

# THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON Multicultural Discourses



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## Plenary speaker

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#### Abstract

##### *The care of the Selfie*

This paper (Jan Blommaert & Li Kunmin) fits into a broader attempt towards coming to terms with the sociological specificity of online-offline social life, starting from the assumption that online zones of life require, and have generated, a range of new forms of social interaction, social relationships and social groups, broadening the “repertoire” of normative systems required for “integration” in contemporary societies. We shall examine a popular online practice on Chinese social media, in which young girls submit a selfie to a male blogger-celebrity, who “rates” and “exposes” them often in demeaning and deprecating terms. This misogynistic discourse ritual fits into a broader pattern, however, in which young women construct an online image of themselves through an elaborate “care of the self” - a large complex of dispersed but coordinated practices of self-making, benchmarked against normative male (and female) judgments such as the ones provided by the blogger-celebrity, and aimed at online performances of a kind of sexualized femininity hard to achieve in the offline world. The use of judgments by the blogger-celebrity, thus, is chronotopically organized as a kind of carnival, and it shows us some essential features of such types of online culture: we see “light” communities of knowledge at work, performing “ludic” activities of attachment and learning, the payoff of which is exportable into other online chronotopes.