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Sexualized labour in digital culture: Instagram influencers, porn chic and the monetization of attention

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The rise of digital technologies and social media platforms has been linked to changing forms of work, as well as the mainstreaming of pornography and a 'porn chic' aesthetic. This article examines some of the ways in which these themes coalesce, and interrogates the conceptual boundaries of sexualized labour, extending beyond traditional organizational settings and into Web 2.0. The study explores performances of sexualized labour on social media by analysing visual and textual content from 172 female influencers on Instagram. This article contributes to the literature on sexualized labour in three ways. First, by demonstrating how sexualized labour is enacted across various forms of influencer labour, and how this relates to the attention economy and monetization. Second, by developing the extant conceptualization of sexualized labour and introducing connective labour as a required element to mobilize sexualized labour. Third, by opening up a critical analysis of what is meant by 'sexualized' labour within a cultural context of pornographication.

KEYWORDS

influencers, Instagram, prosumption, sexualization, sexualized labour

1 | INTRODUCTION

Research increasingly attends to the role of the prosumer in explorations of work, consumption and organizations (Dujarier, 2016; Gabriel, Korczynski, & Rieder, 2015; Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008). The prosumer bridges the traditional divide between consumption and production (Cova & Dalli, 2009; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010), carrying out a

variety of productive activities in their role as consumers. Scholars highlight the role of digital technologies in facilitating the rise of consumers as workers and expanding prosumption practices (Büscher & Igoe, 2013; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). One key area in which this can be illustrated is the explosion of user-generated content online, whereby consumers of Web 2.0 platforms are actively involved in the production process of content that is co-opted for the social, cultural and economic value it generates (Bonsu & Darmody, 2008; Fuchs, 2013). For some, this highlights the ways in which prosumption serves to perpetuate existing power relationships within capitalism, particularly in relation to the exploitation and alienation of prosumers and the unpaid work they perform (Comor, 2011; Fontenelle, 2015). We are interested here in how prosumers and social media platforms, such as Instagram, relate to extant understandings of sexualized labour.

The ability to monetize the prosumer labour invested in generating this digital content hinges upon the amount of attention produced (Jin & Feenberg, 2015). Within this 'attention economy', attention is both a scarce and valuable resource (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Goldhaber, 1997) that functions as a form of capital, which, once measured, can be marketized and financed (Terranova, 2012). One consequence of this has been the explosion of 'influencer commerce' — with prosumers working to generate digital content and gain the attention of a 'following' on social media through representations of their everyday lives in which commodities play a vital role. Influencers are a type of 'microcelebrity' — a style of online performance in which individuals attempt to gain attention and popularity by employing digital media technologies, such as webcams, blogs and social media (Senft, 2008). Influencer marketing on social media is now a multi-billion-dollar industry, expected to be valued between $5 and 10 billion by 2020 (MediaKix, 2018). The influencer category is dominated by women (Abidin, 2016a), who set the 'cultural scripts' adopted by everyday social media users — commonly on the platform Instagram. In turn, this leads to the generation of vast quantities of digital content that integrates promotions of products and services, work that is often utilized by brands without remuneration or with little compensation (Abidin, 2016b).

For influencers, the body plays a critical role in the 'selfies' that are the end product of their prosumer labour. For the women who upload these self-representations to social media, conformance to heteronormative prescriptions of attractiveness and femininity is fundamental in gaining attention (Duffy, 2017). This is enacted through a range of fashion and beauty practices, appropriate lighting and posturing, and the use of image-enhancing and photo-editing applications that in turn maximize the number of 'likes' on a post — a quantification of attention and monetization potential (Abidin, 2016a). It has been observed that women's self-presentation on social media is highly sexualized (Carrotte, Prichard, & Lim, 2017; Hall, West, & McIntyre, 2012; Kapidzic & Herring, 2015; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008; Ringrose, 2011). Posting sexualized photos on social media has been related to wider cultural pressures that convey to women sexiness is both valued and a means of gaining attention (Daniels, 2016).

Today, what has increasingly come to constitute sexiness in online environments is 'porn chic' — a style that reflects the mainstreaming of the aesthetics of commercial pornography within western societies (Lynch, 2012; Tyler & Quek, 2016). There is no single way that porn chic manifests in popular culture, although a core element can be understood as making women appear 'fuckable' (Dines, 2015) to a (generally assumed male) audience. This fragmenting and blurring of pornographic imagery into traditionally non-pornographic forms of popular culture — also known as pornographication — has been heavily facilitated by the rise of the Internet and associated digital technologies (Attwood, 2011; Boyle, 2010, 2018; Dines, 2010; McNair, 2002, 2013; Paasonen, Nikunen, & Saarenmaa, 2007; Paul, 2005).

In this article, we aim to develop new directions for the analysis of sexualized labour by extending its performance beyond the traditional dyadic perspective of management–worker. We examine how sexualized labour is performed by influencers in the digital era and its precarious potential to be monetized by generating attention, which for women is structured by cultural expectations of 'porn chic' sexiness. In doing so, we consider how prosumption as enacted in digital culture subscribes to and challenges extant understandings of sexualized labour. This article contributes to understandings of sexualized labour in three ways. First, we develop the extant conceptualization of sexualized labour by conceiving it as an embodied performance that involves a complex, interrelated dynamic of emotion, aesthetics and a modality of 'sexualization' that cannot be separated from where it is placed. This is

mobilized by what we term connective labour — the practices, skills and knowledge employed to successfully embody and negotiate this performance for attention and monetization purposes. Second, we demonstrate how sexualized labour is enacted across five forms of influencer labour in digital culture (i.e., hopefuls, boasters, engagers, boosters and performers), supporting self-commodification which unfolds on a continuum from non-monetized and low attention practices (i.e., affiliation-based influencer labour) to monetized and high attention practices (i.e., access-based influencer labour). Third, we offer a critical analysis of what is meant by 'sexualized' labour beyond the recognized elements of sexuality, sexual desire and/or sexual pleasure (Spiess & Waring, 2005; Tyler, 2012; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Specifically, we query that the concept of sexualized labour generally incorporates all labour that has a sexual or sexualized element, but this tells us little about the specificity of the practices and their underlying power dynamics. We argue for the consideration of possible modalities of sexualized labour that interrogate the relationship between 'sexualization' and the shaping role of cultural norms and power dynamics in this process, in particular, the influence of 'porn chic'.

In exploring these ideas, this article is structured as follows. First, we review literature on sexualized labour and consider its conceptualization. Second, we present our research study, which examines performances of sexualized labour on the social media platform Instagram. We analyse visual and textual content from 172 female Instagram influencers, both aspiring and established, as sampled through curatorial sexualized 'shoutout pages' that function as attention currency. Third, we present our research findings that demonstrate how prosumers perform sexualized labour on Instagram through a meshing of aesthetic labour, emotional labour and a 'porn chic' sexualization across five forms of influencer labour, which is mobilized by what we term connective labour. We conclude by discussing how our research contributes to extant conceptualizations of sexualized labour in relation to: the issue of freely chosen versus prescribed sexualized labour; the addition of connective labour as a key element of sexualized labour; and questioning the meaning of 'sexualized'.

2 | SEXUALIZED LABOUR: EMOTIONAL LABOUR, AESTHETIC LABOUR AND SEXUALIZATION(?)

Sexualized labour is understood as work that becomes associated with sexuality, sexual desire and sexual pleasure (Spiess & Waring, 2005; Tyler, 2012; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). The concept grew out of the need to better understand the role of employee corporeality and the sexualization of employees in undertaking forms of emotional and aesthetic labour. We draw on two key conceptualizations of sexualized labour from the available literature (Tyler, 2012; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Warhurst and Nickson (2009, p. 385) argue a 'conceptual double shift' is needed to understand how employees become sexualized — firstly, as a linear shift from 'emotional to aesthetic and sexualised labour and secondly, from an employee sexuality that is sanctioned and subscribed to by management to that which management strategically prescribes'. Tyler (2012, p. 914), on the other hand, conceives sexualized labour as a process through which 'work becomes associated, either implicitly or explicitly, with the provision and pursuit of sexual pleasure'. This moreover encompasses a complex dynamic of emotion, aesthetics and sexuality, the performance of which cannot be separated from where it is placed. Common to both conceptualizations, is that emotion, aesthetics and sexualization underpin the performance of sexualized labour. Each of these aspects will be considered next.

The first element of this conceptualization is emotional labour, which constitutes 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display [which] is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). It is a dramatic performance that necessitates the active management of emotions — requiring an individual 'to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). According to Hochschild (1983), the performance of emotional labour is enacted through surface acting — a body-language performance of facial expressions, gestures and voice tone that conveys an appropriate image — and deep acting — which involves a method form of acting through which

employees regulate their emotions to align with their work and its required displays. Understanding and evoking the appropriate emotional performance in a given situation is critical. These 'feeling rules' or 'display rules' may be explicitly stated (e.g., training manual, policies of customer conduct) or implicitly learned through organizational culture and norms (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). However, such an analysis may elide over employees seeking out particular occupations to express their identities (Korczynski, 2003; Schweingruber & Berns, 2005). As such, there is a need to distinguish between emotional work that occurs in response to the requirements of one's job and emotional labour which occurs more routinely in managing our emotions (Bolton & Boyd, 2003). The motives for workplace emotion (Bolton, 2005) may range from pecuniary (material and commercial gain), prescriptive (abiding by professional norms of conduct), presentational (abiding by social norms) and philanthropic (performed as a 'gift' to others). Regardless, all such emotional displays require effort (Morris & Feldman, 1996) and foreground the centrality of the body.

The second aspect of sexualized labour is aesthetic labour, whereby workers' embodied capacities and attributes are incorporated into the labour process to evoke sensory affect in customers and commercial benefits for organizations (Dean, 2005; Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006; Tyler, 2011b; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003). Although related concepts exist, aesthetic labour is focused on work in which 'individuals are compensated, indirectly or directly, for their own body's looks and affect' — as opposed to body work (unpaid work on one's own body) and bodily labour (paid work on others' bodies) (Mears, 2014, p. 1332). This emphasis on 'looking good and sounding right' (Warhurst & Nickson, 2001) is moreover recognized as steeped in race, class and gender inequalities (Mears, 2014; Tyler & Taylor, 1998). In turn, this aesthetics is mobilized, developed and commodified across a range of work contexts. Most research on aesthetic labour focuses on organizational settings, especially interactive services, and the ways in which workers' bodies are recruited and controlled to embody the aesthetics of the organization and promote its products and services (Spiess & Waring, 2005; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003). This aesthetic may also be driven by consumer tastes in the market contexts in which organizations are situated (Otis, 2011). Research has also turned to freelance or 'non-standard' labour contexts, such as fashion models (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006) and theatre and television performers (Dean, 2005), where aesthetic labour is not managerially prescribed. What is understood as aesthetically valuable is much more ambiguous and subject to change in freelance contexts. Freelancers often engage in the ongoing production and maintenance of their embodied selves through work that both endures beyond the working day and requires the production of a 'personality'. In turn, this has highlighted some conceptual deficiencies of aesthetic labour as superficial work on the body's surface that ignores the physical and emotional effort required to keep up appearances (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006). Such a critique highlights the conceptual slippage that exists between aesthetic and emotional labour (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003).

The final feature of sexualized labour relates to sexualization, however, there is a lack of agreement in the literature as to how this is conceived. For some, *sexual appeal* — which is closely related to aesthetic labour and an organizationally prescribed 'look' — is fundamental in understanding how sexualized labour works to appeal to the senses of consumers. This differs from sexualized work that is employee driven — such as a 'sexualized look' that is displayed through comportment, dress and language and sanctioned or subscribed to by management (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Spiess and Waring (2005) similarly focus upon the notion of a 'sexualized appeal' but locate the shift from aesthetic to sexualized labour as defined by the role of the customer in interpreting the organization's aesthetic as sexualized, specified as 'appealing to the *sexual desires* [our emphasis] of customers' (p. 198). This has signalled the 'blurry distinction between aesthetic and sexualised labour' (Mears, 2014, p. 1339) that exists. This blurriness is most clearly demonstrated in the case of those engaged in 'display work', a type of aesthetic labour that involves a high degree of sexualized bodily display as the point of the job (Mears & Connell, 2016). For Tyler (2012), it is not simply an employee's 'look' that is sexualized, but rather their embodied sexual subjectivities which necessitate consideration of the social materiality in which such labour is enacted and made meaningful. In turn, sexualized labour 'encompasses a much broader process through which work becomes associated, either implicitly or explicitly, with the provision and pursuit of *sexual pleasure* [our emphasis]' (Tyler, 2012, p. 914). Another stream of literature that has been associated with the concept of sexualized labour focuses on the commodification of sexuality, mostly in sales service

work (Adkins, 1995; Filby, 1992; Pringle, 1989). Indeed, sexuality is referenced in relation to sexualized labour by all key voices on this topic.

Yet, 'sexualized' has quite different connotations to sexuality. Namely, when a person (and by extension, their labour) is sexualized, they have been subjected to sexualization, which is understood as 'a problem of sexual objectification along with recognition of a culture that is more likely to reduce girls (and women) to sexual objects' (Tyler & Quek, 2016, p. 10). An American Psychological Association (APA) report on the sexualization of girls establishes sexualization as synonymous with sexual objectification and explicitly separates sexualization from sexuality (Zurbriggen et al., 2007). As Davis (2001) states, sexuality is healthy and positive whilst sexualization is objectifying and degrading. Hence, important tensions exist in how 'sexualized' is to be understood when discussing sexualized labour. Considering this, the aim of this article is twofold. First, to explore what sexualized constitutes via an examination of influencer labour in digital culture, which for women is monetized by getting attention through communicating one's 'sexiness'. Second, to examine how prosumption as enacted in digital culture subscribes to and challenges extant understandings of sexualized labour. Given the aforementioned conceptual blurriness between aesthetic labour, emotional labour and sexualized labour, following Tyler (2012) and Entwistle and Wissinger (2006), we commence with a working conceptualization of sexualized labour as an embodied performance that involves a complex, interrelated dynamic of emotion, aesthetics and sexualization that cannot be separated from where it is placed.

3 | RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

To examine sexualized labour in a prosumer and digital context, we turn to Instagram, an image-based online social networking site with over 800 million users worldwide (Statista, 2018). Instagram, launched in 2010, is rooted in prosumption by harnessing the user-generated web. The platform is unique due to its focus on visual content — all uploaded content must include an image or videos, accompanied by optional captions, geolocation and hashtags (e.g., searchable keyword hyperlinks). Digital editing tools are in-built, allowing users to adjust visual elements of their images and videos, including brightness, contrast and colours. Shared content appears in a news feed and on the original user's profile. Users can interact through commenting, liking, tagging, mentioning and private messaging. Instagram accounts can be public or private.

Following other users on Instagram is not necessarily a reciprocal process. Figure 1 provides an illustrative anatomy of a typical Instagram post and user interface. This study employs a dual qualitative approach of visual and textual analysis of Instagram posts by influencers who engage in sexualized labour on the platform.

3.1 | Sampling through sexualized Instagram shoutout pages

To identify influencers, the study began by sampling sexualized Instagram shoutout pages, which are dedicated to soliciting, compiling and reposting other users' Instagram photographs, along with tagging the original user — hence, giving the shoutout. A shoutout 'is a tool, a lubricant, a virtual currency — the sole purpose of which is to build popularity' (Kids Media Centre, 2018). Shoutouts are intended to show support and give exposure to other users and can substantially increase a user's followers (Jang, Han, & Lee, 2015). Sexualized shoutouts on Instagram involve taking a screenshot of a female user's posted image on Instagram, uploading the screenshot to the moderated sexualized shoutout page and tagging the original user in the caption or image. Thus, sexualized shoutout pages are reflective of attention currency within the Instagram platform and provide a systematic entry point in our process of identifying individual women's Instagram profiles that have attracted widespread attention. Figure 2 provides examples of sexualized Instagram shoutout pages, which emphasize heteronormative standards of female beauty and sexuality. For anonymity, these mock-ups are representative recreations using stock photographs.
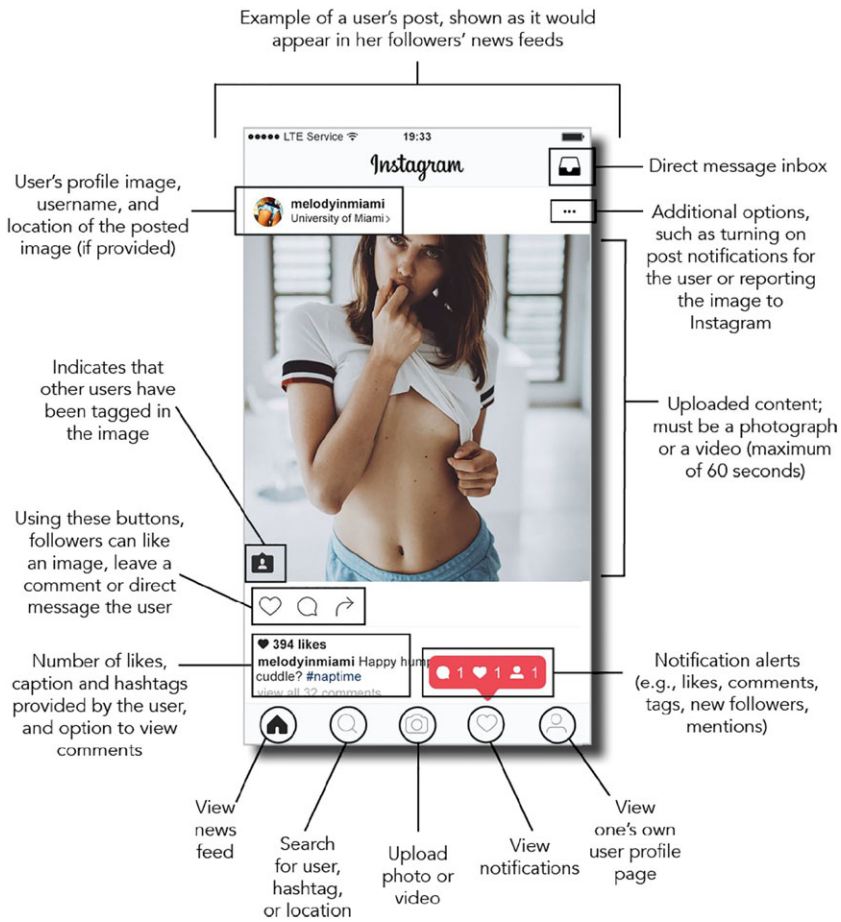
Example of a user's post, shown as it would appear in her followers' news feeds

User's profile image, username, and location of the posted image (if provided)

Direct message inbox

Additional options, such as turning on post notifications for the user or reporting the image to Instagram

••••• LTE Service 🛜 19:33

Instagram

melodyinmiami
University of Miami ›

Indicates that other users have been tagged in the image

Uploaded content; must be a photograph or a video (maximum of 60 seconds)

Using these buttons, followers can like an image, leave a comment or direct message the user

Number of likes, caption and hashtags provided by the user, and option to view comments

♥ 394 likes
melodyinmiami Happy hump cuddle? #naptime
view all 32 comments

💬 1 ♥ 1 👤 1

Notification alerts (e.g., likes, comments, tags, new followers, mentions)

View news feed

Search for user, hashtag, or location

Upload photo or video

View notifications

View one's own user profile page

FIGURE 1 Basic anatomy of an Instagram post and user interface [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 3 provides an exemplar of the Instagram shoutout process. Images featured on sexualized shoutout pages are typically discovered through three practices: solicitation, submission or search. First, the moderators of shoutout pages may directly solicit images from women on Instagram, using the direct messaging and commenting features built into the platform. Second, women may submit images directly to shoutout pages, through direct messaging or tagging shoutout pages in their images and captions. As shown in Figure 3, the original user, @melodyinmiami, tags various shoutout pages, including @collegegirls in her image. Her image is then reposted on the @collegegirls shoutout page. Third, images may be discovered by searching hashtags and geotags. For example, the @collegegirls shoutout page moderator may search location-based geotags, like 'University of Miami', to discover images or search targeted hashtags like #collegehotties and #collegebabes.

Data collection began by first establishing our sampling frame for sexualized shoutout pages. Through an initial search of Instagram profiles using generic hashtags (e.g., #girls, #beauty), shoutout pages were discovered that featured sexualized images of women. Snowball sampling was employed by clicking on related hashtags and suggested profile pages, resulting in a sample of 27 shoutout pages. The sampling frame was limited only to shoutout pages which overtly include language soliciting sexualized images from users (e.g., 'DM [direct message] or tag to be featured') and which tag the original user (i.e., the featured 'model'). Table 1 provides detailed information about each page, including number of followers and profile bio description. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each page and, if applicable, to tagged users in the text of the bio. While sexualized content is central to each shoutout page,
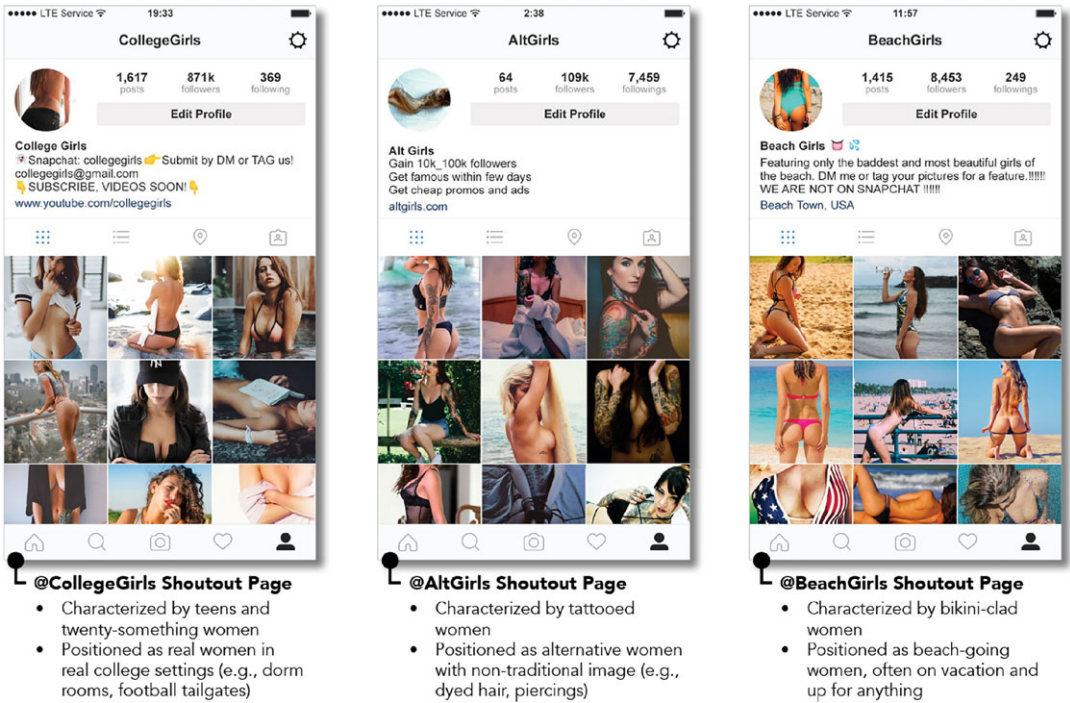
FIGURE 2 Illustrative examples of Instagram shoutout pages [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

FIGURE 3 Instagram shoutout process [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

each page has a distinct focal niche or thematic style (e.g., curvy girls, college girls, tattooed girls) — as evident in the exemplary profile mock-ups shown in Figure 2. The profile bios provided in Table 1 offer evidence toward the diversity of pages represented in our sampling frame.

TABLE 1 Instagram shoutout pages

Pseudonym	Posts	Followers	Following	Profile Bio
@RabbitGirls	70	3.7m	67	Turn On Post Notifications 🐰 _Where's that Wascally Wabbit ? 🐰 Need a Promo? DM 🐰
@ThickGirls	1,339	2.1m	2,999	TURN ON POST NOTIFICATIONS ▪ MALE OWNERS ▪ Profile Pic: @influencer ▪ thickgirls@gmail.com 📩 Follow the backup 📩 instagram.com/boomgirls
@BoomGirls	1,542	1.5m	1,251	🎀 BoomGirls	TURN ON POST NOTIFICATIONS ▪ MALE OWNERS ▪ S4S 100k & up Send DM 📩 SHOP NOW 📩 bit.ly/BuyBitcoinGet10FREE
@QueenGirls	81	1.1m	111	🔥 Models 📺 Promo 📺 Features 🔥 Hot and Elegant Babes 👑 🔥 Keep Following and Liking photos 💕 🔥 Contact me at Dm ⭐
@AltGirls	1,242	1m	518	Tattooed girls you will love	default @influencer 👀 For a feature please DM us 💕 Click the link below for our only fans page 🔗 onlyfans.com/altgirls
@TwerkGirls	164	1m	221	You Can't Copy Respect 💯	Paid Promo	PayPal	Trendsetter Display pic: @influencer Turn On Post Notifications 🔔 📺 No Disrespect Intended
@WildGirls	24	877k	103	💪	• FOR Promos/Business Inquiries • DIRECT ⬅️ • DM for Credits 🙏
@CollegeGirls	1,617	871k	369	🎓 Snapchat: collegegirls 👉 Submit by DM or TAG us! ✱ collegegirls@gmail.com . 👉 SUBSCRIBE, VIDEOS SOON! 👈 www.youtube.com/collegegirls
@StarGirls	15,468	493k	346	⋅ Business & Promotion Inquiries ONLY: StarGirls@gmail.com	we do NOT accept submissions. #stargirl #stargirls #stargirlsonly
@HopefulGirls	5,029	369k	378	📧 email@hopefulgirls.com	MUST have a photo set in review MUST have link in bio & linked to IG (Read the link in our bio) Tag your photographers www.hopefulegirls.com
@CutthroatGirls	336	341k	2,494	Male owner I post, models, dancers and just everyday women all tagged. Dm for feature inquiries. #makethecut	pic@cutthroatgirls.com
@AussieGirls	964	180k	180	🇦🇺 Aussie Alt Models 🤖 Admins @moderators 👀 To be featured #aussiegirls only! 💕 Profile pic features @influencer www.aussiegirls.com/recruit
@DimeGirls	95	94.2k	1,214	💄 Snapchat: dimegirls Be Active 👄🇮🇹🇮🇹 Turn Post Notification On ❤️ Paid Promos ✱ Available Dm Me I'll Rise Up 🐎 dimegirls.co
@CountryGirls	1,714	72.6k	7,386	🎸	🔥 Country babes • Model promotion • Contest Give-aways 🔥 Follower submitted photos • High quality photos only. ▪ Page Model -@influencer
@HotGirls	2,176	65.3k	1,373	cover girl @influencer	Shoutout page only 🌊 Hottest models 🎸 🔥 FREE SHOUTOUTS 😎 Male administration ♂ 🇺🇸 Any rude or stupid comments gets you blocked hotgirls.com
@AssGirls	836	48.8k	7,361	Featuring Tropical Beauty @influencer profile pic Please follow prior to submitting pics. Follow, like, and comment! Thanks for following! 💕🍑🔥🐎
@AlphaGirls	47	47.3k	220	Beautiful Babes 🔥 Fitness Fashion Models Brands Health 📸📸📸 Checkout 📸📸📸/ Profile pic: @influencer
@CoolerGirls	942	40.6k	257	Welcome to Cooler Girls Daily 😎😜 DM us a picture and we will post! MERCH 👇👇👇 at link below! coolergirls.com
@USAGirls	957	24.3k	2,470	The Hottest Girls Of North America • Feature? Tag & Follow • 18+ • Be Respectful: Hate = Blocked 🅜 @moderator 🇴 PP: @influencer
@BadGirls	254	17.8k	7,337	💋 We BadGirls University 💋 Est. 4.26.17 #badgirls 📺 Promo for all baddies *ocking with us 🙎 Upcoming Brand® 2019	Modeling/Clothing/Photography📸 cash.me/badgirls
@DivaGirls	3,621	15.6k	2,579	We Publish Beautiful Girls From All Over The World. DM Us To Be Featured 18+ 💜 Website coming soon💜 twitter.com/divagirls
@SmokingGirls	488	14.7k	1,064	🚬 Be Confident. You are smoking hot 🚬 🔥 Use #smokinggirls for a feature.
@BeachGirls	1,302	12.4k	4,176	🔥 DM or tag us for a feature! 🌴 Beach girls daily ☀ For business or promotion DM us 🎀 BeachGirls
@BootyGirls	55	9,456	993	Booty is beautiful everywhere, especially on the beach 🏖 All models are tagged 📍 📺 Turn on Post Notifications 📺 Leave a comment for a follow back 👇
@BikiniGirls	478	3,261	6,002	Bikini Models & Brands 🔗 Tag/DM For Feature 🔗 Must be 18+ 🔗 Respect all models/ featured girls	Every Season Is Bikini Season
@BeautifulGirls	369	1,127	4,832	⚠ DM for shoutouts ⚠ ❤️ Page Model: 🔥 @influencer 🔥❤️ Featuring fitness, modeling, fashion, outdoor enthusiasts, athletes, and artist ❤️
@UniGirls	120	382	1,017	Pics from a college near you! 💙 Dm/Tag to be featured 💙 Respect the post be a gentleman or get blocked! 🔥 Follow us 🔥 ❗ Students only ❗

Pseudonyms are used for each shoutout page and any identifying information. Relevant acronyms are provided as follows: DM = direct message; PP = profile picture; S4S or SFS = shoutout for shoutout.

3.2 | Collecting and refining the data

Data collection next involved a process of immersion across four months with the 27 sexualized shoutout pages and the development of characteristic vignettes of each page to gain an initial understanding of the nature of each page and observe the posting practices. After the initial observation period, a systematic approach to data collection was taken by downloading ten consecutive images from each shoutout page from a common date into a Google spreadsheet, resulting in 270 individual images across the 27 sexualized Instagram shoutout pages. Videos were not included in the data. Downloaded content for each image included date posted, a screenshot of the image, a permanent link to the image and image caption. In addition, each of the downloaded images was traced back to the tagged influencer featured in them. The permanent link to each influencer's Instagram profile and her self-provided profile bio was recorded. The data was further refined by removing 13 influencers with deleted profiles, 13 influencers with private profiles and 14 duplicates of profiles across multiple shoutout pages.

The data was further refined through analysis of each influencer's profile to gain a better understanding of the monetization practices, if any. This process included a deep immersion into each influencer's profile — clicking through her images, following external links posted on her Instagram page (e.g., YouTube channel, personal website), noting self-identifying language used in her profiles (e.g., 'brand ambassador', 'influencer') and signals of monetization (e.g., paid partnerships, coupon codes, tagged brands). For each influencer, the first 25 photographs and/or videos were reviewed, including reading through comments, captions and hashtags on each posted image to determine the nature of the influencer profile. Influencers' profiles with no evidence of commodification were removed (n = 58). Thus, the final

set of Instagram profiles for analysis included 172 influencers. The content posted on each of these 172 influencers' profiles served as the data for analysis. This included images, hashtags, image tags, captions, external links (e.g., YouTube, e-commerce site) and comments. Each influencer was assigned a pseudonym for anonymity.

3.3 | Analysing the data

This study employs a dual qualitative approach of visual and textual analysis of Instagram posts from female influencers who engage in sexualized labour. In media analysis, analysing text and imagery together is important to identify connections or deviations between the two elements (Elliott & Stead, 2018; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015; Scollon & Scollon, 2003), recognizing that 'images are simultaneously independently organized, structured messages but are also connected to the written text' (Elliott & Stead, 2018, p. 27). In other words, what Instagram influencers show in their images may reinforce or contradict what they say in their captions and/or comments. Visual and textual data from the influencers' profiles was analysed using an iterative, hermeneutical approach (Thompson, 1997). Each Instagram post was analysed independently, searching for meanings and patterns, rather than just casually reading the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This encompassed an analysis of the visual content (e.g., photograph), the text (e.g., captions and hashtags) and interactive affordances (e.g., likes and comments) of each post. Then, the posts were analysed across influencers to identify patterns and related back to existing literature to develop insights about how sexualized labour is employed to monetize attention on Instagram.

Following the initial immersion period, the data was analysed through a combination of deductive a priori and inductive open coding that was driven by constant comparison looking for similarities and differences (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Data was first sorted into inductively derived categories of influencer labour (e.g., affiliation-based influencer labour, access-based influencer labour or evidence of both). In line with Elliott and Stead's (2018) visual semiotic approach to analysis, we considered the following factors: composition, or how the elements in an image are arranged; representational meaning, or how the elements of an image interact; modality, or the credibility of an image; and interactive meaning, or the relationship an image fosters with its viewer. As the analysis developed, patterns emerged offering insight into how sexualized labour is performed within these. Specifically, to analyse sexualized labour, three a priori codes (i.e., aesthetic labour, emotional labour, sexualization) and one emergent code (i.e., connective labour) drove the analysis. For aesthetic labour, embodied aesthetic attributes were coded, such as prosumers' physical poses (e.g., kneeling, holding breasts in hands), props and clothing (e.g., food, drink, bathing suits, lingerie), location (e.g., in a bedroom, at the beach, in a kitchen, at a gym) and other stylistic devices (e.g., stylized make-up, tattoos, dyed hair). In coding for emotional labour, the analysis considered how prosumers engaged with their followers (e.g., captions, comments, emojis), the emotional sentiment of interactions (e.g., defensive, gracious, positive, upbeat) and the frequency of interactions (e.g., non-response, immediate response). During the analysis process, connective labour emerged as a required practice to mobilize sexualized labour, which was coded by examining prosumers' use of digital affordances, including low-level functional features of the platform (e.g., image tagging, hashtagging) as well as relational facilitation (e.g., contactability, redirecting) (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). In line with our conceptualization of sexualized labour, the analysis was directed by considering the interconnections between these forms of labour.

The dataset was managed via Google sheet. The analysis progressed by reviewing the influencers' profiles, looking for outlier cases, developing categorizations and refining the coding scheme. In line with our conceptual framework, which we present in the next section, the 172 influencers were placed in etic categories of influencers — hopefuls (21), boasters (45), engagers (26), boosters (30) and performers (50). Notably, a key challenge in our data is its ephemerality. Instagram's policies prohibit nudity or sexual content from being shared on the platform, however, they are enforced haphazardly. In some cases, shoutout pages and/or influencers' profiles were deleted by the platform due to policy violations. Some shoutout pages and influencers, included in the original sample, were later deleted by the platform during the period of analysis. Rather than a permanent and static collection of content removed from its social media platform, our data exists online, in its natural state — enabling one to dip in and out of the data

for analysis. Indeed, our dataset was (and is) a dynamic one; providing a naturalistic approach to the ongoing understanding of how women perform sexualized labour in a digital prosumption environment.

4 | RESEARCH FINDINGS

We draw upon the data to examine the articulation of sexualized labour in the prosumer and digital context of Instagram. Our emergent framework in Figure 4 is derived from the data and illustrates how sexualized labour supports self-commodification, which unfolds on a continuum from non-monetized and low attention practices to monetized and high attention practices. Along the continuum, monetization and attention relate to sexualized representations in different ways. Although this sexualization is largely bounded by 'porn chic', it ranges from what could be deemed 'softer' or more 'cheesecake' shots (Meyerowitz, 1996) with references (conscious or unconscious) to pornographic convention to more overt pornified images which are often difficult to differentiate from mainstream commercial pornography with direct links to commercial sex industry sites (e.g., webcams, strip clubs).

Non-monetized and low attention practices encompass more affiliation-based influencer labour, which works toward gaining a formal affiliation with an established brand in the marketplace. Affiliation-based influencer labour seeks to gain and hold the attention of an external brand via sexually suggestive and playful engagements with social media followers that are mobilized through increasingly subtle digital affordances. In contrast, monetized and high attention practices reflect more access-based influencer labour, which works towards establishing one's identity as a brand of value in the marketplace. Access-based influencer labour supports self-marketed ventures via sexually explicit and strategic engagements with attentive social media followers through employing increasingly sophisticated digital affordances. Such ventures can include producing tangible products (e.g., clothing line, skincare), offering personal wellness services (e.g., make-up artistry, personal training), and accessing exclusive and personalized sexual content (e.g., personal camming website, private Snapchat membership).

Our findings offer quite a different reading of sexualized labour, which to date has been bound within the confines of a more traditional organizational setting (e.g., retail store, restaurant) with workers employed under more secure conditions (e.g., receiving a salary/wage and structured by organizational policies and procedures). Drawing on evidence from the data, we next present how emotion, aesthetics and 'porn chic' sexualization mesh to articulate performances of sexualized labour across five identified forms of influencer labour. These encompass hopefuls, boasters, engagers, boosters and performers. Connective labour emerges as a required element to mobilize sexualized labour, encompassing practices, skills and knowledge employed to successfully embody and negotiate the performance of sexualized labour for attention and monetization purposes. In our study and its social media context, this was elaborated in the form of digital affordances.

4.1 | Hopefuls

Hopefuls are aspiring influencers who seek to be affiliated with brands and perform sexualized labour to be discovered and gain the attention of potential brand partners and followers, without monetary compensation. Figure 5
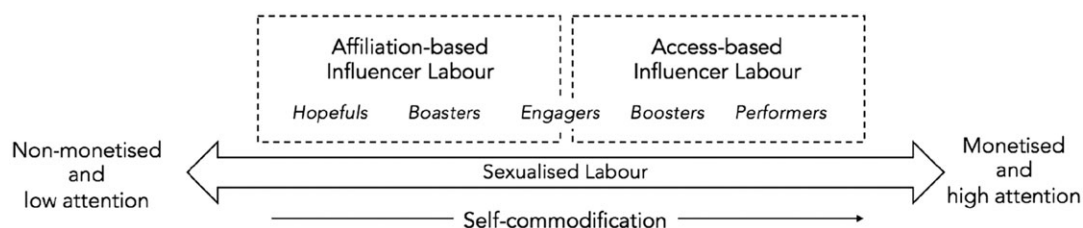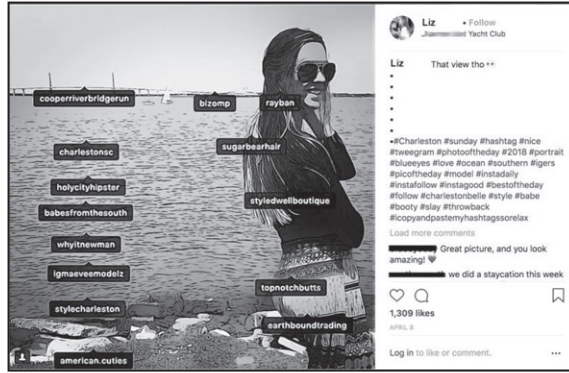

FIGURE 4 A framework of self-commodification through sexualized labour

FIGURE 5 Examples of hopefuls

provides exemplary posts from hopefuls. Although each woman's profile stylistically appeals to a particular lifestyle and related brands, the same 'look' needed to succeed as an influencer is reiterated throughout the data. This look is conveyed primarily through poses, gestures and stylistic choices, beginning at hopefuls who emulate a sexualization that becomes increasingly explicit, niche and disembodied along the continuum toward performers. Throughout our data, influencers consistently pose in ways that highlight body parts, wear tight, short and revealing clothing and employ gestures such as gently pulling their hair, touching their parted lips and simulating undressing. Combined, these efforts both draw upon and reproduce a recognizable soft 'porn chic' aesthetic (Dines, 2015; Harvey & Robinson, 2007). For instance, in Figure 5, Jessica, Liz and Valerie each demonstrate the same physical pose of popping their hip to the side to accentuate bodily curves and provide the illusion of rounder buttocks and a smaller waist.

For hopefuls, these 'porn chic' aesthetic signals are often more subtle and candid. For example, in a post Jessica reveals her body in a bikini but chooses to take a selfie in a bathroom mirror as opposed to posing in a more stylized manner at a pool or beach.

This sexually suggestive aesthetic is reinforced through interactions with social media followers governed by feeling rules of positivity, conviviality and playfulness, thus mirroring the emotionality noted in previous research of sexualized labour within interactive services (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Hopefuls offer upbeat and somewhat cliché captions (e.g., '*that view tho*', '*happy hump day*'). These phrases are representative of a type of 'organizational shorthand' in the Instagram environment, and similar to previous research on workplace clichés (e.g., 'work hard, play hard'; Anderson-Gough, Grey, & Robson, 1998), they reflect uncertainty of the individual — in this case, hopefuls who are trying hard to gain attention. Hopefuls reinforce sexual suggestiveness through emotionality as they appeal to followers to gain more attention. For example, one hopeful, Morgan, enters a teen model search for a clothing brand based on Instagram 'likes' and calls upon her followers to like her photo, promising to post more sexually suggestive images if she wins (e.g., '*LIKE WHAT YOU SEE AND WANT MORE? PLEASE GO LIKE THIS PICTURE TO HELP ME WIN MODEL OF THE WEEK!!!!!!!!*').

Competitions such as this convey viability of the sexualized aesthetic and demonstrates the extent to which others (e.g., followers, brands) support the aesthetic. In our data, we also begin to see how brands solicit women to perform sexualized labour on their behalf. For example, on Liz's image in Figure 5, four different clothing and swimwear brands comment on her image — each complimenting her and requesting that Liz send a direct message (DM) to the brand to get free products or become a brand ambassador. Yet, even as brands seek to exploit influencers' sexualized bodies, the onus for maintaining burgeoning attention remains on hopefuls.

Thus, aesthetics, emotions and 'porn chic' sexualization mesh in a performance of sexualized labour, albeit in a more amateur manner for 'hopeful' influencers. In turn, these are mobilized through connective labour that employs the digital affordances of Instagram to gain the attention needed for monetization potential. For hopefuls, this manifests in the sheer magnitude of tagging they undertake with a view to creating as many affiliations as possible. For example, in addition to tagging a geolocation and including 27 general hashtags in her caption, Liz (see Figure 5) image tags 13 other Instagram profiles, including clothing brands, beauty products, shoutout pages and tourist destinations. None of these 'partners' financially sponsor her photograph; rather, she tags them to maximize attention on the platform — to be discovered, gain more followers and get more likes. Indeed, hopefuls engage more overtly in this type of connective labour in an effort to mobilize their sexualized aesthetic and emotional labour — in this case, to build potential attention on the Instagram platform. However, this provision of free advertising for brands by hopefuls is sexually objectifying. That is, in order to get noticed by potential affiliate brands, hopefuls subscribe to culturally prescribed female body ideals as the primary object of attention (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Yet, as hopefuls have only just begun down the path of attracting attention, their labour receives no monetization. As Mears (2014) observes, the subjective experience of being aesthetic comes with a seeming pleasure and empowerment that can seduce workers to labour under poor wage and benefit conditions. Similarly, our research highlights that 'hopeful' digital influencers consistently perform sexualized labour on behalf of brands for no financial incentives. Hence, we can see how women's unpaid labour in digital spaces adds value to economies in unacknowledged yet meaningful ways.

4.2 | Boasters

Boasters encompass influencers who have informal affiliations with brands and perform sexualized labour to capitalize on this initial brand attention without monetary compensation or with very precarious referral-based compensation. Boasters are often recipients of branded freebies, free product trials and coupon codes — all which serve to promote the external branded product yet fail to provide (meaningful) monetary compensation for the influencer. Still, influencers boast about these branded affiliations, which are heralded as authenticating and

legitimizing partnerships in the digital realm of prosumption. Thus, boasters rely heavily on aggrandizing brand affiliations in their images. Figure 6 provides exemplary posts from boasters.

Again, for boasters the 'look' of porn chic was reproduced in their posts. Products are used conspicuously as props and often act to support an aesthetic of sexual suggestiveness. For example, Naomi uses a hair product package as a prop, gently resting it against her mouth, however, the central focus of the image is not her hair — but her breasts. Indeed, boasters' aesthetic labour involves focusing the image on the product while still drawing upon 'porn chic' sexualization to garner attention. These overt brand promotions are risky as followers may perceive them as inauthentic (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010), however, our data suggests boasters maintain the attention

FIGURE 6   Examples of boasters

of the audience through the replication of 'porn chic' poses and gestures, such as squatting, gently propped up on their shins, placing their hands strategically between their legs and drawing the viewer's attention there (see Sarah, Figure 6). The products promoted through boasters' sexualized labour are consistent across influencers in our data and primarily fall into categories of clothing and fashion accessories, nutrition supplements, and skincare and beauty products. Collectively, these products highlight how the influencers' labour is sexually objectifying; selling products that reinforce ongoing effort to produce an idealized body and promote habitual body monitoring, body shame and internalization of the thin ideal. Thus, boasters' curated bodies are commodified to promote and sell products directed toward maintaining a particular sexualized aesthetic.

For boasters, this aesthetic labour meshes with emotional labour to create a more niche appeal, akin to traditional market segmentation. For example, Shayla (see Figure 6) crafts a fitness-oriented niche, promoting products like Bang Energy drinks and BPI Sports protein powder. Yet knowing how to successfully get attention and engage with her audience to promote this highlights challenges. In contrast to a 'look' and standards of interaction that are managerially mandated to appeal to the local context and consumer tastes for a given organization (Otis, 2011), here the individual influencer is responsible for appealing to the senses of their potential 'customers', namely audience of brands and followers. For instance, Shayla appeals to her customers choosing niche hashtags that both reflect her physical appearance and have the potential to connect with women like herself, such as #fitblackqueens and #melaninpoppin. In navigating this self-management, certain 'floating norms' (Mears, 2011) come to dictate how influencers gain attention on Instagram. One such norm relates to influencers engaging frequently with their audience by responding to all followers' comments. In doing so, they demonstrate they are fulfilling an expectation about the intimacy that is to be created with their followers (Abidin, 2015). One boaster in our data, Ellen, even offered a YouTube tutorial on how to engage with followers, stating "*it doesn't have to be super complicated stuff, you know, people compliment you and just say 'thank you' or 'oh love you' … It's something so small that really helps out a ton on your pictures*". By responding frequently to followers, boasters are able to exploit the Instagram algorithm. As Ellen notes, for boasters, it is 'vital to reply to your comments because it shows more engagement on your picture'. Posts with more engagement (e.g., comments, likes) are deemed more attention-worthy by the platform and thus more likely to be discovered. These frequent, intimate engagements moreover function to amplify the sexually suggestive aesthetics of boasters, such as Shayla's disembodied representation that focuses on her breasts, stomach and buttocks, highlighting the sexual objectification so prolific across the boaster data whereby women are positioned as objects alongside the products they promote.

Like hopefuls, connective labour works to mobilize this aesthetic labour, emotional labour and 'porn chic' sexualization for boasters. Here, the digital affordances of emojis come to play a critical role. For a boaster, knowing which emojis to use to convey an aesthetic of sexual suggestiveness alongside a playful style of emotional engagement is critical to for getting attention. Emojis are graphic symbols that represent facial expressions, feelings, concepts and ideas and are employed in nuanced and subtle ways beyond a positive–negative binary to craft intimacies with their audiences (Kralj Novak, Smailović, Sluban, & Mozetič, 2015). For instance, in responding to comments, Shayla uses distinct variations of winking face emojis 😉, pink hearts 💗 and heart eye emojis 😍 all of which are playful but subtly flirtatious while giving a sense of customized intimacy in each unique response.

Yet, with increased attention, comes a rise in sexual harassment for boasters. Digital media reduces inhibitions and yields more intimate exchanges, given its lack of non-verbal cues and asynchronous nature (Walther, 1996). Followers may share comments they would be unlikely to make in face-to-face settings. Boasters receive sexually aggressive and objectifying comments, yet rather than ignoring them, they employ the same positive, upbeat feeling rules by responding with playful emojis (e.g., laughing emoji) and/or use digital shorthand like 'lol' (i.e., laughing out loud) and 'haha' to signify humour. Our data shows that strategies like reprimanding can risk fallout from followers. For boasters whose relationships with brands are highly precarious commission-based promotions, the risk of losing further 'partnership' opportunities is high. Consequently, hashtags come to play an important reinforcing role in connective labour, with boasters using hashtags strategically and sparingly by limiting them to affiliated brands and their 'niche'. For example, Sarah hashtags her image with gaming-oriented hashtags (e.g., #gamer #godofwar

#playstation #xbox #fortnite) and brand-specific hashtags (#teammusclesport) that focus her affiliations and attention-gaining efforts. Similarly, having coupon codes for the brands promoted act as a signal to followers and other influencers that sexualized labour can 'pay off' (e.g., getting freebies) while masking that monetization is still largely absent for boasters.

4.3 | Engagers

Engagers are influencers who are formally affiliated with brands and perform sexualized labour to maintain the attention of the brand with monetary compensation. They straddle the boundary between affiliation-based influencer labour and access-based influencer labour. For many engagers, they are building their own person-based brand (Turley & Moore, 1995), by which they leverage their popularity and attention to establish formal, monetized partnerships with external brands, products, events and services. Relative to hopefuls and boasters, engagers represent a move toward a highly choreographed and staged aesthetic, still relying on porn chic aesthetics but with a greater emphasis on cultivating a perceived aspirational lifestyle rooted in this modality of sexualization. For example, in Figure 7, Tanya's sponsored post pairs porn chic gestures (e.g., lips parted, hair-pulling), poses (e.g., hip popped to accentuate curves) and clothing (e.g., cleavage-bearing white swimsuit) with a glamorous, luxury vacation paid for by a cosmetics brand. The implicit suggestion is that 'porn chic' sexualization is a means to pursue an aspirational jet-setting lifestyle. Engagers' images appear candid, but in fact, are planned and professionally captured. This 'plandid' approach is common among celebrities, who create highly planned content meant to appear spontaneous (Cheng, 2017) and mirrors the type of snapshot aesthetics prominent in advertising for consumer lifestyle brands (Schroeder, 2011). This mirrors previous work suggesting freelancers engage in ongoing production of 'personality' as a component of aesthetic labour (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006), however, our findings suggest engagers move beyond personality to craft aspirational lifestyles, rooted in a modality of sexualization.

Engagers' heightened attention (e.g., millions of followers) coincides with a further increase in aggressive harassment and objectification (e.g., sexual solicitation, physical threats). For instance, on Anna's image (see Figure 7), a follower comments, '*Its damn … i wanna a fuck u … darling … your ass is really very sexy … my penis is finding u to have a sex.*' Unlike boasters, engagers do not respond to such comments, however, they do not remove them either. The intensity, volume and public nature of this harassment are quite different to those experienced in offline service settings by customers and colleagues (Adkins, 1995). Anyone who opens Instagram can harass influencers. The digital platform heightens contactability (e.g., commenting, direct messaging) and perceived availability as the influencers' images are always available to viewers for their consumption. Thus, engagers' aspirational sexualized lifestyle depictions coupled with seemingly constant availability amplifies sexual objectification and vulnerability to harassment. The notion of being 'at work' is tenuous for engagers who experience constant and inescapable interactions with followers without the support of employer intervention. Influencers are solely responsible for these interactions and must determine their own guidelines to evaluate which responses are appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

For engagers, aesthetics, emotions and 'porn chic' sexualization mesh as sexualized labour that encompasses a lifestyle performance. Connective labour mobilizes this through digital affordances designed to persuade followers that they could achieve a similar lifestyle by purchasing the products featured in engagers' formalized paid brand partnerships. For example, engagers in our data frequently have 'verified' Instagram accounts — denoted by a blue check mark symbol and meant to authenticate 'well-known figures and brands' with 'a high likelihood of being impersonated' (Instagram, 2018). This signal communicates that the influencer has 'made it', capturing the attention of brands and establishing formalized partnerships that are promoted to legions of followers. Engagers such as Deanna both legitimize and mobilize their sexualized labour by using hashtags such as #sponsored and #ad through which she is able to position her relationship with a brand as a 'collaboration' (see Figure 7). Thus, engagers monetize their sexualized labour by capitalizing on opportunities to merge their carefully crafted lifestyles with sponsoring brands — and in turn, endorse a pathway to monetization that relies on self-objectification.

Deanna
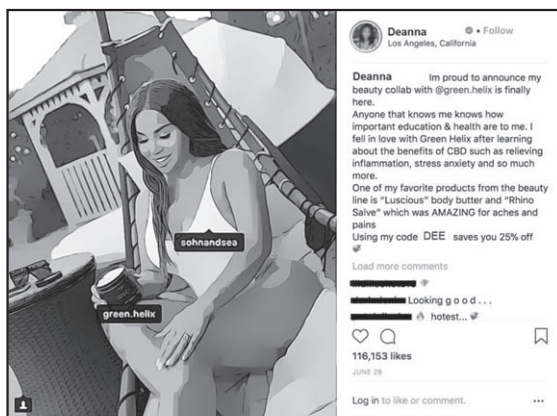
Tanya

Anna

FIGURE 7 Examples of engagers

4.4 | Boosters

Boosters are influencers who promote access to self-marketed products and perform sexualized labour to exploit the attention of social media followers for monetary compensation. That is, boosters mark a shift toward access-based influencer labour as they create and promote *their own* products or services, such as swimwear, clothing, make-up, sunglasses and fitness guides, among others. Figure 8 provides exemplary posts from boosters.

Julia

Jade

Stephanie

FIGURE 8 Examples of boosters

In the case of boosters, the female influencer acts as the face of her own brand, rather than performing sexualized labour to promote external brands. Boosters' aesthetic appeal employs more explicit elements of porn chic, with their own personal products used as props. In line with previous work on influencers (Abidin, 2016b), our data suggests considerable work goes into the behind the scenes staging of boosters' images — meant to highlight the product for sale while relying on particular aesthetics to grab the viewers' attention. For example, Jade's image highlights her artwork, both in the foreground and background, but notably alongside her cleavage. Aesthetic labour involves a constant awareness and attentiveness towards one's body, even outside of work (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006). Similarly, our data suggests influencers are always thinking about and working upon their bodies. This is apparent among boosters as many of them sell curated fitness regimens and diet plans used to 'achieve' their physical appearances.

These boosters frequently post images and videos of themselves in the gym, actively showing the 'work' they do to achieve their look while simultaneously promoting the product (e.g., fitness guide) for sale. Still, boosters are distinct from health and wellbeing influencers, who might focus on expanding healthy food choices and encouraging exercise in moderation (Vaterlaus, Patten, Roche, & Young, 2015). Instead, boosters draw upon porn chic aesthetics to appeal to a male gaze, despite their products being marketed toward women, reinforcing Rich's (1980) concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. For example, in Stephanie's post (see Figure 8), the squatting pose and explicit reference to her rear-end being grabbed (e.g., sand handprint) appeal to heterosexual porn tropes.

Boosters' captions reflect an ongoing conversation with their followers, who are potential customers for their products. As they are building a brand, boosters act as their own customer service representatives with a heightened requirement for emotional labour and personal interaction. Their captions are expressive — often featuring personal reflections and thoughtful commentary — yet always tied back to the product for sale. Harassment, which is heighted due to an increasing level of objectification, complicates the customer service exchange. For example, Julia's image promotes her own swimwear line for women, however, she receives sexually (and racially) confronting comments from men, such as, '*Turn around before I take out my black dick and beat you like a purchased slave!*' Like engagers, boosters like Julia typically do not engage with these commenters and do not remove the comments. As previously discussed, more engagement (e.g., comments) results in more potential attention for a given post. For boosters, this is critical as they seek to grow their customer base and sell their products and services. Hence, reading and making the choice to not delete such harassment simply becomes 'part of the job'.

For boosters, aesthetics, emotions and 'porn chic' sexualization mesh to create an entrepreneurial brand promoted through sexualized labour, with little distinguishing between the influencer as a person and the brand she is building. Connective labour mobilizes sexualized labour for boosters by combining previously discussed attention-seeking digital affordances of the Instagram platform (e.g., hashtagging, tagging, commenting) and promotional practices (e.g., discount codes, exclusive giveaways) with an added element of redirecting the audience to outside e-commerce sites. The entrepreneurial products boosters create exist outside of the Instagram platform; therefore, boosters must understand how to employ connective labour to direct potential customers to purchase their products via external websites and apps, thereby monetizing their sexualized labour.

4.5 | Performers

Performers are influencers who offer access to themselves as commodities and perform sexualized labour to nurture the devotion of social media followers for monetary compensation. Figure 9 provides exemplary posts from performers, who engage in sexualized labour on Instagram as a method of building an audience and redirecting their followers to external outlets for distributing more overtly sexual content. The performers' aesthetic is unmistakably pornographic, with posted images featuring little or no clothing, few or no props, set in private locations (e.g., bedroom) and most notably focusing on a particular body part. For example, nearly all of Latasia's images prominently feature her tongue whereas Brenda's images primarily highlight her breasts. Thus, performers' aesthetic appeal signals their bodies are available for monetary exchange while simultaneously distinguishing themselves in the marketplace based on a singular most valuable body part. This sexualized aesthetic is reinforced through performers' use of sexually symbolic emojis, which act as sexual currency to reinforce that these women are 'fuckable' (Dines, 2015). That is, in line with Tyler (2012), the sexualized performance by influencers is not just about the body but also emphasizes the importance of place. Here, other elements are sexualized in the digital arena, including sexually symbolic emojis and overtly flirtatious captions. Performers frequently use emojis, such as a smirking face (😏: symbolic of flirtation), a peach (🍑: symbolic of a butt), an eggplant (🍆: symbolic of a penis) and three water droplets (💦: symbolic of orgasm). These emojis move beyond feeling rules of playfulness and instead signal unmistakable sexual innuendo and engagement.

FIGURE 9 Examples of performers

Like other influencers in our data, performers receive vast numbers of sexually aggressive comments from followers, however, rather than replying on Instagram, performers perform more direct means of emotional labour elsewhere by redirecting their followers to external websites for personalized chatting and interacting. For example, Jamie redirects followers to her Snapchat, Brenda redirects followers to her OnlyFans.com page and Latasia redirects followers to her personal website. In all cases, access to these sites involves a paid premium. For

example, Jamie's Snapchat access includes three tiers, with the top billed option at $500/month and described as follows:

> Want the ultimate and most personal experience? With the My King Experience you will get all the perks of the other packages. To make it even more personal, I'll send you a special monthly photo collection, follow you on Instagram, and give you my personal phone number (WhatsApp).

Thus, in commodification of the self, performers use Instagram as a teaser to entice followers toward heightened forms of emotional and sexual engagement on other digital platforms — featuring constant availability and connection at a price.

Our data illustrates how performers capitalize on the meshing of aesthetic labour, emotional labour and 'porn chic' sexualization to build an access-based business venture rooted in sexualized labour. Connective labour mobilizes this sexualized labour through digital affordances such as clickable hyperlinks to redirect followers to external websites, which allow for more sexualized content and heightened personal interactions. Even though these women approach sexualized labour as a means to a commercial end, the digital marketplace at large can, and does, exploit performers' sexualized labour for its own gain. Influencers lack control and ownership over their own digital content, due to the fluid nature of the digital space. In our data, their identities are impersonated and their images are frequently used as advertising click-bait, with the creators going uncredited and unpaid. For example, Latasia identifies impersonators on her profile and warns her followers,

> my only page is this one and my backup account! Anything else is not me! U send money n try to hit me n tell me I don't wanna fuckin hear it cause I said multiple times its not me!!!!

In this way, influencers' connective labour is limited by the exploitative nature of the digital platform, whereby women's bodies can become commodities of the commons — available to anyone able to take a screenshot and profit off of performers' sexualized labour.

5 | CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this article, we have considered the conceptual boundaries of sexualized labour, articulating it beyond the realm of the standard employment arrangements as embedded in traditional organizational settings, and considering a specific, digital context. By drawing upon the concept of prosumption, as carried out by influencers on Instagram, our study examined performances of sexualized labour bounded by 'porn chic' cultural norms. Through this, we sought to interrogate how prosumption is enacted and related to monetization in digital culture, as well as to issues of sexualization and pornographication, and how these subscribe to, and challenge, extant understandings of sexualized labour. In particular, we have put forward connective labour, and a more nuanced, contextually bounded, understanding of sexualization — which recognized links to the broader cultural context of 'porn chic' and pornographication — which serve to advance research on sexualized labour, as well as pose new questions for further research in this area.

Consistent with the extant literature, we observed that both aesthetic and emotional labour were clearly present in our data, although these were generally very difficult to separate. Additionally, this article shows that aesthetic labour, emotional labour and 'porn chic' sexualization mesh to articulate the enactment of sexualized labour by influencers on Instagram, as mobilized by connective labour. In this way, we concur with Tyler (2012) who advances a conceptualization of sexualized labour as a complex dynamic of both performance and placement. Building upon the working definition offered earlier in the article, we conceive sexualized labour as an embodied performance that involves a complex, interrelated dynamic of emotion, aesthetics and a modality of 'sexualization' that cannot be separated from where it is placed. This is mobilized by what we term connective labour — the practices, skills and knowledge employed to successfully embody and negotiate this performance for attention

and monetization purposes. We next explore how our reading of the data, pushes the boundaries of extant conceptualizations of sexualized labour with regard to: the issue of freely chosen versus prescribed sexualized labour; the addition of connective labour as a key element of sexualized labour; and questioning the meaning of 'sexualized'.

In a departure from previous research in which an organization prescribes the sexualized labour of workers, in our study influencers act as entrepreneurs able to pursue multiple pathways to exploit their sexualized labour. Yet, these opportunities are marked by precarity, where — in spite of the demanding efforts required to craft sexualized labour — there is no guarantee of any financial reward and more overt sexualization or porn chic can be one way to improve attempts at monetization. That is, 'porn chic' on Instagram was not managerially prescribed in our data, but was rather defined by existing cultural norms. This was present across the self-commodification continuum in body poses, gestures and stylistic choices (e.g., clothing), highlighting a fairly consistent pornified aesthetic embodied by the influencers that ranged from softer to more explicit. The monotony of this kind of representation in our study highlights the role of forces outside of a traditional management or organizational structure in shaping the performance of sexualized labour. This troubles the boundary between existing understandings of sexualized labour as either something that is managerially enforced or freely chosen by a worker. Understanding the ways in which sexualized labour might be prescribed, enforced or defined outside of traditional employment relations should prove a rich area for future research, especially given the rise of digital and precarious forms of work.

With regard to emotional labour, there are some similarities between these Instagram influencers and other documented experiences of sexualized labourers in extant studies although, again, the boundaries were not prescribed by an employer but directed by the norms of digital culture and the platform (e.g., Instagram). The influencers documented in our study also experienced a variety of harassment; the intensity, volume and public nature of which were amplified by the characteristics of online interactions and the ubiquity of sexually objectified imagery. Our findings highlight that, for influencers labouring in digital culture, emotional labour is shaped by new norms and collapsing boundaries as the difference between 'work' and 'life' is blurred. Furthermore, the unbounded spatial and temporal conditions of the platform mean that these influencers are 'always on' in a way that has not been common in traditional employment relationships within organizations. This has implications, in particular, for the study of harassment in online work environments, where there is no clear end to a shift, and the place of work is not physically bounded in the same way as much traditional employment.

Mirroring discussions in previous literature about the importance of particular knowledge resources in performing sexualized labour, our study also highlighted the importance of what we have called connective labour. This often involved understanding the overt and more covert mechanisms of the Instagram platform and the shoutout process. We offer that connective labour works to mobilize sexualized labour (in our study, primarily through the use of digital affordances such as tagging and emoji use and promotional practices such as discount codes and giveaways). The careful and strategic application of practices, skills and knowledge works to successfully embody and negotiate the performance of sexualized labour for attention and monetization purposes. Naming this as connective labour helps to make visible the kind of knowledge resources gestured towards in previous studies (e.g., Tyler, 2012). Examples of connective labour could be foregrounded more in future explorations of sexualized labour as this element plays an important role in the 'successful' performance of sexualized labour and might otherwise remain hidden.

One of the most striking elements to emerge from our analysis is the connection between porn chic/pornographication and sexualized labour. Moreover, as the self-commodification continuum unfolds, more overt sexual objectification and pornographication can lead to more attention and therefore more opportunities for monetization. This objectification, while potentially harmful in and of itself, was also more likely to be associated with more intense sexual harassment/sexually aggressive comments, suggesting that there can be significant costs tied to the monetizing potential of platforms like Instagram, for female influencers. Our data therefore suggests that pornographication is a key element of the cultural background to contemporary practices of

sexualized labour, especially in non-traditional labour contexts, such as digital prosumption. We also note that these cultural norms need to be recognized as a significant force which has an impact upon influencers in our data, but which exists outside the traditional employment and organizational dynamics in existing literature addressing sexualized labour. Given the cultural trend of pornographication, it not surprising to find that women often present themselves in highly sexualized/pornified ways on social media (Daniels, 2016) but how this relates to existing understandings of sexualized labour has been heretofore underexplored. We suggest that one way forward for thinking about sexualized labour is an interrogation of what is meant by 'sexualized', potentially beyond the recognized elements of sexuality, sexual desire and/or sexual pleasure (Spiess & Waring, 2005; Tyler, 2012; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). The trend of pornographication suggests a larger political economy of a *particular kind* of sexualized representation of women (Tyler, 2011a). As pornified imagery has become the norm for 'sexy', and as 'sexy' has become increasingly demanded of women in online spaces (Daniels, 2016), it has become impossible to completely untangle notions of freely chosen sexualized labour from a pornified aesthetic in digital contexts such Instagram.

In many ways, pornographication is a useful concept to bring to understandings of sexualized labour, not least as it has the potential to more accurately delineate the kind of sexual representation that is being promoted as opposed to the broader and less bounded notion of sexualization (Tyler & Quek, 2016). That is, our data does not show an enormous breadth of ways in which women might wish to be sexual, but rather a fairly monotonous repetition of 'sexiness' and sexual availability that is bounded by porn chic. Given the extensive reach of pornographication (Attwood, 2011; Boyle, 2010; Dines, 2010; McNair, 2002, 2013; Paasonen et al., 2007; Tyler, 2011a), this is likely to be an issue relevant across a range of other settings. Furthermore, the concept of sexualized labour generally incorporates all labour that has a sexual or sexualized element, but this tells us little about the specificity of the practices; if they are, for example, heteronormative, unequal, abusive or potentially empowering. We argue for the consideration of possible modalities of sexualized labour that interrogate the relationship between 'sexualization' and the shaping role of cultural norms in 'managing' women's sexualized representations. In turn, this offers the possibility of greater precision about the context in which particular kinds of sexualized labour take place, and the underlying power dynamics that may underpin them.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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