Pursuing a Gender Non-conforming "Hellscape:" Investigating Nonbinary User and Fan Practices on Tumblr[*]

Arianna Bussoletti[**]
Sapienza, Università di Roma

The article contributes to budding research on nonbinary individuals by analyzing nonbinary people's practices as social media users and fans on Tumblr. Drawing from literature on nonbinary identities, gender performativity, platform vernaculars, and Tumblr it analyzes semi-structured interviews to Tumblr members of a particular group, the Houseki no Kuni (HnK) fandom. The findings highlight how nonbinary fans of HnK utilize Tumblr's vernacular and affordances to manage a safe(r) space where to express what they perceive as their true selves (RQ1), while using fandom discussions to validate and narrate their identity as nonbinary individuals (RQ2) towards the creation of more accepting futures.

Keywords: social media, nonbinary identities, Tumblr, platform vernaculars, affordances

Literature on nonbinary people is still in an explorative stage, with such identities only recently becoming subject of research in disciplines such as psychology and counseling (Matsuno & Budge, 2017) and being addressed in the psychological, medical, and legal fields (Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). The lived experiences of nonbinary people can be understood as gender performativity (Butler, 1990), with gender performance and disclosure to ideal or imagined audiences on social media potentially leading to the creation of communities across virtual and physical spaces (Sharp & Shannon, 2020). Among these spaces, nonbinary people have found a home on Tumblr, a popular social medium among fans and marginalized groups, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color) and queer people (McCracken, Cho, Stein, & Hoch, 2020).

This paper contributes to budding research on nonbinary people's social media experiences by using the concept of platform vernaculars (Gibbs, Meese, Michael, Nansen & Carter, 2015) to understand nonbinary people's practices as social media users and fans on Tumblr. Drawing from literature on nonbinary identities, gender performativity, platform vernaculars, and Tumblr this paper analyzes thematically 19 semi-structured interviews to Tumblr members of a particular group, the Houseki no Kuni (HnK) fandom—chosen for the fans' diversity in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, and culture. In doing so, it answers the following research questions: how do nonbinary fans of HnK engage with Tumblr to manage a space where to express what they perceive as their true selves (RQ1)? How do nonbinary fans of HnK resort to fandom discussions to validate and narrate their identity as nonbinary individuals (RQ2)?

Nonbinary identities, gender performance, and social media

Scholarship addressing nonbinary gender identities is still in its explorative stages. Literature acknowledges how nonbinary genders have historically been marginalized in both society and academia, despite nonbinary gender identities and expressions long being present across time and cultures (McNabb, 2017; Richards et al. 2017). Therefore, studying nonbinary identities should not "whitewash understandings of nonbinary genders" (Sharp & Shannon, 2020 p. 138) that can be found outside the Anglo-European gender system's binary (McNabb, 2017). The complexity given by various cultural understandings of gender identities and expressions makes it particularly challenging to provide a definition of nonbinary genders and identities. Various words (or labels) can be employed to describe different experiences of not fitting into the traditional genders of 'male' and 'female,' such as genderqueer, nonbinary, demigirl, agender etc. Genderqueer and nonbinary are usually regarded as umbrella terms, with the distinction that 'genderqueer' points to visible transgressions of gender norms and is often politically charged (Ben 2020). Conversely, 'nonbinary' challenges gender polarization and cisgender identities but does not necessarily encompass discursive implications. Matsuno and Budge (2017) tentatively definite it as including (but not limited to): "(a) an individual whose gender identity falls between or outside male and female identities, (b) an individual who can experience being a man or woman at separate times, or (c) an individual who does not experience having a gender" (pp. 1-2). Since it was also the term most commonly used by the interviewees, this paper chose 'nonbinary' as an umbrella term. In doing so, however, the author agrees with Sharp and Shannon (2020) in that researchers must use and respect the identity categories that people assign to themselves. In the context of people's everyday life, 'nonbinary' and 'genderqueer' may be part of a number of other labels that allow an individual to better express their identity.

The lived experiences of nonbinary people can be understood under the light of gender performativity (Butler 1990), the process by which gendered subjects "are constituted by regulatory notions within a heterosexual matrix" (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014, p.123), thus shifting the focus from gender as a self-evident category to a social practice, a doing/undoing that considers queer performativities as sites of resistance and gender identity as an ongoing activity. In the context of new gender politics— originated from trans studies and the intersex movement's critiques of feminist and queer theory— 'doing' one's gender sometimes implies 'undoing' dominant notions of personhood (Butler, 2004). As observed by Nentwich and Kelan (2014), 'doings' and 'undoings' are highly context specific, suggesting that research should focus on contextual identity practices rather than assuming somebody to have a gender identity per se, echoing Green (2007)'s critique of queer theory as a theory of the self.

This paper thus focuses on nonbinary people's identity-making practices on social media, their gender performance and disclosure to ideal or imagined audiences, which can potentially lead to the creation of communities across virtual and physical spaces (Sharp & Shannon 2020). This view echoes McLean (2014)'s theory that the internet can enable the construction of queer counterpublics, as social media not only grant a space for queer individuals but, thanks to their encouraging continuous conversations among members of the same group, may serve as foundations for discourses that challenge the status-quo on sexuality, gender, and politics across time. While scholarship addressing nonbinary people's social media practices is still in its explorative stages, it recognizes the role played by online spaces in allowing nonbinary individuals to meet, discuss, and co-create labels for their own experiences (Fraser, 2017), generating personal narratives of self-determination, agency, and belonging (Yeadon-Lee, 2016). By focusing on nonbinary people as curators and creators of their own online spaces (social media pages, blogs, hashtags) we can thus understand these as "vehicles for nonbinary space and identity making" (Sharp & Shannon, 2020, p.138).

From platform vernaculars to Tumblr affordances

These forms of engagement with and on social media can be understood through Gibbs and colleagues' (2015) notion of platform vernaculars, that is a series of conventions or communication practices that emerge from the affordances of a social medium and the ways these are appropriated and performed over time. An example are Twitter hashtags, who were not designed-in the platform but established through widespread community use and adaptation. According to the authors, Instagram's architecture influences platform practices around death and commemoration. For example, the places for mourning on Instagram are the conversations defined by consensus around hashtags (i.e. #fuckcancer) rather than around a profile of the deceased (lacking on Instagram but possible on Facebook), resulting in more decentered and rhizomatic conversations (p.16). Indeed, affordances are not just architectural elements of a platform but can be considered as the relationship between an object's properties and "the capabilities of the agent that determine just how the object could possibly be used" (Norman, 2013, p. 2). On social media, affordances can thus configure the environment in a way that affects users' engagement, highlighting issues they have to contend with (Hanckel et al. 2019). Focusing on platform vernaculars, then, allows scholars to focus on daily conversational occurrences and social practices rather than extraordinary events, emphasizing users' creativity in dealing with a platform's constraints and allowances (Gibbs et al., 2015).

When it comes to Tumblr, scholars have amply observed the close-knit relationship between its unique user practices and affordances. For example, the way Tumblr privileges fast-circulating reblogged content makes the Tumblr experience centered around curation rather than creation, which renders the users' personal investment in Tumblr 'affective' (Cho, 2015). Born in 2007 as a hybrid between a blog and a social

network site, Tumblr was designed as a countercultural platform to share one's perceived authentic self. Its progressive policies (i.e. no censorship of sexual content until 2017) and uncharacteristic isolation from the rest of the internet (McCracken et al., 2020; Neill Hoch, 2018) contributed to its becoming a home for marginalized groups and a site of youth media literacy, identity formation, and political awareness (McCracken, 2017). Tumblr's afforded 'safeness' in virtue of its isolation invites engagements that thrive on anonymity, contributing to its popularity among marginalized groups. Among these, the platform has come to be associated with nonbinary identities and users (Pulice-Farrow, McNary, & Paz Galupo, 2019) as a breeding ground for different understandings of gender and sexuality. Tumblr's 'malleability' and anonymity afford nonbinary people the possibility of making and re-making safe(r) spaces (Sharp & Shannon, 2020) where to exist as themselves and curate their identities.

While these communities and interactions are not a Tumblr exclusive, platform vernaculars and affordances of sites like Twitter and Reddit— which allow for less sophisticated privacy settings and call for stronger top-down management— often contribute to fueling violent discourses against gender minorities (Wareham, 2019), to the point of overturning virtuous expressions and experiences (i.e. social justice warriors) born on Tumblr (Massanari & Chess, 2018). Conversely, Tumblr's staff has historically been ineffective, resulting in users self-managing through tactics and extension frameworks like Xkit (Neill Hock 2018), marking their experience on the platform as one of reciprocal acculturation, education, and discourse (McCracken, 2017). Additionally, Tumblr's emphasis on content-sharing and emotional authenticity contributed to making it a key platform for fandom (McInroy, 2018), leading users to perceive themselves as a distinct group of social media users as they negotiate cultural products in ways that reflect their specific interests and display proficiency in 'Tumblr-ness.' This connection is so strong that the distinction between who is a fandom member and who is not is "fuzzy" on Tumblr (Hillman et al. 2014) and the same can be said for Tumblr user practices, making it impossible to study them without accounting for fandom culture, as exemplified by existing Tumblr research. In the words of Amanda Brennan, Tumblr's content and social teams' leader, "all of Tumblr" (McCracken 2020, p. 38) could potentially count as fandom. For this reason, the choice to interview fandom members to investigate nonbinary user practices on Tumblr is not only representative of Tumblr users but provides information on both their fandom and Tumblr experiences.

Methods

The paper analyzes 19 Semi Structured Interviews (henceforth SSIs) to Tumblr members of the Houseki no Kuni (HnK) fandom (a community born around a Japanese manga and anime) carried out in the Summer of 2019, as part of a larger research. Participants were recruited via a call for volunteers published on a purposely-created Tumblr blog, using tags (i.e. 'HnK,' 'houseki no kuni') to address the post to the fandom's members. This choice

was informed, on the one hand, by the limits of Tumblr's search function (which risked the call going unnoticed), on the other by the researcher's prior knowledge of the fandom as an intrinsically queer space (the source material features many gender non-conforming characters, thus appealing to queer and, especially, nonbinary fans) and as a transnational fandom composed mostly of non-US fans. The fans' diversity in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, and culture allowed for an ampler sample of voices concerning nonbinary people's use of Tumblr.

SSIs (Bartholomew, Henderson, & Marcia, 2000; Leech, 2002) combine high relevance to the topic at hand and responsiveness to the participants' inputs. Following SSI methodology, participants were directed to specific areas of inquiry: the interviewees' experience on Tumblr; their opinion on the platform; their experiences in the HnK fandom; potential fandom conflicts and/or synergies connected to the diversity of the fans (i.e. their gender identity or sexuality, their nationality). They were encouraged to branch out in their responses and asked follow up questions, making it possible to delve into their unique experiences while still allowing for interviews' comparison by item. In line with Tumblr scholarship (Neill Hoch 2018), interviews were carried out via Tumblr's instant messaging (IM) system. IM interviews (Opdenacker, 2006; Voida, Mynatt, Erickson, & Kellogg, 2004) are well-suited to survey geographically scattered respondents and when participants' anonymity is required, which both apply to Tumblr. The characteristics of IM interviews have been acknowledged during the analysis. While their conversational nature resembles oral interviews, the shortcomings of written interviews were outweighed by the benefits of carrying them on Tumblr, a space familiar to the interviewees that allowed the researcher to build a higher level of trust with them.

Respondents to the call and users who interacted with the post (with likes, comments, reblogs) were contacted to further explain the research and obtain informed consent. Interviewees were filtered for age by accepting only volunteers aged 18 or above. They were not filtered for nationality but, attesting to the global scope of the fandom, the sample still represented 12 different countries across five continents. With consideration of the interviewees' queerness and of how anonymity is an essential component of the Tumblr experience, utmost care was devoted to safeguarding their privacy (Franzke, Bechmann, Zimmer, Ess, & the Association of Internet Researchers, 2020; Freund & Fielding, 2013). Interviews were pasted on individual Microsoft Word documents, identifying information was matted, and the original interviews deleted from the IM system. Data was processed qualitatively and manually via a circular and iterative coding process, combining deduction and induction towards thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Patterns were formed from clustering all the codes into theoretically derived (deductive) themes (such as 'Tumblr drama' or 'Tumblr fandom') and themes derived from the raw data (inductive themes, such as 'fandom networking as safe space;' 'fandom as nonbinary education'), which were reviewed until defining the most relevant ones: "To customize one's Tumblr experience is to create a nonbinary space" (subtheme 1.1: customization grants anonymity; subtheme 1.2: customization grants recognition); and "Fandom pronoun patrolling is a nonbinary practice" (subtheme 2.1: pronoun patrolling as identity-revindication; subtheme 2.2: pronoun patrolling as education).

Findings

This section discusses the themes identified through the analysis. The first paragraph answers RQ1 by discussing how nonbinary users' practices are aimed at customizing a safe social media space/experience and express what they consider their true self. The second paragraph answers RQ2 by analyzing HnK fans' practice of discussing a character's pronouns as a way to protect and validate nonbinary fans' gender identity.

All quotes are reported verbatim with edits [in brackets] when necessary to understand the interviewee's words. Excerpts are identified by one-letter aliases and the interviewee's age. Participants who chose not to disclose their pronouns are referred to with gender neutral they/them.

Tweaking the Tumblr experience towards a safe "hellscape"

Nonbinary interviewees referred to a shared set of practices and habits to tweak their Tumblr experience, such as curating their following and customizing the privacy settings. While these practices are not new to Tumblr research or unique to nonbinary users, they are marked by an additional layer of complexity through their relationship with the user's gender identity, which informs their choice to be on Tumblr, the way they interact with it and other users, what they decide to disclose about their identity, and how.

As [Z22] commented: "tumblr is a hellscape where nobody can really trace back to me unless I deliberately give them the information." The culture of anonymity that permeates the platform informs Tumblr's usage in virtue of its isolation from the rest of the world. This condition not only refers to a situation where the self is connected across other platforms but one's Tumblr blog remains inaccessible. For the interviewees, Tumblr's built-in affordances also afford a unique tabula rasa, a blank space to fill with what they consider one's own unfiltered identity, towards an experience that feels more authentic and personal than other social media. The platform allows users to "filter out" [H26] people and content by blacklisting and/or silencing tags, blogs, and users, turning on and off anonymous messages, post notifications, access to one's own blog etc., allowing users to avoid content, people, or opinions. Content in this highly personalized space thus responds to the rules of a 'custom-made' algorithm, as posts on a user's so tweaked dashboard will be determined by the user's choices (if expressed) rather than the platform (contrary to social media like TikTok, which opens on a 'For You' page). While users can run multiple independent sideblogs, the presence of one unifying dashboard and list of followed users accentuate the co-mingling of content from different users on a single page, making one's main blog a big "conglomerate" [N24] that is indicative of what the user considers their true, unfiltered personality. This emphasizes reblogging rather than creating content as creative expression via choosing what content to reblog (and therefore

be associated with) and on which blog (and therefore to which audience). In this way: "[Tumblr] lets you run a page that still feels like yours" [O21]. An additional tool to broadcast and place oneself into a community is a user's profile description, which often includes preferred pronouns, sexuality, ethnicity, and other affiliations: "[J] / Vircer / 20 / Gender-Fluid Polysexual /21" [J20]; "23\white\agender trans gal(they or she)\Christian\Bisexual" [R23], displaying characteristics that are often concealed on other social networks but that, on Tumblr, are expected to be shared, allowing users to achieve visibility through recognition (McCracken et al., 2020).

Such curation is especially meaningful for nonbinary and queer users, as gender discussion is a daily occurrence on the platform, with Tumblr being "a breeding ground for alternative understandings of gender and identity" [H26]. While Tumblr's affordances and platform vernacular encourage unfiltered self-expression, allowing queer users not to "hide their gender or sexuality like they have to on other sites" [A22], expressing one's identity and opinions also subjects nonbinary users to continuous scrutiny by hostile users, fueling platform 'wars' that can quickly escalate in virtue of a Tumblr's "mob mentality" [A22]. When such hostility manages to break through the user's strategies to avoid it (for example due to malfunctioning in the tag-blacklisting mechanism), interviewees agreed to simply "steer away" [P18] until the argument dies down.

Overall, nonbinary users of Tumblr take advantage of the platform's "queer friendly" [Z22] atmosphere as best they can to build meaningful, supportive environments: "i follow hundreds of fellow nb [nonbinary] people, and i think only a few of my mutuals are cis [cisgender]" [N24]. Interviewees connected this to the forging of more "open" communities [A22] compared to those on other social media, where people "are quick to insult someone who's from a minority" [A22]. Indeed, they consider other platforms to be "significantly less cohesive than Tumblr" with "less interaction between people" [L21], making it harder to build kinship. Nonbinary users' socialization on Tumblr can thus mean the solidarity of coming together as an amorphous group of people sharing experiences and interests (McCracken et al. 2020) in a space made by and for nonbinary people.

Pronoun patrolling to affirm and protect gender identity

This section deals with the HnK fandom practice of *pronoun patrolling*, that is policing other fans for misgendering HnK characters, which, as stated by the series' author, are agender and use they/them pronouns. For nonbinary fans of HnK (a substantial portion of the fandom) the issue falls beyond grammar. As the author recommended they/them be used for the characters, nonbinary fans feel both validated in their identification with the text and ignored or offended by those who refuse the correct pronouns, prompting them to engage in or endorse pronoun patrolling to protect their identity and/or educate others.

The very practice is indicative of Tumblr vernacular as it "[is not] present in other platforms" [H26]. In the respondents' words, debating a fictional character's gender would be considered a "non-issue" [E19] on other social media, while they perceive Tumblr to notoriously cater to queer youth and encourage gender "discourse" [V19]. Using the

correct pronouns is a central issue for nonbinary people, as it is often dismissed by others— a common form of gender microaggression that effectively renders nonbinary people's identity invisible (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019). While expressing frustration about having to constantly debate it, [N24] testified how important the issue is to them as a "nb myself" because it goes against "transphobes and stubborn grammar prescriptivists" who "don't seem to be capable of understanding." For nonbinary interviewees, who are rarely able to find content that caters to their own experience and gender identity, some of the appeal of HnK lies in its cast of agender characters: "I really enjoy the fact that all of the [characters] use they/them pronouns [...] I always love some nonbinary representation" [T18]. As a result, when misgendering and gender discussions happen in the perceived 'safe' environment of the fandom, especially by straight or cisgender fans, it signifies to nonbinary fans an enforcement of gender binaries and a disregard for their own gender identity, even if they are not the target of misgendering: as [N24] states, personal pronouns are "endlessly debated" in the fandom and "i get annoyed at people misgendering the [characters] or discoursing." The arguments over HnK characters' correct pronouns mimic the struggles for recognition nonbinary fans have to face in their everyday lives and the lack of care for their own identity reflected by society and media: "[I have] had to struggle with this exact thing in real life" [N24]. Still, non all interviewees agreed to endorse pronoun patrolling: [H26] criticized the practice as "overzealous," [A22] perceived it as "just trying to push an agenda," and [V19] felt it took attention away from "more important" elements of the series.

Generalized frustration with the practice was dealt with in the Tumblr-way illustrated above of "steer[ing] away" [P18] from it and blocking tags and users as needed ("I only follow people who consistently use they/them, incidentally usually fellow trans/nb people" [N24]). An additional strategy, however, lies in education and is that of circulating information posts about gender. This echoes a distinction between different instances of misgendering, be them enacted by "transphobes" or people who must be "calmly correct[ed]" [N24]. Pronoun patrolling then takes on the dual function of affirming nonbinary people's existence and also protect them through education whenever the perpetrators of misgendering are simply people who genuinely do not know better: "i would hope if someone truly doesn't know, then somebody would just calmly correct them" [N24]. [Z22] too believes that people who are not necessarily malicious in their actions sometimes just "don't get it." Education is thus seen as a tool to solve the issue of misgendering in the long run, a tool that can mean just engaging with HnK as a community and as a series or by explaining the importance of using the correct personal pronouns (be it for a real person or a fictional character), making correct information circulate cyclically in the community so that everyone has access to it. In this way, even people who are "very commit[ted] to gender binary" [Z22] may modify the way they understand and view gender: "They were shaped that way, and that's hard to undo, but possible" [Z22]. Through actively informing and educating other users, nonbinary fans of HnK contribute to challenging oppressive gender practices towards a better future (Sharp & Shannon 2020), actively shaping a nonbinary space for and by nonbinary people.

Conclusions

As observed by Sharp and Shannon (2020), one of the elements that emerges from nonbinary people's social media experiences is "the appreciation and solidarity felt in engaging with content published by and for nonbinary people," which, in the case of nonbinary HnK fans on Tumblr, is an array of strategies directed at making permanence on the platform more enjoyable, authentic, and safe. Indeed, platform vernaculars are not merely user practices or the way they contend with or make use of platform affordances, but they are also shaped by the users' mundane interactions with each other (Gibbs et al. 2015). The combination of styles, grammars, language, and logics shared among interviewees in interacting with each other, the platform, and the HnK community constitutes a platform vernacular of nonbinary HnK fans on Tumblr as they filter out content and associate themselves with certain topics to carefully balance anonymity and recognition. The objective is to navigate a space that is safe but still allows for recognition in virtue of the users' shared interests, allowing them to forge kinships that make permanence on Tumblr both bearable and worth it.

Pronoun patrolling, in particular, emerged as both an example of Tumblr vernacular and an online experience that is directly connected to the interviewees' offline lives. It tells a story of offline (micro)aggressions and misgendering and online resistance against hegemonic gender expressions and identities. HnK fandom's pronoun patrolling is thus linked to a constant back and forth between the users' mediated online (related to HnK as a fictional series) and offline experience as nonbinary individuals. The latter fuels a desire to defend and reclaim nonbinary identities which ultimately finds an outlet in the safer environment of the HnK Tumblr fandom, allowing nonbinary fans to challenge oppressive practices through engaging in/endorsing pronoun patrolling for fictional characters, with a constant exchange between online and offline nonbinary experiences. This pairs with the affective investment that users display in online communities, especially on Tumblr, and is thus linked, for HnK fans, not only to fictional characters but to an actual revindication of nonbinary identities and mutual recognition among like-minded individuals (among those who also engage in or support the practice). This building of safer and supportive online spaces through fandom practices and settings-tweaking is thus a way for nonbinary users to engage with social media spaces to enact online strategies aimed at resisting offline aggressions and reabsorption into the gender binary.

The limits of this research lie in the small sample of interviewees, in addressing only one platform, and in its explorative (and thus broad) aims. Future scholarship should enrich these findings by taking into account wider samples of users and platforms, addressing how elements such as race and culture complicate nonbinary gender performances and social media practices to better understand the multiplicity of strategies nonbinary users employ to contend with and utilize specific affordances towards online and offline visibility and acceptance.

Biographical Note

Arianna Bussoletti is a PhD student in "Social Research, Communication, and Marketing" at the Department of Communication and Social Research of University of Roma La Sapienza. She investigates the interplay between digital media usages and identity practices, with a focus on youth activism and the LGBTQ+ community. She participated in the Italian team for the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project, collaborated with the Italian research unit of "Tipping+" (a European Research and Innovation action funded under H2020-EU.3.3.6.), and was panelist at 2021 "Visions of Change" ICA Preconference. She is involved in ongoing research on FridaysForFuture activism, youth social media challenges, and vaccine narratives on TikTok.

References

Bartholomew, K., Henderson, A. J. Z., & Marcia, J. E. (2000). Coding semi-structured interviews in social psychological research. In H. Reis & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology* (pp. 286–312). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ben, V. (2020). *Nonbinary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities, and Healthcare.* Policy Press.

Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology,* 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706QP063OA.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender.* New York: Routledge.

Cho, A. (2015). Queer Reverb: Tumblr, Affect, Time. In Hillis K., Paasonen S., and Petit M. (eds.) *Networked Affect* (pp. 43-57). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Franzke, A.S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C., the Association of Internet Researchers (2020). Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf.

Fraser, L. M. J. (2017). *Reblogging gender: Nonbinary transgender subjectivities and the internet.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Western Ontario. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/4453.

Freund, K., & Fielding, D. (2013). Research ethics in fan studies. *Participations*, 10(1). https://tinyurl.com/dw93ed98.

Gibbs, M., Meese J., Michael A., Nansen B., and Carter M. (2015). #Funeral and Instagram: Death, Social Media, and Platform Vernacular. *Information, Communication & Society,* 18(3), 255– 268. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152.

Green, A. I. (2007). Queer Theory and Sociology: Locating the Subject and the Self in Sexuality Studies. *Sociological Theory*, 25(1), 26–45. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00296.x

Guest, G., MacQueen, K., Namey, E. (2011). *Applied Thematic Analysi*s. London: Sage.

Hanckel, B., Vivienne, S., Byron, P., Robards, B., Churchill, B. (2019). That's Not Necessarily for Them': LGBTIQ+ Young People, Social Media Platform Affordances and Identity Curation. *Media, Culture & Society,* 41(8), 1261–1278. doi:10.1177/0163443719846612.

Leech, B. L. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semistructured interviews. *PS: Political science and politics*, 35(4), 665-668. doi:10.1017/S1049096502001129.

Massanari, A. L. & Chess, S. (2018). Attack of the 50-foot social justice warrior: the discursive construction of SJW memes as the monstrous feminine. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 525-542. doi:10.1080/14680777.2018.1447333.

Matsuno, E., & Budge, S. L. (2017). Nonbinary/ Genderqueer identities: A critical review of the literature. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 9(3), 116–120. doi:10. 1007/s11930-017-0111-8.

McCracken, A. (2017). Tumblr youth subcultures and media engagement. *Cinema Journal,* 57(1), 151-161. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44867867.

McCracken, A., Cho, A., Stein, L., & Hoch, I. N. (2020). *A tumblr book: platform and cultures*. University of Michigan Press.

McInroy, L. B., Craig, S. L., & Leung, V. W. (2018). Platforms and patterns for practice: LGBTQ+ youths' use of information and communication technologies. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 1-14. doi:10.1007/s10560-018-0577-x.

McLean, N. (2014). Considering the internet as enabling queer publics/counterpublics, Spheres, 1(1). https://tinyurl.com/pk4du8yh.

McNabb, C. (2017). *Nonbinary Gender Identities: History, Culture, Resources.* London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Neill Hoch, I. (2018). *Tumblr as Platform Architecture, User Experience, and Interaction Artifacts.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Illinois. https://tinyurl.com/2rahswkm.

Nentwich, J.C., Kelan, E.K. (2014), Towards a Topology of 'Doing Gender'. *Gender, Work and Organization, 21*, 121-134. doi:10.1111/gwao.12025.

Norman, D.A. (2013). *Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum qualitative sozialforschung/forum: Qualitative social research,* 7(4). doi:10.17169/fqs-7.4.175.

Pulice-Farrow, L., McNary, S.B., Paz Galupo, M. (2019). Bigender is just a Tumblr thing": microaggressions in the romantic relationships of gender non-conforming and agender transgender individuals, *Sexual and Relationship Therapy,* doi:10.1080/14681994.2018.1533245.

Richards, C., Bouman, W.P., Barker, M.J. (2017). *Genderqueer and Nonbinary Genders.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arianna Bussoletti