



TITLE: A political economy of gendered images on neoliberal & algorithmic (social) media

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We examine how the circulation of images on mobile and ‘algorithmic’ (Carah, 2014) social media platforms is gendered. We argue for a ‘political economy of gendered images’ on social media, drawing on research with young informants who observed, documented and discussed flows of images between cultural spaces and social media platforms. We suggest that in commercial social media systems, certain heterosexy (Dobson 2015) female bodies function as media devices for generating forms of engagement and attention that can be converted into data that is recognisable to algorithms. Carah (2015) terms these types of engagement ‘reconnaissance’ and ‘promotion’, as we explain. We illustrate how the labour of reconnaissance and promotion is embedded within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990). First, we examine how material cultural spaces entice gendered forms of image production. Second, we analyse how cultural labourers like promoters and photographers edit images to reproduce gendered norms that cultivate valuable forms of attention. Third, we explore how self-representation is entwined with the decision-making logic of social media algorithms. We illustrate how the commercial imperatives and promotional culture of neoliberal social media platforms amplify the presence and visibility of some specifically gendered bodies.