‘She has like 4000 followers!’: the celebrification of self within school social networks.

# Details

## Year

2017

## DOI

10.1080/13676261.2017.1420764

## Issued

2017

## Language

English

## Volume

21

## Issue

6

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Youth Studies

## Publisher

Informa UK Limited

## Sample

41 pupils aged 11–18 attending a Scottish secondary school

## Implications For Educators About

Other

# Abstract

Online social interaction has become integral to contemporary
social life, adding new dimensions to how young people learn,
interact, and perceive themselves and one another. This paper
presents theoretical insights from a year-long ethnographic study
within a Scottish secondary school, where participant observation
and qualitative interviews were used to explain pupils’ informal
social relationships. Here, pupils aged 11–18 constructed and
negotiated a hyper-surveillanced social space within which many
became (or strived to become) visible and ‘known’ amongst
others and where online presentations of self were highly
important. This facilitated a celebrity-esque culture amongst the
pupil population whereby pupils learnt from and emulated macro
celebrity culture and often framed social interactions as
entertainment. Central to these practices, was a continual desire
to ‘make gains in distinction’ by demonstrating high social status
amongst peers. The paper explores the resulting implications for
teaching, learning and pupil wellbeing within contemporary
educational environments.

# Outcome

"Online social interaction was evidently widespread amongst pupils and integral to their
culture. The majority indicated that social media sites and mobile apps (for example, Facebook,
Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and WhatsApp) were important to them, indicating
that they ‘don’t know an awful lot of people that don’t have it.’ These young people
spoke of accessing these sites ‘constantly’ throughout the day, mostly via smartphone
devices with Wi-Fi access or mobile data. Pupils would check their phones during
lessons, for example stealing quick glances under their desks as the teacher’s back was
turned. They engaged with online social spaces for numerous reasons, one of which
was a desire to feel connected with friends and to communicate with others not physically
present." (MacIsaac et al, 2017: 822). "The data pointed to a culture where pupils were becoming celebrified. They ‘knew’ teenagers
from other schools from their Facebook and Instagram profiles and followed them
and their lives in similar ways to how they would traditional celebrities. This was also the
case with high status peers – such as older pupils – within their own school. Pupils talked
about popular peers who were, ‘really well known…everyone knows them,’ and a
number of pupils strived towards becoming known amongst others in these vast social
networks." (MacIsaac et al, 2017: 823). There were gender dimensions with girls being more impacted than boys: "In a context where the female body is so heavily surveilled and evaluated, these girls
were acutely aware that they could achieve enhanced social standing by being known
as ‘pretty’ or ‘hot’. Therefore, they may have had more incentive to post self-images,
despite any risk of being negatively judged." (MacIsaac et al, 2017: 823). Self-representation techniques were based on high-profile celebrities.