

# Participation in social networks: a social capital perspective of communication practices

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## **Abstract**

The following work aims to study the motivations to participate and publish in social networks. We use the concept of social capital from Bourdieu to understand this scenario where the possibility for the people to make online contributions and participate has become almost an obligation to exist. The object of this research is a Facebook group made by almost 130.000 women that is focused in to discuss the choice of not taking hormones as a form of contraception. From an interdisciplinary approach, we intended to investigate how the cooperation and the social capital circulate and can be altered between social groups.

**Keywords:** social network; Facebook; social capital; feminism.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence and dissemination of computer-mediated communication through Internet, new social groupings have emerged, as well as new forms of conversation and new forms of self-identification. We witnessed the appearance of the systems focused on the exercise of sociability, such as Facebook, that allow the interconnection between people, maintaining themselves as permanent channels of information circulation. In the current context of media convergence and the emergence of a new culture based on information and communication technologies, the possibility for the people to make online contributions and participate has become almost an obligation to exist. We are faced with a scenario where self-public exhibition and observation of the other's private life have become common practices.

In this research, we intend to accommodate the concept of social capital from Pierre Bourdieu (1980) to understand the motivations towards the participation and collaboration in social networks. We have as hypothesis that the reason why people want and need to collaborate in social media is to collect, obtain and, above all, to accumulate this kind of capital, that can be converted into various other attributes – tangible or not – like prestige, popularity or money for example.

We selected Facebook as social network to be observed and since one of our goals is also to understand how the cooperation and the social capital circulate and can be altered between social groups, we chose to explore as field of study a Brazilian group<sup>1</sup> called "Goodbye hormones: no-hormonal contraception". It consists in a very interesting object of investigation that addresses relevant discussions about the self-appropriation of the female body and is moved by ideas such as female sorority and companionship. That is, not only its main theme is actual, complex and relevant, but its participants are aligned with the perspective of the collaboration and support as principles.

The outline of this master's thesis is composed of three parts. The first chapter presents the particular context of the information society, introducing the changes that Internet and computer-mediated communication brought to the structure of communication, the culture of its users and the patterns of interaction. We also approach the idea that considers that we are faced with a context where there is a "superexposition" of ourselves and an online self-

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<sup>1</sup> The fact of being a Brazilian woman previously interested in the group since 2015 helped the approximation with the subject and its members.

hypervisibility in social media. The display in the form of public contributions of all kinds of personal activities – sometimes even the most intimate ones – is one of the topics of our interest in this chapter. Then, we finally discuss the concept of social capital, considering its multiple and complementing definitions thought by the most important authors.

The second part is dedicated to the presentation of our object of study, the Facebook group “Goodbye Hormones – Non-hormonal contraception”, a group formed exclusively by women and focused in to discuss free-hormones options regarding contraception among other subjects. We intended to provide a full understanding of the issues implied in the discussions of this group, so we found that it was appropriated to clarify some definitions about sex, gender and sexuality. We also believe that it was absolutely relevant as well to present the matter of choosing to abandon hormonal contraceptives from a historical and feminist perspective. Lastly for this part, we present and detail the methodology we used and justify our interdisciplinary approach, underlining the kind of research we intended to make, that is, one that takes into consideration the society that is being made instead of purely just follow the progress of technology or new tools and techniques that come along with it.

The last chapter brings the empirical, interpretative and conclusive research efforts. In order to develop it, we consider that applying the concept of social capital in a measurable way consists in to a methodological research challenge because of its complexity and multidimensionality. We developed an analysis guided by six aspects we brought to investigate and we took into consideration the particularities of the group, as well as the themes, connections and discussions it has aroused. In this part, we can also find the explanation of our hypermedia project related to the presentation of the thesis's data. We built an interactive website, a non-linear production that combines photography, text, audio and video to present and publish our research.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 - The information society

The emergence of computer-mediated communication and its dissemination through appropriation of the technical tools provided by the Internet has profoundly changed the way in which people communicate. New social groupings have emerged, as well as new forms of conversation and new forms of self-identification. Over the last years, the so-called "social" tools, which are those that focus on this exercise of sociability and the social networking sites that have grown in recent years. These systems comprise interactional processes and the networks expressed through them are built through established conversations. Through these systems, therefore, social actors and their connections are understood as ties.

According to Manuel Castells (2001), one of the features that the current revolution has is the application of knowledge and information to generate more knowledge and information processing devices, generating a feedback loop between innovation and its use. That is, technology users have taken ownership of it and redefined it. "The new information technologies are not simply tools to be applied, but processes to be developed"<sup>2</sup> (2001 : 50) says the researcher.

We do know that the Internet and computer-mediated communication have definitely changed the structure of communication, the culture of its users and patterns of interaction. Castells, who refers to the Internet as a "global electronic agora" (2001 : 381), defines three inherent characteristics of the network: penetrability, multifaceted decentralization and flexibility. He also adds the properties of interactivity and technological individualization.

More systematically, the author presents the characteristics that would be the basis of the information society. The first is that information is the raw material of new times, that is, technology acts on information. Another aspect is the strong penetrability of technologies, because once information is part of any human activity, all our processes, individual or collective, are shaped by new technological means. In addition, there are the characteristics of logic and the networking system. Logic is necessary to "structure the unstructured" and refers to a set of relationships with complex interactions and unpredictable patterns of

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<sup>2</sup> "As novas tecnologias da informação não são simplesmente ferramentas a serem aplicadas, mas processos a serem desenvolvidos" (translation by the author).

development stemming from the creative power of that interaction. The network system refers to the flexibility, reconfiguration and reversibility of processes, organizations and institutions in the technological society. And, finally, this new society is endowed with the convergence of technologies, which makes it impossible to distinguish technological trajectories separately, creating a relationship of interdependence. The example is that microelectronics, telecommunications, computers and optoelectronics - areas that, as we have seen, have developed, prospered and reconfigured an era - are all integrated into information systems.

Along with this context of development of digital information and communication technologies new relevant concepts and terms have emerged such as the idea of "cyberspace" and "cyberculture" introduced by Pierre Lévy (2014). The cyberspace, brought by the global interconnection of computers, is both a network and a new communication medium. The term refers not only to the material infrastructure of the digital communication but also to the universe of information it contains as well as the human beings who make part of it. Having said that, we would like to highlight that the emergence of the cyberspace at the same time that follows also favors the general evolution of civilization. That shows its conditioner character instead of the determined one. Regarding the concept of cyberculture, it would be the set of techniques, practices, attitudes, ways of thinking and values that develop along the cyberspace.

It is in this context and in that space (cyberspace) that the collective intelligence intervenes, consisting in one of the main engines of cyberculture, which Levy explains in "L'intelligence collective" (LÉVY, 1997). This notion of intelligence is spread everywhere, coordinated in real time and results in an effective mobilization of skills. It recognizes the individual's skills in order to coordinate them for the use of the community. In that case, information and communication technologies are in charge of the coordination of collective intelligence.

Therefore, as Pierre Lévy explains, this new techno-sociological configuration leads to some changes to the collective organization:

The act of giving a community the means to express a plural speech, not through representatives, such is the technopolitic issue of democracy in the cyberspace. This collective speech could, for example, present itself as a complex image or a dynamic space, a moving map of the practices and ideas of the group. Each one could be situated in a virtual world where all members would contribute to enrich and to sculpt by their acts of communication. (...) The development of cyberspace gives us the opportunity to experiment new

collective modes of organization and regulation at the same time it intensifies multiplicity and variety. (1997 : 73).<sup>3</sup>

Lévy also detected what he calls “major technological evolutions” (1997 : 64) regarding the message’s control; in the cyberspace, the control is digital (bit by bit) and the production, diffusion and interaction make part of a context. With an optimistic point of view, he considers that the regulation of human groups is marked by a character of immanence, when a big collectivity is in the situation of being auto-organized.

These characteristics are aligned with what we can detect in the object that constituted our corpus of analysis in this research. A Facebook group organized, regulated, with its content produced, tagged and commented by its own members and users.

According to Boullier (2016), the connectivity offered by digital networks made possible the appearance of more specific and unlikely communities like, for example, communities of patients with rare diseases. Also, without the possibilities brought by Internet, it would be very difficult to have as many activities cultivated by the communities of fans – or groups that are somehow reunited by its affinities – that extend the universe of authors (like in fanfictions). This constitutes a key-moment regarding the emergence of new collectives because “the shift can take place from the modus of cultural consumption to productive and contributory activities that change the previous asymmetries in each domain and thus constitute a specific attribute of the digital world”<sup>4</sup> (BOULLIER, 2016 : 105).

We can also identify new types of contribution and organization of tasks and functions. Boullier (2016) mentions several studies developed within digital communities such as Debian (a group of developers that produces since 1993 a distribution (or version) of Linux), Wikipedia and even Bitcoin. It is interesting to study this vision about the production and technique embedded in the contributions but we want also to approach the most common cultural practice that reveals a generalized exposure of oneself, an apparently less structured contribution, but that invades all the relational space.

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<sup>3</sup> “Donner à une collectivité le moyen de proférer une parole plurielle, sans passer par représentants, tel est l’enjeu technopolitique de la démocratie dans le cyberspace. Cette parole collective pourrait, par exemple, se présenter comme une image complexe ou un espace dynamique, une carte mouvante des pratiques et des idées du groupe. Chacun pourrait se situer dans un monde virtuel que tous contribuerait à enrichir et à sculpter par leurs actes de communication. (...) Le développement du cyberspace nous donne l’occasion d’expérimenter des modes d’organisation et de régulation collectifs exaltant la multiplicité et la variété.” (translation by the author).

<sup>4</sup> “C'est ainsi que le glissement peut se faire depuis des styles de consommation culturelle vers des activités productives et contributives qui changent les asymétries précédentes dans chaque domaine et de ce fait constitue une action propre du numérique.” (translation by the author).

## 1.2 - Contribution and digital identity

The possibility for the public to make online actions has become almost an obligation to exist on the Internet. The display in the form of public contributions of all kinds of personal activities – sometimes even the most intimate ones – remains one of the particular topic of interest in the area of social media studies.

The success and propagation of social networks since Friendster (2002) and Orkut (2004) highlighted the phenomenon of the massification of digital social practices. People provide and publish deliberately personal information at the same time they observe the life of the others. We are faced with a context where there is a “superexposition” of ourselves and an online self-hypervisibility.

According to Serge Tisseron (2001) there is a “desire of “extimacy”, a wish to display publicly elements of one’s private life. It consists in to communicate about the person’s inner world at the same time that there is the observation of the other’s intimacy (voyeurism). Tisseron explains that the goal of this sharing is:

“(...) to encourage thinking, to meet a benevolent interlocutor – one who would also be available for a punctual and instantaneous exchange in order to be better known. ‘Better known’ refers here to the fact that it would create a relation to oneself as to the other, it is speculated as much as reciprocal” (TISSERON, 2001 : 69).<sup>5</sup>

Under the culture of narcissism effect, we watch people to publicize aspects of their life traditionally intended for a reduced audience – like their affects, their small habits and everyday perversions – as well as an intention to put into practice relational tactics, managing their digital reputation and developing a personal branding. Gustavo Gomez-Mejia (2016), who studies this particular thematic about how people represent themselves in social media, refers to the phenomena as “self factory”<sup>6</sup>:

“It seems to me that the so-called "social" sites develop conceptions of identity that make the self-representation on the Web consubstantial to the production and consumption of industrial contents. (...) the devices of the

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<sup>5</sup> “(...) susciter la pensée, de rencontrer un interlocuteur bienveillant, demandeur comme soi d'un échange ponctuel et instantané pour « se » connaître mieux. Ce pronom, on l'a compris, renvoie ici à une relation à soi-même autant qu'à l'autre, il est spéculaire autant que réciproque” (Translation by the author).

<sup>6</sup> “Fabrique de soi”, in the original publication.

contemporary Web decline the identities of Internet users between positions of author, equal and client<sup>7</sup>. (GOMEZ-MEJIA, 2016 : 23).

The architectural form present in the social media services standardizes a series of editorial forms, building a dense board of metaphors that characterizes the way we dress up the structures of the contemporary Web. In other words, item by item, the mechanism/device invites the user to express and define himself with pre-defined categories, from the most basic ones like name, city, age, profile picture, to tastes, moods and status, photos, videos. Thus, the user's representation achieves a connotation of personality being written by the citation of favorite books, movies, brands, idols, universities, employers, etc. “(...) we imagine then a certain transference of connotations between the items cited and the concerned personality”<sup>8</sup> (GOMEZ-MEJIA, 2016 : 74).

What is also noticeable in the social network's systems is the presence of an engine strategically oriented to the expression of euphoric values, such as the likes, number of followers, friends, fans, etc. By the way, the friendship, the sharing and the community/group are famous values in this logic; they create an environment propitious to the intensive production of connotations of popularity regarding varied actions. This conception of popularity is the center of all the innumerable intangible elements in the contemporary Web. Its importance is constantly marked by information like “This video is popular” or “This photo is popular” regarding different contents. It is very rare to find social media devices that do not invite the users to like, comment or share a post. These are the signs of the intention to produce and, at the same time, to measure popularity to users that are generally expecting to become popular. For the “audience”, it takes only one click to contribute and make this engine work. From the thumbs up from Facebook and Youtube, the heart from Instagram or Pinterest, the retweet or the star from Twitter and the +1 from Google+ we can see some examples points out this propensity to make the value of the popularity. When Orkut first appeared in 2004, it invited the user's friends to very directly evaluate him regarding how much he was reliable (the smile icon), cool (the ice cube icon) and sexy (the heart icon). A friend could anonymously give 1 to 3 “points” in each aspect and the system would show the average evaluation in the user's profile page as above. At the time,

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<sup>7</sup> “Il me semble en effet que les sites dits « sociaux » aménagent des conceptions de l'identité qui rendent la représentation de soi sur le Web consubstantielle à la production et à la consommation des contenus industriels. (...) les dispositifs du Web contemporain déclinent les identités des internautes entre des positions d'auteur, de pair et de client.” (translation by the author).

<sup>8</sup> “(...) on imagine alors un certain transfert des connotations entre les objets cités et la personnalité concernée” (translation by the author).

the greater prestige one could have was the number of his/her declared fans, marked by the star.

Image: Profile page from Orkut

The screenshot shows a detailed profile page for 'Geet Purwar'. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Friends, Messages, Communities, Search, and What's New. The profile header features a cartoon illustration of a person at a computer. Below the header, the user's name 'Geet Purwar' is displayed, along with gender ('male'), location ('single Ghaziabad India'), and a fan count of '46 fans'. A decorative banner with various icons follows. The 'about me' section contains numerous details: relationship status ('single'), here for ('friends'), about me ('Later! Ryt now visit Radioworld (www.radioworld.co.nr)'), ethnicity ('asian'), religion ('Hindu'), humor ('clever/quick witted, friendly'), fashion ('contemporary'), living ('with roommate(s), friends visit often'), hometown ('Orai'), webpage ('http://clik.to/abes'), passions ('Technology! in each and every dimension of life!'), sports ('in Second life!'), activities ('ONline! books: Technojunkyl music: Hindi'), tv shows ('Discoveries, National Geographics'), movies ('Matrix, Spiderman'), and cuisines ('Indian'). To the right, there are sections for 'his friends' (147) and 'his communities' (121), each listing several users with their names and profile pictures.

Source: <https://vulcanpost.com/39081/orkut-dead/> Access: 09/05/17.

This idea of popularity is frequently associated to the notion of "greater number/quantity"; in that sense, some social media systems often organize ratings with the "Tops" or "The 10 more", for example, establishing an idea of concurrence between the users.

Gomez-Mejia says that the simple like button in Facebook acquires a meaning that exceeds the idea of merely expressing a subjective appreciation of a content; that click is a nominative and iconic annexation of the subject to an audience, a fanbase or to a client context. (...) all these expressive clicks that seem to have identity values return to feed conventional compatibilities, (...) subordinated to an industrial production of euphoric values, deliverable in the form of "systematic performance indicators"<sup>9</sup> (GOMEZ-MEJIA, 2016 : 113).

Ultimately, inspired by Gomez-Mejia work epilogue, we produced the board down below to resume and organize some thoughts about what is implied in the act of being self-represented, "self-written" in social network sites of the contemporary Web.

<sup>9</sup> (...) tous ces clics expressifs qui semblent avoir des valeurs identitaires se dédoublent et reviennent à nourrir des comptabilités conventionnelles (...), livrables sous forme d' "indicateurs synthétiques de performance". (translation by the author).

## 10 theses about the identity-industry relations on contemporary Web

I The web would like to be seen as a place where people talk, but what it really is is an assembly of writings	II Assigned and then assimilated to a numbered page, I submit my identity to a systematic order that makes me comparable	III Assembly table: here are my name and my head + X prefabricated markers
IV Metaphoric habits: Image of a world of sharing among friends	V Followers compulsion: At each post, I will die to know who will react to it and how would be these reactions	VI Duty to inform: I tell my life in a "news" mode. The plot of the latest news in a timed scroll obsolescent flow
VII My tastes are a relational fuel. Who chooses to show its preferences expects the other user's identification	VIII Popularity curve: I am a fan conscripted and counted by the scores and euphoric buttons	IX Big Brother: the panoptic shadow put in my private life makes me forget that I make part of the merchandise
X Amphibological engineering: the new language colonizes the world. My profile, their targeting. My friends, their audience. My sharing, their distribution.		

Dominique Boullier (2016) cites Fanny Georges (2010) to bring to light the three aspects of the digital identity:

- The declarative identity (the user): state or not attributes of himself in his profile.
- The acting identity (the user's activities): edit this profile more or less often, post photos, activities, etc.
- The calculated identity (the system): the ubiquitous calculation tools in the platforms which contribute to give status and notoriety (the like, for example).

They consider that the interfaces of computer-mediated communication frame a cognitive and informational environment that plays a role in the construction of the subject. And by deploying the acting identity and the calculated identity, we detect the stimulation of a

compulsive behavior. It is a matter of constantly manifesting oneself in order to continue to exist and to maintain the existence of its representation.

## 2 – Social Capital

The concept of social capital plays an important role in this research. We consider it to be a central element in the exchanges, collaborations and actions in social networks. We have as hypothesis that the reason why people want and need to collaborate in social media is to collect, obtain and, above all, to accumulate this kind of capital, that can be converted into various other attributes – tangible or not – like prestige, popularity or money for example.

Pierre Bourdieu is known for being the first to bring up the concept with “Le capital social: notes provisoires” in 1980. He so defines:

Social capital is the totality of current or potential resources that are linked to the possession of a sustainable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of intercognition; Or, in other words, belonging to a group, as a set of agents that are not only endowed with common properties (that can be perceived by the observer, by others, or by themselves) but are also united by permanent and useful connections. (BOURDIEU, 1980 :1)<sup>10</sup>

The “volume” of social capital depends on the size of the connections an agent is capable of effectively mobilize, and on the economic, cultural, social or symbolic capital that each of those connections has. Bourdieu’s definition explores four other linked concepts:

- a) Resources – the supplies or sources of aid that are or might be available in an individual's social network.
- b) Social network – a stable and “durable” social network (or networks) that allows individuals to access resources.
- c) Relationships – interactions based on subjective (e.g. feelings, such as friendship, respect, etc.) or institutional (e.g. the name of a family) acquaintance and recognition. It is through acquaintance and recognition that social capital gains a symbolic character that allows it to be acknowledged and legitimized.
- d) Group membership – the association with a group that provides durable and helpful social connections.

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<sup>10</sup> “Le capital social est l’ensemble des ressources actuelles ou potentielles qui sont liées à la possession d’un réseau durable de relations plus ou moins institutionnalisées d’interconnaissance ; ou, en d’autres termes, à l’appartenance à un groupe, comme ensemble d’agents qui ne sont pas seulement dotés de propriétés communes (susceptibles d’être perçues par l’observateur, par les autres ou par eux-mêmes) mais sont aussi unis par des liaisons permanentes et utiles.” (translation by the author).

As social capital is a concept closely related to other significant sociological concepts and it has become a multidisciplinary concept used by a range of different disciplines, from economics to political science, it has been growing significantly in the last decades. Another observation is that social capital is based on a holistic approach to human connections and its resources, it can be applied to study the micro and macro levels of social relationships. We acknowledge that it is an elastic concept with a multitude of definitions. However, the historical path of the concept of social capital shows how, despite not being consensual, it has common elements and a collective scientific credibility.

Therefore, it is necessary to at least briefly explore its major interpretations, summarizing and comparing the definition and approach to social capital by its four main contemporary proponents, namely Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Nan Lin. When we look for similarities in their definitions we find that they all agree that social capital is related to the resources people can derive directly from their social connections. The differences are related to the addition of other elements in their definition (besides social networks), theoretical backgrounds, and research purposes.

For Bourdieu (1980) and Lin (2001), social capital is defined as the resources that are available in social networks. Their analysis is done within an unequal society, constrained by limited resources and power and hierarchical structures. For Coleman (1988), social capital is defined by function, including obligations and expectations, information channels, and norms. As Lin, Coleman frames social capital within the rational action choice and social exchange theories. For Putnam (2000), social capital equals social networks, and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. Putnam's approach is done within the political science field, focusing on democracy and civic engagement. He also brings up the distinction between bonding and bridging capital: bonding social capital is related to homogeneous and closer groups, such as fraternal groups. Bridging social capital would be related to more diverse and heterogeneous groups, such as the civil rights movement.

We here consider that social capital is the joint of the resources that are potentially available and can be mobilized from our social networks. These resources are intrinsically connected to the social networks where they can be drawn from, but represent more than the sum of those social networks. For instance, resources can be accessed through direct (friend or family member) or indirect ties (a friend of a friend). Additionally, the mobilization of these resources is socially situated: it occurs in a specific context that involves factors, such as social circumstances, timing, reciprocity, etc. Social capital shares similarities with other types of

capital, such as human and cultural capital, namely the nonmonetary aspect. But besides the specificity of each capital, social capital accumulates with use and requires at least the interaction of two people. There is also a connection between social capital and other types of resources – those with higher economic and human capital, seem to have higher social capital. Lastly, social capital adds value, or complements other types of capital and we must not forget that this notion is linked to the idea of power relations.

## CHAPTER 2

### 1.1 – Goodbye hormones

"apparently it is ungraceful of me  
to mention my period in public  
cause the actual biology  
of my body is too real

it is okay to sell what's  
between a woman's legs  
more than it is okay to  
mention its inner workings

the recreational use of  
this body is seen as  
beautiful while  
its nature is  
seen as ugly" (KAUR, 2015 : 177)

Since among our goals is to observe how the cooperation and the social capital circulate and can be altered between social groups, we chose to explore as field of study a Brazilian Facebook group called "Goodbye hormones: non-hormonal contraception". Created in 2015, this group is secret and in order to get in you need to be invited and have your admission approved. Even so, the Facebook group counts already more than 125.000 women. Only women are allowed, or as the cover photo warns "Group for people with a uterus":

Image: Group's overview

The screenshot shows the Facebook group 'Adeus Hormônios: Contracepção não-hormonal' with a red cover photo featuring a heart shape and the text 'Grupo para pessoas com útero LEIA O POST FIXO!'. The sidebar includes links for Discussion, Membres, Évènements, Vidéos, Photos, Fichiers, and a search bar. The main content area shows a post by Luana Moreira from October 4, 2016, with the text '[POST FIXO] SEU RELATO É DE EXTREMA IMPORTÂNCIA E VALOR PARA O GRUPO, PORÉM TODOS OS RELATOS POSTADOS AQUI É ÚNICA, INTEGRALMENTE E EXCLUSIVAMENTE RESPONSABILIDADE DA PRÓPRIA PARTICIPANTE.' Below the post are member statistics: 128 705 membres (356 nouveaux) and suggested members.

It reads "Group for people with a uterus. Read the fixed post!". Source: screenshot taken in 12/05/2017.

It is moderated by 10 people, has specific rules regarding the posts and it is quite organized in terms of the use of tags. Its main purpose is to discuss non-hormonal contraception options. More and more women are deciding to stop taking the birth control pill. They don't have the intention to get pregnant, but are very worried about the possible side effects associated to the drug, such as reduced libido, mood swings, migraine, depression, fluid retention, and, in some cases, venous thrombosis. Since the medical community seems to have almost as a consensus that the contraceptive pill negative effects are not frequent and that the drug even helps to prevent some types of cancer, women often felt with no option but to accept the "recognized" scientific opinion.

Scientists like to think they're the supreme experts of what constitutes the nature of the act of science – that is, the meaning of objectivity, the basis of scientific claims, the status of science itself in the society and the way science works. But over the past 40 years, our understanding of scientific activity has undergone some changes. At the heart of this revolution, feminists have introduced a specific set of questions about the influence of gender ideologies on the history of science. It's in this context that this Facebook group was created, to discuss and share experiences and information about the decision to stop taking hormonal drugs to prevent pregnancy, suggest other kinds of contraception methods and promote the awareness of the female body.

However, as a broader part of the theme, very frequently we find posts concerning sexuality in general, period, menstrual cup, sexual diseases, feminism, abortion, among others. Telling experiences is deeply encouraged, but there are several rules, such as the prohibition of: fake profiles, couple profiles, profiles without picture, screenshots from the comment's section, fights, intolerance (sexism, homophobia, racism, hate speech, insults, etc), posts without tags, posts about politics, topics that incite violence. In the fixed post, we also find some organized specific information that redirects to another related groups like the groups whose main topics are: male condom, female condom, Billings method, polycystic ovarian syndrome, fertility perception, etc.

One reason why this research field could be interesting is that the group is moved by ideas like female sorority; therefore, they feel invited to collaborate and to express themselves in a "safe" environment that encourages helpful contributions and disapproves trolls, unkindness and personal judgements. At the same time, even though at the first sight the specific topic of the non-hormonal contraception may sound too "medical", it is something that women need to talk between them, without the interference of the State or the so

established medical knowledge. They want to regain control of their bodies and get to know it better to make their own choices.

## 1.2 – Considerations about sex, gender and sexuality

“One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine”<sup>11</sup> (BEAUVIOR, 1949 : 285).

Even though this essay is not intrinsically related to gender studies, due to the nature and content of our object of research, we find necessary to underline some points about what is known to be as feminist theories. First of all, we use Elsa Dorlin’s (2008) definition of feminism in reason of its clarity and objectivity. We understand feminism as a tradition of thought and its historical movements, which have established the fight for the equality of men and women, tracing the prejudices concerning the inferiority of women or denouncing the inequity of their condition. The feminist studies are made with multiples disciplines like History, Sociology, Literature, Philosophy, Biomedical sciences and they are a: “(...) work of questioning what had hitherto been commonly held outside politics: the roles of sex, personality, family organization, domestic tasks, sexuality, the body. A work of historicization and, consequently, of politicization of private space, intimacy, individuality”<sup>12</sup> (DORLIN, 2008 : 10). It’s about disturbing the hegemonic power relations, where we find the stuck natural or moral norms, to the matter of the body, to psychic or cultural structures, to individual choices.

It is also appropriate to differentiate these three concepts related to the sex. According to Dorlin (2008), there is the biological sex, like what we born with and defines us as male or female and the sex behavior that is supposed to correspond to it; the gender, the attributes of the masculine or the feminine that the process of education and socialization produce to the individual; and the sexuality, “that is to say having a sexuality, “having” or “making” sex”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “On ne naît pas femme: on le devient. Aucun destin biologique, psychique, économique ne définit la figure que revêt au sein de la société la femelle humaine; c'est l'ensemble de la civilisation qui élabore ce produit intermédiaire entre le mâle et le castrat qu'on qualifie de féminin”. (translation by the author).

<sup>12</sup> “travail de mise en doute de ce qui jusqu'alors était communément tenu hors du politique: les rôles de sexe, de la personnalité, l'organisation familiale, les tâches domestiques, la sexualité, le corps... Il s'agit d'un travail d'historicisation et, partant, de politisation de l'espace privé, de l'intime, de l'individualité.” (translation by the author).

<sup>13</sup> “c'est à dire le fait d'avoir une sexualité, d'"avoir" ou de "faire" du sexe.” (translation by the author).

(DORLIN, 2008 : 5). In the specific case of our Facebook group, it's the biological sex (those who have a uterus) that is going to designate those who are able to participate in the forum; transgender men would be in if we consider that they have a uterus, but excluded if we consider they identify with the male gender. In any case, the group doesn't seem to go further in questioning these subjects and sticks itself to the relation with the female reproductive system. The effect of hormones and the contraception intention will play a central role in that sphere, even if subjects of other matters are also discussed in the environment.

One of the main topics of the feminist critic is the body ("my body belongs to me", "my body, my rules"). Some believe that the critic begins with a political imposition of the heterosexuality, once it contributes to a social control of reproduction. But several devices have been created over different times and societies in order to establish a domestication of the female sexuality, such as the concept of sexual initiation for women, the appreciation of virginity, the idealization of marriage, monogamy and the restricted access to contraception methods. The right to contraception and to abortion, along with a sexual education, in the other hand, would be elements of re-appropriation of the female body by themselves.

### **1.3 – It's about the right to choose**

The revolution for women's rights began on March 8, 1857, when American workers protested for better working conditions and gave rise to the International Women's Day. But it was not until May 1960 that they became autonomous to choose the time to get pregnant and to expand their entry into the labor market at the time, with the sale and distribution of the first contraceptive pill, Enovid, a drug with a high-level concentration of hormones. The novelty was a watershed in terms of sexual liberation and gave women an alternative to expectation of motherhood and domestic life; they finally were able to rule the family planning, without having to abdicate other aspects and wishes of their lives.

More than half a century and many questions later, they return to preach the revolution through another choice: stop taking the pill to regain control of their own bodies without synthetic intermediates. Some believe that taking hormones and considering the side-effects that they come with like depression, mood swings or PMS, make the woman a lesser version of herself, it artificially alters her identity. In the other hand, fertility and body awareness, to know how their bodies work, brings independence and empowerment.

Women began to question the mainstream acceptance of hormonal contraceptives and to ask themselves: "Is it fair to compromise my health in order to be the responsible one for the birth

control?”. Holly Grigg-Spall, the author of “Sweetening the Pill: or How We Got Hooked on Hormonal Birth Control”<sup>14</sup>, recently wrote an article for The Guardian<sup>15</sup> where she states about this particular query: “Considering that women are fertile just six days per menstrual cycle, and men are fertile every single day, that the burden of avoiding unwanted pregnancy falls to us, regardless of the burden that might have on our health and wellbeing, is nothing short of sexism”.

It seems that this subject has a lack of will and some resistance from the research and medical community. In a rare occasion, when Danish scientists published a work<sup>16</sup> that annunciated that women who take pill are more likely to experience depression, the doctors rushed to relativize the discover. “(...) it seems that no study will ever be good enough for the medical community to take women’s experiences seriously. As soon as this research dropped, the experts lined up to deliver their usual mix of gaslighting and paternalistic platitudes” said Grigg-Spall about this event. She even refers to the phenomena as “pillsplaining” alluding to mansplaining, which means to explain something to someone, characteristically by a man to woman, in a manner regarded as condescending or patronizing.

Finally, the matter regarding the hormonal contraception is more complex and touches more several issues than one can imagine at first sight. It comprises subjects since the hegemony of the pharmaceutic industry, passing by the asymmetry in power relations between women and men, and the empowerment of women from the control of their bodies and fertility. It’s about making available all the information concerning this matter in order for the woman to choose and decide what suits her better, with total liberty to choose even the hormonal option if she so wants to.

## 2.1 – Methodology

This research aims to investigate how the information and communication technologies influence the construction of social capital in the particular context of the social

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<sup>14</sup> GRIGG-SPALL, Holly. Sweetening the Pill: or How We Got Hooked on Hormonal Birth Control. Alresford : Zero Books, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> “The pill is linked to depression - and doctors can no longer ignore it”. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/03/pill-linked-depression-doctors-hormonal-contraceptives>. Access: 17/05/2017.

<sup>16</sup> “Women taking pill more likely to be treated for depression, study finds”. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/28/women-taking-contraceptive-pill-more-likely-to-be-treated-for-depression-study-finds>. Access: 17/05/2017.

networks. We have, as hypothesis, that the reason why people feel compelled to collaborate in this virtual environment is to collect, obtain and, above all, to accumulate this kind of capital, that can be converted into various other attributes – tangible or not – like prestige, popularity or money for example.

We chose to explore a Facebook group, but the intention here is not merely to follow the progress of technology or new tools and techniques that come along with its venture; but to understand the society through the possibilities, logic and grammars turned possible by the information revolution. Boullier (2016) quotes Latour (2006) to say that it is necessary to choose a sociology of the society that is being made instead of:

“giving in to this race for novelty, or to make constant wars between techies, for whom a brighter tomorrow is announced at every product launch and technosceptiques, for whom society does not vary despite these buzz that do not change anything in the unequal structure of the world (BOULLIER, 2016 : 6)<sup>17</sup>.

It seemed to us that an interdisciplinary approach would be the most coherent to address our thematic and research goal, the kind of approach that draws on conceptual frameworks capable of dealing with particular problems, integrating concepts that permeate various disciplines and proposing new syntheses based on the evolution of existing models and analogies. Therefore, we take into consideration, naturally, the studies of sociology, visual anthropology and gender studies to better understand the whole picture. It is absolutely necessary to borrow some points of view from neighboring disciplines due to the complexity of the subjects of our times. We also developed a content and discourse analysis on an exploratory basis for a first apprehension of the field. Unfortunately, we didn't have the time to extend this kind of analysis as we would like to at the beginning.

## 2.2 – Survey

In order to address our research questions and hypothesis about the collaboration in social network sites and the social capital in this particular context are related, we conducted a survey (hosted by Google Forms) in the group, posted it and asked for the users to answer. The post reverberated a lot and we had 431 reactions (342 likes, 60 gratitude flowers and 29 I loved it) along with 102 comments saying mostly that they answered it. 1126 women answered the survey.

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<sup>17</sup> “céder à cette course à la nouveauté, ni pour reprendre sans cesse la guérilla entre les technophiles, pour qui des lendemains radieux sont annoncés à chaque lancement de produit et technosceptiques, pour qui la société ne varie pas malgré l'écume de ces buzz qui ne modifient rien à la structure inégalitaire du monde” (translation by the author).

Image: The post asking for the users to answer the questionnaire and their reactions

**(Pesquisa) (Ajuda) (Colaboração)**

Oi, gente, preciso muito da ajuda de vocês! Na minha pesquisa de mestrado estou estudando a colaboração nas redes sociais e o meu campo de pesquisa é justamente esse grupo maravilhoso ❤ Por favor, me dêem aquele help respondendo o questionário abaixo! Todas as respostas são anônimas.

Obrigada, obrigada! 😊

**Colaboração no grupo "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não hormonal"**

Questionário sobre colaboração nas redes sociais utilizando como campo de pesquisa o grupo do Facebook "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não hormonal". Todas as questões se referem ao comportamento das usuárias nesse grupo. Fique à vontade para descrever a sua opinião nas questões abertas. Todas as respostas são anônimas.

Este é um questionário de pesquisa. O resultado da pesquisa cuja descrição é obrigatória para obtenção de título de mestrado em Ciência Digital.

Obrigada desde já pela participação! :)

**Required**

**Idade \***

Até 17 anos  
 18 - 24 anos

[COLABORAÇÃO NO GRUPO "ADEUS HORMÔNIOS - CONTRACEPÇÃO NÃO HORMONAL" - FORMULÁRIO DE PESQUISA](#)

**Colaboração no grupo "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não hormonal"**

Questionário sobre colaboração nas redes sociais utilizando como campo de pesquisa o grupo do Facebook "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não..."

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

J'aime Commenter Partager

Afficher les commentaires précédents 50/102

Répondre à [REDACTED] · Respondido! [REDACTED]  
J'aime · Répondre · 16 mai, 22:19

Répondre à [REDACTED] · Respondido! Bom trabalho! Ah! Gostei como as perguntas foram feitas e a chance de marcar mais de uma opção é amor.  
J'adore · Répondre · 3 · 16 mai, 22:43

1 réponse

Répondre à [REDACTED] · Respondido! [REDACTED]  
J'aime · Répondre · 1 · 16 mai, 22:50

Feito  
Répondre à [REDACTED] · Feito  
J'aime · Répondre · 1 · 16 mai, 23:00

Feito  
Répondre à [REDACTED] · Feito  
J'aime · Répondre · 1 · 16 mai, 23:05

Répondre à [REDACTED] · Feito  
J'aime · Répondre · 1 · 16 mai, 23:11

Source: screenshot taken in 18/05/2017. The anonymization was necessary once screenshots are a forbidden practice according to the group's rules.

We made closed and open questions and the measures we used and intended to collect were related to these aspects:

- Demographic: aiming a comprehensive analysis and a better understanding of the background of these women, we asked a series of questions about the demographics of our sample. We found that it was interesting to know their age, level of education, sexual orientation and if they were mothers. Not too many questions of this kind, since we intended not to be long and had other goals.
- Relations with the use of contraceptives: types of contraceptive they use (hormonal, non-hormonal, the two methods combined or no use) and if they have experienced unpleasant effects related to the use of hormonal contraceptives.

- c) Identification with feminism: if they consider themselves as feminists and if they consider the group as feminist (since the group is nowhere described as feminist neither uses this word, we wanted to their perception about this matter).
- d) Group interest and participation: how comfortable they feel to share experiences and opinions in the group; the level of difficulty to find the specific information that the group has in other sources, motivation to participate in the discussions.
- e) Feelings regarding likes and interactions: considering that the like is a very important form of visualization of the social capital, we intended to know what effects the idea of getting it caused to the users; and what others outcomes the absence of this element could cause.
- f) Kind of relationships: how the group influences, or not, the creation of new social relations (in our case, friendship) or strengthens pre-existing ones.

### **2.3 – Video interviews**

We also conducted semi-structured anthropologic video interviews that were recorded in May of 2017. The participants were from different parts and states of Brazil (MG, SC, DF, RJ) with ages that varied from 18 to 27 years old. One of the participants were the founder and moderator of “Adeus Hormônios”, Luana Moreira, who naturally answered some different questions regarding the creation of the group. The interviews were made from physical distance using Skype or Facebook’s videoconference tool. The participants were at their home, we presume that in a relaxed and unaffected environment. The observation of these interviews will allow us to work on the nature of the results obtained from capturing images and sounds.

**Image: Participants during our video interview**



From left to right: Luana Moreira, Christiane Lagun, Bianca Minink and Mikaelly Santos.

According to Chabert and Ibáñez-Bueno (2015), since Internet increases the interpersonal communication at distance, “this feature of the web communication enables a telepresence that can question the concept of the distance. Webcams and softwares like Messenger enhance new social practices (...)" (2015 : 4). In fact, the researchers consider that “distance communication and face-to-face communication are rather complementary than opposite” (2015 : 6). One of the advantages of using a methodology based on visual anthropology is that it consists in:

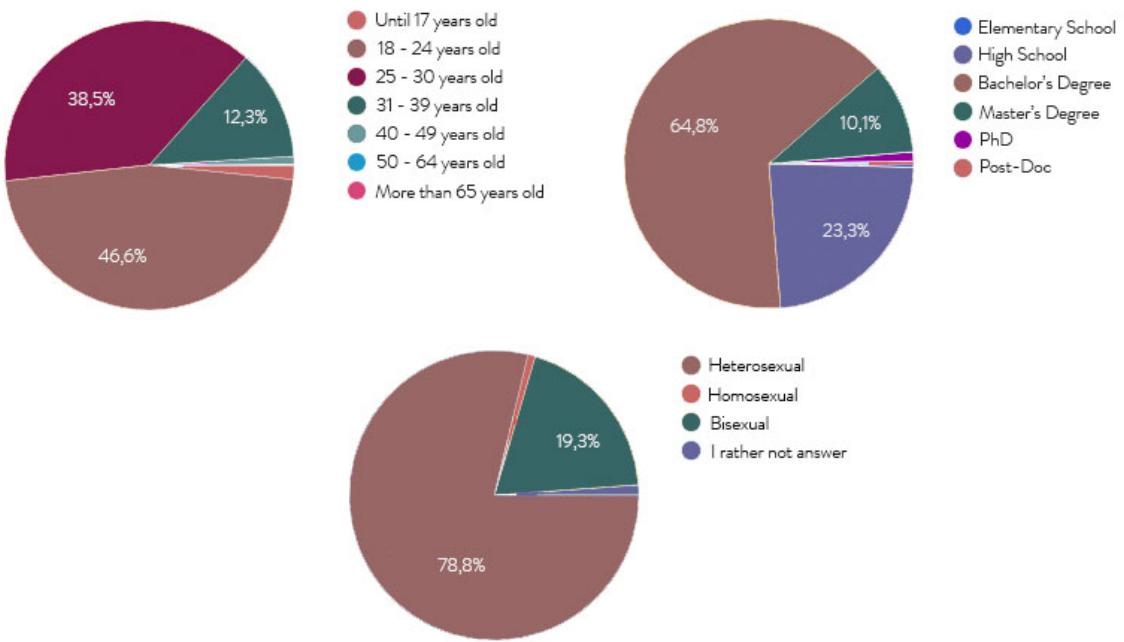
a collaborative approach that demonstrates how many aspects of experience and knowledge are not visible; and even those that are visible will have different meanings to different people. Finally, visual anthropologists view image production and the negotiations and collaborations that this involves as part of a process by which knowledge is produced rather than as mere visual note taking (PINK, 2003 in CHABERT and IBÁÑEZ-BUENO, 2015 : 7).

## CHAPTER 3

We made an effort here, from the elaboration of the methodology and the questionnaire, to formulate questions that could help us to identify the presence of the social capital in the interactions – specially in the motivation to collaborate – in the group. In this analysis, it is absolutely necessary not to ignore but to take into consideration the particularities of the group, as well as the themes, connections and discussions it evokes. Even if this object of study has characteristics and findings that could be extended to the logic and the context of social networks in general, we found that it was essential to offer a more complete view about the whole picture. As previously mentioned, we guided our analysis according to the following aspects:

### 1.1 - Demographic

It was possible to draw a profile of the participants of the group “Goodbye Hormones” from some questions during the surveys and the video interview. The vast majority is in the age group of 18 to 30 years old (85,1%). That is probably linked to the fact individuals of this age group are more comfortable with technology and social media and it is usually during these years that the woman is more sexually active. 74,9% of the women have at least a Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree, which represents that they are well educated analysis corpus. The huge majority (98,1%) considers themselves as heterosexual or bisexual, which is totally understandable considering that the main reason for them to join the group is to search for alternatives for contraception. Only 10,8% have kids; other 88% don’t.



## 1.2 – Relations with the use of contraceptives

At the moment, 68,3% of the women are taking non-hormonal contraceptives. We don't know if they took this decision following to the group participation or if they decided this and then joined the group for more information. The fact is that their attitude is aligned with the purpose of the group. And 17,1% are not making use of any kind of contraceptive at the moment, which can be surprising if they are not trying to get pregnant, but also makes sense to the choice of not taking hormonal contraceptives.

We asked them about possible unpleasant side-effects related to the use of hormonal contraceptives to understand precisely if this occurrence could be related to the interest for the group. 69% experienced a decrease of libido when taking hormones. The other three most frequent side-effects were decrease of vaginal lubrication (56%), fluid retention (52,4%) and strong headaches (47,4%). In the open option, we detected frequent answers mentioning depression, mood swings, anxiety, altered blood pressure and fatigue, for example. When they made remarks considering the side-effects more related to psychological occurrences (depression, mood swings and anxiety) they many times made reference to how bad they were, using adjectives that weren't present when they mentioned other symptoms – "A LOT of anxiety", "disproportional emotional sensibility", "exaggerated increase of anxiety", "significative mood alterations", "absurd mood swings", "drastic mood alterations", and so on. It does not seem that they were just merely qualifying these effects. What it looks like is that

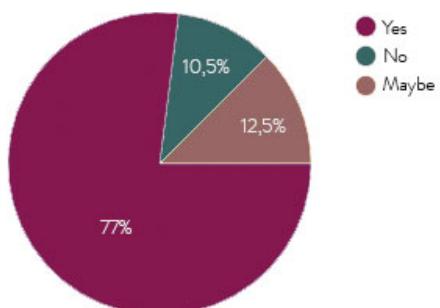
when it comes to unpleasant feelings related to women's psychological side they need to add adjectives to express how serious they are to be taken in consideration. This becomes even more notorious when we are talking about the pill's or hormonal contraceptive's side-effects. People and the medical community tend to think that women in general are emotionally instable and have intrinsically mood swings, for example, as part of their existence. Therefore, they need to stress, highlight and use superlatives to describe feelings of their own body and mind to maybe have the chance to be taken seriously in these matters.

### 1.3 – Identification with feminism

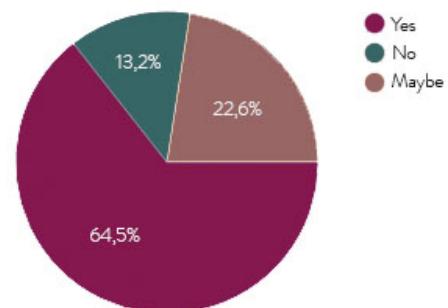
Although the group does not define itself as feminist and even if we cannot find many posts discussing specifically feminism (there are only 10 of them marked with "feminism" as hashtag), we do believe that yes, it is feminist due to its content strongly attached to the empowerment of women through the awareness of their body. During our interview with the founder of the group, she explained that she didn't intend to use the "F word" (for feminism) because of the weight it carries, but that the group has some guiding principles that are strictly linked to feminism like sorority, empathy, companionship and self-knowledge. Another interviewed participant also mentioned that the word can be a burden that "can create a lot of discussion nowadays, but I think it is feminist because it brings empowerment of the woman over her body and that is an issue completely feminist".

So as results we had 77% of women that consider themselves as feminists and 64,4% that consider that the group is feminist. As we were aware that the word could represent an auto-definition problem we left the option "maybe" available, which had quite an expressive number over the "no" option; 12,5% for the first question and 22,6% for the second one.

Do you consider yourself as feminist?



Do you consider that this group is feminist?



## 1.4 - Group interest and participation

First of all, the huge majority (70%) thinks that the group is a safe and free place to share experiences and opinions, so problems of nature that could intimidate or constrain users are practically excluded. They also mostly agree that the kind of information and discussion that is in the group is hard to find somewhere else, so it gives another status, one of the rareness and singularity to the content. The level of participation in the discussions, whether making posts or comments, is quite varied; the majority (38%) answered "2" in a scale from "0" to "4" how often they take part in the group. The other parts of the percentage were more or less distributed in the other scales (from "never" to "always").

Regarding their motivations to intervene (to comment or make posts), except for those who just observe (11,3%), the most incident reasons were:

Related to themselves: "when I have doubts", "to be helped", "to obtain information", "to share my feelings", "to share experiences", "to enlarge my vision about things", "to learn" or "to gain knowledge".

Related to the other: "give advices", "to help", "to offer help", "to spread some knowledge", "to answer questions", "to encourage the girls", "to show solidarity", "to correct some information".

Neutral (not centrally related to oneself nor the other): "to exchange experiences", "to learn", "curiosity", "empathy", "support", "collaboration", "feeling of identification", "to interact", "to demonstrate sorority".

Right away we can find some expressions that in this context belong particularly to the feminist universe, like "empathy", "collaboration", "solidarity" and "sorority". Besides that, we realized that when they interacted focusing "on the other", some notions of being able to do a determined action are implied. For example, in order to give advices or to offer help, the person need to at least feel that she is able to provide what she is proposing. She needs to possess something that turns her able to present herself in that situation. Another clearer example is the reason to collaborate "to correct some information". If the woman thinks that her objective there is to correct someone, it is implied that she thinks that she has the means (in that case, some specific knowledge about something) to do so. And those attributes that maybe unconsciously they consider to have, are nothing more than social capital; those individual skills, competencies, and know-how are implied in these mentioned intentions.

We also found some clues about this and other things they may consider relevant in order to participate in some unique answers. One user said "I only intervene when I think that my contributions would be essential and unpublished so far". This person appears to have a clear idea of what it would turn a contribution owner of social capital, that is, when it has the characteristics of essentiality and originality (the judgement of what would be considered essential and original is up to the user to decide, what matters is that she has this intention in view).

Some others said "when I feel able to help", "when I have a relevant opinion", "when I have something new to add", "when I have some knowledge about a question made". All these characteristics about what they have or what the content that she plans to share has are social capital forms. One person even said "I have a Bachelor in Biology and I try to inform women about their own body". That means that when she thinks about participating, she has in mind that once she has the scientific capital that her Bachelor in Biology provided to her, not only she is able to inform a group of women about their body, but it is more likely to be accepted for, maybe, accumulate some more social capital.

### **1.5 - Feelings regarding likes and interactions**

That brings us to the forms of measuring acceptance/social capital in this group. We made use of the like and the interactions generated from an intervention as a tool to measure social capital. The causality relation is simple, the more likes one gets, the more powerful the person or the message is. So first we asked if, when expressing themselves in the group, they felt more comfortable and confident when the other users like their publication. We gave the possibility to answer from "not at all" (0) to "yes, a lot" (4). We could see that this approval really matters to the users; more than 50% answered numbers "3" and "4" in the scale.

Once again, due to the feminist ideas of the participants and the feminist vibe that is present in the group, we got several answers regarding the representation of the like that made reference to: the fact that it shows empathy, empowerment, indicator of reciprocity, sorority, solidarity and companionship. One of our interviewees said: "I think that gives strength. It's important. We often hear that we're crazy, so the like means that is not only me that feel this way, and we strengthen together". Others said: "The like means 'we're together!' or "To encourage the sister".

The idea that they have regarding receiving the demonstration of a like is related to the approval by the others and that would signify that their post has attributes that makes it

"pertinent", "relevant", "validated", "not idiot", "legitimate", "useful", "interesting", "credible", "funny" – to use the words that they mentioned significant times to describe it. Once more, the social capital appears to indicate the value of something and establish power relations between the interactions. Some users considered that this element of approval could be understood as a stimulus to continue the discussion. In that case, we can say that the individual that chooses to continue to interact and discuss would have a different status than before, than the previous one when he began to talk.

Regarding the feelings that it causes, they appear to be more related to identification and support. "I feel understood", "It means that I'm closer to be right about something", "It brings security", "It means that I'm not alone", "It feeds my ego. That's the truth". All positive feelings that could lead to an encouragement and confidence to continue with more strength.

We detected as well the idea that receiving likes or commentaries would be a tool to turn the post more visible (and feed this cycle again). We know that Facebook adjusts its algorithms as result of these kind of elements, but in the case of a Facebook group it is highly important because the posts are organized in a vertical form, from the most recent to the older one. A new comment makes the post goes up again, increasing the chances for it to become visible and popular. When we made an open question in the other sense, concerning what would be the reasons for one to like someone else's post, some said specifically "to help to give some visibility to the post" or "to give an 'up!', to make to post go up in the page". They are aware of the operational elements involved in the structure of the page and use the like as a mechanism to work according to their intentions.

Lastly, one of our questions was "Have you ever deleted a post due to lack of "likes" or interactions?". Only 9,8% (110 people) answered yes. But considering that it is an extreme reaction to delete a post only because of this reason, that number is quite surprising. It represents the direct relation to the intention to receive this symbolic approval, a more evident way to measure the ownership of social capital.

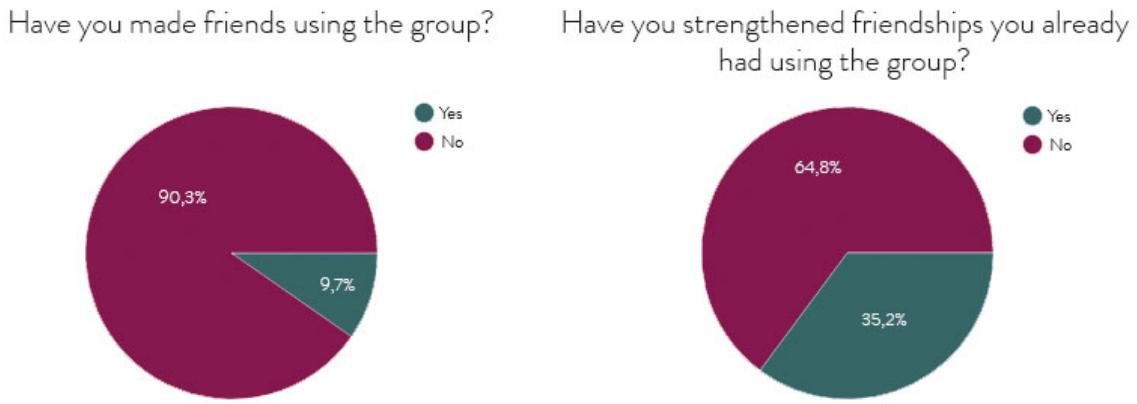
### **1.6 - Kind of relationships**

We intended to verify the occurrence of bonding and bridging capitals. As we explained, Putnam (2000) makes the distinction of these two types of capital. The first is related to homogeneous and closer groups with close relationships, such as fraternal groups; this kind of relationship can possibly include, besides emotional support, varied benefits (such as willingness to loan a sum of money, for example). The other would be related to more

diverse and heterogeneous groups, composed by “weak ties”, loose connections between the individuals. In this case, the benefits would derive from these casual acquaintances and connections.

Facebook, as a social network, has as general function to form and maintain a wide network of social connections. Although some literature suggests that it is used more for communication among acquaintances and offline contacts than it is for connecting with strangers, in the case of groups like the one we are analyzing things work differently. In a group of almost 130.000 users, even if you were invited by a friend, that crowd is definitely not your friend, even if you are completely in favor of ideas like sorority and female companionship. So, in this case, we would be facing the bridging social capital form.

We asked them if they had already made friends from the group. To which only 9,7% said “Yes”. When it came to strengthen friendships they already had from the group, 35,2% answered “Yes”. In the video interviews, some said that the topics that they discuss in the group are also a subject of conversation between them, a sort of element to push the friendship on.



## 2 - Hypermedia project

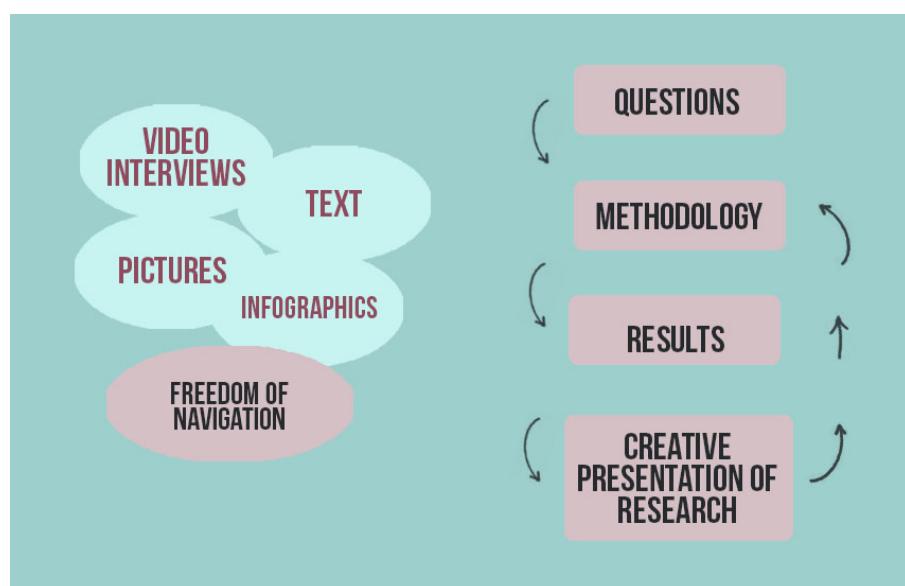
An academic research requires a lot of energy, time and commitment in every phase of its execution. However, the last step, that concerns its presentation and publishing, normally is underestimated. We acknowledge that traditional forms of publication have been dominant over the years and that researchers sometimes feel the need to fit some norms in order to be recognized. Yet, more recently academic publishing has had to grapple with the question of what constitutes a peer-review publication for works that contain a “creative”

component that is intrinsic to the piece. In this new society that we live in, especially when the “academic world” can sometimes seem so distant and displaced from the “real world”, it seems urgent and necessary to create and validate new modalities for the presentation of researches to reach broader and diversified audiences. New forms are being conceived in order to consider publishing materials like videos, images and sounds related to the study.

It's in that sense, considering the need for new forms of creative representations of research that our hypermedia element was built. We intended to make an interactive site to present and publish our research. Regarding the format, it is somehow related to a webdocumentary, a unique medium to create non-linear productions that combines photography, text, audio, video, animation, and infographics, for example. We also wanted to give the receiver/reader some freedom of navigation, so he/she could choose what content is more interesting to view and in what order, taking over a key-role in the interactive process. The idea was also to turn the practice of reading an academic work into a pleasant and rich experience, turned possible for a multiplicity of groups, and not only for a restricted audience.

Even if we recognize that this kind of hypermedia project is generally a result, a form of communication and representation of the research, we can say that, in a way, it also makes part of the methodology process too because since we know what we intend to do with the research material after the end of the work, we do try to anticipate and predict what elements would fit better in the final presentation. Therefore, the process methodology > final results > presentation is once again fed by the needs of the form of presentation, which influences the methodology stage and creates a new dynamic to the research procedure.

Image: Dynamic present in the hypermedia project



## CLOSING REMARKS

In this research, we investigated the relationship between the concept of social capital and the motivation towards the participation in social networks. After studying the Facebook group "Goodbye hormones: non-hormonal contraception", understanding its context and concepts linked to it and to the information society, we confirmed our main hypothesis about their intention to collaborate. It was possible to understand that the users seek, in their participation in the social network, to collect and accumulate social capital.

We tried to make a modest contribution to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, as well as bring one of his most important concepts to the current context, marked the media convergence and the emergence of a new culture based on information and communication technologies. The idea of accommodating a notion from the 80's – long ago Internet becomes omnipresent – to the questions of contemporaneity seemed, however, natural due to its adaptability and pertinence when it comes to the functioning of individuals and societies in general.

Our reading and interpretation of the results we had about the women's motivations to intervene (to comment or make posts) allowed us to detect that they have the idea of needing to possess some attributes to be validated. For us, those individual skills, competencies, titles or know-how are examples of the manifestation of social capital.

We also made use of the like and the interactions generated from an intervention as a tool to measure social capital. They consider that the approval that a like transmits as very important to their confidence. But the most relevant finding was their answers saying that the reason why it is important is because it means that what they posted is "pertinent", "relevant", "useful", "interesting" "not idiot", "legitimate", etc. They seem to have the idea of what makes a content to be filled with social capital. In other words, it would need to contain these intangible values like pertinence, relevance, utility, etc, in order to please. For us, at this point, it doesn't really matter to know what it would be considered as "pertinent", for example. This judgement is up to the person to decide, what matters is that she has this intention in view.

We investigated the presence of bonding and bridging capitals in the group and founded out that, although Facebook is more related to the maintenance of social relationships, the bridging capital (with "weak ties" and loose connections) is the predominant form in our object of study.

At last, we presented our hypermedia project, which is related to the presentation of this research. Motivated by the need to present an academic research in a more creative and free way to offer a new experience regarding its understanding to the reader, we created an interactive website with the content of this work. This project is also a way to turn possible the presentation of our video interviews implied in our methodology process.

We do hope that this work can help other researchers or people interested in sociology of usages to comprehend and interpret the new forms of socialization and interconnection between individuals and how relations between society and technology are updated. This Master's thesis can maybe also be interesting to those who are curious or captivated by gender studies, that seem to be in evidence now. Furthermore, the results we obtained from our sample are very rich and can be explored by multiplicity of fields, like media studies, biology, pharmacy, medicine, etc.

It was never between our intentions to cease or determine the subject of this research as closed. It is far from being exhausted and, motivated by its deployment, we contemplate a range of possibilities that can be explored in the future. First, as we didn't have enough time to explore properly the matter of bonding and bridging capital, it would be interesting to address some attention to this kind of relational tie in social networks – how they change, what would be the social capital's involvement into this. Then, maybe instead of explore and verify the social capital from positive actions such as the like, investigate its absence, the negative feeling that possibly comes with a damaging commentary or reaction. And lastly for now, search and verify the presence of social capital in the personal pages, in the profiles in different social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) taking into consideration the different logics and architectures in them; and connect those findings with the question of the construction of an identity.

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## ANNEXES

Questionnaire that some members of the group answered



**Colaboração no grupo "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não hormonal"**

Questionário sobre colaboração nas redes sociais utilizando como campo de pesquisa o grupo do Facebook "Adeus Hormônios - Contracepção não hormonal". Todas as questões se referem ao comportamento das usuárias neste grupo em particular. Fique à vontade para desenvolver a sua opinião nas questões abertas. Todas as respostas são anônimas.

Este levantamento faz parte de um projeto de pesquisa cuja dissertação é obrigatória para obtenção de título do mestrado em Criação Digital.

Obrigada desde já pela participação :)

\*Obrigatório

**Idade \***

Até 17 anos  
 18 - 24 anos  
 25 - 30 anos  
 31 - 39 anos  
 40 - 49 anos  
 50 - 64 anos  
 65 anos ou mais

**Nível de escolaridade (último título) \***

Ensino Fundamental  
 Ensino Médio  
 Graduação  
 Mestrado  
 Doutorado  
 Pós-doutorado

**Orientação sexual \***

Heterossexual  
 Homossexual  
 Bissexual  
 Prefiro não responder

**Tem filhos? \***

Sim  
 Não  
 No momento estou grávida.

**Você já sofreu efeitos desagradáveis relacionados ao uso da pílula ou de outros contraceptivos hormonais? Se sim, quais? \***

Não  
 Enunciadas

	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Dorreto da liberdade</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cólicas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Trombose</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diminuição da libido</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diminuição da lubrificação vaginal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Outro: _____</p> <p><b>No momento, você faz uso de qual tipo de contraceptivo? *</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Hormonal (pílula, Mirena, etc)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Não-hormonal (camisinha, DIU de cobre, etc)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Hormonal + Não-hormonal combinados</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Não faço uso de nenhum contraceptivo</p> <p><b>Você se considera feminista? *</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Sim</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Não</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Talvez</p> <p><b>Você considera que este grupo de Facebook é feminista? *</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Sim</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Não</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Talvez</p> <p><b>Você considera que este grupo é um lugar seguro e livre para compartilhar experiências e opiniões? *</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Não mesmo</td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Bastante</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Você considera que o tipo de informação e discussão que se encontra no grupo é difícil de se encontrar em outro lugar? *</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Não</td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Com certeza</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Você costuma participar das discussões do grupo? (seja fazendo perguntas ou comentários) *</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nunca</td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Sempre</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Quais seriam as suas principais motivações para participar das discussões/conversas? *</b></p> <p>Sua resposta</p> <p>Ao se expressar (com um comentário, pergunta, colocação) no grupo, você se sente mais à vontade e confiante quando outras usuárias dão "like" no seu post? *</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Isto não me influencia nem um pouco</td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Bastante</td> </tr> </table>	0	1	2	3	4	Não mesmo	<input type="radio"/>	Bastante	0	1	2	3	4	Não	<input type="radio"/>	Com certeza	0	1	2	3	4	Nunca	<input type="radio"/>	Sempre	0	1	2	3	4	Isto não me influencia nem um pouco	<input type="radio"/>	Bastante																	
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**Por quê? \***

Sua resposta

Ao interagir no grupo, você contrai sentimentos negativos (decepção, angústia, arrependimento ou diminuição da auto-estima, por exemplo) quando o seu post não recebe "likes"? \*

0    1    2    3    4

Isto não me influencia nem um pouco      Bastante

**Por quê? \***

Sua resposta

Que tipo de sentimento você tem quando recebe um comentário/reação negativo(a)? \*

Frustração  
 Vergonha  
 Arrependimento  
 Raiva  
 Isto me inspira a argumentar mais  
 Isto me desencoraja a continuar a discussão  
 Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

Você já apagou um post devido à ausência de "likes" ou interações? \*

Sim  
 Não

Por quais razões você dá "like" no post de outra pessoa? \*

Sua resposta

Você já fez amizades a partir do grupo? \*

Sim  
 Não

Você já fortaleceu amizades que você já tinha a partir do grupo? \*

Sim  
 Não

**ENVIAR**

Nunca envie senhas pelo Formulários Google.

It reads:

Questionnaire about collaboration in social networks using as research field the Facebook Group "Goodbye Hormones: non-hormonal contraception". All the questions refer to the behavior of this group in particular. Feel free to develop your opinion in the open questions. All the answers are anonymous. This survey is part of a research project whose Master's thesis is obligatory to obtaining the title in Digital Creation.

Since now, thank you for participating.

- Age

Until 17 years old  
18 – 24 years old  
25 – 30 years old  
31 – 39 years old  
40 – 49 years old  
50 – 64 years old  
More than 65 years old

- Level of education (last title)

Elementary School  
High School  
Bachelor's Degree  
Master's Degree  
PHD  
Post-Doc

- Sexual orientation

Heterosexual  
Homosexual  
Bisexual  
I rather not answer

- Do you have kids?

Yes  
No  
I'm pregnant at the moment

- Have you ever had unpleasant effects related to the use of the pill or other hormonal contraceptives? If so, which ones?

No  
Headaches  
Fluid retention  
Cramps  
Thrombosis  
Libido's decrease  
Lubrication's decrease  
Other (specify)

- At the moment what kind of contraceptive do you use?

Hormonal (pill, Mirena, etc)  
Non-hormonal (condom, copper IUD)  
Hormonal + Non-hormonal  
None

- Do you consider yourself as feminist?

Yes  
No  
Maybe

- Do you consider that this group is feminist?

Yes  
No  
Maybe

- Do you consider this group a safe and free place to share experiences and opinions?

Scale from 0 (not at all) to 4 (sure)

- Do you consider that the type of information and discussion that is in the group is difficult to find elsewhere?

Scale from 0 (not at all) to 4 (sure)

- Do you usually participate in group discussions? (Whether by asking questions or commenting)

Scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always)

- What are your main motivations to participate in the discussions / conversations?  
(open answer)

- When expressing yourself (with a comment, question, placement) in the group, do you feel more comfortable and confident when other users "like" your post

Scale from 0 (not even a little) to 4 (a lot)

- Why?

(open answer)

- When interacting in the group, do you contract negative feelings (disappointment, anguish, regret or decreased self-esteem, for example) when your post does not receive "likes"?

Scale from 0 (not even a little) to 4 (a lot)

- Why?

(open answer)

- What kind of feeling do you get when you receive a negative feedback?

Frustration

Shame

Regret

Anger

That inspires me to continue the discussion

That discourages me to continue the discussion

Other (specify)

- Have you ever deleted a post due to lack of likes or interactions?

Yes

No

- For what reasons do you like in someone else's post?  
(open answer)

- Have you made friends using the group?

Yes

No

- Have you strengthened friendships you already had using the group?

Yes

No