersectional feminism. So, it’s very ambiguous.

Mira, a 15-year-old American girl, also fretted about the multiplicity and ambiguity of feminism. When I asked her if there was something she wished people understood about feminism, Mira replied:

I just wish people would like understand what feminism even means [...] there’s so many like variations of [it], and people twist words and stuff like that, [...] there never seems to be a consensus on what feminism really is. (Lindsay: Hmm). Like is it radical feminism

where it's like men are bad women are better? Or something like that? Or is it more just like equality? Is it more liberal feminism? There's so many kinds where I really wish people would just pick one [laughs] and stick with it.

Mira told me that she did not associate herself with the different feminisms she discussed, and clarified that “even if there's a few extremists, there's not like a huge thing.” Underscoring the relational becoming of Instagram and feminism, Mira said, “like I'm cautious to make sure that I don't say stuff like [...] ‘women are better than men’ or anything like that on my page.”

Curiously, Instagram feminism becomes in an entanglement that includes Mira and a particular engagement with Instagram content creation that is cautious. Cautious here, seems to be a material-discursive, reconfiguring discourses of palatable feminism, and Instagram-worthy, “safe” content.

Jenna's and Mira's arguments remind me of Braidotti's discussion of posthuman feminism. Braidotti (2022:3) similarly notes that feminism is “now an established social movement, greatly diversified across multiple constituencies and locations,” and recognizes that “it is therefore not easy to give a comprehensive definition, other than pointing to a broad range of feminist positions.” For Braidotti however, the multiplicities of feminism seem to be potentialities. Like many of the girls I spoke to, Braidotti (2022:3) critiques certain feminisms that advance a liberal humanist subject and argues that the “radical spark” of feminist politics is “its subversive politics [...] creative alternative visions of ‘the human’ [...] creating other possible worlds.” I wonder then, how we might hold on to the multiplicities of feminisms, including on Instagram, with an understanding that it is an iterative, relational becoming (Braidotti 2022; Haraway 2016). Such an approach would encourage us to shift away from attempts to understand what it means, or demarking stable boundaries around typologies, and

instead tune into what it does for the world's mattering. Put differently, how are feminisms and worlds intra-actively becoming?

Sylvia saw the multiplicity of feminism and digital feminism as opportunity and potential. When I asked Sylvia what feminism meant to her, she wrote back, “feminism is undoubtedly a challenging concept to define, much like many other topics that lack clear boundaries or predefined representations.” Writing from Ontario, Canada, Sylvia said, “I wish people would understand that feminism on Instagram [...] encompasses a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. It’s not an ideology and there is room for various voices and discussions within the feminist community.” I asked Sylvia what she meant by ideology, and she replied, “I mean that it is not a fixed set of beliefs or principles. Instead, it encompasses a diverse range of perspectives, discussions, and approaches to advocating for gender equality.” Here, Sylvia speaks to digital feminisms as including diverse voices and discussions, which when read with Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) can be understood as configurations of human/non-human bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces. While Sylvia seems to hold onto hope for the potential of diversity in digital feminism, my diffractive reading throughout this chapter will seek to trace how specific configurations constrain and enable particular becomings.

Like Sylvia, when I asked Valeri how she understands or defines feminism she replied, “uhm, I don’t know, I really don’t have a concrete definition, even though there is a concrete definition.” Valeri explained how she “feel[s] like feminism can encompass many different things and there are so many other different topics that are feminist issues.” Valeri, who described herself as a Haitian and Black American girl, went on to position police brutality against Black people as an example of a topic that is a feminist issue. In two sequential voice notes, Valeri argued:

When you look at the stories [...] people are familiar with of Black men being killed by the police in comparison to [voice note ends][next voice note starts] in comparison to Black women being killed by the police. The differences are kind of disappointing [...] I also feel like being a woman that's Black, or a Black person who is a young woman, there is like a double edge, not necessarily a double-edged sword, but like double swords that you have to uhh, encounter.

I write at length about my conversation with Valeri in this chapter because I was struck by her politics which were overt, pointed, and at the fore of our conversation. Here, as throughout our interview, Valeri underscores race as differentiating, which Braidotti (2022:3) would argue is evidence of a feminist politics that becomes relationally through “a transformative decolonial and radical struggle to affirm positively the differences among marginalized people(s).” The relational, intra-active becoming of Valeri's feminist identity and Instagram feminism seem committed to the type of feminist project Braidotti proposes.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Amina was one of the few passionate radical feminists I talked to. Frequently throughout our interview, Amina made distinctions between Western, liberal, and radical feminism, and these boundaries were also congealed in her Instagram content which frequently critiqued or dismissed Western and liberal feminism. In one instance, Amina explained why she no longer attends the Women's March in her community in Pakistan:

I don't think I would [go to the Women's March] anymore because I do not share the same views with the organizers of it anymore [...] They are too liberal and mainstream and that harms women. They follow Western ideologies and forget about the women here [in Pakistan] and focus on mundane stuff and not what matters most.

Amina's feminism becomes in a particular timespacemattering (Barad 2007), an entanglement that includes Western feminism-liberal feminism-radical feminism-Pakistan-women's march-feminist bodies. Amina argued that her "feminist lens" has helped her to understand that "oppression is sex based, and that is the reality for all girls." Amina added, "regardless of our race, culture, tradition, religion, [or] politics, the one thing we have in common is being a woman." This commonality, Amina argued, demands "all women should fight and adv[o]cate for a world that makes it a better place for all women." Quite directly, Amina wrote, "that is my politics. I do not take interest in man-made politics and nationalist or any other man-made agenda." While Amina tries to differentiate and distance her feminist politics and feminism from the "man-made politics" and "man-made agenda" she problematizes, the ongoing intra-activity of the world is not separate or distinguishable from the ongoing intra-activity of her feminist becoming (Barad 2007). While Amina might feel like her feminism is different, and while she might not take interest in different politics, a posthuman agential realist account (Barad 2007) recognizes boundaries, subjects, and mattering as necessarily porous, relational, and entangled. Digital feminism then, is not neatly contained, it becomes through intra-actions which co-constitute the systems and beliefs it challenges. This relational becoming reminds me of Banet-Weiser's arguments about the co-constitution of popular feminisms and misogyny (2018).

Bea, a non-binary 17-year-old from the UK, did not position themselves as a particular type of feminist, but was critical of the ways that feminism has been co-opted by consumerism and digital trends, including around girlhood. Bea was particularly frustrated with "bimbo feminism," writing:

[It's] pretty much just pink washed patriarchy. The[] changing your voice to sound "dumb" and "childish," all of the trends like "girl math" which is just *girls are bad at

math 🤔,* “girlsplaining” making out that girls need global politics dumbed down to understand what’s going on, “girl dinner” which is just repackaged ED [eating disorder] culture, etc [,] just makes women out to be brainless dolls and gives misogynists ammo to use against us. Not to mention that it thrives on consumerism [...] (in my opinion, capitalism is what upholds patriarchy) [...] This is because, through bimbo feminism being built around performance and hyper-consumerism, we have made male the “default,” a non-action, the natural human state of being. And in turn, we have made female synonymous with performing, and changing how we are perceived based on how others will choose to view us. It is a vicious cycle because then we have to do the outfits, the voice, the makeup, pretend that everything men say is incredibly insightful in order to be taken seriously and to avoid disrespect/hate, which is the exact behaviours that bimbo feminism is made of.

I am struck by Bea’s writing here because it troubles the framing of digital feminism as neatly contained or neatly defined, by pointing to the multiple bodies (human and non), materialities, and discourses that co-create its possibilities. Bea narrows in on one typology of digital feminism – bimbo feminism – that becomes here through an entanglement that involves pinkwashing-patriarchy-digital trends-digital girlhood-eating disorder culture-consumerism-capitalism-femininity-masculinity-clothes-voices-makeup-bodies.

Taken together, my diffractive reading in this section aims to illustrate the multiplicity of Instagram feminism. What is curious to me, and I muse about in the following chapter, is the ways that protagonist and antagonist (Hunt et al. 1994) feminist identities become together, in intra-actions through material-discursive processes of collective identity. While I have talked about multiple feminisms and feminists, like Stalker and Wood (2021:2) I continue to trace the

ways that movement identities, like radical, TERF, root, or liberal feminist, “both names itself, and is named by others” as the movement is “activated” and “deactivated” in contexts and relations. By disentangling and re-entangling specific configurations, I have traced the patterns of difference that technologies like linktrees, hashtags, and material-discursive contexts like intersectionality, radical feminism, liberal feminism, choice feminism, and bimbo feminism do for the unfolding of Instagram feminism. Participants’ stories, including their experiences with different Instagram feminisms, and their ambivalence around what digital feminism is, trouble a re-presentational understanding of digital feminism as easily contained, an argument I continue to develop below.

The Material-Discursive Practices of Instagram Feminisms

In this section, I aim to map the various bodies, technologies, timespaces, and discourses that co-create the possibilities for girls’ Instagram feminism. I consider how the material-discursive practices of Instagram feminism unfold, participants’ stories about their content creation including their thinking about infographics, and how they decide what to post. My diffractive reading collides with binaries of activism/slacktivism, online/offline, and real/not real, as well as material-discursive contexts like gender, age, aesthetics, and emojis in the intra-activity of Instagram feminism.

According to Valeri, she does her “best to actually uhh breakdown topics and talk about them in-depth even though [she] only ha[s] like 10 slides” in Instagram carousel Posts which users swipe through like a digital photo album. Valeri’s co-creation of these mini-essay carousel Posts was distinguishable from other accounts in my sample, which tended to favour Canva collages and infographics. Resonating others’ stories, Valeri said she did not have a clear process for content creation. Valeri said:

I guess it would be, I hear about an issue, I have it in the back of my mind. I research, I re-write [...] that's the researching process. And then I, uhm, sit down when I actually want to post something, when I actually want to work on it, I find an article that I'm going to base my Post off of. And oftentimes it's [...] more than one article [...] that go into a single Post [...] But I don't copy it word for word, right, I [...] use [] articles as a basis.

The content on Valeri's Instagram account becomes through an intra-action that involves noticing and hearing a social issue, remembering it, researching, sitting, reading, articles, and writing. Valeri's Instagram feminism thus involves multiple timespaces (Barad 2007) – online, offline, different websites, and digital documents. It is also affected by the affordances of Instagram, including the 10-slide limit for carousel Posts, which has since been updated to 20 slides. I was excited by Valeri's resistance of the aesthetically pleasing infographics in her digital feminism, which she positioned as “short bites of information.” Valeri's digital feminism necessarily becomes in relation to other types of digital feminism, and material-discursive forces that are outside of her, including within a broader digital timespacemattering (Barad 2007) that co-constitutes and rewards digestible, aesthetically pleasing, and repost-able content.

Nora, who was 20 at the time of our interview, wrote to me from Germany about her process for content creation. In one email, she wrote:

I usually read through many essays or opinions by other women, collect [and] filter the information, edit the images (and cancel out possibly triggering words/phrases), think of an addition for my caption, and then upload it.

A process Nora thought was “quite simple, actually.” However, when she writes something “entirely self-written,” she clarified, “I usually write it into my notes and correct it when I read it

again, and then I do the same steps as above.” If she “needs more information” she will reference and add details from articles she has found, and then “link said articles in [her] [S]tories so others can take a deeper look into it as well 😊.” Similarly, Bea’s process began when “something important happens and [then they] research it.” Bea tended to remix other’s content. As Bea explained:

I [] find a post that explains [the issue] well and in relatively simple terms. I post a few of these to my Story and at the end I post a couple of short, essay-style Stories to inform and persuade. [S]ometimes people reply to these [Stories] and we talk about whatever the event is [...] privately [through direct messages].

For Both Nora and Bea, the becoming of their Instagram feminism is shaped by bodies, discourses, and materialities outside of themselves. Despite Nora’s framing of the material-discursive practice of her content creation as “quite simple, actually,” it involves an entanglement of other bodies, content, references, links, and Stories. Similarly, the content on Bea’s Instagram does not begin or end with them or their relation to Instagram. Finding content, reading it, sharing it to Stories, then posting their own thoughts to add depth and “persuade,” are all components in the entanglement that co-create the content. Reading Nora’s and Bea’s stories with Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) decentres them as individualized, autonomous, agential human subjects, and instead attends to the intertwined agencies that shape the possibilities for their digital feminism.

Like Valeri, Estelle also seemed keen to distinguish herself from other Instagram feminists, stating, “I create all my own content, so if it’s somebody else’s, like unless it’s like a rally, like usually I’ll just repost those types of things to [my] Story.” Estelle explained that she “use[s] Adobe and [...] just kind of like [...] come[s] up with ideas randomly, it’s kinda like

spontaneous.” Estelle was also interested in sharing content with actionable steps for her audience, like calling representatives. Estelle uses Adobe Express, a paid graphic design software to create Instagram content. Explaining her process, Estelle said:

[I] pick like a random background, and then be like ‘okay, what do I like, what is the message that I want to like send? Or, do I need them to click something? Do I need them to call some number? Like what do I need?’ and then I’ll kinda choose what I think is like aesthetically like pleasing at the moment, and then I’ll just like post that.

For Estelle, the material-discursive practice of creation content might be better understood as an intra-acting co-creation between Estelle, Adobe Express, aesthetics, Instagram and its affordances, and her imagined audience. As Estelle explains, the way that she makes content is shaped by what she needs people to do (i.e. call representatives, click links), and the message she wants to send. Adobe Express, as a material-discursive phenomena was differentiating, and as a paid service, is entangled with relations of power and marginalization. Echoing arguments made by others (Mendes et al. 2019; Keller 2016) digital feminism is thus, not equally accessible to all girls. Technologies like Adobe Express differentiate the becoming of digital feminist content, including access to different materialities (i.e., templates, illustrations, graphics) which likely affect how other bodies, including Instagram and its algorithms, relationally become with it.

Talking about her process of content creation, from her college apartment in Scotland, American-born, Anne exclaimed, “Canva is my girl, yes, I love! You’re gonna get that a lot [laughs!]” Here, Canva is material-discursive, a collection of technologies like graphic design tools, templates, fonts, colours, and images, which are intertwined with a gendered discourse of “girl.” Anne’s exclamation that Canva is “[her] girl!” reminds me of my wonderings around Frankie’s “year of the girl,” and use of “girling” as verb, that I discussed in the previous chapter.

As I questioned in the previous chapter around whether Instagram can be “girled,” I am curious about what it does to see Canva as “girl.” I am struck not only by the human-technology relation here, of Anne-Canva, including the ways in which it is gendered by Anne, but also how when read with Barad (2007) Anne’s story makes clear the impossibility of binary understandings of human/non-human, or human/technology. The digital content on Anne’s Instagram page is a both human and non-human, a collaboration, an intra-active unfolding between Anne-Canva-Instagram.

Frankie talked about the process of creating content for the collective Instagram account and feminist/activist collective she started in Ireland. While scrolling together through the Instagram account she co-creates with three other girls, Frankie said:

If you go on like the most recent Post, which is our calendar (Lindsay: Yep) [...] I made [that] on Canva really lazily. I’d made a calendar Post last year, so I just shimmied that up a bit with the colours so [it] could ... [make] a whole new one. Uhm, that’s me like scrolling through Canva, finding something that I think is like kind of good, and figuring out that, and changing up the colours. I try not to make it too complicated because I, I’m not that good at that. Uhm, I quite like [...] the screenshot things like we just like set up to announce [our] joining with another group (Lindsay: yeah), we did like to the Spice Girls [audio] [...] We did an Agony Aunt, but that didn’t launch very successfully, but that’s just like a screenshot from Parent Trap, like that kind of thing I quite like. If you scroll down, we’ve got some stuff about our exhibition from last year, that we’d have like the speakers, I think I did that on Canva as well. And I really fell in love with these like little like collagey splashes, so [I] really experimented with that for a second [laughs]. Uhm, but yeah, I mean, it’s kind of just finding something that it’s, you know, finding,

uhh sorry, words, just finding a template, making it a little maybe like a bit different or whatever, making sure everyone like[s] it, chucking it up [...] writing a caption. But we always kind of post for a reason, unless it's like reposting and we like, we're like, 'oh we need to post something. Let's just repost.' Uhm writing a caption, and then posting it, turning off the like count, uhm, and that's probably about it. And then putting [it] on our Story.

Various components intra-act in Frankie's story, including Canva, Canva templates, audio bits, Parent Trap memes, Agony Aunt columns, "successful content," "good content," Instagram main-feed posts, and Instagram Stories. Further, the intra-activity of Instagram including likes, hiding like counts, captions, Posts, and Stories, co-constitute the collective Instagram account. Again, Instagram feminism and individual pieces of content are not neatly contained, rather are collages of various human and non-human bodies, forces, discourses, times and spaces. Laughing, Frankie said, "I wouldn't say that in any way our content is very good [...] I don't mean that in a self-deprecating way. I just think I see content, I'm like 'wow, that's incredible.'" Frankie noted that sometimes she will make something she likes, and then when she looks back on earlier content she thinks "I kind of hate it now." Diffracting Frankie's comments with Barad's re-turning (2014) means that re-turning "older" content means opening it up, and reading it through the ongoing intra-active becoming of technologies like Instagram, including its shifting digital trends, popular culture, affordances, and vernacular. "New" content is not necessarily "good," and "old" content is not necessarily "bad," but instead, each happen within a particular timespacemattering (Barad 2007). Instagram's technologies, platform vernaculars, and culture iteratively become, thus, shifts across Instagram timespace differentially affect meanings and boundaries of content and feminisms.

During my content analysis, I also noticed that some Instagram accounts include a mixture of feminist and political content, as well as content that might be described as more apolitical or mundane. For example, I was struck by the centring of Taylor Swift on one account. Taylor Swift's songs were used to accompany carousel Posts, her lyrics were positioned as feminist anthems for their girl power rhetoric, and she was positioned as an icon that is inspiring girls to live boldly and recognize their potential. Here, digital feminism becomes through an entanglement that is not separate from the ongoing unfolding of the material-discursive forces of popular (Banet-Weiser 2018) and celebrity feminism (Keller and Ringrose 2015), celebrity and fan culture, music, and neoliberal girl power (Bent 2020; Taft 2020). On some accounts, material-discursive contexts of empowerment and inspiration seemed to be prominent, for example through the repeated use of hashtags like #femaleempowerment and sharing Pinterest-esque photo quotations around girl power, and feminine strength. Further, @womanpower, an account which looked different aesthetically than the others given its long-text style carousel Posts with simple solid-colour backgrounds, also shared more "fun" content like animal memes and funny videos in Instagram stories. Relatedly, describing the collective Instagram she is part of in Ontario, 19-year-old, Jacinta said:

Some of [the Posts] are like more fun, like topics, like you know, lighthearted like 'where did the word menstruation come from?' [...] Some of them are more serious, about like [...] diseases, or [...] about like the disparity between [...] how like people with like different economic statuses deal with menstruation. You know, we try to like mix it up, not have like a constant theme.

Diffracting Jacinta's thoughts here around "lighthearted" content, and wanting to "mix" up content with my notes from content analysis, I wondered what this mixture of topics, affective

tones, and types of content does. Does digital feminism become more palatable, relatable, or agreeable with Instagram's algorithms, affordances, and digital cultures, when it is not always overtly feminist or "too much" feminism? (see also Mahoney 2022; Semenzin 2022).

Haraway (2016:99) argues that in order to understand becomings, assemblages, and change, we need to tune into "scale, rate/speed, synchronicity, and complexity." Through this lens, mixing more "lighthearted" content with more overtly political content might work to co-create Instagram feminism that is more synchronous with Instagram's algorithms and community guidelines, and the rate and speed of users' intra-actions with Instagram. In this entanglement, more "lighthearted" content might facilitate a faster human-technology relation, as the audience can digest, engage with, and spread the content more quickly. This faster engagement which might diffuse across digital space as users send it or repost it, not only extends the reach and virality of the content, but leans into the platform vernacular and algorithmic systems of Instagram, which reward high engagement. Feminist or political content might facilitate a different human-technology engagement, in an assemblage that is slower and less synchronous with Instagram's technology. Thus, mixing these two forms of content might be an example of Instagram users understanding the "rules" of the Instagram game, and an attempt to foster visibility, engagement, and relevancy (see also Cotter 2019).

Aesthetics as Doing

Continuing to discuss the material-discursive practices of Instagram feminism, in this section, I consider aesthetics, specifically Instagram aesthetics and what they do for digital feminism. Esti, a 16-year-old Chinese-Canadian girl from Ontario, who did the graphic design for the collective Instagram account she was a part of, told me about the challenges around what she described as aesthetics. Esti said, "so like, our colours are red, black, and white, and a lot of

our Instagram is just mainly focused on that,” which posed challenges when trying to find graphics on Canva. Esti said, “I’m not allowed to use anything with water marks on it. So, if I didn’t have my Pro [Canva] account, like it would be 10 times harder.” Esti added that “fitting the information in a way that makes it look aesthetic” is also challenging. As discussed above in Estelle’s story, Canva Pro, a paid service made available by Esti’s school, makes difference in the material-discursive process of Instagram content creation. The colours red, black, and white, in written text and in graphics, do something for the branding and aesthetic of the collective Instagram account, perhaps signaling their focus on period activism. But I also wonder, how the emphasis on “aesthetically pleasing,” colour coordinated, Canva-Instagram content co-creates a broader material-discursive digital culture that valorizes monetized, branded digital content and identities.

Curiously, Poppy, Farah, and Zara, from the UK, were part of a different collective Instagram account that had a pink colour scheme. Farah said, “we just kind of stick to the theme of like, the colour scheme of pink, and then like just visually attractive stuff [...] something that you really want to click on.” When I asked Poppy about the use of pink for their Instagram account about girls in politics, she argued:

I don’t feel like pink represents female in any like intrinsic kind of sense. But I think it kind of helps us get the message across easier that like we’re [a] women and girls group. I think it’s more of just a communication thing rather than like [...] ‘this is the truth, like pink equals women.’

Zara, who was also part of this collective, explained the collective Instagram account as “all about girlhood and politics [...] the way we present our Instagram in the, a hyper feminine kind of fun-to-explain kind of way [...] because we feel that like kind of attracts more younger girls’

attention.” But Zara reiterated “there shouldn’t be one certain [way] of girlhood as pink and ribbons, and like fancy, and beauty, and sequins, glitter, blah, blah, blah.” Funnily enough, Rose encountered and decided to join this collective after seeing a post on LinkedIn which she described as “pink, and it was bright, it looked cute.” Here, pink text and graphics do something, co-creating a “hyper-feminine”, “fun,” “bright,” “visually attractive” and “cute,” timespacemattering (Barad 2007) that is read as for and about girls and women.

While I have been identifying differences and boundaries between the multiplicities of Instagram feminism, I am also curious about whether there was something, whether an Instagram aesthetic, format, or themes/topics that were similar across typologies. Describing the style and aesthetic of feminist content she sees on Instagram, in the pair interview, Safa stated, “like pinks, blues, purple, pastels, cursive, girly fonts, things like that.” Gwen also noted “pink uhm as a common theme in a lot of feminism posts,” in the focus group. Responding to Safa, Jacinta thought that it was important for Instagram feminism to be presented in multiple aesthetics or styles because “if you don’t vibe with that girly aesthetic [...] you’re not going to follow that page [...] or read their stuff.” I was struck by Safa’s use of “girly fonts” and Jacinta’s thoughts around “girly aesthetic.” As Jacinta argues, “girly aesthetics” which might include the material-discursive “girly fonts” Safa referenced, affect how others react to and perceive Instagram feminism. Neither Ava or Ally thought there was a similar format or aesthetic to Instagram feminism.

As I have mentioned already, there was a distinction between highly curated Instagram pages that seemingly used Canva to create cohesive infographics, and accounts that I described in my fieldnotes as “eclectic hodge-podge[s] of reposted memes, quotes, and screenshots.” For example, the @proudprochoice account created a page mascot, a hand-drawn animal in pen and

marker ink that frequently appeared in comics and memes that the user drew, photographed, and uploaded to Instagram. The photos were often grainy, and I could see erased pencil marks or words crossed out and changed. Admittedly, when I was deep in the content analysis of my project, at times I became less interested or excited by the “cohesive” and “highly curated” infographic style of Instagram feminisms. When scrolling through Posts that I had saved to my ‘save’ folder, I was frequently able to match Posts to their accounts based on their look and ‘feel,’ speaking to the potency of cohesive design and branding in the material-discursive contexts of Instagram feminisms (see also Moksnes Barbala 2024). I became excited by content that was “imperfect,” for example, having typos, photos of hand-written or hand-drawn artifacts, and content that was pixelated or grainy. Maybe it was their disruption of the material-discursive contexts and practices of “Instagram-able content,” or it was the way that I felt closer to the creator and the materiality of their feminism. Curiously, some Instagram accounts, like @womanpower, critiqued the proliferation of infographics, especially from “white women activist influencers.”

Read together, these stories and examples from my content analysis underscore the affective force of Instagram aesthetics, which include colours, graphics, and hand-drawn art, to co-create a feel or identity of the Instagram account. These aesthetics work to congeal boundaries around particular Instagram accounts but also co-constitute meanings and boundaries of Instagram feminism – affecting others’ expectations of it.

Experiencing Instagram Feminism: What Bodies Can Do

In this section, I engage with posthuman feminists’ attention to what bodies can do (Barad 2007; Bradiotti 2022; Haraway 1997, 2016). I continue to trace the human/non-human bodies of Instagram feminism, attending to how they are enabled and constrained in intra-

activity. The focus is thus, less on what Instagram feminism is, and more about its ongoing intra-active differentiating (Barad 2007). I have no interest in evaluating this *doing* in terms of whether it is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ feminism or is particularly effective or efficient as a strategy for social change.

I was really struck by Anne’s discussion of her Instagram, which she primarily used to discuss and promote her podcast about queer and women-centred histories. When I asked her if she felt her Instagram account said anything about her, she responded:

[...] I’m very aware that like what I put on Instagram and like, oh, so like even on my Story, it’s like, it’s not real, in a way. And like, even though a lot of my stuff is very real, I’m like, ‘I’m gonna do this today’ and I’m doing it, but I know that the way that [...] I am showing myself to the world through @femme_fm is of like, ‘I’m Anne, I’m [...] an English [and] Modern History student, I’m interested in women, in queer history, [and in] feminism, and just women’s rights in general.’ Yeah, but like there’s so much more to me, and also, like I feel like that’s, you know, the lens that everyone is seeing me as online, and especially in @femme_fm [...] and that’s because I purposely put out content to be perceived in that way.

Anne’s thoughts remind me of Barad’s (2007:377) assertion that “there is no absolute inside or absolute outside. There is only exteriority within.” Here, Anne’s body-multiple Instagram users-Instagram-content-podcast entangle to produce messy agencies that co-constitutes Anne’s embodiment, her sense of self, others’ reactions to her, and her digital self. The boundaries of the multiple bodies in the entanglement are porous. Anne is not separate from the entanglement that co-constitutes her Instagram, and her Instagram is emergent only through the entanglement of

multiple bodies, including hers, in intra-action. Anne is not within or outside of her Instagram, and her Instagram is not within or outside of her. They become together.

In each interview, I asked participants if they had any particularly positive or negative experiences posting about feminism on Instagram. In one striking instance, Amina told me she has received “hatred, death, and rape threats from men [...] and angry women who disagree” with her Instagram feminism. Similarly, Estelle, who was overtly pro-choice on Instagram and TikTok at the time of our interview, shared that she “gets so much hate,” including “probably like 10 or 20 rape threats through TikTok.” Sometimes Estelle responds to comments by creating content that debunks their arguments, and other times she does not respond, arguing, “like you’re just a troll and I don’t have to like deal with this, and I don’t have the capacity for you. (Lindsay: yeah). So, I’ll just like leave them there usually [laughs].” In Amina’s and Estelle’s stories, multiple bodies – their bodies, other Instagram users, “trolls,” hate comments, Instagram content, TikTok content, and Instagram intra-act to affect how digital feminism unfolds. Reading these stories with Barad (2007), Braidotti (2022), and Haraway (1997, 2016) pushes past a focus on an individual human body creating Instagram content, and instead recognizes that multiple bodies – human and non-human – intertwine to co-create Instagram feminism.

Participants’ narratives around whether they see Instagram feminism as feminism or not, also underscore what bodies *do* for the possibilities of Instagram feminism. Some participants, like Jenna, Mira, Zara, Crystal Waters, and Quinn seemed to be more comfortable asserting that Instagram feminism is a “real” and useful form of feminism and/or activism. It was curious however, that participants like the aforementioned who advocated for the value of Instagram feminism as a legitimate form of activism, also reproduced debates around online/offline activism, thus making their distinctions messy and intertwined. For example, Zara, a British

Pakistani 19-year-old, was particularly passionate about explaining her stance on whether content creation on Instagram is feminism. Zara said:

Well, this is a good question [laughs]. I think [...] I kind of classify this [as] like micro-feminism. I hate to call it micro-feminism, it's still feminism, but it's to a smaller scale. Because my followers, obviously, my account's private, so I have about 500 followers. (Lindsay: Right). So, only 500 people see my Stories [laughs] so it's at a micro-scale. But like platforms where I have [...] a larger following [...] so TikTok where I have like over 5,000 [followers] it is much more, it's like kind of macro [...] macro-feminism [...] It's to more people, because it's kind of hard to determine how many people see it [...] It's all about who sees your Post and changes the[ir] thought process, or kind of [...] empathizes with it, and like, you know, who's educated by it.

I find the boundary-making of micro- and macro-feminism particularly interesting because it is illustrative of the inseparability of materialities and discourses (Barad 2007). Micro-feminism is an entanglement that includes content-digital space-audience-followers-reach. Micro-feminism is “small scale,” a material-discursive feminism differentiated by the affective force of fewer followers, less reach, or engagement. For Zara, macro-feminism is differentiated by the scale and intensity of the entanglement (Haraway 2016). Macro-feminism seems to be positioned more favourably, because as Zara argued “it's to more people [...] it's all about who sees your Post and changes their thought[s].” This relational becoming of Zara, content, audience, and micro/macro feminism underscores the multiple human and non-human bodies, beyond Zara herself, in the intra-activity that co-constitutes Instagram feminism.

Shortly after this discussion about micro/macro feminism, I asked if Zara had heard about discourses of slacktivism (Cabrera et al. 2017; Fullam 2017) or framings of Instagram feminism

as silly of frivolous. She responded, “I’m gonna be quite upfront about this [...] but I think that’s absolutely garbage, because I feel like feminism is like [...] feminist activism can come in different forms.” Zara continued, “whether it be protesting on the streets, or physically going to countries [to] interview and women are given a voice, or it can just be from at home on your bed, just like scrolling through and reposting something.” Zara thought even reposting from bed does not make it any less significant. She did however, feel a bit complicated about the performativity of digital activism, particularly, a material-discursive context she called “performance activism,” and when people do not research before reposting content on social media. Her thoughts about performance activism were nuanced, as she argued it is a term that “people still weaponize” in order to discredit and dismiss content that contrasts their beliefs. In Zara’s stories, Instagram feminism collides with material-discursive contexts like micro-macro feminism, performance activism, and multiple timespaces like Instagram, bedrooms, and streets. In addition to Zara’s human body, there are other bodies like Instagram content, other Instagram users, and women bodies which all enact force for Zara’s boundaries of feminism and performance activism. In these entanglements and intra-actions, particular feminist and activist subjectivities and performativities emerge, which Zara understands as more or less feminist.

Zara’s thoughts about performance activism were also echoed by others, like Crystal Waters and Valeri who talked about the accessibility of Instagram feminism. Through Zoom from British Columbia, Crystal Waters argued that it was “a bit poor to shut down the idea of digital feminism,” noting the diversity of opinions and its accessibility. She argued that if you close yourself off from digital feminism, “you’re sort of limited [...] in terms of who you’re able to hear from ‘cause [...] for the most part you’re not going to travel to like the other side of the world to go to a protest” to be exposed to different feminisms and feminists. Crystal Waters

reminds me that Instagram and digital feminism are multiplicities, not just singular things, practices, or discourses, rather are material-discursive becomings (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022) that unfold through entanglements of multiple bodies, and timespaces, a point I elaborate below.

Others, like Anne, Go, Valeri, Amina, Estelle, Juliette, Nora, Frankie, Lola, Sylvia, and Gwen were less optimistic about Instagram feminism's potential to create "tangible" or "real" change on its own. For example, from her bedroom in Ontario, 16 year-old Juliette explained:

If you think of advocacy as like a three-dimensional thing [...] Instagram is like a two-dimensional thing. So, I can repost something and say, 'oh, I support this.' But that's not *really* doing anything. Maybe someone will look at my Story and think, 'oh, like this is something that I want to pay attention to [and] read more about it. Maybe, I'll do this.'

Right? But I think a lot of the time, that's just not what happens [laughs]. So, I think even though [...] Instagram can be a great way to spread, especially news [...] I don't think it's [...] a great spot for tangible action to happen. I think working in communities and working yourself [...] [in] more tangible, in real ways, is a lot more effective than how Instagram could be.

Estelle, valued a combination of digital feminist activism and feminist activism in community, arguing that "if you're really invested in the cause, you're going to try to like bring awareness everywhere, not just at a protest, you know." Nora argued that "it depends on the extent of one's online activism," and positioned online communities and organizations "which aim to provide real like resources for women, or support women mentally in safe spaces online [...] are certainly as meaningful as activist action which take place offline only." Nora explained her online feminism as more about information and awareness sharing, "which is definitely useful but not on the same level as helping disadvantaged women, supporting your local women's support

groups, going into politics, etc. 🤖.” In these examples, “real” or “meaningful” activism are intra-actively produced phenomena. Through entanglements that include multiple human bodies, timespaces, online, offline, news, digital content, and links, different feminist and activist becomings are enabled and constrained. As argued by Juliette, a feminist becoming that is limited to the timespace of Instagram is not able to affect what she describes as “real” or “tangible” change. Instead, as also argued by Nora, Instagram co-creates a feminist performativity and feminism more concerned with spreading information and news.

Amina was quite direct saying that she “somewhat agree[s] that [digital feminism] can be silly and frivolous,” which she “blames liberal feminism” for. Critiquing the proliferation of liberal feminists and feminism online, Amina argued, they “don’t really focus on the issues that matter and sometimes just make it superficial as in ‘everything’s okay as long as it is a choice and just be kind to everyone’ even if those things are extremely harmful to women collectively.” Again, Amina’s story makes clear the ways that multiple digital feminisms become together, and that their boundaries are differentiated through practices of mattering (Barad 2007). For Amina, it seems that the problem is the way that Instagram is a timespacemattering (Barad 2007) that rewards liberal feminisms, and not the radical feminism which she sees as more central to shifting patriarchal inequalities. The problem then, is not that Instagram feminism exists, rather, that certain feminisms unfold with more ease in the intra-action with Instagram.

Similarly, Frankie argued that digital feminism “could be somewhat frivolous,” and “should [never] replace in-person action but [...] alongside it, it can be productive.” But this was sticky for Frankie, as she explained how Instagram was her gateway into feminism and feminist politics. Frankie said:

Maybe you don't want to follow pages like, look, what's that page? It's just called 'feminist,' or something? (Lindsay: Yeah). And it's just like tons of infographics and memes and stuff. Yeah, follow it. But like, Rachel Cargle, Guerilla Feminism, like MattIV, like god, endless, endless activists that you definitely follow on Instagram, as do I. You know, uhm Jameela Jamil. Whatever. Like, why not follow their platform? They, like, Rachel Cargle taught me, she taught me things, so I don't think in any way that's frivolous that I learned from her online. What is think is important is that I then took that offline [...] I don't think there's anything innately frivolous about it starting online, as long as [moves offline too].

I was struck by Frankie's discussion here, particularly her differentiating between different Instagram accounts. For Frankie, the widely followed @feminist account seems to do something different than the accounts of activists like Rachel Cargle, Guerilla Feminism, MattIV, and Jameela Jamil. The latter, Frankie seems to position more favourably. What differentiates then, a "good" digital feminist account from one that is not?

In another example, Go, whose Instagram account was transitioning to become more focused on her activism and organizing around period poverty in her local community in Ontario, talked about how her shift in activism on/offline made things feel more 'real' for her. She talked at-length about a Reel that included footage of her creating "period packages" with various menstrual products, handwritten notes, and decorated bags, which were then delivered to a youth shelter. Go explained:

like the work I that I was doing before, it's just like on a phone, it's just like an account. But when I was conducting the actual project, and actually going to the youth shelter, I feel like I made it very real for me.

Go added that she hopes to continue creating Reels “like every time [my team and I] do another donation [...] like record it, just so that we can show credibility, as you said, but yeah, I feel like it’s also just like a good means to post.” This was a curious moment, where Go’s feminism becomes “real” through an entanglement of Instagram-video-period products-shelter-Reels-Post-views-credibility-realness. Digital feminism becomes as a material-discursive phenomena that is reconfigured in particular entanglements, that differentiate what Go understands to be “more real.” The Reel itself is an entanglement of bodies – Go’s body, the period products, the notes, the boxes, the car, the audio, the text that appears on screen, and timespaces – Instagram, shelter doors, Go’s house. While it is unclear if the Instagram Reel makes digital feminism more “real,” or if the making of period packages to deliver to shelters makes her digital feminism more “real,” I am struck by the ways that materialities and discourses become together, messily, and all at once.

To Be(come) Instagram Feminism, or Not?

The force of various human and non-human bodies for the becoming of Instagram are also illuminated in participants’ reactions to seeing digital feminism in the timespace (Barad 2007) of their Instagram feeds. In this section, I diffract participants’ stories, theory, and literature on algorithms, to understand the configurations that enable or constrain the becoming of Instagram feminism. When I asked Gwen, Ava, and Ally how they reacted to feminist content on Instagram, the focus group discussion became lively. Speaking through Zoom, from their respective homes in Ontario, Gwen started by responding:

Yeah, so I think it really just depends on what it is that I am seeing. If it is like an extreme, I am kinda like, yikes emoji [🤢]. Only because [...] we’re in a culture where people love to fight and people love to find issues in everything, and just cause issues.

So, I think when I do see things like that, it is a little bit frightening just because I know it could be very much used against us, and also generalized to everyone. Whereas when I see things that are appropriate for what feminism is (Lindsay: right), then it's like 'oh yay!' But yeah [laughs].

Ally responded to Gwen, stating, "I'll usually take a read, or take a listen, and if it's interesting, then great. If it's not [up] my alley, then I'll just scroll past." Ava added:

I think I have the exact same reaction as Gwen, where usually if someone just gets down, like straight to the point, and what they're saying is realistic, then I love it. But sometimes it's just taking things too far, and I'm like, 'ughh, that's not,' it's like upsetting 'cause it just sets the wrong image for feminism in general too, so it's kinda like counteractive.

Here, the relation between human-content-digital feminism is differentiated by whether the content is "realistic," "extreme," or the "wrong image." Gwen, Ava, and Ally become differently with Instagram feminism that feels more familiar or productive to them.

In another poignant example, Juliette thought that reposting feminist content on Instagram "doesn't do anything, it just shows 'oh I believe in this', or 'I support this'" a practice which she described as "value signalling" to be seen as a "good person." Juliette explained how she doesn't "want to be seen as someone that just [...] posts" and while posting "is not an issue in and of itself, sometimes it can get a bit excessive" which leads her to wonder, "but like what are you actually doing? [laughs] like just sharing an infographic? Is that really helpful?"

Juliette's critique of value signalling can be complicated by neoliberal can-do girlhood (Harris 2004), or girl power narratives which suggest girls should be successful activists and feminists (e.g., Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018) or expectations that "good people" are activists

(Einwohner 2008; Myers 2008). However, Rose said, “no one gets annoyed with me when I do my politics spams on my Stories, that I know of, so it can’t be that serious.” Similarly, Crystal Waters shared that when people post about feminism on Instagram, it does not “make [her] form an opinion about someone (Lindsay: right), like [...] it’s a nice thing to see people caring about what’s going on.” Farah, however, also spoke to how posting too much about politics or feminism on Instagram affects others’ perceptions of you, and whether they engage or not with your account. Farah said, “not everyone’s interest[ed] in that kind of stuff and especially if you post like that kind of stuff frequently, people just get tired of it, and they can’t be asked to like have to tap all the way through it (Lindsay: right). So, they just don’t follow.” Taken together, Juliette, Rose, Crystal Waters, and Farah underscore the ways that digital feminism and identity become together. Their stories also emphasize the relational nature of Instagram feminism, wherein particular digital feminisms affect Instagram users differently, including how they engage with (or not) the content.

Others, like Esti and Ava, argued that posting feminist content on Instagram can be hard. Now a highschooler, Ava told me she posts less frequently on Instagram about feminism because she is more concerned with her “whole page aesthetic” and the number of people who see her Instagram content. Ava explained:

[...] ‘Cause when I was in grade 8, like I didn’t, there wasn’t that many people that would see [my Instagram content] and judge me [...] But now, like as a third year in high school, your social life becomes such a huge part of you and you’re constantly worried about other people criticizing you, right? Like I’m gonna post this and even though I stand by this, and I would tell anybody in the school that I stand by this, I just know this one guy in my school is gonna look at that and be like ‘there’s no way this girl is posting

this, like she needs to shut up.’ [...] Even though I would talk to him in his face and say ‘what you’re doing is wrong,’ I would overthink it more if I had to post it on my Story. [When] I post something and it gets like 300-400 views, even if it’s only on my Story [...] There’s so many people seeing that, and it takes so much more to make an announcement to 300 people than to talk to a person one-on-one about an issue. Which is like, I find myself a victim and contributor to the stigma of feminism because sometimes I even feel embarrassed to speak up about it. And it’s like unfortunate, but it’s true.

I am moved by Ava’s story. Echoing Essa’s earlier thoughts, likes and views are material-discursive practices that are differentiating (Barad 2007) for the becoming of Instagram feminism. Again, multiple bodies intra-act to constrain or enable the becoming of digital feminism – Ava’s body, the bodies of the audience, the Instagram Story, likes, and views. The becoming of digital feminism is also not neatly contained to the online world, or the timespace of Instagram, as Ava blurs the boundaries between Instagram Story views, and her experiences with peers in the timespace of highschool. Here, gender and age are also intra-acting material-discursive forces in the becoming of digital feminism, as Ava fears being read through her Instagram content, as a girl that says too much online.

Another wondrous moment (MacLure 2013) around the intra-activity of age was in my interview with Crystal Waters, when she was talking about the pressure to repost or post activist or political content on Instagram. A pressure she saw as increasingly relevant for “younger” people like her sister in grade nine. Crystal Waters said:

for example, the Israel-Palestine conflict and [my sister’s friends have] been posting about it, which you know, is good, but [my sister] asked them [...] like ‘what is this post about?’ or something [...] and her friends were like ‘I don’t know, I’m just posting it

because someone else posted it.’ [...] I think a lot of people fall into the same, I guess you could call trap, where they feel this need to be an activist on social media. To post a lot about things that are important, but they don’t really know a lot about.

Crystal Waters said that she does not feel that same pressure to post about social, political, and/or feminist issues online, but she “definitely [feels] pressured [...] about learning about it.” Here, age is not just contained in Crystal Waters’ or her sister’s and friends’ human bodies, but is also marked on Instagram content and accounts. Instagram accounts which repost widely shared political content, are read by Crystal Waters as a particular aged (i.e. younger) digital performativity. Becoming young on Instagram, Crystal Water argues, involves an assemblage of expectations around reposting content, frequently updating Instagram Stories with reposted content, and material-discursive practices of digital activism.

I also heard from participants like Anne and Gwen, who thought the word feminism itself did something. As I have been arguing in this chapter, feminism as a material-discursive context can be understood as an intra-acting entanglement – a collection of human and non-human bodies that becomes differently in specific timespacematterings. With Barad (2007), we can think of words as matter and meaning, material-discursive practices that enact difference in the world’s unfolding. For example, Anne thought that “even the word feminism [has] like ‘femme’ in it [...] so I think women and girls are [...] more interested in connecting [...] and much more likely to be engaged in feminism online.” As discussed earlier in this chapter, in my content analysis I noticed that some Instagram accounts and content were not overtly labelled as feminist or feminism, despite engaging in what I would consider to be feminism. Gwen told me how the collective Instagram account she started uses “youth menstrual equity activists” rather than “feminists” because “from like a PR [public relations] standpoint [...] feminist could be a turn

off for a lot of people.” Gwen argued that she would not want “feminist” or “wording in our [Instagram] bio or anything to turn people away [...] But when people see ‘activists’ [...] they’d be like ‘oh, I want to take part in that.’” Feminist and feminism, are thus, human and non-human bodies, words, relations, and affective intensities that do something in their collisions with other bodies in timespacematterings.

Emojis as Material-Discursive

During my content analysis, and in the interviews that were facilitated through email or Instagram’s direct message, I became entranced by emojis. In this final intertwined section in my discussion of the boundary-making practices of Instagram feminism, I argue that emojis are a material-discursive context of Instagram feminism that illuminate the ways that bodies intra-act to become meaningful and shape potentialities. I noticed that emojis were frequently used in the captions of Instagram Posts, seeming to work with the accompanied text, images, and audio in the content to co-constitute affective or emotional intensities like solidarity (e.g., 🤝), love and support (e.g., 💖) rage, confusion, sarcasm or satire (e.g., 🤪), or to signal a content and/or trigger warning (e.g., ⚠️). Emojis also came up in the focus group conversation, when Gwen said that sometimes feminist content on Instagram can make her feel “yikes emoji” (i.e. 😬).

Emojis also do something for creating a relation between the content, the creator, and the audience. For example, emojis like 🙌 and 🙏 appeared in captions by @feminista, encouraging the audience to contribute to the discussion in the comments section below, or to prompt them to read the Post in full. It was common for Posts to be “re-grams” or reposted content created by others, and in many cases the accompanied captions would include emojis like 🙌 or 100, which

work to mark approval or belief in the content that they reshared. Sometimes captions only included emojis.

When I was thinking about emojis in these instances, I was reminded of Mina's (2019:167) theorizing of memes, and her argument that memes, like mirrors, "reflect, amplify, and distort culture." In the case of girls' feminism on Instagram, I argue that emojis are one matter-meaning/materiality-discourse that co-creates feminist girl, digital girl, and girlhood – entangled becomings I discussed in the previous chapter. This was particularly evident in the captions on the account @femmefm. For example, in one of the first Posts announcing her podcast, she writes "[redacted] Introduction is UP!!!! I loveee speaking into the void 🧐🏊!?!❤️ link in bio fr [read: for real]" And in her bio statement, she uses the emojis 🌈🔫📖🕒🍄👤🔄👉👂 alongside the text "dedicated to unspoken histories of girls, gays & non-binary slays" to describe her podcast. To become digital girl, is to know, understand, and remix these emojis in your performativity of girl and girlhood on- and offline.

Technology As Doing

Re-turning (Barad 2014) arguments I began to develop earlier, in this section I disentangle the material-discursive phenomena of technology and position it as a re-configuration that does something for digital feminism. Resonant with Bivens (2015), I argue that a feminist posthuman approach to understanding technology recognizes it as an iterative unfolding and constellation of human and non-human bodies, materialities, and discourses that becomes in specific intra-actions. I consider the doing of multiple Instagram accounts, multiple digital selves, and the intra-active co-creation of content between humans/non-humans. I diffract participants' stories, Barad (2007), Braidotti (2022), research on technology, and digital fieldnotes to reconceptualize algorithms, shadow bans, virality, likes, and Instagram comments.

Multiple Instagram Accounts, Multiple Digital Selves

In interviews and focus groups I learned that many girls and young women have multiple Instagram accounts with different purposes, followers, and types of content. Diffracting these stories with Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) allows me to think about Instagram accounts as messy phenomena that are not neatly contained, co-creating girls' and Instagram feminism. In one example, Zara laughed while saying:

I have too many accounts to keep up with, most of which I've forgot[ten] the passwords to. Because when I was young, I did have an unhealthy obsession with like making either a fan page or like an account for memes, or an account for something. [I] would just keep making Instagram accounts. I think I have around 30, give or take.

Zara has two accounts where she posts edits of movie and book characters, and a "finsta, I think you say in the United States [and] Canada, but over here, [in the UK], we call it [a] private account, just like a couple of my close friends, which is where I post whatever I want." Zara decided to make a smaller account, where she "like cut off everyone [she doesn't] speak to anymore" which has helped her feel more confident sharing political and feminist content. Zara explained, "'cause my account is smaller and I have more people I know, close to me, there's no one there who like replies to [Stories or sends] DMs [saying] 'wait, so you hate men?' [laughs] or something like that." Instagram accounts are not one thing, rather are phenomena that are configurations of multiple bodies (e.g., creators, audience, software engineers, content, comments), and material-discursive contexts (i.e., "big following"; "finsta") that necessarily exclude (Barad 2007). As Barad (2007) argues, this does not mean that anything is possible at any given time. Instead, the entanglements and intra-actions of bodies-discourses-times-spaces-matter that co-produce each of Zara's Instagram account are differentiating. As Zara said, her

“finsta” (i.e., “fake Instagram”) account includes a different entanglement than her accounts that have a “big following,” where more human bodies reply to Stories, and non-human bodies like “annoying comments” are co-constitutive, affecting what types of content she posts, and how she experiences its becoming.

Similarly, Rose had three Instagram accounts. One bigger account that she shares whenever anyone asks for her Instagram username, one “private Instagram” where she “spam posts” (i.e. frequently) “like a photo album,” and “then [another account] for stalking.” Curiously, Rose shared that unless she is posting to an account, she “doesn’t usually know which account [she’s] in.” Rose said, “like if I’m on my feed and I see something and I want to put it to my Story, I just post it to my Story.” She often only realizes which account she is in after she posts, but Rose thought this was okay, especially around politics. As Rose said, “if it’s politics [...] like I kind of believe in this, so I don’t really care which account it’s on.” This was a wondrous moment in our interview (MacLure 2013), and I re-turned (Barad 2014) to discussions earlier in this chapter about how there was an emotional intensity and stress around posting political or feminist content, as many girls argued that “it’s not easy.” It is also curious to think about Rose’s practice alongside aforementioned discussions around aesthetics, and the material-discursive context of Instagram that valorizes a cohesive digital self-presentation online (Mahoney 2022). Here, however, we see that Rose’s digital self is multiple and porous, not neatly contained or re-presented in particular spacetime-matterings, including on each of her Instagram accounts (Barad 2007). Resonant with Rose’s arguments around posting political content across each of her accounts, Quinn shared that they also post feminist and political content “because I want those who follow me to understand that this is who I am as a person, but also to realize that feminism and activism shouldn’t have as much stigma as they do now.” The multiple timespaces

Rose and Quinn co-create on Instagram, as well as the digital feminist performativities that co-constitute them, seep into each other (Barad 2007).

Ava, however, thought that it might be easier to post about feminist and political account on an Instagram account that is not connected to her personally, but is “dedicated to those types of posts, only.” Speaking about the collective account Ava co-creates, she said:

If you see @menstruationmatters post something about feminism, you’re not going to be like ‘woah, what a comment’ [from an account by] an organization working towards gender inequality, right? But if you see me suddenly make a bold comment, like some political comment on how women are treated, like let’s say in the workforce, or like general politics or whatever on my [personal] account, they’re gonna be like, ‘why is a 16 year old girl talking about stuff like this?’[...] That’s why it’s so much easier to take out that space [...] it has its purpose [...] so like if I post something [political or feminist] on that account, nobody’s gonna be shocked by that.

Understanding Instagram accounts as entanglements of multiple bodies-spaces-times-discourses-matter means that each specific configuration shapes their unfolding. The entanglement that co-constitutes the collective Instagram account enables the becoming of content that is feminist.

Whereas the intra-actions of Ava’s personal account, including around material-discursive contexts and relations of gender and age, demark her 16-year-old body and personal Instagram as at odds or unfamiliar to “political comments.” As Barad (2007:236) argues, power is “intra-actively demarcated through the specific production of marks on bodies.” Bodies here, are human bodies, like Ava’s 16-year-old human girl body, but also her digital body, content, and Instagram accounts. Contrasting Rose’s and Quinn’s stories, Ava argues that her digital feminist performativity becomes differently in the specific timespace of the collective Instagram

feminism. Read together, their stories highlight the doing of multiple Instagram accounts, and how the specific material-discursive contexts of them, including the aim of the account and the number of followers, affect the performativity of their digital feminism.

Differentiating Content

Through each method, I learned that main feed/grid Posts, Stories, and Reels do something different for the unfolding of Instagram feminism. In interviews, participants told me about how the temporality and visibility of Stories affects what content they share and how often they post. Mira, whose Instagram account was nearly all reposted content from others, explained, “Stories is just, in general, like anything I like, I posted to my Stories. I’m like ‘oh cool’ [...] actual posts, I those are very like, less. I don’t just post anything on there.” Mira continued:

I always feel like there’s this pressure for Posts to be better (Lindsay: hmm). Stor[ies], that can just kind of [be] whatever, and it doesn’t matter, it’s gonna go away in 24 hours [...] nobody’s gonna see it after. But Post[s], I like to be cautious about what I post. Because it’s also like I don’t wanna post anything wrong or false.

Like many I spoke to, Safa also had a preference for Instagram Stories, explaining:

I feel safer maybe because it’s like, yeah, it’ll go away after 24 hours, and I just know that maybe because of the algorithm, but I know that people I think that I’m closest to somehow will view my Story because it’s always like the same people that view it, or it goes to them first. And that just make[s] me feel safe somehow, and I also like don’t feel as stressed, I don’t know, like posting on Instagram, like scares me [laughs]. I don’t know why it does, but that’s why I just don’t do it (Lindsay: hmm).

Anne also positioned her main feed as “more calculated” and for “like anyone,” whereas her Stories were where “people that are more like engaged or have already followed [see] more

personal [content like] about my day, some books I'm reading, other people who I know [and] what causes they're working on."

Mira, Safa, and Anne make clear that particular timespacematterings (Barad 2007) affect the becoming of content. Instagram Stories are a timespacemattering (Barad 2007) that disappear unless saved in a Story highlight, and intra-act differently with the algorithm and "close friend" affordances to co-produce a material-discursive context that feels less risky or scary. Main feed (also known as main-grid) Posts are co-produced through a different timespacemattering (Barad 2007). Main feed Posts do not disappear unless the creator archives them, and they seem to take on a different intensity for Instagram users, as interviewees explained them as "more calculated," or reserved for sharing "Instagram-worthy" or "original content." Curiously though, while comparing main feed Posts and Instagram Stories, Valeri said "so uhm, I wouldn't necessarily say there's a difference [in content], the different mainly lies in how often I post."

While doing content analysis, I noticed that Amina was quite active on Instagram Stories, posting several Stories each day. Amina told me that she "mostly post[s] Stories [because] every rant or topic I discuss can be talked about with more detail in Stories." Amina, like many of the others in my sample, used Story highlights to organize and archive Stories. Explaining why she does not make Posts or Reels, Amina said, "they attract a larger audience that can comment a lot of abuse which the public can see, and I don't have the time to filter that, whereas if I get abusive DMs [direct messages] I can just ignore them." Instagram Stories however, enable a different relationality and intra-action between users and content, where people can reply to Stories by swiping up to type a message, or to select a reaction emoji. This is a standard feature on Instagram, however users can alter their settings to restrict Story replies, including by specific accounts. Again, the affordances of Instagram enact force in Amina's Instagram feminism.

Stories, which Amina argues have less reach, co-create a different timespace than Reels which diffuse and attract hate comments. Amina's ability to control the reach and intra-actions between users through Stories, facilitate her use of Instagram Stories as the form for mobilizing her digital feminism.

Frankie also talked about the difference between Instagram Stories, Posts, and Reels for the collective account she co-created:

All the catcall chalking we do goes to the Story (Lindsay: mmmm) and then it goes into a highlight Reel. Every, all the chalking we do about a club goes on a Post of its own, [...] and then we will post Reels from the chalking as well [...] because they reach so many people in a way that a Post doesn't. [Reels are] a really good way to, I guess, yeah, for platform exposure, but also for like our actual work to get it out there. But it definitely helps with sustaining our following, and that kind of thing, and growing it [...] We will repost [others' content] because sometimes we don't have any content [and] we'll notice that like, you know [...] our following [i]s dropping

Here, the affordances of each type of content, and their force for creating reach and engagement, affect the material-discursive practice of digital feminism. Reels are material-discursive phenomena (Barad 2007), videos that participants described as "addictive," and as Frankie notes intra-act with the algorithms of Instagram to differentially "reach so many people." Reels are positioned as useful for "platform exposure," "sustaining a following," and blurring online and offline organizing when they include montages of activism and protest. Reposting content also does something for sustaining the following of the collective Instagram Frankie co-creates in timespacematterings where they have breaks between their original content. Reading Frankie's story with Barad (2007) makes clear that digital feminism is a constellation of human and non-

human bodies like technologies, affordances, and material-discursive contexts of digital culture. Indeed, technology does not sit still. Instagram feminism and technologies of Instagram iteratively intra-act and co-constitute each other.

Algorithms, Shadow Bans, and Community Guidelines

In this section, I diffract stories from Nora, Amina, Valeri, Bea, Farah, notes from my content analysis, and Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022), to better understand the force of algorithms, shadow bans, and Instagram's community guidelines for digital feminism. Nora and Amina argued that Instagram's community guidelines are biased. While Nora thought that Instagram was generally a good place for feminism, from Germany, she wrote:

I also think that, like every social media platform, it's unfortunately too influenced by the people and societal problems I/we are criticizing, especially because there are many people on here who harass others (and especially target women), yet they don't face consequences for it. Instagram likes to cancel women who speak up, while people who are hurtful towards our community usually get a pass, which is sad 😞

This was echoed by Amina, who wrote from Pakistan:

I feel like the community guidelines are extremely biased. I have noticed this because other online feminists talk about this as well, but any sort of abuse from people that is reported by feminists is never taken seriously, but very simply, criticism of men is easily removed because Instagram considers it a generalization and therefore "hate speech" of a demographic, but when the abuse is aimed towards women, it is never that easily removed. Sexualized images of women are allowed, but realistic images of a women's body and their natural function, such as breastfeeding [...] not only get more hate but are also reported by people [...] I also noticed I get more engagement and views, and my

shadow ban was removed since I changed [...] my personal settings from “female” to “male.” It’s definitely biased and misogynistic.

Both Nora and Amina remind us that the intra-activity of technologies like Instagram’s community guidelines and their affordances around reporting content are not separate from the intra-activity of the world (Barad 2007). Relations of power and marginalization, including gendered and sexualized double standards, seep into human-technology relations. It is particularly striking to hear that Amina’s experiences with shadow banning seemingly improved when she switched her Instagram user profile settings from female to male. I am reminded of Barad’s arguments that power intra-acts with bodies, leaving marks on particular bodies. In the intra-activity of Instagram, female user bodies, and content bodies about women and girls are marked, and are seemingly more heavily constrained by the force of Instagram’s algorithms and community guidelines.

Amina also expressed concern about the potentialities of artificial intelligence, explaining an instance where “someone created AI nude images of a lot of feminists and posted them as ‘revenge’ and it was hard to get reported and removed.” Here, AI nude images are material-discursive, intra-actively remade in an entanglement that includes digital feminists-artificial intelligence-Big data-Instagram-revenge-misogyny-Instagram users-Instagram guidelines. Experiences like these made it hard for Amina to see Instagram as a safe space. She noted that “doxing is really common too, even by other girls who are not feminists and simp[l]y disagree with you.” Because of doxing, Amina talked about “tak[ing] measures for safety.” Amina explained, “lots of feminists, especially radical feminists I know, hide their true identity [on Instagram]. I don’t, but I understand why they do. I kinda put myself in danger by being known.” I am really struck by Amina’s thoughts here. She illuminates the affective force of becoming

digital radical feminist, within a broader material-discursive context that algorithmically rewards particular types of feminists and feminisms (Mahoney 2022). Radical feminists, Amina argues, as they entangle and become with Instagram, are particularly risky. I can also diffract Amina's thoughts here with some of my encounters during content analysis. For example, @feministflower, an account overly positioned as radical feminist had one caption that read "if my friends knew that I'm a radical feminist, they'd cancel me instantly #radfemundercover." In another Post, @feministflower uses the hashtag #radfemsafe, and writes "a safe space for women/radfems would mean a lot to me."

Valeri also spoke about her experience being shadow banned as a Black American girl. Valeri said, "[I've been] shadow banned a lot in my main account, I kid you not, it has been deleted but reinstated like six or seven times at this point." Like others in my sample, Valeri created a "back-up" account. On shadow bans, Valeri argued:

Instagram shadow bans uhh marginalized creators. So especially racially marginalized creators, like myself [...] it's uhh shaped my experiences, and I've had to shift gears on how [and what] I post about here [...] It kind of sucks [yawn]. Because it's like all this hard work, right, and I post it, and barely people see it. Because [...] I work on my Posts for months, mainly because I'm very busy at school. Like my largest break was I did not post for [...] five or seven months, and when I posted it, every [Post] got like 82 likes [when they] usually get around 200 [or] 300 [voice note ends] [...] I really don't care about the likes. I'll just say that I guess it's a little disheartening when I post it, and [it's] shadow banned to like three times less than what my regular reach it [...] it kind of [puts] a damper, and it kind of makes me question myself a little bit of 'oh, do I actually want to be doing this work?' Stuff like that. But I know that uhm educational awareness and

trying to educate uhh people who are part of my platform, uhm, that's what I actually care about, not the numbers.

There are multiple humans and non-humans in the entanglement here, including Valeri, software engineers, content moderators, algorithms, community guidelines, Instagram content, Instagram users, Instagram affordances (i.e., likes, views), and material-discursive forces like marginalization, reach, and shadow bans. As Valeri suggests shadow bans *do* something for her content creation. As material-discursive phenomena, that include entanglements of humans-non-humans-timespaces-discourses, shadow bans are differentiating. Intra-sections of power and marginalization are embedded into the becoming of technologies (Bucher 2018; Noble 2018) like Instagram, co-constituting her content creation, including whether others see or engage with her content, what and how often she posts, and her back-up Instagram account. Barad (2007:237) argues that intra-acting “material-discursive apparatuses” produce “a space or structure” that is demarked by the unfolding of contexts of gender, community, race, and class. Here, algorithms and shadow bans are material-discursive apparatuses which intra-actively produce a digital space/structure that is marked by the intra-active unfolding of race and racism.

In my content analysis, I noticed that Instagram users try to push back or disrupt shadow bans through relations with their audience. For example, in a main feed Post,

@girlagainstpatriarchy writes:

temporary post [.] Hi if you see this post [,] please comment anything & save! Instagram has been shadowbanning activist accounts and my engagement for my account, amongst others, has been unnaturally low. Thank you!

In the caption, @girlsagainstpatriarchy writes “[...] I thought it was me and my [P]osts but apparently it has been happening to many other[s.] The new algorithm has been shadow banning

political JUSTICE and activist acc[ounts] [...]” When algorithms are understood as tailor-made formulas for personalized content, broader relations of power like shadow banning, appear as individual problems with a single digital artifact or user. This framing also works to disguise the relations of power embedded within and intra-acting with technologies like algorithms, which differentiate ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ content and users (Cotter 2023). A feminist posthuman approach traces the ways that relations of power and marginalization co-create the intra-activity of technology, which troubles an individualizing approach to understanding shadow bans. Some content and accounts in my project also attempted to disrupt shadow banning by censoring words or using alternative words (e.g., b00st, m3n, m@n), as previously noted in my text-based interviews with Nora and Fatima.

I was also struck by discussions of algorithms in my conversations with Frankie, Farah, and Bea. Frankie said:

[...] You only see [what] the algorithm wants you to see [...] things that agree with you already. So I can go on Instagram and I kind of think [...] ‘oh my god, I feel so safe and loved by the world because everybody agrees with me [...] we’re like [...] pro-choice and like anti-capitalism [...] because it’s my side of Instagram [...] what the algorithm wants me to see. But I can also go and see like, MAGA stuff really easily with a hashtag and getting into like a [...] side of Instagram [where] people would probably like feel threatened by my existence [...] I think that’s dangerous as well.

Reflecting arguments made by Bail (2021) about the polarization of social media, Frankie is concerned about the ways that algorithms which are focused on matching content to users’ preferences, create echo chambers. Frankie’s “side” of Instagram becomes intra-actively through entanglements of her body-content-Instagram-algorithms, and is a timespace that continues

becoming with her. Frankie's input of data into Instagram through likes, comments, views, as well as hashtag and profile searching, intra-actively creates the output of content that she sees. The relation between input and output are iteratively becoming, and inseparable from each other. Thus, each human body that intra-acts with Instagram co-creates a specific timespacemattering, affecting meanings and experiences of Instagram, content, and as Frankie argues "the world."

Farah argued that the algorithms on Instagram and TikTok are different, positioning the latter as harder to manipulate. From her bedroom in the UK, 16-year-old Farah said, "I think with Instagram, once you have seen a few feminist things, they will pop up again and again." For Farah, the quick repetition of preferred and/or similar content on Instagram, made it a better space for feminism. In contrast, on TikTok, Farah explained, "it will be like a feminist video, then like a monkey eating a banana [...] it's hard to like, keep it going." Farah believed that even when you "stop liking something, you just keep seeing it [...] so you have to restart, like reset your algorithm kind of." Differing from Farah, in an email, Bea argued:

[T]ik[T]ok is generally more accepting of my views, however this is largely because the [T]ik[T]ok algorithm is very good at grouping alike people and creating echo chambers. Instagram is better for finding people who don't share your views and creating environments for conversations, but the people tend to be generally less willing to listen to other views, than the people on [T]ik[T]ok.

Bea saw the TikTok algorithms as more easily manipulated, and thus, as a "better platform[] for advocacy." Bea clarified though, that they do not think Instagram is "bad," and that it has "become better since adding the 'suggested accounts' feature, as you can discover other users more easily now." For Bea, the timespacemattering of TikTok co-constitutes echo chambers which affect how they experience the platform and their relations with others. The intra-activity

of Instagram, including the algorithms, and “suggested accounts” features co-constitute a different timespacemattering (Barad 2007) that according to Bea constrains dialogue, but enables “finding people who don’t share your views and creating environments for conversations.”

Doing Enough of the ‘Right’ Thing?: Reach, Virality, and Metrics

Related to a discussion of algorithms and shadow banning, the intra-acting doing of technology was also emergent in discussions around virality, metrics, and reach. Participants wondered whether their digital feminism was doing ‘enough,’ for example, if it was reaching enough people, engaging their audience, or fostering productive and meaningful conversations around feminism. In one striking moment, Jacinta worried about whether the collective Instagram account was doing ‘enough’ outreach to grow their period activism. Jacinta said:

[Instagram] also holds us back a bit from like, you know, reaching out to maybe like bigger corporations [...] [or] really go[ing] to the next level because [...] a lot of our Instagram is really like fun, and you know cheeky and whatever, [but] it sometimes doesn’t make it seem as professional at times. [There] is like [a] good different organization that has the same mission [and has] like very sleek [Instagram] Posts and stuff. So I feel like, while Instagram does open up a lot of doors for us, [...] it also holds us back in a sense [...] We don’t have a website [...] [which] would make this seem more official [and] more professional [...] Like we could do like [] presentations [at] events and colleges or universities [...] but it just makes [it seem] less legit if we don’t have like a website or like a tangible way to contact them [...] like if [other groups] don’t have Instagram.

The material-discursive complexities of the collective Instagram account emerge intra-actively here, through constellations that co-create the account as “fun” and “cheeky.” In contrast, Jacinta

argues that “sleek” Posts can co-create a “more official” and “more professional” feel to an Instagram account. The technologies of Instagram and their material-discursive contexts, thus, enact force for what Instagram feminism may (not) become. Despite Jacinta’s concerns about reach, many of the participants learned about the feminist collectives they were part of through Instagram. As Ally explained, “everyone else [besides my few friends] is like people who heard about [our collective] through us posting [...] Instagram Stories, or just saw it through, I don’t know, maybe the Instagram algorithm shoves it in their face.”

Ally told me that when beginning the collective account based in Ontario, they posted “shoutout for shoutouts [...] to try to grow [their] follower count.” Shoutout for shoutouts are relational practices where different Instagram accounts will offer to post about another account in exchange for that account posting about them. Another way that accounts seemed to pursue reach was by encouraging people to comment, like, and share their Posts. Ally said, “I remember I had my friends comment on the Posts as well, in the beginning, so that they would gain more attraction.” Essa, a Canadian teen girl, shared how she sees a lot of the Posts from the collective she is part of on Instagram, and she will “like them to show that [she] wants to engage with them.”

Poppy, from the UK, was part of the team that managed the social media for another collective Instagram account. She described her role as mostly focused on “looking at the different analytics and kind of finding out what we could do to kind of grow more as a page and interact with people” as well as responding to direct messages on Instagram and LinkedIn. When I asked Poppy what she was attentive to on the analytics page on Instagram, she said:

Mainly engagement and reach as well because I want the Post to reach as many people as possible and for people to be commenting, liking, sharing, stuff like that. Yeah, because

I'd rather have fewer people who are genuinely interested and coming back, rather than people who are just mindlessly just, you know, scrolling past.

Poppy told me that she wished “people [felt] more free to share their thoughts and like comment [on the Posts] and stuff like that,” rather than just sending their thoughts in direct messages.

Poppy tends to reply to these messages saying something like “okay, please put that into a comment. That would be really, really, good.” Some Instagram accounts, like @womanpower contributed to their own comment section, by adding a couple of comments to most Posts with hashtags and alternate text. While this practice might be in response to caption word limits, it is also a material-discursive practice that intra-acts with and co-produces metrics, reach, and virality.

In another example, Gwen, a 20-year-old Korean Canadian, worried about the impacts of social media, arguing that “people are just like obsessed with [...] like, likes or whatever, views and stuff like that.” Gwen cautioned about “like the damage that [obsession with metrics] could have on people,” which she framed as “unnecessary.” It is curious to think about Ally's, Poppy's, and Gwen's musings about metrics with a newer affordance on Instagram that allows Instagram users to hide the like counts on their Posts. What does the obscuring of like counts and metrics do for the timespacemattering of Instagram and Instagram feminism? Given the affective force of likes in the intra-actions that co-constitute Instagram, including in the unfolding of its algorithms and user experience, it seems as though hiding likes is an attempt by Meta to co-create a different timespacemattering of Instagram that shifts away from virality and reach, and towards more carefree and fun engagement. Yet, Instagram likes, as a material-discursive force, or as a middle ground of relationality (Braidotti 2022) that links users, content, and algorithms, are one of the vital forces that affects what Instagram and Instagram feminism become. Many of the accounts I

entangled with seemed to embrace the affordance to hide likes. One might argue that Meta introducing the “hide like” affordance resembles a feminist attempt to decrease the mental health burden of likes. Others, like Caldeira and colleagues (2021), are skeptical that this affordance does much to shift users’ relations to the app, given the centrality of likes in co-creating the algorithms which affect user experience.

Virality is contextual, emerging through specific entanglements that are reconfigured through timespacematterings. Gwen, for example, argued people who use Instagram for “personal uses,” such as posting on personal or “everyday” accounts are always engaging for “selfish reasons” like “trying to gain attention from others.” When you contribute to a collective Instagram account, however, Gwen said, “it’s more selfless [...] you’re trying to spread a word and gain traction for a cause that you’re trying to support.” For Gwen, the timespacemattering (Barad 2007) of a collective, activist-oriented Instagram is a different timespacemattering than a personal Instagram account, differentiating meanings and experiences of virality.

I spent hours of my content analysis sifting through fascinating comment sections on Posts. I became curious about what types of content and digital feminisms co-constituted boisterous comments. Several participants shared that while they did not have many negative experiences with hateful or disruptive comments on their content, they frequently had negative experiences when they commented on others’ content, especially “bigger” accounts like @feminist and @impact. Comment sections seemed to be less divisive on content that was framed less overtly as feminist, for example, as political education. It also seemed that accounts that posted more polished or “fun” aesthetically curated infographics seemed to attract less division in comments. Often, the comments section on these Posts would include comments from other youth organizations, from various members of the collective, and were frequently a

collection of supportive phrases or series of emojis. The most divisive comment sections were linked to content that was overtly political and feminist, reading like manifestos of feminist beliefs, re-productions of (trans-exclusive) radical feminism, pro-abortion content, and critiques of men's rights activists/activism, pro-life feminism, as well as content which suggested a 'right' and 'wrong' ideology or practice. Interestingly, in my interview with Anne, she told me that she tries to avoid overtly establishing a 'right' and 'wrong,' in her Instagram content by keeping her content "very personal," a practice which she saw as safeguarding against hostility and anti-feminists.

I became curious about how certain content and material-discursive practices of Instagram feminism intra-act with the algorithms, platform affordances, and cultural landscape of Instagram to affect engagement. One account, @feministunicorn, was very overt about their feminist identity and feminisms, and had a section in each caption that outlined "tags I support" and "tags I do not support." On each Post, @feministunicorn lists a collection of hashtags they support (e.g., "#prochoice #prochoiceisprolife #mybodymychoice #mybodymyrights #defundliveaction") and hashtags they do not support (e.g., "#prolife #prolifeisprowomen 🙄 #prolifegeneration #prolifefeminism (no such thing 🤪)"). This material-discursive practice enacts a diffractive pattern, as the becoming of the content is intertwined with and linked to an opposition. Engaging so directly with the opposition might work to disrupt the boundaries of an echo chamber, which many of the participants critiqued.

While it might be risky to invite opposition to Instagram feminism through hashtags like @feministunicorn does, this material-discursive practice of digital feminism reminds me that relationships with oppositions are also always becoming. The relational becoming of oppositions was also resonant in Frankie's earlier story about becoming with MAGA women. Feminist

human bodies and feminist human/non-human Instagram accounts and content have porous boundaries. As I will elaborate in the following chapter, feminisms and feminists collide with each other, and these collisions between and within feminisms are intra-actions which temporarily mark boundaries between bodies. Affective forces mark boundaries between bodies and feminisms, which offers an understanding of conflict that turns towards response-ability in entanglements and intra-actions (Barad 2007; Haraway 2016). Rather than understanding these collisions and conflicts as only aggression or hostile, we can muse about which bodies and forces differentiate entangled becomings.

In various intra-acting sections, I have aimed to highlight the affective force of technology in the intra-activity of Instagram feminism, challenging a framing of technology that sees it merely as a materiality or a socially constructed discourse. Instead, I have positioned technology as an entanglement of human and non-human bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces, that reconfigure the possibilities of girls' Instagram feminism. I have argued that technology must be seen as an iterative becoming that intra-acts with the unfolding of the world, marking bodies through boundary-making practices of gender and race in practices like shadow banning, community guidelines, and algorithms. In what follows, I map the multiple timespaces in the intra-activity of Instagram feminism.

The Multiple TimesSpaces of Instagram Feminism

In this final section, I think with Barad (2014, 2017) about timespacemattering in the intra-activity of digital feminism. Diffracting Barad, content analysis notes, and participants' stories, I aim to trouble a linear framing of time that progresses from beginning to end, and an understanding of space as an "container" (Barad 2007:180) that pre-exists intra-actions. A diffractive reading of digital feminism underscores how multiple times (i.e., past-present-future,

digital, clock, “realtime,” trendy, political, age) and spaces (e.g., online, offline, West) emerge through their co-constitution – messily and all at once.

Many participants shared that they started to post about feminist and political content on Instagram in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of George Floyd. In one example, Jenna told me that she posted “a message of support for the Black community, and also [wanted to] call out white privilege” after George Floyd’s murder, noting that while she “didn’t have many followers at the time,” it was not being talked about “in [her] real circle at school.” Here, Jenna’s digital feminism unfolds in an entanglement that co-constitutes multiple timespaces: the Black Lives Matter movement; online; offline; “real circle at school”; and the Black community. The timespace of Jenna’s Instagram collides with the timespace of the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of George Floyd. The boundaries between online and offline timespaces are leaky (Barad 2017).

Juliette, who noted that she was one of the last at school to create an Instagram account, said:

Back in grade 8, like, I think the Black Lives Matter [movement] happened, and [...] I’ve always been really passionate about social justice, so I felt like I really had to share that online [...] I was like [...] ‘oh, I have Instagram, like I can post about this now’ [...] I probably had like 10 followers, but I was like ‘oh, I have a platform, like I can post this stuff and like show that I’ve been supportive of it, or I can like add on my own little [...] comments about what I think about something’ [which] felt kind of like empowering [...] Whereas now, honestly, I have not posted something about like social justice in a very long time, like if I’m part of like I’ll repost their stuff, but it’s like, I rarely do that now, because I think [...] I have a much bigger following now [laughs] than I did when I was

like younger, so I feel like there's a lot more people that would judge my opinions. And I don't know [...] I like using Instagram as being something a bit more fun now, than something super serious [...] I think I can still support things within my own life and make sustainable change [...] real sustainable change, rather than just like reposting something.

Laughing at her younger self, Juliette said, "I remember being so invested in like making my Stories [laugh], like I would post mostly about like social issues and [...] like draw all of it out on like Procreate." Echoing Ava's aforementioned story, Juliette argued she cares differently about Instagram aesthetic compared to her younger self, arguing "like if it's aesthetic, then I'll post it now."

The unfolding of Juliette's Instagram emerges from intra-actions or practices of timespacematterings (Barad 2007). The intra-action that mutually constitutes her "older" Instagram includes an entanglement of the timespace of grade eight, the Black Lives Matter movement, material-discursive contexts like followers, "hav[ing] a platform," as well as technologies like Procreate, and Instagram Stories. Her more recent Instagram emerges from an entanglement of human bodies (i.e., a bigger following), non-human bodies (i.e., aesthetic content), and material-discursive contexts like age, Instagram aesthetics, and a timespace of "fun" Instagram. When Juliette re-turns (Barad 2014:168) the timespacemattering of her Instagram in grade eight, she "open[s] it up and breath[es] new life into it." As Barad (2014:168) argues, "there is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then," and erasure is never accomplished because difference is always affecting intra-actions. So, while Juliette might see her eighth-grade Instagram as something of the past, as scholars argue (e.g., Kitchin 2017), when we move in digital timespaces, we leave traces which feed the iterative assembling of algorithms,

which undoubtedly affect how we know and experience digital timespaces. In the timespacemattering of Instagram, Juliette's past-present-future becoming and her past-present-future Instagram are mutually constitutive.

Talking about her earliest experiences on Instagram, Amina said, "the first [Instagram account] I made when I was 13, and that was when Instagram had literally just come out, so it was a new thing." Amina had that first account for two years, but explained "I switched over to a new one when I was 15, 'cause I wanted to talk about serious issues and not just kid stuff like I was doing when I was 13." I am excited by the way that the material-discursive contexts of age emerge here. Age is not contained in Amina's human body, rather is an intra-active material-discursive phenomena that includes human bodies like Amina's and other Instagram users, non-human bodies such as the technologies of Instagram, "serious" Instagram content, and the timespace of Amina's Instagram account that is "not just kid stuff." Like Juliette, Amina differentiates between different Instagram accounts, but a diffractive reading suggests that the timespacematterings of Amina's "kid stuff" Instagram account, and the timespacemattering of her "serious stuff" Instagram account, are not neatly contained. Amina's "kid stuff" Instagram is still existing in her 'present' Instagram, through the digital traces it left on Instagram, which continue to affect the timespacemattering of Amina's Instagram algorithms.

Mira described her Instagram account as a "personal diary, of sorts," a framing of Instagram that scholars like Caldeira, Van Bauwel and De Ridder (2021) advance. Talking about the trajectory of her account, she said:

Like if you go way down [to the older Posts], it's just quotes and stuff because honestly, I didn't really know that much about the world [...] like political [stuff]. I had like, basically no political affiliation (Lindsay: Hmm). And then [I] started to learn, and you

know [...] [I] make sure that Instagram is not always my source (Lindsay: right) because you know, online, anybody can post anything, it's not always going to be right. I always try to like Google stuff (Lindsay: totally) before, I, you know, share it out.

Mira's framing of her account as a "personal diary" reminds me of the archiving of becoming that happens in diary-making practices. Mira's Instagram, as a material-discursive diary or archive, is a cartography (Braidotti 2022), a "navigational tool" or recording of Mira's and Instagram's entangled, iterative becomings. Each piece of content can be understood as a snapshot of a timespacemattering where Mira's self and the content "are not themselves but rather the iterative intra-activity of all matter of time-beings." (Barad 2017:80). Put differently, Mira's Instagram content, is a collection of timespacematterings. Each piece of digital content on her Instagram account chart the transformations of Mira's gendered, aged, and political becomings.

Like several participants I spoke to, Bea "started to share activism related content in 2020, during lockdown." As Bea explained, "I began to explore politics more as it was the first time that my day-to-day life had been so dramatically impacted by politics." Bea shared that in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, they "looked more heavily into the social justice side of politics" and felt they "had to help somehow" so they "began to spread information and awareness." Zara also started to post about politics on Instagram in 2020, arguing "I don't think it was much of a surprise to anyone, because I feel like, what happened in 2020 [it] was quite a political year." Ava also talked about the COVID-19 pandemic in the timespacemattering of Instagram feminism, arguing "during the pandemic [...] every teenager was having their social justice phase, and was just reposting things constantly [laughs]." Here, multiple timespaces intra-act: 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement, COVID-19 pandemic, and "social justice phase." I

was particularly struck by Ava's argument that "every teenager was having their social justice phase." A "social justice phase" is a particular timespacemattering that is reconfigured in an entanglement that co-creates teenage body-Instagram-Instagram Story content-politics. The timespace of the pandemic co-constituted a particular aged subjectivity, that involves what Ava describes as a "social justice phase" which congeals online through reposting content.

Participants also shared how their experiences sharing political and feminist content has shifted across timespace, feeling scarier at first and becoming less fulfilling. Safa, for example, was particularly worried about the potential to spread misinformation through her content. In another example, Frankie said, "like almost as long as I've had Instagram, I've been [posting about feminism]. Like it was Instagram, where I learned about feminism." Again, the timespacemattering of Instagram, and the iterative becoming of Frankie's feminist self and feminism are entangled. Frankie also shared how she used to be very outspoken about mental health and her own experiences with mental illness on Instagram, remarking "now I look back and think [that] was really cringey." Arguing her past Instagram is "cringe," Frankie re-turns it (Barad 2014) diffracting the content anew with the timespacemattering of Instagram and the world "now." "Old" content is not finished, it continues to become as Instagram unfolds, including then, the potential for it to become "cringey." While Frankie still "enjoy[s] Instagram for a place of feminism" because "it's easy and it's accessible," she argued that "doesn't love that, you know, big issues are reduced to Instagrammatics." Frankie noted, "but I also understand that's kind of the culture now, and that's kind of the way in which people communicate with a 10-second attention span." Frankie's arguments around "Instagrammatics" which are more commonly known as infographics, illustrate the entwinement of time-space-matter. Multiple timespaces, like "culture now," clock time (i.e., "10 seconds"), attention spans, and "big issues"

entangle to co-create Frankie's meanings and experiences of Instagram feminism. Infographics themselves can also be understood as a particular timespacemattering, a congealing of multiple bodies-discourses-timespaces.

Essa's thoughts about the material-discursive contexts of Instagram feminism and the timespacemattering of Instagram feminism seemed to be differentiating in my diffractive reading. Unlike most I spoke to, Essa shared that she does not post about political or feminist content on Instagram outside of her contributions to the content for a collectively run Instagram account. As discussed in the section on technology as doing, likes and reach had force for Essa, affecting whether she posts or archives Posts on Instagram. When I asked if she would ever start posting about feminist or political content on her personal Instagram, she wrote in an email, "I don't think I would start anytime soon, because I don't think people would want to see it. I see Instagram as a place where people just want to see their favo[u]rite celebrity." For Essa, Instagram is a timespacemattering that is at odds with digital feminism. Material-discursive forces such as likes, reach, celebrity culture, and multiple human/non-human bodies (i.e., Instagram content, affordances, and algorithms), entangle to create a timespacemattering of Instagram that Essa understands as incompatible with feminism.

Experiencing Real-timeness

Real-timeness was also part of the multiple timespaces that mutually co-create digital feminism. Crystal Waters, who was a writer for a web-based blog created by and for girls, made comparisons between the timespaces of blogging and of Instagram, and their force for meanings of activism. As discussed earlier, she was critical of a pattern she has observed among peers, where people will repost things quickly because they see others posting them, without prior research. The "real-timeness" (Lupinacci 2024; Weltevrede, Helmond, and Gerlitz 2014) of

Instagram feminism seemed to deter Crystal Waters from sharing feminist and political content, especially around complex social issues that have a history, like the conflict in Palestine and Israel, because she feels “there is a lot of understanding that one possibly should have [...] to advocate properly.” She wants to be sure that “if someone were to attack” her on a Post she made, she would “be able to back it up and feel confident.” In contrast, writing political content for a blog, Crystal Waters argued:

gives you the opportunity to slow down and think about the way you want to articulate things and how you want people to perceive things (Lindsay: okay). You can rewrite it over and over again, make edits, make changes, to hopefully create a better, more informative piece. And I think it’s a healthier form of activism because it gets you to stop and think a little bit.

For Crystal Waters, blogging is a timespacemattering that co-creates a slower, more responsive type of activism. Whereas the timespacemattering of Instagram that is an entanglement of repetitive content, rapid sharing of content through the platform’s affordances, and a perception of “real time,” relevancy, or timeliness.

Like Crystal Waters, Safa shared also wanted Instagram feminism to slow down. Safa said:

My really big hope for feminism and just also for like feminist activists, or like content about feminism to kind of go back and start, be a little bit more definitive and revisit their purpose of why they’re doing what they’re doing (Lindsay: hmm). I think that obviously, social media and Instagram is a little bit of a race, and so we kind of lose sight of like, and this sounds so corny (Lindsay: okay), but we kind of lose sight of why we started these pages [...] And so, it’s more like because of how big content creation is now, people

are pumping out like Reels, people are pumping out Posts because they just want to have those there [...] and just realize that yeah, like you're reaching an audience.

Diffracting Crystal Waters' and Safa's stories together with Weltevrede et al.'s (2014) and Lupinacci's (2024) theorizing on temporality and algorithms, underscores the ways that users, social media platforms, algorithms, and times are mutually co-created in intra-actions.

Weltevrede et al. (2014:26) argue that we must understand "real-timeness" as a fabrication, "an understanding of time that is embedded in and immanent to platforms, engines, and their cultures." Relatedly, Lupinacci (2024:4080) contests that temporality is "both subjectively experienced and always orchestrated in certain ways by the platforms themselves." Thus, Lupinacci (2024:4080) turns to rhythm as an analytical device to understand the "perceived temporalities of algorithmic media" which they term "phenomenal algorithyms." Diffracting Weltevrede et al. (2014) and Lupinacci (2024) with Barad (2017) illustrates how algorithms or algorithyms (Lupinacci 2014) are timespacematterings that trouble time, making it unstable, leaky, and multiple. Time, space, and technology become through their entanglement.

It seemed common for Instagram Stories to co-create content that evokes a sense of "real-time," sharing and reposting of news events, "breaking news," or urgent calls to action. The timespace of Instagram feminism was also entangled in the material-discursive creation of content. For example, when asked how they decide what to post about, many interview participants talked about current events, or "real time," echoing discussions by Weltevrede and colleagues (2014) and Lupinacci (2024). As Valeri explained, "it's mainly about world issues [...] even if it's not breaking down uhh what's currently happening, it's going in-depth with an issue." Estelle also said that she creates content "depend[ing] on what's happening in the world." Despite her focus on abortion activism, she tried to balance a desire to "keep the momentum

going,” but also “not ignore the fact that there are other problems happening in the world.” Zara echoed Estelle, arguing that she “give[s] voice to things [she’s] aware of” but she was also attentive to not “be selective about [...] who I give a platform to.”

Valeri, however, talked about how her entanglement with the timespacemattering of Instagram has shifted:

I started out [by] simply post[ing] stuff about world events to keep people updated [...] but so much is going on in our collective [voice note ends, and another begins] community that’s so hard to do, to be on that like, [snaps fingers twice] at the drop of a hat, really. So, I kind of shifted [...] [to] picking specific topics and breaking them down and talking about the issues, like actually dissecting them. I do more of that, than I do world issues. Which is why you see the long break in uhh, breaks in posting times.

While scrolling through Valeri’s account I noticed a diffraction pattern. Differing from her long-form essay style Posts was a single slide Post that read, “Roe v. Wade has been officially overturned.” Valeri replied to comment on the Post asking if there were more slides, reflecting her common format. Valeri responded “no there [a]r[e]n[’]t. I posted this right when I woke up ‘c[au]s[e] my friend texted me ab[out] it, [a]n[d] I wanted to get the news out.” Similarly, in a Post from @feministsis, they write “sorry, we haven’t been very active, we both have very busy lives right now ~ but we thought it [was] important to post about what’s going on in Texas.”

Relatedly, in my digital fieldnotes about @feministsis, I wrote:

[it] seems they try to engage with the timely, popular discourse online. And I wonder if this is sometimes why the Posts feel [like they are] put together quickly, almost seeming incomplete or unclear, uncited, generalized, and often echoing what everyone else is saying.

Similarly, as discussed earlier, Frankie talked about reposting others' content when there were breaks in sharing original content. The intra-activity of Instagram co-creates a timespacemattering that demands and rewards "real-timeness" or timely content (Lupinacci 2021; Weltevrede et al. 2014). Here, multiple timespaces entangle: "real time," "timely content," "fast content," breaks in content creation measured in clock time, Roe v. Wade, world issues, and political news stories.

Curiously, however, there was also content that critiqued this real-timeness or timely trends in the timespacemattering of digital feminism. Real-timeness and trends emerge through entanglements of human bodies-content-Instagram-digital time-clock time-political time-online-offline. For example, @proudprochoice wrote, "BLM [read: Black Lives Matter] isn't a f*cking trend" in a caption accompanying a Post on police violence. In our interviews, Jenna and Quinn also wanted to challenge the trendiness or timeliness of digital feminism. As Jenna said, "people don't post about these things for fun, it's because we have to speak about this in some way or another." She did, however, suggest that "some, especially younger people [do] post as a trend" but reasoned that even in doing so it "does a lot for raising awareness, despite the wrong intentions behind it." When discussing what she wished others would understand about digital feminism, Quinn said, "that it's not a passing trend. Feminism has a long history."

As Quinn explained, timespace also emerges through recurring (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly, annually) content series, as well as through awareness/campaign days. Talking to me from Jamaica, through email, about the collective Instagram account that she contributes to, Quinn said:

On the @activistnetwork Instagram, my aim [is] to post content that reflects current events and important themes. For instance, we have a recurring segment [...] where we

highlight influential women. Given that it's Black History Month, my focus has been on featuring Black women who have made significant contributions to the feminist movement.

In another example, I was struck by @feminista's elaborate weekly content plan for #menstrualhealthawarenessmonth. In a lengthy caption, @feminista maps a weekly plan, detailing what menstruation related content will be posted on her various Instagram accounts, YouTube channel, podcast, as well as her plans for a fundraising live stream.

Curiously, I also noticed a tendency for Instagram accounts to announce breaks in content, make Posts announcing new series for content, and make Posts that describe shifts in focus or form. For example, @feministstreetart had a main grid Post explaining why they changed the name of their Instagram account and collective, and @activistnetwork posted a carousel Post to re-articulate their "mission vision, and purpose" with the hashtag #rebranding in the caption. @feminista had a Post to announce her podcast, encouraging the audience to "make sure to mark your calendars!" In another example, @teenactivistclub, a collective Instagram account, also made a Post announcing their return to Instagram, writing, "we needed to take the necessary time to pause and put intention behind the work we're doing." Here, multiple times (i.e., clock time, calendar time, real-timeness on Instagram), multiple spaces (i.e., Instagram, YouTube, podcasts), and materialities (i.e., Instagram posts, YouTube videos, podcast episodes, Canva templates, hashtags) entangle to co-constitute the multiple timespacematterings of digital feminism.

For Rose, the timespacemattering of Instagram made it an "expected" space for digital feminism. Rose said, "if I go on my Instagram now, like I could probably count [...] like five people who have posted something to do with politics. And I would have been able to guess

those people if I had to [...] I'm never usually shocked." Here, specific configurations of human and non-human bodies (i.e., Rose, Rose's peers, content), and materialities (i.e., content, algorithms) co-create a timespacemattering of Instagram as an unsurprising place for politics. When I asked Zara whether she thought Instagram was a productive space for digital feminism, she replied:

I think [in] the past it was even better because as society progresses, we kind of go through different stages of social media. Like before there was the whole Facebook, and I wasn't, I was too young to remember [laughs] but like MySpace, and all that [...] And then it kind of went to Instagram [in] most of my teen years [...] and nowadays they do have Instagram [which] is quite popular, obviously, as a platform (Lindsay: hmm, right) for like advocat[ing] [around] issues, but also generally using, [but] usage there has definitely dropped. Like for my teen years, I had Instagram, and now teenagers [...] are more inclined towards TikTok and stuff. So, I feel like [...] TikTok, because it's the most popular use[d] platform, this popular platform, right now, in social media, in the world [makes it] an even better place [for digital activism] [...] But I feel like gener[ally], there's nothing wrong with posting on Instagram, but if you were to make that your sole focus as your platform, then TikTok would be better in terms of demographics and usage.

For Zara, the timespacematterings of Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, and TikTok are not static, they are continuously reconfigured. Importantly, for Zara, the relevancy of a social media platform, differentiates it as an effective timespace for feminism. Here, multiple times, including chronological time (i.e. calendar years), timeliness, and digital trends, exist messily and at once with effects for how Zara understands Instagram and TikTok as timespaces for feminism.

Porous Digital Spaces

While it might seem like I have disentangled time and space, in this section, I argue that a diffractive reading of content analysis, and transcripts, alongside Barad (2007), Lupinacci (2024), and Weltevrede et al. (2014), troubles an ontological hierarchy of online/offline, clear divisions between different online spaces, and linear orientations of time. There were moments in interviews and focus groups, as well in the content that I entangled with, where girls re-produced a division between online and offline. For example, Estelle talked about her organizing around abortion rights and resources in her community in Texas, and Go shared her experiences providing period products to youth shelters in Ontario. As discussed earlier, sometimes these offline activities were imagined as more legitimate, “tangible,” or impactful forms of feminist activism. I was also struck by Farah’s story about how she only uses her phone or computer to access Instagram from her bedroom, a timespace she described as “her own vibe.” While these characterizations disrupt my own understandings, there were other timespacematterings (Barad 2007) in my project that troubled this separation, for example when girls like Poppy, Esti, Ally, and Amina talked about how their Instagram accounts seeped into other parts of their lives.

Poppy told me that she often does her personal Instagram account on her phone from her bed, but she also does her personal and her feminist Instagramming when commuting on the train. While laughing, Esti told me “I usually do it in my room, or I’m doing it at school in class, sometimes like [...] I get really busy and [...] like the Monday [when the Posts need to go up] I’m in class like doing it.” Reflecting on how much time she spends thinking about or working on the collective Instagram she created, laughingly Ally said, “oh god, I think all the time about [it]. I’ll go to sleep thinking about [it].” Ally found that she tends to think about the community and the collective Instagram account when she should be doing other things, like studying.

Others, like Frankie, Lola, and Estelle saw their Instagram feminism as attached to or part of their offline organizing.

In another poignant moment, when talking about how much time she spends working on or thinking about her Instagram feminism, Amina wrote:

Sometimes I do spend the whole day overanalysing something, not necessarily staying on Instagram the whole time, but if I read something [...] like the ongoing wars and the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran, I do think about it quite often and then when I'm on Instagram I put my thoughts on there. But I spend more time thinking about the things I know I wanna talk about, and will talk about eventually. I'm kind of obsessed with women's lives, rights, and well-being because it is personal to me.

Here, Amina's digital feminism becomes in an entanglement that co-produces multiple timespaces, including Instagram, Afghanistan, and Iran.

Multiple timespaces also emerge in the intra-activity of Farah's, Fatima's, Amina's, and Quinn's digital feminism. Farah described herself as an Arab from Palestine who was living in the UK at the time of our interview. Farah spoke candidly about her experiences on Instagram in the timespace of the ongoing conflict in Palestine and Israel. Farah told me that while watching the news about the genocide in Palestine, her parents will sometimes recognize the places that have been destroyed, noting how they used to attend school down the street. Farah said:

With regards to like social media, I get my parents are really like scrolling and like looking for [content about Palestine], but I try to avoid it because I feel like especially [since the violence] has been ongoing for like a hundred days now, I feel like if you stay stuck in that, you can't move forward with life.

Curiously, Farah seems to suggest that the multiple timespaces of Instagram, including the “real-timeness” (Lupinacci 2024; Weltevrede et al. 2014) and repetition around the genocide in Palestine can alter time, making someone “stuck.”

At the time of our interviews, both Fatima and Amina were living in Pakistan, a timespace they both thought affected their digital feminism. As Fatima said, “being a women’s rights activist from Pakistan[,] social media, including Instagram has helped me a lot as well as many girls and women around my age.” Fatima added:

Talking about women’s rights can literally get you killed in Pak[istan]. You can’t talk about the basic beliefs of feminism in routine settings. As a result, social media has helped Pakistani feminists a lot to amplify the voices of women who can’t do it for themselves. There are feminist communities and safe spaces on social media where Pakistani feminists can raise issues. Of course[,] they still receive threats, but [it] is far [more] convenient and safer for women than on [the] ground activism.

Positioning Instagram as vital timespace to her feminism, Fatima wrote:

In Pak[istan], feminism became mainstream as a result of online activism. Before that, not a lot of people knew what feminism is. Now we have national television shows talking about feminism and women’s rights in both good and bad light.

When I asked her what she meant about “good and bad light,” Fatima replied, “in [P]ak[istan], feminism is considered a Western movement, as a consequence all the mainstream coverage is still majorly negative.” Amina was also living in Pakistan in the timespace of our interview and was overtly critical of misogyny in her South Asian culture, one of the reasons why “people like [her] are very vocal on social media.” Further, as previously discussed, Quinn talked about Instagram as vital to her becoming feminist in her community in Jamaica. Multiple timespaces

also intra-act in specific collective accounts. For example, @girlactivistnetwork was co-created by girls in Canada, America, and the Caribbean, @menstruationmatters involves girls and a few boys in various parts of Canada, and @girlpolitics is co-produced by girls and young women across the UK.

My diffractive reading of the data with Barad (2007) also has me thinking about how multiple timespaces emerge messily and at once in Instagram feminism, when entanglements of digital trends, digital spaces, and human and non-human bodies each with their own timespacematterings intra-act. For example, in my content analysis I noted how Instagram Reels were often reposted TikToks, and how carousel and main grid Posts contained screenshots from Tumblr, images from Pinterest, and threads from Twitter/X. In one example, when talking about her experiences creating viral TikToks for the collective she is part of, Ava argued that even though they repost the TikToks as Instagram Reels, “the Reels [...] trends come 2 months after.” The entanglement and emergence of multiple digital timespaces was also evident in Ally’s story about creating TikTok and Instagram content. Ally said:

In the beginning the trends [on] TikTok [were] all about like dances and stuff like that (Lindsay: yeah), so we’d have our execs do the dance but like there’d be text on the screen talking about like the [content from our weekly Instagram series]. And then [TikTok] kind of shifted into doing like funny audios or funny bits and stuff like that. (Lindsay: yeah, yeah). So, we’ve, you know, to follow this new meta, we also do like funny audio and funny stuff. Like one of the audios, or no, one of the trends was like to just like be in 2-time speed, and like just talking (Lindsay: Yeah). And then our like text on the screen was like telling your friend about [...] this fun fact about menstruation.

Both Ava and Ally spoke about how they would repost TikToks on Instagram as Reels, thus, the timespacemattering that co-creates the TikTok video intra-acts with the timespacemattering of Instagram. The boundaries between the digital timespaces are porous as trends, audio bits, and dance memes diffuse across digital space, although their timespacematterings are differentiating. As Rose proclaimed, “yeah, no, I’m not a [Instagram] Reel girl [laughs]!”

Diffraction participants’ stories, content analysis, and theory makes clear the multiple timespaces that co-create girls’ Instagram feminism. Their Instagram feminism is not neatly contained in the timespacemattering of the Instagram application; it frequently seeps across digital timespace and into other aspects of their lives. Turning to Barad (2007), this re-conceptualization recognizes that multiple times and spaces emerge through intra-actions, and that their boundaries are not pre-existing their collision. The multiple timespaces are not neutral, as evidenced in Amina’s, Fatima’s, Farah’s, and Quinn’s digital feminism, wherein intra-actions of power and marginalization, such as misogyny, genocide, and violence affect the becomings of their feminism. Such thinking is fruitful for understanding digital feminism outside of binaries of online/offline, or through linear conceptualizations of time which downplay the messiness and multiplicities of timespaces for the iterative becoming of Instagram feminism.

In/Conclusions

In this chapter, I argue that a feminist posthuman conceptualization of girls’ Instagram feminism makes clear the multiple intra-acting bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces that iteratively reconfigure meanings and experiences of digital feminism. I began with a discussion of the boundaries of Instagram feminism, and aimed to illustrate how Instagram feminism is a multiplicity with porous boundaries. Resisting representationalism, I leaned into theorizing about what Instagram feminism does, as it iteratively unfolds and affects the ongoing

intra-activity of the world. This shift towards doing was also echoed in participants' ambivalence about what digital feminism is, and their wonderings about the multiplicity of digital feminism. My diffractive reading also considered the doing of bodies like infographics, Canva, Adobe Express, aesthetics, and emojis for the becoming of digital feminism. I traced the effects of material-discursive contexts like age, slacktivism/activism, online/offline, and performance/performative activism in boundary-making practices of digital feminism.

In the second section of the chapter, I narrowed in on one component in the entanglement of Instagram feminism – technology. I positioned technology as a doing, a material-discursive entanglement that includes constellations of human and non-human bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces. I have argued that technologies like Instagram are differentiating apparatuses (Barad 2007) marking human/non-human bodies along the lines of gender and race through practices like shadow bans, community guidelines, and algorithms. I position virality, likes, metrics, and reach as material-discursive contexts that make clear the relational nature of girls' digital feminism. Recognizing technology as an intra-active entanglement, I illuminate how multiple entangled agencies beyond individual girls themselves, co-create Instagram feminism.

The final section of this chapter entangles with the multiple timespaces of girls' digital feminism in attempt to challenge a linear framing of time, and a conceptualization of space that views it as a pre-existing entity. Instead, I have argued that multiple timespaces, like “real-timeness” (Lupinacci 2024; Weltevrede et al. 2014), past-present-future, the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, online, and offline, emerge messily and at once in the intra-activity that co-constitutes girls' digital feminism.

Chapter Five: Towards Cyborg Feminism

In this chapter, I entangle with one of my most exciting findings – Instagram accounts organized and run by collectives of girls and young women. I diffract interviews, focus groups, and fieldnotes to map patterns of difference that co-produce collective Instagram accounts, and girls’ experiences of them. With Haraway’s cyborg (1991, 1992), I trouble framings of digital feminism that overemphasize disconnected individual actors, and arguments by scholars like Bennett and Segerberg (2013) and Milan and Halleck (2013), which suggest collective action is becoming increasingly individualized in a digital landscape. I argue for a turn towards cyborg feminism (Haraway 1991, 1992), which recognizes digital feminism as a constellation of individuals, collectives, and timespaces, which go beyond any individual human actor or piece of content. All digital feminism, and indeed all digital content, is more than any one human or non-human body, as it is remade in entanglements and relations between bodies, materialities, discourses, and timespaces. With Haraway’s cyborg (1991, 1992), I advocate for a move away from subject-oriented understandings of digital feminism which seek to evaluate their efficacy or what they mean, towards recognizing digital feminists and feminisms as “imploded entities” (Haraway 2016) – iteratively entangled, and multiple, cyborg feminist becomings. This chapter unfolds in three intertwined parts: collective Instagram accounts; collective identities; and towards cyborg feminism.

Collective Instagram Accounts and Content

During my digital fieldwork, I stumbled upon a collectively organized Instagram account run by a group of girls and young women. While I found it curious, I wondered whether these accounts would be a ‘good fit’ for my project, given my initial hopes to understand girls’ experiences of digital feminism and collective identity. I also questioned whether their inclusion

would create divisions among my sample. I wondered about what it would do to interview girls who belonged to the same collective. In attempt to embrace a diffractive methodology and challenge more prescriptive or rigid approaches to methods, I came to recognize this as an exciting diffraction pattern in my research, which I elaborate in this chapter. In my digital fieldwork I analysed eight collectively run Instagram accounts and talked to 19 girls and young women who were part of them.

Experiencing Collectives

In what follows, I disentangle these collectives to understand how girls experience them, the material-discursive practices which co-constitute them, and sticky and glowing moments that affect collective feminist becomings. In my content analysis, I noticed a tendency for collectively run Instagram accounts to advertise applications or calls for nominations for specific roles within the collective, such as social media manager, graphic designer, or writer. I became curious about the apparatuses (Barad 2007) that collective Instagram accounts co-create. I was particularly struck by the Instagram account @menstruationmatters, where they had specific branches of the collective – education, advocacy, communications, and service – each with a purpose towards their goals around period poverty and education. Jacinta, who was part of the education team, explained how she collaborates with others in the education department to research and write for Instagram content, as well as prepare modules and talks for community events. She detailed the hierarchy within the education team, where one member is the leader who approves the writing that is sent to the communications department. Thinking with Barad (2007), Jacinta's explanation of the collective provokes me towards visualizing the collective Instagram account, and their content, as becoming through multiple, messy entanglements. There is not just one entanglement or intra-action that co-constitutes the content. Instead, there are intra-actions within and between

the departments of the collective, which are then enfolded through each other in the material-discursive practice of collective content creation.

Ally, a 20-year-old from Southern Ontario, explained her leadership role in the same collective:

I kind of lead the overarching ideas and goals for the team. And then I also give support to my [leaders of each department] whenever they need it. I lead recruitment [...] I oversee the initiatives and events that [...] the committees do [like] final approval for like an events timelines, or to give them advice on their ideas to help improve it. I make sure there is good inter-departmental communication [...] to keep them on the same team, and to always improve everybody's like, kind of morale. Because it's a volunteer experience, so we're not really, the only motivation people have here is [...] like commitment to menstruation, and you gotta make sure to foster a good team environment for everybody to stay motivated.

Gwen also had a leadership role in a collective and worked most closely with Ally. Gwen told me that the collective is a local branch or chapter of a bigger organization that organizes around periods and period poverty. Speaking on Zoom in Southern Ontario, Gwen said:

The huge organization itself does run on three pillars of education, advocacy, and service so we knew that we wanted those three departments [...] we knew that we needed departments, obviously, we can't just like run on mayhem. And then communications was an obvious one for like social media and stuff (Lindsay: Right) And then finances [is another] obvious one. So that's how we decided like the main departments. And then in terms of heads and officers [of departments], we just thought that just made [...] the most sense so that it wasn't me and [the president of the collective] always talking to

everybody at the same time because meetings would just not run [or] be scheduled (Lindsay: chaos, yeah) [...] So we thought it would just be easier to work with a few people and always [be] communicating with them, and then they communicate with their [team members] ...

I was curious about how these collectives were organized, seemingly like structures or apparatuses (Barad 2007), that reconfigure the possibilities for Instagram feminism, and girls' understandings of it. For Barad (2007), structures are produced through material-discursive intra-actions, including of gender, race, and class, which co-create a topology that creates difference. Structures are not just here or there, but are contested "spatialit[ies]" or "ever-changing topolog[ies]" that [are] iteratively (re)produced through the dynamics of intra-activity and enfolding" (Barad 2007:243). Ally's and Gwen's collective is enfolded through the bigger organization they intra-act with, although they articulate different aspects of their structure and downplay other aspects in specific contexts. The structure of the collective becomes through intra-actions of members, timespaces like meetings, and schedules. I wonder too, how much agentive force the familiarity of hierarchy in non-profit spaces had for the becoming of the collective. Gwen argued that structure was needed in some ways, because the collective "can't just run on mayhem." Does the topology of the collective, including the boundaries (re)marked around particular roles, bodies, and/or timespaces foreclose potentialities? Or, what possibilities become when apparatuses are not hierarchical? Is a non-hierarchical feminist becoming possible within a broader digital apparatus that marginalizes particular gendered and racialized human and non-human bodies? I re-turn (Barad 2014) some of these musings later in the chapter.

While Gwen explained that she helped to oversee the collective with the president, she clarified that she has "a quote unquote special role just because I've had many communications

positions in the past and I'm very familiar with creating content." Trying to better understand the material-discursive practices of the collective, I asked Ally how the Instagram account works. Ally replied, "so we have a communications department, and [...] our social media coordinator, she is the one that runs the Instagram, who posts it, responds to DMs [direct messages], puts up Instagram Stories, makes captions, all that fun stuff." While Ally did "have final say on all the graphics" she told me that she "mainly let[s] the communications team do everything else." It was curious to hear Gwen and Ally position themselves amongst the others in the collective. They seemed to embrace their roles as leaders and saw this structuring as necessary for the collective's success. I find Ally's assertion that she has "final say" on all the graphics for the collective content particularly striking. Ally's "final say" enacts an agential cut (Barad 2007) that disentangles the intra-actions of bodies, technologies (e.g., Canva, templates, illustrations), and timespaces (e.g., Instagram, Slack group chats) to shift the trajectory of the Instagram content. Ally's entwinement with the content "cuts" the intra-activity of the collective and the emergent content, untangling it from relations with other members, and (re)entangling it again with her body and the material-discursive practices of her becoming as co-leader with the collective.

At the time of our interview, Esti, an energetic 16-year-old girl in Ontario, was part of the communications team for a collective Instagram account. When I asked Esti if she was the one posting to the Instagram account, she replied "no, that's not [me], like we have a social media manager, so I only make the graphics and [then] I send them to the chat, and the rest is theirs." Reading Esti's comments with Barad (2007), I argue that the collective content unfolds through a series of diffractions within intra-activity. For example, diffractions with Esti's body, the bodies that co-constitute each "team" (i.e., communications, education, leadership) within the collective, and material-discursive contexts of members and their roles. The content emerges through an

intra-action that includes multiple bodies, timespaces like Canva, Instagram, and group chats. Each emergent human and non-human body and timespace in the intra-actions which co-constitute the unfolding of the Instagram open new possibilities for the becoming of the content and the collective, as they diffract and collide.

Similarly, Ava told me that she was responsible for posting the collective's content on Instagram but shared that she mostly focuses on their TikTok account, later turning the TikToks into Instagram Reels. From her bedroom in Toronto, Ava said:

I make appearances on [the TikToks and the Reels] a lot [...] But all the Posts are made by other people, if you see their faces in the videos, they're all scripted by me. So, I just told them what to do. Before it was like different people [...] but like at the moment, pretty much all of the posts are like coming from me.

In addition, Ava was also "in charge of like [...] the entire outreach for podcasts or collaborations with other influencers or possibly other organizations."

Admittedly, when I was talking to girls that were part of some of these more highly-structured collectives, I was worried about the obvious tensions between the structuring and rigidity of their approaches, and my theoretical framework that troubles distinct boundaries between bodies, things, and ideas in a flat ontology. This exchange with Ava is one of these sticky moments where I diffract data that seems counter to a posthuman ontology. Here, Ava seems to emphasize a separation between herself and the other bodies in the collective, as she scripts videos, and explains that all the Instagram Reels and TikTok videos "are like coming from [her]." Ava's positioning of herself suggests a separation of self/other, and the pre-existence of her body and role within the collection. While I am not trying to discount Ava's framing of herself or her understanding of her role, reading her story with Barad (2007), Braidotti (2022),

and Haraway (1991) complicates Ava's perspective, by noting how Ava's body, her role in the collective, and the content become together through an entanglement. The specific spacetime-mattering marks boundaries of the emergent Instagram content, but also the human bodies that co-constitute the collective. So, while Ava argues that she is responsible for the vision, script, and coordination of the Instagram Reels content, the becoming of the content is necessarily affected by the other members of the collective who are featured in the Instagram Reels, as well as those who are not. All these bodies, including those that are not directly implicated in the Instagram Reels, congeal a material-discursive collective and identity that is not separate from the intra-activity of content co-creation. I build on this discussion of collective identity later in the chapter.

Similarly, the collective that Essa, Sylvia, and Quin were part of also had distinct member roles, including around finances, marketing, and outreach. In an email, Sylvia, an 18 year-old girl from Ontario, shared that she "joined as a marketing design member, but [...] became the design director last year." Sylvia wrote, "I led the design and creation of over 50% of the social media content, ensuring brand representation and engaging visuals across various platforms." I read Sylvia's explanation of her role as one she was proud of. Here, I am reminded of arguments made by Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano (2018) about the pressures of neoliberal girl-power rhetoric, wherein girls are expected to be empowered leaders who use their tech-savviness to create social change. There is also an entrepreneurial essence to Sylvia's explanation too, in the emphasis on "brand representation and engaging visuals across various platforms." I wonder how a collective without such structure might enable a different becoming of digital feminist? Curiously, at the time of our interviews, Go, a 16-year-old from Ontario, and Mira, a 15-year-old from Texas, were working on shifting their own feminist Instagram accounts towards accounts

run by a collective of feminist and activist girls. Is there something about the material-discursive contexts of Instagram, age, or gender, which propel girls towards hierarchical collaboration?

Talking through email from Jamaica, 18-year-old Quinn wrote, “my role within the group is VP of marketing, but before that, I was the social media manager, and before that I was a writer.” Quinn explained:

I’m not fully responsible for creating and posting content on our account. We have designers and writers behind the scenes who are tasked with what our page puts out. [My job] is to decide what gets posted throughout the month based on important events or other interesting things that align with our case. However, there are times when I do design or write specific posts.

Like much of what I have written above, Quinn illuminates the multiple bodies and timespaces that intra-act to co-create the content for the collective. Fascinatingly, Quinn was part of a collective Instagram account that began as a collective of girls in Ontario, and has become, as Quinn wrote in an email, “more international.”

Curiously, the Ireland-based collective Frankie and Lola were part of seemed different from those described above. When I asked whether different members had specific roles, Frankie replied:

There’s four of us and we don’t really have like specific roles on the team at all. But we [...] end up doing different jobs even though it’s not prescribed. So [name redacted] and I kind of did the [chalking] campaign [about gender and sexual harassment] [...] And we’ve done like a lot of the stuff for the back of it, and often I send stuff to [name redacted] and like send her the picture and then be like, either send her a caption or be like, ‘can you say something like this?’ (Lindsay: Right) And I think probably just ‘cause

we work so closely, like [name redacted] knows the way that like, I don't use capital letters [laughs] like that kind of thing, like she knows the way I write, you know, so she will just do that.

I want to narrow in on Frankie's proclamation that her friend and collaborator "knows the way [she] write[s]." Echoing some of my discussions in the previous chapter about the intra-activity of Instagram feminism, I am drawn to this part of Frankie's explanation because it troubles neat boundaries between Frankie, her friend, and the emergent content. As Braidotti (2022:137) argues, there are "no unitary subjects" given the entangled nature of reality, and as such, any subjects in entanglements are "transversal, heterogenous, molecular, and collaborative." The content emerges through an entanglement of Frankie's body-friend body-Instagram-timespace, and the material-discursive contexts of their friendship and relationship as collaborators and organizers. The content, as a human/non-human body and artifact, can be thought of as a snapshot or timespacemattering in the ongoing reconfiguration of the collective's unfolding, and also their entangled becoming as friends.

Echoing Frankie, Lola told me how the "team has fluctuated. It was seven, [now] it's four." Lola described the collective as "fairly collaborative" explaining how they use their "little group chat" to share ideas, or when they need someone else to take on their work when they are overwhelmed. Lola said the collective is "just very collaborative and I think that suits us because it just means like everyone's ideas are being fed into each other's in a really like, natural way." In contrast to some of the more rigid structures that were created in the intra-active unfolding of other collectives, Frankie and Lola speak to a more dynamic becoming, where boundaries between roles and bodies are blurrier. I wonder if the ease Lola speaks to invites thinking about how more intra-active becomings that favour interconnectedness and non-hierarchical organizing

might be more in line with the intra-activity of the world (Barad 2007). Are different possibilities opened up when we do not resist the intra-active, entangled becoming of ourselves, others, and the human/non-human world? Might embracing this entwined, multiple becoming co-constitute more response-able (Haraway 2016) feminist politics?

While I have written so far about the ways that girls spoke about the collectives they were part of and their roles within them, it was fascinating to see how they unfolded on Instagram. In my content analysis I commonly encountered content that felt like advertisements for the collectives, outlining open calls for applicants to join the collective. Resonant with my thinking in the previous chapter, these pieces of content were constellations of human and non-human bodies (i.e., creator, audience, hashtags, emojis, Canva templates), multiple technologies (i.e., carousel posts, Reels, and Stories on Instagram, Canva, illustrations), and material-discursive contexts including around age, activism, feminism, gender, and girl. For example, in one wondrous example on @girlpolitics, a caption reads:

 Join us on a mission to empower young women and girls through the @girlpolitics campaign!  Our goal: accessible education and political awareness   [...] Let's make history together!  Stay tuned for exciting tools: member gift packs, thought-provoking blogs, and a monthly newsletter   Become a member at [url] and be a part of this transformative journey! 

This post not only advertised the collective and attempted to recruit members but also is an important artifact in the ongoing becoming of the collective's identity – as a group of girls working to empower and educate other girls about politics.

Material-Discursive Practices of Collectives and Content

In this section, my diffractive reading maps the bodies that intra-act in digital feminist content creation, the unfinished becoming of content, and the inseparability of online/offline timespaces. I complicate a framing of content creation and digital feminism that centres an individual agentic feminist girl; by playing with the timespacematterings and messy, multiple agencies that emerge in the entanglements that co-create girls' Instagram feminism.

In one example, Ava spoke at-length about the practice of content creation for the collective she was part of:

We have a lot of stuff like fully scheduled, I would say. Like you know, we have [our weekly series on menstruation], which like every Monday we post an informative post. But that comes from the education branch, like they give us the information, we create the Post, and then we post. It's [...] kind of difficult to explain it because we're kinda like our own team, like kinda separate from (Lindsay: yeah) the others, but we're also working with them [...] All the heads [of departments] have board meetings and they discuss like what [content] they need [us] to put out. And we just put that in the works. And it's just a lot of stuff that we've done in the past that we just keep doing, like the president and vice president just tell us like what the Post is for [...] Like if we're doing [...] something for [another department], obviously it is communicated, if they need anything. But apart from that, other than those posts, like communications [is] kind of on its own. Like let's just say the weekly TikToks or Reels, like that's just us [...] I just make the script, and I just tell someone to record it. And other people, like the president, can see the script, but I don't need to go to the president and be like 'I wanna make a TikTok about this, this week [...] Is that okay?' No, it's like our role, like, we're trusted to do it [...] We all do our own thing, but we also talk to each other at the same time.

In Ava's stories, multiple collisions between human and non-human bodies are differentiating for the emergent Instagram content. Where Barad argues that relations are "intra-active and performative," for Braidotti (2022:94) they are "materially embedded and differential" where "the relation is the middle ground." Ava argues that in the co-creation of content for the collective Instagram account, having the president's "trust" is differentiating, as she does not have to seek approval to make content for the linked TikTok account. Barad might argue "trust" is a material-discursive context that becomes through Ava's and the president's entangled becomings in intra-actions between Ava's body, the president's body, technologies like Instagram, TikTok, Zoom meetings, and Slack group chats. "Trust" becomes both a sense of assurance in Ava and an affective force, but also materially embedded in the apparatus (Barad 2007) of the collective, and the emergent TikTok and Instagram content. But for Braidotti (2022), trust becomes through the relational middle ground – between the bodies of the collective, including Ava's and the president's, as well as the non-human bodies (i.e., content, TikToks, Instagram reels). The relational middle ground – trust – is embedded, embodied, and differentiated in the collective's and its content's entangled becomings.

Both Poppy and Zara, teens from the United Kingdom, told me about the various technologies that were vital to the co-creation of digital feminism, including Slack and Google documents. Detailing the collective's practice of content creation, Zara said:

I log into the @girlpolitics account, and I go through, and I look for certain accounts that share mutual interest with us, and it's basically outreach. So, I reach out to them and I'm like 'oh, hey, so we do this at @girlpolitics. This is our goal as a campaign. And we would be really interested if you ever wanted to collab[orate] with us.' [...] Then I like report to [...] the rest of the social media team. I just ask them, 'hey, how are the Posts

going? What ideas do you have? Sometimes I input my own ideas for Posts [...] I'm kind of in charge of making sure everything's running smoothly operations wise, with the social media team. And then I would go back to [the president] and I tell her [how] everything's going.

Part of my curiosity about the material-discursive practice of collective content creation was an interest in understanding the various components of the entanglements that affect what feminist Instagram content becomes. Doing so can challenge understandings of girls' online engagement as silly or self-absorbed (Bimm 2018; Driver 2018), and as an increasingly individualized practice (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Milan and Halleck 2013). As seen in Zara's quotation, here, creating content, even for a collective Instagram account, is not as simple as taking pictures or creating infographics and Reels, and then posting them to the account.

Feminist Instagram content is not the product of an individualized body, as clear in the case of collectively run Instagram accounts, as well as the collaborations between collective accounts that Zara explains. This understanding is useful for countering the assumption that individual human girl bodies are creating and posting feminist content, which is then shared, reposted, and remixed by other individual human actors. These individualizing approaches have effects, as argued by Bent (2020) and Taft (2020), for activist girls to be constructed and celebrated as individual heroes, or criticized and dismissed when they push beyond normative understandings of girlhood in neoliberalism. Instead, the intra-active unfolding of girls' Instagram feminism, as evidenced in Zara's story, provokes me to think about the new girl and feminist subjectivities that become possible. The affordances of Instagram, including the ability to label an account as an organization, to search for similar content and accounts through hashtags, and direct messages which facilitate networking between Instagram accounts, co-create

new possible feminist subjectivities that are necessarily relational, networked, more-than-human, and beyond any individual. The boundaries between individual girl bodies and Instagram accounts are blurry. Building on arguments I developed in the chapter on becoming girl-becoming feminist, here I argue that an intra-active approach might be a way to challenge the focus on an individualized activist girl couched in neoliberal girl power logics. Echoing arguments made by Driver (2024), a turn towards collective feminist girl becomings attends to the nuanced relations that co-constitute girls' feminist communities, and the material-discursive contexts which differentially constrain and enable their collective feminist possibilities.

Like many girls I spoke to, Poppy told me that they use a group chat to share ideas for content like an “idea bank,” and for members to ask the social media team to share specific content on the collective account in Stories or as Posts. But members did not get assigned specific topics or tasks around content creation. Poppy explained, “it’s more like whatever you want to do, you can just post it. Like there’s not really like that many restrictions [...] like if you have something you want to talk about just make the Post and you can place it into the account.” Poppy described the collective as “more like a free, kind of collective space,” where members use the group chat to ask for help with their content creation. I was struck by this more dynamic material-discursive practice of content creation, which diffracted the more regimented approaches described by participants in other collectives. The material-discursive practice Poppy describes is still co-constituted by and co-constituting an apparatus (Barad 2007) that includes a group chat, an idea bank, and different roles like the social media team, which shape the intra-actions that co-create the Instagram content. Poppy also shared that each member had access to the Instagram login and password, and could create and post the content right from their phones, something she thought was “much easier” to ensure the Instagram account is actively posting.

She also felt that because members of the collective are young, and their Instagram audience is young, “with that kind of approach where everyone’s posting about what they think about and their interests, there’s bound to be someone who’s following who’s also interested in that too.”

Poppy was one of the only participants to speak about the benefits of a collective Instagram account for sustaining engagement and consistency, material-discursive contexts in the timespacemattering of Instagram. It is also curious to see age as enacting force in the collective content creation. In Poppy’s story, age is both embodied by the human body that creates the content, and embedded in the non-human Instagram content body on the collective account, which then invites a particular creator body-content body-audience body relation that is also aged.

When I asked Farah to describe her process for content creation, she emphasized avoiding repetition in topic or format “because the accounts really new, so you want to keep everything fresh.” Resonating with Poppy’s story, Farah speaks to the apparatus (Barad 2007) of Instagram, that reconfigures the possibilities for digital feminism. More specifically, Farah underscores the material-discursive force of Instagram’s algorithms and the material-discursive digital culture wherein consistency and engagement are algorithmically rewarded (Cotter 2019; Mahoney 2022; Semenzin 2022). Farah shared that she would often seek approval from the girl who posts the content to the account, before she creates the Instagram content. Talking about her most recent Post, Farah said she “researched the whole thing, and then use[d] the template” from a previous Post. Here, previously posted content on the collective account continues to become as it is enfolded into the future becomings of content, as templates are reused and remixed. The material-discursive practice of Farah’s content creation is best understood as a co-creation between Farah, other members of the collective, Canva templates, the collective’s content, and

Instagram's algorithms. Thus, while Farah might be creating content by herself, from her phone in her bedroom in the United Kingdom, she is not acting alone.

I was struck by the material-discursive practice of content creation for the collective Lola and Frankie were part of. When asked about what goes into the creation of a piece of content, Frankie replied "it kind of depends on the Post, like the chalking Posts are just posted by [...] one of the girls in the team because she's very good at doing her Reels." Frankie said, "we all have access to the Instagram but on the chat [I] will be like 'okay, I'm taking care of this.'" The impossibility of the online/offline binary was evident in Frankie's story about the purpose of their collective Instagram account:

The thing with the Instagram for @feministstreetart is obviously we're trying to draw attention to the [community] events that we're putting up. And I would say the chalk-back thing is the first, let's say like Instagram campaign, obviously it's something we're doing in-person, but like we had like 600 followers before we started, and now we've got nearly a thousand [...] I think some of our posting sometimes is, because as I say, we're, we have an online advertising, but we're more about the community that's created [...] it's changing because we've got so many more followers. But previously [...] the focus was the in-person stuff, and just because of the way social media works you do have to just post quite a lot. So, like that's not to say like I would be like, 'oh whatever, post anything' [...] So I think maybe it's kind of changing because there is obviously now a huge portion of people who know us, who [...] are just gonna follow us online and that's it. And I didn't really know what that would look like, but yeah, like [...] trying to create content for the sake of people seeing what's happening in-person, versus like keeping it online.

As Frankie describes it, the becoming of the online collective of @feministstreetart is inseparable from the offline becoming of the collective that does chalking campaigns and art workshops in their community in Ireland. In addition to the collective's content being co-created by the various members of the collective, it is affected by the expanding entanglement and relations of human/non-human as the follower list on Instagram grows. Instagram, as an intra-acting force also does something for the iterative becoming of the collective, as Frankie notes "you do have to post quite a lot." Frankie's discussion of the relationality between the online/offline timespacemattering of the collective also urges theorizing activism and activist collectives as increasingly networked (Coretti and Pica 2015; Milan 2015).

I was also struck by Frankie's description of the material-discursive practice of the collective's content creation. Frankie said:

I would say a lot of like our stuff goes on probably from the flat, like the big stuff [...] like the first Posts we did about the chalking felt like really big, and we did them together. Like [name redacted] came over and we wrote them, and we were like 'okay, and we're going to go [post it] now' [it] felt like a big deal.' Now we've done [chalking content] about a few clubs and we're like 'ahh, we don't care.' We kind of just like go chalking, we take pictures, we'll go for coffee after, and I'll just be like jamming on, because I'll do it on [name redacted]'s phone because I don't want [them] to have to do it. Like I think the last year [...] I've been logged in[to] [my Instagram] on [name redacted]'s phone. So maybe bypassing, this is just the nature of our friendship now.

I wrote about this moment in my research diary immediately after our interview. I was intrigued when Frankie told me that she does not have the Instagram application on her phone because she has what she called an "addictive personality." Frankie said that if she needs to log onto

Instagram on her phone to post something on the collective account, she uses the web browser rather than the application format. The web browser is less enjoyable as a user, so Frankie is less inclined to spend too much time scrolling. Again, technology is not a passive material object, rather a material-discursive practice that creates difference (Barad 2007). Echoing my previous discussion, I was also affected by the blurred boundaries in Frankie's story here, between online/offline, and Frankie and her friend. Frankie described using her friend's phone as "bypassing" and as "the nature of [their] friendship now," which reminds me of Braidotti's (2022) and Haraway's (1991) troubling of the self/other binary to extend our understanding of bodies to surpass the flesh boundaries of our skin. Frankie's description of the material-discursive practice of content creation also provoked me to visualize the girls sitting together in the café or their "flat" (i.e., apartment), drinking coffee, and gathered around one phone, to create together. Their human bodies and non-human bodies like phones, photos, graphics, and videos entangle together in the becoming of the collective and its content. This visualization reminds me of the bedroom culture that Keller (2016) describes in her exploration of girls' blogging, where the bedroom is an important space for political and cultural engagement. The multiple timespaces of the collective are evident in Frankie's story here – online, offline, Instagram, cafés, and their flat.

As mentioned in previous chapters, some of the collective accounts were tagged as "youth organizations" using Instagram's affordance to categorize business Instagram profiles. This affordance had agentive force in the material-discursive practice of collective content creation, including around cross-posting or reposting other collective's Instagram content. For example, Go's account, which she was working to grow into a collectively run account, was labelled as a youth organization. Go described the community of youth organizations on

Instagram as “a really nice community to be in [...] it’s sort of like a little friendship moment between the different like organizations and accounts.” Go elaborated, “like we all, when people like post, they’ll send you their Posts and they’ll tell you like, ‘please like this, comment [on] this, re-share this’ and then you do and then they do it back.” Similarly, Mira, a 15-year-old American girl, told me that she is part of a group chat with various “youth organization” accounts, where they will share content and encourage others to like, share, and comment on it, to try to boost engagement. Both Go and Mira told me that these collective youth organization Instagram accounts are organized around a bunch of different topics and social issues, not just feminism. This relational engagement and becoming echoes findings by Cotter (2019, 2024), who writes about social media influencers working together in “pods” to try to manoeuvre social media algorithms. Go also thought the “youth organization” affordance also affected her follower count, saying “I get like a bunch of like new followers everyday [who] just find me, sometimes they’ll show up in my recommendation then I’ll follow them, and then they follow me back. It’s just like we find each other, towards the same cause.”

Sticky Moments in Collective Content Creation

I also asked participants about the best and hardest parts of feminist content creation. I begin with the hardest or more sticky moments of creating feminist content within a collective. Esti was quite open about some of the challenges of content creation in the collective she was part of:

It almost feels like I’m the only one who’s really putting in this like weekly work for the team (Lindsay: Right) [...] and then I always so felt like [my] position was just like almost kind of like low, and like looked down upon. [...] I almost just didn’t wanna like do it anymore because I felt like I was just putting in so much work just to have like, a

bad name, right? Like it was something I was almost too embarrassed to tell people. And like [...] obviously if I'm too embarrassed to tell like even just my friends [about my role in the collective] like I probably wouldn't even want to write that in like a resume or even say that to like [...] in an interview for university or whatever.

I was quite taken aback by Esti's discussion here, especially her seeming frustration around the name of her role in the collective – graphic designer. Esti was particularly frustrated with one of the few boys in the collective who worked on the communication team, whom she argued did little work or organizing on a weekly basis. Notably, Esti also seemed worried about others in the collective knowing that she participated in my project, writing to me afterwards to confirm that her participation and our conversation were confidential. Jacinta shared a similar experience, explaining that while she was in “a lower position” than one of the boys in the collective, she ended up doing more work than him “because he didn't know what he was doing, and he wouldn't take the initiative to learn how to do it.” Here, the collectives Esti and Jacinta speak about are entanglements of bodies, content, technologies, timespaces, and contexts like age and gender, that co-create a structure or apparatus of power that organizes bodies.

Talking about some of the challenges researching and writing for feminist Instagram content, Safa said:

Sometimes it can be a little difficult because in my mind, I'm like creating the Post a certain way, like I'll structure the words and the content to be, to look like a certain way and then eventually, we don't see the final Post [before it's posted], it's like ‘oh, I didn't think it was gonna be like this.’ Not that it bothers me, I'm not like ‘this is wrong,’ it's just more like ‘oh, I didn't picture it to be this way,’ and I'm like ‘oh cool.’ [...] [...] And so I think that was a little bit difficult, because I was just like, you know, we have the

information, but I think it's just like kind of, I don't know, like a black box-ish. [I do the research and writing] and then [the communications team] makes [the content]. So I'm like, I have a vision [for the content], that I don't think [gets executed].

I then asked Safa if she wished she had more of a say in what the Posts looked like. She replied, “maybe not more to say on what they look like, but just giving them an idea of ‘hey this is what I thought could be on slide one’ (Lindsay: right) and then it's their choice if they want to do it or not, because obviously [...] that's their role.” While I was transcribing, I was struck by Safa's use of “black box-ish” to describe the process of collective content creation because it is a term frequently used in popular and academic discourse of algorithms (Cotter 2024; Kitchin 2017). Here, I want to lean into “black box-ish” in my diffractive reading. When you stumble upon digital feminist content on Instagram the material-discursive practices and multiple bodies which co-create it are often concealed, or as Safa puts it are “black box-ish.”

Reading Safa's story through Barad (2007), the unknown about what the content might become can be understood by tracing the diffractive patterns of the intra-activity. As Barad (2007) argues, entanglements and intra-actions leave marks on bodies. If we understand collective content creation as emerging through multiple intra-actions, each intra-action co-constitutes different bodies which affect and diffract the Instagram content. Importantly though, absolute erasure is not possible (Barad 2014, 2017) because difference is always produced and leaves traces in iterative intra-actions. So, the intra-action that co-creates Safa's body and the research and writing of the Instagram content, and the human/non-human relation between Safa-content, is enfolded in past-present-future entanglements in the collective's content creation. We might understand the “black box” of the collective's Instagram content, by tracing the past-

present-future of the collective's Instagram content, including the Instagram account's emergent aesthetics, feel, or the co-created collective identity – a point I elaborate on later.

Throughout my interviews with members of collectively-run Instagram accounts, I became increasingly curious about power and hierarchy in the intra-actions that co-create them. Re-turning (Barad 2014) her previous experiences within activist collectives, and her more recent experiences, Gwen argued:

So, the main difference was just in how we treated our everyone quote unquote under us. We don't like to think that anyone is of higher power necessarily, but you do need hierarchy to make anything work. So, like obviously we are in those positions where we get to like to oversee everything and like control everything, not control, I don't know if the word is like manage everything. But yeah, just being able to really and truly support our members and have them also give us feedback (Lindsay: right, right). So, it is a very reciprocative relationship rather than kind of just like dictating them on everything that they have to do, and being very negative.

While Gwen argues that the structuring of the collective she co-organizes does not reproduce unequal power relations, it would be remiss to overlook how the structure of the collective differentiates different bodies, and thus, constrains and enables particular human/non-human becomings (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022). Material-discursive contexts like teams and roles which sort bodies, as well aesthetics and colour schemes, enact force for the emergent digital feminism. Gwen argues that “you do need hierarchy to make anything work,” which perhaps points to the naturalization of hierarchy and structure in social and political worlds, which seep into the intra-actions that co-create digital feminism. Others, like Zara, similarly naturalized and embraced hierarchy in the feminist and activist collectives they were part of on Instagram. There is also

friction here, between the embrace of hierarchy in digital feminism, and a feminist politics and culture which embodies horizontal relations and organizing.

The hierarchical organization of these digital feminist collectives were co-created through entanglements of bodies and technologies. For example, Jacinta explained how the collective used Slack, an application where multiple group chats can be organized with various people of an organization or group. She said:

we have a Slack [channel] where the whole organization is there, we have a channel for each of the departments [and] finance and communications. We have a general channel for all members. We have one like, uhm secret, I don't know what it's called, but like a locked channel for board members, like [the leaders of each department]. And then there might be, like smaller group chats within different subcommittees.

The technological affordances of Slack co-create the structure or apparatus of the collective which necessarily excludes, specifically, which bodies become within the “secret” group channel for the board members. The structure of the collective is not something that just is, it is iteratively remade in specific configurations, including by technologies like Slack which open new possibilities for intra-actions and relations while foreclosing others.

Re-turning (Barad 2014) earlier discussions, participants' embrace and comfort in the hierarchical organization of their activist communities is ontologically messy. Feminist posthumanism seeks to trouble binaries and rigid structures through attention to entangled, iterative becomings, which feels incongruent with the seemingly stiff, hierarchical, and procedural unfolding of the collectively-run Instagram accounts. At first, these frictions felt like they might resist diffractive analysis (MacLure 2013) because they counter the ontological underpinnings of my theoretical approach. However, as I have written, participants also

embraced their relations with each other and technologies, in collectively-run Instagram accounts, and through group chats with other “youth organization” Instagram accounts. In this way, participants activate and deactivate feminist posthuman and more subject-oriented frameworks in specific timespacematterings (Barad 2007).

Interestingly, alongside the embrace of hierarchy some girls spoke about wanting more collaboration within the collectives they were part of. For example, Crystal Waters, who was a writer for a digital collective that had a blog and an Instagram account, spoke at length about the value of collaborative writing to reduce bias. Similarly, Safa shared that the large collective does not meet as much as she might like, instead, she works most closely with the people on her team. While Safa thought she might like to have larger meetings with the whole collective, she hesitated, stating “like I would be too nervous to say anything.” These moments in interviews were curious, because while many of the girls felt optimistic and excited about their participation in collectives, there were sticky moments like these, where girls felt frustrated by the process or other members, or wondered about alternatives. I do not see these moments as indicative of digital feminism as increasingly individualized action or practice, concerns that some scholars have about digital activism (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Milan and Halleck 2013). Instead, I see these sticky moments as opportunity to think about the diffraction patterns of intra-actions, including how the “black box” nature of technologies like Instagram can downplay the entangled agencies that co-create digital feminism. A feminist posthuman lens, which traces the relational becoming among girl bodies, Instagram accounts, and digital feminist content underscores the forces and networks underneath the surface of individual pieces of Instagram content.

Glowing Moments in Collective Content Creation

Many girls who were part of these collectives enjoyed learning about feminism, creating content with other girls, and felt proud of the “meaningful” work they were doing. Amongst these glowing moments, Frankie told me the origin story of the collective she co-created:

[The collective] was like this, like positive outlet for me [...] like it was almost a selfish thing that I was doing this for me [...] At that point [...] I [didn't] think it would be[come] more [than] like events [...] raising money for charity [...] [It became] more of an activist thing. And I'm really happy about that. It has been such a natural evolution, that there have been so many just like learning-on-the-spots, like, 'okay, we're not that. We tried, we didn't do well, that's not us.' (Lindsay: Right) that kind of thing. So it's definitely grown really organically [...] out of this place of like what I needed. [...] I'm just happy other people went, 'oh yeah, I need this too.'

I was struck by this part of our interview because it added to the other stories Frankie shared where she distanced herself as the leader of the collective. But it also reminds me of Haraway's (1991) theorizing about desire and pleasure as important parts a feminist politics that has the potential to “chang[e] the rules of the game.” The collective did not become all at once, or in one specific spacetime-mattering (Barad 2007), instead, as Frankie describes, what started as something she “needed” or wanted, began with charity and fundraising events. Somewhere in its iterative unfolding, the collective “became more of an activist thing,” which Frankie explained as “a natural evolution.” With Barad (2007) and Haraway (1991), I suggest that Frankie's feminist desire or want was not contained in her individual fleshy body, but was a relational, intra-active force that unfolded into the spacetime-mattering (Barad 2007) or ‘beginning’ of the collective. Frankie's feminist want or desire enfolded through relations with her friend who became her co-creator of the collective, the other human bodies that attended charity events, and non-human

bodies like Instagram and digital feminist content. The collective's unfolding contains traces of Frankie's feminist want or desire (Haraway 1991; Kennelly 2014) as it diffracted in spacetime-matterings (Barad 2007) to become what the collective is 'now.' The 'now' of the collective, however, is never finished, as past-present-future (Barad 2017) are enfolded through each other in spacetime-matterings, a point I elaborate in the following section.

For Frankie, the feminist collective was also in part about "cultivating really like, I don't know, [an] enthused community," which as aforementioned, was entwined on Instagram and in their community in the United Kingdom. Frankie told me that she "love[d] when we get so many comments, we get some DMs [direct messages]." It seemed that comments and DMs have agentive force for Frankie. Trying to describe what they do, Frankie said "I don't know, [it's] exhilarating almost, like people are engaging with what we care about. And that's so cool when you see so many other people caring about it too." It is curious to think about comments on Instagram as territorializations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Braidotti 2022) of feminist or activist desire or want, which have force in the intra-active becoming of the collective. Frankie's feminist want and desire are transferred to other bodies through comments, which weave many Instagram users and feminist becomings together. Instagram's affordances, such as comments, are bodies with affective force for co-creating feminist communities.

In another glowing moment, Ally told me that Instagram is "less stressful now [that] we are kind of like an established org[anization] in the non-profit space." Her concerns are around ensuring they co-create content that has "accurate information." Here, the collective Ally co-created becomes within a timespace-mattering of non-profits which is an entanglement that includes other non-profits, human bodies, technologies like Instagram, and digital activist/feminist content. I also wonder what differentiates an established organization or

collective from one that is not- or less- established. Perhaps on Instagram, a collective becomes established through high-engagement and followership, resonating arguments by Mahoney (2022) about algorithmically rewarded feminism. For me, this entanglement or material-discursive context of being more established feels like a risky context for becoming feminist or activist online, given the rhizomatic or decentralized (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) spread of the entanglement (Braidotti 2022) as more human body Instagram users, Instagram content, and algorithmic engagement propel the becoming in ways that can become uncontrollable.

All Content Is Collective

So far in the timespacemattering of this chapter, I have enacted an agential cut (Barad 2007) to narrow in on the collectively run Instagram accounts, what they do, and how girls experience them. In this section, I build on Mendes et al.'s (2019:186) argument that digital feminism is “ultimately a collective activity.” In posthuman feminism, Instagram content is necessarily a constellation of human bodies (e.g., multiple Instagram users, relations between Instagram users and ‘offline’ friends and family), non-human bodies (e.g., content, audio, pictures, videos, text, comments, memes), multiple technologies (e.g., hashtags, likes, emojis, Canva, Google form, linktrees, blogs, websites), and timespaces (e.g., “viral,” “trendy,” “real-time”). Furthermore, the timespacemattering which co-creates the ‘now’ (Barad 2017) of the Instagram content is enfolded into the ‘there’ and ‘then’ of the content once it is posted, as it circulates and iteratively becomes within and beyond Instagram. So while the content might appear to be posted by one individual Instagram user, in a specific moment, and in a specific place (i.e., their Instagram page), the content is never just theirs, as others have argued in terms of the proliferation, surveillance, and commodification of Big data (e.g., Noble 2018; van Dijck

2013), but also in the sense that it becomes in intra-actions that congeal multiple bodies and timespaces.

In one example, Anne explained, “I’ve had some people like reply to my stuff and be like ‘I found this so interesting, like you should look at this,’ or ‘I have an idea for you.’ And it’s really fun, uhm to hear the people are actually engaged, and also to learn from others.” While Anne was the sole “owner” and creator of the Instagram account we spoke about, the content becomes through intra-actions that include Anne, comments from other Instagram users, affordances of Instagram like Story replies, and direct messages. This intra-active becoming troubles notions of autonomous individualized subjects and discrete objects as pre-existing in an ontological hierarchy. In posthuman feminism, it is not possible to draw neat boundaries around each component of the entanglement, including Anne, the digital feminist content, Instagram, or the other Instagram users, because they are enfolded through each other. Such an approach is also necessary for a shift away from a subject-oriented understanding of digital feminism which focuses on the efficacy and experiences of individual feminists. I re-turn (Barad 2014) to this relational becoming later, in my musing about a move towards cyborg feminist becomings.

The blurred boundaries between online/offline and individual/collective were evident in Lola’s discussion of the collective she is part of. As Lola explained, the collective has an online/offline campaign that involves using sidewalk chalk to write about experiences of catcalling and harassment that their Instagram followers submit. Talking about the chalking campaign, Lola said:

that’s the thing that has got these extra followers, so kind of like, it’s a little feedback loop there [...] That’s something that people can see their voice being represented just by filling out a form on our page.

The material-discursive practice of this collaborative work shifted, as they explain in another Post on the main feed of their account, to differentiate experiences of harassment in public places and mistreatment by service-sector staff or police. They also updated the Google form to include an optional contact information component if those submitting their experience wish to participate in the chalking. The chalking campaign blurs online/offline boundaries, as digital feminist content on Instagram emerges through intra-actions of girls' bodies, chalk, sidewalks, phones, Google forms, Instagram content, and re-turning to timespaces like bars, pubs, and clubs where the harassment occurred. The Google form is part of an entanglement too, which includes the intra-activity of Google – a digital capitalist apparatus that intra-acts and co-creates human/non-human bodies, text, typing, phones, computers, cloud storage, fibre optic internet, and multiple relations between humans-technologies. Instagram too, while part of the intra-action that co-creates the “feedback loop” of the chalking campaign, is an entangled intra-acting becoming, which includes the human/non-human bodies of the digital capitalist apparatus Meta, algorithms, hashtags, past-present-future of Instagram and accounts, audio, Reels, Stories, Posts, and comments. So, while the collective's chalking campaign and the emergent content on their Instagram account might appear to be made by the few girl bodies that are featured in Instagram photos and Reels with sidewalk chalk, the content becomes through entanglements of human/non-human bodies, and timespaces beyond the 'here' and 'now' of the collective.

Comment sections are also evidence of the multiple bodies, technologies, and material-discursive contexts that co-create digital feminism, thus, underscoring the ways in which all content is co-constitutive of collectives or entanglements. In one glowing moment in the timespace of our interview, Lola talked about the collective's chalking around a statue of a woman in Ireland that urged visitors to stop groping and touching the statue's breasts. Lola

described this campaign as “genuinely like by far the thing that we’ve [...] got overwhelming support for [...] but like that’s like pretty much the focus for people who want to like have a go at us.” Talking about one of their Instagram Posts that was a video of a man groping the statue, Lola said:

One of the guys who commented below our Post, he was the first guy [to comment], and his point actually, to be fair, was you know, ‘why do you post a pic- video of some guy like doing it?’ And we were like ‘yeah, okay, so, point taken.’ Like we deleted, or we like cut the guy’s face out. But like that wasn’t actually necessary. You couldn’t tell who he was. But we were like, ‘fine, whatever’ because it’s a very touristy spot, he actually might end up being able to read what we’ve written [in our Post on Instagram]. And we’re like ‘fair, childish,’ and then the same guy came back [to the Post] and basically kept [commenting] like ‘it’s just a statue, it’s just a statue, like why are you guys kicking up such a fuss? Like you’re vandalizing a landmark.’ (Lindsay: mmmm) And we were like ‘well, the statue has been vandalized, like her chest is completely tarnished, like it’s completely rubbed off [...] it’s completely damaged.

Despite moments like this, Lola said:

we’ve just been lucky that we’ve had such like an overwhelmingly positive experience on Instagram [...] and like the only negativity has been like seriously combated by not only us on our private accounts, but by our followers [...] Like we don’t even really have to do the talking down anymore, which is you know, a star.

Lola’s story about this content provokes me to think about how Instagram content, whether a Post, Reel, or Story, is not just the individual piece of content itself. Instead, it is reconfigured by and reconfiguring comment sections. As Lola detailed, Instagram content can be deleted and

reposted. In addition, Instagram captions can be edited after posting without removing the Post itself. Instagram users can also limit comment sections including by restricting certain words, and delete or archive Posts – affordances that enable and constrain the unfolding of digital feminism (see also Mendes et al. 2019). Feminist Instagram content, is thus, open and dynamic, continuously becoming as users engage with it through comments, edit, archive, or repost it.

As I read comment sections I found myself get agitated, feel defensive of the feminists who posted the content, and wondering what these often-divisive arguments did for digital feminisms becomings. I mused that comment sections are a striking timespacemattering of girls' Instagram feminism, and a site or "cultural laboratory" (Melucci 1989) of collective identity and boundary making, a point I elaborate in the next section. In one striking example, I spent a long time reading the comments on a @feministjules post about abortion. Content that was overtly pro- or anti- abortion seemed to provoke Instagram users to debate, critique, or leave hate in the comments, a debate that was lively in the timespacemattering of my content analysis as Roe v. Wade was being overturned. There was a long thread on the Post by @feministjules, where one Instagram user was repeatedly critiquing the pro-abortion stance, and was going back-and-forth in dialogue with others in the comment section. As I scrolled the comments, there was one comment from @feministjules thanking followers "for stepping in" to debate the Instagram user that was spam commenting in opposition of the content's arguments. @feministjules writes, "I hope you won't be disappointed that I've deleted his thread, but I do try to stick to my boundaries and he's been spamming for three days now. Gla[d] to fight beside you two 😊."

This entanglement between @feministjules, the content, the comments, and other Instagram users challenges a framing of digital activism as individualized action (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Mendes et al. 2019; Milan and Halleck 2013). @feministjules' account, content, and

comment sections are co-created by Instagram users as well as followers who “step in” to intervene with spam or antagonistic comments. Comment sections become a space where feminists can confront oppositions and reconfigure the boundaries of their feminism.

Even on individual girls’ Instagram accounts, collaborative content creation occurs. These collaborative posts were particularly prominent between activists and feminists with larger followings. For example, @womanpower writes “this is a collab between @redacted [a]n[d] @redacted, so go give them a follow as well + stay tuned for p[ar]t 2.” In my digital fieldnotes, I also noted that @womanpower tended to collaborate with friends in the co-creation of content, for example when they thank friends in captions for editing the post. In another example, in the caption of a Post about the ongoing violence in Sudan, @feministlove writes, “cr[edit]: I can’t @ her but my friend made me aware about these horrendous issues and I would like to thank her! ❤️” Diffracting these moments from my content analysis with participants’ stories reveals the ways that forces, bodies, contexts, and timespaces beyond any individual girl shape the possibilities for girls’ Instagram feminism. Thus, echoing arguments made by Mendes et al. (2019), I argue that all digital feminism is collective. I build on this argument in the following discussion of girls’ thoughts about belonging in feminist collectives.

Feeling Part of a Collective Or Not

Inspired by the intra-acting unfolding of Instagram feminism, I became curious about whether girls felt part of a digital feminist or activist collective. I wondered how my own understanding of all Instagram content as necessarily collective, diffracted participants’ experiences and thinking. When I asked Nora in a direct message on Instagram, from Germany, she replied:

Online activities aren't comparable to activities in real life, however, participating in a[] network and exchanging your ideas with women from all around the world with many different backgrounds can be very insightful, too. I think if I hadn't encountered other women online, particularly women who are not from my own area or from the West at all, I wouldn't have educated myself further on certain topics[,] since I was unaware of many things before that.

Similarly, Anne did not feel like she belonged to a feminist community online, because she was: not like actively, you know, encouraging people to go to protest for Roe v. Wade, I'm not in the States, like I feel like a lot of what's online right now about feminist discourse is related to Roe v. Wade and abortion rights, from what I can see. And so I don't feel like I engage with that [...] I don't feel part of like a feminist online community, definitely not.

Nora's and Anne's arguments seem incongruent with a feminist posthuman rethinking of online/offline. I find it curious that two feminists who shared that they spent lots of time online, in places like Tumblr and on their podcast, respectively, feel like online activism or feminism is less meaningful than offline activities, seemingly reproducing slacktivist discourses (e.g., Cabrera et al. 2017; Fullam 2017). Curiously though, both Nora and Anne emphasize place and its effects for mobilizing feminism. As Anne notes, the timespacemattering of the overturning of Roe v. Wade in the United States was an intensity in the intra-activity of digital feminism at the time of my interviews and content analysis. This intensity differentiates digital feminists as a collective, distinguishing between those who entangle with the real-timeness (Lupinacci 2024; Weltevrede et al. 2014) of American feminist politics, and those who do not. Similarly, timespacemattering emerged in my email conversation with Quinn, who emailed me from Jamaica, and was part of a transnational collective. Quinn said, "through research and

involvement with groups like @activistnetwork, I've found ways to engage in this activism, despite living in a place that often opposes it."

Mira's and Valeri's musings about digital community were messy and evocative. When asked if she felt part of a digital feminist community, Valeri responded:

Uhm, to be honest, I do not feel like I am. But also, uhm, I'm totally fine with that because this – creating content – isn't something that I do as like a job. Because like I don't get paid for this. I do everything on my own free will. I basically do everything on the side. So I believe [...] I guess to be blunt, I guess I don't necessarily care if I'm part of a community, an online community, because it's like, this is not my main thing, even though it's something I'm very passionate about. It isn't my main focus, at least for right now when I'm still in college.

I was affected by Valeri's explanation here, especially how her meanings of online community are entangled with content creation. Valeri clarified a few times in our interview that she did not do content creation for a job, and she does not accept sponsorship from brands or receive money for content creation. I was a bit surprised to hear this overt resistance of monetization, in a material-discursive context of influencers and influencing on Instagram. Valeri told me that she pulled out of paid opportunities on Instagram, because she does not want to get money or be paid to research and post activist content, worrying it would rush her process, and potentially complicate her politics. Valeri emphasized, "everything is like on my own accord." It is curious to think of the agentive force of monetization, money, and the material-discursive context of influencers/influencing for digital feminism. For Valeri, this entanglement does something for how she understands online community. Valeri's ambivalence around online communities might be related to her resistance of engagement metrics and monetization. For Valeri, "growing" an

online community to be algorithmically rewarded by Instagram might not be a priority in her feminist practice.

When I asked Mira if she felt part of a digital feminist community, she replied: maybe not like [in the sense of] directly communicating with other people online, but like there's [...] a few small groups who I communicate with sometimes and post with together. But not in the huge like, oh you know [...] talking to *the* feminist Instagram account or anything but.

Similar to my conversation with Valeri, I asked her if she ever wished she felt more part of a digital feminist community. Mira replied, "yeah, I mean if like I got the opportunity, I would love to work for *the* feminist group, or your know, any big community [...] I mean, yeah, I wish. Someday I would want to." I was struck by Mira's re-presentation of the (in)famous @feminist Instagram account as *the* feminist account and thus, the pinnacle digital feminist community. Importantly, the @feminist account is a commercialized and professionalized Instagram account, run like an online magazine or blog, where a series of creators produce infographics to be posted to the account. Curiously, this was an account of digital feminism that Lola critiqued in our interview. I also wondered if my question to Mira was a bit unclear, so I tried to agitate this narrative by asking, "what about in terms of like, just not even you know, working for like that feminist page, but, you know, just like engaging in community like through DMs [direct messages] or something? Is that something you do on your account?" Mira responded:

no, well, usually big accounts don't respond, like they don't reply. Because I know for smaller groups whenever I repost something, they're like 'oh cool' or they like it, or something. So, the bigger accounts, they don't do that, which makes sense because there's so many out there, but they never like respond.

Like Valeri, influencer/influencing and the monetization of digital feminism seems to do something for Mira's understanding of digital feminism and community. It is striking here, that for Mira community is something reserved for accounts with large followings. Similarly, when I asked Estelle about the community on her Instagram account, and Instagram more broadly, she replied, "I guess I'm in the place where I would like, still like to see it grow more. But I have like been able to connect with a lot of different people." Read together, Valeri's, Mira's, and Estelle's stories underscore the force of Instagram and material-discursive contexts like influencer culture for co-constituting meanings and experiences of digital feminist communities.

As Barad (2007), Braidotti (2022), and Haraway (1991) note, an individual human body and one's identity does not end at the flesh boundaries of their skin. Braidotti (2022:137) argues that there are no "self-referential subjects," rather bodies, selves, and subjectivities are always emerging through entanglements that are mutually interdependent, theorizing which builds on Haraway's earlier work (1991). Barad's intra-action articulates how any individual human body is made through an entanglement that (re)configures other human and non-human bodies, timespaces, materialities, and discourses. Read together, their theorizing troubles an understanding of social change as either the result of an individual actor or collective action, which has been long debated in social movements literature (e.g., Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Tilly 2005; Melucci 1989). Instead, Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway offer a rethinking of social change that recognizes it as necessarily (re)configured/(re)configuring entanglements of individual/collectives. An individual actor is always becoming through intra-actions or relationality with collectives of human/non-human bodies, timespaces, and material-discursive contexts. So in this way, there is no neatly contained individual actor, just as there is no finished or fixed collective, as both are entwined and intra-active becoming. A focus on collectives in

social change then, must reckon with the entanglements, like of individual/collective and online/offline, that co-constitute possibilities, exclusions, and that “which come to matter” (Barad 2007:140). I elaborate this thinking in the following section.

In this first section, I have aimed to trace the entanglements that co-create Instagram accounts run by collectives of girls and young women. My diffractive reading illustrates some of the sticky moments and the glowing moments that become possible in Instagram feminism within a collective. Beyond content that is created by groups of girls and young women who are organized around a specific Instagram account, I argued that all Instagram content is collective. Forces, bodies, and timespacematterings beyond any individual Instagram user or individual piece of Instagram content affect what Instagram feminism becomes. Individual pieces of Instagram content are also not just one thing, as they iteratively unfold through comments, likes, shares, and the agentive force of algorithms which diffuse them across timespace. While I understand Instagram feminism to be always collective and entangled, participants did not all feel part of a digital community. Next, I consider the entanglements and intra-actions that co-create material-discursive practices of collective identities.

The Becoming of Collective Identities

In this section, I diffract participants’ stories and my digital fieldnotes with social movement scholarship (e.g., Melucci 1989; Jenson 1995/2013; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992) and posthuman feminism to disentangle the timespacematterings that co-create the material-discursive practices of feminist and activist collective identities. I underscore the entangled, material-discursive becomings of collective identities, including of feminist, activist, girl/woman, and youth, through boundary-marking processes of “us” or “we” and “them.” My diffractive reading becomes in three parts: becoming feminist and/or activist

collective identity; boundary-marking practices/moments; and becoming girl/woman collective identity.

Becoming Feminist and Activist Collective Identity

Various human/non-human bodies and material-discursive contexts affected the iterative becoming of feminist and activist collective identity. One striking agentive force was a tagline or motto that was represented on Instagram content, and nearly memorized by all the interviewees who were members of collectives. For example, when I asked Ally how she would describe the collective she co-created, she quickly replied:

I've memorized [it]. @menstruationmatters is a chapter of [a bigger organization] that strives to end period poverty and stigma, through our three pillars of advocacy, education, and service. @menstruationmatters is a chapter of this organization that works to achieve this goal in the Ontario community.

In a similar way, Crystal Waters had the tagline of her collective memorized saying, "it's a digital online platform that's committed to amplifying young women's voices. Yeah, that's usually what I say [...] in my university applications [...] that like was my first sentence." It is hard to deny the entrepreneurial, can-do and girl-power (Harris 2004) ethos of the taglines themselves, which reverberates in girls' regurgitation of them. Echoing arguments made by Caldiera (2023) and Mendes et al. (2019), this material-discursive practice underscores the force of can-do (Harris 2004) girl-power in girls' digital activism. I wonder too, how these mottos or taglines are affected by and affecting the material-discursive context of Instagram wherein monetization, branding, advertising, and entrepreneurialism flourish. Instagram, as an entanglement, emerges through and reconfigures capitalism, and digital feminism is enfolded through these material-discursive apparatuses. Girls' digital feminism is thus co-constitutive of digital capitalism and

entrepreneurialism, creating tension for the becoming of resistance in oppressive and discriminating digital apparatuses (Mendes et al. 2019). Further, Instagram accounts that have a catchy tagline that captures the essence, aim, or feel of the account might be productive for cultivating a sense of “we.” When other Instagram users encounter such accounts, they may be more likely to follow or engage with the account if they are quickly able to discern and relate to the account’s aim. That is, taglines in Instagram biographical sections might propel human-tech relations and be a key force in the unfolding of collective identity.

Admittedly, I became frustrated with the ways girls’ seemingly reduced the nuances of their digital feminist collectives to Instagram-able taglines. Although Frankie too, recited a tagline for the collective she co-created, I was moved by her elaboration. Frankie said:

our kind of tagline is that we’re a nonprofit community-based platform for all people of marginalized genders. And I guess what that means is that [...] were built of two pillars. [...] This community pillar and this activism pillar. And I don’t think they just exist parallel to each other [...] they like need each other. [...] We are activists because of our community, and our community is built of activists [...] it’s very symbiotic in that way [...] We exist on Instagram, that’s how people find us, that’s how people get to know us, that’s where we explore and share our activism, platform the activism that we’re doing in person. And that’s how we reach out to and grow a community that then will come to the in-person stuff.

Frankie’s description of the online/offline collective as “symbiotic” reminds me of the mutual co-constitution of becomings that Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2022) propose. Frankie disrupts neat boundaries between individuals/collectives and online/offline. Here, the intra-activity of the collective emerges through and with the iterative unfolding of community.

Talking about the arts-based workshops the collective organizes in their local community, Frankie explained:

It's always been exactly the space that I need to be in [...] I've always described it[] like old women knitting [...] I think there's something so beautiful about like just creating with other people [...] And you're in this space like with 10 to 15 people, and you know that you have shared experience with them. You can go up to anyone on the street and even if she was like a Trump-loving [...] Republican, and I'm like pretty left wing, I've shaved my head, and she [w]ould probably hate that, but like we could probably still find five similarities between our experiences [...] You know just like being in that space, and just, I guess there's a feeling of understanding.

I was really struck by this part of our interview, particularly Frankie's assertion that it feels like "old women knitting" and that there is a shared experience among women even with different political beliefs. There seems to be an affective force that helps to congeal the boundaries around individual/collective bodies in the art workshops Frankie's collective organizes. I am also struck by Frankie's recognition that her becoming girl-becoming feminist are relational and intertwined with others' becomings, even those who might oppose her shaved head or leftist politics.

Like Frankie, Lola too referenced the "bio[graphy] line" in describing the collective. But similarly, the collective was also something more. As Lola said:

I would like say it's [a] pretty young community, like I'd say most people who at least come to our events tend to be between [...] 18 to 25. So it's young. Uhm, I'd say it's a very, I can't quite explain [it], like when we do the exhibitions, the bigger events are always incredible. That's always one of my favourite events of my life. But when we do the smaller classes, I honestly can't quite explain, like the energy in the room [...] it's

very calm but not because it's quiet. (Lindsay: hmm) You know, it's like people [...] and they're strangers, which is really gorgeous to see, especially as our platform's growing. Like it used to be us sort of like dragging our friends to the classes, and now it's loads of different people, like speaking about whatever like, you know, painting pictures about their trauma or whatever. And it's like, I just got this like very restorative like feeling [...]

Collective identity processes are not neatly contained. Instead, as Lola describes it, the becoming and boundaries of the collective shift across timespacematterings (Barad 2007), at “bigger events,” in “smaller classes,” online/offline, and with more or less human bodies including “friends,” and “strangers.” Collective identity does not happen all at once and is never finished, just as any posthuman or cyborg identity iteratively becomes (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2022; Haraway 1991). Speaking about the iterative becoming of the collective, Lola told me that there was not always this “restorative” feeling, explaining how they used to have fundraisers at clubs. Lola said, “after we did the second club night [...] [we were] like ‘this is not, this is not our thing.’” As the collective grew and intra-acted with more bodies, it became more focused on “exhibitions[,] classes[,] and art.” This evolution or intra-active becoming was affected by the timespacemattering of their community, which housed several art colleges, artists, and art-enthusiasts. The process of collective identity is not a neatly contained “thing” (Melucci 1989), but an iterative material-discursive practice. This iterative process demarks boundaries and relations between members and co-creates tactics, stories, and affective bonds (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003, 2005), which congeal to co-constitute a material-discursive “we.”

Pointing towards these affective bonds, Jacinta said there is no “like tangible profit” in being part of an activist collective, so there was something else that had to motivate and sustain

membership. When I asked Jacinta if she felt like she was part of a community of activists, she replied:

I feel like when you say like ‘community of activism,’ it like creates like a grand like, ‘oh yeah, like we’re you know, fighting.’ But I feel like it’s kind of the opposite [...]

Everyone’s here for a good reason and we know we’re doing good work [...] A lot of like our meetings are really chill [...] really friendly, [...] because people are the same age, people have the same, you know, like similar backgrounds [...] I feel like it’s not like a band of brothers, you know, like ‘live fast, die young’ [or] you know, ‘we’re all in this together.’ It’s more of just like a community and we just happen to all [be] activists [...] for the same thing [...] we’re like a community or a team who are also activists, you know.

For Jacinta, a community of activists/activism is entwined with a re-presentation of activist collectives as a “band of brothers” who want to “live fast die young.” These material-discursive contexts seem to be differentiating for Jacinta, and I wonder how the entangled technologies and bodies of Instagram might propel these types of unruly or divisive collective activist becomings that Jacinta distances herself from.

A key component of collective identity is sustaining members’ engagement and solidarity with the collective and its causes (Melucci 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Technologies can be vital for this work, especially in the latent phases of movements (Coretti and Pica 2015; Karataş 2021). This emerged in my conversations with Ava, who said “it feels really good when I get to repost their stuff [on my own Instagram] and know that I’m part of this group who’s working towards this change.” The process of collective identity, involves relations of Ava-collective-

Instagram, wherein sharing the collective's content has force for how she feels about her membership.

Diffracting participants' stories together-apart (Barad 2007) points to the messy, unfinished process of feminist and activist collective identity. Their stories reveal the ways that a sense of "we" develops in specific timespacematterings that blurs boundaries between bodies and online/offline timespaces, and that this unfolding is unfinished, shifting as bodies diffract. Resonating theorizations of collective identity proposed by Melucci (1989), Taylor and Whittier (1992), and Tilly (2003), my diffractive reading illustrates the ways that boundaries of feminist and activist are renegotiated and in flux. The iterative unfolding of feminist and activist collective identity was affected by the becoming of age, material-discursive contexts of Instagram and girl-power rhetoric, and relations between bodies and technologies. Instagram is thus, a particular timespacemattering where feminist and activist collective identities become, with effects. I add to this discussion below, with a focus on the entangled boundary-making practices which work to congeal boundaries of a "we" and an opposition.

Boundary Marking Moments and Practices in Feminist Collective Identity

As social movement scholars argue, processes of collective identity mark the "we" of the collective in relation to an opposition (Melucci 1989; Tilly 2003, 2005; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Here, I consider the entangled becomings of collective and oppositional identities. While all becomings and intra-actions necessarily exclude (Barad 2007), I was particularly struck by the iterative framing of an opposition in the becoming of radical feminist and feminism. Fatima, a 22-year-old feminist in Pakistan, described radical feminism in a direct message on Instagram:

So radical means root, which is smashing and abolishing the root causes of patriarchy.

Radical feminists don't include men in their feminism and regard women as an oppressed

class [and] men as oppressors. Moreover, I also identify as an eco[-]feminist[,] because I believe that oppressions of women and nature are interconnected under male supremacist systems. Women are most affected by environmental issues.

Here, radical or root feminist co-constitutes Instagram. As previously discussed, Fatima tries to circumvent surveillance and shadow banning by censoring “men” and “male” in her message, underscoring the force of technologies in the creation of collective identities (see also Milan 2015). In the intra-active becoming of Fatima’s root feminism, boundaries of “us” and “them” are marked, between men and women, as well as radical feminists and “other” feminists. The collective identity of radical feminist that becomes in Fatima’s story is not contained neatly in specific human bodies or individual pieces of Instagram content. It is not a “thing” (Melucci 1989), but an iterative material-discursive practice which becomes through relations with other feminists and feminisms, the technologies of Instagram, and a human-technology relation that attempts to circumvent shadow bans.

Amina, a 23-year-old radical feminist in Pakistan explained that radical feminism is: Less about “equality” and more about equity. It is defined as liberating women from the patriarchal institutions. Radical means grasping from the root. So not only just accepting every “choice” a woman makes but understanding why she feels the need to make that choice and how different would her choice be if indoctrination into the choice and persecution from straying away from that choice didn’t exist. It’s very different from liberal feminism, which does more harm than good. Liberal feminism is just trying to make misogyny more palatable.

In a subsequent direct message, Amina added:

Also, for radical feminism, I'd like to say it's different because its anti-pornography, anti-prostitution, anti-surrogacy, pro-choice (leaning more towards pro-abortion) and gender critical as well. There are the fundamentals of it. Some radical feminists are even separatists, choosing to spend life away from men and not having any relationships with them.

As I argued in the previous chapter, here, radical feminism becomes in relation to, and entangled with, the becoming of the framed opposition – liberal feminism. Amina's critique of liberal feminism, as "trying to make misogyny more palatable" co-constitutes the boundaries around radical feminism, as "anti- pornography, prostitution, and surrogacy, as pro-choice," and "gender critical."

Like Fatima, Amina said, "men are pretty much our predators," so in her view, "to still be attracted to them and want to be in a relationship with them, to me is embarrassing." These anti-men framings also emerged in radical feminist content that repeatedly argued that feminism needs to centre women, and should not include men, or else, as @flowerfeminist warned, "we're gonna end up in some like post-oppression society where sexism somehow still exists." Reading these entangled becomings of woman, man, radical feminist, radical feminism, and liberal feminism reminds me of Haraway's theorizing about the taxonomies of feminism. Haraway (1991:156) argues that the boundaries marked between taxonomies of feminism "produce epistemologies to police deviation from official women's experience." Haraway's critique is fruitful for thinking about how the congealing of boundaries around feminism, mutually co-constitute bodies as woman, man, and other, with effects for becoming feminist.

While it is important to think about the timespacemattering of Instagram, and how it might enable and constrain collective feminist becomings, like others (Bucher 2018; Noble

2018), I caution against utopian framings that overlook or downplay power and marginalization in the workings of technology, and people's experiences with them. For example, while Nora noted that there are "mutuals" on Instagram who become collectives of radical or root feminists, others like @flowerfeminist, posted content that mused about the risks of being "too radical" for the collective of radical feminism/feminist on Instagram. @flowerfeminist wondered if she was "too radical even for radical feminist" and shared that she was "afraid that I'll get kicked out of the radfemcommunity [sic]." In a caption, @flowerfeminist also wrote:

Libfems [liberal feminists] would call me an extremist, a racist, a fascist, a[] fanatic, a transphobe[,] a homophobe, an ableist, a classist... for this because I "exclude" marginalized men from my activism (tbh [to be honest] I'm not sure if that's actually the case, I just put every man regardless of class, race, sexuality, etc. behind every woman regardless of class, race, sexuality, etc. so they're not really excluded??? IDK [I don't know]) I'll take criticism from fellow radfems though 🙏

An important part of the material-discursive practice of collective identity is establishing goals and tactics to intervene with an opposition, thus, a collective identity is always entangled with an opposition collective identity (Melucci 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992). The fear @flowerfeminist posts about, around whether they might get "kicked out of the radfemcommunity [sic]" feels intense, and provokes thinking about the effects of entangled collective becomings. Haraway (1991) writes about Katie King's critiques of fragmentations among feminists. As Haraway argues, "painful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention women) along every possible fault line has made the concept of *woman* elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's dominations of each other" (2013:155). This feels especially pressing in feminisms like Nora's, Fatima's, Amina's, and @flowerfeminist's who exclude certain women

and girls (i.e. trans, non-binary), and men from their feminism. I wonder if the intra-active siloing or echo chambers of digital feminists and feminisms make the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion particularly intense. Human/non-human bodies are becoming so closely and entwined with other bodies that are like them, which makes it risky for feminists like @flowerfeminist who might become untangled from the collective and more vulnerable to hostility from the opposition.

Given my understanding of the intra-activity of technology as co-creating the possibilities for collective identity (see also Milan 2015), I was curious about whether girls felt they were part of a digital feminist community. In these conversations, participants referenced and critiqued the safety of digital timespace. From Germany, Nora wrote:

this is a good question, though I'm not entirely sure about the answer 🤔 I do think that I'm part of the feminist community on here, [on Instagram], and on Tumblr, and I feel a strong sense of community and commitment as well, however there's still a certain distance and insecurity, most likely because online spaces are unpredictable and prone to infighting [and] misunderstandings. I think it's a two-tied sword for me. And I do wish for a "closer" digital feminist community, but I'm not sure how this could happen. I think it's difficult to create a safe space in general, and it's also difficult to organize and secure long-term 😬

Like Nora, Bea also seemed to critique a material-discursive context of digital safe space. Bea, a self-identified non-binary and autistic teen in the United Kingdom, felt their intersecting identity affected their experiences with digital feminism. Bea wrote:

When you get into more neurodivergence/autism[-]oriented spaces and discuss politics, there is much more understanding and people accept that being autistic doesn't

necessarily mean you are unintelligent. Within these spaces I find it to be more accepted to talk about political topics and people don't assume you are incompetent, however, after these conversations leave the community and spread into other feminist spaces you are still often ignored and spoken down to if someone decides you disagree with them.

In Bea's story, the cultivation of community is a relational timespacemattering. The timespacemattering of "autism-oriented spaces" propels a different becoming for Bea compared to the timespacemattering of "other feminist spaces." Bea's body is differentially marked in each timespacemattering, with effects for how they become feminist.

The notion of digital safe space has been challenged. For example, Clark-Parsons (2018) argues that digital safety and safe space are mediated relations between users and platforms, and thus, advocates for thinking about what relations enable safer digital spaces. As I wrote about in the previous chapter on the intra-activity of Instagram feminism, many participants and Instagram content shared experiences with the "infighting" and "misunderstandings" Nora and Bea wrote about. While opposition is a key component of the unfolding of collective identity (Melucci 1989; Tilly 2003, 2005; Taylor and Whittier 1992), I wonder what this type of hostility does for the unfolding of online/offline feminism and feminists. How does the relational becoming of Instagram-feminist co-create boundaries and distance? Haraway (1991:156) argues that the divisions between feminisms and feminists has the tendency to split the ongoing history of the feminist movement into fragments of feminists and feminisms, "so it appears to be an ideological struggle among coherent types persisting over time, especially those typical units called radical, liberal, and socialist-feminist." Haraway (1991) advocates for a turn towards cyborg feminist politics that critiques the myth of unity among "us" and "we," and seeks for a politics that embraces impartiality, and incomplete becomings, a point I elaborate now.

It was curious to hear participants' thoughts about the boundaries between different feminists and feminisms on Instagram. Some of these messy thoughts I think, are boundary-marking practices which were connected to their ambivalence about what feminism is and whether they are a particular type of feminist. In our pair interview with Safa, Jacinta argued that "feminism like started off from like the same concept, equal opportunity [...] quote unquote 'it's a man's world,' right?" But then she argued, that something that is "very prevalent" among different feminists and feminisms on Instagram is "people who identify with like these different subgroups, they often get, I want to say triggered, but like, angry or like they take it personally when someone doesn't like align with all of their values exactly." Jacinta clarified that is not suggesting "you can't have your disagreements" and she understands that feminism is a "personal thing," but she feels that:

it's become a lot more divided than unified. [...] I feel like there's almost like a battle between like the types of feminism. You know, like what type of activists you have to be. So it was really hard for me to come up with like [...] something that unifies all of us, because I feel like it's more of like a competition, of like which one's right. And people start bringing like, you know, they're a lot more toxic people online like who are [...] out there to bash feminism [...] any form of it. So it's kind of hard to like identify as one or like say we all have something in common.

Safa agreed with Jacinta, but added:

you want to be the right sort of description of feminism, and when somebody is questioning you, maybe it's because we don't know the right answer, we're not sure like how we're defined, like [how we are] differentiating ourselves from other groups. But

that kind of feels like an attack to us because we're like 'why are you questioning it by asking the group?' or whatever.

It is curious to see Jacinta and Safa struggle to identify something, whether a belief, or a “look” or aesthetic that unifies digital feminism. Safa also speaks to the stakes of being “right” about feminism on Instagram. In our focus group, Ally, Gwen, and Ava were critical of “extreme feminists” who they argued can undercut or “invalidate” the feminist movement. In our interview, Poppy similarly argued that “a lot of people feel like they're being confronted, when that's not really the aim [of digital feminism] [...] a lot of people just think it's some sort of like conversion kind of thing.”

A diffractive reading of these stories, I argue, illuminates how the intra-active becoming of Instagram and feminism are entangled. It seems reasonable to suggest that the intra-activity of Instagram co-creates the hostility and divisiveness between different feminisms, and the pressure to “do it right” or be the “right” kind of feminist collective, as Safa explains. It is important to note that Instagram users will sometimes post evocative or controversial content in attempt to get people to engage with the Post in comments or reposts, a technique some refer to as “rage baiting” (Fox 2024). Engagement with content, whether supportive or not, is algorithmically rewarded. So in some ways, the timespacemattering of Instagram propels division through its algorithmic structure which encourages engagement and reach, and links similar bodies through its algorithmic timeline, “suggested” content and accounts, and through hashtags. Feminist bodies and content might attempt to become differently through human-technology relations that are evocative or divisive to diffract and iterate outside of an echo chamber. Again, underscoring the mutual co-constitution of technologies like Instagram and the becoming of feminist collective identities.

While Amina did feel part of a feminist community online, she clarified however, that she “can’t always agree with everyone and their beliefs but at the end of the day, all of my beliefs are pro-woman.” Describing the community, Amina said:

we do argue about what things some people consider to be pro-woman but actually aren’t.

I wish women who argue in feminist spaces saved the energy they use on imperfect feminists who are learning and trying[,] on males instead. We still all need to bond just based on the fact that we’re all female and our oppressors are male. Although some disagree with that too[,] when it’s obvious. But yeah, I do consider myself to be part of the feminist community online.

While entangled with content and interview data in analysis, I found myself thinking about Haraway’s vision for a cyborg feminist project. Haraway (1991) critiques the creation of an “us” in feminist politics, including essentialist framings of women as having a unified experience. Haraway (1991) argues that the “we” or “us” that emerges from gender, race, or class consciousness is a result of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. Haraway (1991:157) states “cyborg feminists have to argue that ‘we’ do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole.” I do not think that Haraway (1991) is opposed to collective identity, but urges a critical approach that recognizes the social, political, and historical contexts that differentiate collectives, and the construction of Other. Haraway’s embrace of partial, ironic, messy, and entangled identities and becomings might allow feminists to engage in a digital feminism which Poppy and Amina seem to desire. One that is less hostile, confrontational, or worried about demarking divisions between particular types of feminisms and feminists in ways that might constrain the feminist movement altogether.

Different from these kinds of critiques of digital feminist communities, Lola felt Instagram was important in the becoming of “systemic change.” Lola explained:

Instagram can’t be the solution, but it’s sometimes a means to either managing the reality or finding a way to change. So by working with [the other feminist collective], what we provide, we hope [laughs], is like a safe space that manages the reality of society that we live in as best we can, while the people we’re working with, and will be fundraising for, are trying to create a more systemic change at the root of some of like, you know [a] small portion of the problems.

I was drawn to this moment in our interview, as Lola positioned digital feminism as a “means to either managing the reality or finding a way to change.” This was a fresh perspective among interviewees, that points to the potential of digital feminism without pinning it down to a representational framing of ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ For Lola, Instagram feminism will not be the solution, but it can be helpful for bearing the reality of slower change. Instagram, I argue, is a vital and messy timespacemattering for collective feminist identity in the past-present-future of feminism.

I also want to diffract participants boundary-drawing stories and content which co-created material-discursive contexts of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ feminism, in the process of collective identity. In my digital fieldnotes, I noted a repetition of content that seemingly aimed to “myth bust” around the collective identity and aims of an opposition. For example, @feminista posted a letter to “pro lifers” which she described as “any essay about why abortion rights are essential.” Like @womanpower, @rebelgirl frequently posted carousel Posts that included mini essays on specific social issues. In one Post, @rebelgirl wrote, “the patriarchy and capitalism are inextricably linked, therefore if your goal in becoming a feminist is to just be a man’s equal in

the marketplace, keep that feminism to yourself.” @rebelgirl repeatedly shared content about feminism needing to be anti-porn, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchy, anti-colonialism, and critical of “choice.” These became through series of carousel Posts, collaborations with other activists and feminists on content, annotated tweets, and news media pieces. Similarly, @womanpower posted a mini-essay or a “guide on how to respond to pro-life talking points.”

Instagram feminist content felt at times evocatively expository, for example, @flowerfeminist wrote about “men’s rights activists’ lies,” and @feministunicorn posted a series of content about the “myth of pro-life feminism,” including “what it truly is and why it goes against the very principles of feminism.” @radecofeminist created content about “the problem with girl boss/equality feminism,” echoing arguments made by Amina and Bea in interviews. Part of this evocative feeling was again, the use of blunt critique, as well as more covert sarcasm which was echoed in comment sections of content. For example, in a Post where @flowerfeminist provides “examples of EXTREMIST beliefs in radical feminism” the caption reads “seriously, how DARE we.” These affective intensities echo Mendes et al.’s (2019) claims that digital feminism involves affective labour and affective solidarity building. In their focus on how digital feminism is (re)-presenced, they argue that affective solidarity building is not only about making digital feminism visible, but about creating urgency and commitment to feminist causes in digital space (Mendes et al. 2019), which I see as related to some of the ways rage and rage baiting illicit engagement with digital content (Fox 2024).

I was also struck by a Post created by @feministunicorn, that felt like a sarcastic critique and exposition of a prominent American anti-abortion non-profit group called “Students For Life.” The carousel Post had pink and purple backgrounds, with screenshots of Tweets and comments on each slide. The @feministunicorn Instagram handle was in the top corner of each

slide, and the Twitter user's Instagram handle who was responding to the "Students For Life" Twitter account was also included on each slide. Again, this piece of content is a constellation of multiple human and non-human bodies, and timespaces. On the first slide, @feministunicorn wrote "students for life have ~for far too long~ tried to deny theirs and the "pro-life's" communities connection to wyte [white] supremacy ... @redacted put them in their place, and MADE it make sense 🙌." @feministunicorn repeatedly reposted content, including from particular Instagram and TikTok users. I wonder if this reposting and platforming of specific digital activists works to create a leader or hierarchy in a collective? Again, this piece of content does something for the collective identity process of digital feminists, specifically those organizing around abortion access. But it is not just the words of the post that enact force. The material-discursive context of the emoji 🙌 has agentive force. The 🙌 emoji is often used by Internet users, especially younger ones, to convey sass, sarcasm, disinterest, or a state of being unbothered. Thus, it might be part of a specific performativity of digital girl and girlhood.

I was also curious about the shifting boundaries that were reconfigured in content and in interviews around feminism in the "West" and feminism in the "East." In one example of Instagram content, @radecofeminist an Instagram account based in Asia, wrote:

Feminism is also not an exclusive women's rights movement in Pakistan. Majority of us are equality feminists, not well aware about the systemic patriarchal violence against women and that women are an oppressed class. But this equality feminism is not like the one in the West, where women are called dehumanizing terms like birthers and menstruators. Instead[,] this feminism is merciful enough to include all other rights movements such as secularism, anti-classism, anti-fascism, anti-religious extremism etc.

Here, @radecofeminist (re)configures boundaries between “us” – “equality feminists” in Pakistan, and “them” – “equality feminists” in the West. This reminds me that feminism, even when re-presented as a particular kind like “equality feminism” is not just one thing. It is multiple, becoming differently in particular timespacematterings (Barad 2007). Collective feminist identities thus need to be understood as becoming within particular timespacematterings, rather than fixed or consistent across time or place.

In our Zoom interview, Lola talked about a “difficult conversation” she had with her friend, who is a woman of colour, as a differentiating moment for the collective identity of the collective she was part of in Ireland. Lola said that her friend approached her and said, “I know that you’ve got like you, and your group support [feminism], but it sometimes, it feels like the actions you take are more sort of pushed for when it’s something you can directly relate to. And I would appreciate, you know, like more effort being put into [racism too].” Re-turning (Barad 2014) this conversation, Lola shared:

The group of us [who organize the collective] is four white cis-women. Obviously we try and we like work as much as we can [to] collaborate with like people of colour, and like are trying to make what we’re doing as intersectional as possible, because it’s not feminism if it’s not intersectional. But like that conversation, that was obviously really difficult. And [we] have obviously like since, we’ve taken steps to try to make work on that. But I think that was a conversation that was massively aided by the relationship that we’re run through our like group outside of [the collective], I mean, like our group of friends.

I understand this conversation between Lola and her friend as a diffraction pattern that affected the iterative becoming of the collective and its collective identity. In another moment, on their

Instagram account, the collective posted an illustration of a new logo as the cover photo of a carousel-style main Post, and wrote in the caption in that the collective was changing their name to be more gender inclusive following a conversation in their group chat. Taken together, these diffractions underscore that collective feminist identity becomings are not linear or easily anticipated, instead, entanglements with bodies, timespaces, and material-discursive contexts like race, racism, and gender, diffract anew (Barad 2014).

Becoming Girl/Women 'We'

While I discussed the entangled becomings of girl and feminist in chapter three, here, I want to narrow in on some wondrous moments that underscore the entangled processes of collective girl, activist, and feminist identity. For Crystal Waters and Juliette, there seemed to be a shared sense of empowerment and empathy that co-created a “we-ness” among girls and women, affecting their becoming feminist or political. In a glowing moment in our interview, Juliette shared:

Okay, I think because I’m a girl [...] I think I have this level of empathy that comes with being a girl, I think like with women and girls there is like this shared experience of girlhood and it’s [...] I’ve experienced things that I don’t think like a man or a boy has necessarily experienced the exact same way, right? And I think I can relate to a lot of women based on some of those experiences, so I think it creates this this kind of layer or buffer of like empathy that I have and that like allows me to see [...] to really step into other people’s shoes a little bit more.

I was hooked by Juliette’s assertion that there is a “shared experience of girlhood,” and asked what she thought it was about being a girl that affected empathy. Juliette replied:

I think almost every single woman has experienced sexism (Lindsay: yeah) of like a patriarchal society. But not only that [...] many women are not respected in their specific [career or professional] fields, and some women in other countries have even worse [experiences] [...] And I think altogether like it kind of ties like a string for all women to be able to say ‘oh, maybe I haven’t experienced this, but I have experienced this’ and it’s all under like the same overarching oppression [...] and having shared experiences and being able to empathize and relate with one another on those experiences really ties each of us together [...] Even though each of our perspectives are different, there’s still the womanhood [and] girlhood that ties us together, if that makes sense.

Similarly, Esti said:

we’re the ones that are experiencing it front on, like even if it’s like another female that’s experiencing that misogyny and not me, it’s like kind of the same thing because like we’re all females, right? Like, I don’t know, maybe someone might not do it to me, but like I know that it can happen to me.

The process of becoming collective girl/woman identity also included Instagram content that provoked the audience to think about how sexual and gender-based violence “can happen to any of us,” as @feminista argued in one example.

Not only do Juliette’s and Esti’s stories illuminate the ways that girl and girlhood traverse across fleshy human bodies, but also as material-discursive phenomena they iterative unfold in timespacematterings including of sexism and patriarchy, becoming a “we.” Becoming girl and becoming feminist are entangled collective identities. Some girls, like Nora and Farah argued that it was important for girls and women to develop “class consciousness” to better meet feminism’s goals. Importantly though, this becoming of a girl “we” was differentiated across

feminisms and feminists. For example, radical and root feminists on Instagram and in interviews excluded trans and gender queer women and girls from the collective “we” they co-created.

While I previously discussed the affective force of digital trends of girlhood for co-constituting experiences and meaning of girlhood, here I want to re-turn (Barad 2014) these arguments to consider their force in the unfolding of collective girl identity. In the follow-up pair interview and focus groups, we talked at-length about these digital trends. On trends of girl and girlhood, Ally said, “I personally love it [...] I think it’s like a really nice like solidarity [...] we all go through the same thing [...] so we all relate to the same thing. So saying like girl math, or girl summer, or like hot girl summer, or whatever [...] I like it.” Ava agreed with Gwen’s feeling that these kinds of trends are “cute” and “like we’re all like one pact [...] [who] all kind of experience the same things” but she also worried that it “allows space for negative stereotypes to then come in.” Ava added:

it’s one of the only trends that you see started by women for empowering other women [...] cause a lot of girls go against each other on social media [...] so I feel like that it’s like one of the really good things about it. But I was also going to say that it’s like, we’re providing stereotypes and opportunities for like the others to be like [...] sexist towards women [...] Because you find it as a joke, like how our math, girl math, makes no sense, and at the same time, like so many men are going to [...] use that against us. Even though we think it’s funny, they’re gonna just see that as like another weakness. But I think it’s like, I like it more than I hate it, definitely, because it’s not our fault that other people want to be sexist. We’re just empowering each other and that’s all that matters.

Collective girl identity is multiple, and is remade in configurations of girls, technologies, memes, viral audio bites, hashtags, and digital content. While many of the girls I spoke to applaud these

digital trends of girlhood, or saw them as funny or relatable, others like Gwen and Ava were cautious about what they could become. The diffusion of digital girlhood as a “we” when it is understood as remade in entanglements of timespacematterings (Barad 2007) where material things enact force and humans are not the sole actors, means that it can become unruly with effects.

In another wondrous moment, I was captivated by two of @proudprochoice’s Instagram Stories about Jojo Siwa and the “not like other girls” meme. As Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen (2025) explain in the context of gamer girls, and Janckila (2019) writes about in the context of Taylor Swift fandom, “not like other girls” is a meme and stereotype which differentiates girls and “other girls.” “Other girls” are framed as “annoying, basic, and unlikeable” (Janckila 2019:90), and are scrutinized for their interest in and enthusiasm about hegemonically feminine things. The meme encourages a girl and girlhood that is different from “other girls” who are unlikeable, but not too different (Janckila 2019). In the series of @proudprochoice’s Story Posts, the first included a screenshot of a Tumblr Post that read “jojo siwa is like, her style is not my taste at all[,] but as soon as other people call it annoying im [sic] like actually you’re wrong[,] she’s an icon and a legend.” The next Instagram Story was a pink background with blue text that read, in part:

I think the main reason I resented her is kinda[,] as the original post said[,] the extremely girly and feminine aesthetic she has[.] Not sure if I talked about this before, but I also did have a (thankfully all internal, my gosh thank frick) “not like other girls” mindset that I am still (obviously) working on dismantling.

Towards then end of the text, @proudprochoice typed, “I love how this post started out as “defend Jojo Siwa as she is an icon” and evolved into “here’s where I fuqed [sic] up so

reexamine your biases to be a better human” I love running this page :)” I was drawn to this series of content because it was indicative of an always collective process of content creation, as content is spread, reposted, and modified by Instagram users, challenging a framing of individual digital activism (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Millan and Halleck 2013). I was also curious about the re-production and challenging of the “not like other girls” meme that enacts force in the collective identity of digital girlhood. “Not like other girls” is material-discursive becoming through constellations of bodies, content, hashtags, and audio which demark “girls” from “other girls.” As @proudprochoice writes, and as Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen (2025) argue, this meme is mutually constitutive of patriarchy and internalized misogyny.

Reading this data together, digital girl collective identity becomes through what Juliette called a “shared experience of girlhood,” and through trends and memes of digital girlhood which mark “girls” and “other girls,” wherein the latter are framed as “basic,” unlikeable, and thus, not aspirational (Janckila 2019; Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen 2025). Digital girl collective identity, thus, is not a “thing” (Melucci 1989), rather an entangled, human/non-human unfolding that becomes through digital stories, relations, and boundary-making practices (Tilly 2003) in the intra-activity of Instagram. Instagram’s platform affordances, such as likes, hashtags, reposting, and comments, as well as content like memes, viral trends, photos, and written text, enact force in differentiating collectives of “girls” and “other girls” (Janckila 2019; Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen 2025). While I find Juliette’s arguments compelling for thinking about solidarity building among girls with shared experiences of girlhood, Haraway’s (1991, 1992) cyborg and cyborg feminism can offer critique. Haraway (1991) argues that “there is nothing about being ‘female’ that naturally binds women.” For Haraway (1991:146-147), “a theory and practice of sisterhood” must not simply locate experience within “a system of sexual difference [...]

between coherent categories called women and men” as this downplays power relations and differences within. More sufficient theorizing about gender requires “historicizing the categories of sex, flesh, body, biology, race, and nature” such that the sex-gender system is understood in contextual times and places as “articulated, differentiated, accountable, located and consequential theories of embodiment” (Haraway 1991:148).

How then, does the intra-active, entangled unfolding of Instagram and collective girl identity articulate and embody relations of power? In the context of collective identity, I think Haraway is urging us to think about how relations of power necessitate processes of collective identity, but also the ironies of developing a sense of “we” while becoming within systems which seek to reduce, essentialize, and homogenize bodies. The hope of collective identity might be in tuning into its unruly, unfinished, and ironic becomings, and the possibilities for them to diffract anew. A final point I elaborate below.

Towards Cyborg Feminism

Taken together-apart (Barad 2007, 2014), my diffractive reading has proposed rethinking about the always collective nature of girls’ Instagram feminism as multiple human and non-human bodies, timespaces, and material-discursive contexts co-create its becoming. Individual pieces of digital feminist content are never neatly contained on an Instagram account as they continue to become with the algorithms of Instagram that filter, rank, and categorize it, and as it traverses timespace as others comment, like, repost, and remix it. My diffractive reading in this chapter has narrowed in on one of my most wondrous “findings” of my project – feminist Instagram accounts co-created by communities of girls and young women. These collective feminist Instagram accounts trouble framings of digital activism as individualized (Bennett and Segerberg 2013), as girls and young women from different timespaces work together, sometimes

on the same Instagram account, to mobilize digital feminism. As I wrote in the section on collective identity, girls' Instagram feminism is one intra-acting part in an unfolding of a feminist "we," that marked boundaries around particular feminists and feminisms, young people, women, and girls. There were some sticky moments in my diffractive reading, where posthuman feminism and participants' stories seem incongruent, for example, when girls reproduced binary framings of online and offline feminism, centred humans as agentic and acting on their own, and when they represented taxonomies of feminism and feminists (Haraway 1991).

I have felt drawn towards Haraway's cyborg and cyborg feminists throughout in my diffractive analysis. I wonder what it might do for understanding the messy, exciting, and entangled becoming of girls' Instagram feminism. In this final section, I think with Haraway's cyborg (1991, 2016) to play with their diffractive possibilities in theorizing girls' digital feminism.

For Haraway, the cyborg is both "imagination and material reality" (1991:150), is ironic, partial, situated, and a "mapping [of] our social and bodily reality" (1991:150). Rather than a machine or human-machine hybrid, a cyborg is an "imploded entit[y]" or mapping of messy, situated relations and their effects (Haraway 2016). A cyborg is a body, but a body that resists dualisms of human/machine, animal/human, and human/technology (Haraway 1991). As Haraway (1991:163) explains, "the cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code." Importantly though, the cyborg is not merely a machine or an "*it* to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment [...] we are they" (Haraway 1991:180).

A turn towards cyborg feminism imagines the entangled, relational becoming of collective feminist identities and artifacts of feminism, like Instagram content, not as human or non-human, or as a hybrid form of online/offline or human/non-human feminism, but as imagination and reality, as oppositional, partial, ironic, and as products of capitalist and patriarchal violence (Haraway 1991, 2016). Capitalist and patriarchal violence are intra-acting forces, including through relations of gender and racial inequality, as they become with technologies like Instagram's algorithms, community guidelines, shadow bans, and the capitalist topology of Instagram's Meta. Girls' Instagram feminism, when understood as cyborg feminism is an "imploded entit[y]" (Haraway 2016), a snapshot of timespacematterings, where human and non-human bodies, online/offline timespaces, and material-discursive contexts collide to shape its form and potentiality. Rather than evaluating the success or lack thereof, of girls' Instagram feminism, or trying to pin down what it means, Haraway's cyborg and cyborg feminism (1991, 2016) helps us to think about what it is doing, and how this doing is entangled within a network of humans, non-humans, and intra-actions (Barad 2007) of power and marginalization.

Haraway also resists the naturalization of unity implied in the evoking of a "we," which I argue, is fruitful for reimagining collective feminist identities. As participants shared, girls' digital feminism is co-created within a broader material-discursive digital culture where divisive politics and boundaries of inclusion/exclusion are algorithmically rewarded. But with Haraway, we can open up this "we," knowing that its boundaries are porous and unsteady, as "no construction is whole" (1991:157). This might help us resist antagonistic or hostile feminisms, and recognize mutual, entangled becomings and response-abilities (Barad 2007; Haraway 2016) within past-present-future (Barad 2017) feminisms. Turning towards an understanding of Instagram feminism as cyborg feminism tunes into difference, understanding that "some

differences are playful [and] some are poles of world historical systems of domination” (Haraway 1991:161). But a move towards Instagram cyborg feminism does not worry about or strive for “perfect communication” but celebrates “noise and pollution” as vital to its cyborg, relational becoming (Haraway 1991). In this way, cyborg Instagram feminism is multiple, relational, and an embodied, material-discursive cartography of individual-collective-human-machine feminist becomings.

Chapter Six: In/conclusions

I set out to immerse myself in girls' Instagram feminism to understand what it looks like, girls' meanings and experiences of it, and the material-discursive practices of girl, feminist, and feminist girl collective identities. Through a research entanglement that includes the Instagram account I created for this dissertation, @lindsaysresearch, I spent around eight months scrolling, following, and saving feminist content created by girls' and young women, or collectives of them, aged 15-23. I wrote digital fieldnotes in a collection of handwritten notebooks throughout this time, when I would scroll and entangle with content in a less structured way, mirroring a more leisurely engagement with Instagram. I also engaged in a more careful analysis of 26 accounts and around 270 pieces of Instagram content. In these encounters, I considered the form of the content, what it looked like, framings of feminist, girl, and girlhood, as well as the use of technologies like hashtags, emojis, and memes, and what they were doing for the co-creation of feminisms and feminists.

The research entanglement of my dissertation also included 27 digital interviews, through Zoom, email, or Instagram direct messages with the girls and young women “behind” the Instagram accounts in my sample, and two follow-up Zoom focus groups with some of the interviewees. Participants lived in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Pakistan, and Jamaica at the times of our interviews, and had varied relations to girl, girlhood, and feminism. Through the entwined chapters in this dissertation, my diffractive reading has aimed to untangle the material-discursive forces that co-create girls' experiences and meanings of Instagram feminism and collective feminist identities.

I have sought to understand various interconnected questions, including: What is it like to grow up as a girl into/with Instagram feminism? What and who is “girl” on Instagram? What and

who is feminist or feminism on Instagram? Is girls' Instagram feminism about individual actors and identity, or collectives, collective action, and collective identity? I attempted to weave these various questions into one key research question: *What material-discursive forces shape how girls and young women experience and reflect on feminist activism and feminist collective identities on Instagram?*

Like Ellingson and Sotirin (2020), I trouble stark beginnings or endings of research projects, recognizing that parts of this dissertation research entanglement will seep into the research-to-come, but here, I muse about some in/conclusions as they are now. I review and grapple with the arguments of my diffractive reading, discuss the contribution of these arguments for the existing literature on girls' digital activism and collective identity, and detail the project's potentials and pitfalls.

In three interconnected analysis chapters, I iteratively read my digital fieldnotes from Instagram content analysis, interview and focus groups transcripts, and my research diaries with and through the theorizing of Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna Haraway. By drawing various mind-maps or cartographies of my diffractive readings, I narrowed in on three clusters of the data that I was most affected by: becoming girl-becoming feminist, the intra-activity of Instagram feminism, and cyborg feminism.

In chapter three, I write about the intra-active, relational becoming of girl and feminist identities. I argue that girl and feminist identities are posthuman performativities (Barad 2003), that are multiple, dynamic, and co-constitutive of material-discursive entanglements. In this chapter, I diffract participants' varied meanings and experiences of girl and girlhood. Despite responding to an invitation to participate in a research project on girls' Instagram feminism, some participants did not enthusiastically self-identify as girls. I underscore how a feminist posthuman

approach accounts for the multiple ways girl and girlhood are felt (Pomerantz 2024) and re-written through collisions between human and non-human bodies like the 2023 Barbie film, as well as memes and trends of “girlboss,” “girl dinner,” “girl math,” and “gorgeous girls.” For example, while Frankie was buzzing about her celebration of being a girl, in what she felt was “the year of the girl,” she also explained *girling* almost as a diss, wherein her friend group will use “girling out” to signal that someone needs to calm down. Others, like Essa, did not see girl or girlhood as significant to their life experiences, including on Instagram or with feminism. Rather, Essa was quite critical of the weight that some attach to being a girl.

Some interviewees held more tightly onto age-based or developmental framings of girl and girlhood, feeling like they were identities and experiences that they had grown out of. But these age-based distinctions of girl and girlhood became complicated in their messy and ironic celebration and relation to trends of digital girlhood like “girl dinner.” Girl and girlhood are not things that just are, they become through specific material-discursive practices, wherein bodies, materialities, times, and spaces co-create the boundaries of girl and girlhood. In my diffractions with the data, I argue that the intra-active becoming of girl and girlhood are co-constitutive of material-discursive contexts of age, generation, social class, race, and religion, all of which become in specific timespacematterings (Barad 2007). I decentre individual girls as agentic actors to illustrate how various things and meanings beyond girls themselves affect boundaries and performances of girl and girlhood.

In chapter three, I also write about shifting boundaries and practices of feminist identity. Feminist identity was not fixed or neatly re-presented in the Instagram content I analysed, or in my conversations with the girls. Feminist was also a posthuman performativity (Barad 2003), intertwined with and co-constituting the intra-activity of girl and girlhood. For example, Amina,

one of the self-identified radical feminists I spoke to, was quite clear about how her feminism and feminist identity were affected by her experiences as a girl in Pakistan. For Amina, being a radical feminist entailed a particular understanding of girl and girlhood as connected to biological essentialism. In another instances, both Safa and Farah shared that they felt their feminism had to be different because of their experiences as Muslim girls who wear hijabs. Some participants, like Ava, Ally, and Juliette, felt that there was something about being a girl and growing up within their families that meant they should be feminist, and felt being a girl was synonymous with being feminist.

Interestingly though, while feminist was embraced by some participants as a seemingly common-sense identity for girls, many of their stories were much messier. For example, while many participants told me that they would self-identify as feminist, they added that they would not necessarily be overt about that self identification, arguing their actions should be indicative enough of their feminist beliefs. I was surprised by the way that some participants seemed to embrace an ambivalence towards a feminist identity, connected to what Ringrose and Renold (2016) argue around feminism having a bad affect, as well as fears about being labelled a feminist killjoy (Ahmed 2010) or undesirable girl subject. Following Polletta's (2006) conceptualizations of ambivalence and ambiguity in movements' storytelling, I see this ambivalence around feminism and feminist identities as generative. Ambivalence might encourage us to resist representational understandings of feminisms and feminists. By turning towards the ironic and complex relations between feminists and feminisms, and girls' meanings of them, we can recognize feminisms and feminists as entangled posthuman performativities, rather than phenomena that are neatly contained. In doing so, we might see ambivalence as opportunity for feminisms and feminists to diffract anew. Like becoming girl, feminist is a

becoming that is not neatly contained in girls' individual human bodies. Rather girls and Instagram content become feminist in particular timespacematterings (Barad 2007), including through the co-creation and remix of "I'm just a girl" memes, emojis, and material-discursive contexts like age, race, disability, gender, sexuality, and can-do girlhood (Harris 2004). My diffractive reading in chapter three underscores multiple feminist figurations in transcripts and Instagram content, as cool, uncool, feminine, unfeminine, bimbo, unlikeable, extreme, and anti-men. As I elaborate in chapter five around collective identity, these feminist figurations were relationally created with an opposition.

In chapter four, I disentangle the intra-activity of Instagram feminism, to map the force of technologies, bodies, and timespaces for how it unfolds. I argue that Instagram feminism is a multiplicity that is remade through collisions between girls' bodies, technologies like algorithms, hashtags, memes, and emojis, and material-discursive contexts like age, gender, activism/slacktivism, and online/offline. I position Instagram as an entangled phenomenon, rather than a pre-existing thing, that enacts force for constraining or enabling particular feminists and feminism, including for example, through practices of shadow banning. Rather than merely a social media platform that is experienced on smartphones or tablets, I position Instagram as a phenomenon that becomes through an entanglement of many human bodies (e.g., coders, users, investors, resource extractors), non-human bodies (e.g., data, source code, content, phones, fibre optic cables, APIs), and timespaces (Barad 2007) (e.g., "real-time," viral, server farms). The affordances of Instagram, including the Story and Reel features were embraced by participants for their temporality and reach, illustrating the intra-active becoming of Instagram and Instagram feminism.

In line with my arguments around the becoming of girl and feminist identity, Instagram feminism is not one thing. Instagram content, and interview and focus group conversations were sites of debate and remaking the boundaries of feminisms. These boundaries of feminism were reconfigured through entanglements, for example, in linktrees that direct Instagram users to different websites or resources, in Instagram captions that offer “how-to” information about feminism or becoming feminist, and in screenshots of other digital artifacts that are called out, critiqued, and used as non-examples of particular feminisms. Interview and focus group participants were critical of what they called “extreme” feminists, as well as popular, choice, and liberal feminism. They used these oppositions to demark boundaries of their feminism. Participants had complicated feelings about the multiplicity of feminism. Many worried about there being too many feminisms as well as competitions and in-fighting between feminists, which they saw as counter to the aims of feminist movements.

In addition to mapping the multiple becomings of Instagram feminism and their boundaries, in chapter four I write about the material-discursive practices of Instagram feminism. I muse about the doings of infographics and aesthetics, short essays in carousel format Instagram Posts, and the perceived ephemerality of Instagram Stories. I consider the effects of Instagram for the co-creation of different digital feminist performativities as cohesively branded and professionalized, or as eclectic, imperfect, or “unaesthetic” content. Participants debated the efficacy of Instagram feminism. For example, Juliette felt Instagram feminism did not really do anything beside value signalling, and Gwen positioned it as “bad PR” for the menstrual activist collective she was part of. I also write at-length about the force of affordances like Instagram likes, views, and shares which co-create feminist possibilities. For example, as Ava shared, it can feel riskier to post feminism on an Instagram Story that might get 300 views. Relatedly, Essa told

me that she does not post feminist content on her personal Instagram account because she is worried about not getting enough likes or shares. By disentangling these material-discursive practices, I aimed to highlight the impossibility of online/offline binaries and discourses of activism and slacktivism, as multiple timespaces become messily and at-once in girls' Instagram feminism.

Chapter five, the final analysis chapter of this project, discusses one of my most exciting findings – collectively organized and created Instagram accounts. I write about the material-discursive practices of digital feminism that are made by many girls and posted to one Instagram account. I argue that these collectively run Instagram accounts trouble the framing of digital activism as increasingly individualized, as girls plan, create, and remix content in group chats, Zoom meetings, and in local communities, which they share and archive on Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok. I was particularly curious about my conversations with girls who were part of these collectively run Instagram accounts, specifically their reflections on how the content creation unfolds, and their meanings and experiences of the community. Echoing findings from Yuen and Tang (2021), these collectively organized Instagram accounts overwhelmingly embraced hierarchy and structure, despite common assumptions that networked movements are more horizontally organized. For example, interviewees talked about the various branches of the Instagram collective, which they often framed as an organization or non-profit because of their offline work, and the ways that members applied to specific positions with distinct roles.

Much like the boundaries of feminism I write about in chapter four, in chapter five, I trace patterns of difference which demark boundaries of “us” and “them.” Through content analysis and in my interviews with girls who were part of collectively run Instagrams, I map the effects of Instagram biographical statements or taglines, logos, recurring content series, and

hashtags which work to congeal a feminist collective identity. Enfolding previous arguments, the becoming of collectives are necessarily relational, as material-discursive practices co-create “we” and “them.” What “we” become is entangled with what “they” (read: opposition) become. I wondered about the possibilities for an alternative understanding of digital feminism that does not strive for cohesive representation, or binary evaluations. I re-turn (Barad 2014) Haraway’s (1991) cyborg and cyborg politics to argue that Instagram feminism is neither online or offline, individual or collective, rather both, and perhaps something more. I advocate for a rethinking of girls’ digital feminism away from human subject centred approaches, towards mapping the “noise” and “pollution” among multiple interconnected human and non-human bodies and feminist becomings in timespaces. A cyborg is not a thing, but a cartography of alternative becomings (Haraway 1991). Cyborg Instagram feminism is multiple, relational, and an embodied, embedded, and material-discursive cartography of individual-collective, human-machine feminist becomings.

Diffraction The Arguments Together-Apart

In this section, I diffract the various arguments throughout my dissertation in attempt to congeal my overarching argument and response to my research question. I diffract these arguments, as Barad (2014:168) would say, together-apart, enacting an agential cut which “do[es] not produce absolute separations but rather cut together-apart” in one move. I do not aim to produce a unitary argument, as if there ever is one, but to engage in a process of differentiating (Barad 2014), to better understand what the arguments are doing for understandings of girls’ Instagram feminism and collective feminist identities.

My diffractive reading highlights that girls’ Instagram feminism is complicated and messy. Pushing beyond approaches to digital activism which emphasize discourse (e.g.,

Dejmanee 2018; Garcia and Vemuri 2017; Herrero-Diz and Ramos-Serrano 2018; Jiménez 2016; Keller 2016; Kim and Ringrose 2018) or mobilize humanist and individualizing understandings of girls and activism (e.g., Bent 2020; Horton 2018; Taft 2020), I attend to the intra-actions and relations between human and non-human bodies that co-create girls' Instagram feminism. My posthuman feminist, diffractive analysis adds to a growing body of new materialist, posthuman, and affect approaches to girls' and young women's activism (e.g., Coffey and Kanai 2023; Mendes et al. 2019; Renold 2018; Sheppard and Raby 2022). My work illustrates that girls' Instagram feminism is a multiplicity that is reconfigured in entanglements, where material-discursive contexts such as gender, age, feminism, girlhood, and technologies constrain and enable particular possibilities. Girls' Instagram feminism is thus co-created by forces beyond individual girls themselves. Girls are never acting on their own, rather, their Instagram feminism becomes through material-discursive entanglements that produce messy agencies (Barad 2007) which constrain and enable particular possibilities. In these entanglements, human and non-human bodies are marked by intra-actions of power and marginalization, with effects for which bodies and which Instagram content become girl or feminist. While the material-discursive practices of digital feminism are messy and dynamic in specific timespace-matterings, so too are girls' experiences and meanings of them.

As evidenced in my extensive digital fieldwork and in my conversations with girls, there are many digital feminisms proliferating on Instagram, with effects. Girls and Instagram feminist content seem to respond to this multiplicity of feminisms and feminists in some notable ways. First, by developing an ambivalence around feminism, wherein they see the potential in critiquing patriarchy and misogyny in their everyday lives, but also through nuanced and impressive structural critique. Alongside this intervention though, girls told me that the spread or

branching out of feminism is risky, because it creates competition between different feminisms and feminists, and certain “extreme” or “liberal” feminists are problematic for the broader feminist movement. Second, girls respond to the multiplicity of digital feminism by demarking boundaries between “desirable” and “productive,” and “undesirable” and “problematic” feminisms and feminists, through processes of collective identity. These processes of feminist collective identity cultivate a sense of “we-ness” (Melucci 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003) among particular networked communities of feminist girls online/offline, through practices of calling-out, myth-busting, and countering oppositional frames. Instagram, thus, might be a submerged network or cultural laboratory (Melucci 1989; Mueller 1994) of collective identity practices, where girls and Instagram content intra-actively co-create the stories, boundaries, and relations (Tilly 2003) of girls and feminists like “them,” demarking themselves from “other girls” (Janckila 2019; Ruotsalainen and Meriläinen 2025) or feminists they see as undesirable. Another response to the multiplicity of feminism is what I might call a *non-feminist* feminist. This posthuman performativity of *non-feminist* feminist involves girls engaging in feminist activism in multiple timespaces, but distancing themselves from a feminist identity in response to their ambivalence around what feminism is or has become, its concerning effects for their organizing efforts, and the bad affect of claiming a feminist identity (see also Ringrose and Ringrose 2016).

Of course, I am not suggesting a prescriptive or representational response, rather offer these three interventions to the multiplicity of digital feminism as they became through the data of my project. Further, these responses to the multiplicity of feminisms on Instagram are not products of girls’ agency as if they are autonomous, individualized liberal human subjects. Instead, as I write in this dissertation, they become through messy agency that is the product and

result of ongoing reconfigurations among bodies, spaces, times, materialities, and discourses in the unfolding of digital feminism (Barad 2007).

I hope that it has become clear throughout the chapters of this dissertation that I advocate for an understanding of girls' digital feminism that recognizes it as a material-discursive practice of identity work, community, and collective action. I want to re-emphasize here, the vitality of the collective, transnational organizing among girls and young women across Instagram accounts in what Cotter (2019) explains as engagement pods. But more so, in my dissertation I learned that girls across cities, provinces, states, and continents are organizing, creating, and mobilizing digital feminism together-apart (Barad 2014) on one collectively run Instagram account. As girls told me in interviews, these accounts provided them with a feminist community that was missing in their local geographies, but also an opportunity to learn about and organize around social and political topics that were important to them. These examples and girls' compelling stories about them, challenge the overdone rhetoric of digital activism as increasingly individualized (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Cabrera et al. 2017; Milan and Halleck 2013). These moments of collective organizing and feminist action are not utopias, though. I was surprised by the ways that girls embraced hierarchical structure and decision-making, and the force of technologies for propelling and naturalizing these organizational structures in ways that counter the collective, horizontal mobilization embraced by past-present-future feminisms. As others have argued, we must resist conceptualizations of digital activism as either purely oppressive or liberatory (Mahoney 2022; Moksnes Barbala 2024; Semenzin 2022; Wajcman 2010). Instead, as I have aimed to do in this project, analyses of digital feminism should trace the relations of power and marginalization in the intra-activity of its becoming.

Through my diffractive reading, I propose a posthuman feminist reimagining of girls' digital feminism as cyborg feminism. As Haraway (1991) explains, cyborgs are not mere human-machine hybrids as if these subjects pre-exist. Instead, cyborgs are alternative political figurations that are ironic, contradictory, partial, and situated (Haraway 1991). With Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway, I argue that this type of reimagining of girls' feminist politics resists characterizing the multiplicity of digital feminisms as either good or bad, or as collective or individual, rather traces differences in the pasts-presents-futures of feminist activism. A cyborg re-thinking of digital feminism demands that we "stay[] with the trouble" (Haraway 2016:1) of the messiness of the phenomena, and seek to understand which feminists and feminisms "come to matter" (Barad 2007:152) in the co-creation of "other possible worlds" (Braidotti 2022:3). This also demands attention to the effects of which feminisms and feminists proliferate, and our intertwined part in the entanglements that co-constitute them.

Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

My dissertation intervenes in discussions of girls' digital feminism, offering unique theoretical and methodological insights. As I explain in detail in the introduction chapter of this dissertation, there is a growing body of research on girls' digital feminism (e.g., Jackson 2018; Keller 2019). While much of this literature is focused on post-structuralist or discourse-centric approaches, there are some important new materialist and posthuman contributions by scholars like Mendes et al. (2019), whom I speak most closely to in this dissertation. Specifically, I add to their argument that digital feminism is a collective activity. Many of my findings echo and deepen Mendes and colleagues' (2019) conclusions, including for example, our shared attention to intersections of power and marginalization, the emotional intensity and labour of digital activism, the potency of neoliberal discourses of girl power and can-do girlhood, as well as the

role of affordances for shaping the possibilities of digital feminism (Mendes et al. 2019). While Mendes and colleagues (2019) utilize a new materialist and affect lens, my project challenges an ontological hierarchy and focuses on the co-creation of humans, non-humans, technologies, discourses, times, and spaces of girls' digital feminism. A feminist posthuman framework offers a vital contribution to existing research on girls' digital feminism by attending to the intricate ways that humans and non-humans are intertwined in a digital world, and the force of technologies for digital identities and performativities. Such an approach, I argue, best accounts for the messy agencies of girls' digital feminism, and the intra-active becoming of girls' feminism and political, social, and digital worlds.

I also work to bridge the siloing of conversations around girls' digital activism in girlhood and youth studies, digital sociology, and social movement studies. For example, while there is research that considers the nuances of age and generation for young people's activism in youth studies (e.g., Raby and Raddon 2015; Raby and Sheppard 2021) and girlhood studies literature (e.g., Bernier and Winstanley 2021; Bent 2020; Huang and Bent 2022), this scholarship seldom engages with insights from social movement scholarship around processes of collective identity. My dissertation aims to bring these different areas of sociology into conversation with each other, to offer a robust understanding of girls' digital feminist participation.

Additionally, my diffractive reading of Barad, Haraway, and Braidotti is a strength of this project. Reading numerous works by these three theorists together-apart (Barad 2014), helps me to challenge the valorization of individual theorists, like Barad, in the Ontological Turn, and the disconnect between past-present-future feminist theories in feminist new materialism and posthumanism, critiques offered by Ahmed (2008), Cox (2018), and Hollin et al. (2017). My diffractive reading helped me to better contextualize my previous understanding of Barad, by

tracing the diffractions within their work, of Haraway's and Braidotti's earlier work. For example, my understanding of Barad's (2007) agential realism was deepened in my learning about Braidotti's (1994, 2003, 2014, 2022) becoming and Haraway's (1991, 1992, 1997) figurations, theorizations which all trouble stable boundaries in their turn towards entangled, dynamic, material-discursive unfoldings. It makes sense then, to read Haraway, Barad, and Braidotti through and with each other, to map the ways their theories are co-productions and diffractions within.

My previous understanding of Barad's agential realism and a flat ontology was particularly vital for understanding the potentials of Haraway's cyborg and cyborg politics. My diffractive reading in this project has revealed to me that many of the ways that Haraway's cyborg and cyborg politics are taken up and critiqued are missing the point (e.g., Cox 2018; DeCook 2021). Specifically, when Haraway's cyborg is positioned as a mere human-machine or human-technology hybrid, the potentials of cyborg politics are foreclosed and misrepresented. Barad's (2007) agential realism has helped me recognize the impossibility of pre-existing or stable things or bodies. Thus, positioning cyborgs as discrete human-machine or human-technology hybrids is counter to a feminist new materialist or posthuman onto-epistemology. In this project, I respond to critiques by Cox (2018) and DeCook (2021) about the limitations of cyborgs to account for relations of power, by demonstrating how cyborg is a collective posthuman performativity, wherein different bodies are marked with effects, rather than something that is neatly contained in individual human bodies in a techno-utopia.

Through this project, and in my diffractive reading with Barad and Braidotti, I have come to recognize the importance of Haraway's cyborg and cyborg politics for understandings of digital activism. Cyborgs, as feminist figurations (Haraway 1991, 1992, 1997, 2014), or nomadic

becomings (Braidotti 1994, 2014), are not mere characters or hybrids, rather are cartographies and imaginings of alternative more-than-human becomings. Such an approach is useful for thinking about girls' Instagram feminism, because it allows us to map the various timespacematterings of multiple entangled becomings – of girls, feminists, and feminisms – without reducing their mess to binaries of online/offline, individual/collective, or evaluations of 'good'/'bad.' A turn towards cyborg politics helps us to tune into the “noise” and “pollution” in material-discursive practices and becomings of feminist and feminism. Haraway's (1991) cyborg politics allows us to sift through the messy tensions and ironies of the multiplicity of feminist and feminism becomings (Braidotti 2003, 2022) in apparatuses which differentially mark bodies (Barad 2007). This is particularly valuable in a digital context, as we can trace the unfolding of different feminisms and feminists in an apparatus like Instagram which co-creates patriarchy, racism, and sexism. Haraway's cyborg (1991) helps us to stay with the mess of becoming feminism and feminist in an apparatus that is unjust, and imagine different subjectivities or more equitable relations with human and non-human kin (Haraway 2016)

Rather than categorizing feminism as something that just is, Haraway's cyborg politics allows us to better chart the messy and unfinished unfolding of digital feminisms, through entanglements that constrain and enable its possibilities. Thus, it is not that anything is cyborg feminist or feminism, but that in specific intra-actions (Barad 2007) or entanglements (Braidotti 2022), posthuman feminist performativities might become possible. This framing of digital activism is also fruitful for troubling individualized framings of activism and activist identities, as it recognizes that activist and activism, or feminist and feminism, are never neatly contained in individual human bodies. Such an approach was particularly necessary in my project, to stay with the mess of girls' ambivalence around feminism and feminist. Furthermore, Haraway's

cyborg recognizes the complicated relations between different feminisms and feminists. My use of cyborg here, articulates the always relational becoming of oppositional feminists and feminisms, with effects for what ‘feminist’ and ‘feminism’ can do. For these reasons, I advocate for deep engagement with Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway, to think about digital activism through a feminist posthuman, cyborgian framework.

Reading the three theorists together-apart (Barad 2014), was also necessary for meaningfully answering my research question, which is concerned with gender, technology, and individual/collective becomings. Building on Barad’s agential realism (2007) and Haraway’s figurations (1992, 1997), Braidotti’s posthuman feminism (2022) allowed me to consider the entangled, gendered, human/non-human becomings of girls’ Instagram feminism. Diffracting Haraway’s (1992, 1997) figurations, Braidotti offers a framework for thinking about the necessity of posthuman feminism, to trouble gendered binaries, as well as the violence of liberal humanism’s framing of Man and Woman. Braidotti and Haraway helped me to think about girls’ complicated material-discursive relations to girl and girlhood, including their ambivalence around it, through the lens of nomadic and cyborg posthuman becomings – resisting universal, individualized, neat, or stable identities.

In addition to the theoretical insights, I am proud of my methodological contributions. To my knowledge, at the time of my writing, this dissertation is the first piece of research to engage a feminist posthuman diffractive methodology with Barad, Braidotti, and Haraway to understand girls’ digital feminism. While there is much to be learned from research on girls’ digital feminism that identifies key patterns and themes in discourse and content analysis, my work attempts to “stay[] with the trouble” (Haraway 2016:1) or the messiness of the entangled human/non-human phenomena of girl, girlhood, and digital feminism. Rather than working towards analyses that

identify what the data means, I iteratively read theory and data through each other to grapple with their doing (Lenz Taguchi 2021; Mazzei 2014). Through a multi-method diffractive methodology, I was deeply entangled in the research apparatus. Unlike Big data approaches which utilize data scraping tools to quickly collate large sets of data, I embraced a slow method (Law 2004) of scrolling, saving, reading, and contemplating Instagram accounts and pieces of content. This iterative entangled becoming of technology-research-researcher-data can be understood through a data engagement model (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020), wherein data is remade rather than found. Contrasting digital scholarship that uses data scraping tools to engage with enormous amounts of digital content, my “small story” (Georgakopoulou 2017) close engagement with Instagram accounts and pieces of content, is more aligned with a feminist posthuman sociology.

My multi-method approach, which included interviews and follow-up interviews with some of the girls and young women behind some of the Instagram accounts that I analysed, is also a methodological strength of my project. Pairing Instagram content analysis with interviews and focus groups allowed me to better understand the material practice of Instagram feminism, and digital feminists’ and activists’ messy experiences and meanings of it. Such an engagement, I argue, is most compatible with a feminist posthuman ethics of response-ability (Haraway 2016) that demands attention to our enmeshment with bodies beyond our own in intra-actions, and “accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming which we are a part” (Barad 2007:393). Pairing interviews with some of the girls whose content that I analysed in my project was an attempt to “[be] alive to the possibilities of becoming,” as girls’ stories diffracted with my own reading of their content, especially in our relational scrolling of their accounts in the interviews.

The Research Entanglement and Limitations

While I am happy about the contributions of my dissertation, like any research, there are limitations. As I write in my methods chapter, the research apparatus of this project is an entanglement which includes my human body and my personal smartphone which I used to create my Instagram account and to engage in the digital fieldwork. Importantly, the English language enacted force in the research entanglement not only in terms of the Instagram content and feminists included in my project, which I elaborate below, but also by constraining the possibilities for a non-representational, diffractive analysis (see also MacLure 2013). As I have written throughout, technologies, including those of Instagram, are not neutral, rather are affective forces that constrain and enable particular possibilities (see also Caldeira and Flora Machado 2022; Mahoney 2022; Moksnes Barbala 2024; Semenzin 2022). Thus, my encounter with girls' digital feminism is undeniably shaped by the forces of technologies in my project, including Instagram's APIs, algorithms, trace data on my smartphone, and the IP addresses of the wifi I used during digital fieldwork. I recognize that the feminist Instagram content and accounts that I encountered in the digital fieldwork are shaped by algorithmic processes that sort and rank content affecting its visibility, therefore, shaping which accounts and content I "saw" and ultimately included in my project. Furthermore, I engaged only with Instagram accounts that were in English, which undoubtedly affects the story of feminism and feminists I share in this project.

Given the specificity of the timespacemattering of the research entanglement and intra-action (Barad 2007), I do not attempt to provide a generalizable argument or conclusion anywhere in my dissertation about the nature of girls' digital feminism. I offer my diffractive reading of the data but know that this is not the only possible reading. In this project I only scratched the surface of a very small fragment of digital feminism, co-created by Instagram and

I, in the intra-activity of the research. Echoing arguments made by Caliandro and Graham (2020), it is not possible to engage with the breadth of Instagram data, even more so through the “small narrative” (Georgakopoulou 2017) diffractive approach that I use in this project.

Caliandro and Graham (2020) argue that digital research should aim for engaging with some of the breadth of Instagram, while also tuning into some of the specificities of particular pockets of it, including how they evolve over time. My hope is that my diffractive reading and multi-method approach works to map some patterns of difference among the content that I entangled with over the course of eight months, and also highlights the particularities of some girls’ experiences and meanings of it.

While I resist neat re-presentations and generalizability, I have learned that girls are trying on, remixing, and mobilizing feminisms and feminist and activist identities together-apart (Barad 2014) in multiple timespaces, including on Instagram. In these experimentations, not all girls are identifying as feminists, even when they are co-constituting and becoming with Instagram accounts that mobilize feminist politics. Some girls, however, are claiming feminist identities and overtly positioning themselves and their Instagram content as a particular type of feminism. As I write in chapter five, Instagram content importantly affects practices of collective identity, where digital content and Instagram accounts co-create, archive, and sustain the stories and boundaries (Tilly 2003) of particular feminists and feminisms, and relations (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003) between desirable (‘us’) and undesirable (‘them’) feminisms. Relatedly, through material-discursive practices of collective identity, boundaries of girl and girlhood are congealed and opened. However, these boundaries are ever-changing (Melucci 1989 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Tilly 2003), as are girls’ relations to them. Girl, girlhood,

feminists, and feminisms are remixed through shifting digital trends, memes, and socio-political timespaces both on and off Instagram.

I know too, that girls' Instagram feminism and feminist collective identities are far more dynamic and curious than current debates which fix them in binaries of online/offline, activism/slacktivism, and individual/collective. Girl, feminist, and feminism are entangled material-discursive phenomena that are iteratively becoming, not pre-existing or fixed identities, experiences, or movements. In their Instagram feminism, girls are never acting on their own, their posthuman performativities as girls and feminists, as well as their Instagram feminism are co-created by forces and bodies beyond them. Girls' Instagram feminism is thus, always shaped by materialities, forces, and bodies beyond any singular girl, piece of Instagram content, or Instagram account. Additionally, Instagram was a timespace where girls stumbled upon and co-created feminist and activist communities, sometimes working together transnationally on a single Instagram account. Girls who were part of these collective Instagram accounts embraced and naturalized hierarchy amongst members based on tasks and roles, in ways that seem counter to how feminists are often understood to organize offline. Technologies, including Instagram, Slack, and group chats co-created these hierarchical organizations of digital collectives. While we might never get a complete or fulsome picture of girls' digital feminism in a specific research entanglement, projects which engage with the networked and entangled dynamism of the material-discursive contexts of digital politics might be best equipped to map its nuanced relations and girls' meanings of it. The attention to materiality is important, I argue, to see how material-discursive phenomena like girl, girlhood, and feminism, can be felt and imagined through pieces of digital content (see also Pomerantz 2024).

In addition to the force of Instagram for affecting my relations to Instagram feminism in the digital fieldwork, like any digital sociology, my project offers insights into a digital phenomenon at a specific moment in timespace (Barad 2007). As I have articulated throughout this dissertation, digital feminism and technologies like Instagram are dynamic phenomena. As Instagram changes, Instagram feminism also evolves. There were changes to the technologies, affordances, and platform vernacular and culture of Instagram during the timespace of my dissertation. For example, TikTok, another popular platform for feminist activism, was very briefly and temporarily banned in the United States. I wonder how the precarity of TikTok as a political timespace affects/affected the becoming of Instagram as a political timespace?

Instagram reconfigured default profile settings to restrict political and “sensitive” content and introduced “teen accounts” (Meta 2024; Wong 2024) just as I had finished my interviewing. Teen Instagram accounts are private, can involve age verification processes, and limit direct message and Story replying features to only “friends.” Further, content deemed “sensitive” by Instagram are restricted on teen Instagram accounts (Wong 2024). Instagram argues that this shift which will transition all accounts for users under 18 to teen accounts is in the name of safety and protection, citing concerns from some teenagers, parents, and experts about youth mental health and screen time (Demopoulos 2024; Wong 2024). Had teen accounts been rolled out sooner, the trajectory of my project would have been significantly different. It would have been more difficult to contact and recruit interviewees younger than 18, and restricted their profiles to private, disallowing me to engage in analysis of their Instagram content. Thus, the story I write about girls’ digital feminism in this project, proceeds these changes by Instagram. It will be curious in future work, to see how girls manoeuvre Instagram’s teen accounts, and the effects of these changes for the performativity of girl, girlhood, and feminist.

While there were diffractions in the becoming of this dissertation by forces like technology that are beyond my control, there were some moments in the research entanglement where I acted in ways that affected its trajectory. For example, there is perhaps some fragmentation among my ‘sample.’ To my knowledge, based on the “about this account” information and context cues, most of the Instagram accounts in my project were created by girls in Canada or the United States. Furthermore, most of the girls I talked to in interviews were living in Canada (11) and the United States (3) at the time of our conversation.

While I did talk to three girls living in the non-Western contexts of Pakistan and Jamaica, these are outliers in my project and cannot represent girls’ experiences of feminism or gender in the Global South. While I tried to engage closely with Amina’s, Fatima’s, and Quinn’s stories and experiences, particularly in underscoring the power of intra-sections in the timespacemattering of digital feminism, my analyses are limited. Limited by my ‘sample,’ as well as the pragmatics of this dissertation, I was not able to engage as deeply with the geographical contexts in the timespacemattering of girls’ Instagram feminism that undeniably affect who and what becomes feminism and feminist. There is a need for more research, specifically diffractive qualitative work, that maps feminist becomings across timespaces, especially those beyond Western or Global North contexts.

Relatedly, many of the interviewees self-identified as middle or upper-middle class, which is a limitation to my dissertation. Echoing arguments made by Mendes et al. (2019) and Keller (2016), digital feminism is more available to girls with access to technological resources and leisure time. Thus, middle and upper middle-class girls not only have more access and support for their feminist participation, but also likely understand and experience feminism and feminist identities differently because of their class positionings.

One final point on the data assembly (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020) in the research entanglement is around the difficulty discerning whether the inclusion criteria was met in the analysis of Instagram accounts. As Mendes and colleagues (2019) detail, it can be difficult to know the demographic information of Instagram account creators. Many of the Instagram accounts in my sample included explicit information in the biographical sections of their Instagram accounts that position them as teenage girls or young girls, for example noting their age, or the high school or college that they attend. There were also some context clues on many of the accounts, including sharing birthday-related or graduation posts which can signal age. However, other Instagram accounts were more anonymous, with fewer context clues. Therefore, I cannot be completely sure that each Instagram account that I include in the content analysis exactly fit the inclusion criteria, specifically around age. Furthermore, I cannot be sure that some of the Instagram accounts which I frame as individual, are really managed by one girl. It is possible that some Instagram accounts which appear to be personal accounts by individual girls, are managed by more than one person. Similarly, it is possible that Instagram accounts that are labelled as “communities” of girls, or as “youth organizations,” are not really collaborative or collectively run Instagram accounts.

While not necessarily a limitation of the project, as I have explained in the proceeding chapters, there were many “sticky” moments in the research encounter. As argued by others (Hamilton and van den Hoonaard 2016; Ellingson and Sotirin 2022; Salganik 2017; Whiteman 2012), research ethics are much more nuanced than institutional procedures and check-boxing, and often require manoeuvring by the researcher throughout the unfolding of project. Ethics can feel particularly sticky in the context of digital research, wherein researchers need to consider the presumed privacy of online spaces (Beninger 2017; Salmons 2016) and make decisions about

anonymizing publicly available digital artifacts (see also Stanley 2019). There was one particularly striking moment towards the end of my conversation with Lola, where she said, “when I saw th[e] title [of your project], I was like, ‘what an interesting idea.’ Cause I feel like [...] anyone who is doing [...] like Instagram feminism is definitely thinking about like what people say about it.” I think Lola is speaking directly to the concern scholars raise about privacy from research, even in public digital spaces. Lola, and all of the interviewees, seemed to appreciate the member-checking process and the opportunity to receive a mini-report of the preliminary findings of my dissertation. Several participants have followed the research journey through the updates I share in Instagram Stories and Posts on my research account, and have expressed interest in reading future outcomes. I see my research Instagram account as a tool to engage in digital research, but also as an opportunity for knowledge mobilization in the format and vernacular of the platform that I research. This has provided participants, as well as my family, friends, and colleagues, the opportunity to read short updates as the research unfolds, in digestible portions as per the culture vernacular and affordances of Instagram. I believe that sharing research in the digital spaces in which it is created in, is part of a feminist sociology.

As I write in the methodology chapter, all of the Instagram accounts and participant names are pseudonyms. As Stanley (2019) writes though, there might be political and ethical reasons for including Instagram account names in digital research, especially for public accounts with large followings and other publications (e.g., news articles, interviews) which feature their names. In these cases, Stanley (2019:9) argues that including the account names in analyses of their content can be part of “giving due credit to people doing activist work online.” There were some moments in interviews, where participants questioned and seemed to resist the need for pseudonyms. In situ, my response was that I was anonymizing all of the data in the project, in

part because of institutional ethics review policy. I worry about inviting hostility to their accounts through my project, as many participants spoke about the risks of their feminism and feminist participation on/offline, as well as some intense experiences of hate comments, death and rape threats through various social media channels. Furthermore, while my project is about seeking to better understand girls' experiences of digital feminism, the aim is not to narrow in on or spotlight individual girls in ways that reproduce limiting activist girl hero narratives (see Bent 2020; Raby and Sheppard 2021; Taft 2020).

Throughout the intra-activity of this research entanglement, I have thought a lot about my affective force, as I diffract, entangle, and co-constitute the story of girls' Instagram feminism in the pages of this dissertation. As a twenty-nine-year-old, white, middle class, straight, cis woman, and PhD student in Canada, my becoming is not ontologically separate from the research apparatus. My body, the questions that I ask, and my theoretical and political frameworks, as well as participants' expectations and perceptions of me, shape the research apparatus and the intra-activity of the data co-creation. Barad (2007:185) advocates for an "ethico-onto-epistem-ology" that involves "an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being – since each intra-action matters." As an affective force in the becoming of this project, I am always acting from within (Barad 2007). There were moments in interviews where the intra-activity of age was evident. In practices of collective identity, younger participants seemingly dissed millennials, but then clarified that they did not see me that way despite belonging to that generation. In another poignant moment at the end of our interview, Amina asked me if I was talking to other girls from Pakistan, and shared that she was happy to be "one of the few who aren't from a western country" in my project. Relations of power and

marginalization, including around race and ethnicity, affect the becoming of feminists and feminisms in the intra-activity of my research apparatus.

I also manoeuvred many sticky moments in the asynchronous text-based interviews through email and Instagram direct messages. I have facilitated text-based interviews previously, but these were only quick check-ins with children between video-based interviews in a longitudinal project. In my dissertation, I only communicated with some participants through text and voice notes. In these interviews, it felt harder to develop rapport, indicate active listening, or sense how things were going for participants in the text-based interviews that lasted several days, weeks, or in one case, two months. While I frequently checked in with participants, it is not possible for me to know with any certainty, if the text-based interviews actually required more effort or time from participants, compared to the video interviews. I do see the text-based interviews as a methodological strength of my project, as it likely facilitated participation for girls who might have felt uncomfortable having a video-call with a researcher they have never met. Text-based asynchronous interviews were also useful for facilitating participation across time zones. In all cases, text-based interviews fostered a different timespace of the interview in terms of duration and pace, which may have felt more inviting for some girls than a synchronous interview.

In addition to these sticky moments in the text-based interviews, it was challenging to embrace a diffractive methodology. At the outset of my project, I felt very shaky about my analysis process, and continued to feel this way throughout the digital fieldwork and interviews. This dissertation was my first attempt at a diffractive methodology with such a large body of data. It was difficult to resist the urge to code the data into easily recognizable and understandable themes and patterns. Resisting a coding procedure and representational

understanding of the data meant that I had to lean into the uncertainty of iteratively as analysis (Golden-Fiddle 2022). Instead of making sense of the data with measures that I could apply across artifacts, I had to approach each piece of data with an openness to deep theoretical thinking. There were times throughout this research, however, where I found myself gripping too tightly onto the safety and comfort of process and structured observation, collection, and processing of data. For example, constraining my becoming with the Instagram content I analysed to the pre-established question form I intended to fill-in for each piece of content. If I could somehow turn back time and start my digital fieldwork again, I would loosen my grip on the structure of my analysis and format of my digital fieldwork. This of course, might be easier to say from the other side of the project, knowing that I did, in fact, “find things.” Or, because I see the opportunity in a diffractive, messy, qualitative methodology, and now, feel more confident in my own skills and curiosities as a theorist and researcher.

As in any research project, the story I share here is does not include all of the details and nuances in the data that emerged in the research entanglement. There is a rich corpus of data from this research project, and while I tried to hold onto the messiness and engage with the breadth of it, I could not diffract deeply with all the data. I recognize that the story I share about girls’ Instagram feminism is limited here, by the format and demands of graduate school, and by my attempt to place boundaries around the project, such that I engaged with data that affected me, and felt closest to my research question. For example, I could have written a chapter, or an entire dissertation about the intra-activity of Instagram, where I think deeply about the forces in the constellation that co-create Instagram. In my digital fieldnotes, I also mused a lot about the posthuman performativity of digital girlhood. This too, could have comprised an entire chapter about digital girlhood as a material-discursive phenomena in the timespace of Instagram.

Alongside these limitations, my dissertation makes important theoretical and methodological contributions through its diffractive, multi-method methodology that includes deep analysis of Instagram content, interviews with their creators, and follow-up focus groups. My work challenges understandings of digital feminism that see it as increasingly individualized connective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2013) and insists on evaluating its efficacy as activism or slacktivism (Cabrera et al. 2017). Instead, my diffractive reading has aimed to stick with the messy, ironic, and dynamic nature of girls' Instagram feminism and feminist collective identities, and their meanings and experiences of it. As underscored in the data section of this project, Instagram feminism is a timespace where girls and young women craft and critique boundaries of feminism and feminist identities, and facilitate sometimes transnational feminist communities of collaborative creation on singular Instagram accounts. Instagram feminism is not just one thing, and the multiplicity of feminisms and feminists on Instagram have effects, including, for example, how girls relate to feminism and feminist identities, and their ambivalence or resistance to digital feminist activism. There are implications too, for the proliferation of violence and exclusion, for example transphobia, when exclusionary feminisms and feminists become on/offline. Rather than trying to pin girls' Instagram feminism into neat themes or patterns that help us make sense of it, here, I have argued for an approach that holds onto its messiness and seeks to understand what it is doing and how it is becoming messily, and entwined with the becoming of social, political, and digital worlds.

Recognizing human/non-human bodies as porous and relationally becoming, is important for thinking about our response-abilities (Haraway 2016) in the unfolding of both patriarchy and feminisms. Specifically, we can explore which relations and intra-actions sustain and challenge patriarchy and feminisms, and our individual/collective force in these unfoldings for the creation

of other possible worlds (Barad 2007). Resonating my earlier writing about the way girlhood can be continuously felt (see also Pomerantz 2024) through materialities like memes, posthuman feminism troubles beginnings and ends, including around child-adult (Murriss 2016), which is useful for intergenerational activism by recognizing that our past-present-future are entangled in each moment (Barad 2017). In the context of intergenerational activism, older bodies might lean into and re-entangle their childhoods, embodying Murriss' (2016) child-adult, to mobilize for social change.

Future Directions

I know that there will be traces of this project, including musings from the content analysis and the wonderful conversations I had with the activists and feminists in the timespace of this project, in my future work. At the time of writing this chapter, I am buzzing with ideas and questions that emerged through this dissertation. For example, I am curious about the ambivalence and resistance of feminism and feminist identities, and how this ambivalence or anti-feminist rhetoric is normalized, especially for young people, in digital trends like “trad wives” and “crunchy teens.” I continue to wonder about what aged, gendered, and political performativities emerge in digital timespaces strife with cisheteronormativity.

Future research might also consider exploring a particular type of feminism, to chart its diffusion across or within digital spaces. While I approached my project with an openness to engaging with any English-language feminist content and accounts on Instagram that were public, narrowing in on one approach to feminism, through for example, hashtags, would be a fascinating project. For example, in future work, I might consider how radical feminism is taken up, remixed, and mobilized in a space like Instagram, and explore the nuances of collective radical feminist identity. It might also be intriguing to create a research project that explores a

feminist topic or debate (e.g., reproductive rights) across different digital timespaces, to consider how the spread and mobilization of feminism is affected by the technological affordances and vernaculars. Furthermore, age and generation came up in all of my conversations with the girls in this project. Future work might explore the complexities of generational political identities, for example, through analyses of digital artifacts like memes (see also Zeng and Abidin 2021) as well as interviews with feminists and activists from different generations.

I 'leave' this research entanglement with some more confidence in myself as a research and theorist, and a greater appreciation for the possibilities of a feminist posthuman and diffractive sociology for better understanding and holding onto the messiness of social and political worlds. My entanglement with girls' digital feminism has underscored its multiplicity, and complexity, as well the dynamic material-discursive practices which co-create potentialities for feminism and feminist identities on Instagram. Feminisms, feminists, and technology do not sit still. Please accept this, as an invitation to imagine and follow with me, the cyborg feminist possibilities that unfold in the iterative becoming of the world.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Message

Hello (name or Instagram username),

My name is Lindsay Sheppard, and I am a sociology PhD student at York, University in Toronto, Canada. I think you would be a great ‘fit’ for my PhD research project, *Insta-feminism: Untangling the Material-Discursive Forces of Girls’ Feminist Activism on Instagram*. I have stumbled upon your Instagram account, and I am inviting you to participate in my project.

The purpose of my dissertation is to better understand girls’ and young women’s (aged 15-23) feminism and feminist identities on Instagram. I am curious about girls’ and young women’s meanings of feminism and feminist identities, and how they experience these through Instagram. My project includes analysis of Instagram accounts, semi-structured digital interviews (Zoom, direct message, email, phone) and focus groups (Zoom).

If you choose to participate in an interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences with feminism and feminist identities on Instagram. Focus groups will include discussion with me and other participants in the project, including about how Instagram works, definitions of feminism, and challenges/benefits of engaging in feminism on Instagram. You will choose a pseudonym for yourself and your Instagram account for the research. Of course, participation in an interview and/or focus group are voluntary.

Participating in this research has the benefit of talking to someone who is curious about your Instagram and legitimizes girls’ feminism on Instagram and offline. Participation will allow you to reflect on your experiences as a young person who uses technology to learn about and engage in feminism.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through York University’s Research Ethics Board (file # STU 2023-096).

I am very happy to answer any questions you have about this project, or your role as a potential participant.

If this sounds of interest to you, I can send a consent form with more information.

I would super appreciate if you could let me know either way.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration,
Lindsay Sheppard
PhD Candidate
Department of Sociology
York University

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Demographic Information:

- How old are you?
- How do you self-identify in terms of gender and sexuality?
- How do you self-identify in terms of race, ethnicity, and/or culture?
- Where are you currently living?
- How would you describe your class background?
- Do you see these contexts as relevant to your experiences on Instagram?
- Does the category of girl resonate with you? Does it mean anything to your politics? Or your Instagram?

Instagram:

- When did you join Instagram?
- Do you have more than one Instagram account?
- How would you describe your Instagram account to someone who has never seen it?
- Can you tell me a bit about why you started to post about feminism on Instagram and what that was like?
- Has your experience posting feminist content on Instagram changed at all over time?
- How do you decide what to post?
- Is there a difference between the kinds of things you post to your stories, or as posts in the feed? What about reels?
 - How do you decide?
- What is involved in the creation of a single piece of content? Can you walk me through the whole process?
- How does your Instagram reflect and/or differ from your engagement in other digital spaces?
 - Why do you think that is the case?
- Where do you create/post content? eg., bedroom, at your desk
- How much time would you say you spend thinking about or creating for your Instagram each day?
- How would you describe your relationship to Instagram?
 - What are some of your overall thoughts about Instagram?

Feminism:

- How do you define feminism? What does it look like to you?
- What is it like sharing about feminism on Instagram?
- What is the best and hardest parts about engaging in Instagram feminism?
- Do you think that Instagram is a good space for feminism? Why or why not?
- Do you self-identify as a feminist? Why or why not?
- Do you see your Instagram as feminist activism? Why or why not?
- How do you respond to critiques around online feminism? For example, when people suggest it is frivolous, or silly, or not “real” feminism.

Community:

- Do you feel part of a bigger feminist community online?
 - If so, how would you describe it?

- If not, do you wish for or think about a digital feminist community?
 - How could this happen?

Bigger Questions:

- Do you think that Instagram feminism is gendered? For example, are girls/women more likely to engage in feminism on Instagram?
- What do you think your Instagram says about your identity as a girl/women, youth, and/or feminist?
- What is one thing you wish people would understand about feminism on Instagram?

Digital Scroll:

- Ask them to pick one post/reel/story from their Instagram that is most meaningful to them:
 - How would you describe it?
 - What was it like making and posting this?
 - Why is this meaningful to you?
 - Does this mean/say something about your feminism or identity?

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Focus Group Guide

Girls & Instagram:

- What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear "Instagram"?
- How did you discover Instagram?
- What were your initial/early experiences on Instagram like? Has your experience with Instagram changed? If so, how?
- How are you and your friends using Instagram?
- Do you use different social media apps for different purposes?
- How would you describe girls'/young women's experiences with or relationships to Instagram?
- Do you think gender shapes experiences with Instagram? What about with technology more broadly?
- What are your thoughts or reactions to the use of "girl" in digital trends? (eg., "soft girl winter", "hot girl walks", "girl dinner")
- Are there any unwritten rules about what/how to post on Instagram?
- Are there expectations or pressures around how to engage with or create on Instagram?
- Do you think Instagram offers something different than other social media platforms?

Feminism & Feminists:

- How do you understand feminism? What does it mean?
- What does it mean to be a feminist?
- Has technology (e.g., Instagram) changed meanings or experiences of feminism and feminists?
- How do others (e.g., peers, family, media) respond/react to youth feminists?
 - What about girl feminists?
- How do others (e.g., peers, family, media, other Instagram users) respond/react to feminism on Instagram?
 - How do they react to people who self-identify as feminists on Instagram?

Instagram & Feminism:

- Why do you think girls/young women are creating feminist content on Instagram?
- What are some of the goals of sharing feminist and/or activist content on Instagram?
- Are there different types of feminist content or creators on Instagram?
- Is there anything that unifies feminist content on Instagram? Why or why not?
- Do you feel like you are part of a feminist and/or activist community on Instagram?
 - If so, how would you describe this community?
 - If not, why do you think this is the case? Is feminist community possible on Instagram? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the technology/space of Instagram shapes the kind of feminist content that is posted?

Technology & Social Change:

- Do you think technology, for example social media like Instagram, contribute to social change?
- Do you think that posting feminist content on Instagram is a form of feminist activism?
- What do you think/feel when you see feminist content on Instagram? How do you react to it?

- What do you wish people understood about the role of technology in feminism and/or activism?
- Do you think technology will become more or less useful for feminism in the future?
- Do you have any hopes or concerns about technology like Instagram?
- Do you have any hopes or concerns about feminism and/or feminists?

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Instagram Analysis Guide

Of Instagram Account:

- What is the username?
- What is the bio statement?
- What is the profile/display photo?
- How many posts, followers, and following?
- Does it seem like the account is highly engaged with?
- What is the most “liked” or “commented” on content?
- What is the overall feel of the account?
- What (if any) is the aesthetic style of content?
- Is the user centered in the content?
- Is there any digital art used? (e.g., infographics, illustrations, collages)
- What are the key or overall messages of the account?
- How do they seem to be describing feminism, overall?
- Has the account changed in content, style, or form over time?

Of Instagram “Feed” Photos:

- What is the photo of?
- What is the caption?
- Are there any hashtags, tags, comments, likes?
- How are they positioning feminism here?
- How are they positioning feminists here?
- How does it fit (or not) with the other content on this account?
- Are there references to self/other/community?
- What is my reaction to it?

Of Instagram Stories (including those saved to “highlights”):

- What is the story of?
- Is it a photo or a video?
- What technology is used here? (e.g., audio, tags, hashtags, overlaid text, closed captions)
- How are they positioning feminism here?
- How are they positioning feminists here?
- How does it fit (or not) with the other content on this account?
- Are there references to self/other/community?
- What is my reaction to it?

Of Instagram Reels:

- What is the reel of?
- Is it a compilation of still-photos or a video?
- What technology is used here? (e.g., audio, hashtags, overlaid text, closed captions)
- How are they positioning feminism here?
- How are they positioning feminists here?
- How does it fit (or not) with the other content on this account?
- Are there references to self/other/community?
- What is my reaction to it?