

# MeCCSA Postgraduate Network Conference 2022

## Mediating Gendered Identities: Articulations, Representations & Contestations

July 21st - 22nd, 2022  
King's College London, UK



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### Thursday 21st July

13:00-13:15 Opening Remarks & Reception (Tea & Coffee)

### Keynote

13:15-14:00 Dr Ysabel Gerrard, University of Sheffield  
Lecturer in Digital Media and Society

### Panel 1: Challenging Gender Representations through Digital Spaces

14:10-15:40 Rukhsar Hussain, University of Strathclyde  
"Representation of Hijras (a Third-Gender Community) in Bollywood"

Sarah Molisso, City, University of London  
"Discussing South Korean Instatoons"

Gilang Desti Parahita, King's College London  
"Hashtag Activism for Female Domestic Workers in Indonesian Instagram Sphere"

Q&A

### Panel 2: Negotiating and Reconstructing Identity

15:50-17:20 Sijuade Yusuf, University of Brighton  
"Sub-Saharan African Feminism; Social Media and Patriarchy"

Gelan Chen, KU Leuven  
"Reconstructing Gender Roles through Audience's Empathy with Female Characters in Pandemic TV Series"

Zhaowu Huang, Lund University  
"You're my kind of bro!" White Socks Fetish, Homosexual Masculinity, and the Mediated Construction of Gay Male Bodies"

Millicent Lovelock, University of Manchester  
"She knows her demographic, in spite of her contempt for it' Feminism, Identity, and Mediation in Lauren Oyler's Fake Accounts"

Q&A

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### Panel 3: Narratives of Age in Filmmaking

17:30-18:30

Kullanit Nitiwarngkul, City, University of London

"Ageing Successfully: Representations of Women's Ageing in Lifestyle Shows in Thailand"

Ali Ramsey, University of Sussex

"Re-visioning Menopause Through Experimental Documentary Filmmaking"

Q&A

18:30-20:00

Meze & Drinks Reception

### Friday 22nd July

### Panel 4: Digital Fandoms and Online Gaming

10:00-11:30

Erika Ningxin Wang, King's College London

"Ghost in the Box: Heterotopia of Intimacy in Fans Gendered Identification"

Lulu Yuan, University of Macau

"Identity Construction in Conflicts: The Nisu Fandom in China"

Sijing Song, Renmin University of China

"The Double 'War' of Invisible Flaneur: Everyday Practices and Resistance Strategies of King of Glory's Female Players"

Q&A

### Panel 5: Confronting Stereotypes Through Digital Platforms

11:45-13:15

Ridwa Horreh, University of Nottingham

"Black Women and Perceptions of Self-(re)presentation and Identity Formation on Social-Media"

Chanapang Pongpiboonkiat, University of Leeds

"Shaping Reality: Explore How Thai Military Women Use Facebook to Confront Female Stereotypes"

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**KING'S**  
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LONDON

  
**MeCCSA**  
Media, Communications &  
Cultural Studies Association

  
**MeCCSA**  
Postgraduate  
Network

Ziyang Chen, London School of Economics and Political Science

“(Self-)Representation and the Politics of Visibility in Contemporary Chinese Digital Platform: A Case Study of “Fifty-Year Old Auntie’s Solo Road Trip”

Q&A

13:15-14:15

Lunch Reception

### Panel 6: Conceptions of Capital

14:15-15:45

Jingjing Fu, University of Sussex

“Sharing for More Than the Money: Analysing Digital Labour in the Context of Gender”

Josephine West, King's College London

"Discussing the Digital Labour Experience of Camgirls"

Odin O’Sullivan, University College Dublin

“The Privatized Body, Social Media Masculinity, and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson”

Q&A

16:00-17:00

MeCCSA PGN Annual General Meeting (AGM)

# Abstracts

**Rukhsar Hussain, University of Strathclyde**

## **“Representation of Hijras (a Third-Gender Community) in Bollywood”**

This presentation studies hijra representation in the mainstream Hindi cinema, Bollywood (one of the largest film producing cinemas in the world). Bollywood offer queer space to exist and be recognised in varying manners. My argument in this presentation is that despite the fact that there are some films which have centred on hijra representations, most of these films challenge and undermine heteronormativity in a way that is not threatening in the context of Hindutva ideologies (which are representative of upholding Brahminical patriarchal heteronormative values). So, these representations can be excessive or disruptive but are also contained.

To present my arguments clearly, I have divided my presentation in two sections. The first section will give an overview of the treatment of gender and sexuality in Bollywood to offer an understanding of the world of Bollywood. This section will be useful to provide a context to readers who are not familiar with Bollywood films and the way it uses certain film images, allegories and tropes as part of the film. The next section will discuss in what roles are hijras present in Bollywood. In this section, I will do a close reading of scenes from two blockbuster films of their times, Golmaal Returns and Sadak. My main aim will be to see how gender is been mobilised in these representations and to think about how the figure of hijra de-stabilizes gender performances. I will argue how hijra representations are contained within a Hindutva framework, being disruptive and excessive at the same time.

**Sarah Molisso, City, University of London**

## **“Discussing South Korean Instatoons”**

Online spaces can serve as a medium to challenge normative gender roles and identities. Instatoons (webtoons that are published on Instagram) provide a radical space in which user created content can be made to challenge stereotypes and provide a counter-narrative to hegemonic discourses. I argue that South Korean instatoons are political acts, as they allow for public discussions on feminism. To understand the political nature of feminist instatoons, this presentation will first contextualise the feminist discourse in South Korea starting from the mid-2000s, looking at how it exists in conflict online. Ahn et al. (2016) have highlighted that various websites have varying levels of misogynistic speech, resulting in misandry as a counterattack (as seen in websites such as Megalia or Womad). I argue that instatoons have emerged as a ‘palatable’ interpretation of feminism, one that can subtly critique gender norms, and one that can reach a wider audience in a society in which ‘feminism’ is a dirty word. This presentation will then explore transnational intersectional feminist research in how to evaluate my role as a white, openly feminist researcher. Does my position help or hinder the study of such a volatile topic?

## **Gilang Desti Parahita, King's College London**

### **“Hashtag Activism for Female Domestic Workers in Indonesian Instagram Sphere”**

Feminist accounts on Instagram of Indonesia spawned the sphere with the hashtags #sahkanruupprt (#ratifydomesticworkerprotectionbill) and #pekerjarumahtangga (#domesticworkers). The issue of the Domestic Worker Protection Bill did not get enough media exposure in 2021, even though some notable events took place at the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). Given that most of 3.3 million domestic workers in Indonesia are women and some are underaged (ILO), #sahkanruupprt illustrates the double (labour and gender) support for female Indonesian precarious workers. Who are the users of #sahkanruupprt and #pekerjarumahtangga on Instagram? What are the themes that appear in the meme and caption upload via the hashtag of #sahkanruupprt and #pekerjarumahtangga? How can gender and class aspect be accommodated in the themes? Can forms of solidarity and empowerment be found in the memes' and caption's themes? By exploring digital feminist activism with a focus on hashtags related to female domestic workers in the Global South, this research contributes to the scholarly discussion of how digital feminist activism can/cannot resist the neoliberal tendencies of social media platforms and create counter public spaces for marginalized issues and communities, let alone promote solidarity and empowerment. The findings can also present the basis for further research such as how the hashtags are used to perform feminist selves by the users.

## **Sijuade Yusuf, University of Brighton**

### **“Sub-Saharan African Feminism; Social Media and Patriarchy”**

Social media platforms including Facebook in particular, are growing in popularity in Sub Saharan Africa. With the increasing affordability of ICT devices, users are able to access the mobile Internet and connect via mobile social networking applications which have increased engagements on these platforms. My study explores the use of social media particularly Facebook by sub Saharan African women through engagement and participation and the effects upon gender roles as collective agent of redressing patriarchy and identity production. Facebook and other new media applications have been seen as potential vehicles to negotiate identity and produce gender roles. The potential usefulness of social media for redressing patriarchy was highlighted during the Arab Spring. However, there is a dearth of literature on the role of social media in the negotiation of social roles and production of Identity in sub-Saharan Africa. Also, in considering the role of social media platforms in Africa, to a large extent, researches have focussed on the spread of ICT devices in the region, access to technology, subject of capitalism and growth and economic development etcetera. My research draws on the studies on digital activism by women to explore the links between Facebook use and role production in sub Saharan Africa. This research aims to highlight the power of new media in negotiating social changes. Based on a host of assumptions including the growing visibility in the plurality of gender and sexuality and the 'un-Africanness' of the subject of feminism in Africa, my research examines how the structures of sub-Saharan African societies intersect with social dichotomy and or stereotypic interpretation of gender roles and how African women respond to this using new media tools. My research will answer questions on extant feminism discourse in sub-Saharan Africa and the use of social media to bring about social changes. My research will also touch on strategies adopted by sub Saharan African women to address gender inequality in the region whilst adding to the body of knowledge on the subject of Gender and Digital Activism. This research explores how engagement on Facebook is used by sub Saharan middle class African women, with particular reference to gender participation and involvement.



## **Gelan Chen, KU Leuven “Reconstructing Gender Roles through Audience’s Empathy with Female Characters in Pandemic TV Series”**

The pandemic narrative provides an opportunity to reconstruct gender roles across different forms of media. Different emotions are aroused by watching this kind of TV series, among which empathy is vital to determine whether the audience can engage and relate to it. In this paper, we aim to defend the hypothesis that the different conceptualization of emotions in female characters can determine whether the audience will empathize with the female characters, by conducting frame analysis of 4 episodes of two TV series, *With You* and *Heroes in Harm’s Way*. These two series are chosen because they are both anthology series with storylines centered around real-life stories during the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, paying tribute to heroes represented especially by female medical workers. However, audience’s empathetic response to one is much stronger than the other. Emotion is conceptualized as a natural and affective experience to women and result in profound insight about the world in *With You*, while in *Heroes in Harm’s Way*, the emotions have to be controlled or even suppressed in order for women to succeed in both their daily lives and career path. With the perspective of examining gender representation in a pandemic genre, we are able to prove that subverting the conventional division of a masculine disembodied gaze and a feminine embodied object is more effective to arouse empathy with female characters from audience, which in turn helps reconstruct gender roles.

## **Zhaowu Huang, Lund University “You’re my kind of bro!” White Socks Fetish, Homosexual Masculinity, and the Mediated Construction of Gay Male Bodies”**

The body is socially constructed, and it is a question that has long been discussed by social scientists. Traditionally, a lean, muscular, and V-shaped body can be most popular among gay males, which defines the ‘ideal body type’ (Labre, 2002). But now, this is only a normal type. Recently, gay males have shown more interest in white socks, resulting in a ‘white socks fetish’ subculture. The impact of ‘white socks fetish’ is so huge that it has figured in negotiating homosexual masculinity and constructing the gay male body. In this research, I aim to make clear that: 1) in what process does ‘white socks fetish’ have been constructed, and particularly, what is the role of social media, 2) how does ‘white socks fetish’ negotiate traditional homosexual masculinity, and 3) how does this kind of negotiated masculinity figure in constructing the gay male body. In this research, I have combined digital ethnographic methods and hermeneutical analysis. Concretely, I have conducted three stages of research: 1) six months of online participatory observation of ‘white socks fetish’ related hashtags on Instagram, 2) understanding and interpreting ‘white socks fetish’ related photos, and 3) online in-depth interview with gay male Instagram users. Consequently, I found that: 1) the commercial features and algorithm mechanism of Instagram resulted in the widespread of a white-socks-well-fitted body as trending beauty, 2) the ‘white socks fetish’ has resulted in the mixed homosexual masculinity, other than hegemonic masculinity and effeminate masculinity, which is a mixture of soft, pureness, youthful, masculine, and spirits of dedication/domination, and it can be traced to the Greek love, and 3) to pursue this kind of mixed masculinity and be more popular in their groups, gay males would like to exercise themselves to be better fitted in white socks.

**Millicent Lovelock, University of Manchester**  
**“She knows her demographic, in spite of her contempt for it’**  
**Feminism, Identity, and Mediation in Lauren Oyler’s Fake Accounts”**

In this paper, I will explore the ways in which articulations of gender are expressed and explored through mediated representations of feminism in contemporary women’s fiction. Specifically, I focus on Lauren Oyler’s 2021 novel, *Fake Accounts* and examine how it utilises text from and references to her own published work as well as that of other writers in a way that is imitative of the way information is shared on social media. I argue that in this way the text becomes mediated—by which I mean first that the novel becomes embedded in a network of other texts, and second that it instantiates a mode of becoming facilitated by social media and digital technology—a mode of becoming that shapes the form of the text and produces feminism as an identity. It is in the ways that *Fake Accounts* is mediated and embedded within a particular milieu of other writers, texts, and political concerns that feminism emerges as that which can be repeated, shared, and recognised across networked texts. Feminism is then situated within a context of textual production and, specifically, textual production that is mediated by social media. Building on critical work on social media and mediation by Zara Dinnen (2018) and Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylińska (2012), I suggest that the processes of mediation that shape *Fake Accounts* are illustrative of modes of becoming that not only produce the novel as text, but also establish feminism as an identity that relies on certain aesthetic repetitions, reiterations, and reproductions.

**Kullanit Nitiwarngkul, City, University of London**  
**“Ageing Successfully: Representations of Women’s Ageing in**  
**Lifestyle Shows in Thailand”**

Feminist scholars, such as Sontag (1972), have long argued that women face a ‘double standard’ in ageing, in which their ageing is regarded as less acceptable than men’s, because it is often associated with bodily decline and negative life transitions e.g. in relationships and socioeconomic status. My presentation explores the discourses of successful ageing through the exploration of the mediated representations of women in their 60s in Thailand. Thailand is currently ranked the third most rapidly ageing population in the world and the majority of this population is female. Nevertheless, there is still little research in this area. This presentation explores the representation and reinforcement of various gendered social expectations of what a woman’s successful ageing life should be like through an analysis of two lifestyle programmes. The analysis demonstrates that such representations promote neoliberal discourses around self-care, self-reliance, activeness and wealth accumulation (Marshall, 2018). It also sheds light on unique Thai cultural values, such as on the maintenance of familial relations and the moral obligations of care that need to be provided to elderly family members. Such media discourses may in turn shape and construct narratives of ‘dominant’ and ‘marginalized’ age and gender identities for older women in Thailand, which to some extent, reflect the policy discourses on what a ‘good’ senior citizen should be. This media analysis is part of my overall research on the socio-cultural meanings of ageing and the experiences and perspectives of Thai elderly women on ageing.

**Ali Ramsey, University of Sussex**  
**“Re-visioning Menopause Through Experimental Documentary Filmmaking”**

There has been an increased visibility of menopausal life and politics in mainstream, countercultural and social media in the last few years, typified by Davina McCall's recent TV documentary and various high-profile campaigns such as #MakeMenopauseMatter. Exploring issues arising from a practice-based PhD research project that aims to act as a commentary on the mediation of menopause, this presentation considers what we should make of its new visibility in public life, whose interests this reflects, and the relationship it bears to the long history of feminist struggle for equal healthcare and bodily recognition. The presentation includes the screening of a short experimental film created to pilot research methods which are aimed at defamiliarizing through the use of experimental narrative forms and the juxtaposition of popular cultural texts, to enable the reframing of representations through both form and content and attempt to re-vision dominant menopause narratives. Reflecting on themes arising from oral history interviews with women and non-binary people about their lived experiences, this short film explores dominant menopause discourses to ask how they might be revealed through personal testimony, as well as the limitations of using interviews in documentaries. The presentation will consider the extent to which the use of détournement, appropriation and collage filmmaking methods might help to both reveal and disrupt dominant notions of menopause.

**Erika Ningxin Wang, King's College London**  
**“Ghost in the Box: Heterotopia of Intimacy in Fans Gendered Identification”**

I plan to discuss the fans gendered identification based on my 20-month ethnographic fieldwork in Chinese fandom of idol industry. The identification of fans is a hybrid of both contradictions and harmonious cohabitation, a paradox akin to schizophrenia, where fans form fandoms with their idols that are at the same time subversive and vulnerable, encompassing both the interactions of identificatory fantasies and nonetheless everywhere embodying the objectified sexual desires. The identification of fans that is formed in such fandom is gendered, dynamic, superimposed, chaotic and disordered. Accordingly, the relationship between fan and idol appears more analogous to Foucault's notion of heterotopia, which in my view I have tried to interpret as the heterotopia of intimacy. In this heterotopia, the “idol” is not, first of all, an independent human being with a complete personhood, who is unable to possess and present the characteristics commonly owned by human beings - imperfection. He must be a deified, idealised character, and fans project the standard of “good” qualities onto their idols, internalising them through “identificatory fantasies”, seeing them as role models for their own lives. But at the same time, the “idol” is constantly objectified. His body, personality, masculinity, femininity and even all his behaviours on and off stage are constantly gazed at and manipulated in the fans understands of their relationship. Fans are free to imagine themselves as dominators of power, manipulating and shaping the image of their idols, and expressing all kinds of “shamed”, “unaccepted”, “dirty” sexuality desires through the creation of fandom mediation - in the form of fan-made illustrations, cotton dolls, and nisu fantasies, for example.



**Lulu Yuan, University of Macau**

**“Identity Construction in Conflicts: The Nisu Fandom in China”**

Nisu fandom, as a subculture characterized by fandom and rooted in fanfiction with a cross-gender and queer specificity, is flourishing in Chinese female-oriented cyberspace nowadays. Nisu fans tend to reverse the gender roles of their idols as opposite of idols' biological sexes by constructing a male celebrity with a delicate, feminine quality or a female celebrity with a masculine, domineering personality. However, their complex identities and active online participatory production make Nisu fandom controversial and have attracted censorship from Chinese publicity authorities. Given this context, existing Nisu studies focused on the gender politics embedded in individual practices of Nisu fans while ignoring collaborative participation that facilitates individual Nisu fans to become a Nisu fandom and eventually form a subculture. Hence, to address this gap and to provide new insights for Chinese fandom studies, this article attempts to investigate the emergence of Nisu culture in Chinese female-oriented cyberspace and to explore the identification of Nisu fandom via the gender and fan practice they engage in, underpinned by social identity theory, through online non-participant observation. Through participation with affective sensibility, interaction based on empathy, and similar gender expression, Nisu fans construct their self-identity and constantly reinforce their mutual recognition to form a subcultural group. They build boundaries for their Nisu space and create specific symbols, rituals, and a series of the norms of Nisu fandom to develop collective consciousness within their in-groups. They make self-regionalization through conflict with out-groups and resistance to cultural capitals, which strengthens the group-identity as the Nisu fandom.

**Sijing Song, Renmin University of China**

**“The Double 'War' of Invisible Flaneur: Everyday Practices and Resistance Strategies of King of Glory's Female Players”**

Literature on women's everyday resistance mainly focuses on the classic discourse of female readers or viewers in cultural studies, and the study of women's leisure. Compared with traditional leisure activities, online games not only reproduce mainstream gender culture, but also provide more possibilities for gender performance with their anonymity and openness. With the help of Michel de Certeau's theory on the practice of everyday life, this study finds that as an online game, King of Glory reproduces traditional gender culture in the "simulacra" constructed by geometric logic and the interface and rules written by text logic, influencing players' gaming behaviours and preferences, with marginalized female players internalizing stereotypes. On the other hand, King of Glory provides a possible space for female players' gender performance. Female players actively render themselves invisible, wandering on the margins of traditional gender frames and engaging in everyday resistance through actions strategies (self-reinforcement, avoidance, disruption, gender camouflage and weakening, and female mutual aid) and verbal strategies (frontal counterattack and alternative narrative). Their resistance also reveals new characteristics different from offline scenarios - the flexibility of identity transition, low cost of counterattack, and the Petri of female camaraderie. Here, female players are engaged in a double war in two senses. They fight against both the opponents in the game and the constraints of traditional gender culture. They experience the tensions both between the structural power and individual, and within individuals.

**Ridwa Horreh, University of Nottingham**  
**“Black Women and Perceptions of Self-(re)presentation and Identity Formation on Social Media”**

Many contemporary media and public discourses about Black people are couched in the language, experiences and perceptions dating back to white domination during colonialism. A case in point is the fetishization of Black female bodies and the stereotyping of Black women. The resultant representations of Black women as hypersexual beings to justify the exploitation, objectification, racialisation and ridicule of their bodies have been widely circulated via mainstream media, including social media platforms. As a result, according to intersectional theory, Black women find themselves experiencing sexism and racism. Drawing on a number of key theoretical frameworks coupled with early-stage field research, this abstract proposes to explore how a selected sample of Black female social media influencers navigates the aforementioned hypersexualised and racialised representations of Black women and their bodies online. This is important because the oversaturation of such representations renders them difficult to counter. A key part of the exploration here will cover the strategies adopted to challenge fetishizing and racializing normalisations of the Black female body and alternative narratives of the self and identity. Existing research has found that the perpetuation of the said stereotypes and related representations via dominant media outlets can shape how Black women understand, perform and identify with their self. However, lesser known are the processes and work Black women undergo to arrive at a critical understanding of their self, to craft their own self(re)presentation, and to form their identity particularly in virtual spaces.

**Chanapang Pongpiboonkiat, University of Leeds**  
**“Shaping Reality: Explore How Thai Military Women Use Facebook to Confront Female Stereotypes”**

Thailand has a long history of patriarchy, allowing traditional gender roles to play a vital role in the construction of stereotypes that reflect cultural values and expectations. Whereas men are associated with masculine leadership and guardians, Thai women are expected to follow men's lead and guidance. Additionally, Thai mainstream media consistently links women with being a faithful partner, a loving mother, and a submissive person incapable of functioning in the absence of male leadership. Thai military women also appear to conform to these female stereotypes; in the media, they are portrayed as more concerned with their womanhood than with their military roles. Furthermore, Thai military women are underrepresented or labeled as 'supporting roles' in comparison to their male colleagues. The proliferation of social media in digital culture enables individuals to create their self-representation to challenge established stereotypes, or normalise gendered representation. This study investigates such activity through a semi-structured in-depth interview of 31 Thai military women. The overarching objective is to gain a better understanding of the end-to-end process of online self-representation as well as the factors that influence it. The presentation delves into the coded interview data, highlighting key self-representational themes concerning gender and stereotypes, military professionalism, and social class in the Thai culture. The concluding remarks include a call for future research comparing and contrasting these identified motifs to established themes in mainstream and military media.

**Ziyang Chen, London School of Economics and Political Science**  
**“(Self-)Representation and the Politics of Visibility in Contemporary Chinese Digital Platform: A Case Study of “Fifty-Year Old Auntie’s Solo Road Trip”**

Su Min, a retired female worker in China who left her depressing family for a trip has been producing short videos to tell her stories on multiple digital platforms in the name of “Fifty-Year Old Auntie’s Solo Road Trip”. Not only has she gained supports from different groups of people, but was also reported by media outlets globally, which made her a public figure and an “accidental feminist icon”. The previous works on media (self)representation have showed that the economy of visibility in the digital era shifted the politics of visibility to a status where new subjection might be engendered and the visibility becomes the end itself. Based on these arguments, the research is conducted in a broader way by taking political, economic, and cultural structures into consideration and examining the representational strategies utilised during the process of meaning making. The research finds that on the one hand, Su Min’s media products disrupt in part stereotypical mis/underrepresentation on gender by showing an independent and brave woman deviates from the traditional gendered roles from social expectations and regulations. However, it is noticeable that Su is also sanitizing, mainstreaming, and commercializing herself on the other hand. The research suggests that rather than a totally optimistic case of resisting existing hierarchies, the hyper visibility proliferated in digital cultures could still reinforce and reproduce intersectional inequality to women and other marginalized groups by consciously and unconsciously following the internal logic of neoliberal capitalism, conservative culture structures, and even political norms for the social stability.

**Jingjing Fu, University of Sussex**  
**“Sharing for More Than the Money: Analysing Digital Labour in the Context of Gender**

The financial success of Internet companies worldwide represents the success of digital economic practices that rely on all forms of user activities online including those leisure and playful activities. These economic practices have attracted research and debate for some time in terms of disrupting the boundaries between work and play. Among the digital economy literature, online user activities are theorized as a form of labour that is expropriated and exploited by Internet companies in order to accumulate capital. While valid, this paper aims to explore the limitation of such an understanding drawing on ethnographic data of the users of a social networking-based cashback App based in China. This paper pays particularly attention to the participants’ self-making practices and the moments when gendered subjectivities are articulated. Drawing on feminist frameworks raised by scholars such as Jarret (2016) and Fortunati (1995), this paper identifies the socio-economic relations (not only class relations in political economy literature) that underpin the legibility of specific self-making activities. By tracing the effect to what specific subjectivities are articulated, this paper interrogates its dynamics in relating to historically and culturally specific context and to gender actors. This paper argues that even though those user activities are productive in generating immaterial products such as effect, intention and social relations that sustain the digital capitalism, the immaterial products are to some extent inalienable to users.

## **Josephine West, King's College London**

### **"Discussing the Digital Labour Experience of Camgirls"**

My PhD research focusses on the digital labour experience of camgirls and their interest in labour organisation and resistance. My presentation will focus on how their creative erotic labour and the cultural product they produce within digitally mediated sex work markets is influenced by and subject to gendered identity formations. It will engage with three themes outlined in the call for contributions including exclusion and gender inequalities, media and culture in a neoliberal age and the relevance of online communities. First, I will introduce the multi-million-dollar camming sector, it's growing popularity and relevance during the pandemic. I will then explore the exclusion and gender inequalities theme: how sexcam labour is gendered and excluded from gig economy discourse; how the gig economy is gendered and camming overwhelmingly performed by women; the emotional labour camgirls perform and the gendered and sometimes coercive experience of fetish as a cultural product. Next, I will delve into the theme media and culture in a neoliberal age discussing how the psychic life of neoliberalism and postfeminist culture (often articulated via social media) informs the gendered subjectivities of workers, potentially inhibits labour organisation and conversely offers women strategies of survival. The latter point also addresses the online communities theme, exploring how this isolated and disparate workforce forges collectively through social media. Finally, I will address why it's significant that the gig economy is gendered and what role this plays for platform capitalism within the broader context of expanding service sector labour.

## **Odin O'Sullivan, University College Dublin**

### **"The Privatized Body, Social Media Masculinity, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson"**

The ideology of male body building is intrinsically connected to notions of masculinity, productivity, and utility. As Michel Foucault (1977) articulates, in contemporary society "the object of the control" is no longer the "signifying elements of behaviour or the language of the body, but the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organisation...the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise" (181), working towards creating a "docility-utility" (181) which is integral to neoliberalism. As such, building a masculine body becomes a key part of becoming a legible neoliberal citizen. I argue that in the age of social media contemporary icons of masculinity must be particularly visible and accessible and as such they are often film-star-influencers. This form of influencer, typified by the likes of Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, builds what I term a "privatized body." This type of body, assiduously promoted on social media, encourages the "docile bodies" (Foucault) of young men (for whom traditional paths to self-making have been blocked by the developments of neoliberalism) to aspire to build themselves as productive, legible, and profitable bodies (Hakim 2019). As such, contemporary masculine body culture is imbued with neoliberalism. With an emphasis on individual achievement, building the body as a site of human capital and emphasizing outward presentation of it as easily accessible, the bodies of these men are not built for labour, but as a display of power, discipline, and control, and as a private means of production with which they can increase their own human capital.