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García León, David, Javier García León y David S. Dalton (eds.). *Comunidades digitales: Perspectivas interdisciplinarias desde y sobre América Latin@*. Editorial A Contracorriente, 2025. pp 334.

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Published by a Spanish-language imprint of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at North Carolina State University and distributed by the University of North Carolina Press, this compilation of eleven texts chronicles the internet's role in shaping community experiences across Latin America and the USA. It is divided into three sections. The first section, dedicated to essays on forms of digital resistance centered on sex and gender, contains four chapters focused on cases in the Colombian Caribbean, Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, and Brazil. The second section, focusing on race and ethnicity, includes four additional chapters that analyze situations in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and the USA. The third section, aimed at developing community links via social media, culminates in three installments centered on life experiences in different locations across Mexico.

In the introduction, the editors, the brothers David and Javier García León, affiliated with the University of New Brunswick in St. John and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, respectively, and David S. Dalton, also from UNC Charlotte, quote Benedict Anderson's pivotal definition of nation as an imagined community and apply it more broadly to the types of communities that have emerged throughout Latin America as a result of the internet, hence the allusion to digital communities in the title. Their hypothesis is quite straightforward: whereas the printed press and more conventional forms of communication served as mechanisms that fostered the creation of imagined communities in Benedict's canonical text, nowadays this is frequently left to the internet and social media. The authors are especially interested in dispelling any understanding of the role of technology across Latin America as "imported magic," alluding to Medina, da Costa Marques, and Holmes's 2014 volume, and instead clarifying that, nowadays, the internet is a daily, mainstream element in the lives of most Latin Americans, even in the countryside, where the presence of the state tends to be less preponderant. In this sense, the internet plays a role as common and habitual in the daily lives of Latin Americans as it does in the lives of the inhabitants of imperial and metropolitan enclaves. For instance, in Mexico, the number of internet users has doubled in the last decade, reaching 105 million people, around 86

percent of the population (Alegría *La Jornada*), no doubt spurred by the fact that by 2028, the national electrical grid will cover 99.99 percent of the population (Sánchez and Muñoz, *La Jornada*).

The first chapter of the collection examines the experience of the LGBTIQ+ collective Transmallo in Barranquilla, Colombia. Massimiliano Carta (Universidad del Norte) and Danny González Cueto (Universidad del Atlántico) describe how the collective used the internet to foster community during the COVID-19 pandemic and to challenge the cis heteronormativity that governs bodies, desire, sexuality, and gender roles. Chiefly, the authors highlight the internet's ability to transcend spatial and temporal limitations, enabling individuals across Colombia's Caribbean coast and beyond to communicate and interact, thereby strengthening ties of solidarity. Additionally, the chapter reviews the birth, rise, and consolidation of trans collectives in the Colombian Caribbean, as well as the variety of discourses these communities circulate through multiple internet modes, heavily supported by artistic initiatives.

In the second chapter, Manuel Zelada (Université de Montréal) examines the Instagram account *indiaescribe*, which has about 8,000 followers and reflects on the sexual identities of so-called Andean minorities in Peru. Zelada analyzes what is posted on the account—primarily poems and their corresponding comments—to show how discursive construction leads to negotiation among readers. His methods draw on cultural linguistics and visual grammar. Accordingly, his work addresses both ends of communication: production and reception. While the chapter's main focus is a critique of the development of gender and sex constructs in Peru, it also illustrates how Peruvians of Andean descent have been racialized amid a colonial tradition. The chapter may initially seem narrowly focused, but it proves quite effective by demonstrating how exclusion operates in Peruvian society.

The third chapter, by Alyssa Bedrosian (The Ohio State University), examines the case of *Catolicadas* (Catholic-y Things), an animated YouTube and Facebook series with more than 14 million views and 30,000 viewers that addresses gender, sex, and religion. The series is produced by Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir México (Catholics for the Right to Decide, CDDM) and advocates the creation of a feminist Catholic community by offering alternatives to the Catholic Church's strict anti-abortion position. Bedrosian analyzes twenty episodes on abortion, spanning the first through the eleventh seasons of the internet series. Most importantly, by offering an alternative space for feminist Catholic practice, the chapter elucidates the wide range of positions on this complex topic, revealing the intricacy of this topi in Mexican society.

The final chapter of the first section, by María Emilia Barbosa (Missouri University of Science and Technology), Lily Martínez Evangelista (Universidade de Brasília), and Emanuel de Fátima Rubim

Costa Silva (Universidade Federal do Maranhão), explores how digital communities build support networks in Guatemala and Brazil. According to the text, Guatemala has the highest rate of gender violence in Latin America (106). In Guatemala, performance artist Regina José Galindo has criticized gender violence through "Estoy viva" (I'm Alive, 2013–2015) and "Las escucharon gritar y no abrieron la puerta" (They Heard Them Scream and Didn't Open the Door, 2017). The social denunciation in these performances has gone viral through commotion and hashtags. In Brazil, a cooperative platform like Señoritas Courier, a group serving the São Paulo metro area, delivers cosmetics, flowers, gifts, books, legal documents, groceries, and even prepared meals, while challenging the social stigma of lower autonomy and of being less efficient at navigating traffic, thereby empowering cis and trans women. In short, it is a movement against the rampant inequality produced by capitalism.

In the first chapter of the second section, drawing on critical approaches to race and ethnicity, independent researcher Erika Maribel Heredia examines structural racism on Twitter (now X) in the Mexican and Argentine domains. Using critical discourse analysis, Heredia analyzes how terms such as *pinche prieto* ("f****** dark-skinned person," in Mexico) and *negros de mierda* ("worthless, trashy poor people," in Argentina, as it can go beyond race) are used to sustain imaginaries deeply rooted in Eurocentric notions, thereby shaping class constructs and racialization in both countries. However, the chapter fails to clarify how other racial terms (such as *trigueño*, literally "of the color of wheat") take on different meanings across countries, shaped by the specific racialization schemes prevailing in each national context. The novelty lies in how social media are used to perpetuate and justify these imaginaries, which in turn sustain societal inequality and exclusion.

The following chapter exemplifies qualitative research. It presents a detailed study of the internet's impact on the practice of Palenquero, the language of San Basilio de Palenque, the first free African town in the Americas (allegedly founded in 1603), located near Cartagena, Colombia. Drawing on data carefully compiled for this study, Covadonga Lamar Prieto (University of California, Riverside) and two of her graduate students, Miriam Villazón Valbuena and Miguel Muñoz Valtierra, found that the internet is affecting the use of Palenquero and may be contributing to the consolidation of a cultural and linguistic identity among Palenqueros, the descendants of slaves who escaped during the colonial period. The chapter includes many charts, such as a breakdown of social media platform use by gender. It offers a worthwhile model for studying the impact of technology on so-called minority languages, especially in countries like Colombia, which has begun recognizing these languages relatively recently.

The third chapter in the section is David Dalton's study of the United We Dream (UWD) campaign, which sought to regularize the immigration status of many people in the USA. Dalton examines UWD as an example of media activism aimed at countering prevailing anti-immigrant discourses in the country. Dalton's main argument centers on how technology can be used to promote a more positive representation of first-generation immigrants who arrived in the USA before or during early adolescence, typically between the ages of 6 and 12. This group earns the label "Generation 1.5" because, while they spend their formative years assimilating and socializing in the new culture, they often maintain their native language, cultural traits, and even national identity from their country of origin. Dalton expands on what he calls "legal liminality," the term he favors for the group's immigration status.

The final chapter of this section is by Andrea Pitts of SUNY Buffalo. They document how feminist Chicana and Latina authors of the 1980s and 1990s—in particular, philosopher, and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa—embraced the technology of the period to denounce racialized societal injustice and, along the way, facilitate communication among women from diverse racial, ethnic, and sexual backgrounds across a wide range of locations. That is to say, even at that early stage in the internet's infancy, it was already playing a key role in fostering coalitions among women of color, offering support and solidarity. In a way, the chapter speaks of a sort of *avant-la-lettre* feminist technological movement compared with current Latin American versions of digital feminist militancy.

The ninth chapter of the collection is a joy for anyone interested in urban cycling. Javier Alejandro Zamora y Góngora (York University) and transdisciplinary researcher María Ávila analyze the communitarian digital archive *(re)Ciclarse en la ciudad*, which has been available since 2020. The site features narratives from cyclists in various Mexican cities (Mexico City, Guadalajara, Mérida, Oaxaca, etc.), fostering communication and the sharing of experiences among cycling enthusiasts in urban spaces. Through the archive's shared writing, the authors focus on relational authorship, the redistribution of collectively generated knowledge, and the circulation of narratives by the very communities that generate them. In this way, cyclists from across Mexico can disseminate information ranging from hit-and-run reports to plans for new bikeways, thereby benefiting communities nationwide.

In the second chapter of the final section, two research faculty members at the Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila, Francesco Gervasi and Gabriel Pérez Salazar, discuss the most striking development: the Mexican practice of treating the revolutionary hero Pancho Villa as a religious figure. Gervasi and Pérez Salazar focus on the Facebook page "Pancho Villa Milagroso" (Miraculous Pancho

Villa), where many people post messages thanking the hero for his support in life's experiences or predicaments, thereby forming a digital religious community. The chapter includes a chart documenting many forms of devotion to Villa listed on Facebook, along with photos of tattoos, an altar, and posts from devotees of "Santo Pancho Villa"—some of whom are police officers. In fact, the chapter uses a follower's impassioned plea to "have many women in my life" as its title, just like the revolutionary hero, offering insight into how gender and religion are closely interwoven in patriarchal ways. More than anything, the text's interest is the role of the internet in bringing together individuals with such an idiosyncratic belief.

The book's final chapter, by Rosa María Alonzo González (Universidad Autónoma de Baja California) and David Ramírez Plascencia (Universidad de Guadalajara), examines the evolving construction of community and family in Mexican society from 2013 to 2023 through an analysis of autobiographical YouTube videos. In particular, this evolution is evident in the changing gender roles within these groups over the decade. The accompanying chart provides detailed information on the age, gender, marital status, and education level of the video authors. Ultimately, the text highlights the psychological and social consequences of divorce for a sense of community and belonging.

Overall, *Comunidades digitales* is a remarkably pragmatic endeavor. It does not engage in grand theoretical debates; rather, the book aims to show the many ways Latin Americans are embracing social media and the internet to satisfy an appetite for sociability. In this sense, it is a helpful resource for research or instruction. Plain and simple, the hope is to clarify that the extensive use of the internet has become as much a part of Latin American life as many of our other daily practices, whether rooted in tradition or not, and to dispel any notion that technology is still only available to elites because of metropolitan privilege. The authors do everything necessary to prove how dated this view of the region is, from dealing with an eccentric saint-to-be to reviewing animated videos featuring Sor Juana look-alikes discussing abortion rights. This is not imported magic; instead, it is homegrown actuality.