

Title Page

**A Deleuzo-Guattarian Study of Youth, Social  
Media and Identity Becomings at School  
and Online**

Jessie A. Bustillos Morales  
UCL Institute of Education

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **Declaration**

I, Jessie A. Bustillos Morales confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I can confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## **Abstract**

The prevalence of social media in young people's lives is widely accepted in today's society. Although social media use is ubiquitous in young people's lives, schools continue to overlook how young people engage with social media. Drawing on ideas from Deleuze and Guattari (2013) this thesis uses an ethnographic approach to explore the ways in which nine young people engage with social media platforms to generate a sense of identity. Using ethnographic interviews, school and online observations, this thesis examines the relationship between school cultures and online social media environments inhabited by the young people. Working as an academic tutor at a mainstream secondary school in the UK, the researcher had access to the research participants' day-to-day school activities, as well as extended access to their online lives by conducting online observations on various social media platforms they used.

Each participant was analysed using a Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptual frame which draws from the notions of assemblages, becomings, territorialisations and de-territorialisations. The research findings identify some of the participants' dissatisfaction with narrow and constricting school curricular cultures, whilst also highlighting how the blurred expectations that social media offers facilitates the building of their ambitions and aspirations. Therefore, the thrust of the thesis is to trace some of the relationalities between school cultures and the social media used by the young people. The findings could inform current government initiatives exploring social media's impact on young people's health and lives. With legislation due to be passed between 2020 and 2021, this thesis could deepen the understanding of how young people's online activity is intricately linked with other aspects of their everyday lives, such as school. The thesis demonstrates how participants' engagements online are nuanced and opening up possibilities for empowerment, identity work and the pursuit of a curated becoming underpinned by the particularities of social media platforms.

## **Impact Statement**

This thesis examines the relationship and dynamics between the schooling cultures in Britain and online spaces in which young people forge and develop their identities. The thesis is written in a context where schooling and learning can be stale, regimented and constrained by curriculum-driven teaching which has the unintended affect of excluding and isolating young people, as well as being detrimental to their creativity. The research in this thesis shows, that despite the dangers and risks posed by social media, young people are able to adapt their use of the online in order to develop learning where schooling has failed them, by mapping out a series of identity becomings which a group of young people were able to curate through online platforms, such as Wattpad, Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook.

This thesis is timely as it is written at a time when there is a strong interest in young people's engagements on social media. The thesis proposes that more attention should be paid to young people's use of social media since it is a very important outlet in young people's lives and one which bears correlation with schooling practices. The thesis has offered a more holistic approach to how the learning that happens on social media is impacted by school cultures. It has potentially a long-lasting impact on the understanding of the relationships between the offline and the online lives of children and young people.

This research also contributes to the wider academic discourse on young people's identity constructions on social media and extends into the interplay between experiences of schooling and social media production. In so doing, the thesis calls for a pluralistic view of young people's engagements on social media and how they bear relevance with schooling. Through an ethnographic approach the thesis extends the discussions from a focus only on social media engagements to the interplay between school and online environments.

The ethnographic methods used, including the researchers immersion in the field and online observations of young people's social media provided rich data and a more comprehensive paradigm in the study of school-aged young people's actions both offline and online. This paradigm can help to dispel the many moral panics associated with social media use and bring the cultural understanding of teachers, parents and adults closer to the cultural media worlds of young people. This study can therefore contribute to ongoing attempts at creating and designing policy around online and social media use by young people and how they can have a place in the school curriculum and classroom pedagogy. This study intends to shift the discussion into an exploration of the conditions necessary to inform education professionals of how

transformative young people's social media engagements can be. Exploring a broader definition of informal learning, this study can also inform the public imagination of how learning can happen outside of the school walls; an important contribution at times when young people use social media to access all kinds of information, from news to subject knowledge.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis has been inspired by the work I have had the opportunity to do with young people in schools. Coming to the UK and not knowing the system of education from personal experience I have learnt significantly from young people and my work is an opportunity to articulate some of the many things we can learn from them. Throughout the development of this work I have been energised by the passion young people have about their own futures and the resourcefulness they develop so creatively in what can be very tricky times. The young people who participated in this study and also teachers I have encountered in my time at the school have made this project possible, and I have drawn strength from their commitment to education.

I am also indebted to my enthusiastic supervisors Professor Jessica Ringrose and Professor Stephen Ball who have contributed and expanded my thinking throughout the development of my thesis. I am also grateful to Jessica for introducing me to a supportive network of friends who share my interest in seeing significant social change and will be friends for life. I am grateful to my colleagues, Shiva Zarabadi, Dr Camilla Stanger, Hanna Retallack and Dr Heather Allison for offering support at critical points of my PhD. I am also indebted to Dr Philippa Veija and Dr Rory Magrath whose critical perspectives helped in the final stages of this thesis. I am very grateful to my examiners Professor Carol Taylor and Dr Brett Lashua who made my Viva Voce experience very enjoyable and gratifyingly insightful. A warm thanks to Dr David Blundell for offering me an opportunity to join academia and from whom I learnt a great deal as a student and also as a colleague. I am also indebted to my parents, siblings and extended family who even in the distance have always had the strongest belief in me and this has guided me through life.

The development of this research has also been made possible by the unfailing and strong support from my husband Dr Brian McDonough who has extended his help whenever necessary, particularly, after the birth of our son, Huxley George and during my second pregnancy. Overall, it has been a transformative journey which has changed my perspective on the meaning and purpose of education and has left me with a renewed sense of understanding on the challenges and opportunities young people encounter in their educational journeys.

## Contents

Abstract.....	3
Impact Statement.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	6
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Introduction to the Thesis.....	9
1.2 Background to the Study.....	9
1.3 Background to Richmond Academy.....	10
1.4 Richmond Academy: Schooling Culture and Social Media.....	13
1.5 Research Questions: Understanding Young People at School and Online.....	15
1.6 Introducing the Theoretical Framework of the Study.....	16
1.6.1 Assemblages.....	16
1.6.2 Becomings.....	19
1.6.3 Territorialisations and De-territorialisations.....	20
1.7 Discussion Chapter Introductions.....	22
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Introduction to Literature Review.....	25
2.2 Understanding Constraining School Cultures and Practices.....	26
2.2.1 Surveillance, Discipline and Conformity.....	26
2.2.2 School Cultures of Authority and Oppression of Students.....	28
2.3 Understanding Literature Around Young People's Learning on Media.....	29
2.4 Literature on Social Media Use by Young People.....	30
2.4.1 Spoilt Youth and the Social Dangers of Media.....	30
2.4.2 Alternative Narratives of Social Media Use by Young People.....	31
2.5 Social Media Research and Young People's Gender Identities.....	33
2.5.1 Gendered Sexist School Cultures Navigating a Feminist Identity.....	33
2.6 Aspirations, 'Race' and Celebrity Culture.....	35
2.7 Conclusion to Literature Review Chapter.....	38
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology.....</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1 Introduction to Methodology Chapter.....	41
3.2 Gaining Access to Young People and School Culture at Richmond Academy.....	41
3.3 Sampling Method.....	44
3.3.1 Criteria Sampling.....	44
3.3.2 Extreme Cases: A Retrospective Analysis of my Sampling Method.....	45
3.4 Pen Portraits of Research Participants.....	46
3.5 Observations of the School Environment.....	48
3.6 Interviewing Young People.....	51
3.7 Online Observations of Research Participants' Social Media.....	54
3.8 Ethical Issues.....	56
3.8.1 Online Ethics.....	59
3.9 Narrative Analysis Informed by Assemblages and Becomings.....	61
3.10 Becoming-Researcher: Methodological reflections.....	66
<b>Chapter Four: Meaningful Learning and Identity becomings on Social Media.....</b>	<b>68</b>
4.1 Introduction: Exploring Territorialisations of Schooling and Online Assemblages of De-territorialisations.....	68
4.2 Taylor: Territorialising the EBacc and its Effects on Drama.....	70
4.2.1 Becoming-Political to De-Territorialise Schooling.....	72
4.3 Skeeks: Territorialisations of School Art.....	77
4.3.1 Becoming-artist: Posting, Archiving and Building a Portfolio.....	79
4.3.2 Becoming-Artist: Visibility and Getting Likes.....	81
4.4 Danielle: Territorialisations of Writing at School.....	84
4.4.1 Becoming-author: De-Territorialisations and Writing on Wattpad.....	85
4.5 Conclusion.....	90

<b>Chapter Five: Exploring Feminism, Gender and Sexuality Identity Becomings on Social Media</b> .....	89
5.1 Introduction: School Territorialisations and Online De-Territorialisations.....	89
5.2 Ashley: A Patriarchal School Territory.....	90
5.2.1 Becoming-Feminist: Assemblies, Blogging and Feminist Writing.....	92
5.2.2 Becoming-Feminist on Tumblr by Mobilising Feminist Imagery.....	97
5.3. Skeeks: Heteronormative Territories at School.....	102
5.3.1 Becoming-Heterosexual: Skeeks' Postings and Selfie-ing on Instagram.....	103
5.4. Danielle: Sexualised Territories at School.....	107
5.4.1 Becoming-biromantic: Blogging and Co-opting Content on Tumblr.....	110
5.4.2 Becoming-biromantic: "I was learning about me".....	112
5.5 Dan: "I'm doing too many interesting stuff to be posting": territorialising 'laddish' masculinity.....	115
5.5.1 Becoming-popular: Facebook Friend Tagging as creating new territories.....	116
5.6 Conclusion.....	120
<b>Chapter Six: Identity Becomings in Neoliberal and Aspirations Culture</b> .....	121
6.1 Introduction.....	121
6.2 Brian: A Territory of Low Expectations for Black Students.....	122
6.2.1 Becoming-successful through a neoliberal imaginary of aspirations on Twitter.....	125
6.2.2 Retweeting for becoming-successful and creating a territory of 'black success'.....	127
6.3 Zee: Becoming 'Woke' at School and Online Activisms.....	131
6.3.1 Building an Aspirational Becoming as 'Blacktivist' on Twitter.....	133
6.4 Mimi: Rupturing Academic Territories of Successful Femininities.....	137
6.4.1 Becoming-Micro-Celebrity: Creating New Territories of Value through Twitter Visibility.....	139
6.5 Elizabeth: Conflicting Territories of Academic vs Entrepreneurial Success.....	144
6.5.1 Becoming-Entrepreneur: Creating Business visibilities of Value on Facebook.....	145
6.6 Conclusion.....	149
<b>Chapter Seven: Conclusion</b> .....	150
7.1 Introduction to the Concluding Chapter.....	150
7.2 Responding to Research Questions Around Young People's Engagement with Social Media.....	151
7.2.1 School Curricula and the Relationship Between the Offline and the Online for Young People at School.....	151
7.2.2 Social Media and Young People's Negotiations of Gender, Sexualisation and Feminism at Richmond Academy.....	154
7.2.3 Emancipating Class and 'Race' Disadvantages Through Neoliberal and Celebrity Culture Aspirations on Social Media.....	156
7.3 What the Research Participants are Doing Now.....	158
7.5 Contributions to Knowledge.....	161
7.4 The Researcher: A Short Reflection on Learning.....	162
7.5.1 Re-thinking Public Pedagogy, Learning and Student Voice.....	163
7.6 Limitations and Considerations of the Study and Future Research.....	165
Bibliography.....	167
Appendix 1.....	184
Appendix 2.....	194
Appendix 3.....	196



## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the thesis**

This thesis is an ethnographic study of a South London school called Richmond Academy (pseudonym used). The study examines both the narratives and the online worlds of young people, and how their online engagements overlap with aspects of their schooling experiences. Throughout the thesis the young people who participated in this study are discussed as using their online social media engagements to free themselves from various school restraints. This thesis draws on research data gathered over three years from a group of young people studying at a South London school in the UK. An important narrative in the young people's lives is how they have become disaffected towards schooling and how they use social media to develop their identities, in response to constraining school practices and cultures. This thesis therefore maps out some of the school practices and cultures which the young people have experienced as unfair or restrictive, and how they use social media to create and curate alternative spaces in which their social identities develop. Using a qualitative approach, this thesis unravels the experiences of nine young people in particular, who negotiate various learning social spaces, whereby a prohibitive schooling culture is often resisted and online social spaces become avenues in which creative learning is pursued. This thesis shows how young people's dissatisfaction with schooling can create conflict within the classroom, with teachers, classmates and others. But it also shows how young people turn to online social media to explore their interests and learn about the social worlds in which they live. It shows how the offline and online connect and also how they are contrasted in the experiences of ten young people who, for a variety of reasons, shape their identities through both offline and online interactions and experiences.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

It was September 2012, when I was first recruited to work at Richmond Academy, delivering Saturday enrichment classes over the whole school term. I started working with young people from various ages, ranging from thirteen to eighteen in order to help them with academic subjects, coursework, and other academic matters. I was part of a team of tutors recruited from various universities in London and the sessions were designed to offer students a different kind of input to the support already provided by teachers. As enrichment tutors we tried to help them secure a higher level of attainment where possible and offered advice on other academic matters, such as routes into higher education. Therefore, the students in attendance were those con-

sidered borderline students, or those who were predicted to attain a C grade or higher. Students could only attend sessions if they were invited by the senior leadership team of the school. This would normally involve that students were noticed by teachers and others, such as Heads of Year. My involvement at Richmond Academy provided me with a wealth of experience of the British schooling system, the attitudes of young people to the curriculum, school teachers' influence on students and it offered me an insight into everyday school cultures. I attended school in my country of origin, Venezuela, where I was educated up to the equivalent of A levels. As I had only experienced the higher education sector in the UK as an international student, being at Richmond Academy opened up an opportunity to understand more about the education system the young people who participated in this study were immersed in.

### **1.3 Background to Richmond Academy**

The school was meant to benefit from the Labour policy of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) but this was scrapped by the then Minister for Education, Michael Gove. Right from the beginning of my time spent working at the school, I witnessed some of the pressures the school was under to perform and prepare for an Ofsted inspection which was imminent. These pressures led to the leadership team organising extra study sessions and academic support workshops which I took part in. The school was still recovering from the lost opportunity to update its look through the refurbishments they were meant to receive as part of the BSF scheme, and this was still part of everyday talk by teachers and senior management in the school. The school decided to invest in some new external units to accommodate subjects and strategies that struggled to fit in the physical arrangements of the school, such as Art and SEN support. During my time at the school I was very aware of the pressures the school faced in relation to the upcoming Ofsted inspection and the school management team's desire to improve on their previous report which had labelled them as 'Good'. Richmond Academy displayed some of the regimes of control and conduct which happen in schools even before inspections happen, but which become exacerbated by the prospect of an imminent Ofsted inspection, high rotation of staff, emergency meetings and management observation of teaching (Perryman et al, 2017).

Additionally, Richmond Academy was going through an important transition, as they were preparing to become part of an academy trust and this transformation was the driving force behind many of the school cultures presented in this thesis. Some of these cultures and practices involved being very data-driven and ignoring the voice of students and teachers; removing students from lessons so that they could spend more time studying on core subjects; under-staffing non-core subjects due to the rota-

tion of teachers, these are some but not all practices I identified in the study, more will be discussed in the discussion chapters. Some of the evident pressures were expressed by teachers, as they were unsure as to whether they would retain their jobs after the school was absorbed into the academy trust, resulting in many teachers leaving and others having to work more because of slow recruitment. Richmond Academy like other schools in the British educational system can be bureaucratic, management-driven and over simplistic. Other pressures were imposed by a new senior leadership team which was focusing on improving the school's data, undertaking an approach of 'governing by numbers' (Ball, 2017: 21). This means that the climate of the school made students 'visible and calculable' only through the potential they carried in improving the school's attainment levels and ranking (Ball, 2015: 299). Resulting in borderline C students subjected to the new 'regime of numbers' experienced at the school and many more students, both at the top and the bottom ignored for the same reason (Ball, 2015: 300).

Whilst at the school, I also noticed that there were very clearly delineated boundaries around social media, both physical and ideological (Barker et al, 2010). As a result at Richmond Academy boundaries around social media and electronic devices were strongly reinforced. Some of these boundaries were, mobile phones to be kept out of sight at all times, whenever a mobile phone was 'spotted' it would be confiscated by teachers. If a mobile phone was used in class, teachers would not only confiscate it but it would be passed on to Heads of Year. All computers had all social media sites permanently blocked by the IT network system. For many of the school teachers and management team, social media and young people's use of it pushed the boundaries and so it had no place past the school threshold. I found that although social media is ubiquitous in young people's lives, Richmond Academy, like other schools was still neglecting its significance. To this effect, Richmond Academy, continued to incorporate safety and teaching and learning policies and guidelines to keep social media at bay, whilst continuing to assume that students' lives whilst at school are not influenced or affected by trends and other patterns of social media uptake in society (Thapa et al, 2013).

The time I spent at Richmond Academy helped me develop a sound awareness of the challenges the school was facing, as well as the many efforts the school went through to improve its chances of raising attainment and helping students in very difficult situations. Alas, the school's position always seemed to be critical or precarious and the school suffered from a high rotation of teachers and this in turn made the school's attempts to raise its attainment more difficult. These pressures created an environment where the school's mentality was determined by external factors and pressures, and not sufficiently influenced by the needs of the school community.

Richmond Academy's sense of precarity about itself speaks to what Perryman et al (2018: 148) describe in relation to the notion of 'governmentality', whereby government is not just about 'national political control' but the ways in which individuals seek to govern themselves to resemble dominant expectations. In this sense Richmond Academy was always responding and reacting to these pressures to shape itself in accordance to the rigidity of Ofsted inspections. The lives of my participants and my life at the school were also marked by the codes on control the school was reacting to. For instance, I was under pressure to work closely with students who could be dropped by the school at any point to allow a more 'worthy' student to take their place, and students were very aware of the pressures they were under to perform.

I believe this was a very influential factor in how Richmond Academy operated a rigorous inspection of the pupils that were deserving of the extra support provided by the school and which I was a part of. The school was gearing itself towards an inspection which they were unsure when it would happen, but it was impactful in how the school imposed a culture which micromanaged teachers' and students' perceived contribution to academic success and meeting targets. This school climate is reflective of what Perryman et al (2018: 149) referred to as the 'hidden power' of Ofsted, 'working as a subtle influence on school practices and normalities such that inspection does not have to physically take place for a school to be governed by its perceived judgements'. As a result, Richmond Academy overlooked other important parts of education and schooling, such as keeping a balanced curriculum and listening to student voice, all of which transpired in my data. Other important aspects which will be developed in later chapters are, developing a passion for subjects at school, allowing students to engage in constructive learning, curtailing students' ability to express themselves through strictly enforced codes of conduct, and the overlooking and under-staffing of some subjects in the school (Courtney, 2016; Chapman, 2010). These school contexts are important as witnessing and experiencing them during my time at Richmond Academy gave me a greater understanding of the inner struggles in the school, many of which my research participants would later discuss with me.

During my interactions with research participants these school pressures as previously discussed became very vivid and crucial in their experience of schooling. In most narratives my research participants show their awareness of how they are put in particular positions, sometimes advantageous and disadvantageous. As part of my analysis I explain how Richmond Academy's treatment of students varies depending on how the school views their 'worth' against the overbearing importance of educational attainment. My research participants also carried some of the effects of the school culture around achievement and attainment online, in the form of resistance, escapism and alternative learning. In the next few sections I will be introducing how

the effects of school on young people's lives can be located in their social media use, also my research questions, the theoretical framework and summaries of upcoming discussion chapters. Throughout the focus is on showing the ways in which my research participants' uses of the social media platforms are embedded in some of their school experiences.

#### **1.4 Richmond Academy: Schooling, Culture and Social Media**

Formal education institutions, like Richmond Academy, remain the dominant ways in which the public imagine children and young people are exposed to meaningful learning. Thus, formal education has struggled to change and incorporate the experiences and knowledge that young people bring to school. In remaining bound to the past, formal schooling 'is increasingly anachronistic, tied as it is to a belief in both the unified human subject who can be perfected by education' (Quinn, 2018: 145). These dynamics in formal schooling continue to reduce individual students in schools to subjects who need to be filled with knowledge, and the medium of school and the classroom as the only viable way in which knowledge can be 'given' to students. Whilst compulsory education plays an integral role in children's and young people's learning there have been recent calls 'to recognise that significant learning takes place beyond these confines: at home, in communities, at work and leisure, through activism and volunteering, in arts and popular culture, in nature and via digital media' (Quinn, 2018: 145). Drawing on my study of schooling at Richmond Academy this thesis aims to illustrate how young people are engaged in such ongoing dialogues of learning and transformation on various social media platforms, where they are envisioning and strengthening their identities and futures. I argue and contextualise how the school lives and experiences of my research participants are closely influenced by the everydayness of school and school cultures and how this in turn influences their social media engagements. In this thesis how research participants experience school regimes of authority, curriculum pressures, gender, race and class politics, school constructions of success and failure, is discussed in conjunction with the worlds they spawn and carefully contrive online. Through my data I explain how the school offline and online lives of my research participants are not detached but rather, combined and enrolling aspects of each other which the young participants use and reflect on to forge their emerging identity becomings.

This thesis also wants to offer a set of alternative voices to the many cautionary discourses that point to the risks and dangers that young people face online and through the use of mobile and social media. On the one hand there are utopian voices which construct the potential of new media in young people's lives as limitless (Behnke, 2010). On the other hand there are other voices which construct young

people's use of media as extremely deviant, primarily through discourses around addiction (Elliot, 2016), the proliferation of narcissism (Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, 2016) and increased risk of violence and suicide (Draper, 2012; Mann, 2008). Whilst it would be naive to assume that there are no risks associated with social media use, the bias of these warnings and magnifying of these issues denies young people agency and neglects the creative and savvy ways in which they manage and arrange themselves on social media. This thesis explores how the research participants knowingly and expertly produce online spaces which help them respond to some of the imbalances of knowledge and power that they encounter in their lives, and crucially in their experiences at Richmond Academy.

Another important part of this thesis is its depiction of how school cultures at Richmond Academy which seem beneficial or rational are perceived by the young people. As part of this thesis dominant school cultures around assessment, the hierarchy of school subjects, entrepreneurial aspirations and hyper heterosexuality are discussed and critiqued. Against this backdrop social media is presented as a constitutive part of how young people seek to align themselves with particular identity becomings that are in a process of development. The research participants in this thesis created social media spaces resourcefully, partly attracted to their versatility, participatory culture and the way in which they accumulate interactions in the forms of likes, comments, follows, etc (Jenkins et al., 2016). All of these features point to how social media are 'networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication' (Meikle, 2016: 6). For my research participants the networked, and augmented communication of social media seemed very important in how they construct themselves a renewed or established identity online. For example, Danielle who I discuss in the fourth chapter uses a social media platform to write stories and fiction which are made available for anyone to read, like, or comment on when they join the platform. Danielle who sees herself as an author writes almost everyday and has stories with over twenty chapters; Danielle is particularly influenced by the metrification of how people comment, like and read her various online books. Danielle's engagement is reflective of how the networked and accumulative environment of social media (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013) can generate new possibilities for young people to forge their identities both offline and online.

Research participants are discussed as active, they bring change to their own lives and many of them want to bring change to the cultures of the school, through various forms of engagement, including activism. The narratives of the young people show the impact of various school cultures on them and how they respond to their experiences by enrolling the possibilities of social media platforms, such as, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Wattpad, and Instagram. This emerging analysis can also be used to

open up the parameters of schooling which continue to relegate it to an instrumental and passive transmission of knowledge between teachers and students (Quinn, 2018). Richmond Academy's established and transitional school cultures underscored the lives of all the young research participants and were a catalyst for many of the online responses generated by the young people.

### **1.5 Research Questions: Understanding Young People at School and Online**

This thesis has several key research questions which focus upon the experiences of schooling and social media usage for young people. The research questions developed out of a set of presuppositions I had from my experiences of working at Richmond Academy and from my own reading of Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) philosophy, which I discuss later in this chapter. I generally had three research aims with corresponding research questions for each of my aims. My first aim was to map out and understand how young people's relationship with the online is connected to the offline lives at school, and how these movements from online to offline impacted on their emerging identities. Two questions for this aim were:

- R.Q.1 What is the relationship between the online and offline in the lives of young people?
- R.Q.2 How does the online impact upon the social identities of young people? (These two questions became the basis for my first discussion chapter, but they run through all chapters).

My second aim arose from the first aim as a sub-theme which looked at more specific facets of identity, such as gender, race and class as raised by my research participants. Two questions for this aim were:

- R.Q.3 How do young people's school experiences reflect the gendered, racialised and classed nature or regimes in school?
- R.Q.4 How do young people engage with social media to shape their emerging gender, race or classed identities? (These two questions became the basis for my second and third discussion chapters - See Chapter 5 and 6).

My third aim was to understand how young people's emerging identities become entangled with aspirations around work, celebrity culture and success enabled by online platforms. This question became the basis of the final discussion chapter:

- R.Q.5 What are the influences young people encounter when they imagine their academic and work futures on social media? (This question became the basis for my third discussion chapter - See Chapter 6).

## **1.6 Introducing the theoretical framework for this study**

In this section, I shall outline the theoretical framework used to conduct this study, introducing some of the key concepts used. The young people in my study each have their identities mapped out through my research. At an early stage during the research process, I asked: How can I better make sense of these identities for the purposes of this study? And, how can I understand the relationships between schooling culture, young peoples' aspirations and engagement with online social media? I turned to Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) work *A Thousand Plateaus* and I borrow from some of their concepts to illuminate and make sense of my research findings. Since these are philosophical notions used in an empirical thesis, I offer definitions as to how they are used in my discussion chapters and examples from the data to broaden and contextualise the use of the concepts in my findings.

### *1.6.1 Assemblages*

The notion of assemblage is used to make sense of how the young people who participated in this thesis establish connections and relationships both online and offline which help them form a basis for their identity. Assemblages have been conceived by Deleuze and Guattari (2013) as transformative happenings 'of actions and passions...intermingling and...reacting to one another' enabling difference and change (102/103). Importantly, this thesis refers to young people's school lives and uses of social media as assemblages, opening up possibilities, outlining potential, allowing young people to experiment and curate a sense of identity. Discussing research participants' experiences using the logic of assemblages has enabled me as a researcher to see connections and highlight how the young people's lives are always in a phase of ambivalence between aspects of offline life, like schooling, and the online worlds they inhabit. Like other research using assemblages (Feely, 2019; Taylor and Hughes, 2016; Ringrose and Renold, 2014; Renold and Invinson, 2014; Taylor, 2013; Ringrose, 2011) either directly or more implicitly my focus is to attempt to make theory by 'connecting ideas' found in different types of data, creating other thinking assemblages that can be used to explain social phenomena (Taylor, 2013: 43).

The experiences of the research participants can be explained and analysed more meaningfully by exploring the associations among their experiences of schooling, the social media in their lives, and the emerging ways in which they assembled with elements and technologies to pursue their self-creation online and offline. To explain further how assemblages uncover important parts of human experience I want to introduce Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) argument of the feudal assemblage, as it



helps to re-pose questions on how we relate to our environment and technologies. I draw on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage in so far as it helps me understand and analyse the online and offline. Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the 'feudal assemblage' to help us think about the versatility of associations:

'We would have to consider the interminglings of bodies defining feudalism: the body of the earth and the social body; the body of the overlord, vassal and serf; the body of the knight and the horse and their new relation to the stirrup; the weapons and tools assuring a symbiosis of bodies a whole mechanic assemblage' (2013:103).

As Deleuze and Guattari suggest assemblages can offer a way to place some analytical attention on the relationships and transformations that occur if we examine what arises as a whole, rather than focusing on separate units. For Deleuze and Guattari feudalism is explained through the associations among lands and peasants, lords, iron and horses, weapons and the new powers to subjugate and rule the land. In this case, we would need to consider the longer distances that humans were allowed to travel through, on horseback and by using stirrups; the new military powers that were created by humans' use of iron to wield armours, weapons and swords, and the new military strategies of war employed as a result.

Similarly, many aspects of the data which are to be explained in later chapters are seen through the overarching concept of assemblages, which has also been deployed as a methodological tool to highlight the connections between different sections of data (see section 3.9). Assemblages are understood as complex territories, imbued with power, which are made up of moving and more stable elements and which normally lead to changes how something is perceived (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013). The notion of assemblages will be used as a lens for delineating the contexts of the school and the social media platforms discussed, as composed by many parts. In the case of school some of the elements are, teachers, rules, students, assessments, among other elements. On social media, the elements are dominated by online content and its visibility, exposure, durability among other aspects. My research participants are discussed as moving through offline and online assemblages continuously, with the offline happenings drifting into the online. For example, in the fourth chapter, Taylor, one of my research participants begins her engagement with politics online, directly as a result of changes in her school assemblage. If I had not mapped out the school assemblages I would miss the connections between the offline and the online in Taylor's case.

In this thesis the school assemblages are discussed as being more restrictive and controlling in their nature, particularly since schools are traditionally highly regulated spaces. The school assemblage at Richmond Academy was also open to lots of movements and change because of the constant pressure of performativity and the threat of surveillance that the school was under; I have explained this context in a previous section (See 1.3). In contrast, online assemblages are discussed as being more malleable and adaptable online and on the social media platforms used by the nine young research participants. Yet, what I will discuss in more detail is how the research participants in forging their identities online are also responding to the limitations on their identities as imposed by Richmond Academy. Assemblages as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (2013) allows me to pave the way for analysing the young people's identity becomings as an ongoing tug-of-war between the school and the possibilities found online.

The narratives of my research participants are explained to show how there are constant online and offline movements in the lives of the young people which make up their sense of identity. The notion of assemblage generates a way of thinking about these experiences which focuses on the passages and transformations that the young people experience, particularly online and at school. For instance, one of my research participants, Skeeks, talks about his love of art and photography and how his encounters with art at school have both been the reason for his passion and a source of disappointment because of how the subject has become overlooked. Yet, Skeeks is also an active Facebook user who recreates a sophisticated online space for his art and photography, his Facebook postings viewed through assemblages show the constant associations between school environment, affordances online and Skeeks' acts of identity. As Deleuze and Guattari (2013: 95) suggest, assemblages 'are in constant variation' and movement and 'are themselves constantly subject to transformations...the circumstances must be taken into account...a performative statement is nothing outside of the circumstances that make it performative'. Skeeks' acts of posting and keeping his art and photography work public by making it visible on Facebook are assemblages that allow him to perform his identity. An assemblage that responds to how his school's overlook of art and photography as a subject which lost prominence because of other ongoing school issues. Skeeks is shown transitioning his love of art and photography from the walls of the school to the openness of the Facebook wall.

Assemblages are about connections and the transformations they enable. In the discussion chapters assemblages is an approach that arranges how the narratives of my participants are presented, with an emphasis on subtle and more explicit connections between occurrences at Richmond Academy and the online social media

world's research participants curate online. Once the assemblages between social media and the lives of the young people become more solidified they are referred to as *becomings*, denoting the research participants' emerging identity formations.

### *1.6.2 Becomings*

One of the concepts that has allowed me to articulate some of my research participants' identities is '*becomings*'. In my thesis I use Deleuze's (2005) approach to understanding the complexities of experience of my research participants because Deleuze discussed the lack of fixity in everyday experiences. Deleuze developed what he called '*transcendental empiricism*'; which allows us to talk about the empirical in a transcendental way, always changing and recruiting change. Deleuze and Guattari (2013: 299) say *becomings* are the inseparable result of materials, people, and elements assembling, '*an individuated assemblage*'; *becomings* are the more perfected '*assemblages that create new power*'. The *becomings* in my study are those identities created by participants as a result of emerging assemblages. Some examples of the *becomings* presented later in the thesis are becoming -entrepreneur; becoming-celebrity; and becoming-blacktivist, just to name few. Crucially, in my study, research participants are constantly looking to add and create new meaning in their identity *becomings* through the creation of online content and other social media engagements.

Moreover, '*becomings*' are the '*effects of an assemblage*', with assemblages working as mechanisms and *becomings* as what can be captured at points of stability in the assemblage (Deleuze, 2005: 24). The *becomings* outlined later in the discussion chapters are the captured effects of the school and online assemblages shaping identity *becomings* of research participants. To this effect, Deleuze's approach has been used by Ringrose (2011) to analyse empirical research, because '*it offers strategies for mapping both modalities of social/subjective*' happenings (2011: 599). I decided to use this approach to denote how the young people in my research are constantly using their own agency to move through the socialities of social media platforms, and how their experiences reflect power struggles within their school. Additionally, in this thesis I also explain some of the school assemblages that accentuate the various identity *becomings* and which offer differing fields of power to research participants.

In the case of my research participants I deploy the notion of *becomings* to articulate how their assemblages with school cultures and social media have resulted in particular *becomings* for them. For instance, Danielle, one of my research participants having experienced mechanisms of authority in the form of school curricula compounded by the pressures teachers are under to perform (Ball, 2010) at Rich-

mond Academy, escapes the school assemblage to generate an identity becoming as author on a social media platform for writing stories. In order to be able to trace and capture Danielle's becoming-author, this thesis is engaging with Danielle's school assemblage and online assemblage to narrate the productive becoming resulting from the conflict between the two offline and online assemblages.

As part of my thesis I also encountered from very early on through my time at Richmond Academy how the young people were in a constant struggle where they were challenging the norms of their school environment. These struggles were evident not just at school but also online, where the young people engaged in practices to create new forms of value. The young people were constantly negotiating many instances of disempowerment, as well as power-affirming experiences. The ambivalences I encountered in my research participants' experiences speak to the notion of becomings, marked by what Deleuze called 'increases or decreases in power', prompted by changes in the assemblages and triggering new fields of power (Deleuze, 2005: 25). In the case of my research participants they were engaged in struggles for power online, yet, the school assemblage was a driving force in how they curated particular becomings on social media. Thus, becomings are imbued with power and made possible by subtle and/or abrupt changes in the assemblages which become more stabilised.

### *1.6.3 Territorialisation and De-territorialisation*

The notions of territorialisation and de-territorialisation are used in my thesis to distinguish the power regimes that the young people encountered in their lives. These notions were introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (2013) bringing the element of power to an assemblage. They think about power through territorialisations, they say that 'the assemblage has both territorial sides, or territorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization which carry it away' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 103). The territory becomes the accepted cultures and set of practices that exert power over everything, including people. For Deleuze and Guattari discussing assemblages is incomplete without the element of power as explained through territorialisations and de-territorialisations. A powerful territory to be made sense of in this thesis is that of the school, school functions as an influencing territory in the lives of the young people. School cultures are dominant layers which tend to exert a particular power on to the young people. In my thesis the school territory was an important context, defined by the whole school assemblage and underpinning the normalised codes of conduct and cultures experienced. Richmond Academy was impacted by its precarious position in the educational market and this produced strong binaries for stu-

dents, in terms of attainment, behaviour and belonging. Wadham (et al, 2014: 131) refer to the 'institutional disposition of the school' which 'tends to see the students in the traditional sense of conforming, or otherwise, to the adult-centred school culture', students attitudes are seen through a binary of 'obedience' and 'trouble'. In this thesis I present some of the dominant dispositions of the school and I refer to them as territorialisations, and how my participants 'fit in', and sometimes 'come up against' them. However, despite the dominant and powerful dispositions of the school in which territorialisations are established, this thesis reveals how young people break free through forms of de-territorialisation, many of which take place online. I also refer to my research participants' resourceful negotiations of these school territories of power as de-territorialisations, as many of the research participants respond to the inflexibility of school values which they find lack relevance in their own lives at times. The de-territorialisations are a very important part of this thesis and they contribute significantly to understanding young people's uses of social media differently. Many of my research participants utilise the online worlds of social media to assemble with online communities, online content and tools which bring them closer to more meaningful becomings for them.

The threading and narrating of territorialisations and de-territorialisations are useful conceptual tools that frame the analysis and the articulations in this thesis, they encapsulate different forms of power in the lives of the young people. On one hand, a power which subjugates and co-opts, such as the forms of management, codes of conduct and behaviour, the cultures of academic excellence, the acceptance of punishments and rewards and the various regimes of authority that make up school life (Wadham et al., 2014). On the other hand, the many ways in which young people choose to actively transgress these school values and cultures, whether in the school premises or through other online means. The thesis uncovers how the young people creatively navigate many social media platforms, producing assemblages that allow them to build becomings of identity which would be labelled 'problematic' in their school environment, and which go beyond the endorsed aspirations of the school.

The thesis explains the territorialisations surrounding the young people before delving into various forms of de-territorialisation that reveal the originality of the data and its analysis in this thesis. Some of the territorialisations that will be developed reflect the pressures that the school is under, above all in an educational climate where surveillance and educational attainment regimes become school culture, and are interpreted by students as oppressive (Perryman et al., 2017). Some other territorialisations speak of ways in which student interactions reflect the overall heteronormative school cultures which can become toxic for both boys and girls (Robinson, 2006; Renold, 2010; Renold, 2017). The young people in this thesis are also discussed as

producing and pursuing several forms of de-territorialisations online and offline, where they challenge, contest and transform some of the more constraining school cultures they experience. The de-territorialisations create lines of escape which the young people interpret as important aspects of their emerging identities and which I articulate through the notion of becomings. Becomings then are infused with power struggles which the young people re-contextualise, in many cases, with the help of others online, on various social media and which can reverberate back to everyday school life.

Overall, the notions of assemblages, becomings, territorialisations and de-territorialisations define my Deleuzian-Guattarian framework and serve as sensitising concepts to analyse and interpret the lives of the young people who participated in this thesis, whilst I had access to their lives both at school and online. I have seen the young people conform to and follow standards and expectations, which are imposed on them, not just by teachers but also by the whole environment of the school, how they have assembled with the territorialisations of school and the online. Equally, I have also witnessed and sought to understand how the young people pursue alternative assemblages online, which become important contexts underpinning their becomings. In the next section I will outline the key themes in the subsequent chapters.

## **1.7 Discussion Chapter Introductions**

There are three data analysis chapters in this thesis. Each of them can be read as separate and distinct contributions to understanding young people's experiences of schooling and use of social media platforms. They deal with themes focusing on the parallels between the online and offline world, and dissatisfaction with a restrictive schooling culture which suppresses creativity in young people.

The first discussion chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis discusses four of my research participants. This chapter is mapping out how participants experienced the school curriculum and their alternative assemblages with various social media platforms. The relationship between the offline and the online is highlighted and constructed in this chapter as reactive and allowing research participants to enhance their experiences of certain school subjects by developing complex engagements with online platforms. The research participants discussed in this chapter are, Skeeks, Danielle, Taylor and Laura, all find themselves creating and curating an online space on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Wattpad, to respond to aspects of curriculum learning that they feel are stifling and limiting at Richmond Academy. The peculiarity of their use of social media is underpinned by this relationship between the offline and the online, with the online worlds my research participants inhabit sufficing and ampli-

ifying the cultures of schooling which they find coercive, restrictive or lacking in meaningfulness. For instance, Danielle who is in her mid teens and has a passion for creative writing is very critical of the teaching of English Literature at her school, and finds the school curriculum repetitive and dull. Danielle is discussed in this chapter as enacting a becoming-author on Wattpad, where her readership runs in the thousands. Therefore, the research participants' school context is made sense of in the chapter, combining data from my time at Richmond Academy and observations conducted, as well as interview and online data. The online engagements are then discussed to construct an understanding of how research participants responded on various social media, partly due to their experiences in the school context. Many of the research participants' assemblages in this chapter are characterised by the exposure that social media offers and the intensifications it brings, in the forms of likes, comments and repostings (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013). This chapter argues that the young people were very creative in pursuing different outlets of expression online, and in doing so their offline experiences were harnessed online to create different becomings enabled and consolidated by the use of social media platforms.

The second discussion chapter (Chapter 5) in this thesis explores becomings as a result of gender politics, mainly experienced within the school. It draws on research at Richmond Academy detailing the experiences of four of my research participants, Ashley, Danielle, Skeeks and Dan. All schools have particular dynamics which result in gender cultures and gender expectations affecting students in a variety of ways. In the case of Richmond Academy some of my findings point to the prevalence of a territory where heteronormative cultures can be alienating to some of my research participants. The school context is explained per research participant discussed and I map out how they navigate through some of these gender politics, in school and out of school. The online identity work that my research participants engage in denotes how they encounter the social media platforms, features and content as liberating, cathartic and useful to steer themselves into favourable and sometimes difficult positions within the gender regimes at the school. For example, one of the research participants, Ashley, is introduced as inhabiting problematic positions at the school because of her outspoken manner and her investment in feminism. Ashley reflexively engages with online content and blogging technologies online and on Tumblr, to resolve some of her feelings towards the school and towards oppressive cultures which she has been exposed to at Richmond Academy. This chapter illustrates and discusses how my research participants enrol different online and social media platforms to expand their knowledge of gender and sexuality matters, as in the case of Danielle and Ashley, but also utilise features of social media itself to manage a suitable performance of identity, as in the case of Skeeks and Dan.

The third discussion chapter (Chapter 6) in this thesis is an exploration of what are some of the influences young people's negotiations and imaginations of their work and academic futures encounter. The chapter focuses on an aspirations culture which they experience both offline at school and online on social media. In this chapter the research participants engage with various social media platforms to carefully construct aspirational becomings around academic success, activism, celebrity culture and entrepreneurship. As with the previous chapters the school context is made intelligible per participant through a combination of interview data and snippets from my observations. As part of this chapter I argue that young people's use of online and social media is pervaded by effects of neoliberalism and I describe how my participants' becomings seem to be imbued in a set of neoliberal imaginaries around success, self-examination and self-reinvention (Freeman, 2014) which influence their assemblages with social media. In this chapter I discuss my research participants, Brian, Zee, Mimi and Elizabeth, all young people transitioning into adult life and following different paths, yet still steeped into becomings which show their investment in effects of neoliberalism. I present the cases in relation to Richmond Academy's dominant constructions of success, which affect the young people in different ways because of their ethnicity, class status and their dispositions towards academic attainment. For instance, Mimi, a white middle-class student who has low levels of attainment, finds herself struggling against dominant 'Girl Power' cultures at Richmond Academy which privilege an academic route over others. Yet, Mimi still judges herself against this norm and seeks to build an alternative becoming of success on Twitter. This chapter threads how the young people are acting as agents of their own future, whilst following neoliberal ideals of the self (Rose, 1996; Rose, 2010; Freeman, 2014) which manifest in their online identity becomings.

The lives of the young people are captured in all three chapters as a set of relational happenings which see them moving across seamlessly from their experiences at school to social media platforms which make up a particular experience of youth. The young people are engaged in complex sets of relations, where they are curtailed by the dispositions and dynamics of their school, but also find ways to create new fields of power for themselves. The becomings narrated in the chapters are the emerging identities I captured throughout my time with the young research participants.



## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review Chapter**

This chapter examines the literature related to my thesis, showing how my research situates itself in relation to other work on young people, schooling and social media. The literature examined is interdisciplinary, bringing together research from across sociology, cultural studies and new media. This chapter shall be presented in six key sections. The first section (2.2) examines literature which discusses constraining school cultures and practices, many of which are experienced by my research participants. The school environment's social fabric is changed by the emphasis on data, producing results and modelling 'good' practices enforced by regular inspections, from internal and external bodies. The literature to be discussed presents different lenses to discuss how nuanced school contexts are and the effects school can have on young people (2.2.1) and how school cultures provide authority and oppressive school environments for students (2.2.2). The following section (2.3) will discuss how the uses of social media by young people might be producing different ways of learning online which go beyond the formal learning that young people traditionally do at school. Some of the key problems with young peoples' use of social media are discussed in the next section (2.4), showing how youth has been reportedly ruined or 'spoilt' by social media and how there has been social dangers connected to young peoples' use of the internet (2.4.1). But the section also looks at more nuanced perspectives (such as boyd, 2008), which, like my thesis, emphasises the complex connections between schooling culture, teachers, parents and social media usage (2.4.2), specifically addressing the ways in which the lives of young people are transformed by new media practices. The final two sections of this chapter relate directly to sub-themes of identity (2.5 and 2.6). Discussing the various layers of identity of research participants has meant that my literature review also extends into literature considering the significance of social media for modern constructions of gender and sexuality (2.5). Many of these aspects of identity construction are also impacted by school cultures around aspirations, entrepreneurialism and celebrity culture (2.6). These pieces of literature argue ways in which "modern" youth identity constructions occur in schools. My findings are scaffolded by some of the arguments to be presented in this chapter, but it furthers these arguments by deeply engaging with young people's social media production and how circulating and curating online content is essential for youth identity becomings, challenging school cultures and post-school transitions. The final section (2.7) provides a conclusion to this extensive literature review.

## **2.2 Understanding Constraining School Cultures and Practices**

### *2.2.1 Surveillance, Discipline and Conformity*

Part of the research and literature used in this thesis are around the current pressures that schools are placed under due to long-standing educational policy, interventionist government policies and Ofsted school inspections. Richmond Academy has been discussed as a school where these pressures were augmented (see section 1.3) due to the impending 'academy conversion' status that created an 'insecure' environment for students and teachers (West and Bailey, 2013: 149). In this section, I shall discuss some of the literature which has been used to make sense of the school as a territory where cultures of performativity and accountability created a particular school environment affecting my research participants in different ways. The following section offers an overview of the research that has been used to make sense of the school as a territory where there were relationships of power geared towards academic performance, disciplining students and teachers and normalising academic aspirations.

The research by Perryman et al (2018) discusses how the regime of Ofsted inspections in England influences the work of leadership, management and teachers in schools and framed the discussion using the theoretical Foucauldian notions of governmentality and post-panopticism. The article was a useful piece of work which considers how school cultures play an important role in the everyday occurrences of the school. The findings highlighting how school cultures around teacher accountability and academic performativity were a consequence of inspection regimes in the UK were very important for this study since they reflected school cultures and practices at Richmond Academy. Perryman et al (2018: 148) reflect on the ongoing power of school inspections, 'inspection is not just about external surveillance. It is through the in-school culture of performativity and accountability that conformativity, discipline and normalisation are achieved, as teachers learn to police themselves and to perform the successful inculcation of the normalised behaviour'. To this effect, I encountered pressures and practices at Richmond Academy which were reflective of these 'in-school cultures' that Perryman et al (2018) referred to. As part of this thesis I have discussed some of the tensions found at Richmond Academy and they will continue to be made sense of in the subsequent discussion chapters through the notion of 'territories' (Deleuze and Guattari (2013: 105) as sites of hegemonic power. Perryman et al's (2018) article was important to critically reflect on parts of my school observations and how Richmond Academy was constantly being shaped by the forces of performativity which impacted on my research participants' narratives significantly. Whilst the paper by Perryman et al (2018) focuses on the school context through the pressures

on teachers and other management staff, in this thesis I expand the perceptions of the school context by discussing it as a territory which strongly concerns the lives of students.

Within this Foucauldian understanding outlined in the previous section, Courtney (2016) provides further consequences of the surveillance schools are under, such as Richmond Academy. The ways in which the school territories at Richmond Academy modelled student expectations and aspirations were informed by neoliberal ideology. Courtney (2016) argues that schools are under increased pressure due to the public nature of results, leading to self-invention and competing educational markets which are all characteristics of a neoliberal economic ideology. Richmond Academy has operationalised under these neoliberal expectations, in order to meet benchmarks informally set by educational markets, and formally reinforced by Ofsted standards. Courtney's (2016) findings will be used to explain how the climate at Richmond Academy was symptomatic of a system produced by 'policy-makers influenced by neoliberal ideology who differentiate schools based on quantitative data and have them compete for pupils to improve standards' (2016: 628). The Saturday school I was a part of (see section 1.2) was one of the ways in which the school competed in the markets that dictate that academic excellence propped by evidently high results was at the core of the identity of the school; an identity which at times contradicted the identities of some of the research participants to be discussed.

Literature around schools and their boundaries also helped me think more critically about the spaces at Richmond Academy and the practices associated with them. Research by Barker et al (2010) on schools spatial relations is used to tease out some of the inequalities that school spaces enabled at Richmond Academy. The research participants of this study were very aware of school boundaries, and this is something I witnessed during school observations and which was discussed during interviews. Barker et al (2010: 381) refer to school 'spatial strategies and disciplinary tactics' as reproducing unequal treatment for students, due to the arrangement of spaces and the neglect of the student experience. Indeed, at Richmond Academy there were many issues surrounding the use and misuse of spaces, affecting both students and teachers, as the school's building was in need of many repairs, having missed out on government investment funds (see section 1.3). The notion of 'boundaries' presented by Barker et al (2010: 378) is constructed as not just a set of physical places, but also as a set of social relations both in and outside of the school. This is similar to how this thesis presents school boundaries as material and physical but also as immaterial. The boundaries at Richmond academy are presented in this thesis as extending into the online social media engagements by young research participants. For example, in chapter four, Danielle narrates the anxiety and shame she

experienced in school corridors where she is subjected to unwanted touching and sexual banter. However, Danielle draws from this experience in school corridors to create social media that rejects the school's overlooking of these issues. Similarly, Barker et al (2010) document some of the inequalities and oppressions that the school staff and students where the research was conducted were going through. Moreover, this thesis is challenging how young people are simply subjected to school's practices, but rather discusses how young people are competent social actors who encounter a variety of strategies offline and online to contest, challenge or transgress adult spatial hegemony and boundaries.

### *2.2.2 School Cultures of Authority and Oppression of Students*

Wadham et al's (2014) research was used to understand how school cultures of authority contribute to students' disengagement. The school as an institution with norms, rules and particular interests, which often tend to go against the identity of students, is problematised as deliberately overlooking its impact on the lives of young people. The findings raise questions about how schools have remained 'inflexible', too conservative, and perpetuate demonising discourses around white working-class youth, such as, 'feral youths', 'baby-faced mothers' and 'chavs' (Wadham et al, 2014: 151). Like my thesis this article placed an emphasis on how students experience school cultures and relations and how they 'understand' their effects. Additionally, the research by Wadham et al found that the disaffection experienced by research participants was provoked by 'school values which the students in this study generally experienced as not being meaningful in the context of their own lives' (2014: 133). The article by Wadham et al (2014) describes how students forge a sense of identity through the rejection of school cultures and values, which labelled them as 'troubled teens'. Similarly, many of my research participants experienced a sense of strangeness and alienation as a result of the key practices that Richmond Academy endorsed. Yet, in this thesis students are not just shaping their identities through troubling contestations of the school environment, but astutely creating online content and social media engagements that allow them to avoid significant conflict at school, whilst still retaining a sense of power about their production of identity.

School cultures around discipline are explored by Kennedy-Lewis et al's research as a significant force 'silencing' students' voices, creating 'systematic oppressions' (2016: 3). The school is discussed as a highly regulated space where students' identities are ignored or co-opted by the school's set of expectations around educational attainment, behaviour management and controlling the educational environment. This article was used to establish an understanding of school climate as a factor

creating everyday exclusions for young people. The young people interviewed by Kennedy-Lewis et al (2016) were excluded on a variety of levels by the dominant school cultures, even if they were not formally excluded. Many of my research participants' experiences at school will be mapped using similar critical arguments reflecting the power of the school culture over students' identities. Nevertheless, my thesis also focuses on students' negotiations and resistances which take place in the school environment as well as the online and social media platforms they skilfully use.

This section has discussed the literature that has been used to show how the school cultures and practices can constrain students' engagement and sense of identity. Borrowing from the literature discussed in this section this thesis is juxtaposing the school's cultures and practices at Richmond Academy and how my research participants navigate through, whilst shaping their identities. The school environment is explored in the discussion chapters as a territory with particular relations of power that my research participants, respond to, conform to and resist in various ways, but particularly using online and social media platforms.

### **2.3 Understanding Literature Around Young People's Learning on Media**

To ground some of the ideas around the learning that schools recognise and the learning that remains ignored this thesis has used the research by Quinn (2018) challenging the view that only learning that happens at school should be valued. Quinn argues that 'to achieve social change, what constitutes learning and where and how it happens must be rethought', including spaces such as digital media (2018: 144). Whilst Quinn focuses on projects following white working-class students' learning in community activities he makes a case for thinking about the potential new media could have in re-thinking informal learning; it does not outline specific learning that happens on different media. This thesis has used some of the arguments from this article to highlight the draconian ways in which we continue to look at 'formal learning' as that which happens within the walls of the school and underestimate the potential of young people's 'informal learning' to update and democratise schooling (Quinn, 2018: 149). Whilst the work by Quinn (2018) helped to problematise the boundaries and constraints of learning, my thesis provides numerous examples of how young people from various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds learn from online social media and use this learning to shape their emerging identities.

The problems with learning excluding the digital has been debated by Nowell (2014) who argues that digital literacy can improve media literacy for both teachers and students. Part of the problems that research participants discussed was the lack of involvement and contribution they feel at school. Nowell (2014) argues that young

people's potential is being ignored by the schools' overlooking of the importance of technology and media in young people's lives. Young people's use of social media has been simplified to satisfying the need for entertainment, instead, Nowell argues that engaging with young people's social media work, particularly entertainment, schools can fulfill 'the responsibility to teach students the skills to live in a networked society and to insure they become media literate' (2014: 112). My thesis expands on these ideas to demonstrate that social media engagements by young people can enlighten the inflexible ways in which we think of learning in schools and how identity is constructed by young people.

Research by Unlusoy et al (2013) explores the potential of online platforms for young people's learning, arguing that young people browse the internet to improve the quality of their schoolwork. The research argues that browsing the internet and using various devices instead of affecting concentration span helps young people to assess online content and engage more meaningfully with schoolwork. The key arguments and findings present a more progressive way of thinking about youth media engagements, by positing the idea that youth can be more critical of the usefulness of online content by browsing and accessing different information online. Yet, the work is focusing on how young people unproblematically accept schoolwork and use online resources and information to improve the content of schoolwork. It does not present alternative cases where young people might use online platforms or social media to create content that is restricted by the demands of school curricula. Although my thesis builds on ideas around the potential learning experiences young people create online and on social media as argued by Unlusoy et al (2013). It also discusses how young people create counter-practices that allow them to produce emerging identities which have been curtailed at school because of curricular pressures.

## **2.4 Literature on Social Media Use by Young People**

### *2.4.1 Spoilt Youth and the Social Dangers of Media*

Most literature on young people's uses of social media has been presented as harmful and detrimental to young people's development. For instance, some of the relationships found in current literature are marked by 'social dangers', characterised by 'social media addiction' which leads to 'distraction from schoolwork and class activities, short attention spans, diminished reading capacity, lower GPA, higher anxiety, lower satisfaction with life, cheating on tests, and rudeness' (Elliot, 2016: 2/3). Unlike my study, where the relationship between the offline and the online is very productive and positive for research participants, Elliot describes the use of online social media as 'detrimental' and one which is 'spoiling youth' who perform 'narcissistic identities' (2016: 3). Far from being detrimental to their attention span and education,

my research participants engage with social media to create a live resource of topics that matter to them and which play a crucial role in the formation of their emerging identities. For example, one of my research participants, a high-achieving student, active blogger and highly engaged in feminist practices online, uses social media as a way to learn and organise content which she wants to bring to the school in an effort to help change sexist school cultures. Instead of framing the online and social media use by young people as profoundly worrying for young people's education (Elliott, 2016); my study lies within arguments such as Ringrose and Renold's explorations of social media and peer online cultures as 'stirring a feeling of responsibility and a sense of purpose' in young people's education, particularly, when it comes to issues of equality such as school feminisms (2016: 109). Similarly, my research participant finds that there are many 'complexities of what it means to be positioned, and to position oneself as feminist' in the institutional context of the school (Ringrose and Renold, 2016: 105), and her social media work allows her to explore her academic interests whilst instrumentally shaping her identity both at school and online.

A lack of emotional coping and resilience has also been linked to social media use by young people. In the article by Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, Face it, don't Facebook it (2016: 428) the focus is on how mindfulness is affected by social media, revealing how 'social media addiction can lead to lower mindfulness'. The rationale behind this linkage is that when people are addicted to social media, their ability to be mindful to what they are doing in the present tends to be impaired because of the distraction caused by the urge to access social media'. Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol (2016: 427) also present their arguments as affecting teenagers particularly, arguing that 'it is evident that more people, especially teenagers, are becoming addicted to using them'. They argue that 'almost everywhere in the world, it is not unusual to see people facing down towards their mobile devices to check their social media while walking or doing any activities' (2016: 427). Contrary to these ideas, my research shows, how young people skilfully and articulately thread connections on social media which help them form supportive networks and groups (see chapters four, five and six). In the discussion chapters' of this thesis, online social media is discussed as an important outlet for the creation of youth support groups. Social media is discussed as helping research participants, who felt marginalised by racially-biased (Gillborn, 2017) and heteronormative school cultures (Renold, 2017), form support group networks and online content to validate their identities.

#### *2.4.2 Alternative Narratives of Social Media Use by Young People*

One of the authors who has contributed to an alternative understanding of social media use by young people is danah boyd. Her work in *Taken out of Context* (2008) and *It's Complicated* (2014) is also ethnographic and explores American teens'

engagement with SNSs such as MySpace and Facebook across the United States. *Taken out of Context* focuses primarily on examining ‘the intersection of social network site profiles and identity....and how social network sites shape teen sociality and peer relations’ (boyd, 2008: 4). boyd’s work is of particular importance to my study as it advocates for a more complex understanding of young people’s uses of digital technologies. More importantly, the way in which this understanding is sought by the author is based on the belief that ‘the practices of teenagers must be understood on their own terms’ to inform the debates around social media use from various perspectives, and not just adult-centred perspectives (boyd, 2008: 3). My research study shares a very similar commitment to the understanding of young people’s experiences, as I am interested in finding out the particular online engagements and identity-building performances which are important to young people’s identity-building.

Similarly, boyd’s work in the way in which it narrates teens’ online social practices grapples with the question which has concerned several other studies; namely, can the internet be considered to be a separate space with particular cultural practices of its own (Haraway, 1991; Reid, 1991; Stone 1995; Sundén 2003; Wakeford, 2003). My study, as boyd’s, proceeds from the premise that the ways in which we have adopted the internet and new digital technologies have changed our sociality. The work by boyd is not explicitly theorised, though her work is loosely influenced by Goffman, it is not informed by research. My thesis, in contrast, theorises through Deleuzian-Guattarian concepts and is informed by aspects of research around youth and their media engagements. In the case of young people, these media appropriations of the technologies impact on themselves, their homes, their localities, their schooling and their overall relationships and issues of gender, ‘race’ and class (as will be discussed in the discussion chapters of this thesis).

boyd’s work has a strong emphasis on identity construction and the ways in which teens created a ‘tangible digital identity’ (boyd, 2008: 121). In doing this boyd’s centrality of argument revolves around how teens use digital technologies and the various narratives obtained from teens in order to describe everyday teen culture and practices around self and identity, peer sociality and parents and adults. Identity is understood by boyd as impression management and she lightly uses the sociology of Goffman (1959), to theorise identity constructions by young people. boyd (2008: 119) states ‘in an effort to make a good impression, people tend to look around, see how others are acting in that context and then choose their performance accordingly. Depending on how they are received people alter their behaviour to increase the likelihood of being perceived as intended’. Whilst boyd recognises that mediated environments might alter this process of management of impressions her analysis of how mediated environments complicate acts of identity is still too fixed on the agency of teens. To this effect, boyd (2008) talks of teens’ efforts to choose, edit and upload con-



tent that they think best matches the representation they want of themselves online. boyd (2008: 130) quotes an extract from a boy called Dom, 'I chose what I wanted on my profile because I thought it represented me well'. Passages such as this one are constructed as emphasising the young person's attempt at impression management which is in turn used as an act of identity. Although this is of course an act of identity and expresses a concern with self-representation online, boyd's analysis misses the multifaceted ways in which acts of identity interact with other important collective cultures, such as schooling. I suggest that these multiple identity acts are constitutive and not just to do with young people's agency and rationally pursued management of identity, but can be theorised more accurately by drawing on the school offline lives of young people.

## **2.5 Social Media Research and Young People's Gender Identities**

### *2.5.1 Gendered Sexist School Cultures and Navigating a Feminist Identity*

Using online social media can be detrimental to the ways in which young people communicate with each other and others, and can damage the ways in which they shape their identity. For example, Brighi et al (2012) argues that extensive use of online social media can lead to aggressive dynamics and dysfunctional behaviours, like internet abuse and cyberbullying. These forms of behaviour are gendered and more common for young girls (Mishna et al., 2015) who are more likely to be subjected to 'demeaning comments about their appearance', whilst boys are more likely to be 'cyberbullied through online games and homophobic comments' (Gianesini and Brighi, 2019: 4). However, unlike my thesis, these studies do not show how some young girls and boys can become empowered through their use of online social media. Similar to my thesis Kofoed and Ringrose (2012) explain how social media produces cyberbullying events which fix young women within pejorative and sexist cultures; yet it also shows how young women try to manoeuvre themselves out of this cyberbullying positions with further social media interactions. My thesis has also developed the experience of boys, for example, in my study, social media was used as a way of establishing a heterosexual identity for my research participant Skeeks, who according to everyday school banter came across 'as a bit feminine for a boy' and therefore posted pictures of himself with his girlfriend to reinforce his sexuality from the online within the walls of the school. As many key studies (discussed above) show, gendered forms of cyberbullying can make the online world a dark place for young people to be. However, my thesis also shows that social media can be used to emancipate and empower young people.

The role of digital fields in young people's production of gender is also taken up by Metcalfe and Llewellyn (2019: 94) who argue that there are 'rules of gender that young people follow and are consistent between the physical field of schooling and the digital field of social media'. Their findings follow a Bourdieusian and Butlerian analysis to purport that gender is 'real only to the extent that it is performed' (Butler, 1988, p. 527, cited in Metcalfe and Llewellyn, 2019: 86), and social media sites provide a unique platform for youth to actualise their gender identities. Similar to the arguments and analysis by Metcalfe and Llewellyn, my thesis demonstrates the importance of looking at the connections between offline school gender relations and online constructions of gender identities. Whilst there are consistencies between offline and online gender identity work in my thesis, there are also ways in which young people in my research resist the gender cultures and rules that they experience at school. Social media sites will be discussed as integral to how research participants managed not just established identities but ones which were in conflict with school gender relations and were just emerging at the time of the research.

In order to explore aspects of masculinity I have used Renold's (2010: 373) arguments on how the perceived 'feminisation' of education and 'studiousness' presents a challenge to how boys engage with education whilst projecting a coherent masculinity. The contradictions and multilayered processes by which boys experience and manage a masculine identity at school are explored to consider how hegemonic masculinity can be contested and replaced. These considerations are important to understand how my research participants' gender identity performances are more than a personal construction, but also occur within the institutional context of the school. The young research participants who are constructing conforming and 'othered' gender identities at the school encounter similar contradictions to my research participants. With an emphasis on how boys perform to hegemonic masculinity paradigms and negotiating academic success as not feminine, the arguments by Renold (2010) uncover tensions that characterise some of the gender struggles and complex gender relations my research participants experience.

Baer (2016: 20) critiques how in the context of neoliberalism, feminism is becoming both 'second nature and unnecessary' in societies where differences between men and women have improved. The arguments put forward by Baer (2016) are illustrative of the school environment that research participants experienced. Baer's key discussion problematises the prevalence of social media use by young people and how they might encounter these post-feminist ideas in images, advertisements and examples of digital feminisms such as #YesAllWomen. My research participants engage with these environments and also navigate through various feminist online content to discern their emerging identities as feminists. In doing this their engagement

with online feminist content is touched by some of the influences neoliberalism has on feminist content. My thesis discusses how my research participants are critical of the undoing of feminism, and can also be seduced by the empowered and independent image of women that neoliberalism posits.

Young people's engagements on social media as a meaningful way to do identity work around feminism has been a theme in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Retallack et al (2016: 85) argue that 'fourth wave social media feminism' has been used by young girls to fight everyday sexism both at school and in their own lives. It follows a 'theatre group' of girls and the complexities around performing a feminist identity in and around school. Similar to the arguments proposed by Retallack et al (2016) the school environment experienced by research participants in my thesis was saturated with neoliberal and post-feminist messages. Yet, in my thesis I am also exploring how not just girls, but also boys oppose the school's post-feminist and sexist cultures with both offline and online engagements.

Other arguments around performing a gender identity in post-feminist neoliberal times will be explored through Baker (2010), whose research focuses on how young women suffer because of the lack of reflexivity encouraged by meritocratic and individualising schooling systems. Baker (2010: 4) argues that the image of 'empowered women' has become a cultural commodity that is used regularly in popular culture, media and advertising. Regrettably, this image is also internalised by young white working-class women who encounter the current neoliberal context at school and are left disempowered by this image, particularly, if they have not experienced successful transitions in education. The arguments and analysis by Baker (2010) will open up ways of thinking about how my research participants take up and negotiate discourses of female empowerment or the 'successful girls' discourse (Ringrose, 2007), as they encounter it both at school and online on social media. My thesis will be offering reflections from participants who are from various ethnic backgrounds and similarly might feel disempowerment, but who are also actively negotiating their identities on various social media to generate other empowering engagements.

## **2.6 Aspirations, 'Race' and Celebrity Culture**

Another layer of analysis to uncover in this thesis is the aspirations culture that the research participants encountered both offline and online. The school was an important context where institutional practices framed the possibility to succeed as directly related to young people's hard work and commitment. This is an approach that relies 'upon a belief that a morally acceptable social generation of motivation - through the provision of opportunity - can sufficiently fuel and satisfy aspiration to inspire a re-

newed social order based on feelings of obligation alongside those of responsibility' (Prideaux, 2001: 86). Within the aspirations culture that research participants were exposed to there was an approach to success that is common with neoliberal approaches to education, privileging the role of ambition, self-examination and self-efficacy.

In order to make sense of some of the aspirations culture that is so rooted in education in England and which was part of the schooling context of research participants I will use some of the arguments by Best (2017) in *Aspiration, Abjection and Precariousness*. The arguments by Best define aspirations culture 'in terms of fulfilling ambition, achieving, improving and developing the confidence needed to achieve personal, academic and career goals. There is also the underpinning assumption that to be without aspiration is to lead a life without value or meaning and with an underpinning feeling of helplessness' (2017: 39). The arguments by Best (2017) will help interpret some of the ways in which young people in Chapter 6 play out the neoliberal powers of self-creation on themselves and enact their projects of identity at school as well as on various social media platforms. The narrative of self-accountability and self-invention are very important for the young people discussed in the last discussion chapter, particularly since they are transitioning to the next step into employment or higher education after schooling. This thesis expands on reflections not only from the school environment but also on movements onto the online productions of identity, and the social media content produced by research participants, aligning themselves with particular identity becomings.

The work by Freeman (2014) argues how the actualisations of identity of young people from african-caribbean backgrounds are impacted by the neoliberal expectations of employment markets. This work will be used because of its insightful approximations on the conditions enabling the production of an entrepreneurial class. Whilst the work on youth transitioning into employment reflects some of the analysis in Chapter 6; my thesis bridges the gap between the school environment and the world of work. The influence of neoliberalism is not just argued to be prevalent in the employment sector but also budding in the world of school. My thesis then harnesses some of the key practices in their neoliberalised school context and their social media identity becomings as the young people transition into their post-school lives.

The way in which young people are discussed as responding to neoliberal imperatives of self-creation and ongoing self-examination are explored further by using the work of Rose (2010) *Inventing ourselves: psychology, power and personhood*. Arguments by Rose adopt a Foucauldian analysis to explain how notions of personhood are strongly shaped by Neo-liberal economic ideologies instigated by political agen-

das to encourage individuals to govern themselves. In doing so, the 'enterprising self designates an array of rules for the conduct of one's everyday existence: energy, initiative, ambition, calculation, and personal responsibility' (Rose, 2010: 154). These arguments around the governing of enterprising individuals are used in Chapter 6 to highlight how the young people use social media to mitigate some of the unfulfilled fields of accomplishment from school. Yet in doing so the young people are also shaping their identity becomings that will 'maximize its own human capital, project itself a future, and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be' (Rose, 2010: 154). The work by Rose is a theoretical exploration of the enterprising culture as a new way in which political agendas seep into the ways we do individuality as a way of 'governing *through* the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite of them' (2010: 155). My thesis is embedding empirical data which demonstrates how social media production and use plays a crucial role in how young people adhere to these relations of self-steering and self-accountability.

School cultures of aspirations are developed by Spohrer (2016: 411) and argue that schools in the UK are more encouraged to build a 'raise aspirations' expectation, particularly since the notion of cultural capital was adopted by the former Education Minister Michel Gove. The work by Spohrer discusses the school cultures of a school in Scotland with a high proportion of working-class students. The fieldwork in this research and the school population bear some similarities with my research, however, the cohort in my research study is more mixed and were followed for a much longer period of time. The research by Spohrer is very focused on the notion of 'raising aspiration' as a form of 'governmentality' targeting the 'souls' of young people in order to create proactive citizens of the future (2016: 412). One of the consequences of blindly endorsing the aspirations culture in schools is that constructions of 'success' and 'failure' are not being critically problematised, and are at odds with students' identities. My thesis reflects some of these explorations around the problems with aspirations culture in young people's lives; yet it also explores how young people encounter some of these relations on social media and use them proactively to imagine and realise their post-school futures.

Problematizations of young people's perceptions of aspirations, hard work, celebrity culture and merit are further analysed by using the work of Mendick et al (2015). The work recognises how young people's investments in hard work, aspirations and celebrity culture can lead to successful educational transitions, but how it can also lead to a skewed interpretation of success and reproduce meritocratic, as well as class and gender distinctions. The arguments by Mendick et al analyse 'the relationship between hard work and neoliberal discourses of meritocracy' (2015: 162)

that young people encounter in and outside of school. This work is important for analysing how the context of the school continues to privilege academic routes which contribute to the failing project of the knowledge economy over other routes which are less traditional but should still be viable. The findings point to how constructions of 'deserved success' based on celebrity figures, such as Kim Kardashian, Katie Price and Kerry Katona, discussed by young people in the study are still founded in notions of 'respectable femininity', and so are gendered and classed (Mendick et al, 2015: 170). Following some of these arguments my thesis acknowledges some of the problems with young people's perceptions of success, but also focuses on their acts of identity becomings on social media. The engagements on social media can help further the understanding around which discourses are circulated through aspirations and celebrity culture, and how young people play these discourses out into their own productions of identity.

## **2.7 Conclusion to Literature Review Chapter**

This chapter examined the literature related to my thesis, showing how my research situates itself to other work. It was presented in five key sections. The first section discussed the key problems with young peoples' use of social media, revealing how my thesis responds to some of the issues related to the 'social dangers' of the internet (Elliot, 2016), such as how online social media use can contribute to a lack of emotional coping and resilience (Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Where other literature problematises the use of social media by young people, my research shows some of the benefits which it can provide for positively shaping young peoples' identities. My research has some resonance with the work of boyd's work which portrays a very different kind of narrative around young people's use of social media. Like my thesis reveals, the use of social media is a complicated set of relations which involves not only the media usage and technology, but also the teachers, the parents, the schooling culture and the community itself (boyd, 2014).

The second section dealt with the constraining school cultures and practices of contemporary British schooling. This section developed some of the academic discourses exploring the current tensions that characterise schooling in the UK. The works explored articulate how schools' exposure to surveillance and the workings of the education market produce coercive environments for students and teachers (Courtney's, 2016; Perryman et al, 2018). The effects produced by these tensions are explored by Kennedy-Lewis et al (2016) and Wadham et al (2014), who were discussed as presenting some of the students' perspectives. The problems found by their research involved how young people's form a sense of identity by contesting the rules and codes of behaviour of the school.

The third section of this chapter reviewed literature which is raising questions about the disconnection in learning produced by archaic ways of separating learning into formal/informal learning distinctions (Quinn, 2018). With an emphasis on democratising educational processes the paper by Quinn was discussed as urging change that recognises how learning outside the school walls is meaningful for young people's lives. Similarly, Nowell (2014) was discussed as highlighting the importance of young people's learning in new media through the notion of media literacy. These arguments are also taken up by Unlusoy et al (2013) who argue that new media use and internet browsing by young people can improve schoolwork and help students develop media critical skills. Trying to dispel some of the myths associated with new media engagements the work is useful for thinking differently about young people's media engagements. Yet, my thesis interjects some of these findings by demonstrating how using social media and other internet technologies, young people are creating alternative content to that of school curricula.

The fourth section in this chapter discussed the work around youth media and gender identity work. Gender rules and norms were explored by Metcalfe and Llewellyn (2019) who argued that social media is used by young people to assert gender norms that are found at school. My thesis extends these findings by not only discussing how some young people might use social media to conform to gender norms at school, but also to resist them. The work by Renold (2010) was also discussed to problematise how studiousness and academic success have become feminised at school by aspects of hegemonic identity. As a result boys' struggle to form academic identities whilst still performing a coherent masculine identity. My thesis is building on these discussions to illustrate parts of my data analysis in Chapter 5. This chapter discussed how gender identity constructions by young people are affected by the neoliberalised context of schooling, particularly, underachieving girls (Baer, 2016). The emphasis that school places on individual merit and hard work leaves the students disempowered but still applying the same self-invention and meritocratic logic to their educationally disrupted futures.

The fifth section is engaging with some of the aspirations culture that young people encounter in schools and which are described by Best (2017) and Spohrer (2016) as part of policies to raise the aspirations of working-class communities through a re-engagement with meritocratic discourses in education. My thesis builds on these findings by stringing together the school space and the social media spaces as saturated by these messages. The work by Freeman (2014) is also discussed as theorising the transitions of young people from african-caribbean heritage who construct identities that seem suitable for neoliberalised employment markets. The dis-

cussions in my thesis are discussed as arguing in parallel with Freeman (2014) but adding connections between school's and imagined academic and employment futures that young people navigate offline and on social media. In this section the work by Mendick et al, (2015) is also used to contextualise how young people at school participate in aspirations culture around success and celebrity, but also concomitantly with problematic classed and gendered notions. My thesis builds on these discussions and contributes to understanding how young people play out discourses of success and celebrity culture in their own lives, not just at school but also on social media platforms.



## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction to Methodology Chapter**

This chapter outlines the research methodology and research methods used in this study. It shall explain how parts of the study were carried out and provide more detail of the practicalities in conducting the research. Firstly, this chapter shall explain some of the circumstances preceding the start of my study at Richmond Academy; discussing how I negotiated gaining access to the young people. Secondly, this study explains the ethnographic methods used and how the research was conducted both at Richmond Academy and on various social media to understand youth online sociality. Thirdly, this chapter shall discuss sampling, pen portraits of research participants, and the ethical issues and implications in carrying out this research in different settings, in a school, around the school and online places where young people are in a constant negotiation of their identities. Lastly, the approach to data analysis is discussed to explain how it was underpinned by Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptual framework.

### **3.2 Gaining Access to Young People and School Culture at Richmond Academy**

Gaining access allowed me to learn a great deal about Richmond Academy as a research site. However, it was not just about the practicalities of being allowed in, but also about the process of negotiation as reflective of the culture of the research site itself. In this section I reflect on two important aspects of gaining access, the practical journey and the 'wandering in and encountering' and experiencing the research site as a vibrant set of cultural and social relations (Matthiesen, 2018: 4). On a pragmatic level, gaining access to Richmond Academy involved a long process of interviews and checks. After being recommended by a friend who worked at the school, I was required to fill out and send in an application form, attend an interview with members of the senior leadership team and then plan and deliver a mock session for students. This was followed by routine police checks before I was eventually given a start date. The school was recruiting tutors like me, experienced teaching in higher education, in order to organise a Saturday school programme to run during term times and to raise the academic profile of students and the school. It seemed like the ideal opportunity to gain access to a space where my research could be carried out.

After four months I was working within the school premises and the practical part of gaining access was finalised. Yet, gaining access was more complex in my

study, as accessing the school and accessing the practices and the cultures of the school were two different processes. During my time at Richmond Academy I was slowly 'becoming familiar with "the field" location and its inhabitants, a natural and important part of ethnographic research' (Barley and Bath, 2013: 182). Reflecting on gaining access to the young people is important as 'these negotiations produce the field, and are as such a key part of what it is that researchers come to know, i.e. access is as much a part of research as more formalised research methods such as interviewing and participant observations' (Matthiesen, 2018: 2). I was planning to apply for a PhD programme and I knew, as a potential qualitative researcher, that I must immerse myself in the field in order to 'deepen my understanding of the research context and gain local knowledge that can be vital to the larger project' (Fujii, 2014: 526). After working at the school for several months, I began building relationships with both staff and students - another key feature of doing ethnographic research (Russell, 2013; Pitts and Miller-Day, 2007; Spradley 1979; Gobo, 2015).

As soon as I started to teach at Richmond Academy I began introducing myself to other staff and students, which later allowed me to 'establish a trusting relationship with participants and others members of the community under investigation' (Pitts and Miller-Day, 2007: 177). However, building trust was made more difficult because of the fact that the Saturday school project was met with some resistance by teachers who did not want to work more over the weekend, or who thought the project was expensive and snobbish. Some teachers saw me as an academic "parachuted into the school" so I had to work hard to 'build rapport' with teachers and school staff, a difficult task in a school environment where newcomers are usually 'met with suspicion' (Atkinson and Washiya, 2015: 242). I was aware that although I should feel like an 'insider' I was still regarded as an 'outsider' by most school staff and students. The insider/outsider distinction helped me reflect on how gaining access to Richmond Academy was more than just the practicalities associated with being physically present in the field, instead being an insider or an outsider was more 'contextual' and my positioning was a 'mixture of the two' (Paechter, 2013: 74). In some contexts I was an insider as a teacher at the school, yet, I was an outsider as I was not a full-time teacher, but instead worked on interventions and extracurricular initiatives planned by the school, which is partly an outsiders position.

It was in this early period of time working at the school, that I met teachers, classroom assistants and potential research participants, such as Skeeks, Brian and Mimi. Skeeks, for example, was working on a homework project and asked me for my opinion on what he had produced. I helped and supported his project. With Skeeks, like all of my respondents, I fostered a 'reciprocal balance of trust and respect' (Pitts

and Miller-Day, 2007: 180). My PhD was still in the early stages, but I had started to develop long-lasting relationships with my potential research participants. Some of the classroom assistants and teachers I met in this early stage would be instrumental for the development of the study. For example Gill, a classroom assistant, who was allocated to my classroom and with whom I interacted weekly, introduced me to other teachers during lunchtime, all of whom helped me understand the hierarchy and management structure of the school. Working at Richmond Academy enabled me to familiarise myself with the workings of the school and provided an opportunity to begin 'locating gatekeepers' who could allow 'initial access to a community' and broaden my access to the field (Barley and Bath, 2014: 187). This information was very important in gaining authorised access to research participants.

Gaining access to the young people also meant that I needed to learn about the context and who were those in a position of power, who policed the boundaries of outsiders wanting permission to do research. The teachers as gatekeepers helped me figure out the 'context' at Richmond Academy, not just to be familiar with staff in positions of authority, but to understand the various alliances and dynamics of power at the school. I was already familiar with the school channels and members of staff but gatekeepers (head's of subject areas in particular) gave me an insight into the current context of the school. I therefore had to seek permission, step by step, with key senior management staff in order to carry out my study in the school. Sometimes this meant that I had short meetings with some members of the management team to explain the importance of the study, other times it meant a quick informal chat in school corridors, a 'place where intimate communications' in schools often takes place (Hurdley and Dicks, 2011: 277). This gradual permission resulted in the opportunity to run an introductory workshop where students could drop in and listen to what my research plan was and the topic of research. Students could volunteer to participate in the study on that day or other subsequent weeks, if their parents supported their participation. For ethical reasons it was important to "emphasise the voluntary nature" (Lambert, 2019: 3) of taking part in my research (See also section 3.3 Ethical Issues).

Having gained access to the school and having developed relationships with students, teachers and other staff, allowed me to see the everyday tickings of the school, student interactions, teacher influences, parental involvement and the overall impact of school cultures on student behaviour and activity. I was gradually discerning Richmond Academy's context with an enriched perspective from my interactions with gatekeepers. As Spradley explains that an ethnographic approach involves 'more than studying people...learning from people' (2016: 3), so I acquired an active multilevelled understanding of the school context, the tensions between management and staff, the

attainment pressures on the school, the handwork and frustrations of teachers and students. From the very beginning I was immersed in the field, even before I made the decision to start the research in earnest.

Throughout this time I kept a research diary recording school observations, usually typing-up what I saw, heard or experienced on my smartphone, but for ethical reasons I did not record conversations (see section 3.3 Ethical Issues, below). By doing so I learned about how the online world seeped into everyday school life. For example, when a mother brought her son into school to discuss online bullying; the school's response was primarily advising the student to disconnect from the platform where it was happening and recruiting parents to follow this through at home. An action to which the student turned to his mother in disbelief and said, 'allow it, allow it, mum I can fix this, such an overreaction!'. So, by being there at the school and observing these interactions I was able to have an 'appreciation' (Fielding, 2006: 277) of not only, the school and parents respective positions, but more importantly for my research, the students' experience of the situation.

### **3.3 Sampling Method**

#### *3.3.1 Criteria Sampling*

This study began by using a sampling method which can be broadly understood as criteria sampling (Liamputtong, 2013). This involved laying out a specific criteria for finding particular research participants pertinent to my research. The first criteria was that my sample had to be young people, working at the school helped me gain access to my sample. Second, they must be online users, also keen at least, to talk about their online world. Third, for ethical reasons (See 3.8 above) I could only have participants whose parents gave permission. Fourth, I needed young people who were approachable, accessible, and willing to give up some time for my research.

From this angle, my sampling technique could also be considered as 'convenience sampling' (Cohen et al., 2017) as it was convenient to interview young people who I had access to via the school where I was working. Most importantly, given that part of my interest was on identity and my hypothesis that young people were wielding forms of power through using online platforms, I was interested in cases (research participants) in which this power was evident. My sampling method was useful in identifying suitable candidates for my study but also limited the scope for finding some potential participants. For example, a 13-year old boy called Jermaine was interested in

taking part in my research, but after talking to him for a short time, I realised he, unusually, spent little time using online platforms. Another potential participant called Stacey, was happy to be interviewed, but she appeared guarded over discussing her online use of Facebook. One other student called Ding was very keen to participate, but his parents declined for him to take part. Whilst I did not want to implement a sampling process which forced certain 'voices' to be 'silenced' (Kristensen and Ravn, 2015: 105), it seemed that, in light of ethical reasons, some participants were more suitable and fitted my criteria better than others. Using the sampling criteria set out, I conducted an after school workshop, open to students' from the school, from year 7, through to year 12. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity to identify students who fitted my sampling criteria. The final list of research participants are set out below in my 'Pen Portraits' section (3.4).

### *3.3.2 Extreme Cases: A Retrospective Analysis of my Sampling Method*

Reflecting on my sampling approach post-research, made me realise that my method of criteria for selecting participants could be considered as 'extreme case' or 'deviant case' sampling (see both Liamputtong, 2013 and Neuman, 2014). Without realising it at the time, I was selecting students from Richmond Academy who were interesting to me and my research, quite untypical of the rest of their peers. For example, I chose black students (like Zee) who excelled in academic subjects which was not common at the school. I also picked out students who excelled at writing, who, rather strangely at Richmond Academy, had aspired to be authors (like Danielle). I also selected other ambitious students who were future feminists (like Ashley) who aspired to have an impact on the unequal treatment she perceived girls experienced at school.

Richmond Academy was a working class school in a relatively deprived part of South London, with few things in the surrounding areas, so these students, who were excelling in many ways within and outside of school, were *deviant cases* in many ways. Angela Brown's (1989) study, *When Battered Women Kill*, is a classic example of extreme case sampling, since she chose cases of domestic violence where the victims murdered their abusers. On reflection, my research participants were extreme cases of young people who did quite unique and extraordinary activities (becoming feminist campaigners and black activists, artists and popular online authors), if taken into account the environment in which they were inhabiting. Unlike sampling methods in quantitative research, the aim of my sampling approach was not to find research participants that were representative of the 'wider population'. Instead, I chose research participants who represented the aims and research questions laid out in this

study. An introduction to these extraordinary research participants can be seen in the next section.

### **3.4 Pen Portraits of Research Participants**

The first pen portrait is that of Danielle (pseudonym used). She was a fourteen year-old, year nine student at Richmond Academy who dropped into my workshop and later volunteered to participate in the research study. Danielle attended some of the Saturday school classes and this is how I met Danielle. Danielle's parents were very receptive to my research and thought Danielle would enjoy to participate in the research since she is a very avid user of various social media. Because of their support Danielle returned all consent forms very early on in the research and was one of the earlier participants to be interviewed. Danielle lives with both of her parents who are biology teachers; her father teaches A-Level and her mother teaches in further education. Danielle was keen to talk to me about a number of online platforms. One of the main issues Danielle raised was her use of Tumblr as a social space to discuss issues of gender equality and her own construction of sexuality with others. I chose Danielle in order to understand the power she wields through Tumblr in seeking affirmation and acceptance of her sexuality.

The second research participant was Skeeks (pseudonym used). He was seventeen years old (in year twelve at Richmond Academy) and was available to be interviewed after attending A-Level revision sessions. Skeeks lived with his mother and sister and seldom saw his father after his parents separated. Skeeks was keen to talk to me about a number of social media spaces. One of the main issues Skeeks raised was his use of Facebook and Instagram as a way of showcasing his artwork and photography. I chose Skeeks in order to understand the power he draws from various social media to generate a sense of identity and to challenge existing stereotypes of masculinity.

The third research participant I chose was Ashley (pseudonym used). Ashley was fourteen years old and a student in year nine at Richmond Academy. Ashley's parents who are from India and Pakistan were very keen on her participating since she is a very enthusiastic blogger and had been for the last 4 years. Ashley is also diagnosed with autism and her parents wanted for her to be interviewed at home, at the start of the summer holidays. Ashley wanted to talk to me about her writing and blogging activities online and her Facebook and Tumblr use. Particularly important to Ashley were issues around feminism as she both regarded herself a feminist but was also very critical of it. Ashley is an extremely gifted individual, she is in top set classes for all her subjects and teachers at the school expect her to achieve and attain very

highly academically. Ashley is an avid user of Tumblr where she curates a sense of self through showing her intellectual capacity to critique social issues such as gender inequality.

The fourth research participant I approached was Taylor. Taylor, a seventeen year-old in year twelve at Richmond Academy was very passionate about drama and arts. Taylor was available to be interviewed after her A-level revision sessions at school. Taylor was keen to discuss her use of Facebook as a way of promoting her artistic work. Taylor lived with her parents and is an only child. Taylor is very aware of the pressures the school was under and how the subject she loves is relegated and undermined in the school. Taylor was keen to discuss how Facebook and Tumblr is at the centre of her current and future life projects.

My fifth research participant is Brian. I chose Brian because he is an avid user of Twitter. Brian was eighteen years old and in year thirteen at Richmond Academy. Brian was available to be interviewed at any time at the school and we agreed to meet after his A-level sessions. Brian is originally from Nigeria but was born in Germany and lived in Belgium for most of his childhood. Brian lives with his mother, brother and sister, who is a single mother and works as a nurse. His father lives in Nigeria and is a Law graduate, so as Brian puts it, "it's been my mum, brother and sister and me who have been venturing around Europe". Brian came to the UK at the age of ten and has excelled academically. Brian wanted to talk to me about Twitter because he finds it both interesting and strategic for his plans for the future. Brian's interviews provided an understanding of how twitter facilitated planes of power through which he could appropriate his future life by sharing his ambitions and desires to become a banker, attain material goods, and possess material things.

The sixth research participant I chose is Zee; Zee is a seventeen year-old from Nigeria. Zee was available to be interviewed at the school and we met after one of his A-level sessions. He came to the UK when he was very small with his parents and older sister. Zee's parents separated a long time ago, but he is in regular contact with his father, whom he sees almost every weekend. Zee is a very gifted student who studies really hard because as he explains, "I am surrounded by people who have done nothing with their lives". Zee is planning to go to university but wants to go to a first-class university. Zee is a regular user of Twitter and Facebook and he is very attached to this platform because of the activism he has initiated and developed over the years both inside and outside the school. Zee's interviews allowed me to understand the planes of power through which Facebook could connect him to ongoing issues throughout his life, from moving home (to attend university), to maintaining friendships in his hometown.

The seventh research participant I chose for my study is Mimi (pseudonym used). Mimi, an eighteen year old doing A-levels at Richmond Academy was very keen to discuss her use of Twitter. Mimi was available to be interviewed after her A-level sessions at Richmond Academy. Mimi is an only child and lives with her parents. Mimi is doing A-levels to go to university but she wants to take a gap year to work and decide what she really wants to do. Mimi says that she wants to put university on hold to be sure she is choosing something that is going to make her money. She was very keen to talk to me about her Twitter because she feels it really matches her personality and love of celebrities. Interviews with Mimi allowed me to understand how twitter facilitated the planes of power to achieve material goods, perfect her self-image and connect to celebrity culture.

The eighth participant I chose was Dan, who is 16 years old and in year 11 at Richmond Academy. Dan was one of the few young people who was available from year 11 and he was interviewed at the school. Dan lives with both his parents and has a sister who is much older than him and does not live with him, so he feels like an only child at home. Dan was keen to talk to me about his Facebook use, or lack of use, and how his Facebook is as a result of everybody else's work. Interviews with Dan allowed me to understand the planes of power through which Facebook could exhibit his down to earth, 'one of the boys' attitude to everyday life and maintain a sense of identity which connects to masculine culture.

The ninth research participant I chose was Elizabeth. Elizabeth was eighteen years old and in year thirteen at Richmond Academy. Elizabeth was available to participate in the research and I was able to interview her after her A-level sessions. Elizabeth lives with her sister and parents and is not planning to go to university but is considering to develop her business further. Elizabeth expressed her frustration with schooling and although she had good predicted grades, she felt disconnected from academic study. She was very keen to talk to me about her use of Facebook. The interviews with Elizabeth enabled me to understand the planes of power through which Facebook can become a vehicle for self-creation as a young entrepreneur.

### **3.5 Observations of the School Environment**

As part of my study I engaged in participant observations at the school. Participant observations are defined as 'field observations involving a researcher's active participation in the research setting' (Tope et al, 2005: 473). Therefore, during my time at Richmond Academy I was in regular contact with teachers and the teaching environ-



ment, and over time I felt more and more 'at home' at Richmond Academy. My participation at Richmond Academy allowed me to gain a better understanding of school culture both during weekdays and as part of the Saturday school. I decided to use this method as it was a very suitable way to immerse myself and participate in the school environment which is a salient feature in the lives of young people, giving me an understanding of the school cultures.

Although I started teaching as part of the Saturday school I also had the opportunity to cover in the humanities subjects and also supported other projects that took place during the week. In carrying out participant observations I was not lurking in the background, but rather trying to embed myself in the context of Richmond Academy, Paechter (2012: 74) explains that whilst 'lurking allows a researcher to follow events while working out a strategy, avoiding interaction at all may lead one to miss things, and that participation also allows the checking of interpretations'. Being at Richmond Academy and conducting participants observations created opportunities for not just observing but also listening to key people in the school, such as, teachers, classroom assistants, cover teachers, pastoral staff, canteen staff and students. This method has significant potential in helping the researcher develop detailed description, but also it is 'not only what is described that matters, but also who generates the description, in what terms, within what context and for what purposes' (Punch and Oancea, 2014: 23).

One of the challenges I found whilst deciding on this method was that as participant observers in a formal manner requires a more systematic and organised approach to what could be a very fluid process. Yet, I wanted to overcome this challenge since I could see the potential of participant observations to produce contextual understanding, and also after having gone through a long process of gaining access to Richmond Academy. As a result of this process note-taking to record daily observations was favourable to produce meaningful data that could add value to the research and the experience I already had at Richmond Academy.

Working at the school gave me access to the 'goings on' (McCurdy and Uldam, 2014: 43) and understanding of the school culture of Richmond Academy, but it also gave me the opportunity to take key fieldnotes which I used for analysis and helped me develop the three themes of this thesis. For ethical and practical reasons it was better not to use any devices for directly recording my observations (Ary et al, 2019: 84), as well as the fact that attempting to seek permission to physically record every single person in my vicinity would have killed my research stone dead (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). But I did use my smartphone to take notes of what I saw, either by using a 'notes' application on my phone, or simply by emailing myself the key things I observed each day. My fieldnotes described the physical environment

of the school, the size of the classes, the rotation of teachers and school staff, from teachers who were asked to cover subjects outside of their expertise to teachers who left the school, as well as newcomers. But they also took note of things which were said, such as phrases and words used to describe students, to describe tasks to be carried out, and everyday school talk. My fieldnotes also provided a way to keep a record of different areas I taught in the school, recording how I felt as a teacher, how other teachers made me feel, how students made me feel and how everyday school occurrences impacted on me:

“Today the school feels a little tense, with staff in their classrooms, sat at their computers intensely looking at their screens. The usual morning chat and offers of a cup of coffee or tea are not heard in classrooms and corridors. On the contrary there is very little talk amongst teachers and some of the rooms have closed doors, something that does not happen very often as most staff have their doors open before students start drifting in. Teachers are busy and the mood is palpably tense. When there is talk it is brief and revolving around one thing, data predictions for students at A-level. They have to be in by Monday, many teachers have decided to come on a Saturday to get this done, with many saying - “I just don’t have the quiet time to do this during the week”, “the week is too full on to do this properly”- Similarly. other teachers express their frustration at this data exercise - “I’m not good at this at all and who wants to be wrong?”, “I hate providing something tentative that doesn’t translate into real life”, “This is too important for them [students] and we barely get enough time to do it”. The school calls them “guesstimates” and they are important for UCAS applications and university choices made by students. I did not anticipate the stress that it produces for teachers. Teachers don’t want to be burdened with the responsibility to predict grades that are too high and cause disappointment, or too low and be wrong about their students. This makes me feel so glad I don’t have this pressure”.

The fieldnotes are then what I saw and also my reflections on those experiences at the time. Matthiesen points out how fieldnotes can be ‘layered accounts conveying the messy complexities, contradictions, uncertainties, as well as fleeting moments of clarity that constitute the practice of doing research, as well as the researcher’s movement in the understanding of the field’ (2018: 4). Whilst I was developing a sensitivity to the field throughout my time at Richmond Academy and prior to disclosing my intent to collect data at the school, I was not systematically recording my experiences. Yet, I was developing what Crang and Cook (1995: 5) call ‘depth’ in understanding a ‘localised culture’ which broadens the meanings to be attached to data.

After a year at Richmond Academy I decided to approach the management team about my proposed research. It took about six months to go through all the for-

malities with all key members of staff and to send out as well as gather consent forms, by the time this was finished I had disclosed my intentions to conduct research at the school as part of my doctoral study to other teachers and classroom staff. As a result of this I organised observations of selected classes in Art, English, PSHE and Drama amongst others, keeping a record of my participant observations through fieldnotes. With participant observations there are ongoing debates about 'overt/covert' participant observations; my disclosure to staff that I was going to be collecting data for my doctoral thesis makes my position that of an overt participant observer (McCurdy and Uldam, 2014: 42). After staff learnt that I could conduct research at the school some became a little apprehensive of my presence in their classrooms and some were very open, even enthusiastically inviting me to some of their lessons.

### **3.6 Interviewing Young People**

This study employed a series of interviews to understand my research participants' use of new technologies and social media in everyday life. The ethnographic interviewing style I used was part and parcel of my time at the school, where I spent over two years getting to know the participants, the school community and the cultures of the setting. The interviewing process therefore began a long time before I conducted any of the interviews, as I had to familiarise myself with the school (and those I encountered there) as well as many of the young people who would eventually participate in my study. My interviews were another way of extending my access in the field (Gobo, 2015), building more rapport with my young research participants (Silverman, 2012; Lambert, 2019), and gathering rich and detailed data from my participants' (Forsey, 2010). Using interviews enabled me to move my research from an offline observatory ethnographic phase to a more auditory phase, where I could engage research participants in cultural dialogue giving them an opportunity to comment on their online and offline lives.

The ethnographic interviews and their flowing nature, gave my research participants an opportunity to talk me through and describe in detail their online engagements on social media. Often participants would pause and show me things posted or created on particular social media from their mobile phones. I wanted to strike the right balance between the importance of observing and listening within ethnographic methodologies. These arguments have been discussed by Forsey (2010), who points to how the data presented in ethnography (and ethnographic research) reflects not just what is seen but also, and often more importantly, what is heard. Ethnographic research has traditionally been primarily associated with participant observations, but I am also emphasising that listening in ethnographies 'opens up the possibility of placing engaged listening on a similar footing to participant observations in our conceptu-

alization of ethnographic practices' (Forsey 2010: 560-61). With the time I spent at the school I had already gathered numerous understandings and knew my way in with staff, students and parents. Yet, interviewing allowed me to pursue questions and listen to the narratives of my participants online, and to be led by their particular experiences.

For this study nine research participants were selected between the ages of 14 to 18 and interviewed (See Appendix E for visual table of my research participants). These participants were all current students of Richmond Academy and had been selected following a strict sampling criteria (see section 3.4). I set up the interviews by approaching each of my research participants, and talking through what my research involved, following the ethical guidelines I had set out for my study (see section 3.3). I talked through the consent letter (see appendix B) and let each of my respondents read it. This itself was straightforward, but I was mindful that my respondents were all young people, and may have misunderstood what the research involved. As a consequence, I asked for my research participants to take the letter home, and gave sufficient time for the parents of my participants to get back to me. The older research participants took the letters away and brought them back signed within a couple of days but some of the younger participants took longer to bring the letter back. For example, one of my research participants, Skeeks, who was 18 at the time, returned the consent letter in a couple of days and we agreed an interview after one of his A-Level art classes. With this participant, the interview process ran smoothly, as a quiet classroom was used to conduct and record the interview. With other research participants however, parents agreed for the interviews to be conducted at home. This was partly because some of these interviews had been conducted during the summer holidays (the school was not always open) but also because it was, from the parents perspective, a safe environment for the students to be interviewed (see section 3.3 on ethics). Interviewing my research participants at home, also gave me the advantage of being able to see them in a home context, a place they were familiar with and comfortable being interviewed (Wiederhold, 2014). Because of the different places and contexts in which the interviews were conducted, the length of time of my interviews varied, lasting anywhere between one hour and two hours. These interviews employed in my study provided detailed and in depth research data (Mishler, 1991; Lambert, 2019) allowing research participants to 'elaborate' (Kvale, 2007) on the experiences of social media. Being at the home of my research participants gave me both an 'insider' and 'outsider' set of positions with which to make sense of my research participants worlds. I was inside the school and home (and therefore inside the social world) of my research participants. But I was also an outsider - someone who could acquire 'anthropological strangeness' (Silverman, 2011) and bring a sense of objectivity (and quality of newness) to my research. I was however careful

not to follow myths of 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. Insider myths render 'outsiders inherently incapable of appreciating the true character of a group's life' whilst 'outsider myths assert that only researchers who possess the necessary objectivity and emotional distance from the field are able to conduct valid research on a given group' (Mannay, 2010: 91, cited in Wiederhold, 2014: 602). Although these 'insider/outsider myths' often dichotomize researcher positionality, 'the language of insider and outsider status is methodologically useful' (Wiederhold, 2014: 602), and helps to explain my orientation to the field, research participants, and others (such as parents and teachers) as well as helping me to reflect on the way in which I was attuned to the challenges I faced in gaining access, building trust and obtaining a sense of familiarity at Richmond Academy.

Over the course of my interviews I had developed good relationships with each of my research participants and was gathering lengthy data which is paramount for good ethnographic research (Fetterman, 2010). But I also implemented a number of Spradley (2016) style questions which would guarantee my respondents would provide detailed information about their online and offline experiences. Such questions included 'mini tour' and 'grand tour' questions (Spradley, 2016) which would result in my research participants talking through (providing a tour) of their lives and experiences. Questions like: 'Can you talk me through your using of Facebook' were developed from my reading of Spradley's (2016) work. Spradley also argues that there is an innate disparity between a question asked and a question answered. Namely, 'the interviewer asks a question, someone else responds with answers. This separation often means that questions and answers come from two different cultural meaning systems' (ibid: 83). This separation in the meaning-making process of interviewing means that the interviewer frames her question drawing on a particular already biased cultural system, this is problematic, and this is where I see the benefit of ethnographic and descriptive questioning. Accordingly, I pursued questions which allowed the research participant formulate both questions and answers as it is the case with ethnographic interviewing, where 'both questions and answers must be discovered from informants' (Spradley 1979: 84). Some of these questions recognised the role the research participant had in teaching the interviewer. For instance:

I hardly use the social media you use, so I do not know what it is like to use it in the ways you do. Could you take me through what you do online and what it feels like to use these different types of social media?

This structuring of questions allowed my research participants to talk and narrate their story online more freely, describing their cultural scene, and providing me with an empathetic understanding of how the research participant experienced social media. There is an inherent belief that suggests that 'expanding the length of the question tends to expand the length of the response' but also the respondent has

more time to absorb the question and the process says 'tell me as much as you can, in great detail' (Spradley 1979: 86). This was the underlying approach to the questions in my ethnographic interviews. When it came to their online engagements, this approach also gave them the opportunity to explain and elaborate to me, recognising young people as 'experts in their own worlds' (Tickle, 2017: 66). This approach also allowed me to use the rapport that I had already built at that point with my respondents. I favour this approach to ethnographic interviewing as it minimises strong biases in how questions are phrased.

### **3.7 Online Observations of Research Participants' Social Media**

As part of this study I conducted online observations of my research participants' social media online spaces. I decided to use this as a method since having observed and understood my research participants' offline lives and interactions, and having interviewed them on their online engagements, I wanted to continue my understanding into how they were using online spaces to generate various identity becomings. From the beginning of my research I wanted to avoid a separation between the offline and online lives of my participants, and wanted to have access to different aspects of their lives, employing ethnographic methods to understand them 'across virtual and physical spaces' (Tummons et al, 2014: 107). My methods of online observations are influenced by approaches to what has been called 'online' or 'virtual ethnography' (Hine, 2000); 'digital ethnography' (Pink et al., 2015) and 'ethnography for the internet', in which the 'online and offline are interwoven in everyday experience' (Hine, 2015: 6). As Hine (2015) explains, ethnographic methods can be used to bridge the realms of the offline and online. Hine, through virtual ethnography, rejects the idea that the virtual, which comprises discourses and practices across digital platforms, is experienced as distinctively different from real life (2000: 8). As Hine problematises this off-online separation, I also want to trouble the ways in which we might treat online and offline cultures as incompatible. The online observations allowed me to look into my research participants accounts, as talked through in their interviews, to form a continuum of experience, which connects everyday life, school cultures and youth practices as embedded in their online engagements. Far from being disconnected, my online observations uncovered how social media spaces are not detached cyberspaces, in fact, they were closely intertwined with their everyday lives. In the case of my participants the technologies and platforms were constantly deployed and used in ways that boosted and empowered their subjectivities, social bonds and other activities.

One of the fundamental reasons why I adopted an online approach was to understand and appreciate the personal circumstances in which participants lived their lives and coordinated their online activities as part of their lives. This appreciation

could be better grasped by observing what they do, rather than merely listening to what they say they do. For example, I understood Mimi's fascination for celebrity culture much better by observing the online pictures of famous people, like the popstar Rhianna and the reality TV star Kim Kardashian, and seeing the sorts of headlines and comments that Mimi posted on Twitter. Danielle spoke substantially about online publishing in our face-to-face interviews, but I only really understood the extent of her publishing qualities and range of online published materials by viewing Wattpad for myself. Elizabeth on the other hand, had a range of different online social spaces on Facebook and Twitter, which she used to convey different outlooks and personas showing her different looks showcasing her talent for make up and body paint. I would never have known about these different personas had I not been able to observe her different material interactions online.

Another advantage of using online observations in this study was the access to visual images, posts, and my presence online that enabled me to view materials and posts as they were uploaded. Rather than having a retrospective understanding of the posts (after they had been uploaded, for example), I was witnessing the posts on screen at the very time in which they were being uploaded. Brian, for example, posted online material about expensive watches and posted what he had thought about them and how they linked to his ideas of success, but he had not mentioned these posts in my interviews with him, probably because he thought it unimportant for my research. From this perspective, my online observations not only provided me with large amounts of rich data which I could make sense of in my analysis, but also provided me with information that my participants had forgotten to mention (or considered unimportant). It also provided me with an understanding of online activity as it happened - rich 'first hand' data (Bell, 2014: 281), that I was viewing and making sense of, rather than relying on another's interpretation of it.

Online observations as a method also allowed me to 'follow the natives' and 'follow the medium' to learn from my research participants' online mediations on social media (Caliandro, 2017: 9). Being online with my research participants, recognised the many characteristics of particular platforms and how they co-opted platform-specific digital forms of action, such as hashtags and re-bloggings. For example, taking the example of Twitter's hashtags, hashtags are 'digital devices for categorising and collating tweets related to a specific topic' (Caliandro, 2017: 9). My research participants used hashtags as digital devices for taking part in conversations and threads that were of their interest, but which also placed them within desired groups and reflected their desired subjectivities. So, online observations gave me a way in to analyse and frame for understanding the meaning of digital formations, like hashtags, for my research participants.

The period of online observations took place over three months, and all my research participants whom I had interviewed, agreed to take part in this online phase. I did not have any of the research participants interviewed drop out from the study throughout the online observation phase in which I had access to online content. The online observations were conducted twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays. These two days were convenient for my schedule, particularly Wednesdays and Sundays allowed me to catch up on events from over the weekend. The online phase proved very important as my research participants were insiders in a culture which I wanted to explore, and which I had much to learn about. Therefore, I observed the young people in their 'community habitus' (Tickle, 2017: 68), both offline and online. Research participants were asked to share screenshots of their online social media posts with me, if they wanted to do that, and I also took screenshots of their social media posts during the online observation phase. The screenshots took by the researcher were sent to research participants to ensure they agreed for them to be used in the study.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

Throughout the study I was mindful of ethical considerations and issues, particularly doing research with young people and understanding their very personal lives on and offline. I did however, take a number of precautionary steps (to be elaborated later in this section) to ensure that the research I was doing was considered legitimate and acceptable. As well as these precautionary steps I conducted myself and my research in a way which was professional and I managed to deal with several ethical issues as they arose in the course of my research. From this perspective my research followed a set of guidelines, which are informed by BERA's ethics and guidance for research (2017), but was also what some would consider as situational ethics.

The first step I took was to ensure I had consent from the organisation and those within or connected to the organisation, Richmond Academy. I wrote a formal email to the Headteacher which prompted a follow up meeting to discuss in detail my research and any impact this would have on the school and those within the school. My presence in the school would involve coming into contact with a large number of staff, students and parents but I felt it unnecessary to have to obtain consent from every single person whom, I would see or communicate with, 'in a large organisation engaged in constant interaction with a considerable number of clients it is physically impossible to seek consent from everyone and seeking it will kill many a research project stone dead' (Punch 1986: 36 in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 266).

My second step was to ensure my research participants felt comfortable and did not feel coerced into taking part. All of my research participants were approached



for their openness, availability, and keenness to get involved (see sampling section 3.5). I recognised that there is a fine line between asking, persuading and coercing participants to take part (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Because my research participants were young people, I needed to get consent by proxy and send letters home from the school. However, I took the time to explain the research to each of my respondents because of the extended amount of time I spent at the school. I also emphasised to research participants that they could stop their participation in the research at any point. I also realised that I yield a position of power as a teacher and that this could influence the participants' keenness to participate.

A third step was to ensure I did not deceive anyone at, or connected to Richmond Academy. As a precaution I wrote letters to the Heads of Department as well as speaking with the Form Tutors of my research participants. I did not however, tell all those I came into contact with in the field about my research in great depth, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2019: 210) point out 'ethnographers rarely tell all the people they are studying everything about the research'. Instead, I explained that I was conducting research exploring young people's lives in school and online.

My fourth step was to ensure I did not cause any harm to myself and my research participants. One thing I was mindful of was the ethical problems associated with 'researching down' (Bergman Blix and Wettergren, 2015: 689). This refers to the forms of structure inequality and power when sociologists or qualitative researchers interview people more vulnerable, for example, as a teacher at Richmond Academy I researched students. Bergman Blix and Wettergren (2015: 690) argue that in cases of researching down, researcher/s can sometimes invoke strong emotions of 'guilt, shame, sympathy/pity, and compassion stress'. This has resonance with my interviews in which I felt 'compassion stress' (Bergman Blix and Wettergren 2015: 690) for some of my research participants. For example, Mimi's desire to experience celebrity culture and possess material goods was at times disheartening, causing me to worry about her future and wellbeing.

My fifth step was to ensure that my research participants found themselves in situations which allowed them to spare some time to participate in my research. I was sensitive to who I chose, as I was aware that students are under different sorts of pressures, and working towards deadlines and qualifications. As Hammersley and Atkinson say, being researched can 'create anxiety or worsen it, and where people are already in stressful situations research can be judged to be unethical on these grounds alone' (2019: 213).

My sixth precautionary step was to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. I addressed anonymity in a number of ways. Firstly, this involved using pseudonyms for the school, for my research participants (who all chose their own pseudonyms) and others whom I came into contact with, in the course of my research. Secondly, I need-

ed to ensure that posts and the personal lives of the young people with whom I engaged with about their personal online and offline worlds were kept private, by keeping all notes and collected data in devices which were password secured. Thirdly, the publishing of online posts and online material was discussed with research participants and they gave permission in their consent forms, as well as at the end of the online observation phase when they consented to selected posts being published. Consequently, complying with measures explained in the consent forms, all the posts presented in this study have been anonymised, with all identifying marks, such as usernames or personal hashtags removed to protect the identity of research participants. Where posts are showing participants' full or partial faces, they consented to their faces being shown, although they could have opted for their faces to be blurred. The posts which have blurred faces correspond with research participants' friends who were not approached to give consent to the study.

Ethical issues can arise from before the research is carried out until long after it has been produced (Gray, 2014). And so the ethical issues throughout my research have been ongoing. During the research I also had to deal with issues in particular situations which I could not plan for in advance, such as, being asked by parents to come into their homes to interview some of my research participants. I did not anticipate this in my research plan, yet, from the parents' perspective, they preferred for their children to be interviewed after the school broke up. I felt this shifted researcher positionality (Wiederhold, 2014), because my research participant became more at ease, and my status shifted from teacher at the school to researcher in the home. Losing some of my teacher status was not necessarily disadvantageous, as the research participants felt more relaxed and willing to explain, as they were in a very familiar space. Some have referred to this as 'mobile interviewing methods' - an innovative approach to 'intentionally account for participants' positioning in space and place' (Wiederhold, 2014: 608).

As pointed out in the previous section, gaining access involved being engaged with the staff, students and parents of the school in a genuine and mutually respecting way (See section 3.3). But gaining access to students within the school via senior management was merely formal permission to carry out my investigation. I also had to win over the trust of students with whom I had to work (including all those who did and did not take part in the study itself).

### 3.8.1 Online Ethics

Having outlined the ethical approach taken for face to face interactions; I shall now discuss ethics in relation to the online research used to make sense of the experiences of my research participants. As a starting point, my ethical approach drew on BERA guidelines, but is also what Whiteman (2012) describes as a situated approach to ethical decision-making. This approach which is undertaken across studies researching the Internet from many angles, involves for the researcher to develop an ethical position which is informed by the 'local details of their research, the nature of the observed setting...and the activities and perspectives of those they research' (Whiteman, 2012: 9). These arguments around ethics have made me reflect and adapt sensitively to the specificity of the content I wanted to access and observe, young people's social media performativities, co-opting of content and performativities. In what follows I will be discussing the situated ethical decision-making which addressed the ethical issues in my online observation phase. I drew upon the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) as well as the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines (BERA). Drawing on the AoIR (2012) the ethical judgement of this study was based on a number of facets, including an examination of the particular aims, objectives and circumstances of my study, my research questions, the data involved, the type of analysis that will be used and the way the results will be reported (AoIR, 2012). The British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines informed me of the consequences for carrying out online research (BERA, 2011) explains that harm, for example, can easily occur through such activity as requesting consent, or through the process of asking for consent. In an online context this can be applicable to Web forum members and the researcher. For example, sending participants requests or befriending online members may be considered intrusive, and therefore unethical. As a precaution, my online observation phase never required 'friend requests' (Facebook), or 'follows' (Twitter), or any other type of online interaction, that had not been fully discussed with my research participants. With each research participant I had requested permission offline, at different points, when explaining the research for the first time, and at the point of conducting interviews. Kozinets (2006) writes extensively on online research ethics and argues that researchers should fully disclose their presence and affiliations and intentions to online community members during any research. Kozinets also contends that researchers should ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. However, my research did not involve communicating with online community members, or writing on blogs and other online platforms. The purpose of my online research (and my overall research aims and objectives) did not require me, to write, for example, on online platforms like Facebook or Twitter. I ensured that I was observing but not participating by remaining quiet online. I did request all of my research participants to post a simple

notice on their various social media, to inform friends that their profiles were being observed as part of their involvement in research. As an 'ethical move' recognising the technologies being used for research I asked my participants to post this since I also needed to address the issue of audience online; particularly taking into consideration that social media is a network (Whiteman, 2012: 37). Although I was able to see the happenings online and my research participants were aware of my presence I was not involved in producing content online with them (posts, blogs, photos). Some scholars claim that Kozinets' (2006) ethical stipulations are too restrictive (see Sugiura et al, 2016; Langer and Beckman, 2005). Langer and Beckman (2005) suggest that 'such ethical guidelines make sense in private online communities, but are far too rigorous to be applied to all online communities' (Sugiura, 2016: 5) and argues that because 'online data is already public', 'its collection for research purposes is not a delicate ethical matter' (Rogers, 2019).

Whilst I accept that 'remaining quiet' online would prevent the chances of breaking ethical codes of conduct (outlined in BERA, for example), I must acknowledge that even observing online can impact on my research participants lives. Skeeks, for example, posted more selfies on Instagram during the period in which I was observing. Other online members commented on his pictures (usually indicating they 'liked' the picture). Therefore, my presence was having an influence, even though this was a limited one.

One of the difficulties that emerged during my online fieldwork was to understand the public/private distinctions of the online worlds I was researching. For example, the online observations of Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter and Instagram all involved the contributions of my research participants and others, who were part of their networks. The profile pages, mini-blogs, Twitter feeds and Instagram feeds were all saturated by information which was not all generated by my research participants. However, at first I did not see my observation of the material as breaking any ethical guidelines since this is already public and can be accessed fairly easily on the internet. Ethics and the construction of the public and the private is therefore 'to be understood to be relationally established rather than naturally defined, each is embedded in the local details of specific locations/activities as well as being informed by general principles, and each is dynamic and subject to change'. Just as there is no fixed 'right' and 'wrong' in research, there is no self-evident public or private' (Whiteman, 2012: 48). My study is therefore also dealing with these distinctions in online material environments, such as, social networking sites. There are markers which socially and culturally embed how spaces are legitimately defined as 'public' or 'private', and this study has explored some of these online spaces to illuminate themes that constitute youth online sociality and new affordances in social networking sites.

In approaching the task of defining the private or public nature of online material in my study, I began by reflecting on some critical questions, who goes there? How is access gained? How much of it is 'public'? Whiteman (2012: 57) suggests that internet researchers' responses to these challenges 'have involved rejection of general principles and steps towards more complex relational definitions of the status of online sites/material'. Ethically as a researcher I felt that these debates needed 'localising', in accordance with the technologies explored and the content or social phenomena investigated. In this study I am understanding my participants' social media profiles as public in so far as by searching for someone for example on Facebook, will bring up their profile pages with information and other friends' contributions to the page. But also as private since to access the comments, posts, and online sharing activity overall a password is needed. I requested access to their networks, to investigate and observe their online (co)creation and co-opting of content, and performances around their sociality. Therefore, I discussed and sought informed consent from my research participants to view their 'private' networks and communities on various social media of their choice. Whilst research participants consented to their social media profiles to be observed and data to be collected from them, we also negotiated how they would be anonymised, taking into account participants' specific requirements (Whiteman, 2012). As a result, usernames, hashtags, and other tags were removed from online data.

I made other provisions to ensure that my research was legitimate and ethically sound. For instance, I conducted two workshops within the school to inform potential research participants of my study, this also involved ethical considerations. I also negotiated with the school some of these issues related to access and consent, and parents and carers were sent letters home explaining the different stages of research and the flexibility and non-coercive nature of the research. This means research participants could participate in one or all stages of the research, and then decide not to continue participating; also that participants could at any point request for parts of the data not to be used in the analysis. Two participants did drop out although they were initially very keen to participate, one because of issues with coursework pressures, and another because his parents declined to sign the forms to let him take part in the research. These are all ways in which I recognised the 'different degrees of publicness and privateness' that extrapolate from research involving the internet or in this case social media (Whiteman, 2012: 58). Research participants' consent was also sought in relation to the specific online data included in the study's data analysis. After the online observation phase research participants were approached with the collected posts belonging to their specific accounts and gave their consent for them to be used; with only one post excluded at the request of one research participant. Subsequently, my research participants were offered the opportunity to see my data analysis chapters. However, whilst this was offered, only two wanted to see the data analysis

and most participants did not have the time to see or read my thesis. I was also mindful of needing to strike the right balance and that pressing them to read it would itself be unethical. Consequently, ethics and issues of access and informed consent were being raised and addressed in relation to the technologies explored and used, the context of the school and their procedures and my own commitment to exploring on-line engagements by young people.

### **3.9 Narrative Analysis Informed by Assemblages and Becomings**

The approaches to data analysis in this thesis were influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) assemblages (See section 1.6.1), which is used as a concept but also influenced the methodological approach more than a philosophical concept I used to think through data collected at different stages of the research. The notion of assemblages as an intensity that traverses and connects narratives and events was an important part of how the data was made sense of at different stages. I understand my research participants' lives and offline as well online narratives as 'flows', not isolated and neatly distinguishable, but rather 'collective assemblages' that interlink and meet at different points (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 26). The concepts by Deleuze and Guattari are 'put to work' to show the heterogeneous nature of working with assemblage which includes 'concepts, materials, sources, examples and illustrations' (Taylor, 2013: 43).

The interviews invited participants to tell stories about their school and online lives and the narratives from research participants were rich and told from a multiplicity of perspectives. I compiled a large collection of narratives which I planned to analyse through thematic narrative analysis. Methodologically, a thematic narrative analysis is useful as it explores 'stories that range in length from segments of interviews to many hours of life histories, and that may be about general or imagined phenomena, things that happen to the narrator, or matters they've heard about' (Tambouku, 2008: 6). My plan was to use thematic narrative analysis to produce meaning from 'event-centred' and 'experience-centred' stories, to isolate important discourses in the narratives as well as daily events that were significant in the lives of the young people (Tambouku, 2008: 5). As I began the process of selecting and coding key discourses from the narratives I reflected further on how focusing on what was said was overlooking the richness of the experiences described by research participants. Similarly, Feely (2019: 3) describes some of these problems emerging from using approaches to data analysis which focus only on discourse, 'although discourse analysis does not discount the material world or embodied experience... it does privilege the importance of discourse over other aspects of existence and, arguably, downplay the importance

of materiality and embodied experience'. Additionally, as I read the collection of narratives I was aware of how the events and examples discussed by participants involved several connections which were overshadowed by the thematic approach which facilitated separation. For instance, the school building's architecture played a role in the intimidation of girls at school, narrow corridors where they experienced unwanted touching or comments, igniting their online and feminist activisms, and my time at the school gave me awareness of some of these issues, making it difficult to overlook them. Also, being able to observe students in school and online meant that I had different types of data to arrange and code. Undoubtedly, in most of the narratives and online work the many connections between offline and online experiences co-constructed a vignette of narratives which showed the 'mobile sections' and 'incessant variations' which can be extracted from data (Taylor, 2013: 48).

In order to explore the connections in the data further I employ assemblages as an approach to generating knowledge which assumes 'all entities to be in process rather than fixed, ceaselessly becoming at different rates of speed and slowness' (Feely, 2019: 4). Following assemblages as an approach allowed me to illuminate key points in the narratives and in online work produced by research participants, so that the young people's stories are understood through the connections between school cultures and online social media cultures. Therefore, the connections are presented in the data analysis chapters as heterogeneous occurrences detailing the wide range of experiences and some of the movements from the offline to the online identified in research participants narratives as well as online work.

The experimentation with assemblages undertaken in this study reflects other innovative approaches using assemblages, such as, Renold and Invinson's (2014: 361) mapping of teenage girls' feelings of vulnerability, risk and violence in a mining Welsh village, where the 'equine past of the town surfaces in girls' talk about horses'. Similarly to Ringrose's (2011: 601) analysis of school and online spaces as 'affective assemblages...in a continual flow of energies that constitute the virtual/ 'real', and therefore online engagement is no way free from the social norms of the users and user communities; for instance, peer groups at school'. My study presents explorations of what the school assemblages do, enable and produce in young people, similarly, events and experiences from the school context were actively negotiated by research participants in their various school and social media engagements.

Assemblages as an approach allowed me to show the versatility of the narratives collected and the lively production of online content and social media engagements in the young research participants' formations of identity. In a similar way to Taylor's (2013) approach using participant-generated video, to argue that investiga-

tions of the social are necessarily visual and that the visual and the theoretical are not separate entities but enrolling each other, my study proposes that schooling is more than just what is confined to happen in classrooms and school sites, but also coupling elements of youth online and social media cultures. Assemblages help ask different questions on data and the knowledge produced from it, not what things are, but what things do, how they interface and interact, what Taylor refers to as 'making theory by connecting ideas...and of using theory to develop a new way of thinking - a form of thinking which is acentred, connective, heterogenous, non-hierarchical and multiple' (2013: 43). By looking at the different items of data - interview transcripts, observation notes, online materials - as an assemblage I was paying close attention to how important events and examples narrated by research participants generated mobilities which meandered through various school and virtual spaces. For instance, a young research participant who expertly used social media to create a space for blacktivisms as he felt neglected by school cultures and unspoken low expectations

My study developed narrative analysis through what Feely (2019: 7) calls 'assemblage analysis, where one is invited, indeed encouraged, to experiment and innovate with a multiplicity of relevant data sources'. With these points noted, I turned my attention to the various units of data - interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, online content such as posts and photographs - and what the salient relations that appeared to be among them were. I looked at my data through connections and relations across contexts, personal experience and online contents, similar to how Renold and Invinson (2014) locate gendered feelings of fear and anxiety in young girls' talk, resulting from the equine histories of a Welsh village, or Feely's (2019) exploration of sexual surveillance experienced by disabled people across institutional contexts. My study's use of narrative analysis is underscored by assemblage and the planes of inquiry that link institutional contexts of the school, offline and online relations and my participants' flow through these various sets of relations. Some of the relations developed in data analysis chapters are of resistance, escapism, and entrepreneurship which pave the way for their identity becomings.

The initial stage of assemblage analysis was to distinguish the various key forces or relations bearing upon the experiences of research participants. Assemblage as an analytical methodological tool already places us as researchers in a 'non-reductive' plane where we try to locate the 'in-betweens' joining up context and experience (Hanley, 2019, 413). In the case of my study, this approach allowed me to have a more open understanding of how young people forge a sense of identity, going beyond the usual arguments around individualistic choice, self-reflexion or pure agency. Instead, in their narratives they were mobilising both themselves and their online presence and content across sometimes conflicting school and online contexts, tightly



influenced by external relations. Therefore, the identity becomings of young people are examined through the identified relations composing their experiences and narrative, moved and moving through sticky school and online relations. To explain by example, let's turn to the youngest research participant in the study, who frustrated by what she identified as sexist and misogynist school cultures organised a school assembly where she challenged teachers' gendered behaviours and biases, only to find that her struggle for social justice would become reduced to 'teenage anger' and self-centeredness. These experiences and her displacement in the school's normative gender relations then sparked a series of online engagements and content creation to forge her identity in feminist activism. To seek to understand this extract only from the research participant's perspective and narrative, or only from online engagements and content would have meant overlooking school relations and occurrences which make up a 'plane of consistency', an assembled set of meaningful elements (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 73). Therefore, each participant's production of identity is made sense through the particular forces, relations and key events which traverse across various contexts in their lives.

The next step in assemblage analysis was what Feely (2019: 9) calls the 'mapping of flows...The job of the assemblage analyst is to map these flows', where movements from one plane to another are threaded as a social, cultural and embodied assemblage. In Feely's research he mapped the institutional attitudes and arrangements which served as ways to repress, surveil and stigmatise the sexuality of people with disabilities. Similarly, in my study I map out the physical presence of research participants at school, their movements in particular spaces, important events in school life, and how they scaffold some of the foundations behind their online identity work and content creation. This Deleuzian-Guattarian approach tries not to neglect the continuities in people's everyday experiences, expressed as an 'assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acting on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 25). In my study, through following this assemblage analysis I have been struck by how research participants are aware of their school politics, and therefore treat their online and social media worlds as essential outlets in their identity constructions. The emphasis on mapping out is presented in data analysis chapters by offering contextualising sections where the school climate experienced by research participants is given enough prominence to draw connections and ties to online and social media engagements.

The final stage of 'thinking with assemblage' (Hanley, 2019: 415) encapsulates the lives of research participants as flows which are moving together, affecting and affected, with the points in which they become affected as 'becomings'. The various identity constructions by young people presented in this study are becomings in so

much as they show more than human agency and more than intentionality. The identity becomings of research participants show the pulls of power creating the 'regulatory processes of territorialisation (that serve to stabilize and maintain order within an assemblage) and subversive processes of deterritorialisation' (2019: 12). Therefore, the assemblages explored in school are central to the identity becomings of research participants, as they develop their school and social media engagements to rebalance and redress relations of power. In data analysis chapters I portray the lives of research participants, 'not as unitary subjects but rather one who occupies a range of complex subject positions and experiences a range of associated subjectivities' (Feely, 2019: 14). In taking an assemblage approach to the problems and challenges faced by young research participants, as well as their identity becomings, my study presents an understanding which highlights the points of convergence and connections. Elucidating meaning from narrative analysis can be too focused on the specificity of experience, or events, assemblage analysis provides a fuller picture of the complexities of social life (Tamboukou, 2008).

### **3.10 Becoming-Researcher: Methodological Reflections**

Given my previous experience in qualitative research, conducting small-scale projects as part of my BA and MA in education, I started my PhD without many doubts as to how I would plan and carry out my methods. Yet, as I was to discover much later after passing my upgrade from MPhil to PhD, my methods, the social phenomena investigated and overall ethical rationale demanded a more reflective approach. In this section I want to address some of the experiences where my own becoming-researcher changed as I recognised the more nuanced approach I needed to develop in order to carry out this much bigger, much more complex research project.

Firstly, the importance of 'participant listening' (Forsey, 2010: 558) in qualitative research, which is often undermined by the primacy we give to observing, became apparent from the start. After conducting my first interview I proceeded to listen to the recording again and transcribed it carefully. During this process I realised that at certain points of the interview I could have followed up on some questions, or invite the participant to elaborate further on certain points. However, I did not do this and in this particular interview I seemed more concerned with being able to ask all the ethnographic questions I had prepared. Consequently, in my following interviews I focused much more on the participants' responses through engaged listening, tuning into the moment, being present with them even as participants. At times, the research participants deviated from answering questions and decided to pull out their phones and browse posts which they wanted me to see. This leads me to my second point where

as part of this research project I have learnt that my becoming-researcher changed after recognising how there is much pressure to present ourselves in our writing and as researchers as the 'omnipresent expert in control of the research process' (Schulz, 2020: 1). However, very often participants feel much more comfortable in an environment where there is a more natural flow to social interaction. As a researcher I had demarcated the expectations of that social interaction as an interview, or observation, starting with questions, recording the event. However, by allowing my participants to lead and engage in unexpected gestures during the research opened up opportunities for me to learn from my participants. The first time my research participants wanted to 'take me through' their posts and talk about selected ones I felt that my interview had been interjected or hijacked somehow. Yet, through further reflection and as these occurrences happened in various interviews I started to learn from my participants; about how they enjoyed their posts; scrolling up and down; remembering where their favourite bits could be found. These were important nuggets of interaction which made me think of how interviews are events where researchers are establishing their 'positionality' as legitimate, but the respondent is also looking for opportunities to exhibit their position (Schulz, 2020: 7). My interviews were developing these moments and I learnt how to manage and respond positively as different interactions happened. It was a very important learning experience as a researcher to witness how my participants were not just passively sat answering my questions, but felt comfortable enough to create different trails of interaction during the interviews. These moments became much more than 'deviations', which is how I perceived them at first. Instead, they were adding more meaning and their own intentionality to the interview exchange.

The third thing I learnt underpinned my continuously reflective approach to my research, and it involved responding to ethical conundrums as they emerged. Whilst as researchers we are asked to explain our ethical approaches to supervisors, examiners and university ethical committees, an ethical approach requires 'staying with the process of conducting research' and not assuming that once the ethical considerations are 'written up' we can irreproachably move on. As part of the online observation phase I asked participants to take screenshots and send them to me during the three-month agreed period. To begin with research participants were sending screenshots regularly from the first couple of weeks but this ceased soon after. As a result, I also took screenshots during my designated online observations. Yet, after the observation period came to an end I had collected substantial data which I felt still needed to be presented to my participants for a consent 'check up'. Whilst my consent letter asked my research participants to consent to share online content but also to consent to the researcher observing and collating information online, I felt the posts collected needed further approval by my research participants. These were ethically important decisions

which arose from my reflexivity of how conducting research online can open up new ethical dilemmas. Whilst this data could be regarded as public, or already consented to, the further conversations with research participants allowed me to hear their questions and doubts and reassure them that their hashtags would be anonymised, that their friends' faces would be blurred etc, involving them in the ongoing ethical processes I had outlined as part of the research study.

## **Chapter 4. Meaningful Learning and Identity becomings on Social Media**

Tracing the school experiences of my research participants has brought me into several different paths that they have carved out for themselves on social media. An important path encountered, bringing all the research participants in this chapter together, leads to their desire to build an identity becoming otherwise difficult to attain at school. The chapter develops the argument that complex processes of identity formation are at the heart of student practices. The research participants' identity formations are the 'expressions of relations between self and other within particular cultural contexts', such as that of the school and social media (Wadham et al, 2014: 132). The identity becomings explored here also demonstrate young people's learning online and how it is closely intertwined with experiences of school curricula and school subjects.

### **4.1 Introduction: Exploring Territorialisations of Schooling and Online Assemblages of De-Territorialisation**

The arguments and analysis presented in this chapter build on the discussion presented in the literature review (See Section 2.3), critiquing how school learning continues to be narrow and too dominated by prescriptive curricula which ignores the influences of new media in young people's lives (Nowell, 2014). In developing these arguments, the chapter contributes a tangible understanding of the kind of engagements and media production that young people curate on social media platforms. An important part of this analysis is how young people are aware of the micro-politics of schooling, whilst demonstrating resourcefulness in dealing with coercive and repetitive assessment-led school curricula and study regimes (Quinn, 2018).

Drawing on interview data and online observations from several research respondents, this chapter uses Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) ideas of territorialization and de-territorialization to explore how young research participants actively seek to address the imbalances of power they find in school curricula to create possibilities of transformation and identity becomings. This chapter argues that my respondents cre-

ate and manage new flows of identity becomings onto the online social media worlds they avidly use. This chapter analyses how the young people create movements that stem from territorialisations of schooling, showing the prevalent effects of power driving school curricula, to de-territorialisations online, where social media serves for purposes of empowerment, escapism and identity-building. I use these Deleuzian-Guattarian concepts to examine how the young people are constantly looking to free themselves from constricting school cultures, and in doing so forging a particular sense of identity becoming. This chapter is also developing an understanding of assemblages as useful to explain the presence and engagements of young people online. I explore the notion of assemblages as representing the social, cultural, and technological situations which I have located in the narratives and online engagements of my participants. Social media content serves as a way of creating relations that are less hierarchical and more a composition of elements which situate young people in a more empowered set of relations offline and online. Their identities are enrolling aspects from schooling, but also from their social media use, and are argued not to be stable, rather becoming, ongoing and transforming.

I use Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages logic, and other research to explain my participants' narratives and their particular assemblages on various social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Wattpad and Tumblr as generative of titillating and pulsating expressions that help them present themselves as particular becomings. This chapter draws on the stories of three of my respondents. As part of my thematic-narrative analysis approach the theme will be developed by drawing on several key stories from respondents in this study: Taylor, Danielle and Skeeks. Each of the narratives I present serves to further develop the argument that online de-territorialisations create new avenues and offer new spaces in which offline territorialisations are undermined, rebelled against, de-coded and re-territorialised (See Chapter 1 for an introduction to these key Deleuzian ideas and an outline to my arguments in this thesis).

This chapter is organised in three overarching sections. Firstly, Taylor's experiences of the school subject are discussed in her interview and also as observed by the researcher. Secondly, the chapter examines how Danielle experiences territorialisations of writing at her school and her assemblage with a popular self-publishing social networking site, Wattpad to assert herself as becoming-author. Thirdly, the chapter examines how Skeeks experiences his school's pressures on the attainment of certain subjects and how he seeks to create an assemblage with Facebook for the purposes of becoming-artist.

## 4.2 Taylor: Territorialising the EBacc and its Effects on Drama

Assessment is a very important part of school life, Taylor's experience at Richmond Academy has been particularly impacted by the introduction of the English baccalaureate. In this section I outline how the English baccalaureate (EBacc) has produced school cultures which my research participant, Taylor, struggles against and critiques openly, both at school and online. The impact of the EBacc is explained through Taylor's experience. The two main aspects discussed are firstly, how the introduction of the EBacc changed the school's identity and secondly, how the school's changed identity and Taylor's are in conflict.

Taylor is sixteen years old and a very confident and articulate individual; she speaks of her love of drama and art stating that they are, "an essential part of my life and something I want to pursue as a career... I want to do something I love and where I can be creative". Taylor is a very popular student amongst peers and teachers at Richmond Academy. Throughout her interview Taylor is very complimentary of some of her teachers, particularly one of her Drama teachers, whom she describes as, "a fantastic and fun teacher who understands my love of art and performance". Although she spoke of her experiences of schooling as "fulfilling at times and dismal at other times". The contrast expressed by Taylor could be explained through the school's own struggles to manage its academic performance to satisfy the new indicators imposed by the EBacc. The EBacc is on one hand a 'performative technology' for the school, as well as a form of assessment (Englund and Frostenson, 2017: 885). On the other hand, the EBacc is also having a visible effect which is changing the everyday dynamics of the school, its ethos, its curriculum, all of which Taylor experiences first hand.

The English baccalaureate was announced by the then Minister of Education Michael Gove in 2012. They were introduced to replace General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSEs), which Gove deemed to be 'dumbing down' subjects (Meikle, 2012). The qualification was seen as more favourable for universities and for international options of education and encouraged students to take English, Mathematics and options from the three separate sciences. From 2016 as part of the EBacc, students were also to take a language and a humanities subject, such as geography or history. Richmond Academy was still trying to adapt to these changes as they did not phase out GCSEs as quickly as other schools because of changes in leadership. Having spent time at Richmond Academy it was clear to see that they would struggle to meet the demands of the new EBacc, as they had a high rotation of teachers in the humanities subjects. Yet, they had a strong arts department which, as

this chapter will explore, was to suffer as a result of the changes introduced by the EBacc.

The climate at Richmond Academy was underpinned by the fear of performativity and accountability that can be very often found in schools (Ehren et al., 2014). The new expectations brought by the EBacc swept across the school and placed renewed demands on already struggling departments, such as Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). To this effect, the EBacc has come under heavy criticism both in the media and in academic research. Recent media headlines include, 'Artists condemn exclusion of arts subjects from English Baccalaureate' (Brown, 2018) and 'Decline in creative subjects at GCSE prompts fears that arts industry could be damaged' (Busby, 2018). Moreover, research by Maguire et al (2019) on the subject of physical education, points to how the EBacc 'is a key performance measure that is published annually for each school, which privileges a particular set of traditional academic subjects, and in doing so, marginalises other subjects' (558). Taylor's experiences at Richmond Academy resonate with these discourses.

Firstly, in Taylor's narrative she highlighted how her schooling is "full of contrast, sometimes I just don't get it, one week they love you and the next week you're demonised". Taylor's experiences of schooling revolve around her recent struggles against Richmond Academy's cultures of attainment, which have flagged her up as a disengaged student because of her love of art. Taylor uses strong words, such as, "demonised" because of how raising the sidelining of certain subjects, such as, Drama with the school has labelled her as "rowdy". Taylor explains, "in performance, being outspoken, that's good, it's art, it's confidence, it's owning your script... in normal day to day I'm rowdy, a troublemaker... but even our production was put on hold! I mean how? They don't know how hard I've worked". Taylor experiences the school territory as hostile towards her devotion to Drama and arts. Her efforts are discounted in an environment where the regime of assessment, dictated by the EBacc and its focus on core subjects such as English, maths and the sciences, creates marginalising knowledge relations (Maguire et al., 2019).

School subjects are always under some kind of pressure because of changes in educational policy and school qualifications, as well as broader school challenges, such as shortages of teachers or lack of space and resources. However, Drama was a very strong subject at the school, with specialist teachers and a very engaged cohort. Both the depreciation of the subject, and the suppression of her complaints resulting from behavioural codes of the school are key characteristics of Taylor's schooling experience.

#### *4.2.1 Becoming-Political to De-Territorialise Schooling*

Taylor uses various social media to put into motion online content which associates her identity becoming with arts and drama. In this section, I trace her discontent with the subject of drama at school, particularly as a result of the introduction of the English baccalaureate (EBacc). In her view arts and drama are being sidelined in her school, and she is actively producing online work on Tumblr to express her views. These online engagements strengthen her becoming further as she is doing work that “reminds people why the arts are important”, although Taylor also shows her frustration very often, “amazing that we need to actually be reminded of why we need arts... it’s all STEM now”.

Taylor does not describe herself as “political”; instead she explains, “I’m not a political person, but there are certain things that you just can’t turn a blind eye to, like with Drama...my teachers are being let go, our projects are put on hold, sometimes I feel like I’m not important at all at school”. As a result, Taylor has become very interested in the reasons behind these changes, and has poured her understanding onto the social media platform, Tumblr. Explaining this further Taylor says, “it’s not for everyone [Tumblr], I’m on it to follow art blogs and other random blogs, lately...my rage on the place of arts has been coming through though, do you want to see?”. During our interview Taylor taps quickly on her phone and brings up a few posts.



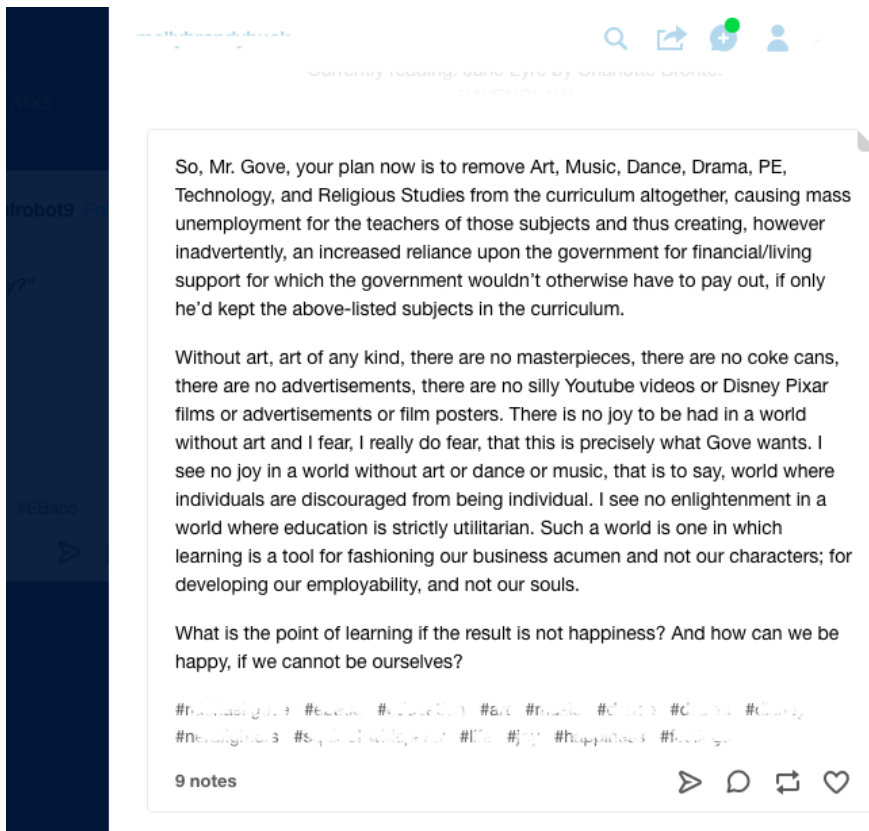


Illustration from Taylor's Tumblr account.

This post is from Taylor's Tumblr account; it is one of the posts Taylor showed me during the interview. The post above is very articulate in addressing the political climate behind the cuts to Drama that Taylor has experienced at school. Taylor's experience shows how young people are engaging in politics and civic participation, although for many years they have been constructed as disengaged (Kahne et al, 2018; Vromen et al, 2014; Loader, 2007; Loader and Mercea, 2011; Loader et al, 2016; Bennett et al, 2013). In this post Taylor is addressing the issues that she sees happening in her school. In her view this is a situation created by government changes to assessment, particularly by the endorsement of the English baccalaureate to which her school is strongly adhering to. When I asked why she posted on Tumblr Taylor explained, "I post and reblog to show that I know what's happening, I'm not stupid, this Gove brings this in and says this is good for uni, not everyone wants to go to uni, not everyone wants to go into business". Posting on Tumblr remediates the sentiments of anti-arts culture that Taylor has been experiencing at school.

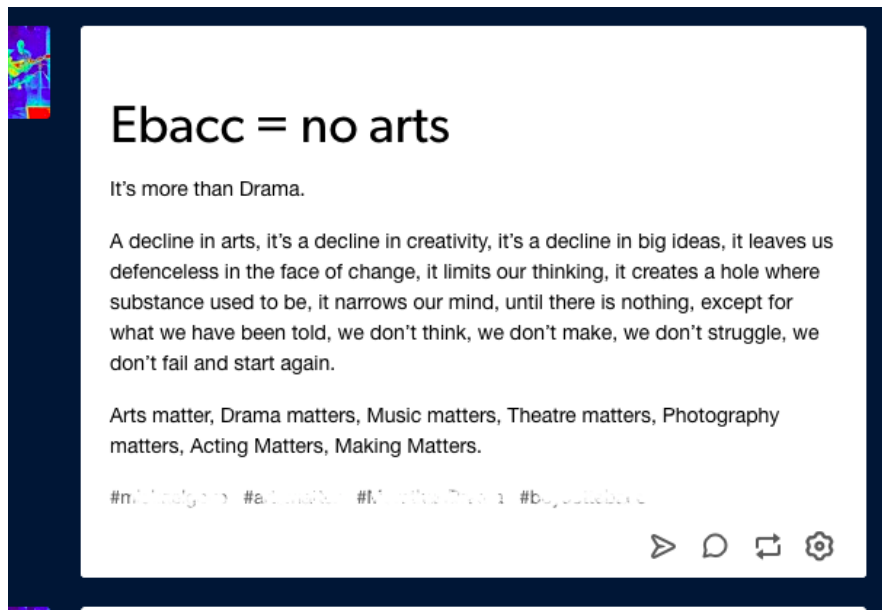


Illustration from Taylor's Tumblr account.

The post titled “Ebacc = no arts” is ironically titled as an equation to highlight the prominence of what is viewed as objective learning, taught through subjects, such as mathematics. The writing is an ultimatum in repetitive prose to show the series of events that can unravel from “decimating the arts”, as Taylor puts it. The line “it’s more than drama” is also suggestive of how students’ complaints are normally silenced, or fall on deaf ears as they are dismissed as teenage hysterics, fleeting, and not to be taken seriously. Producing and circulating content on Tumblr was an opportunity for Taylor to articulate her becoming-political in an environment where she felt it had a space; Taylor says, “not a better place I think, to do that, to speak about the rules that shouldn’t apply, to express your complaint”. Online, Tumblr’s subversive space demonstrate by its complaint culture, was concomitant with Taylor’s desire to subvert the authoritative school environment (Hart, 2015). The school’s reactive territory was a result of various circumstances, to do with its impending change of status to academy, but particularly impacted by the full adoption of the EBacc. The changes resulted in students being more surveilled and moved in and out of classrooms to allow for new arrangements to take course, Taylor explains, “sometimes at school, you turn up one day and teachers are moved from place to place, then you are moved for no apparent reason, it’s just chaotic”. The EBacc was so enthusiastically implemented to signal to the ‘similar relentless gaze’ that the school wanted to re-invent itself in line with new performative expectations (Perryman et al, 2018: 147).

Tumblr’s blogging design gave Taylor an idea; “after writing about this on Tumblr for quite some time I decided to put some of these ideas together and write a letter to the headteacher”. Taylor decided to escalate her “complaint” and says that

the log of material that she had written as part of her Tumblr log, and the encouraging comments by others gave her “confidence” to take it somewhere else. The work produced on Tumblr, apart from being identity-transforming in how Taylor started to regard herself as “political” also offered a history of feeling and reflection which she felt had to be put to use. A traceable and public outline of how a series of events become an issue. In this way engaging with Tumblr has been an identity catalyst, precipitating change, blog by blog, made tangible with every post and post-related interaction (Cho, 2015: 45).

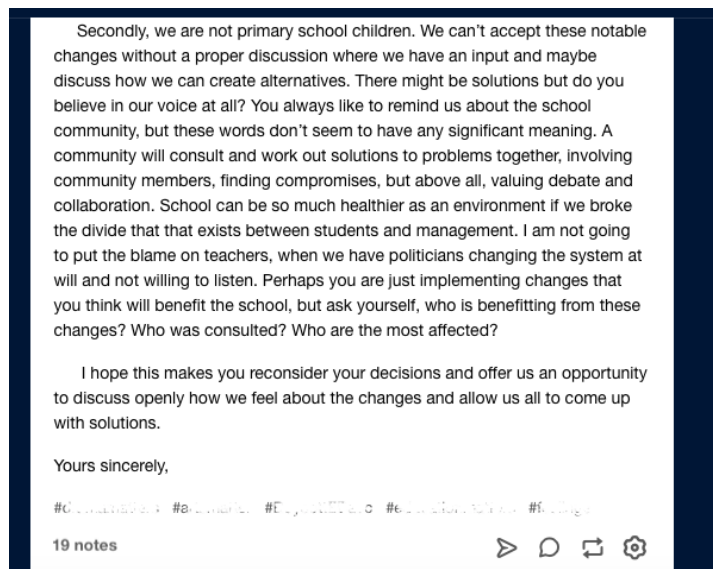
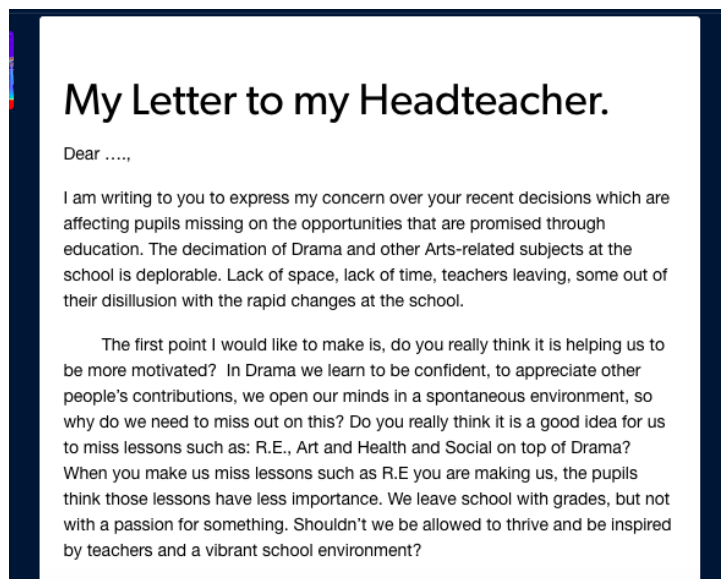


Illustration from Taylor's Tumblr account log.

The letter which Taylor first circulated on Tumblr served as a draft and as a way to get some more comments on her views. Taylor explains, "in this letter I wanted to speak to him [the headteacher] as a person, as someone I know, someone who I see a lot of". The contents of the letter reveal a very articulate and critical tone, raising several key questions and calls for collaboration if the school was to be thought about as a real community. The letter was sent and Taylor waited patiently for acknowledgement, but also felt "sick with worry" at addressing the Headteacher so personally. There was a surprise for Taylor in how she felt more worried about her thoughts not being in the "safety net of Tumblr", since it took a lot of time to get any response at all. Instead, Taylor talks of how "disappointed" she was to find that the "letter had only managed to edge its way into an assembly announcement", where students were reminded to see pastoral staff if they felt overwhelmed at school.

However, Taylor reflects on the event by saying, "it doesn't take away from the fact that I actually went on and did it, I would have not done that before, like, I feel brave and still angry, but less angry now, more like, I know what it feels to speak your mind, I know what's happening around me now, next time I'll be more demanding". Taylor's becoming-political was not diffused by this event, instead, she feels more knowledgeable, better positioned to pursue change, since she now understands the system around her more deeply. Digital opportunities were used by Taylor to create and collate identity outputs in the form of blogs which transcended the online to the offline threshold of the school (Hart, 2015; Warfield 2016). These movements are essential in her becoming-political, as she suggested, "knowing how it feels" stays with you, assembling the experience then becomes part of her identity. The actions by Taylor support views of youth's participation in politics and activism as not in decline or absent, but rather nuanced and actualised beyond the formal means used to measure such activity (Loader et al., 2016).

Taylor is using the site of Tumblr to deploy her take on the issue of the overlooking of the arts and as she explains to "organise my thoughts against the establishment". The drive for academic achievement that Richmond Academy is pressured to deliver is exacerbated by the introduction of the Ebacc, with subjects, such as drama, arts, music and PE becoming further marginalised (Maguire et al., 2019). Yet, in the case of Taylor it is not just the subjects which are being overlooked but also the students who love these subjects, who find themselves caught in the middle of rapid change in the school, Taylor explains, "I don't feel heard...my best teachers are let go or suddenly rotated to other subjects like it doesn't matter, like we don't matter".

Overall, Taylor was a very responsive student who used the digital platform of Tumblr to self-actualise an identity becoming around building a political view and exercising her political voice both online and offline. The actions surrounding Taylor's becoming-political were deepened by the mobilisation of her complaint, in the form of a letter to her Headteacher, actions which left her with undeniable knowledge of what it is to speak to power. Taylor's becoming-political was also driven by the recurrent postings on Tumblr, a chance to articulate school issues, something that she finds has no place in her school. Nevertheless, her Tumblr and social media engagements have left her with a profound learning experience and a renewed desire to not stop, but be "more demanding".

### **4.3 Skeeks: Territorialisations of School Art**

In the case of Skeeks, using the Internet and using Facebook are discussed as essential parts of his life which are not easily recognisable as part of offline or online life, but are rather entangled and intertwined. The way in which Skeeks spoke of schooling was as a territory dominated by the importance of academic work. For Skeeks schooling was about the constant demands school made on his time whilst in there. Skeeks explains some of this further whilst talking about his love of art and photography, "I do like shooting people and things in general...posting it on Facebook...at school with the focus on English and Maths you always got taken out of lessons and stuff and it's normally my art that I don't get to do as much as I'd like to because miss or sir is waiting for you to join a revision session". In this extract the interplay between school and the online needs to be taken into consideration to understand how territorialised school life gets carried away into the online as de-territorialisation. In Skeeks' case, his investments on social media, such as Facebook, although they might be explained as just his preference, they are closely linked with school life. Ringrose (2011: 601) uses Deleuze and Guattari to examine schooling and its politics and how the school environment is increasingly brought into or manifested in other online events and platforms. Ringrose says (2011: 601) of her use of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblages, that it can be used to 'conceptualize both the school community and social networking communities as 'machinic assemblages'—complex social configurations through which energy flows'. These flows between school and the online are present in Skeeks' narrative, in how his school's dismissal of art has led him to post online, but I also want to emphasise the way in which Facebook offers attractive opportunities for Skeeks. Skeeks' use of Facebook shows how the number of affordabilities, or ways to be used motivate him to post his artistic work. In what follows I discuss some of the assemblages that circulate in Skeeks' narrative and how he assembles with Facebook to de-territorialise schooling constraints.

During the interview Skeeks is very clear that Facebook is a very important outlet for his artistic work and he describes himself as “having the photography bug”, and told me excitedly about the school art and photography exhibitions in which he had taken part. During the ethnographic interview Skeeks explained that he posted on Facebook to showcase his artwork. Since the absence of his first art teacher, who was a keen organiser of art exhibitions but left the school and was replaced by a string of supply teachers, meant that there were no more opportunities to showcase his work. When I asked how his interest in art and photography began he said, “I’d say at school, but school, although it started it, there’s too much pressure...so I post on Facebook...so yeah, I’ve used Facebook for that”. Skeeks also talks about how having his photography on Facebook has led to some cash in hand work which he was not expecting. Skeeks describes himself as a working class boy who has not gone on “fancy holidays”, and lives in a council flat with his mum, younger sister and his dog. So, when talking about the casual work he says “I need the money, haha”, somewhat jokingly. He continues to tell me about this, “over the last year or so, I’ve had people actually asking me to do jobs for them...I’ve taken photos for a wedding...birthday party...it’s more because of the people who like my pictures and they’ve recommended me to like, friends and family”. For Skeeks, social media has offered a platform that allows for ways to express his artistic interests and which has brought unexpected surprises in return.

The social networking site (SNS) Facebook has enjoyed a significant rise in popularity during the last few years. With a highly visible position as a mediator of social interaction, it is cast as the domain of young technophiles (boyd, 2008). As a SNS Facebook has an extensive membership, and it attracts a significant youth demographic (boyd, 2008). All of this has contributed to the central position young Internet users occupy in the public imagination, in academic spheres and popular discourse (Waite and Bourke, 2015). Dominant narratives within this discourse construct online spheres in particular ways, articulating consequences for those engaging in these ‘worlds’. Primarily, these narratives are characterised in terms of risk and danger (Barnes 2006; Dobson 2012), where young Internet users move from the ‘real’, everyday ‘world’ to a shadowy, uncontrolled online sphere. However, in Skeeks case, what he is doing online presents challenges to the separation with which we tend to discuss online and offline experiences.

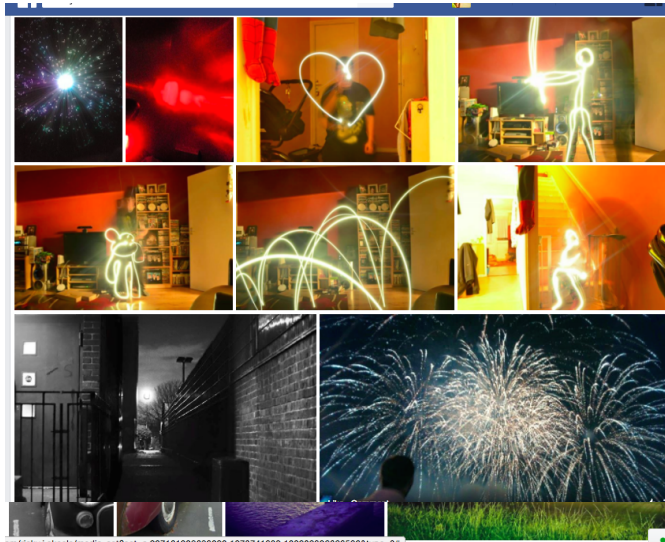
For Skeeks Facebook works as an expression-rich, self-promoting, self-mirroring and communication machine. Skeeks’ assemblage on Facebook shows him posting and archiving his work in ways that allow him to construct a desired image and subjectivity. An example of this can be Skeeks’ online artwork publishing, a move that

helps to make him appear online in the ways that he desires, but not just because of him, but also because the vernaculars of Facebook which scaffold his motivations. In the next sections I will analyse some of the vernaculars of Facebook that Skeeks is particularly assembled with and what the assemblage represents for Skeeks. Facebook is made up of many vernaculars, such as posting, liking, commenting, live videoing, reacting in the form of emojis and more. Skeeks is very interested in these vernaculars as a way to exhibit and open up his art photography with an audience of people. These platform vernaculars are central to Skeeks' narrative on Facebook.

#### *4.3.1 Becoming-artist: Posting, Archiving and Building a Portfolio*

Skeeks says that his postings on Facebook are mainly of his artwork and photography, which I also noted during my online observations. For Skeeks, his posting on Facebook is also helping him forge a particular subjectivity, or to use a more Deleuzian term, becoming. For Skeeks becoming-artist is partly possible through his use of social media and it is an important feature in Skeeks' assembling with Facebook, "I've used Facebook a lot for that, for showing my work to other people, someone else". This has also occurred against the backdrop of schooling, since Skeeks had already participated in school exhibitions, organised by his former art teacher, Skeeks commented on how he felt participating in exhibitions, "I really liked seeing my work on the wall, exhibited". Skeeks understands that becoming-artist involves exhibiting, this is in itself outlining another assemblage, that which recruits art-making, artwork and exhibiting into the making of the artist.

In this section I argue that Skeeks' assemblage on Facebook allows him to create a body of work which provides an artist's portfolio, thus allowing Skeeks' identity to flow into becoming-artist. Skeeks' Facebook profile features 578 friends and numerous albums of photos which show his photography work in the form of portraits, edited photos, nature shots, city shots and flower shots. Facebook was a prominent element of Skeeks' narrative and he was checking his Facebook during our interview, occasionally smiling at what other people posted and to show me some of his online content. For Skeeks, the posting and visibility affordances of Facebook are important features which he plugs into to assert his identity of becoming-artist, and the opening of his work to his facebook audience, not just his friends but the public. The act of posting on Facebook is also transformed into exhibiting his work online, a very important activity in his project of becoming-artist. Below are some examples of his Facebook postings.



Illustrations. Skeeks' photography albums on two themes, prosthetic lights and urbanity.

These images above represent Skeeks' different photographs which he has carefully grouped into several albums, creating a portfolio range. Skeeks' exhibiting of his work on Facebook is part of his becoming-artist. This is an important factor in becoming-artist, being able to show substantial work in the form of a portfolio. Skeeks says, "timelines and albums are good for like keeping your work, memories and stuff. I like storing my photography in albums and going back to it and adding stuff, posts on my timeline, to see how I've progressed and how I've learnt to do more things. It's nice to see your posts from time to time". Additionally, Skeeks does not currently have socio-economic means to support him with becoming-artist online resources which can be pricey, "well I could have a website, but I am not in a position to pay for a web host and for fancy websites and I definitely don't like the ready-made stuff, or printing lots of stuff in colour in different sizes etc, so Facebook is a good option". So Skeeks' facebook engagements are a combination of free access and other affordances that can be found on the site which he uses as a means for creating a chronicle of his project of becoming-artist.

Skeeks' use of Facebook provides what Robards and Lincoln (2017: 1) call 'longitudinal life narratives', allowing a timeline of experiences which Skeeks is able to 'scroll back' over whenever he wishes. A sense of narrative to one's life which works very well for self-presentation and identity work online, for Skeeks Facebook represents 'an archive of memories that can be edited, re-organised, modified, re-configured, re-presented and even deleted' (Robards and Lincoln, 2017: 3). These affordabilities are partly showing the agency of individuals, but also how the site has an inherent design that makes it particularly attractive to people. Skeeks talked about the affordability of timelining as a way of keeping track on his own trajectory as artist, "Facebook has this timeline, you know? you click on the year and it's there, I have



seen myself improve so much like year on year. It's cool to have that online and accessible”.

Overall, Skeeks' assembling with/in Facebook extends his capabilities as artist and photographer, as a reflective individual, not limited to the online, but significantly informed by his experiences offline, like those at school. These fusions of experience and online virtuality are characteristics of the assemblages found in Skeeks and many other of my respondents' narratives. Skeeks' example shows that Facebook is not just a virtual online space 'but simultaneously, it is thoroughly embedded in, and informed by the material lives of the individuals without whom it would not exist in its current, recognisable form' (Waite and Bourke, 2015: 540). For Skeeks Facebook is the right site to archive his artwork, publicise it and share it for various becoming-artist purposes. Skeeks has transformed what most would say is a private space for very personal purposes, driven by his personal experiences of schooling and a becoming-artist subjectivity (Van Dijck and Poell, 2015).

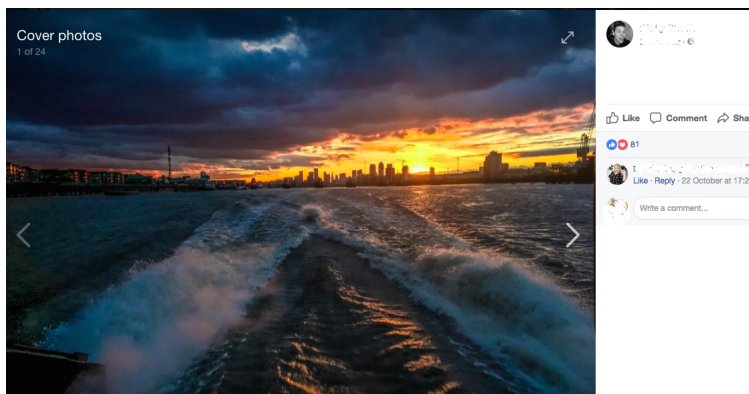
#### *4.3.2 Becoming-Artist: Visibility and Getting Likes*

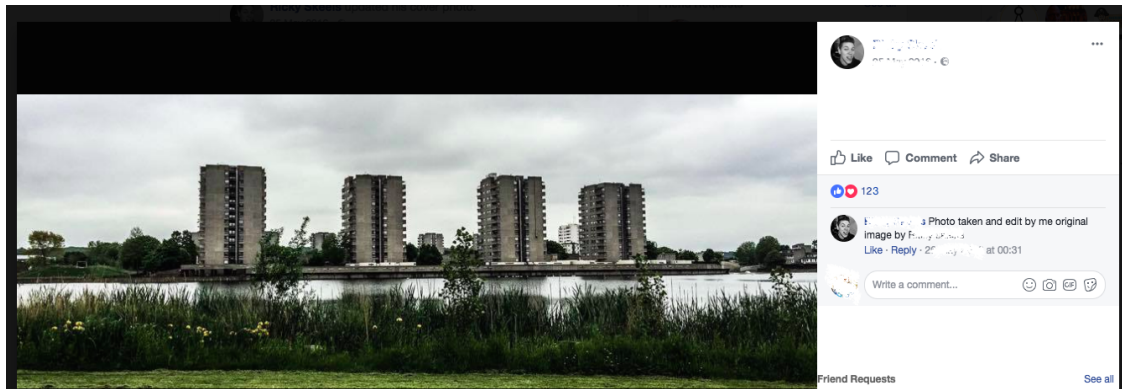
Skeeks' becoming-artist is also channeled through Facebook by how visible his work is on the site and how it gathers high numbers of likes. One of the things that seemed very important for Skeeks and one which I noticed both through my various interactions with him during the ethnographic phase at the school, and during our interview was that Skeeks understands the role of art as needing to be seen by others. From his exhibitions at school, which stopped because of the departure of his art teacher, Skeeks saw the importance of Facebook and posting online. The visibility of the site has been a driver for his engagement, as Skeeks explains "...I love art and photography... it's that art should be seen, like graffiti, proper graffiti is art and it can be seen by everyone, like anyone who walks by, so should photography". Skeeks says of his photography work, "people generally like and comment, and it kind of goes on, I like that". The participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) of the internet is also behind Skeeks' use of social media; he particularly likes the ongoing nature of posting on Facebook.

Part of what Skeeks describes in his narrative is what has been called the social web, or 'liking economy' (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013: 1351), allowing others to view and engage with user-generated online content. Facebook and other social media sites extended the capabilities of Web 2.0 by introducing new features 'that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content' (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 60), which Skeeks experiences in the form of posting, getting likes, sharing and knowing that his work is being seen and shared. As suggested by De Fina (2016: 477) 'social media interactions are collaborative and dialogic in that they usually involve dif-

ferent authors and participants'; for Skeeks, the continuous likes and comments on his Facebook are productive of his becoming-artist. Skeeks explains this in this extract, "seen by other people, because that's art or that's good, to see it there, being seen". It is in this assemblage, in the amalgamation of his artwork, posted on Facebook as exhibited and liked and made sense of by other people, that his self-concept as becoming-artist is made possible.

Skeeks' engagement with Facebook as becoming-artist also emerged as enabled by the numbers of likes his work might gather. Skeeks says "some of my posts have lots of likes...it depends some of them get more than others...I like my photos of cars and the city because they've got a vintage and urban feel to them...people like them too. Some of my portraits have gotten lots of likes where I've played with angles and black and whites, this is good for my photography because people are telling you what they like". For Skeeks getting likes is interpreted as people telling him what they like in his photography by hitting the 'like' button, it is not just about popularity, support or friendship. Instead, for Skeeks the accumulation of likes equates to the act of getting feedback on his photographic work. In discussing likes in this way Skeeks is engaging in what Gerlitz and Helmond say is the 'web of metrification and intensification' where 'Facebook's Social Plugins [e.g. like buttons] do not only enable a social web, but also partake in multiple dynamics of data mining and circulation (2013: 1358). These agglomeration of likes acts as another flow in his becoming-artist. Below are some examples of Skeeks' photography.





Illustrations. Some of Skeeks' 'most liked' pictures.

These photographs represent some of the 'like' metrics that Skeeks relies upon for feedback and endorsement in his identity as becoming-artist. In some of the examples above we see various of his shots, with the second image being the one he talked about in his interview. The assemblage of Skeeks on Facebook is ensuring the visibility and exposure of his work. As a site the vernaculars of Facebook, such as posts, archiving, album creation, scrolling back and getting likes have been the flows that characterise Skeeks' assemblage with Facebook. Overall, Skeeks' motivations, personal experience and personal narrative point to his project of becoming-artist as one of the main threads with which he assembles with Facebook. Skeeks' Facebook is a vast portfolio of his work in photography, both in school and outside of school and is a sort of work that he plans to continue. Yet, it is also an expandable network of content which has been generated by himself and all the other people he has friend-ed. For Skeeks the centrality of his Facebook has been to continue to make his photographic work seen and shareable amongst his friends and family, the visibility that art needs in his view, he can recruit from his careful assembling with the site.

#### **4.4 Danielle: Territorialisations of Writing and Curriculum at School**

In this section I explain the dominant school cultures which surround the production of writing in Danielle's class. I refer to these dominant cultures as territorialisations of writing, underscored by the demands imposed by curriculum and attainment targets. Using Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) notion of 'territorialisations' this section depicts the kind of writing that is legitimised by the school, often closely linked to assessment requirements. Danielle, like other students, is subject to these writing practices and struggles with what she can and cannot do with reference to writing. This is unfortunate for Danielle who "loves writing but finds the school's curriculum unappealing. As Danielle says, "I love creative writing, not at school, but I love to write" (my own emphasis added). It was apparent from my first conversations with Danielle that she

found her school's approach to writing very limiting, describing it as "boring", "stifling" and "regimented", and lacking creativity. The territory at Danielle's school is focused on upholding the needs of the curriculum at the expense of the interests of students. This is evident when Danielle says, "at school...honestly all you can write about is this poem or that poem, or holidays, it's so repetitive". Whilst creativity is seen as an important factor for economic growth and this is an increasingly popular discourse in education; some students like Danielle perceive the school climate as not supportive of creativity, but hindering it (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; McLellan and Nicholl, 2012; Ball et al, 2011). Curricula pressures and writing for the assessments in Danielle's school creates a culture where teachers may want to pay attention to the need for student voice and creativity; but 'the imperatives of raising performance...examination grades can interrupt these different and potentially progressive learning and teaching intentions' (Ball et al., 2011: 7). The territorialisations of schooling in Danielle's case show how the classroom and school cultures are enslaved to the curriculum, the demands of competitive educational markets, regulatory inspections and national benchmarks (Perryman et al., 2017). The territorial assemblage at the school overlooks and actively discourages any content or material produced by students which is outside of stipulated curricula, as Danielle explains: "...you just can't write about anything else. Like even if I tried I'll be asked to do it again, no, it's not possible". In this way, the school offers very little possibilities for Danielle to express and write about her interests and everyday life because it challenges 'curriculum as fact...the official or codified knowledge that is packaged in the school syllabus and taught to children' (Muller, 2000: 9). These are some of the territorialisations of schooling as experienced by Danielle.

Traditionally, students' responses to schools have been delineated and chronicled in educational research focusing on what happens in school spaces (Fine, 1991; McFadden, 1995; Blackman, 2005; Smyth, 2006; Wadham et al, 2014). Whilst the school remains an important site to explore how young people navigate school life and its restrictions, online and digital engagements by young people are also compelling sites in which students contest, resist, and (dis)engage with school politics. The history of student disengagement in educational research has been marked by the narrative that, when students do not conform to the school or broader community values, trouble arises. As a number of authors explain (Kennedy-Lewis et al, 2016; Reiter and Schlimbach, 2015; Lunneblad et al, 2017), 'student voices are often silenced as the adult population expresses them in terms of 'trouble' (Wadham et al, 2014: 130). When asked, 'have you spoken to your teacher about how you feel?' Danielle says: 'No! If I did I'll be in trouble, or my teacher will probably be a bit thrown I think, because I'm like a good student, no wait, I think I might have done once, because I think she likes me but it didn't go too well, so, no, never again'. Wadham et al

(2014: 130) argue that the topic of student engagement in schooling, or adherence to school values (and rules), is often conceived in terms of 'student transgression'; young people have, over time, 'become a problem to be solved – by parents, teachers and school administrators'.

Yet, I argue that students' responses and contestations could also be seen as de-territorialisations in the Deleuzian Guattarian (2013) sense. Danielle's 'territorial assemblage is inseparable from lines or coefficients of deterritorialization, and relays towards other assemblages' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 387). For instance, her writing and self-publishing online allows her to escape the rigidity of writing at school. Students' everyday encounters with the territorial assemblage of schooling will generate events of de-territorialisation, an example of this is how Danielle herself tried to bring to her teacher's attention, how limiting she believes school writing practices are and recounts that "it didn't go too well". Her attempt at de-territorialisation was dismissed and Danielle sees herself as a 'good student', who is also 'liked by teachers', within this dynamic, there is no possibility for her to express her feelings and thoughts with regards to how limiting she perceives her schoolwork to be, as doing this goes against good behaviour codes prevalent in her school. Danielle is aware of the power cultures of the school, as illustrated by Wadham et al (2014), which the teacher and the classroom climate embody; her honesty might be interpreted as transgressive and problematic. Danielle allows herself to be re-territorialised (in this case, her compliance) to the dominant practices at school, even after her attempt at de-territorialising (in this case, her resistance), Danielle says of her writing in English, "I do what she asks me but I don't really want to". It is against the backdrop of these contextual circumstances and school territorialisations that Danielle is re-negotiating very savvily the constraining pressures of her school writing, by choosing to "pour her mind" into cathartic online authorship practices. These will be explored in the next section as de-territorialisations that have led to a particular becoming for her.

#### *4.4.1 Becoming-author: De-Territorialisations and Writing on Wattpad*

In this section I argue that Danielle's de-territorialising writing on Wattpad enable her to produce an identity becoming as an author. As previously discussed in Skeeks' section, Deleuze and Guattari (2013) used the notion of becoming as a way in which a production of identity can be traced back to an assemblage. I use Deleuze and Guattari to argue that a person can have many becomings but that these are attainable through particular assemblages, which are 'enabled by deterritorializations' (2013: 358). In the case of Danielle, her experiences of writing at school have mobilised her onto the online site, Wattpad. In doing this Danielle is de-territorialising some of her writing experiences at school and re-territorialising them onto the self-publishing social networking site, Wattpad. Wattpad as a territorial assemblage is a social network-

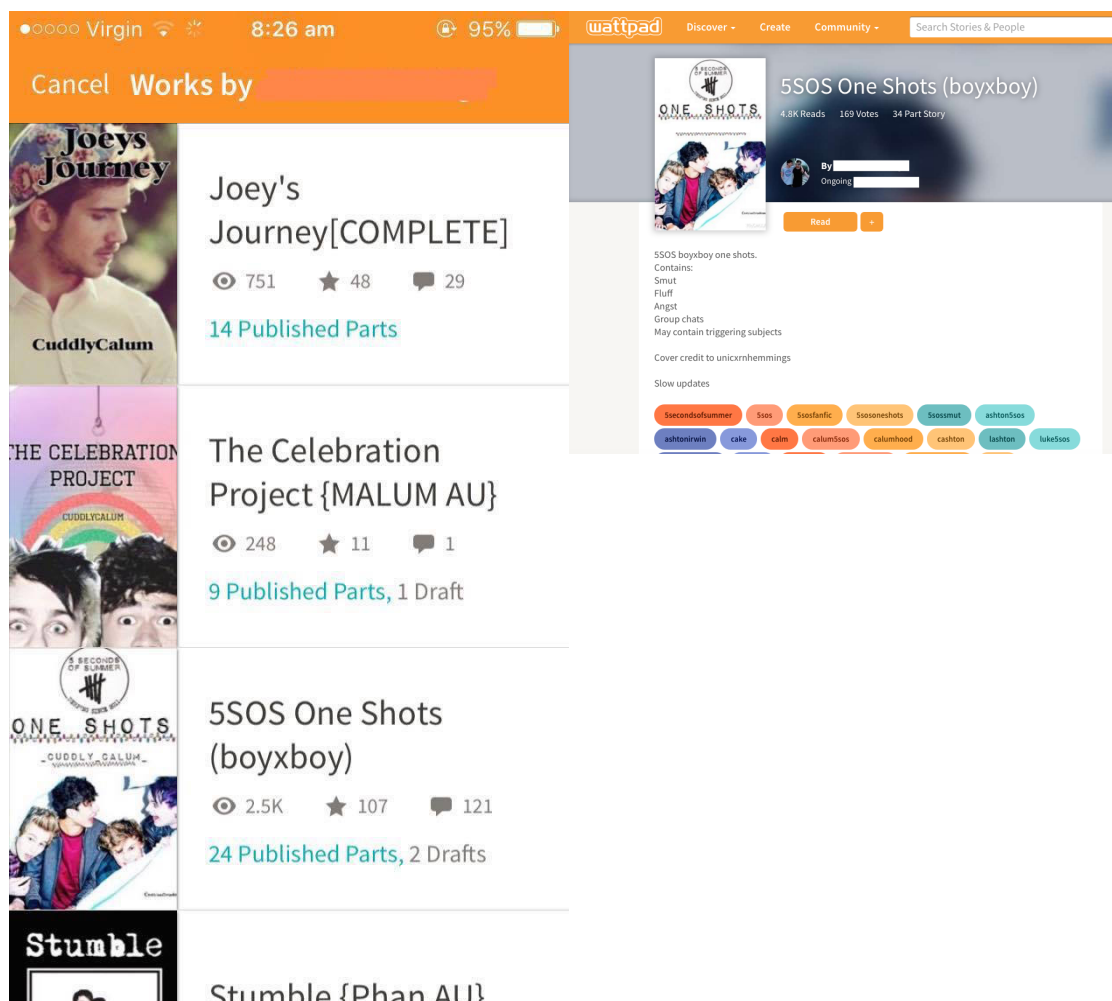
ing site for readers and authors, where anybody can write short stories, novels or other reading material. Readers can post comments and interact with authors online whilst liking, choosing to read and commenting on existing e-books. There is a very wide range of genres on Wattpad and Wattpad affordances of self-expression and creativity have allowed Danielle to respond to some of her frustrations with school and de-territorialise the writing practices she has experienced. When discussing this with me, Danielle kept bringing together her experiences at school and her writing activities online, “like I don't enjoy it [writing at school] as much as I enjoy Wattpad...if she [English teacher] saw my stuff she might even like it...I don't know”.

Writing is a very important part of Danielle's life and it occupies a lot of her time. Danielle elaborated on this during our interview. When asked when she finds the time to write, she responds: “Everyday. Like, I don't publish everyday, I try to. Each chapter I write is between two to five thousand words long. I did it a lot over the summer holidays, I have school and homework but I still try to write as much as I possibly can. I have six books already, not all completed, two completed and four with chapters on the go”. Danielle's profile on Wattpad has six books which are all being read by her community of friends on the site. Danielle's assemblage with the site plays a fundamental role in allowing her to forge herself as becoming-author. Danielle's assemblage on Wattpad is characterised by the vernaculars of Wattpad, self-publishing, voting people's work, liking e-books and reading genres of interest as well as finding out new ones. Other scholars would describe Danielle's becoming-author as the emergence of the ‘social author’, who is conscious of the need to create and have an audience and ‘raise awareness of themselves and their body of work...users of social networking sites have a more diverse network than non-users, which means that authors can further extend their visibility with online social engagement’ (Ramdarshan Bold, 2016: 4).

Danielle is very invested in the self-publishing affordances of Wattpad, the reachability her work has on this network is a very important part of her becoming-author on the site. Ramdarshan Bold (2016: 5) explain some of Wattpad's reachability: “Wattpad has over 40 million people using the site each month: up to 48% year-on-year. Ninety percent of Wattpad users are readers (commenting, sharing, reading and voting) though the majority of the 10% of users writing are also reading. Additionally, 100 million stories have been uploaded and shared on the social reading and writing platform, with at least 250,000 shared every day’. Danielle wants her work to be seen and read and she understands this as a very important part of becoming-author. Danielle explains: “I'd love to be an author and keep writing as much as I do now, it makes me want to write so I do it... In a way I know people are not dying to read my

chapters but it does make me want to write more, like I know that someone is going to give it a read and my work is getting readers”.

The screenshots in the next page are just a small example of Danielle’s fanfiction creative writing work on Wattpad. At just fourteen years old, Danielle has thousands of readers on Wattpad, from viewers who are currently reading, to those who are commenting and liking her publications online. This is a site of meaningful creative production for Danielle; her becoming-author is made tangible through her assemblage with Wattpad and its affordances. These online engagements also challenge the ‘public disdain’ that surrounds online content creation by young people and which reduces it to ‘teen blogs and personal home pages as the trivial and egocentric rumination of self-indulgent, techno-frenzied kids’ (Stern, 2008: 95). Instead, Danielle is seen here engaging an online audience which become her readers, producing online writing which becomes her published books, producing her becoming-author.



Illustrations. Danielle’s most read book until now and Wattpad feed listing of her publications.

Danielle's online stories and e-books have gathered considerable readership on the site of Wattpad, with one of her books hitting four thousand eight hundred (4,800) reads, and one hundred and sixty nine (169) votes, which are good for promoting the popularity of the author on the site. Danielle's becoming-author is realised through her assemblage with the site and augmented readership of her work. In the case of Danielle, her online authorship is very meaningful to her, her ideas unravel creatively and she is autonomously producing content, an experience that contradicts what she experiences at school. Danielle actively de-territorialises constraining school writing practices online through her assemblages with Wattpad. All the while working on a becoming of a serious writer, who produces work consistently, makes her work accessible and reachable, and understands the importance of readership and creativity. Stern (2008) writing about youth online authorship discusses how 'public attention is disproportionately paid to what teens disclose and produce online, such as the words, text, images and sounds...Yet little consideration is typically given to understanding why young people express themselves in these ways' (95). Danielle's experiences uncovers a closely linked response to school politics which curtail her creative expression in writing.

In summary, Danielle's story on Wattpad allows me to show how she has created new flows of becoming which are de-territorialising her writing experiences at school. Also, as a site Wattpad's vernaculars of self-publishing straight from a smartphone, accumulating readers, writing stories for so many different genres, getting comments and metrics on how many people read the e-books is a very big part of her becoming-author. Her assemblage on Wattpad is permeated by all these elements which spur her on and in which Danielle invests a lot of time in, "I write and write and write, on my phone, on my breaks at school, at home, I am writing. Then you publish and you get one vote, two votes and everything seems worth it, it's so rewarding".

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped the narratives of three research participants, Taylor, Skeeks and Danielle, and how their particular becomings online are linked to curricular and performance pressures affecting the school environment. The research participants' experiences are discussed as a result of school territorialisations which produce a dominant culture geared towards performativity and the privileging of results and formal curricula over students' interests. The chapter argued that social media sites were countersites to schooling and helped students to produce and mobilise online content to curate their own identity transformations as becoming-political, becoming-artist and becoming-author. The emerging identity becomings explained in the chapter had significant value to research participants' lives and helped them navigate stifling and restrictive school cultures. The chapter is also scaffolded by the argument that the



school and social media lives of research participants appear as a continuum, rather than separate or atomised realities. The connections between schooling and the online were presented against the backdrop of some of the power struggles - losses of power, increments of power - that research participants experienced at school. The ways in which they grappled with power was presented through territorialisations, which depicted the governing relations at school, and deterritorialisations as the research participants' efforts to participate and contribute to online cultures that helped them shape a desired becoming counteracting the constrictive cultures at school.

## **Chapter 5. Exploring Feminism, Gender and Sexuality Identity Becomings on Social Media**

### **5.1 Introduction: School Territorialisations and Online De-Territorialisations**

School has been studied as an important site where gender identities are constructed and contested (Bowlby, 2013; Ringrose, 2011; Ringrose et al 2015). This chapter pays close attention to research participants' struggles and negotiations around gender, sexuality and school feminisms and how their positions changed because of aspects of social media production and use. The school as territory was marked by specific gender cultures which subjected some of my research participants to experiences of disempowerment, shame, exclusion and alienation. Yet, there were important actions created and managed by participants on social media which allowed them to reclaim some power on their identity becomings and even back in the school territory.

This chapter discusses the becomings of four participants, Ashley, Skeeks, Danielle and Dan and the school and online power-struggles and power-seeking they inhabit. I discuss how the gender and sexuality territorialisations at school as experienced by these research participants are emancipated or are extended online, and I explore them offline and online to show how they creatively tread their ways on to online becomings. For Ashley, Skeeks and Danielle I argue that the gender politics, and heteronormative cultures at school have turned the territory of schooling into alienating space which my participants de-territorialise deconstruct, respond to and resist online. For Dan I argue that the heteronormative cultures of the school which play out in his life turning him into a popular boy, become extended onto social media and re-territorialise him to dominant gender and sexuality cultures at school. Following assemblages as having territorialised re-territorialised and de-territorialised sides, Deleuze and Guattari (2013: 508) emphasise how 'each power is a force of de-territorialization', Ashley, Skeeks, Danielle and Dan are discussed as moving onto new fields of power through particular de-territorialising and re-territorialising assemblages.

These assemblages occur within the social media sites of Tumblr, Instagram and Facebook.

Firstly, the chapter discusses Ashley's territorialisations of schooling and her attempts to de-territorialise patriarchal culture within the school. I argue that Ashley's de-territorialisations at school are feminist in essence. These offline tracings are then discussed with reference to online de-territorialising assemblages that Ashley has pursued and created by blogging online and engaging with feminism on the site, Tumblr. Secondly, the chapter discusses sexuality becomings by focusing on Skeeks and Danielle. I argue that both participants are experiencing heteronormative and heterosexist cultures at the school, which they respond to online; Skeeks by seeking to be re-territorialised as heterosexual at school on Instagram; and Danielle by de-territorialising school heteronormativities on Tumblr. Thirdly, I discuss Dan's experiences as as 'one of the boys' at the school as extended online and how his Facebook assemblages re-territorialise him even more decisively to heteronormative 'laddish' cultures at the school.

## **5.2 Ashley: A Patriarchal School Territory**

In this section I outline and explain dominant gender cultures which produce territorialised expected patterns of behaviour for students at Ashley's school. At Richmond Academy Ashley experienced territorialisations of patriarchy and through her attempts at de-territorialising them was deemed problematic, too argumentative and non-conformist by staff and peers.

Ashley is an extremely gifted student, who is in all top sets at Richmond Academy; she excels in writing and languages, and speaks French and German to a very good level, she hopes to go to university abroad and study a Degree in a discipline within the Social Sciences. During our interview Ashley talks to me about how she went on an "Orwell binge" recently and how this meant she started getting into politics. Ashley explains, "I started with Trotskyism and then I just sort started with Marxism and read Marxist literature...Marxism.org literally has not just every publication by Marx but also publications related to Marxism, stuff on Orwell and Hayek even". Ashley's interest in socialism and liberal politics has given her a more critical position on school, which she criticises very openly as "oppressive". Ashley calls herself a feminist and this was a very important part of her identity and featured strongly in her interview and her online work, Ashley says, "Tumblr is my space to reblog...things I don't tolerate...Like when I started on Tumblr I was just interested in socialism but then I really started to get into feminism, and the blogs on Tumblr, like the feminist ones are very critical...I like that". As a result of Ashley's engagement with feminisms online, her position within the school has become more difficult because she is vocal in proclaiming what she sees are patriarchal cultures in her school, disguised as

'good' for the sake of keeping an academic status quo. Ashley's narrative bears some similarity with the resistances and difficulties experienced by young feminist girls in Retallack et al's research (2016) when challenging school competitive and sexist cultures, and also found feminism through online spaces and used social media as a way to communicate with one another and engage in a feminist politics in and around school.

Ashley's school territorialisations are what Wadham et al (2014: 131) describe as dominated by adult-centered school cultures, where teachers and staff do 'not sufficiently problematise the institutional disposition of the school, and tend to see the students in the traditional sense of conforming, or otherwise, as transgressing the school values'. Another very important territorialisation within Richmond Academy is that of raising and maintaining good levels of attainments in core subjects, such as Mathematics, English and Science, this is achieved at the expense of other enriching curriculum subjects, like Citizenship and PHSE (See section 4.2.3). Ashley talks about how she perceives these territorialisations herself: "School is so disconnected, like my school is a good school if you're thinking about results, like I'm a 'good' [using her fingers to mimic quotation marks] student but I still get into trouble because I just don't enjoy the repetition that sometimes we have to go through, but we just don't, we just don't talk about important things either".

The territorialisation of Richmond Academy as described by Ashley, is focused on maintaining and further improving academic levels of attainment, and within this territory, academically, Ashley holds a privileged position within the school, academically, but she is also in a position of disadvantage because she deeply resents the school culture of academic performance over anything else. Ashley's experiences resonate with what Hay (2009: 55) refers to as 'competitive cultures within education systems where performance indicators become the basis on which a school's quality is indicated and promoted, accentuating their attraction in an education market'. These competitive cultures, such as the centrality given to performativity, create a platform or strict social relations where every school and curricular space is sacrificed to secure the school's existence. Ashley is then constructed as a problematic student within the school, even when her academic results and her work are of the highest quality.

Another important territorialisation in Ashley's schooling can be explained through 'patriarchal culture', she sees this in how the school continues with the patriarchal process of 'apportioning blame to women' (Gill and Orgad, 2015: 340), for example, Ashley feels that patriarchal territorialisations find her articulate manner a problem, and that she's responsible for what happens to her as she does not follow 'good advice'. Ashley explains:

“at school I’m regarded as very clever but I also feel like, my teachers dislike my frankness. They just don’t think I should be so upfront with my knowledge and concerns...I just find school so oppressive most of the time, as a girl, as a young girl”.

Ashley is always being given advice by teachers on being more modest and discreet, or on how she could do with being ‘nicer’, this is a very prevalent patriarchal discourse through which girls’ behaviour is decoded (Reay, 2001). This patriarchal discourse is evident in Ashley’s account of social relations at school:

“...at school I felt that I can’t raise my hand eagerly if I know something...the bravado is not appreciated in girls, you can’t acknowledge that you’re good at something, you have to be more polite, you have to be modest and more submissive, you can’t say that you know better than other people. With boys, good articulation and good debate is very well praised but not for girls”.

Ashley perceives school as demanding her submission, particularly because she thinks this process is very gendered and disadvantages girls. Ashley’s account of how she would like her schooling to be is reflective of what Gill and Orgad (2015: 324) have called the ‘confidence cult(ure)’ with an emphasis on ‘female self-esteem, self-belief and positive self-regard’, Ashley embodies this well, but this is frowned upon by the school’s patriarchal territorialisations impinging girls’ codes of behaviour. Thus, this confidence culture which Ashley manifests is decoded as a problematic subjectivity at Ashley’s school where moderation and discretion are seen as desirable descriptors for girls. Ashley has sought to de-territorialise them at the school but Ashley’s becoming-feminist is perceived as a threat to the required conventions of being a ‘good girl’ within the school environment.

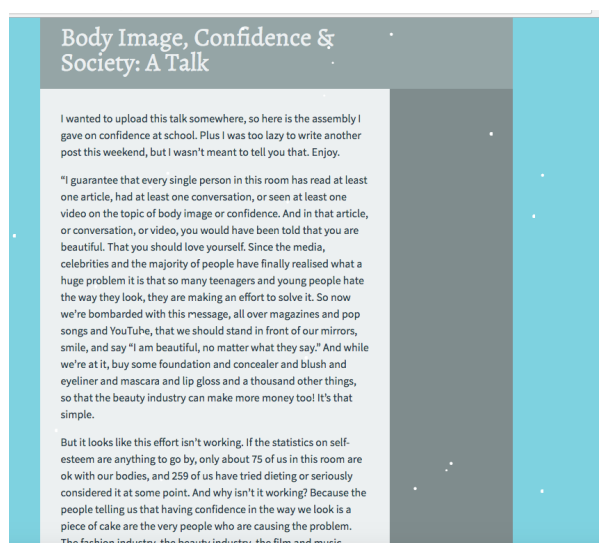
### *5.2.1 Becoming-Feminist: Assemblies, Blogging and Feminist Writing*

In contrast to the constraining school environment in the previous section, this section examines how blogging and Tumblr have served as a way for Ashley to participate in feminist politics and continue to assert a becoming-feminist, both in and outside of school. Blogging has been an important phenomenon of ‘participatory culture’ (Jenkins, 2006) and girls have been active participants of these blogging cultures because of their public, yet, unregulated nature. For Ashley this explains some of her love of blogging but also Ashley feels she needs a space away from adult intervention, as she explains “I don’t want to be treated as a fifteen year-old girl”. With Ashley’s political and feminist views she finds the territorialisations at school neglectful, patronising and sexist.

In spite of Ashley's academic achievements and talent, her articulate disposition to question her school's territorialisations of academic work and good behaviour are a direct threat to the very values the school thinks it needs to have to survive, and have resulted in her being disciplined within the school environment (Hay, 2009; Gage et al, 2016). Ashley recounts, "I'll be in trouble, and I have been, like I have been forced to apologise to teachers, some teachers have written reports about me, I mean when I have actually really exploded about something". Ashley's attempts at de-territorialisation have resulted in negative school reports for her which are then discussed with her parents at parents' evenings. Unlike Danielle, (See section 4.4.1) Ashley engages in more recurrent and open forms of criticism of the school in her becoming-feminist. These attempts at de-territorialising dominant school cultures which she considers to be oppressive and patriarchal have been met by strict discipline from the school and, have re-territorialised her as an argumentative student, a 'little madam' and even 'arrogant' amongst her teachers.

Yet, Ashley has had some successes afforded to her in her attempts to de-territorialise patriarchies at school, made possible by her academic status within the school. Ashley talks of a time when she was able to deliver a talk during an assembly on body confidence and society. Ashley recounts, "I've done an assembly at school about some of my views, well, my critique of this strong woman influence, like popular culture and how consumerist it can be and damaging for feminism". Ashley was drawing from her online engagements on Tumblr and blogging (which will be discussed in the next section) to present a challenge to competitive 'neo-liberalized and marketized school environment' (Retallack et al, 2016: 85), which she finds patriarchal and sexist. Her talk was also posted on her online blog, in which she critiques the narrative of strong women as consumerist and the vulnerability of young women when it comes to body image, as the illustration shows below.

Illustration from Ashley's blog, content used for her assembly talk.



In her talk Ashley is seen as forging her becoming-political and becoming-feminist identities together, meshed and expressed as one, Ashley is also reaching out to everyone at the assembly, as she uses phrases such as, “every single person in this room”. Ashley is very critical of how the discourse of “you’re beautiful no matter what they say” leads to consumerism, this is evident when she says, “and while you’re at it, buy some foundation and concealer and blush and eyeliner and mascara and lip gloss and a thousand other things, so that the beauty industry can make more money too!”. In this talk Ashley is merging her socialist views with her feminist views, to provide a critique of the importance of body image and how we have chosen to tackle these problems by resorting to consumer culture. However, Ashley is careful not to mention the word feminism, or socialism in her talk, Ashley knows that these are difficult labels to have at her school, but Ashley was perceived as exactly these two things already, and even more so after her assembly talk. This screenshot also evidences one of Ashley’s attempts at de-territorialising her school’s patriarchal cultures and overbearing academic cultures, and her talk overall is a positive memory for Ashley although the opportunity has not arisen again. Yet, this school assembly talk re-territorialised Ashley as a feminist at school and meant that her teachers were more careful with how they dealt with her criticisms, but in Ashley’s opinions she feels it has led to her being ignored, “...it seemed like a little milestone for me at school...I’m disappointed...because now that I am a feminist my teachers...don’t engage...I feel like ignored now...oh yeah she’s the feminist now...you can’t win with Ashley because she’s a feminist now”. Ashley’s comments on what it is like being a feminist at school resemble Ringrose’s and Renold’s (2016: 106) research with young feminist girls; they assert that there is an immediate negativity around young feminist girls at school and that ‘to be recognized as a feminist is to be assigned to a difficult category and a category of difficulty’. Unlike in Ringrose’s and Renold’s research, (2016) Ashley does not count with the support of friends or allies in doing and becoming-feminist at school, this has motivated her further to pursue other forms of engagement online, as I will discuss in the next section.

Ashley turns to the online as an emancipatory set of practices, assembling with digital technologies, such as blogging and Tumblr. Blogging as an online culture has allowed her to still keep in touch with her school peers and others whilst pursuing her interests on things that matter to her. Ashley spends time drafting and blogging about issues in relation to feminism, politics and socialism. Ashley’s inclination towards blogging is explained by Keller as enabling girls’ active negotiations in a ‘participatory culture’, as ‘cultural producers’ to extend ‘political agency...as both bloggers, readers, commenters, and re-posters’ (2012: 434). Ashley’s blogging practices exemplify this participatory culture in a media which has traditionally thought about girls as passive receivers or consumers of online and media cultures and artifacts (Baer,

2016). The territorialisations at school that make Ashley feel silenced or ignored are de-territorialised in her blog; blogging is de-territorialising (2013) and carries power, allowing her to produce and engage in new powers of expression and becoming-feminist.

The majority of Ashley's blogging is on politics and her views on capitalism, through a socialist/communist critique. However, Ashley has also pointed to how through blogging she has established her views on feminism, Ashley says, "writing about feminism has made me realise that I am a feminist who critiques feminism, so weird". In her blog Ashley expresses very witty and sophisticated critiques in the form of essays and short pieces, all the while deeply reflecting on politics and enacting a very unique expression of her own online activism. To this effect, Keller (2012: 435) argues that historically girls are often constructed in a precarious position where they are encouraged to engage in political debate but always in the shadow of 'patriarchal constructions of activism that privileges formal political activities'. Through blogging, Ashley is seeking to de-territorialise the 'appropriateness' of conduct and opinion which she feels is so limiting at school, and she is actively eluding age-based exclusions and the patriarchal ways in which she feels she is being disadvantaged at school for being a young girl.



Illustration from Ashley's blog, a critique of "strong female character feminism".

This screenshot from Ashley's blog shows her use of satire and dry humour that she feels are so difficult to exhibit at her school. Ashley's article presents a critique of what she calls "strong female character" feminism. In the screenshot Ashley begins with this captivating, witty line, "Good news! Feminists aren't bra-burning, man-hating serial aborters anymore... we're now the cool kids in town!". Ashley continues

her critique with the following “Jennifer Lawrence, Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus are all falling over their skirts to call themselves feminists, the entertainment industry is mass-producing strong female characters..Isn’t it good that our movement is being popularised?...no, not really”. In this blog post Ashley is producing the becoming-feminist which she struggles so much to actualise at school. Here Ashley is witty, humorous, tongue-in-cheek and very critical, using Ahmed’s term, Ashley is ‘killing the joy’ of girl power which she feels has seeped into feminism lately because of the publicity given to it by celebrities (Keller and Ringrose, 2015). Ashley is constructing a critique which reflects her unhappiness and non-conformity, two very difficult traits to exhibit at her school (Ringrose and Renold, 2016). Ashley is seen in this blog engaging in a wider discussion which outlines post-feminism and rejects the coopting of feminism by neoliberalism and consumerism through the image of the strong liberated and empowered woman (Baer, 2016; Retallack et al, 2016, Keller and Ringrose, 2015). Ashley continues to interweave her becoming-political here as she writes, “One issue with feminism becoming trendy is that...then they tell us what to do and buy to resemble this perfect character so that we consume more. This happens with all trends...and it is starting to happen with feminism”. These are very sophisticated arguments which are accessible to Ashley because of her love of writing, her knowledge of politics and the importance of becoming-feminist. Blogging has served as creative and very meaningful outlet for Ashley to reflect on, and as she says, “trace her interest” in feminism.

Blogging has also become crucial for Ashley as she also experienced alienation and that she was ignored as a young feminist at her school. When Ashley delivered her assembly talk on body confidence and society and announced to the whole school that she was a feminist she felt excited at the time but also isolated by teachers who dismissed her. Ashley’s experience could be aligned with Keller’s (2012) research in which she interviewed four young feminists who in their coming towards feminism drew from online blogs such as Jezebel, Feministing and FBomb to validate their views. Ashley is producing some of these cultural texts on feminism that contribute to the creation and maintenance of a supportive online ‘community...crucial to the fostering of girls’ feminist identities and ability to engage in feminist activism’ (Keller, 2012: 436). Ashley actively encourages her friends to see her latest blogs as she seeks to create a wider community of girls interested in these issues and in the process asserting her own becoming as a feminist. However, Ashley finds that her group of friends at school are not interested in these sort of things and she has struggled, both to challenge and de-territorialise the patriarchal cultures of the school and to form a supportive community around these issues. This is where the social networking site of Tumblr has enabled flows and possibilities which allow Ashley to continue with her feminist becoming.



In summary, Ashley's school territory is marked by its emphasis on academic attainment and by the school patriarchal cultures. Ashley's becoming-feminist at school experiences this territory as an uneasy composition of interactions and social relations in which she is academically successful and praised, but one in which she is continually challenged because of her confident manner and critique of school practices. As discussed Ashley has pursued de-territorialisations at her school, which have resulted in her coming up against teachers and other school management hierarchies (Ringrose and Renold, 2016). However, Ashley finds online platforms emancipatory and has assembled with social media to respond to and strengthen flows of her becoming-feminist.

### *5.2.2 Becoming-Feminist on Tumblr by Mobilising Feminist Imagery*

In this section I argue that Ashley's becoming-feminist on Tumblr is underpinned by the sense of community and spreading of creative visual imagery found on the site. As a site Tumblr has offered Ashley numerous affordances and vernaculars that help Ashley assemble with a wider feminist community. Examples of these are following feminist blogs, private messaging with people with feminist blogs, reblogging feminist material and mini-blogging on the site herself. Fostering supportive feminist relationships is something that became hard for Ashley because of her experienced alienation at school and the lack of willingness by her school friends to engage with feminism. In contrast, Ashley is very positive about Tumblr, "what I like about Tumblr is that it's a space for free spirited individuals...people post very real, very raw things, people posting about their troubles...Tumblr is my space...many of the things I post are to challenge sometimes how girls I know think...I really started to get into feminism". Sociality on Tumblr primarily happens through blogging, reblogging and liking posts. The site allows for an emphasis on the content of blogs and not on other aspects, such as, friend lists, or lots of personal information, like on Facebook. Ashley explained how Tumblr created a space to form supportive relationships; "I'm on there [Tumblr] because these are like-minded people who post stuff that makes me think, they are friends who care about the things that matter to me". Tumblr as a site is predominantly more used to circulate content than it is to show friendships, or friends lists. This has been discussed as allowing people to 'bare more' about their private lives, and users in turn feel that they interact with people more meaningfully, people who have a greater insight into their identity and desires, fostering intimacy, difficult to sustain offline elsewhere (Hart, 2015: 201). Ashley's assemblage with Tumblr as becoming-feminist points to what Papacharissi (2015: 99) calls the 'networked sense of self', one which is always tuned in platforms that are 'always-on', and are realised through crafted 'gestures of performativity'. Similarly, Ashley has entangled herself on feminist Tumblelogs (Tumblr's name for personal pages) which enable her to view

feminism more widely, and perform a becoming as a feminist through the online gestures and mobilisations of blogging and reblogging content, which she she finds critical, meaningful and inspiring.

For Ashley, Tumblr has become instrumental in her becoming-feminist, because of its feminist community and opportunities to view and mobilise creative feminist content. Ashley says that reblogging is one of her favourite things to do on the site and she particularly likes the visual blogs and the many images she comes across on Tumblr which her friends post and repost. Mix creative content and the imagery on Tumblr have been said to contribute to the increase visibilities of marginalised communities and groups, such as feminists, queer and trans people (Cho, 2015; Warfield, 2016). For Ashley, Tumblr is a very important space to critically engage with her becoming-feminist, with each reblog to her own blog and liking of a mini-blog or image she is augmenting her position within the feminist community she is part of on Tumblr (Keller, 2012; Keller et al, 2016). This is also a de-territorialisation of her school community of friends which she says are not interested in the same issues she is interested in, but the friends she has made on Tumblr are closer to her, even when they might not be geographically, “my Tumblr friends are from all over the world, like Canada, Australia...and they think more like me, even more than my friends at school”. Whilst Ashley has contact with people from different countries on Tumblr, what binds them together is not regular friendly chat, or spoken communications, but their everyday online feminist gestures and posts. Ashley is very reflexive of why her school friends reject feminism, she says, “I see my friends [at school] so influenced by mainstream, and you know...mainstream stuff, like mainstream music and videos...I think it’s actually harmful, very bad for girls, because it makes you think that this stuff is normal. Like this couple fighting and the guy pulls the girl towards him and she spits at him, if you don’t talk about it then it’s just like that’s the way it is”. Ashley is referring here to the music video by Rihanna and Eminem ‘Love the way you lie’, where the dramatisation accompanying the song shows graphic physical fighting between a man and woman quickly followed by scenes of a sexual nature.

Reflecting further, Ashley makes a direct comparison between her friends at school and her friends online saying, “my Tumblr friends would definitely oppose this sort of stuff, violence against women, toxic romance and sexism overall”. Ashley’s assemblage with Tumblr has resulted in meaningful friendships for Ashley, but not in a traditional sense, but rather as a form of online community activism interwoven by feminist acts of friendship (Retallack et al, 2016; Keller and Ringrose, 2015; Keller, 2012), in the form of reblogs and likes. Ashley’s assemblage with Tumblr evokes what Papacharissi refers to as a ‘personal politic’; a becoming which is about more than preference, but about performances that ‘disrupt dominant narratives’ and become a ‘social awareness platform that affords networked and condensed performances of

the self' (2015: 100). Below are some of Ashley's posts which she has reblogged from her group of friends on Tumblr and represent the feminist thinking that she seeks on the site.



Illustration from Ashley's Tumblelog.

Ashley's assemblage with Tumblr has opened up new vocabulary and new feminist criticality that layer her becoming-feminist further (Keller and Ringrose, 2015). This screenshot from Ashley's Tumblr is a reblog which represents how society continues to endorse and allow for rape culture to continue. The post is direct and assertive, black bold letters against a white background, focusing the attention on the message. The post also contains important terms and phrases in feminist thinking, such as, 'deserving of rape', and 'misogyny'. Ashley's reblogging of this is an act of support, but also of saying, 'I understand'; it evidences Ashley's immersion in feminism and her learning about it, as Ashley says, "I've learned a lot [on Tumblr] about misogyny, about street harassment, about patriarchy". Ashley's becoming-feminist on Tumblr is affirmed by the constant mobilising of feminist online material, this occurs through likes, comments, blogs and reblogs on the site, all forming an assemblage of de-territorialisation, a force of power to challenge the patriarchal cultures she experiences at school. Ashley is engaging in an online feminist form of activism and critical engagement, to this effect, Keller et al (2016) have written about how young girls utilise digital media to document and challenge harassment, misogyny and rape culture, on sites like Twitter and hashtags. Ashley's becoming-feminist also involve the assembling with online artefacts of expression, such as likes and reblogs which have given her not just more knowledge but also the resilience in her becoming-feminist, these mobilisations are a source of strength. As Ashley says, "on Tumblr I mean, it makes me feel more positive, even when I go to school, I feel like my school is not "it",

like I know it because online things are possible and more open, and that makes me feel more positive about it all”.



Illustration from Ashley's Tumblelog.

The previous image is another example of Ashley's online becoming-feminist as underscored by her assemblage with feminist imagery. One of the first things that this screenshot is addressing is the notion of toxic romance that traps girls into abusive relationships. The baby pink jacket symbolises a traditional femininity and the message, 'stop teaching girls that boys are mean to them because they like them', is a challenge to how girls socially learn to be submissive and accepting in relationships. Ashley finds Tumblr very interesting because of the centrality it gives to images, and Ashley describes herself as "although being a very good writer, "not being very artistic", and Tumblr with its focus on mini-blogs that are normally made of mix content and lots of images is very attractive to her, "on Tumblr....there are some really striking images that when you see them they make you think, or make you feel angry or sometimes sick to your stomach". The proliferation of images and mix media content has been described as 'transmedia literacies' and they are a prevalent feature on Tumblr (Gürsimsek, 2016: 329). Ashley's assemblage with Tumblr is mediated mainly through the reblogging of these images, they are a very important feature of Tumblr blogs or 'Tumblelogs' within the online feminist community that Ashley belongs to and the re-blogs act as flows of becoming-feminist. Ashley's reblogs are also in support of femi-

nism, this resonates with Warfield's (2016) work on Tumblr and how the act of reblogging someone's selfie was in support of members of the LGBTQ community. Warfield's (2016) research found that even when the selfies were of complete strangers, people would still reblog them onto their own blogs in support of non-normative sexualities. Ashley's liking and reblogging of feminist content and imagery is an act of feminist becoming and engagement with issues that matter to her and the wider community.

During her interview Ashley explained how some of the images she encountered on Tumblr have been "eye-openers". Ashley recounts:

"there is one I found which was a woman vomiting newspapers headlines, criticising women and the idealisations of women in society and I actually felt sick to my stomach when I saw it, because vomiting is disgusting, but it was also so meaningful, like, to think that we have to put up with all that, and that we are that. We have all those criticisms inside us somehow".

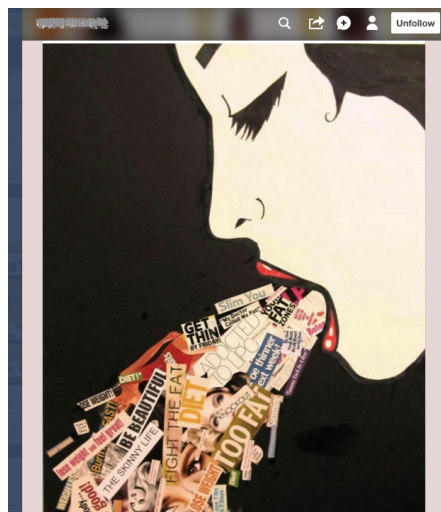


Illustration from Ashley's Tumblelog.

Ashley is understanding and extending her own feminist views and ideas by being on Tumblr and following feminist tumblelogs; Keller (2015) describes this as education, one of the primary practices in which girl bloggers engage online. In light of Ashley's experiences of schooling, which endorse academic achievements in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, education is reduced to these subjects and issues of equality, social justice and feminism find no place in the world of school.

Ashley's post on Tumblr represents her criticisms of media portrayals of women, the cultures of consumerism enveloping women in society and the dangerous narratives of powerful and strong female icons. Ashley finds this image captivating and highly expressive of the modern oppressions women face in today's society. Ashley also likes the representation of these issues in one powerful image, which she

feels she could not create herself since she sees herself more as a writer than as a visual artist. Becoming-feminist for Ashley is marked by assemblages with various forms of online content, (Renninger, 2014) with feminist art being very prominent in her experiences.

In summary, Ashley's becoming-feminist as she assembles with Tumblr has led her to seek out spheres of de-territorialisation online, that are characterised by her assemblage with blogging as enabling feminist writing, and Tumblr as opening up educational and creative opportunities to engage with feminist blogs, art and imagery and forming friendships. Ashley's use, mobilisation and engagement with images, texts and mini-blogs from her Tumblr friends have allowed her to reflect more deeply on aspects of feminism discovered online and still continue to play an important part of her becoming-feminist.

### **5.3. Skeeks: Heteronormative Territories at School**

At school Skeeks had been the target of homophobic comments and unpleasant banter for some time. During my fieldwork at the school, I heard comments in corridors, and everyday talk which seemed like 'light banter', however, it never became an issue involving teachers or management since Skeeks responded to these interactions by making his romantic relationship with his girlfriend very public. Having access to a smartphone and to the social media site of Instagram have allowed Skeeks to navigate through school politics of homophobia which had identified him as a 'soft' boy and target (Renold, 2010; Bowley, 2013).

With its emphasis on academic success Richmond Academy has a tendency to ignore student issues, such as bullying which is normally dismissed as harmless. Skeeks is also a quiet boy who says he does not want to "cause trouble", or draw attention to himself, particularly since he sees himself as very secure and resourceful. Whilst he enjoys the company of his close friends at Richmond Academy, in the wider peer group he is the target of jokes and comments about his girlfriend as being "imaginary"; and that he is still a "virgin". Skeeks' girlfriend is not in the school context as a student and not even in his immediate community as she lives "a train ride away". The lack of bodily presence of his girlfriend in the school context have led to these comments becoming regular jokes, where the improbability of something is expressed with phrases such as, "just as likely as Skeeks having a girlfriend".

This situation is made worse by by the constant talk by boys about having girls' phone numbers, or dating girls from the school and other schools at the same time. This regular talk is described as deriving from more hegemonic masculine be-

liefs that dictate having multiple partners makes boys more experienced and sexually confident (Bell et al., 2015). The dominant masculine school culture at Richmond Academy revolves around some aspects of a hegemonic masculinity which is fiercely heteronormative, with the 'objectification of women being a good measure of heterosexuality' (Bell et al, 2015: 206). Nevertheless, there are other masculine identities, such as that of Skeeks which is based on being emotionally close, romantic and discreet, "I don't have to prove anything to anybody, me not talking about her all the time doesn't mean we're not close or together". Within the wider, more boastful heteronormative peer groups that Skeeks is a part of, his reservedness and circumspection is interpreted as closet homosexuality. Although Skeeks continues to be discreet about his romantic relationship; he has created content on social media that he thinks will alleviate some of this banter he has to face regularly at school.

### *5.3.1 Becoming-Heterosexual: Skeeks' Postings and Selfie-ing on Instagram*

In this section I argue that online postings and selfie-ing on Instagram are part of a heterosexual becoming relating directly to the offline experiences Skeeks had in school. More specifically, I shall show that Skeeks' story narrates how both online and offline territorialisations are used as a way of establishing his becoming. Drawing on Skeeks' story I shall show that Skeeks' posts on Instagram, his use of selfies with his girlfriend have allowed him to forge a heterosexual becoming amongst gender and sexuality territorialisations at school which have labelled him as 'gay'. Sharing images on Instagram is a very prevalent practice, Skeeks says of the site, "Instagram is like a cool place to play around with filters and colours, and editing and I also post my art pictures on it. Selfies, lots of selfies, haha", as of last year 20 billion images had been shared on the site (Zappavigna, 2016). Instagram with its suitability for sharing pictures and allowing users to use colourful filters and write short comments has become one of Skeeks' favourites. Some of the nuances of Skeeks' narrative on Instagram point to the site as harnessing his heterosexual becomings.

I argue that Skeeks' challenging of his 'soft boy' identity took place through the practice of selfie-ing on Instagram. Although there has been some research exploring the phenomenon of selfies (Bruno et al, 2014; Warfield 2016; Walker, 2005), and some research exploring the tensions around performance of sexuality and social media (Coppock and Gillet-Swan 2016; Ramsey and Horan, 2016), Skeeks' example, along with other examples in my study, show that there is a need to locate selfie-ing as a performative practice beyond the usages of social media, to account for what happens offline as well as online. In the case of Skeeks there is a connection between his offline life and his online posts, which is how subjectivity is constructed through the taking and uploading of certain images (Zappavigna, 2016; Warfield 2017).

There is yet more scope to think through how a becoming is construed as an assemblage with the practice of taking selfies, posting, editing and the social media site itself. Skeeks' online posts used multiple images, ranging from pictures of himself, to playful images of himself and his girlfriend - these were all parts of his heterosexual becoming, a blending of his self-identity, not making concrete statements, rather, capturing what Deleuze calls the 'between-times' and 'between moments' of everyday life. Skeeks' school's territorialisations have played a role in his selfie-ing on Instagram which have led to some de-territorialisations on the site.

Skeeks mentioned in his interview how his interest in art and his quiet personality clashed with dominant masculinities at his school, "Everyone says it's gay. Like I've been called gay just 'cause I don't, I mean I'm not gay, but I don't like, I'm not boisterous and I love photography but that's kind of a way, or a thing to take the piss". The school cultures described by Skeeks have reproduced forgeries of masculinities, or ways of doing boy in accordance with hegemonic forms of masculinity (Jackson, 2002; Robinson, 2006). Whereby boys who transgress the delineations of hegemonic masculinities are used as a resource in everyday school dynamics to forge, continue and reproduce hegemonic masculinities. Skeeks through his love of art and photography, involvement in school art activities and exhibitions, and his quiet personality was seen as a transgressor of hegemonic masculinity at his school and became the target of homophobic comments. Skeeks' experience resembles that of Robinson's (2006: 33) research, where she discusses the case of a young person called 'Paul' who actively participated in ballet and contemporary dance, an image which was not incorporated into hegemonic masculinity within his working class school; 'this transgression from hegemonic masculinity resulted in Paul being perceived as not being a 'real boy' as his gender performance did not constitute many of the regulatory norms considered crucial to hegemonic masculine identity'.

Skeeks navigated his way in a school culture that oppressed him by extending the publicity and visibility of his relationship with his girlfriend on Instagram. His earlier posts on Instagram were selfies of himself, and some art photography posts but his current posts are all overwhelmingly with his girlfriend, hugging, kissing and selfie-ing together. Skeeks' posts point to what Deleuze referred to as the 'movements' the 'between-times', 'between-moments' that make up a becoming, a life, for Deleuze what happens to us throughout our lives is 'prior and irreducible to consciousness...it is expressed, in fact, only when it is reflected on a subject that refers it to objects' (2005: 20-29). This is the essence of assemblages, the between-times which amalgamate various elements. So, becomings are made more tangible through assemblages, and I suggest that Skeeks assemblage with Instagram is inherently to do with a hetero-



sexual becoming, which against the backdrop of schooling; and through the practice of selfie-ing; and other affordances by the social media site, was made possible.

Another reason why Skeeks' assembling with Instagram was instrumental in his heterosexual becoming at school was to do with his girlfriend not attending the same school. In Robinson's research however, the boy 'Paul' was counteracting his othering and the ways in which he was referred to as a 'girl' or a 'poofter' by some of the Year 10 boys in particular by pursuing romantic engagements, and finally being recognised as a 'boyfriend' of a popular girl at his school (2006: 34). In the case of Skeeks, his othering was more difficult to challenge because Skeeks' girlfriend was not at his school, so he could not be visibly and actively seen engaging in girlfriend/boyfriend school cultures, as Skeeks explains, "my girlfriend, she's 19 so she's older than me". Skeeks' lack of engagement in these heterosexual cultures in school are what Renold (2010) has defined as regulatory practices of gender at school. In Skeeks' experience and narrative the elusiveness of his girlfriend, as not being part of the school community, meant that he was not taking part in these intimacies with girls within the realm of school which were instrumental in confirming his masculinity. Renold (2010) theorises these regulatory practices drawing from Butler's heterosexual matrix, which is defined as:

'I use the term heterosexual matrix ... to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalised ... a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility... that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality'

(Butler, 1990: 151).

As with Renold's research (2010) the status of being seen as a boyfriend at the school was an important heterosexual and masculinity affirming practice which Skeeks was constructed as lacking. Also, referring back to Butler's (1990) 'grid of cultural intelligibility' for gender identities and sexualities; I suggest that this grid, in the case of Skeeks involved assembling with the online world and Instagram, to perform a heterosexual becoming. When referring to how he has been called 'gay' at school, Skeeks added that these comments diminished when he started using Instagram. I want to highlight some of the aspects of how Skeeks' postings on Instagram, his use of selfies, social photography and Instagram's features enabled him to give tangibility to a heterosexual becoming, which in turn, was demanded by his school climate.

Selfies were the main type of post populating Skeeks' Instagram, some were just of himself and many others were with his girlfriend, there were no selfies with male or other female friends. Skeeks' assembling with Instagram opens up the some-

times reductive view there is on young people and social media. The practice of selfie-ing and their posting on social media has been conceptualised as a narcissistic practice (Elliot, 2016; Sung et al, 2016), as an addiction (Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, 2016), or as contributing to the hyper-sexualisation of youth (Ramsey and Horan, 2017) in some psychological studies. However, in Skeeks' experience the taking and posting of selfies on Instagram was an important performance which created his co-presence in regulatory gender practices at school (Zappavigna, 2016). This is a different nuance to selfie-ing which presents a counter-narrative to the psychologising of young people's engagements on social media, but also reflects how Skeeks' heterosexual becoming is composed by the assemblage of different elements, involving social media, school cultures and new media practices like selfie-ing.

The selfie-ing that Skeeks engages in and displays on his Instagram leverages him back to the required territorialisations of heterosexuality at his school. Some of which required him to show a romantic interest in girls and the pursuit of a physical relationship with girls. His selfies allow him to show and create a co-presence from the online world of Instagram which reverberates back to the classroom and corridors of his school, this is further evidenced when he says, "I've been called gay...I think that's kind of stopped since I've been on Instagram, or it doesn't bother me much". The postings of pictures and selfies on Instagram where Skeeks is displaying closeness, physical touch and intimacy with his girlfriend work as a repository of important heterosexual tracings which re-territorialise him into the heterosexual matrix of his school. Some of the images below show Skeeks' online engagements on Instagram.



Illustrations. Posts from Skeeks' Instagram.

The importance of the audience can not be underestimated, since Skeeks' Instagram followers' list is partly made up of people from his school and other people whom have requested to follow him. De Ridder (2017: 8) has discussed social media as 'battlegrounds', where some of the difficulties young people encounter when performing sexualities online are due to dealing with the audiences 'lurking', and the au-

diences already given on various social media. Online audiences have traditionally been conceptualised as problematic because of their unpredictability, Instagram being an ‘asymmetrical site’ where you can follow without being required to follow back, increases some of these impacts (Zappavigna, 2016: 273). However, Skeeks is very careful with his online privacy and says “with Instagram, you can lock it down to the point where if you are not my friend you can’t see my pictures and you have to request ‘follow me’ if you want to follow me, you have to request and only then if I say yeah you can then...see my pictures”. So Skeeks has carefully selected his audience on Instagram and has made sure it is made up primarily by members of his school community. Skeeks’ Instagram posts as icons of his performances of (hetero)sexuality were intended for a school audience and this also made Instagram the preferred site since his “Facebook has family”, and was not seen by him as the appropriate site to publicise his relationship with his girlfriend. Additionally, Skeeks’ Facebook as previously discussed was a territorialising marker of his art and photography work. `

#### **5.4. Danielle: Territorialising Aspects of Sexuality in Danielle’s Schooling**

In this section I provide an outline of sexuality territories at Danielle’s school. The school is marked by territorialisations of sexuality which are influential in peer cultures and peer relations at the school, boyfriend/girlfriend cultures are very strong at the school, and this is something I observed in my time at Richmond Academy. The school is always reacting to mini-events or everyday encounters with strict rules and school policies created to stop the recurrence of events but there is very little dialogue between students and teachers.

With the school spending so much time and resource on teaching the curriculum and assessment-centered activities the focus is on driving successful attainment in core subjects. This has in turn led to the school not resourcing other important curricular subjects. Danielle’s prominent comments throughout our interview were expressing her frustration with her school’s position towards Physical, Social and Health Education (PSHE). When I enquired further and asked Danielle what she meant by this she replied: “...my school is rubbish at teaching anything in relation to this. They haven’t even started to brush against issues around teen sexuality, consent, bisexuality, homosexuality, harassment, etc”. Sexuality and other gender-relevant issues have always been neglected when it comes to schooling. Whether we try to locate how learning about sexuality occurs in schooling (Renold, 2010; Ringrose, 2011), or how there is a need for a recognition of sexualities in the world of school (McAllum, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2015; Lapointe, 2017), the processes of formal education continue to overlook and essentialise many issues around gender and sexuality. Danielle’s school is no exception and the territorialisations at her school are composed by a reactive culture to discussing issues of gender and sex education, a reluctance to recognise or discuss issues in relation to homophobic cultures, as experienced by Skeeks (see

section 5.2.1) and a lack of appropriate teaching resources allocated to these issues. I witnessed many of the instances that Danielle refers to, as the school management cultures are very assertive in concentrating resources and school time on the core subjects and on students who are borderlining C grades. Danielle continued to explain some of these issues at school surrounding the patchy provision of PSHE, "...and like my geography teacher is sometimes doing PSHE and citizenship too! He's blagging it....they feel that we don't really need to know any of this stuff [PSHE]".

The territorial assemblage of school as explained by Danielle's bears some parallels with what Alldred and Fox (2015) have investigated applying the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of territorialization to the teaching of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in secondary schools, focusing on young men. Alldred and Fox (2015: 909) argue that the existing 'micropolitical processes within schools provide the starting point for the exploration of young men and sexuality...how sexuality manifests has little to do with personal preferences or dispositions, and everything to do with how bodies, things, ideas and social institutions assemble'. Danielle sees the institutional elements as lacking, through the deployment of one teacher for three subjects, and the lack of communication between teachers and students on everyday issues. Danielle also feels that she is seen as a risky subject at school because of her lack of involvement in heterosexual, romantic relationships and boyfriend/girlfriend cultures that make up the gendered everydayness of the school (Renold, 2010).

Similarly, the territorialisations at Danielle's school entangle the young people with 'heterosexist and homophobic' harrassments, or everyday aggressions (Renold, 2002: 415) that reproduce attitudes to sexualities and hegemonic gender relations which ultimately affect her. Danielle talks about how these everyday agressions take place, "in corridors, it can get bad, where boys and girls are like dying to touch each other and also boys being so rude grabbing you whether you want to be grabbed or not". Danielle feels that these are the sort of things that should be discussed in PSHE and finds it frustrating that the school can turn a blind eye to these practices. Danielle's narrative resonates with parts of Renold's (2017) research with secondary school girls in which the respondents spoke of episodes of everyday sexual violence at school and created artistic responses to reclaim some of the practices and verbal abuse they were experiencing. Danielle recounts:

"in corridors ... there is a lot of stuff happening... because the school's such a big maze and you have these long corridors and dodgy corners.... there's this stupid game, finding out if you're ticklish and boys will grab you by the waist or the ribs and squeeze it to see if you laugh, and it's both annoying when people laugh and when they don't because they just shouldn't be grabbing you at school...and then another one does it and it turns into this big crowd, cringey, I have had it happen to me a few times but I don't laugh, so then you're weird

and everyone starts like thinking, you think you're all that. The whole thing just makes me cringe... And if you don't like it then they say you're too skinny anyway, or you're too fat, or you're spastic".

The school are always producing in-school policy to avoid touching between boys and girls, including in the corridors, but as recounted by Danielle the school does not explain or have an open conversation, either in PSHE or any other space, why touching is banned or deemed inappropriate. One example of this is how the school responded to the events in the corridors, by introducing a 'silent' one way system, whereby students cannot use corridors to walk in two directions, and staff patrol the corridors in between school periods to ensure there is no talking, therefore avoiding eye contact and talk. Yet, there was no recognition to address the sexist and harassing practices occurring at the school, either in classes, PSHE or in school assemblies.

Danielle's position is that she believes issues of gender and sexual inequalities should be discussed openly at school - PSHE is an important outlet for this. She feels she is an outsider at school for believing in the importance of these issues and that her school's attempts are less than satisfactory. She told me how because of her love and verbal support of a gay Youtube personality called Joey Graceffa, she has experienced upsetting comments at school: "Like for example, Joey, he's like absolutely great, he stood up for himself, he came out really publicly...he didn't care, he came out, he gave people a lot of courage to stand up for themselves. So some people at school don't like that or are not like...they do not agree with what he stands for. I don't know if they are like homophobic or just plain ignorant or, they just don't care about these issues, but I do, and even if I get a bit of bullshit at school I don't care. That's who I am". The territorialisations at school as experienced and explained by Danielle show a school environment marked by heterosexist and homophobic cultures which are accepted as light banter or inevitable school playfulness. However, these are marked territorialisations of school gender and sexuality (Alldred and Fox, 2015) that create a disconnect between some young people, including Danielle and their school environment.

In all, the way in which this school as a social institution assembles is by, overlooking the importance of these issues, providing patchy PSHE sessions for young people, turning a blind eye to students' experiences of homophobia and heterosexist harassment at school, and by under-resourcing PSHE related topics to drive attainment levels in other core subjects. To this effect, Richmond Academy, like other schools in the UK, does not appear to challenge the prevalence of harassments and harmful school cultures (Renold, 2002) and seeks to meet the minimum requirements; whilst not challenging pedagogically, or educationally the prevalence of harassments, heterosexual hierarchies, unequal gender relations and sexual violence at school. Danielle, however, seeks to deterritorialise these school relations and to cre-

ate these de-territorialisations she assembles with the social media site, Tumblr. This is examined in the following section of this chapter.

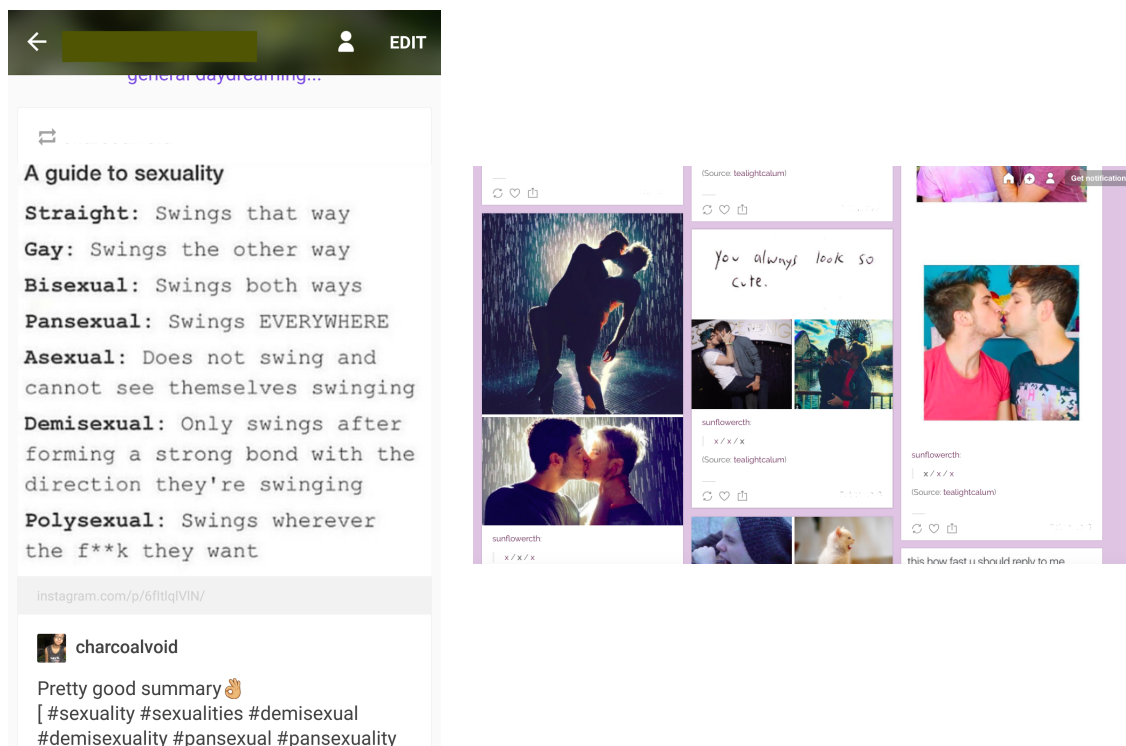
#### *5.4.1 Becoming-biromantic: Blogging and Co-opting Content as De-territorialisations on Tumblr*

The territorialising forces at school have left Danielle disappointed about her school environment and in this section I will discuss how Danielle produces new flows of becoming in her assemblage with Tumblr. This section will explore some of the deterritorialisations of online learning and content generated by Danielle to construct a becoming as biromantic and bisexual.

Danielle is an avid Tumblr user; she engages by using all the key features that the site offers, which include, microblogging, following blogs, liking and re-blogging other people's blogs and user-generated content. As a social media, Tumblr is full of user-generated content, that is perceived to be edgy or cutting-edge, with features that seem to facilitate supportive and encouraging networks. Danielle says of Tumblr, "I love it. I find it so easy. At first I found it really difficult... You can post GIFs, video edits, pictures, you can pretty much do anything on Tumblr, I post more original stuff on there than I do on Twitter but I also reblog people's things, everyone is so nice, and you follow blogs of things you like and they might follow you back. It's basically like a blog website, but maybe less public, like not a lot of personal info, just re-blogs and likes, more private than a blog". Danielle is describing the complexity of the sociality of Tumblr by emphasising how on Tumblr the definition of 'social' is not like on most social media (Gross, 2013). Tumblr is a social media site where the emphasis is not on publicising friends list, numbers of likes, or lots of personal information, unlike other social media sites, such as, Twitter and Facebook. Tumblr's asociality highlights the importance of content over people on the site, also because it does not demand the input of personal information, there is a sense of anonymity that is 'conducive to performing non-normative subjectivities' (Seko and Lewis, 2016: 3). Danielle's assemblage with Tumblr has opened a whole new world of learning and understanding around gender and sexuality which have flowed into a becoming-biromantic within the LGBTQ dimensions of Tumblr (Cho, 2015). Danielle asserts, "I've learnt almost everything from Tumblr because they have lots of, like, sexuality posts (...) anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist blogs, there are lots of feminists on Tumblr too. I use it a lot, like everyday I'm on it, It's like a sort of cool place to air your opinions and rant a little bit. I rant about school because PSHE stuff is so pointless".

With regards to de-territorialisations Tumblr has transformed Danielle's views on issues of sexuality and gender equality, despite her negative experiences and associations with school as a sexual territory. The 'movements of de-territorialization' on

Tumblr are realisations of power by Danielle in the given assemblage, assemblages are always about power (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 154 These de-territorialising movements were easier online than offline for Danielle, particularly since Tumblr allows her to have some anonymity and at school she would be going against very prevalent and hostile heterosexist and heterosexual cultures. Some of the movements of de-territorialisations on Tumblr as expressed by Danielle involved the practice of following blogs, liking and re-blogging, all important movements in her becoming-biromantic. Danielle explains, “with Tumblr it’s difficult to dislike something... You follow blogs of things you like and you reblog their stuff so it’s like always building up on good stuff, like on other social media things can get a bit weird, like Twitter or sometimes Facebook...but on Tumblr is all like, reblog, like, or share, so you’re...more positive and supportive...Like you’re not going to reblog something to appear on your own blog if you don’t like it or don’t find it cute”.



Illustrations. Danielle’s snapshot of her ‘Tumblrlog’.

This eclectic combination of passionate and romantic kissing scenes of young men which are re-blogged blogs on Danielle’s Tumblr shows her support for the LGBTQ community, and represents flows of her online becoming-biromantic work. Danielle’s assemblage with Tumblr has become purposeful in her flowing into a particular sexual identity. Danielle’s re-blogs and likes in her personal gallery are ‘social

curations' on Tumblr embracing what Hogan (2010) calls the exhibition of the self through a bricolage of digital artifacts. The sociality of Tumblr is then expressed through following blogs, liking blogs and re-blogging content onto your own blog. I argue that Danielle is 'curating' her becoming-biromantic by carefully, engaging in the 'social practice of finding, sorting, and assembling digital content' (Seko, and Lewis, 2016: 4).

Danielle's assemblage with Tumblr allows her to co-opt online content, forging her own becoming-biromantic. With Tumblr's re-blogging practices Danielle's profile, or to use the used term "Tumblrlog", is mainly composed of her reblogs and liked blogs. Danielle explains the main vernaculars of Tumblr and the ones she uses the most, "you can post GIFs, video edits, pictures, you can pretty much do anything on Tumblr, it's like weirdly wonderful, I post more original stuff on there...but I also reblog people's things". Danielle's blogging and reblogging is a citational and mobilising practice of becoming, Deleuze (2005) argued that becomings are made possible through multiplicities, and I suggest that the multiple acts of reblogging and coopting on Tumblr help Danielle to navigate her own becoming.

Overall, Danielle's assemblage with Tumblr created flows of becoming which helped her de-territorialise issues around gender and sexuality as experienced at school (see section 4.2.3). The relaxed approach to personal profiling and information on the site provided an anonymity which Danielle utilised to produce a collaged curated space where her online identity was forming as biromantic. The emphasis on content over people (Seko and Lewis, 2016) that Tumblr offers opened up new planes of information and opportunity to Danielle, and her assemblage was actively re-negotiating the conservative and rigid approach of her school to gender and sexualities.

#### *5.4.2 Becoming-biromantic: "I was learning about me"*

In this section I will discuss how Danielle's assemblage with Tumblr is helping her learn about things that go against the territorialisations of her school, and also help her forge a becoming which de-territorialises prevalent heterosexual school cultures. Tumblr's most used social feature is reblogging with 93% of the site's post being reblogs (Seko and Lewis, 2016: 4), Danielle's reblogging of people's blogs is in support of causes and everyday struggles of many people, but in particular, Danielle reblogs LGBTQ images and blogs. As a 'Tumblrlogger' Danielle's blog works as a repository of mix images, gifs, texts, and other media which she talks about as helping her to learn about herself and other people.

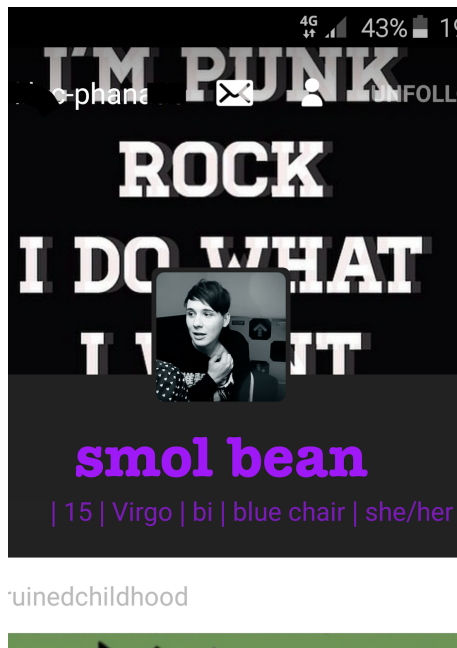
For Danielle, Tumblr is an "awesome" platform; one which also compensates for missed learning opportunities at school, and one which becomes a site for flows of



resistance. Danielle comments on Tumblr point to how she has learnt on the site; she explains: “It’s really important to me, I’ve learnt a lot, like a lot, from being online and from people online, like school falls short”. In the case of Danielle, the act of reblogging on Tumblr was as much a citational act of sexuality becoming and support of the LGBTQ community (Warfield, 2016), as it was an act of learning about herself and non-normative subjectivities (Cho, 2015). Youth online learning has been a developing topic in academic educational research (Ünlüsoy et al, 2013; Tan, 2013). Interestingly, digital learning goes beyond understanding the act of learning as something that occurs only cognitively; it seeks to explain how the very digital means through which learning happens, on connected networks, mediated activity and communication affordances re-shapes individual learning. Danielle’s learning about gender and sexuality on Tumblr is a de-territorialisation of territorialisations at school, as Danielle recounts, “I’ve learnt it all from Tumblr. Like we haven’t even been taught this, we were just told once [at school] that there was straight and there was gay and there’s nothing in between and I thought that doesn’t actually really apply to me”. The abundance of LGBTQ imagery, material and blogs on Tumblr has been discussed as increasing the visibilities of LGBTQ communities, whilst the acts of liking and reblogging afford an ongoing conversation between the individual and the masses of content found online (Duguay, 2016). In this way Danielle is engaged in an ongoing process of self-presentation, and becoming, learning about gender and sexuality through the platform vernacular of reblogging, “Like on Tumblr, reblogging taught me even things, like, transgender, pansexual, panromantic, biromantic, gender fluid...So now I have greater knowledge of things... it’s changed the way I look at myself but it also, like, shows up how other people feel awkward about this sort of stuff. But everyone on Tumblr is like accepting and stuff, in a sense I was learning about me, so I can be more open...So lately we’ve (Danielle and her mum) talked about me being biromantic... and she’s also learning from me”. Danielle’s also materialised some of these feelings and becoming on Tumblr as the illustrations below show.

Becoming-biromantic for Danielle was channeled through her assembling with Tumblr, as a process of self-awareness, self-discovery and self-presentation, (Duguay, 2016). On the site, she found a space to embed different ideas, to learn about herself and to make her own becoming visible, as per the illustrations provided where Danielle writes that she is ‘bi’ in her personal profile and also in a mini-blog. Danielle’s assemblage with Tumblr enabled this becoming, as the site became an environment that felt safe at the time, particularly since she was so critical of schooling, “I think...it’s helped me quite a bit because...it’s taught me... I’ve learnt things, which have also made me think about myself, and...question school a bit more about, things my school hasn’t taught me”.

Illustrations. Danielle’s Tumblr personal information and mini-blog on her sexuality.



In Danielle's experience, there is an obvious rupture between the social and cultural landscapes of school and Tumblr, marked by the failings of school to address issues around gender, sexuality, homophobia and sexism. To this effect, Ringrose's (2011: 602) argument that 'school spaces are shaped through commodified gendered and sexualized norms and idealizations', which territorialise the space is useful for understanding what Danielle feels she is going up against. Territorialisations at her school are hierarchical, rule-intensive, strictly bounded to the school cultures she resents and dislikes. So, in Danielle's experience the territorialisation of school occurs within a relation of power that she finds disempowering and neglectful; yet, the online (i.e. her Tumblr engagements) re-contextualises, re-addresses and enhances her ability to respond through online de-territorialisations.

In all, the online opportunities on Tumblr have been very useful for Danielle to embed herself in a participatory web culture of support and recognition, and she considers herself a member of the LGBTQ community by asserting her identity as biromantic. The flows of becoming in her assemblage are marked by the interactions of blogging, liking and reblogging content which shapes and transforms her understanding of her own sexuality. Tumblr digitally sustained ways and affordances which helped Danielle problematise her own identity, but which also helped her to work out her own sexuality becoming.

### **5.5 Dan: “I’m doing too many interesting stuff to be posting”: territorialising ‘laddish’ masculinity**

Dan is white, a sixth form student at Richmond Academy, and someone who is very popular at the school; he describes himself as middle-class, and he is liked by teachers and other students because of his sense of humour. Dan regularly exchanges jokes with teachers, particularly male teachers at the school; who very regularly respond to Dan by sharing a similar sense of humour and ‘speaking the same laddish language’ at school (Jackson, 2010: 511). Dan’s popularity rested heavily on being identified as ‘one of the boys’, laddish, cool and funny. There has been an association between laddish masculinities school cultures and working-class identity, perhaps this is facilitated by Paul Willis’s (1977) ethnographic study *Learning to Labour* where his boys were discussed as ‘lads’ who were working-class, white and disaffected at school. Yet, Dan does not embody the anti-school cultures associated with laddish behaviour; he does not describe himself as the academic type but chose to go on to sixth form ‘with his mates’. Dan’s masculine identity evokes Francis’ (2010; 2008) argument regarding how there has been a reclaiming of laddism by middle-classes, and that the behaviours associated with lads should not be confined to a particular class or ethnic group, or to educationally disaffected groups. The territorialisations around masculinity at Richmond Academy overlap with laddism, and the hegemonic masculinity at the school was defined by markers such as the ones discussed by Jackson (2010: 506) ‘having a laugh’, ‘liking and playing sport’, ‘wearing the right sort of clothes’, ‘hanging out with mates’ and a ‘rejection of overt academic hard work’; Dan’s masculinity is a reflection of these characteristics.

Yet, there is another important marker for the hegemonic masculinity at Richmond Academy, as Dan describes it, social media is “more important for girls, to take a selfie, to look good, I don’t need that”. Dan talks about how he was not very interested in social media and says he hardly posts or updates his Facebook. Dan describes his Facebook as “dated” and says that he does not update it on purpose because he does not want to just “follow the crowd”, Dan explains, “like if I’m going on a night out, I wouldn’t take a photo to put it on Facebook, it’s annoying how...people just go out to take selfies”. Although the territorialisations of friendships and sociality at school as experienced by Dan are dominated by social media as tags, likes and comments are seen as social bonds amongst youth (Harvey, Ringrose and Gill, 2013; boyd, 2011; boyd 2007), it seems very important for Dan not to be seen to be trying too hard, or at all, online, since this is seen as a feminine practice. Dan is critical and mocks the ritual of posing, editing, selecting and posting photos or other material online as it is perceived as inherently feminine, “I probably shouldn’t be telling you this but, she [Dan’s girlfriend] does, if she thinks she looks nice, she’ll upload it and it kind of boosts her confidence, ‘cause she’ll get a lot of like people, like...the whole thing is

just a bit stupid". Dan's comments point to how within the territorialisation of hegemonic masculinity at Richmond Academy, social media use is derided because of its perceived prevalence amongst girls (Hutton et al, 2016; Dobson, 2014; Manago, 2013).

Although Dan does not seem to be very keen on social media he does say that "Facebook is the main thing", yet, Dan's refusal to actively post on the site is distinctively gendered. His resistance to post regularly on Facebook is produced within a territorialisation of masculinity where using Facebook vernaculars - posting, commenting, tagging, liking - is seen as needy, too much 'hard work', or girls' work (De Ridder and Van Bauwel, 2013), and in opposition with hegemonic gender regimes around masculinities at the school.

Similarly, the territorialisations of masculinity at Richmond Academy construct social media use as a waste of time. Dan says, "it's just not cool you know...it wouldn't occur to many of the boys, like I don't post because I'm busy, like if I go out I'm talking to girls, I'm out having a good time, I'm with my mates, I'm doing too many interesting stuff to be posting". The emphasis for Dan is on making 'stuff' happen, not documenting it on social media; on 'real boys' doing 'real things'. This territorialisation of masculinity positions boys, not as producers, but as 'doers', pursuing and seeking action, rather than keeping a close record of the action that takes place to post on social media, a practice seen as inherently feminine (Manago, 2013).

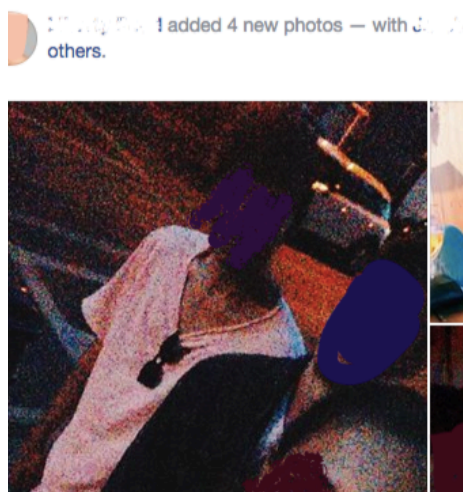
Overall, Dan is seen as laying an important claim to masculinity by not engaging actively with social media. The territorialisations of hegemonic masculinity at Richmond Academy which I discuss as reflecting laddish cultures demanding a cool, effortless popularity go against the perceived 'hard work' and laboured practices that characterise the online. These practices and the labour involved in carefully producing content, selecting, editing, tagging people, and posting it online (Warfield, 2016) are talked about with disdain and derision because of its innate femininity, and they are dismissed as 'what girls do'. Dan is territorialised as a 'one of the boys' who is in the middle of the 'real action', and who does not need orchestrated efforts to get attention (Jackson, 2010), as Dan says "I don't need to use Facebook, like constantly...if I want to get a girl's number I just get it".

#### *5.5.1 Becoming-popular: Facebook Friend Tagging as Creating New Territories*

In this section I argue that although territorialisations of hegemonic masculinity at Richmond Academy needed to avoid trivial, effortful online work, the Facebook vernacular of tagging was important in Dan's popularity. Other people's numerous tags re-territorialised him as popular all the while presenting a challenge to the assumption that the production of a hegemonic laddish masculinity has no need for online en-

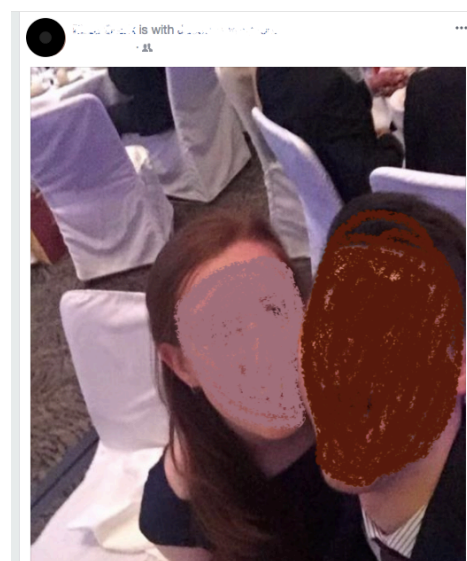
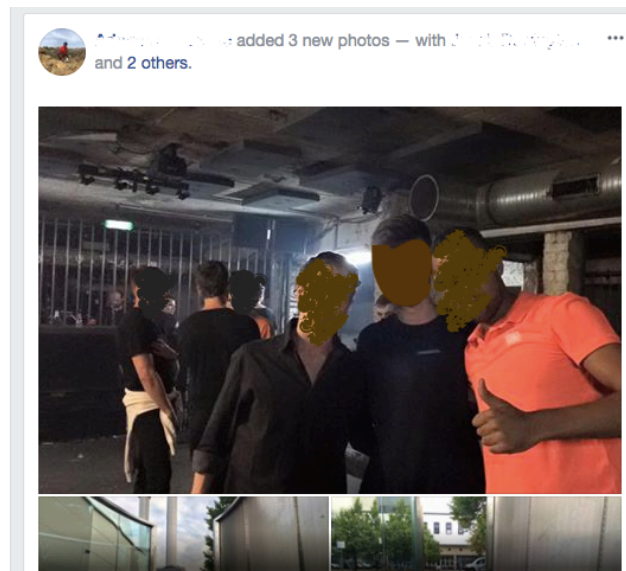
gagements. Although Dan was adamantly talking about his use of Facebook as sporadic and his profile as “dated”; his Facebook profile is by no means dated, but rather, an unravelling collage of weekly images and taggings which show Dan with various friends, and in various settings, liked by many of his friends and commented on by many others. I argue this is a de-territorialisation of how Dan experiences masculinity as not needing the online, instead, Dan becomes visible through Facebook friend tagging and this is fed back to his school and strengthens his hegemonic masculinity image.

Dan’s masculinity performances as a cool and popular boy rested heavily on drinking with friends, socialising and going out. This was an important factor which he referred to in his interview, where he mentioned how much he enjoyed to spend ‘time with his mates’, ‘going drinking in the town’. Young people regularly engage in heavy partying and drinking cultures which create social bonds and are tightly linked to gender performances (Roberts, 2015). These partying social bonds are mainly captured by young people on various social media, yet Dan openly says that he does not update his Facebook and has shown derision towards these practices as he dismisses them as feminine, although social media is one of the main ways in which young people choose to record and share remnants of drinking and partying episodes. Dan’s minimal production of content on social media, in the form of posts, updates and tags is a gender technological performance that helps shape and produce gendered practice regimes (Lyons et al., 2016), in which Dan being a ‘real boy’ does not have time for these things. I argue that Dan’s performance of masculinity requires the ‘citational practice’ of being seen forging these social bonds, and that Dan’s visibility is facilitated by the openness of Facebook and how his friends use it to compose his Facebook.



Illustrations. Dan’s samples of other people’s tags on his Facebook.

Dan's Facebook timeline had regular weekly updates and eighteen out of twenty-one posts are tags from Facebook friends. Dan has close friends at school and they regularly go out and some of these times are documented on Facebook, as Dan explains, "My Facebook is more about drinking and going out in the town". However, Dan becomes visible to the wider school community as engaging in these cultures by the many tags and online content produced and posted by others. Dan's reluctance to post and be seen as working hard on his social media is part of his performance as 'one of the lads', both in school and out of school. Nevertheless his Facebook is indicative of how other people consider the sharing of these friendship bonds and partying performances on social media in the form of posts and picture uploads as instrumental in the shaping of a cool, popular masculinity (Manago, 2013). Dan becomes visible as such a boy through the uploads, updates and tags of other people, as some of the examples below demonstrate.



Illustrations. Dan's tags on Facebook by girls.

In these pictures Dan is tagged by friends, having a good time, spending time with his “mates”, not worrying about doing it himself. During our interview Dan was checking his phone at times and quite quickly pointed to his Facebook, which he has on his phone and accesses it through the Facebook app, “look, I don’t like posting but other people do” I enquired further about how other people tagged him and whether this bothered him, Dan replied: “it doesn’t bother me at all...I guess they know if they’re out with me they’re gonna have a good time”. Not worrying about posting online to increase your popularity carries value within technological performances of gender (Roberts, 2015), Dan’s masculinity performance as a cool, popular boy is enhanced and becomes more credible through the visibility he gets on Facebook; a visibility created by other people and where he is effortlessly producing. Also, Dan’s becoming-popular on Facebook sees him tagged in a particular type of activity embedded in youth partying and drinking cultures which (Lyons et al., 2016) carry value to the formation of hegemonic masculinities, at Richmond Academy and outside of his school.

Dan’s Facebook picture uploads and posts are in their vast majority also posted by girls, and this carries particular value in the production of his masculine identity. Although Dan’s showed derision and was dismissive of online work as just something that ‘girls do’; his masculine production was made more tangible and credible by his becoming-visible on Facebook. Harvey, Ringrose and Gill (2013: 7) have pointed to how social media intensify ‘ways for value to circulate within young people’s peer networks’; in Dan’s account girls ‘doing the work’ for him and in the form of social media posts and tags carries value (Light, 2013). For Dan whilst at school and also on Facebook ‘not trying too hard’ was a very important part of embodying effortless masculine values, as Dan explains, “it wouldn’t occur to many of the boys to take a selfie...if anything, I just jump in or photobomb somebody’s picture”. However, letting others, particularly girls post and tag him in picture uploads and in different settings, carries a value in how Dan is effortlessly seen to engage in heterosexual cultures and actively demonstrating his claim to hegemonic masculinity (Willott and Lyons, 2012).

In summary, Dan’s masculinity performance and continuous construction of being a popular boy at school were extended onto his online masculinity performances on Facebook. Dan drew value from his added visibility online which allowed him to continue to demonstrate masculine values of being a ‘cool’ and ‘popular’ boy who you ‘hang out’ with if you want to ‘have a good time’. These descriptors of hegemonic masculinity were valuable offline at his school but were re-territorialised onto the online and were extended onto the platform of Facebook. Facebook’s vernaculars of expression such as tagging were instrumental in allowing girls to post for him and

tag him in numerous pictures which reiterated and re-territorialised as a validated 'laddish' hegemonic masculinity in the public world.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter uncovered various ways in which the school navigated through dominant gender relations at school and online. The research participants' social media engagements are argued as producing important effects at school where some participants were conforming to dominant relations, whilst others were contesting them. The territory of the school was characterised by cultures which excluded and alienated some of my research participants, whilst also creating some privileged positions. Having discussed the becomings of four research participants this chapter argued how social media practices, content and communities were instrumental in the identity becomings identified.

This chapter focused on exploring the ways in which the young research participants navigated through Richmond Academy's gender relations. Their various identity becomings were instrumentally scaffolded by the social media and blogging technologies used, and these online engagements helped them to challenge but also conform to existing gender relations. The various gender and sexuality entanglements in which Ashley, Skeeks, Danielle and Dan were discussed as fluctuating between were strung together by their online identity work. Their online mediations of themselves were cultivating a desirable identity becoming which in turn allowed them to lay claims to identity and gender positionings that counteracted some of the power pulls from the gender regimes at Richmond Academy. In the case of Ashley, Skeeks and Danielle I argued that experiencing disadvantage because of heteronormative and sexist cultures at the school, they utilised online technologies deconstruct and curate a sense of becoming outside the restrictive gender norms at Richmond Academy. Whereas Dan's gender identity, embodying and enacting some of the dominant forms of masculinity at the school also benefited from social media engagements by his friends and peer group strengthening his popularity and at the school.



## Chapter 6. Identity Becomings in Neoliberal and Aspirations Culture

### 6.1 Introduction

Exploring the aspirational becomings of my respondents, this chapter draws on the stories of four of my research participants in particular: Brian, Zee, Mimi and Elizabeth. The first part of this chapter explores how Brian, a black student from Belgium, is subject to unequal treatment at school and negotiates his way against a school culture of low aspirations at Richmond Academy. Using the online as a way to re-territorialise his aspirations, I argue that Brian re-identifies himself as becoming-academic by embedding himself in Twitter publics of academic success amongst other practices. The second part to this chapter examines how Zee disentangles and challenges racist cultures (in school and elsewhere) through becoming-blacktivist (black activist), creating an in-school project called 'Woke', which acts as a safety net to mitigate some of the neglect black students experience within the school. The third part of this chapter focuses on Mimi, contrasting the offline reality of failing to meet 'top girl' expectations at Richmond Academy with the online aspirations of becoming-celebrity. The final chapter tells the story of Elizabeth, who seeks an aspirational becoming around business and entrepreneurship, as she constructs academic success as expected at Richmond Academy in a derisive way. Each of my research participants presented in this chapter provides examples in which young people challenge existing stereotypes and find ways to escape underprivileged and disadvantaged circumstances by engaging with a culture of aspirations on social media.

This chapter will show how the respondents are actively challenging territorialisations of power that they experience at school and which disadvantage them. Some of the research participants enhance their offline life with online engagements, such as Zee, whose passion for activism developed whilst at school and traversed onto the platform of Twitter. Other research participants, such as Brian, use the online to challenge offline cultures of low expectations found within schooling. In examining these cases, the relationships between the offline and the online are explored to understand the ways in which young people's identities are shaped. This chapter is also mapping out some of the assemblages with social media and the subsequent identity becomings my participants have set in motion offline and online. The common narrative in these respondents' lives is the desire to assemble with social media in order to create what I have termed aspirational becomings. In doing this, the chapter is contributing to literature around youth aspirations (Mendick et al, 2018; Davies and Eynon, 2018) and positioning how the online worlds that my respondents inhabit allow them to forge becomings around who they aspire to be, with these aspirations very often underscored by effects of neoliberalism (Freeman, 2014; Jeffrey and Dyson, 2013; Rose, 1996). The data and analysis presented in the first two narratives illustrate some of

the existing literature around the barriers that black student face in social settings, including education (Ball et al, 2000; Cummings, 2008; Strand, 2012; Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn et al, 2017; Rollock et al, 2015); this is extended by explaining how the young people in this study assemble with online platforms to challenge stereotypes and disadvantages. Similarly, the last two narratives are contributing to research around failing and underperforming girls (Baker, 2010; Skelton 2010; Cossen and Jackson, 2018) by also discussing how Mimi and Elizabeth recur to social media in order to curate an aspirational becoming around leisure, celebrity, work and business.

## **6.2 Brian: A Territory of Low Expectations for Black Students**

In this section I argue that school cultures of low expectations are experienced by Brian despite being an academically gifted student at Richmond Academy. Brian describes how he has had to “prove himself” and “worked hard” to raise his attainment at the school. Brian is originally from Belgium; he came to the UK in his early teens and is now eighteen years old. Brian is currently in the process of choosing universities. As an academically ambitious student Brian is excited about the prospect of going to university and says, “I get to pick [university], this could change my life...I want to be a self-made man”. However, Brian still shows awareness of the limitations and all the many aspects that can go wrong when choosing university as post sixth-form transitions for young people can be confusing and tricky (Ball et al., 2000); “I know some unis are tougher if you are like not in, if you speak slang or don’t come from a really good school”. Although Brian is one of the best students in his sixth form he still feels like an outsider. Being a black student with some of the best academic performance in his group, Brian says “at school, I am a minority in that I am from a black background and I am going to a good uni, but I am going to do well”. Brian is confident that he is going to do well despite understanding the barriers faced because of his background.

When referring to where his motivation comes from, Brian explains how his family, more specifically his mum, has been an important figure in his life. However, the motivation from his mum is contrasted with the lack of motivation in school: “She [Brian’s mum] is like, I want you to exceed me, exceed your peers, exceed everyone and get the best for you... That’s why she pushed me to all the books and also from the circumstances I lived in, so, I never got this from school, it was my mum”. As stated by Brian, his family and the influence of his mother have provided him with a drive to succeed at school, much more than school teachers or pressure from the school. The influence of parental support for Brian and how he regards it as crucial is not unusual in black students’ achievement, since the role of parental involvement has been given great prominence in previous years to explain the educational success of

black males (Cummings, 2008); sometimes also outweighing the role of teacher pressure and schooling cultures. However, Brian also highlights how school has not given him this 'drive' and says that "to everyone's "amazement" [he uses his hands to simulate quotation marks] he is going to go to a first class university". The "amazement" of teachers at the school is problematic for Brian and he interprets this as somewhat ironic – given his high academic performance at the school; this further evokes some of the low expectations he has experienced at school as a black student (Strand, 2012). Brian has a careful enthusiasm, yet he describes himself as "resourceful" and "switched on" and someone who understands that as a young black person he needs to "work hard". The school environment is one in which Brian has become successful academically, but is also one in which he knows he could become disadvantaged. Brian explains that at the beginning when he came to the school he needed to "prove" himself, and that this was made harder because of the school he came from: "at school, it was a struggle at the beginning because as I said I came from a really bad school in Belgium, like the worst, it's one of the reasons why we came, and it was hard, hard at the beginning at the school to actually prove yourself, to be taken seriously by teachers, I don't know, they're on your side but sometimes they're not, they don't want to take a chance with you, teachers need to believe in you to help you do well". Brian worked to gain this trust and respect from teachers as this was not necessarily given to him when he came to the school. Brian is also exemplifying one of the ways Gillborn (2008: 27) argues 'institutional racism' happens within the education system; as an insidious set of relations that continue to overlook the needs and talents of black and ethnic minorities. Brian does not underestimate his efforts to get himself in a good position with teachers; he repeatedly explains how he had to work hard. Brian's situation is typical of an environment where relations of institutional racism continue through school cultures of low aspirations experienced by certain ethnic groups such as black-Caribbean students as they move through education, with some students striving hard to perform and other students becoming disaffected (Gillborn, 2008). Similarly, Brian's experience of working hard to get teachers on his side, or to believe in him reflect what Strand (2012: 78) found in his research regarding the importance of 'teacher judgements' when explaining the low attainments of black students. In Strand's (2012) research, teachers were important gatekeepers who need to make decisions based on predictions and judgements around academic ability; these predictions impact on the tiers and ability groups, students will be placed in for the academic year: 'Each tier gives access to a limited range of outcomes with the highest test outcomes achievable only if students are entered by their teachers to the higher tiers' (2012: 75). As Brian explained the teacher-student relationship is very important, as teachers need to "take a chance" and "believe in you to help you do well", and this is more difficult because there already exist school cultures (Gregory et al., 2011) where black students face complex and insidious exclusions.

Brian spoke in more detail about his efforts to 'fit in' to a 'better group' of students; he is referring to the ways in which he tried to get placed in higher sets after teachers carried out differentiation, which is a common pattern of experience in the lives of successful black students (Gillborn et al., 2017). Brian explained, "I had an accent...I didn't want to stand out, like for the wrong reasons. I tried to be polite, call teachers sir and miss, not have like bad rap songs as ringtone, and be early, be reliable, and then I was invited to come on Saturdays and that was the good group, the group to do better than C". When explaining his efforts to win teachers over, Brian referred to what Rollock et al (2015: 175) explain as individuals managing a racialised self in public spaces, where individuals instead of experiencing a 'seamless, fluid and empowering transition in the management of public identities', they experience rather a 'suppression of a true self that...has no legitimacy' in the particular space. Brian was managing his identity at school by not having 'bad rap songs' blaring out on his phone, using formal language when addressing his teachers, and displaying the 'right' attitude and comportment to signal to others his readiness to learn and minimise the effects of racial discrimination (Rollock et al., 2015). Brian's efforts resulted in being formally invited to the Saturday school which ran extra support sessions to a selected few, in order to drive attainment levels at the school.

However, these classes were funded by the school and were talked about by school staff as "expensive" and only targeted at really "engaged" students since they were delivered by a group of external tutors who came from various London universities. Whilst at the school I noticed that Brian was indeed part of a small minority of black students attending these sessions. Brian's mathematics group had between ten to fifteen students weekly, but only two black students in attendance (including Brian).

In summary, the territorialisation of the school environment for Brian uncovered a culture of low expectations where as a successful black student he felt as a 'minority'. Brian described how he tactically and strategically worked hard to impress and convince his teachers that he was a good student and this resulted in him being placed in top sets and also asked to take part in the extra-curricular classes offered by the school. In the next section I discuss how Brian's assemblage with Twitter allows him to create a becoming reflecting his academic identity and his desire to succeed in myriad ways.

### *6.2.1 Becoming-successful Through a Neoliberal Imaginary of Aspirations on Twitter*

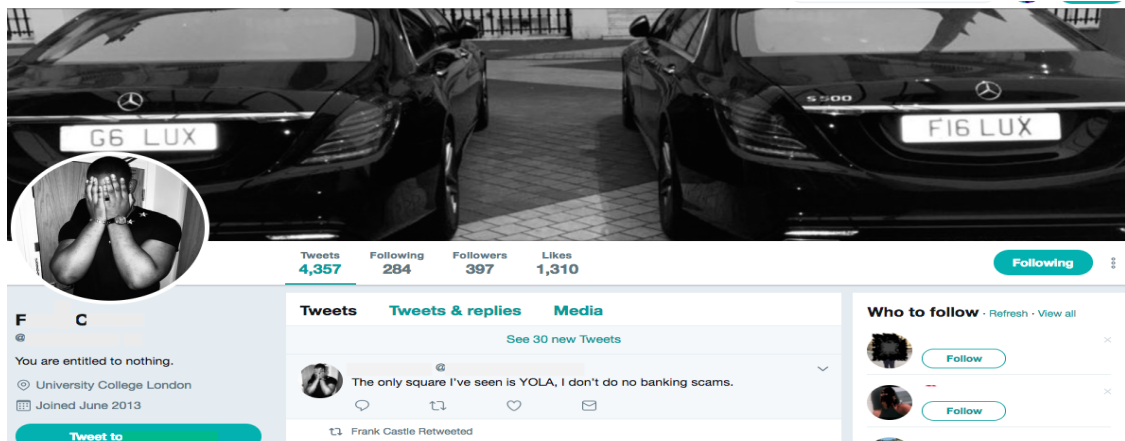
In this section I argue that Brian's assemblage with Twitter enables him to forge a becoming around success and self-creation. On Twitter Brian finds ways to re-establish his interests in pursuing academic and financial success in a space dotted with neoliberal imaginaries that reflect aspirational becomings. In the case of Brian, Twitter is a visual and narrated space where he is creating affiliations with images and other features offered by the site's personal profile page to assert his becoming successful.

Brian spoke about Twitter as his main platform, something he uses quite often and that he likes. As a microblogging site, Twitter was originally developed for mobile phones, designed to let people post short, 140-character text updates or 'tweets' to a network of others. Similarly, Brian points to how easy it is for him to tweet since "it is very accessible from your phone". Brian's personal page on Twitter is an assemblage which allows him to present himself as aspiring to material wealth and goods which are at present outside of his reach. I argue that Twitter offers Brian various ways to harness the site's visual artifacts to channel his becoming-successful. Similarly, discussing the importance of personal pages on social media, Ringrose (2011: 603) has described personal pages as 'operating as component multiplicitous parts that plug into the online community...structured through commercial cultural artifacts used to represent online identity'. I also analyse Brian's becoming successful online as occurring within a neoliberal imaginary, which social media is not exempted from, as 'in the contemporary neoliberal milieu every aspect of life is becoming subject to regimes of flexibility, quests, and commands for self-mastery and self-examination' (Freeman, 2014: 2).

Brian's Twitter space is produced against the backdrop of a neoliberal imaginary where success is only achieved through the careful creation of a self-project, coupled with hard work and a 'can do' attitude which is characterised by what Taylor (2020: 257) calls a 'commitment to competitive individualism'. An example of how these visual artifacts on Twitter are used by Brian as a way to resemble this neoliberal imaginary of self-empowerment is the Twitter cover photo, which Brian has used to show a picture of two Mercedes Benz cars, parked on a spacious entrance to a large mansion. This is accompanied by a brief self-descriptive note, "you are entitled to nothing", and his location as University College London, the university from which he received an offer to read a Degree in Mathematics, all visual artifacts are important online 'affiliations' to his project of becoming-successful (Marwick and boyd, 2011: 147). Brian's becoming-successful is demarcated by what Marshall (2010: 37) calls a 'pervasive production of the self' enabled through new presentation media, such as,

social media platforms like Twitter. Brian’s possibilities of constructing an online becoming as a successful young man, who is on his “way up” gains tangibility online through his assemblage with Twitter’s presentation features and platform specific activities, such as creating a personal profile, tweeting and retweeting.

Illustration. Brian’s profile header on Twitter.



Brian’s presentation profile on Twitter as shown previously, represents his aspirational becoming as deeply bound with the site’s affordabilities. His current location on the site, noted as that of his university’s, suggest his focus and determination in pursuing and attaining the academic accolade and prestige of graduating from this university. Whilst his self-descriptive note, “you’re entitled to nothing” and his cover photo convey how he aspires to success by aspiring to acquire material wealth and by being responsible for his own future. Brian’s becoming-successful is not presented as accidental but rather, enabled by his own self-managing attitude to the world; a world in which he has seen himself as a minority (as narrated in section 6.1.1), being a young black man destined for great things, but Brian as an ‘expert of subjectivity’, is able to ‘transfigure existential questions about the purpose of life and the meaning of suffering into technical questions of the most effective ways of managing malfunction and improving quality of life’ (Rose, 2010: 151).

Brian’s Twitter choices of self-presentation go hand in hand with the choices that he has been making in his own life, as he explains, “I usually do tweet for myself, like this is what I want and what my life is about or what I want it to be about”. There was always a sense of projection in my conversations with Brian, a relentless focus on the future, through the choices he is making now, this encapsulated an incomplete project of life towards which he talked about himself as always striving to. The neoliberal imaginary underlying Brian’s assemblage with Twitter bears resonance with Rose’s (2010) self as subjective being, a self which is to ‘aspire to autonomy, it is to strive for personal fulfillment...to interpret its reality and destiny as a matter of indi-

vidual responsibility...by shaping its life through acts of choice' (151). However, this can also be thought about as Brian's attempt to create his becoming-successful through choices and judgements which show his aversion to failure. Brian's online assemblages with Twitter show, not only his hard work to affiliate himself with success and 'successful people' but also his attempt to create an online shield against failure, where success is the only option and it is 'represented as a form of social cohesion, a means by which group membership is enacted, reclaimed, and produced forms of exclusion' (Marshall, 2010: 37).

In summary, Brian produces an identity assemblage on Twitter as a way to create and imagine a successful becoming, where mastery and management of himself is of paramount importance in transitioning to a 'better life'. This life that Brian is working towards is harnessed by visual and social affiliations on Twitter, which allows him to proclaim to the world publicly and visually his self-project of becoming-successful. This becoming is also pursued by creating and affirming social ties on Twitter with friends who share Brian's hopes and ambitions, as I will discuss in the next section.

### *6.2.2 Retweeting for becoming-successful and creating a territory of 'black success'*

In this section I argue that Brian's virtual self-assemblage created via Twitter allows him to assume an online becoming around success. One of the ways in which Brian harnesses a notion of success is through the support of other people's pursuit of academic aspirations and achievements. Brian's retweeting on Twitter creates numerous instances of what Papacharissi (2015: 44) describes as 'instantaneity' which although not specific to Twitter do create walls of interactions that denote a particular identity. In the case of Brian retweeting is an important part of his becoming-successful. I argue that it is as a way to de-territorialise low expectations of black minorities.

Reflecting on his own motivation for following people back on Twitter he says "I'm eighteen, someone follows me, they'd be like a fourteen year-old that followed me. I can't follow you back, 'cause you don't really have any value to me, I'm not going to talk to you, you don't live near me, you have nothing connected to me so there's no point". What Brian describes, is a consequence of Twitter's directed friendship model: participants choose Twitter accounts to 'follow' in their stream, and they each have their own group of 'followers'. There is no technical requirement of reciprocity, and often, no social expectation of such. To this effect Brian reflects on what he calls "Twitter ratios", "there's two things...you can have the biggest amount of followers, and there's the other thing, people having a nice ratio...they'll have more followers than people they are following...Some people have like pride on their ratio". Brian is refer-

ring to what Marwick and boyd (2010: 117) have referred to as 'a disconnect between followers and followed' on Twitter and how it has become indicative of popularity on the site. Brian refers to these asymmetries as producing a sense of pride in people as they equate to popularity and indeed many celebrities on Twitter have very differential ratios. Although Brian understands the importance and significance of developing a ratio on Twitter, he does not see himself as engaging in this practice wholeheartedly, "I don't worry about this too much I just get enough ratio not to seem desperate". This is demonstrated in his own profile where his followers currently run at three hundred and ninety seven and his following of people at two hundred and eighty four. Although Brian does not derive a sense of pride from Twitter ratios, despite understanding how they work, he does show a careful consideration of whom he follows back on Twitter.

Brian does pay close attention to who he follows, evoking what Papacharissi (2015: 116) refers to as 'publics', brought together by 'structures of experience'. Brian explains the structures of experience he seeks in people to follow back, "so I'd say like, mine is like a black community itself, or just for London in general, and in my age group, people with ideas, with ambition". Brian is engaged in a process of selection and appreciation of people's projects of self presentation characteristic of networked media. Brian's friendships online go beyond using social media to break geographical boundaries with friends (Shin et al., 2015) or to form really close-knit communities, Brian chooses who to follow based on his own self-project of success and aspiration. Arguably, this is why retweeting is a very important part of his Twitter use. Retweeting the success of others underscores his own aspiration and desire to associate himself with other successful young black people. Overall, by weaving himself into a network of similarly aspirational young people on Twitter Brian is furthering his project of becoming-successful.

Brian's retweets normally involve other people's successes at university or within another business sphere. In these retweets (see images below) Brian is celebrating the achievements of like-minded people who have followed in the academic path that he hopes he will succeed in too, as he is currently reading a Degree at UCL. Using a neoliberal outlook, Brian explained how "you are not going to waste a follow on someone who is not worthy" and how he followed people "who are interested in growing, who want to make the most of opportunities, I see it as as people who have value for me". Brian's retweets and his own views on who to follow show a careful consideration of what is required to become successful in a neoliberal world, seeking things and people with value; associating with people who can benefit through their own merit; who want similar things; and who attain things that are desirable to you. These are important characteristics and examples of the discourse of meritocracy in which young people have been educated, where anything is attainable if 'you work hard', and also show the layered meanings of entrepreneurialism in a time and place



of neoliberalism (Mendick et al, 2015; Spohrer, 2015). As with Brian's experience entrepreneurialism is not narrowed to a simple mechanism related to creative ways of employment, generating income, or other business economic outcomes. It is about the self as a project which becomes a key trailblazer of neoliberal times, endlessly desiring, adapting and generating outcomes (Freeman, 2014; Rose, 2010).



Illustrations from Brian's Twitter Feed.

I argue that Brian's becoming-successful is closely interwoven within a culture of entrepreneurialism. Freeman (2014: 2) describes how entrepreneurialism 'denotes action and imagination, an ongoing process of envisioning and becoming, as opposed to a given position, status, or state of being that is achieved and established through economic means alone' (Freeman, 2014: 2). Brian acts as such, an entrepreneur who

visualises his own success through the achievements of others, whilst also actively pursuing his own. To 'entreprendre' means to undertake, but this is not a simple undertaking, as with Brian's profile page (See 6.1.2), this becoming is also grounded in a neoliberal imaginary.

Yet, Brian's becoming-successful is also working in tandem with other aspects of his identity such as being black and aspiring to respectability. Brian explains, "I follow people who are ambitious, who have black excellence, in a good way, because that's what I want, I know it's a bit one-sided but I am one-track minded now, it's about focusing for me". Brian is building a network of people with value, and in his view value is defined by possessing both, what he calls black excellence and entrepreneurialism. Brian's becoming-successful is delineated by his Twitter network, from which he derives a sense of participation in black excellence, not just his but others' too. This network 'consists of complex, enduring, and evolving connections between people, objects, and technologies...It is a set of relations that are constantly made and remade within the processual relations that constitute them' (Ball, 2017: 31). Brian's assemblage with Twitter creates a space for unravelling what he calls his 'one-track mind', his focus on academic and economic success; although Brian does not know the majority of people he follows, the importance falls less on personal relationships and more on the similarity of aspirations that he shares with these young people.

The aspiration to black excellence described by Brian is also preceded by how his experiences of schooling have left him with a strong sense of how he needs to be meticulous to be successful in an environment where black excellence is not the norm (Gillborn et al., 2017). Brian is showing solidarity and pride in other people's projects, and in retweeting the successes of others he is creating a space where black excellence is more than a possibility, but an expectation; de-territorialising the low expectations he has experienced first-hand. This pursuit is synonymous with his desire for success and he actively shapes and chooses his way around this project, from choosing the right images to choosing 'worthy' people to follow, the self becomes what Rose (2010) calls a 'subjective being' striving for 'personal fulfillment', interpreting 'reality and destiny as a matter of individual responsibility...to find meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice. These ways of thinking about humans as selves, and these ways of judging them, are linked to certain ways of acting upon such selves' (2010: 151). Brian's Twitter engagements are choices as part of entrepreneurial culture, but they are racialised and infused with an educational path in which although he was successful, as marked by his entry to a first class university, he was also aware of all the barriers that could hold him back. Assembling with Twitter created an alternative de-territorialised space in which Brian could speak to power by focusing and concentrating on successful becomings of black young people.

In all, Brian continuously recreates the conditions of what he believes is crucial for becoming-successful on Twitter. A focused and efficient individual who makes important and life-changing decisions that impact positively on self-making and which follow an entrepreneurial ethos of self-improving, hard work and making the most of opportunities. Brian therefore does not 'waste' follows on Twitter and engages with, and retweets occurrences of value in his own becoming-successful, creating a space for black excellence, but within the porous boundaries of neoliberal imaginaries.

### **6.3 Zee: Becoming 'Woke' at school and online activism**

Zee is eighteen years old, born to a Nigerian mother and a Jamaican father, Zee has been living in England with his mother for over five years and is a sixth form student at Richmond Academy. Zee is talked about as a very good student by his teachers, particularly his mathematics teachers who also used to be his form teacher and with whom he has a more special rapport. Zee is very articulate about his future plans which involve going to university and achieving great things academically. When talking about his motivation Zee is very complimentary of his Mathematics teacher, Mr S. for his support and honesty throughout his education. Zee explains, "Sir has helped me a lot because he didn't sugarcoat anything, he gave it to me straight, he said, 'the world out there is tough... I came here with a Degree, that's all, you have your education that's your help, you want to do IT and Computing, you need to work hard, you need to know from now on that you're going to be the odd one out". Zee has been struggling against some of the inadvertent inequalities that black boys face in the education system, where their only way to endear themselves to school staff is by being academically strong (Gillborn et al., 2017). Zee is aware of this school dynamic when he says "I know that at school I have it better because I don't mess around, I study and I'm not afraid to say it, I know some of the teachers don't care about me, like the person, except for Mr S. they just want to get me an A\* because they feel that's helping me". Zee understands the pressures that his teachers are under as a result of what Ball describes as 'policy technologies' which seek to 'organise human forces and capabilities into functioning networks of power' (2010: 215/216); and how they affect the ways in which teachers relate to him. Zee willingly turns himself into what the teachers are looking for, a student with the prospect of achieving an A\*, yet, Zee is more reflective and knows that if he were not in this small group of academically strong students he would be neglected by teachers. This neglectful school culture (Gregory et al., 2011) is the one described by Brian in previous sections, where black students are overlooked and face everyday exclusions, such as, detentions, permanent exclusions, and underrepresentation in high ability classes. As a result of this Zee

appreciates his relationship with Mr S. since Zee believes he is genuinely interested in helping him understand “how the world really ticks”, to use Zee’s words.

Zee’s awareness of neglectful school cultures towards students and his unravelling success at school has given him the confidence to raise issues which he believes are experienced by his peers. Zee believes that black students experience less caring and meaningful relationships with teachers (Bottiani et al., 2016) and so he wanted to create a space where peers could be supportive of each other since relationships with teachers were lacking in his view. Zee’s perception of the neglect black students experience in education is supported by recent educational research which has pointed to the importance of supportive relationships at school and the lack of caring that black students experience within the schooling system in comparison to white peers (Bottiani et al., 2016). Zee’s experience of schooling reflects some of these patterns, yet, Zee wanted to create a response to this in school. Zee explains, “I began by chatting to Mr S. and saying Sir we need just an hour a day, like all of us together discussing these issues and helping each other”; Zee then spoke to the deputy Headteacher about his project after refining it with the help of Mr S. The project was then called ‘Woke’ and it was an attempt to create a network of supportive friendships amongst black students which were led by mentors under the supervision of Zee and Mr S. The ‘Woke’ project aimed at fostering positive relationships amongst black students from all levels of attainment to mitigate some of the neglect black students experience at school (Bottiani et al., 2016). This initiative ran on a weekly basis using the allocated time that form tutors normally have with their form group. The format for the sessions started as being led by Zee who later selected a group of students to become mentors in their own ‘Woke’ sessions; these were black students with drive and an interest in helping others, both individually and academically.

Zee describes the success of the meetings in the ‘Woke’ project as “inevitable” because he knows that his peers feel neglected at school, unless they are striving towards something, so students who took part would be seen as actively engaging in a school initiative and in turn teachers would begin to notice them more. Zee explains, “it’s inevitable, you start doing something and suddenly you are a star, or improving, so mentors are key in keeping it going and spreading it to other forms so that black students can come out to the surface”. The increased visibility of black students who took part in the ‘Woke’ sessions was underscored by the school’s desire to get results from these students in Zee’s view, yet this was still positive because of the lack of support that black students experienced at school. Zee’s vision for his sessions and ‘Woke’ groups allowed him to engage in what he calls “blacktivism” at school, his view of blacktivism meant that he wanted to effect change in the neglectful ‘school structure’, and disrupt some of the everyday exclusions he sees as affecting black students

(Gregory et al., 2011). Equally, Zee was aware that the school's disposition to support his idea was rooted in the possible benefit the school would obtain from helping students who were borderline C grades which were attending his 'Woke' sessions, Zee explains, "It's like a symbiosis they benefit, we benefit, they get students who are mentored by the best students we have and we get to create a space for black excellence". Zee's account reflects what has been described by Ball (2015: 299) as the tyranny of numbers which has spread in systems of schooling, whereby 'the learner is... made visible and calculable' only through the valuable categories that compose success in education. In the case of Zee's school, black students only gain value and visibility as they become potential contributors to the yearly levels of attainment schools need to produce in order to survive.

Zee's school activism helped him address his everyday encounters with teachers at the school which he felt were meaningless and disconnected, "you talk to people, yes sir, no sir, they don't even know you, most of them don't want to know you". These experiences became activism tools for Zee, whose school engagements turned him into a 'feeling subject' (Niccolini, 2018: 110) who, in turn created disruptions in the form of the 'Woke' sessions to the everyday normative frameworks of schools perpetuating subtle exclusions of black students. Zee explains, "I know them (students), they are just waiting, they just want to finish, just like most of our teachers as well", becoming a black activist for Zee was about balancing out the everyday inequalities he both experienced and witnessed at school. I attended one of the 'Woke' sessions and was moved by the peer support and sense of collectivity participants reflected. Zee understood activism should involve people and create alternative responses to an issue, and although school as an environment is not supportive of these initiatives (Lewis et al., 2018); Zee successfully navigated management and time constraints at school to run and expand the 'Woke' sessions programme.

Zee's actions and black activism at school allowed him to challenge the hard to shift territorialisations around black students as failing and disengaged. The 'Woke' sessions and identifying of black students as mentors and leaders challenged the prevailing perceptions of black students as disaffected from school. Zee's 'Woke' Project enabled a different kind of visibility and intelligibility around black students; one which sought to address the overlooking of black students by the system because of the overbearing pressures surrounding schools' performativity (Gillborn et al, 2017; Bottiani et al, 2016).

### *6.3.1 Building an Aspirational Becoming as 'Blackactivist' on Twitter*

In this section I argue that Zee's use of Twitter has developed enabling assemblages that give a particular tangibility to his activism. The use of Twitter is built around a cul-

ture of aspirations for black students in order to create collectivities and resourceful spaces that reflect aspirational futures. Zee's Twitter platform is one of his favourites, with over twelve thousand tweets, over five thousand likes and over six hundred followers. On twitter Zee engages with issues and topics that he sees as affecting his generation, such as, issues around racism, discrimination and colourism. The platform has also helped him create a wider interest in his 'Woke' sessions involving people from outside of his school community. Zee's twitter interactions can be understood as 'assemblages enveloping different machines' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 403) which contribute to Zee's becoming-blacktivist on Twitter but also at school.



Illustration. Zee's twitter profile page.

Zee is very aware of the importance of social media in his life, the social media site Twitter is one of his most used platforms, as Zee explains, "on Twitter, I think people like, young people are more likely to talk about things online, express themselves, because it's our medium...it's like where things...happen". From the beginning of our interview Zee is very aware that his way of using Twitter is different and more purposeful to other people as he explains, "well...on Twitter there are lots of 'I like this' and 'I like that' kind of tweets but my Twitter is about what I call blacktivism and it's about being a black person with ambition and what I call black excellence". Zee wants to distance himself from what he sees as pointless tweets; his assemblage with Twitter is for activism. An example observed of his twitter feed shows the following:



Illustration. Posts from Zee's twitter feed.

In this short section of original tweets Zee discusses issues around colourism, which can be understood as the discrimination of black people based on different shades of skin; colourism is seen as a form of racism prevalent amongst black people. Zee's opinions on Twitter show his awareness and pessimism towards how colourism might be tackled, Zee states: "scales get tipped and next thing, lightskins are at the bottom of the barrel and the whole system's reversed". Zee's use of the platform allows him to form an aspirational becoming as a blacktivist, actively tweeting about issues that matter to his community, highlighting the inequalities that prevail around race and contributing to what Zee refers to as "black twitter". As a microblogging site Twitter allows 'tiny interactions' which in themselves propagate around events and issues which intricately form communities (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 116). Zee's tweeting can be understood as a collection of tiny interactions that build an aspirational becoming as a blacktivist as what Zee is doing on Twitter is very tied to his activist work. Zee sees Twitter as an important outlet for his blacktivist work, because he can "connect" and "reach out"; Zee explains, "I've always had a direct link...because we share and connect a lot online, it's a different relationship, like not there in person, but there in every other way...you can chat, post stuff...you can also reach out to total strangers about things that matter". Like other young people in today's society, it is not the case that Zee is simply disengaged from activism which has been argued in recent years (Putnam, 2000), rather he is not engaged in the same way that so-called 'dutiful' generations have been (Earl et al., 2017). Zee has chosen to embed a particular type of activism and politics in his life and Twitter has served as an assemblage of power in his becoming-blacktivist.

Zee's Twitter feed is in its majority composed by original tweets that seek to counteract issues around representation, discrimination and stereotyping. Zee's engagement in creating what has been termed 'black twitter' reflects how he uses the platform as a way to 'resist hegemonic power...and contribute to a digital counterpublic' (Lamont Hill, 2018: 287). For Zee his generation is very important and the development of critical debate is at the heart of how he sees activism working, the versatility of Twitter as a platform plays an important role in his becoming blacktivist, as Zee explains, "there's not a lot you can do about what has gone on before, people say history repeats itself but young people now need to be thinking deep about stuff that goes on now...mostly that's why I tweet".



Illustration. Post from Zee's twitter feed portraying one of his Woke sessions.

Another important part of Zee's becoming blacktivist is his work with groups of young people. The image to follow shows one of Zee's 'Woke' sessions where the group were responding to the question: "Have you ever felt that black people are merely perceived as entertainment among other races?". The tweet also shows a short video of the 'Woke' sessions (watched three hundred and fifty six times) where young black students can engage in debate and be critical about issues that matter to them. Zee's understanding of blacktivism upholds the importance of creating positive visibilities, as Zee explains "It's not good enough to just do something, you have to have something to show for it, like have evidence that you are doing something". Twitter as a platform allows Zee to merge text and image to 'reimagine black youth' as empowered and as challenging the negative visibilities associated with black teenagers in everyday society (Balbridge 2014: 442). Twitter offers Zee a possibility for becoming where he can aspire towards becoming a person for blacktivism; someone who challenges everyday social injustices and creates change through engagement. However, an important part of becoming blacktivist for Zee is to proliferate online content, such as tweets about debates at 'woke' sessions, or tweets discussing issues of colourism. Zee aligns himself towards a "black twitter" that has harnessed online activism in recent years around inequalities affecting black communities (Lamont Hill, 2018).

The positive visibilities and online engagements on Zee's Twitter present a challenge to prevailing discourses around black people as only becoming visible



through violence or crime (Carney, 2016). Zee's use of the site counteracts what he sees as negative representations of black youth, as Zee explains, "I like to scroll and see all the times we've met, short tweets of things that have come out of the debate... people see what we do and it's different to what you see in the media". This points to how Zee uses Tweets as strategies to challenge 'dominant ideologies' that disadvantage black youth, but it also denotes 'a larger struggle for power over the discourse of race and racism' (Carney, 2016: 180). Zee creates an online resource of difference that portrays himself and his peers as young black people who can wield power through critical debates and collective activism; critiquing what they perceive as oppressive racial structures.

In this section I have illustrated how Zee's use of Twitter is closely linked with his aspiration to be seen as engaging and leading young black activism. Twitter's microblogging format presents a platform of singular but connected interactions (Marwick and boyd, 2010) where Zee can tweet, post critical questions and show how young people engage in debates around issues of race and ethnicity (Lamont Hill, 2018; Carney, 2016). Reiterating the aspirational becoming as black activist tweet by tweet; evidencing how young black people can be seen engaging in positive activities, such as, critical debate and in the process changing negative perceptions.

#### **6.4 Mimi: Rupturing Academic Territories of successful femininities**

In this section I outline how the territorialisations at Richmond Academy for girls revolve around a constant striving for academic success and how Mimi's experience makes this normative expectation more visible. Mimi's ethnicity and class further problematise her position at school; as a white middle-class girl Mimi's general dislike for all things academic portrays her as an outcast to teachers and other pupils within the school. Instead, Mimi struggles against the dominant constructions of Girl Power to construct a version of success around popularity, leisure and employment on Twitter.

Mimi is seventeen years old and unlike most of the girls in this study is not an academically successful student at Richmond Academy. Mimi lives with her mother who is separated from Mimi's father. Mimi's schooling experience has been marked by her quiet disengagement, and as she says, "doing the bare minimum to get teachers off my back". At school Mimi is very popular with peers but has been very unpopular with teachers at times, Mimi recounts how "things are quieter now but I used to get lots of detentions for being a bit of a clown, I just found some things too funny...but in class". The experiences recounted by Mimi show how she struggled to fit in the predominant middle class girls' framework of behaviour that tends to dominate in schools

(Baker, 2010; Skelton 2010; Cossen and Jackson, 2018). From my observations and interactions with Mimi and some of her teachers, Mimi was talked about by teachers as “unmanageable”, “disengaged”, “needing to wise up”. Mimi’s behaviour was talked about as problematic, but it was her perceived ‘lack of ambition’ that was really concerning. This seemed to be an unforgivable transgression for a white middle class girl who should always strive towards educational success. The aspirations culture at Richmond Academy revolved around academic success, progression onto higher education, and skilled jobs (Spohrer, 2016), these were in opposition to Mimi’s post-school aspirations. Mimi’s position within the school was made difficult by the prevalence of a school culture based on ‘neoliberal claims that success is universally available’ and Mimi’s rejection to inhabit the ‘can do’ and ‘top girls’ attitudes disadvantaged her (Cossen and Jackson, 2018: 2).

The pathway to success at Richmond Academy was mapped very carefully onto the element of careful choosing by students. For Mimi the continuous choosing was a burden which she did not feel able to engage with at the time, as she explained, “they are just too much, everything’s just too much, they want you to go to uni, they want you to know where you can go, I don’t even want to go to uni right now...and that seems like too much for them because I’m doing A-levels”. Mimi’s experience at Richmond Academy reflected the hegemonic neoliberal imaginaries that young women face at school where ‘girls are charged with choosing the kind of life they want, and planning how to achieve it’ (Cossen and Jackson, 2018: 4). Mimi’s position as a white middle-class girl who refused to engage, or showed little interest in appearing as an ‘autonomous agent’, who participates in a constant ‘reinvention of the self’ (Clark, 2009: 602) subverted the school’s territory where success must involve academic pathways and an adaptable personal responsibility.

Mimi is aware of how her unwillingness to strive for academic success at the school is perceived by others, as she explains, “nothing is holding me back, I have good teachers and everything I need, I just don’t see myself that way and people think I’m being difficult because I don’t”. Mimi’s position in the school is criticised by teachers constantly, and she describes how “teachers are always telling me how the school gave me the opportunity to study there and just getting a D is almost as bad as not having done anything”. Mimi’s position at Richmond Academy is complicated by prevalent ‘post-feminist Girl Power discourses’ that define success for girls in schools normally in relation to academic success (Harris and Dobson, 2015: 146). The dominant constructions of successful womanhood and femininity at Richmond Academy must involve a careful self-creation closely embedded in post-feminist discourses that make success for girls necessary (Gill, 2016); Cossen and Jackson (2018: 2) refer to this post-feminist Girl Power period as ruled by ‘independence, self-regulation and

self-striving' which 'are not so much possibilities as requirements that girls must meet in order to become successful subjects'. As a consequence Mimi's openness in rejecting this construction is perceived as suspect and deviant, and left her with a profound desire to "finish off and be done with school".

Similarly, the post-feminist Girl Power constructions are shaped by neoliberalism, with an emphasis on education and academic superiority. Placing great importance on being a reflexive self and enticing all girls to be responsible for creating a path to successful womanhood, whilst explaining all failure through the individual's lack of merit, talent, motivation, hard work, etc (Ringrose, 2007). Although Mimi does not meet the neoliberal top girl image, she still positions herself within these post-feminist neoliberal discourses, "at this point, I've just had enough, if I didn't do well this time it's my fault, can't blame anybody else really, I can't keep up and have not bothered to work hard, and I just want to get my results and go on to do something else". All the while these imagined neoliberal womanhoods are characterised by the obscuring of everyday inequalities related to other external constraints such as, race, religion, class, disability or gender. In this cycle of neoliberal post-feminist educational realities privilege continues to favour white middle class girls (Clark, 2009). Yet, the post-feminist discourses that surround Mimi's schooling make her in some ways doubly deviant as her whiteness and her class highlight the necessity of academic success in her life, a discourse and identity which Mimi refrains from fitting into.

In all, Mimi wants to pursue a different kind of success as she explains, "I'm not clever like academically, I haven't even totally decided whether I'm going to uni, what I know is that I won't be doing it next year...I want to work and do some castings maybe some extra work". An important part in Mimi's alternative pathway is the use of social media as explained in the next section. Mimi sees her Twitter as a way of harnessing a network of followers which can prove useful in her efforts to engage with aspects of celebrity culture online. Whilst Mimi is finishing her A-levels she actively works on a becoming-micro-celebrity on Twitter, a way in which she navigates through the need to have another version of success in a time where young people are increasingly expected to act upon themselves with confidence and self-knowledge to secure opportunities in life.

#### *6.4.1 Becoming-Micro-Celebrity: Creating New Territories of Value through Twitter Visibility*

In this section I argue that Mimi's assemblage with Twitter enables her to scaffold a becoming where she can self-create as a mini celebrity. Mimi finds a way to reassert herself as successful on different terms to those valued at her school; as someone with popularity, reflected in her number of followers and highly embedded in Twitter,

reflected by her number of tweets. On Twitter Mimi finds a space where she can establish, narrate and self-create a space where she is connecting with celebrity images, operating a micro-celebrity culture and using other features on Twitter that show her aspiration to perform mini-celebrity as a way to be perceived as successful.

Mimi spoke about Twitter throughout her interview as the main thing that makes her “day tick”, from morning posts on her way to work, intermittently scrolling through her feeds as the day goes by and the last thing she checks at the end of the day. Mimi’s use of Twitter started as a way to follow celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, a reality TV star whose family is regularly filmed to produce the famous reality TV show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Mimi enjoys the brevity and sharpness of Twitter, “I love it that you can just post anything, you don’t have to say much and I don’t have a lot to say [giggles], you have to be brief, or you can post funny stuff or jokes”. Mimi’s very aware of how the platform of Twitter is very popular with celebrities and this influences her own use, “I love following celebrities and the things they post and actually like getting follows, so I tweet lots and post pics when I go on holiday, I get lots of followers that way, so in a way it’s like you’re also being followed by lots of people”. Mimi’s interest in leisure and celebrity on Twitter has been identified as a rapidly emerging feature of young people’s engagement on the platform, particularly at a time when social media platforms are accelerating interactions and opening up opportunities for anyone to become ‘popular’ (Hargittai and Litt, 2011).

In the case of Mimi, her becoming-micro-celebrity underpins most of her self-presentation on Twitter. Mimi’s personal profile shows two images; her profile photo and her header photo show her at the beach, in a swimsuit, at a location that encapsulates an iconic image suggestive of sun, leisure and holiday-making. Mimi explains how Twitter gave her a taste of the celebrity life she is attracted to, “I started following celebs and they’re always travelling, going places, I loved just knowing where they’ve gone and they had so many followers but were following like fifty people or something”. For Mimi her profile photos and the contrast between following just over one hundred people and the almost three and a half thousand followers she has amassed echo the celebrity life she is creating on Twitter. Mimi’s Twitter account is indicative of how personal profile pages have been discussed as curated carefully to suggest a specific identity which normally encompasses a desired self-project (Ringrose, 2011). Mimi’s curation of her own Twitter account help her to perform and produce a becoming-micro-celebrity, particularly since Twitter has become very influential in young people’s lives because of the augmented online presence of celebrities which moulds at times their own use of the site (Hargittai and Litt, 2011; Loader et al, 2016).

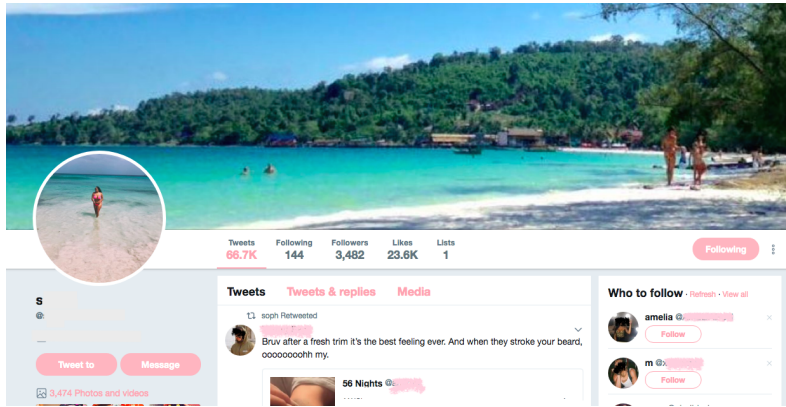


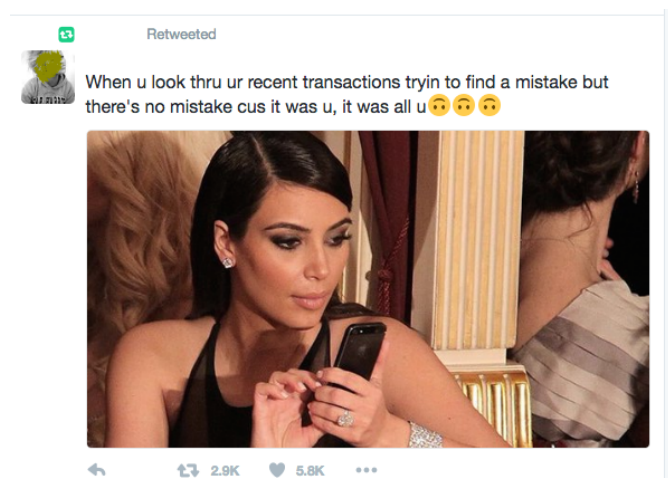
Illustration. Mimi's Twitter profile page.

Mimi also contrasts her perceived lack of success at school with her success on Twitter; “I like the fact that I’m being followed by lots of people [on Twitter], it’s exciting to see your numbers go up, but I’ve been posting constantly, not a day goes by without me doing stuff, so you could say I’ve worked hard for it, unlike at school I suppose”. Mimi has over sixty six thousand tweets and regards this as part of the hard work she has put into her becoming-micro-celebrity. In fact Mimi shows a sound awareness of what is needed to grow her number of followers, “I’m never too much online, like dramatic or anything, keep it fun, light and simple, keep it pretty and personally I love Kim, so Kim all the way”. This is part of Mimi’s aspiration to success, which she shapes through engagements and affiliations with celebrity culture (Mendick et al., 2018). Mimi understands how online she needs to display a coherent identity which expresses her desired sense of “self”, and she is invested in consistently constructing success through her everyday Twitter performances. The efforts by Mimi to forge her becoming-micro-celebrity evoke how Rose (1996: 169) explains the new governance of individuals in complex neoliberal times:

‘humans are addressed, represented and acted upon as if they were selves of a particular type: suffused with an individualised subjectivity, motivated by anxieties and aspirations concerning their self fulfillment, committed to finding their true identities and maximising their authentic expression in their lifestyles’.

Mimi’s aspiration and hard work into her becoming-micro-celebrity online exemplifies the pursuit and commitment to self-fulfil a becoming successful, particularly since she struggled to construct one at school. Mimi’s alternative path highlights how Mendick et al (2018: 60) argue that young people are encouraged to follow their dreams but ‘government policy imposes a hierarchy of aspirations based on a middle-class model, privileging some pathways and denigrating others’. As with Mimi, she struggled against the middle-class model of success favoured at Richmond Academy,

characterised by a continuous self-cultivation project in which young people were expected to secure academic success. Mimi's alternative path as becoming mini-celebrity provides a fresh and new alternative to the academic and mainstream one.



Illustrations. Posts from Mimi's Twitter Feed.

The previous posts show some of Mimi's tweets and retweets which work as visual artifacts of her affiliation with celebrity culture and give palpability to her becoming successful. This is the kind of content that Mimi knows works in generating more follows and the popularity she is seeking online. The first post is humorous and shows Kim Kardashian checking her phone, accompanied by the text, "when you look through your recent transactions trying to find a mistake, but there's no mistake 'cause it was you, it was all you". Mimi's retweet of this post is ensuring that her feed stays within her "keep it fun, light and simple" framework. The second set of tweets show a different side to Mimi where she highlights how she works hard, doing double shifts in her part-time job to "to make her mum proud", an important part of Mimi's becoming successful, especially since she has decided not to go to university in the next year.

During one of our interviews I asked Mimi how she thought Twitter could help her in employment, Mimi hesitated briefly and said, "well, when I start doing my castings and other stuff, like some modelling, I will use my Twitter to self-promote, and see where it goes". Mimi is invested in aligning herself with aspects of celebrity culture on

Twitter, to continue to grow her network in preparation for a future where she can promote herself. In this way Mimi's Twitter, similarly to Brian's is influenced by the neoliberal imaginary of a success attainable only through hard work, ambition and re-invention (Freeman, 2014), as Mimi explains, "It's like Kim, she deserves it because she does work hard, she's got cameras on her all the time and she's herself even if people criticise her, she's so unapologetic, I love it, she's just herself and she doesn't stop". Whilst Brian's construction of success did align itself very closely to academic achievement, Mimi is paving a path to success by adopting and co-opting expressions of celebrity, celebrity lifestyle representations (Loader, 2016) and maximising Twitter popularity features, such as accruing a high number of followers. Also, Mimi sees the figure of Kim Kardashian as deserving of her popularity and success because "she's herself", which points to notions of authenticity and because Kim is always exposed to cameras and working hard to maintain her image.

In a time such as ours where educational failure is constructed so precariously and where merit makes anyone who is perceived to fail deserving of their failure (Mendick et al., 2018), Mimi is turning to celebrity to assemble her aspirations online. Perhaps Mimi's investment in celebrities such as Kim Kardashian can also be explained through the criticism she feels Kim experiences and which she also feels has been part of her experience at school. Yet, Twitter uncovers different possibilities for Mimi to engage with a 'celebrity culture' which articulates a version of success which includes 'social mobility, competitive individualism and meritocracy' (Mendick et al, 2018: 13), all aspirations that Mimi can adhere to, avoiding the traditional academic routes which have left her isolated and disappointed at school.

Overall, celebrity is a site for Mimi to strive towards different articulations of success to the ones she has constantly been judged against at school. Rather than dismiss her Twitter online becoming and performances as trivial, I argued that Mimi is carefully curating her Twitter profile and feeds with material in the form of, photos, tweets and retweets that position her as young person aspiring to operate like a celebrity. One of the ways in which Mimi has worked towards this is by collecting an extensive "followship" and circulating content that she sees as desirable. This also demonstrates how celebrity representations and culture regulates young people's aspirations and work on their developing identities; success for Mimi has been produced in her struggles at school and in her repositionings and investments to form a becoming-micro-celebrity on Twitter.

## 6.5 Elizabeth: Conflicting Territories of Academic vs Entrepreneurial Success

In this section I show how Elizabeth becomes frustrated with academia in schooling, showing how Elizabeth's preference for developing her own business becomes a key feature of her identity and sense of ambition. For Elizabeth, school loses meaning, she does not appreciate the necessity to study endlessly, or to go to university and get into debt. As we shall see, Elizabeth has other aspirations.

Elizabeth is eighteen years old and lives with her parents; she is liked by teachers and is described as "ambitious" and "focused". Although her academic results are not outstanding Elizabeth enjoys a privileged position within the school because she takes part in various initiatives, is liked by teachers as she is seen as "trustworthy" and her teachers say she has a "sensible head on her shoulders". Elizabeth describes her school as a place where she has had a "good time"; she is currently finishing her A-levels, as she was "pushed by her mum", but what she really wants to do is to put all her energy in her developing business.

Although Elizabeth describes her school experience as enjoyable; she is highly critical of the school's emphasis on academic qualifications and going to university as a necessary rite of passage, "I wasn't born to depend on a wage, I know that, like I see these people stressing over getting As and I think, what for? To be in debt and get a crappy graduate job at the end of it?". Elizabeth describes herself as "someone with a sensible plan", Elizabeth's plan falls outside the desired academic pathways that the school mandates, but unlike Mimi, Elizabeth is not openly critical of the school and has a much better level of academic attainment. Elizabeth's experience of the school evokes some of the conflicting cultures that are found in current educational systems, on the one hand schools want to cultivate a strong academic ethos, which at times means curtailing creativity and self-expression, but on the other hand schools want to form students for a competitive economy in which students are supposed to thrive (Davidson, 2008). Some of this is explained by Elizabeth, "like business is patchy and it could be really great but it wasn't, like the emphasis is on the coursework and on passing and on, and on, and on".

Whilst Richmond Academy endorses imagined futures which privilege academic pathways, Elizabeth's interest lies in pursuing a route into economic independence, through self-employment and entrepreneurship, as her A-levels represent a family compromise, "my mum is an academic and she'd be very disappointed if I didn't have A-levels, in fact she's still trying to convince me to do a Degree but I don't think that's going to happen". As a white middle-class girl, Elizabeth also falls outside the chosen pathway to success at her school (Clark, 2009). Richmond Academy re-



quires young people to individualise their futures, placing great importance on academic achievement to secure school to employment transitions (Pimlott-Wilson, 2017), Elizabeth does not believe in this construction as the only way to success. Elizabeth explains some of her aspirations, “I’m very focused at the moment, there are so many people here who are lost because they’ve messed things up, and they have nothing to fall back on, I do, just because I’ve made choices, like good choices and I’ve been working hard to get my business off the ground”. Elizabeth operates in the shift that has brought effects of neoliberalisations into education, where there is an ‘aspirational politics which normalises mainstreams practices associated with a narrow, middle-class conception of aspirations and marginalises those who do not, or cannot, conform to the ideals of neoliberal subjectivity’ (Pimlott-Wilson, 2017: 289).

Overall, Elizabeth is carving a space for an alternative construction of success, yet, she is still heavily invested in neoliberal imaginaries of success, characterised by spurs of entrepreneurial creativity, cultures of hard work which are characteristic of cities and productive of ‘technology-intensive interactive economies’ (Rossi and Di Bella, 2017: 1000). The school territory is saturated by a drive to obtain academic results, and young people are increasingly envisaged as ‘actors responsible for shaping their individual lives, precarious as they may be’ (Pantea, 2017: 232). Elizabeth rejects the prevalence of academic routes as the most successful ones and instead is highly motivated to enact a becoming-entrepreneur which I will make sense of in the next section. However, this becoming-entrepreneur is set in motion against the backdrop of neoliberal imaginaries of success.

### *6.5.1 Becoming-Entrepreneur: Creating business visibilities of value on Facebook*

Making money is at the heart of Elizabeth’s construction of success. Elizabeth appears very focused on becoming an entrepreneur by consolidating her beauty and artistic body and face painting business. This section expands on ideas surrounding how young people engage in forms of entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship is understood as ‘the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled’ (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2013: 3). Elizabeth was very derisive of pursuing a Degree as a basis for success, when asked about her lack of interest in pursuing a course at university Elizabeth was quick to explain, “I want to make money, going to uni means I’m getting into debt...it’s nice to have your own money without having to turn up to some shop or office everyday and just be able to make money”. Elizabeth is very driven by the idea of economic independence, achievable through perseverance and hard work, “I don’t think it’s easy, in fact it’s hard, like to keep going, I work week-

ends a lot, but when you see the money rolling in, it's the best feeling". Elizabeth's aspirations to become-entrepreneur reflect how 'entrepreneurship and resilience' are utilised by young people to pursue 'money as a symbol of responsibility, success and stability' (Mendick et al, 2018: 120).

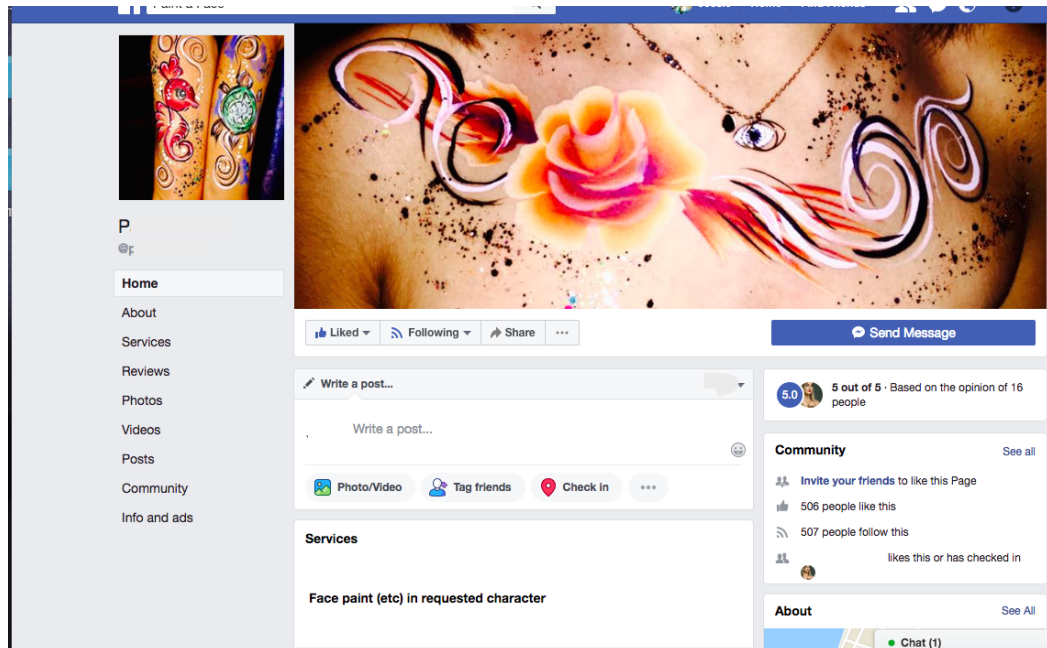


Illustration. Taylor's Facebook's business profile.

Becoming-entrepreneur for Elizabeth involves a careful self-creation on Facebook, a site which she has utilised to publicise her business, "most of my business started by word of mouth but I've been building my business page on Facebook, like posting, uploading and it looks great now, I've done it all myself, taken photos, uploading". The production of suitable content, knowing how to publicise and uploading regularly to create a diverse business space on Facebook show Elizabeth's investment in her becoming-entrepreneur, a process showing 'the 'autonomization' and 'responsibilization' of the self, the instilling of a reflexive hermeneutics which will afford self-knowledge and self-mastery' (Rose, 1996: 157). One of the ways in which Elizabeth has unravelled her business acumen and becoming-entrepreneur has been through the gradual expansion of a Facebook business page to centralise her main business activities.

The image above represents Elizabeth's Facebook business page, Elizabeth has created this in the absence of a website which she sees as "too pricey" yet. Elizabeth has decided to showcase her body painting as this is her latest and most profitable service yet, "I love the face and body painting because you can be very creative

with what you make, because you're painting faces, arms, but it is also profitable because I charge for travelling costs and the paint is actually cheap in comparison to make-up". Young people have been constructed as using social media transgressively (Dobson, 2014; Elliot, 2016), yet, in Elizabeth's case, her use of Facebook illustrates how social media can be used to deliver a 'pipeline to prosperity' and economic growth, a responsibility which normally falls on young generations to seek (Davies and Eynon, 2018).

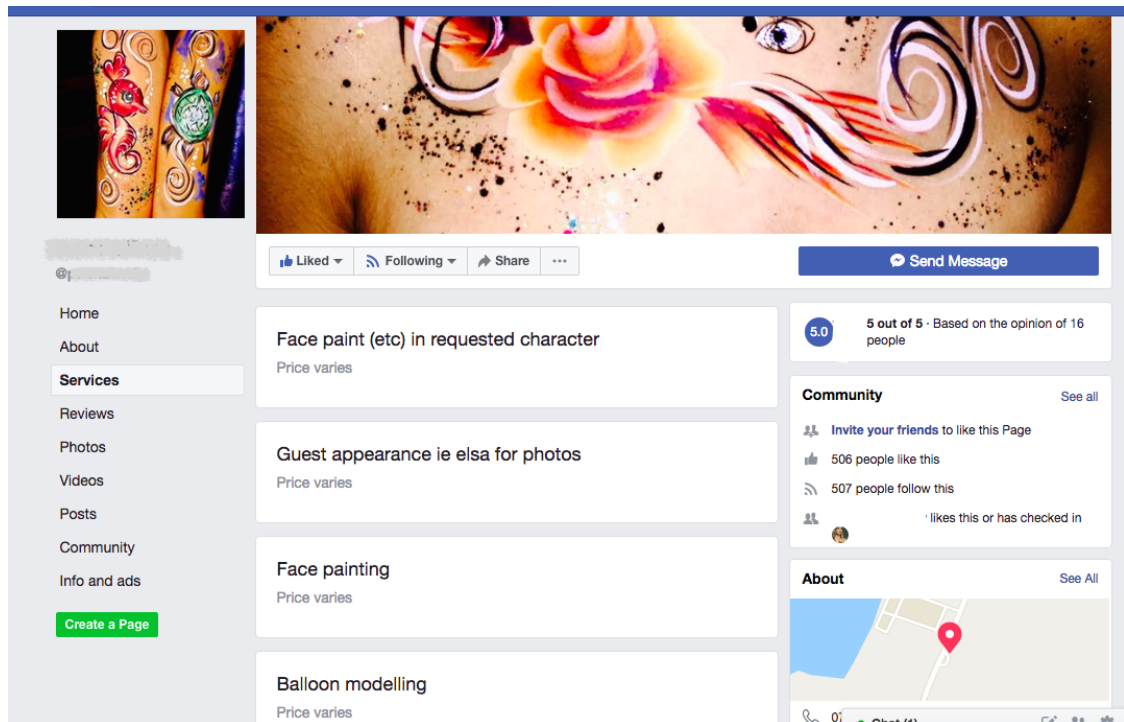


Illustration. Taylor's services offered on facebook page.

Elizabeth's work on Facebook is an important part of her self-making as a business woman, a way to produce a collection of her services and products, evidencing her 'expert subjectivity' utilised to increase the scope of her business. In the image above Elizabeth has used Facebook feature pages to create a detailed list of the services on offer, promote her business products and build the popularity of the page through Facebook 'Likes' and 'follows'; all showing her reflexive adoption of technological change in the image of a digital economy led by entrepreneurialism (Davies and Eynon, 2018: 4). Elizabeth says about her Facebook business page, "It was a bit empty, I've been developing new things like the princess stuff, I love that, and the balloon modelling, all my contact details and lots of photos to show people the quality of the work... In a way Facebook is better than a website because it's so easy to customise and you can show so many photos, that's what my customers want to see". Elizabeth is showing her entrepreneurial spirit in how she has been curating the Facebook page, taking into consideration the resources she has available and what features and

content suit her business and her Facebook page best. Rose refers to these acts of reflexivity as a form of self governance dictated by neoliberalism, where ‘the self-steering capacities of individuals are now construed as vital resources for achieving private profit...social progress...the autonomous, responsible subject, obliged to make its life meaningful through acts of choice’ (1996: 160). Elizabeth who is only eighteen years old, has over five hundred likes and people following her business page, with “regular bookings and enquiries” and the chance to earn “over five hundred pounds over a weekend”.

The allure of being an entrepreneur for Elizabeth lies in the promise of constant self-reinvention and moving in different places and spheres, “I love being creative, doing theater make-up one day and then a kid’s party the next weekend, and then a festival, like always something new and you get lots of contacts that way”. In this way Elizabeth discusses the ways in which her becoming-entrepreneur is managed or governed by an emphasis on creativity, but which in turn secures productivity, competitiveness and innovation (Mendick et al, 2018), all key aspects to strive and thrive in individuating neoliberal economies. Rose (1996: 160) has also referred how self-governing enterprising individuals are essential for how ‘work’ as a site has been re-defined, ‘a new vocabulary of the employment relation has been articulated by organizational psychologists and management consultants, in which work has been reconstrued, not as a constraint upon freedom and autonomy, but as a realm in which working subjects can express their autonomy and creativity’.

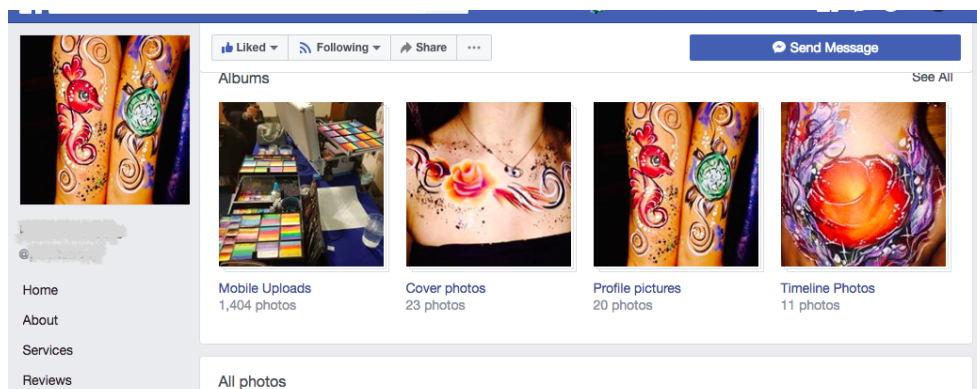


Illustration. Taylor’s compilation of photos of previous work in photo albums.

Elizabeth’s becoming-entrepreneur occurs within a neoliberal capitalism where it is almost a requirement to be striving and to constantly make the most of resources, such as social media, to create new opportunities and navigate difficulties (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2013). Increasing visibility cheaply in competitive markets is an important part of Elizabeth’s becoming-entrepreneur, Elizabeth has attained some of the visibility she needs through Facebook, compiling over fourteen hundred photos and showcasing

the versatility and creativity of her work, from luminescent body painting to personifying Disney princesses. In this way Elizabeth's assemblage with Facebook has had important consequences for her journey into adulthood, and it has resulted in a becoming where Elizabeth puts her creativity to work, to generate profit whilst enrolling all the desirable traits for entrepreneurship, including adaptability, resilience, and resourcefulness to convert talent into a money-making enterprise (Davies and Eynon, 2018). Elizabeth explains, "I started doing party and glam make-up for friends and then I did some work with a theatre company and then I started doing kids' parties, where there is good money to be made, some weekends I've done up to even four parties, and I keep trying new things out"; Elizabeth's entrepreneurial flare crystallises in her comments, showing how she has been considering and planning how her business could diversify to supply services in different settings.

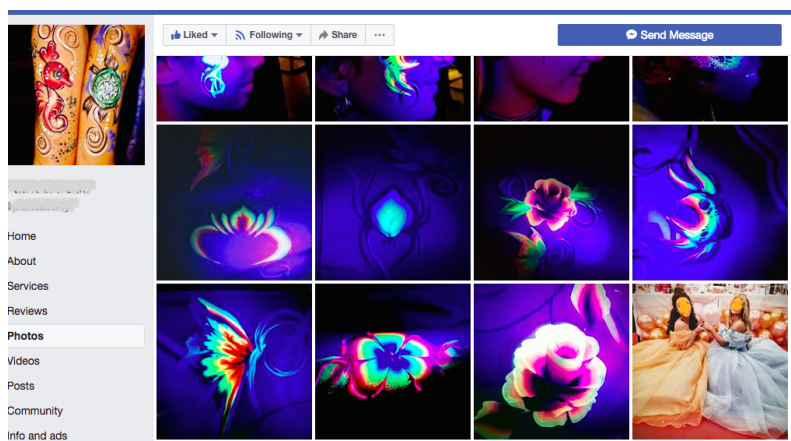


Illustration. Taylor's latest work displayed on facebook.

Overall, I have explained how Elizabeth's becoming-entrepreneur creates a distinct affiliation with Facebook and the available visibilities which she can use to promote her business. Whilst constructing this business space, Elizabeth has found a way to turn her interests and passion for make-up, face and body painting to create a lucrative business. Yet, in order to develop and expand her business she has shown several entrepreneurial characteristics which govern her transition into adulthood and how she envisages success, away from academic excellence. Elizabeth's becoming-entrepreneur goes hand in hand with the rise in a culture of aspirations infused by effects of neoliberalism inhabited by young people.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The chapter explored the identity becomings of research participants Zee, Brian, Mimi and Elizabeth. Central to this chapter is the argument that social media engagements create affiliations to groups, content and an overall imaginary where research participants nurture and carefully curate their desired identity becomings. The chapter ar-

gued that the young people constructed their identity becomings against the backdrop of aspirations culture which they experience both at school and in various online and social media platform technologies. The chapter offered numerous examples of how the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook played an instrumental part in how the research participants built emerging identity becomings, whilst also aligning themselves to existing neoliberal cultures of success. The aspirations culture both at school and online as experienced by the young people placed great emphasis on self-accountability, creativity and autonomy. As a result the identity work focused on young people's entrepreneurial flare, desire to attain goods and status through academic success and work.

In all the narratives presented in this chapter there was an emphasis on how the school's formations of success positioned participants. Crucially, the school's conceptualisations of success privileged academic pathways and university routes over vocational or entrepreneurial options. Therefore, for the young people in this chapter the social media platforms' visibilities, shareabilities and potential for aggregating followers and friends, contributed to the ways in which young people created an assemblage with various platform features to build a space that reflected their identity transformations, promote business ideas and orient their online presence towards their imagined pathways after school.

## **Chapter 7. Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction to the Concluding Chapter**

This thesis has drawn upon data gathered from an ethnographic study of a South London school called Richmond Academy. Using a mixture of observational field notes, interview data from young people, and online observations (See Section 3.7), I have analysed both the school narratives and the online social media of young people, exploring how their online activities and engagements overlapped with parts of their schooling experiences. This thesis showed how the research participants were disaffected towards schooling but used online social media engagements to free themselves from various school restraints. Far from all the downsides to using social media cited by researchers and commentators (See Elliot, 2016; Valkenburg and Piotrowski, 2017; Twenge, 2017), my thesis showed how social media was used by young people to develop their identities in positive ways, in direct response to what they perceived as constraining school cultures. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (2013) I have sought to demonstrate how many of my research participants curated

alternative spaces to develop their social identities, such as becoming-author (Danielle), becoming-photographer (Skeeks), becoming-Blacktivist (Zee), among others.

This chapter provides a conclusion to this thesis, by firstly, revisiting each of my research questions laid out in the introductory chapter, and secondly, by providing a final glimpse of my research participant's lives - showing what each of the young people in my study are doing now, at the time of writing up this thesis, and as these young people 'enter' into adult life. In other words, this chapter provides a final look at the stories of my research participants. Finally, this chapter shall lay out some of the limitations of this study and provide some reflections on future possibilities for this work.

## **7.2 Responding to Research Questions Around Young People's Engagement with Social Media**

In this chapter I shall summarise my research findings, by revisiting my research questions set out in chapter one of this thesis. I shall then reflect on the three key themes this study has centred on: how the offline informs the online lives and social media engagements of young people still at school; the ways in which school contexts and online media engagements each have an impact on young people's gender, 'race' and class social identities; and how young people enact identities reflective of effects of neoliberalism and celebrity culture. Finally, this chapter will discuss future research possibilities, to envisage how the research carried out in this thesis can be further developed and improved for understanding young people's experiences of schooling and online social media.

### *7.2.1 School Curricula and the Relationship Between the Offline and the Online for Young People at School*

In chapter 1, I laid out several key aims and related research questions which focused upon the experiences of schooling and social media usage for young people. Following my first aim to map out and understand how young people's relationship with the online is connected to the offline lives at school, I showed how the identities of young people emerged out of movements from the offline to the online. The relationship between the offline and the online as most of my research participants reported, was one based on power struggles between the school's cultures and the online social spaces they created and engaged with, the latter provided the possibility to re-assert some of the loss of power experienced at school. In chapter four I argued that the school was a territory demarcated by educational policies which created experiences of schooling disadvantaging some of my research participants. In response to these school circumstances my research participants created alternative online content on

social media where they built on, but also escaped some aspects of the school cultures and practices they found restrictive.

There has been a great deal of social research focussing on the ways in which social media impacts upon young peoples' mental health (Twenge, 2017), both in terms of how young people are 'always connected' and spending more time alone with their digital devices (Turkle, 2017) as well as the types of online content they have access to, such as violence (Ruddock, 2013; Valkenburg and Piotrowski, 2017) and other potentially harmful imagery. Throughout this thesis, however, I have argued that there are potential benefits which social media can have for young people, some of which have been neglected or ignored by 'widespread moral panic about new media technologies' (Eichhorn, 2019: 3). Historically, young people have become embedded in negative narratives around social media use. The work by Cohen in the 1970s theorised how the media produces sensationalist, and extreme media discourses around 'selected events that are deviant or socially problematic but also deemed as newsworthy' (Cohen, 2002: xxviii). Cohen's research focused on observing groups of young men labelled as 'mods and rockers' and their regular fights on various seaside English hotspots. Cohen argued that the events produced 'media-induced deviancy amplification' which stigmatised young men as an emerging risk and danger to society (Cohen, 2002: xxix). Namely, the events observed by Cohen (2002: 2) although rare and relatively insignificant in relation to more well-established social problems, such as poverty or homelessness, gained media popularity and quickly transformed groups into 'folk devils: constant reminders of what we should not be'. The notion of moral panics implies a risk or threat to society which can be traced back to a specific event and normally concerns a particular group who through media construction become demonised in the process. My study narrates and explores alternative stories and experiences by young people on social media and at school which counteract moral panics associated with youth and media use. To illuminate these benefits, I reported on my research participants' narratives, who had something significant to say about using social media, for learning, creating, divulging, campaigning, writing, protesting, among other empowering activities. Far from their learning being 'dumbed down' through online activities, or being led astray by others on social media, my research participants' knew how to use the online as a form of resistance, emancipation and escapism.

In chapter 4, following my first key aim of this thesis (See Section 1.5) I mapped out my research participants' relationship between the offline and online. My key question to answer was: what is the relationship between the online and offline in the lives of young people? To make sense of this relationship, I drew upon Deleuze



and Guattari's (2013) ideas of territorialization and de-territorialization to explore the possibilities of transformation and 'becoming' available to young people by using different social media platforms. I argued that my respondents' experience new flows of identity becomings through and within the online worlds they avidly use. The concept of territorialisation was used to explore the dominant practices at school and the power territories that the young people experienced at Richmond Academy. The concept of de-territorialisation was used to explain the online and social media content research participants create to contest the territories of the school. Most of the young people in my study explained themselves in terms of transgressions that enable movement beyond the territorialisations of schooling, to various de-territorialisations online. Using the online as a form of resistance and escapism, I examined how the young people in my study constantly looked to free themselves from constricting school cultures, forging a sense of identity becoming. Then, using the notion of assemblages in my research, I added to this argument that these relations were less hierarchical and more a composition of elements which happen on a plane of situational relations between the offline and online, and which come together but do not necessarily stay the same. Following Deleuze and Guattari (2013) I described them as becoming, ongoing and transforming (see chapter four).

The question around what the relationship is between young people and social media has also been described as one of 'entertainment and leisure' where social media use, at best, is perceived as 'informal learning spaces for leisure' (Kupiainen, 2013: 39). My findings however, go beyond the idea that young people are only engaged in leisure, but rather are creating responses to the inflexibility of the school curriculum (see discussion in chapter four) in very creative ways. Additionally, my thesis has also identified the importance of these offline and online relationships between school practices and social media use for the formation of the young people's social identity. The thesis has developed the theme of identity becomings throughout all the data analysis chapters, showing the ways in which school politics and cultures seep into social media content produced by the young people helping them to curate different identity becomings.

My second research question asked: how does the online impact upon the social identities of young people? (Again, see section 1.5). It was clear from my ethnographic interviews and online observations with my research participants that the online could be used as a way to de-territorialise the restrictive, constraining and undermining forms of schooling many of the young people in my study had experienced at Richmond Academy. Drawing on the concept of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013) I argued that my participants' online work and social media engagements were instrumental in their identity becomings. For instance, chapter four showed how Tay-

lor's becoming-political was underscored by a school environment changed significantly because of the introduction of a new qualification that affected the teaching of drama at Richmond Academy. So Taylor turned to the online to re-establish her interest in drama and speak her opinions on the new qualification and the impact on her favourite subject. Similarly, Danielle de-territorialised the writing constraints at Richmond Academy, through her assemblage with a popular self-publishing social networking site, Wattpad to assert herself as becoming-author. Whilst Skeeks, disaffected by the disrupted and curriculum driven art classes at school, took to Facebook to establish his identity as becoming-artist.

### *7.2.2 Social Media and Young People's Negotiations of Gender, Sexualisation and Feminism at Richmond Academy (Chapter Five)*

The second aim of this thesis (See section 1.5) arose from the first, as a sub-theme which looked at the more specific facets of identity, such as gender and sexuality. This sub-theme emerged from my time spent at Richmond Academy, observing and conducting preliminary interviews with young people. The first key question for this aim was: How do young people's school experiences reflect the gendered nature or regimes in school? In chapter 5 I discussed the gender relations at the school and how my research participants at times conform to it and also contest it with their social media engagements. Answering this question involved outlining the territorialisations (Deleuze and Guatarri, 2013) of Richmond Academy's school culture by analysing the experiences of several key informants, including Ashley, Skeeks, Danielle and Dan. Drawing on their experiences, I argued that my research participants struggled against sexist and heteronormative school cultures at Richmond Academy and that several young people in my study felt alienated by the school culture. In chapter five, I explained how the school alienated some of my research participants as they tried to enact different becomings and occupy less traditional identity positions, as well as how some of them want to conform to normalised gender cultures (in the case of Dan). Whether the young people resist or comply, their social media content is an instrumental part of their emerging identity becomings at school.

This led directly to a second research question for my second aim (again, see section 1.5) which asked: How do young people engage with social media to shape their emerging gendered identities? This question allowed my research to move from understanding the territorialisations, to making sense of how my research participants were able to overcome them. Chapter 5 examined the school and online power-struggles and power-seeking several of the young people participated in. I showed how the gender and sexuality territorialisations which were experienced at school, by these research participants, were emancipated or extended online. Using ethnograph-

ic methods, I explored them offline and online to show how they creatively tread their ways on to online becomings. For Ashley, Skeeks and Danielle I argued that the gender politics, and heteronormative cultures at school turned the territory of schooling into alienating spaces which my participants de-territorialised, responded to and resisted online. For Dan I argued that the heteronormative cultures of the school which played out in his life turned him into a 'popular boy' and became extended onto the online, re-territorialising him to dominant gender and sexuality cultures at school. Following assemblages as having territorialised re-territorialised and de-territorialised sides, I emphasised how 'each power change is a force of de-territorialization' in the lives of the young people (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 508). Drawing on examples of using social media sites Tumblr, Instagram and Facebook, the chapter showed how Ashley, Skeeks, Danielle and Dan were moved onto new fields of power through particular de-territorialising and re-territorialising assemblages.

A great deal of literature on young people and social media (reviewed in chapter two) centres on how social media exposes young people to risk, often normalising or reinforcing sexist (Gill, 2018) and racist (Twenge, 2017) stereotypes, as well as legitimising sexual violence (Ruddock, 2013), pornography and other media related activities. However, contrary to these studies, my thesis argues that social media can be emancipatory, offering forms of escapism to young people which helps them take control of the shaping of their identities - which I discussed using the term 'becoming'. This argument was presented in chapter five in particular, where I presented Ashley's territorialisations of schooling and the ways in which she de-territorialised patriarchal culture within the school. I argued that these de-territorialisations at school were feminist in essence. Furthermore, I showed how these offline tracings connected to online de-territorialising assemblages that Ashley created through blogging online and engaging with feminism on the site, Tumblr. Over and against the school territorialisations which she felt restricted her, Ashley was able to establish her identity as becoming-feminist through Tumblr, an escape from the restrictive mainstream culture at Richmond Academy.

Chapter 5 discussed 'sexuality becomings', by focusing on Skeeks and Danielle. I argued that both participants experienced difficulties with the heteronormative and heterosexist cultures at the school, to which they responded to online. For Skeeks, the response meant seeking to be re-territorialised as heterosexual at school on Instagram. For Danielle, it meant de-territorialising school heteronormativities on Tumblr. I also discussed Dan's experiences as 'one of the boys' at the school and how this 'laddish' culture was extended online through Facebook. Unlike my other research participants, Dan was someone who did not choose to de-territorialise school culture - he chose to reinforce the culture by posting 'laddish' images and giving 'likes' to things

which represented the 'macho' environment he inhabited. However, for him, being one of the 'popular guys' at the school was most beneficial. Dan's case shows that young people often know how to utilise social media to get the best out of the social situation - Dan did not feel disempowered like my other research participants and therefore need not resist or fight it.

### *7.2.3 Emancipating Class and 'Race' Disadvantages Through Neoliberal and Celebrity Culture Aspirations on Social Media (Chapter 6)*

The third aim of this thesis was to understand the identities of young people and how they become entangled with other dominant practices enabled by online practices. This question became the basis of the final discussion chapter: how do young people use online platforms to imagine their academic and work futures? (See section 1.5). In chapter six I discussed some of the relations around 'race' and class encountered by the research participants at Richmond Academy. I discussed these relations in chapter six with an emphasis on how research participants engaged with twitter and Facebook to imagine identity becomings around aspirations towards academic success, entrepreneurship and celebrity culture. These young people were most concerned with their educational and employment futures because they were the oldest research participants and at the point of completing formal education and making the transition to further study or employment. In order to make sense of the young people's experiences I explained the territorialisations around 'race' and class at Richmond Academy and how research participants were positioned as a result. This was followed by detailed discussions of the social media identity becomings research participants created online. These becomings were being played out by the young people in the ways in which they used the social media to respond to the territories of the school and also to create identity becomings that reflected their desire to excel academically and/or secure a future in business or celebrity culture.

Another important analytical thread to the discussion in chapter six was the dominant neoliberal bias that informed and produced the aspirations for the future of these young people. The work by Freeman (2014) and Jeffrey and Dyson (2013) was used to support how the neoliberal values of re-invention, ambition and self-examination have become an important part of how young people form perceptions of success. The data and analysis in chapter six extended these ideas by illustrating how social media platforms lend themselves as instruments of the neoliberal milieu and encourage the adherence of young people to a neoliberal culture of material aspirations. Chapter six also explored the paradox of a neoliberal freedom where young people's emerging identities seemed very liberating and anti-school but at the same time were heavily infused by a culture of aspirations driven by individualistic imperat-

ives. Whilst the research participants' use of social media sites twitter and facebook were used to create alternative identities to those possible at Richmond Academy, at the same time these conformed to the prevalent neoliberal discourses associated with particular aspirational futures.

The symbols and cultural expressions around race and class described in chapter six depict a school culture where there was an unspoken acceptance of low expectations of the performance of BME and working class students; one which both my research participants, Brian and Zee, were aware of (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn et al, 2017). The territory of the school, expressed by teacher expectations and teacher interactions, overlooked their talents and they were both cautious to praise the school because of their academic success. Rather, they singled out individual teachers, the hard work of parents and their perseverance as the factors underpinning their academic success. This thesis indicates how students from minority and black backgrounds struggle to establish positive relationships with teachers and to be recognised for their talents (Cummings, 2008; Strand, 2012; Gillborn et al, 2017). Yet, this thesis looked into the wider contexts and I have tried to indicate how young people are not just passively being discriminated against, but instead, actively constructing identity becomings on social media that can work to to re-dress some of the imbalances of power and limitations of participation they experience at school. The school context has been constructed as unequal and disadvantaging for black and minority ethnic students, in particular through everyday and assessment practices (Strand 2012; Gillborn 2008; Gillborn et al, 2017), but I have tried to emphasise the ways in which young people develop creative responses to what they perceive are unequal relations at school. To this effect, for Zee the school environment was used as a site for assembly and empowerment and he organised the 'Woke' project, supported and endorsed by one of his teachers who helped him get approval from senior management. This project eventually expanded into his local community and became an important feature of Zee's identity becoming as blacktivist on twitter. For Brian the school was just a stepping stone into greater things and the ambition and high aspirations of his family gave him the determination to apply himself to study and achieve academically. Having experienced the work he had to put in, not just in his study, but more importantly to get teachers to help him and "be on his side" as he described; Brian migrated his desire to celebrate black excellence on twitter.

In contrast, the last two research participants, Mimi and Elizabeth are discussed as engaging with social media to produce identity becomings borrowing from celebrity culture and entrepreneurship. Richmond Academy had constructed academic expectations around girls which evoked 'girl power' and 'post-feminist' realities such as that living in an equal world girls could make themselves truly successful through

education regardless of circumstances (Gill, 2016). Nonetheless, Richmond Academy was experienced by Mimi and Elizabeth as alienating; with Mimi feeling ostracised because of her lack of interest in academic pathways and Elizabeth feeling disillusioned with the school's under appreciation of less traditional academic transitions after school, such as self-employment. Chapter six laid out the territories where class relations positioned Mimi, a white middle-class girl who had an open dislike for academic study, at odds with the prevalent constructions of successful girls at Richmond Academy. Similarly, Elizabeth was at odds with the school since her aspirations to run her own business were dismissed by teachers as unrealistic, given that the prevalent perceptions around white middle-class girls' educational futures implied attending prestige universities. On the contrary, neither Mimi or Elizabeth applied for university places and as a result were portrayed as "unfulfilling their potential" by school staff and teachers.

The sixth chapter built on arguments and ideas which problematised the position of girls against school 'post-feminist' cultures where all girls have to do is work hard and have academic merit to be successful (Cossen and Jackson, 2018; Harris and Dobson, 2015). However, this thesis also extended these ideas by examining how girls used their agency online to generate empowering identity becomings on social media. Mimi was harnessing characteristics of celebrity culture, based on leisure, luxury items and holiday-making to create a twitter space where she is followed by thousands of people and she wanted to become a social media personality. Young people are very exposed to celebrity culture on social media (Mendick et al, 2018; Davies and Eynon, 2018), but this thesis also shows that young people, such as Mimi, can resourcefully navigate celebrity culture to enact an identity becoming that can return some advantages. Elizabeth positioned and established herself as an entrepreneur on social media, promoting her beauty and face paint art on facebook, a business she had been growing for years and which had gained momentum because of her facebook postings. Although Elizabeth's becoming-entrepreneur is still constructed around aspirations based on individualistic neoliberal values (Baker, 2010; Skelton 2010); she expertly created content on social media that offered her a secure financial situation in spite of not pursuing an academic route as it was expected at Richmond Academy.

### **7.3 What the Research Participants are Doing Now**

Having spent considerable time with my ten research participants, the relationships I developed were long-lasting and were maintained beyond the data collection stage of my thesis. After building up relationships with each of the young people in my study, I have kept in touch with several of them, even as my doctoral research was coming to

an end. For instance, many of the young people in my study still contact me from time to time updating me on what they are doing. In this section I shall provide the most current account accounts of what each of my research respondents are doing. Some of them continued to pursue their aspirations which they described during the school days, but others showed different career and life paths.

Brian's becoming-successful continued throughout his schooling, securing the A-level results to take his place at UCL studying a degree in Mathematics. Brian also worked for an educational company specialising in science and mathematics tutoring, operating at Imperial College in London, earning three times over the minimum wage. As with his narrative presented in this thesis, Brian is still very committed to his becoming-successful identity and is still very supportive of others' success and still maintains he wants to surround himself with "people who are growing". Brian is really looking forward to securing a high-paid graduate job and says that he has been working on his LinkedIn profile, networking through his current job and university circles.

Zee and Brian are still in touch although they are studying at different universities. Zee accepted an offer to study Computer Science at the University of Surrey, a degree that he has found "very hard" because of the "change of scene" and his friends not being there. Zee's becoming-blacktivist is still a very important part of his identity and he is still actively working with a community organisation in South London, mentoring and running different strands of the "Woke project" for young people in his local area. Zee has had to adapt to a new environment at the University of Surrey and has struggled to build friendships feeling a little isolated and returning home to his friends and his locality where he says he feels "happiest". Yet, Zee says that the degree has been an excellent experience and he is looking forward to securing his first graduate job and applying for a postgraduate course in London.

Ashley's disappointment with schooling never changed and although she excelled at A-level, securing a place at Cambridge, she said school left her feeling "despondent". However, this has changed significantly for Ashley as she is in a college in Cambridge where she is surrounded by "brilliant women" as she puts it, and her "academic voice is valued, not silenced". Ashley's academic accolades keep mounting after winning an essay competition recently in her subject history and modern languages. One of the salient characteristics of Ashley's narrative was her realisation and frustration with what she perceived was unequal treatment of girls at school. Ashley's identity as becoming-feminist and her engagements with social media allowed her to develop a strong voice from a very young age and gave her an outlet for her academic development. Ashley's blogging has continued and centres around sophisticated critiques of rational capitalism and the cooption of feminism by neoliberalism.

Danielle has followed her love of writing and is pursuing a degree in English at the University of Sussex. Danielle has continued to grow the readership of her stories on Wattpad with one of her stories reaching more than two hundred and eighty thousand reads. Danielle's identity as becoming-author has not slowed down but instead she has increased her writing on Wattpad, using it as a platform where she can "sound out ideas" and "get a feeling for what moves people". Danielle has been thinking about training as a teacher, or going into academia, and has long-term ambitions to write and publish her work. Although Danielle is very young, she calls herself an experienced writer, which was something she says was made possible because of her "work on Wattpad", where, "seeing readership numbers increasing" motivated her to put her ideas into narrative. Danielle has been writing for over seven years now and does not plan to slow down but turn this into a credible career.

Mimi is not indecisive about university anymore; she has decided not to pursue a degree and instead is working as an air hostess with a commercial airline. Mimi says that working as cabin crew gives her "a bit of a taste of the celebrity life she's always been attracted to". Mimi has continued to grow her social media on twitter by making the most of her frequent travelling; posting from all the several locations she visits weekly has helped increase her "followship". Mimi has also migrated her social media onto instagram and wants to continue growing her profile and become a social media influencer. Social media use remains a very important part of Mimi's everyday life and is closely tied to how she plans to increase her income in the future. The celebrity life that she was attracted to whilst at school, with travelling and holiday-making has influenced Mimi's career pathway and is harnessed in her social media use to keep mapping her identity as becoming-celebrity.

Skeeks' becoming-artist has also helped him to transition into self-employment as a freelance photographer, web designer and video editor. Skeeks is still "in two minds" about going to university, and instead did a course on web design which helped him kickstart his own business. Skeeks is still very active on facebook, and says that "the amount of work that I did on my photography has led the way into what I am doing now, not just doing it, but collating it all, it gives you a vision". The production of media and turning his facebook into a live and growing portfolio empowered Skeeks to curate an emerging identity as becoming-artist. These social media engagements eased his transition into self-employment as a photographer and web developer. Skeeks' work with his art teachers and his systematic storing and compiling of his work gave him confidence as a budding artist and photographer.



Another transition has been that of Elizabeth who has grown her business since leaving school and is producing an income of more than three thousand pounds a month. The identity mapped in this study as becoming-entrepreneur has continued developing for Elizabeth who says that “social media is a quick way to gain the trust of existing and potential customers because they see the versatility of your work liked and shared by real people. I haven’t even needed to spend money on a website”. Facebook was instrumental for Elizabeth’s entrepreneurial activities. Her entrepreneurial flare was poured very quickly on to her Facebook page, and offered her a platform that she knew well and that has the possibility to reach a lot of people very quickly. Elizabeth is still developing her business and still has no plans to go to university, instead she is preparing for exhibiting her work at a big make up artists’ convention.

Taylor has decided to study a degree in education and drama at Bath Spa and plans to become a drama teacher. Taylor says of her decision to study education and drama that she remembers how her teachers made her “confident and gave her strength”. Taylor’s becoming-political has meant that she is very active in the students’ union and enjoys representing and working with students. Social media has reminded a very important part of Taylor’s current post at her university’s students’ union. Taylor says she has got a “passion fo education and drama” as she knows how the subject can help with “confidence-building” and “overcoming fears”. Taylor is very actively blogging about political and educational issues and hopes that her blogging will create work as resources for “critical drama teaching” in the future.

Dan deferred his university place and took a gap year to travel with friends to Europe and Asia. After his return Dan started his study at the university of Sussex and has plans to settle in Brighton after his degree is finished. Dan has similar attitudes to social media, insisting he does not have the time to update it himself but rather is happy with people tagging him and publishing. However, he admits that since starting at university and thinking about future employment he spends more time looking through his Facebook so as to have some control over what it is published.

#### **7.4 The Researcher: A Short Reflection on Learning**

After providing an update on my research participants’ current pathways and after-school transitions, I also wanted to reflect further in this short section and offer some final thoughts on what I have learnt throughout this process. Firstly, my time at the school and with research participants taught me how much resilience and resourcefulness young people have when it comes to the everyday challenges they encounter. Schooling issues can sometimes be dismissed very easily by adults as teenage

drama but schooling is very impactful in young people's lives. I learnt that the issues and struggles that I encountered in the lives of my research participants affected them powerfully, and their articulations and my own observations offline and online opened my eyes to how vital social media engagements can be for young people's resistance and identity building. Part of my arguments show that young people are very aware of the ways in which they are constructed negatively in society and in the world of schooling. Yet, they also expertly create ways to counteract the effects in their own lives by curating social media environments that act as supportive networks and repositories of the work towards their identity-becomings. Secondly, I have become more aware of how the neglect towards the learning that young people experience online is a loss for schools and the overall educational environment. With social media being so ubiquitous in young people's lives and as evidenced in my data chapters, the online learning and identity affirming experiences of young people should be acknowledged within the threshold of the school. Young people's experiences on different media could open up necessary debate and embed the student voice in curriculum planning, community-building practices and create a more positive sense of belonging between students and the institution of the school. Thirdly, I have learnt how ethics should be an ongoing process and that this is more attainable if we develop a sensitivity to conducting qualitative research. In order to do this I tried to refrain from imposing adult-centred or teacher-centred views on the young people's narratives. This required me to take a step back from the role I was known for at Richmond Academy and find ways to negotiate my relationship as a researcher to the young people who took part in this study.

## **7.5 Contributions to Knowledge**

One of the main contributions to knowledge my study offers is on theorising identity. The notion of identity tends to be discussed as performance, or as agency. Identity as performative presents the individual as an active doer who is rationally acting out a performance that allows the individual to lay claim to a coherent identity (Goffman, 1990). Other theorisations of identity focus on the agential acts of individuals who navigate social structure to forge a sense of self where agency is enacted through choice (Giddens, 1991). These discussions tend to be one-sided with a strong emphasis on performances as conscious identity-building acts of choice. My study offers an opportunity to think outside of performances and agency, by going beyond individual acts of choice and instead emphasising the relationalities that compose what I have developed in the study as identity becomings. Another contribution to knowledge is the use of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy (2013) to illuminate themes in the qualitative data. More specifically, the bringing together of assemblages, becomings, territorialisations and de-territorialisations. As explained in the data chapters, these

concepts from Deleuze and Guattari were used to create a more systematic theoretical approach where identity is presented as existing within a complex set of relations, influenced by various enrolling events experienced at school, at home and social media by research participants. These theorisations allowed me to map out the ways in which young people expertly navigate tricky everyday challenges in their lives. This leads me to the third contribution of my study, an alternative way to imagine and think about young people's lives. My study showcases young people's resilience, inventiveness and originality when they are faced with restrictive cultures or felt disenfranchised by school. The narratives discussed counteract the perceived negative discourses associated with youth and social media. Also, the arguments presented in the study, cutting across school cultures, young people's experiences and their online media engagements highlight the importance of student voice in education. The last contribution to knowledge is on the use of assemblage as both theory and methodology. I have discussed earlier the theoretical approach, but the Deleuzian methodology in the study contributes to understanding how assemblages can be harnessed to generate different combinations of qualitative research methods. Thinking through assemblage allowed me to focus on connections and lines of relationality between different types of data, such as observation fieldnotes, interview transcripts and collated online data. All of these contributions position the study as a much needed modern look at schooling and the intersections of youth cultures, media and the making of identity.

### *7.5.1 Re-thinking Public Pedagogy, Learning and Student Voice*

Some of the wider debates that my study could contribute to are around public pedagogy, online learning and student voice. The notion of public pedagogy offers an alternative way to envisage education as a process which traverses the walls of the school and the classroom. Pedagogy tends to be relegated to the threshold of the school and other educational institutions, yet, through the notion of public pedagogy a more democratic understanding emerges. My study aligns itself with aspects of public pedagogy as it explores the many ways in which students' experience of education is undermined by the overly instrumentalist ways in which we define pedagogy, through a prescriptive curriculum which suggests knowledge is transferable, through specific curricular practices, designed to satisfy performative regimes of assessment (Giroux, 2011). My data points to how pedagogy should be a more open debate where learning is not only perceived to occur in educational institutions. As discussed in this study young people are exposed to online communities and online content on various media which they utilise to make up for what they perceive were contriving curriculum-led school cultures. Including these peripheral narratives of learning in the wider debate

that public pedagogy offers can help make them more central to educational debates. After all, the notion of public pedagogy highlights how everything in society is relevant for how we understand learning, and how mass learning happens in society. Public pedagogy proposes that popular culture, imagery, wider media discourses, advertising and artefacts of visual culture, such as magazines, films and television are important meaning-making means in society. Similarly, youth media engagements as discussed in this study far from being excluded from pedagogy, curriculum and school dynamics are argued to be at the heart of everyday school life.

Another contribution my study makes is on how young people engage in various forms of learning, including online learning on social media. This is an important contribution because there is still a very clear distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' ways of learning. The narratives of my research participants evidence the ways in which they embed themselves in supportive networks, where they join learning communities, such as Taylor's and Ashley's Tumblr communities which helped them speak to power at school. These interactive and supportive participatory communities on the social media site of Tumblr allowed Taylor to address curriculum inequalities at school, and allowed Ashley to challenge sexist school cultures at school. Online learning was very significant in the lives of my research participants as it helped them to navigate school tensions, deal with school pressures and seek support from online communities, as well as learn from online content and blogs. Taking into consideration these findings from my study could help broaden some of the still narrow and overly institutionalised ways in which learning is understood. Lastly, the importance of student voice is tightly linked to both the notions of public pedagogy and online learning since opening up pedagogy and learning requires the inclusion of the student voice. My study identified areas where curriculum and performative targets interfered with teacher relationships and classroom dynamics. For instance, Zee and Brian experienced neglect at Richmond Academy and were very careful not to give too much recognition to the school for their academic accolades, instead, they praised their mothers, a supportive teacher and their social media communities. Many of my research participants felt silenced in the classroom, and many got by through quiet disengagement, withdrawing their voices to avoid conflict with teachers. This exemplifies some of what hooks calls the impacts of institutionalised pedagogies that 'leave teachers afraid, scared of trying new strategies' scared of listening to students since oppressive pedagogies centre on the teacher having 'authority', reducing teacher-student relationships to a rational exchange of facts (1994: 140). My study's potential contributions to public pedagogy, online learning and student voice offer an opportunity to shift the position of teachers and students within a more open debate about what education could be.

## 7.6 Limitations and Considerations of the Study and Future Research

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (2013), my thesis has employed the concepts of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, to map out distinctive ways in which the offline world of schooling and online engagements with social media are connected. In most cases, my respondents chose the online use of social media to deterritorialise the constraining and restrictive forms of offline schooling. However, we must remember that the research participants in my study were untypical ones (See my Sampling Section in the Methodology Chapter, particularly 3.3.2), they were mostly ambitious and creative individuals who rebelled against the school culture at Richmond Academy. Although there are young people like this in every school in Britain, I accept that my research participants are not representative of 'most kids'. Other research participants, such as Dan, provided a good example of a 'more typical' student, whose online use of social media complemented, rather than contradicted, his experiences in schooling. Dan's becoming-popular both in school and online was typical of the ways in which the use of social media platforms like Facebook resonate with the sexual identities already being mapped out in the school environment. Dan's case also shows that in some instances online engagements reinforce schooling cultures - he chose to use Facebook to consent rather than to rebel against school culture.

My thesis shows that young people know how to utilise the online, in order to produce a space of empowerment, escapism or resistance to the institutional cultures of the school and work on who it is they are becoming. The research participants in this study derived a sense of power and a complex network of online content and online support to mould their emerging identities. Zee struggled to fit in to the mainstream culture at Richmond Academy because he was 'black and talented' and therefore rebelled online in his 'becoming-blacktivist'. Ashley hated the patriarchal and male culture in mainstream schooling and rebelled online, in her pursuit of becoming-feminist. In contrast, Dan was very popular at school, fitted well into the heterosexual culture of mainstream schooling, and was able to make use of the online to reaffirm his becoming-heterosexual. What all these young people share, is an ability to put social media to use in a way which benefits and contributes to their identities.

On reflection, there are several limitations about my study which I wish to draw attention to and examine here. First, my study focussed on a sample of untypical mainly working class young people - students who mainly rebelled against mainstream schooling and most of whom became 'successful' in education and work, attending Russell Group and selective universities, such as Cambridge (Ashley), becoming skilled entrepreneurs with high income (Elizabeth), or becoming serious and

professional authors (Danielle). Richmond Academy is a state school, situated in a deprived part of South London, with a host of financial issues to address, so these students I discuss could be argued to be successes at the school, rather than the norm. Whilst it is also possible that some readers might find my account of how these young people tackle the oppressions and exclusions of school culture through social media overly positive, the study offers a very detailed account of modern schooling and its need to take notice of young people's connectivity and social media use. My research participants' resilience and creative resolve are an important part of how they enrolled the affordabilities of various social media, and I accept that social media does have considerable downfalls, yet I have tried to present the stories of young people's socialities as profoundly nuanced. But in a context where social media is deemed to be the root of so many social issues for young people, my thesis does show the potential for exploring further how young people's potential uses of online technologies and social media play an important role in their identity transformations.

The narratives presented focused primarily on how young research participants subverted parts of everyday school culture. It portrays young people's 'agency' through becomings; identity then opens up as a more layered and complex process of endless connections and assemblages. The sense of empowerment that my research participants perceived in their lives were infused by their constant online identity work. Richmond Academy as a school has many problems, some problems are very obvious, like the fact that at the time of the study only 72% of students at Richmond Academy achieved five A-C GCSEs, other problems are more insidious, like the overlooking of young people's resourcefulness and determination. Whilst my study focuses more on those students who against odds did well and even tried to defy school culture, most students at the school might not be contesting school culture in this way. However, my study provides a niche account of very current school issues and very importantly, it details innovative accounts of how young people navigate their positions at school whilst creating a sense of self that has become increasingly intertwined with online and social media use. In future research I would widen the scope of research participants, to include more 'typical' students from schools like Richmond Academy. Future research might also investigate more closely the perspectives and experiences of others too, including school teachers and the parents of students who use online social media to shape their emerging identities.

## Bibliography

- APA. Social networking's good and bad impacts on kids. 2011. Available from: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2011/08/social-kids.aspx> [accessed 24th February 2017].
- ONS, 2016, Accessed 24th February 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulation-andcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2016>
- Allred, P. and Fox, N. (2015) The sexuality assemblages of young men: A new materialist analysis. *Sexualities*, 18 (8), pp. 905-920.
- Allen, K. and Hollingworth, S. (2013) 'Sticky subjects' or 'cosmopolitan creatives'? Social class, place and urban young people's aspirations for work in the knowledge economy. *Urban Studies*, 50 (3), pp. 499-517.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2008) *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage.
- Archer, L., Halsall, A. and Hollingworth, S. (2007) Inner-city femininities and education: 'race', class, gender and schooling in young women's lives. *Gender and Education*, 19 (5), pp. 549-568, DOI: 10.1080/09540250701535568
- Baer, H. (2016) Redoing feminism: digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16 (1), pp. 17-34, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2015.1093070
- Baker, J. (2010) Great expectations and post-feminist accountability: young women living up to the 'successful girls' discourse. *Gender and Education*, 22 (1), pp. 1-15, DOI: 10.1080/09540250802612696
- Baldrige, B. (2014). Relocating the deficit: reimagining black youth in neoliberal times. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51 (3), pp. 440-472.
- Ball, S. J. (2017) *Governing by numbers: education, governance and the tyranny of numbers*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2015) Education, Governance and the Tyranny of Numbers. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30 (3), pp. 299-301.
- Ball, S. J. (2017) Laboring to relate: neoliberalism, embodied policy, and network dynamics. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92 (1), pp. 29-41, DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2016.1264802
- Ball, S.J. (2015) Education, governance and the tyranny of numbers. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30 (3) pp. 299-301. 10.1080/02680939.2015.1013271.
- Ball, S. J.; Maguire, M.; Braun, A. (2011) *How Schools Do Policy: Policy Enactments in Secondary Schools*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Stephen J. Ball (2010) The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18 (2), pp. 215-228, DOI: 10.1080/0268093022000043065.
- Ball, S.J., Maguire, M. and Macrae, S. (2000) *Choice, pathways, and transitions post-16 : new youth, new economies in the global city*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Barad, K. (2012) On Touching - The Inhuman That Therefore I am. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 23 (3), pp. 206-223.
- Barker, J., Alldred, P., Watts, M. and Dodman, H. (2010) Pupils or Prisoners? Institutional Geographies and Internal Exclusions in UK Secondary Schools. *Area*, 42 (3), pp. 378-386.
- Barnes, S.B. (2006) A Privacy Paradox: Social Networking in the United States, *First Monday* 11 (9), pp. 1-11.
- Barton, K. and Lampley, J. (2014) *Fan CULTure: Essays on participatory fandom in the 21st Century*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Behnke, P. (2010). Foreword. In P. Behnke (Ed.), *Social media and politics: Online social networking and political communication in Asia* (pp. 7–9). Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.
- Bell, J. (2014) *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Bell, D., Rosenberger, J. and Ott, M. (2015) Masculinity in Adolescent Males' Early Romantic and Sexual Heterosexual Relationships. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 9 (3), pp. 201-208.
- Bennett, W. L. and Segerberg, A. (2013) *The Logic of Connective Action*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Bergman-Blix, S. and Wettergren, A. (2014) The Emotional Labour of Gaining and Maintaining Access to the Field. *Qualitative Research*, 15 (6), pp. 688-704.
- Best, S. (2017) Aspiration, abjection and precariousness: The neo-liberal educator's desire for compliance. *Power & Education*, 9 (1), pp. 37, 50.
- Blackman, S.J. (2005) Youth subcultural theory: a critical engagement with the concept, its origins and politics, from the Chicago School to postmodernism. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8 (1), pp. 1-20.
- Böhm, S and Land, C. (2012) The New 'Hidden Abode': Reflections on Value and Labour in the New Economy. *The Sociological Review*, 60 (2), pp. 217-240.
- Bottiani, J. Bradshaw, C. and Mendelson, T. (2016) Inequality in Black and White High School Students' Perceptions of School Support: An Examination of Race in Context. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45 (6), pp. 1176-1191.
- Bowley, B. (2013) Soft boys, tough boys and the making of young sporty masculinities at a private boys' school. *Gender and Education*, 27 (3), pp. 87-93.
- boyd, D. (2011). 'Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics and implications' in: Papacharissi Z. (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community and culture on social networking sites*, New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 39–58.
- boyd, D. (2007) 'Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life' in: Buckingham, D. (Ed.), *McArthur foundation series on digital learning: Youth, Identity and digital media volume*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 119–142.



- Brennan, T. (2014) *The Transmission of Affect*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2013) *The Posthuman*,
- Brighi, A., Ortega, R., Scheitauer, H., Smith, P.K., Tsormpatzoudis, C., Barkoukis, V., Del Rey, R., et al (2012) *European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (ECIPQ)*. University of Bologna. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Browne, S. (2015). *Dark matters: On the surveillance of Blackness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bruno, N., et al. (2014) 'Selfies' reveal systematic deviations from known principles of photographic composition. *Art and Perception* 2 (1), pp. 45–58.
- Burgess, J., Green J., Jenkins, H. and Hartley, J. (2009) *Youtube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. London: Polity Press.
- Burgess, J. (2006) Hearing Ordinary Voices: Cultural Studies, Vernacular Creativity and Digital Storytelling. *Continuum*, 20 (2), pp. 201-214, DOI: 10.1080/10304310600641737
- Calvert, S. and Wilson, B. (2008) *The Handbook of Children, Media, and Development*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.
- Coleman, R. and Ringrose, J. (2013) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Caliandro, A. (2017) Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for ethnographers Exploring Social Media Environments. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 47 (5) 551-578.
- Carney, N. (2016) All Lives Matter but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media. *Humanity and Society*, 40 (2), pp. 180-199.
- Champion, C. (2012) Instagram: je-suis-là? *Philosophy of Photography* 3 (1), pp. 83–88.
- Cho, A. (2015) Queer reverb: tumblr, affect, time. In: Hillis, K. Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (eds) *Networked Affect*. London and Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 43-57.
- Clark, S. (2009) A good education: girls' extracurricular pursuits and school choice. *Gender and Education*, 21 (5), pp, 601-615, DOI: 10.1080/09540250802680073
- Cohen, S. (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: the creation of mods and rockers*. London: Routledge.
- Coppock, V. and Gillett- Swan, J. K. (2016) Children's rights in a 21st-century digital world: Exploring opportunities and tensions. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 6 (4), pp. 369-375.

- Cossens, S. and Jackson, S. (2018) White, classed and gendered: pre-teen girls negotiate successful young womanhood. *Gender and Education*, 32 (2), pp. 211-226, DOI: 10.1080/09540253.2018.1482411
- Couldry, N. (2008) Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling. *New Media and Society*, 10 (3), pp. 373–391.
- Courtney, S. J. (2016) Post-Panopticism and school inspection in England, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37 (4), pp. 623-642.
- Critcher, C. (2003) *Moral panics and the media*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Cummings, S. (2008) Explaining poor academic performance among black children. *The Educational Forum*, 41 (3), pp. 335-346, DOI: 10.1080/00131727709336257
- Davidson, E. (2008) Marketing the Self: the Politics of Aspiration Among Middle-Class Silicon Valley Youth. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 40 (1), pp. 2814-2830.
- Davies, H. and Eynon, R. (2018) Is Digital Upskilling the Next Generation our ‘Pipeline to Prosperity’. *New Media & Society*, 20 (11), pp. 1-19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818783102>
- Dean, J. (2010) Affective Networks. *Media Tropes eJournal*, 2 (2), pp. 19-44).
- De Fina, A. (2016) Storytelling and Audience Reactions on social Media. *Language in Society*, 45 (4), pp. 473-498.
- Deleuze, G. (2005) *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. New York: Zone Books.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2013) *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2008) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- De Ridder, S. (2017) Social Media and Young People’s Sexualities: Values, Norms, and Battlegrounds. *Social Media + Society*, 3 (4), pp. 1-11, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117738992>
- De Ridder, S., and Van Bauwel, S. (2013). Commenting on pictures: Teens negotiating gender and sexualities on social networking sites. *Sexualities*, 16 (1), pp. 565–586.
- De Ridder, S., and Van Bauwel, S. (2015). The discursive construction of gay teenagers in times of mediatization: Youth’s reflections on intimate storytelling, queer shame and realness in popular social media places. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18 (1), pp. 777–793.
- Dobson, A.S. (2012) “Individuality Is everything”: “autonomous” femininity in MySpace mottos and self-descriptions. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 26 (3), pp. 371–83.

- Dobson, A. S. (2014) "Sexy" and "Laddish" girls: Unpacking complicity between two cultural imag(inations)es of young femininity. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14 (1) pp. 253–269.
- Draper, N. R. A. (2012) Is your teen at risk? Discourses of adolescent sexting in United States television news. *Journal of Children and Media*, 6 (2), pp. 221–236.
- Duguay, S. (2016) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer visibility through selfies: comparing platforms mediators across ruby rose's instagram and vine presence. *Social Media + Society*, pp. 1-12.
- Ehre, M. Perryman, J. and Spours, K. (2014) Accountability and school inspections. *Economics of Education Review*, 23 (2), pp. 143-151.
- Elliot, B. (2016) Humanistic Antidotes to Social Media/Cell Phone addiction in the College Classroom. *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5 (8), pp. 1-11.
- Englund, H. and Frostenson, M. (2017) Managing Performance Evaluation Uncertainties in Schools; When Teachers Become Struggling `performers, *European Educational Research Journal*, 16 (6), pp. 885-906.
- Feely, M. (2019) Assemblage Analysis: an experimental new-materialist method for analysing narrative data. *Qualitative Research*, 1 (1), pp. 1-20.
- Fernandez-Herrera, A. and Martinez-Rodriguez, F. (2016) Deconstructing the neoliberal "entrepreneurial self": a critical perspective derived from a global "biophilic consciousness". *Policy Futures in Education*, 14 (3), pp. 314-326.
- Fetterman, D. (2010) *Ethnography: Step-By-Step*. London: Sage.
- Fielding, N. (2006) 'Fieldwork and Police Work', in: Hobbs D. and Wright, R. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Fieldwork*. London: Sage, pp. 277-292.
- Fine, M. (1991) *Framing Dropouts: notes on the politics of an urban high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Forsey, M. G. (2010) Ethnography as Participant Listening. *Ethnography*, 11: (4), pp. 558-572.
- Foucault, M. (1994) 'The Subject and Power.' in: Faubion, J. D. (Ed.) *Michel Foucault power: Essential works of Foucault 1954 - 1984*. London: Penguin, pp. 326-348.
- Fox, N. and Alldred, P. (2016) *Sociology and the New Materialism: Theory, Research, Action*. London: Sage.
- Francis, B. (2010) Lads, lasses and (new) Labour: 14–16-year-old students' responses to the 'laddish behaviour and boys' underachievement' debate. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20 (1) pp. 355–71, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425699995317>
- Francis, B. (2000) *Boys, girls and achievement: Addressing the classroom issues*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Francis, B. (2008) Teaching manfully? Exploring gendered subjectivities and power via analysis of men teachers' gender performance. *Gender and Education*, 20: (1), pp. 9–22.

- Freeman, C. (2014) *Entrepreneurial selves: neoliberal respectability and the making of a caribbean middle class*. London: Duke University Press.
- Fujii, L. A. (2014) Five Stories of Accidental Ethnography: Turning Unplanned Moments in The Field of Data. *Qualitative Research*, 15 (4), pp. 525-539.
- Fuller, M. (2005). *Media ecologies: Materialist energies in art and technoculture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gage, N. Larson, A. Sugai, G. and Chafouleas, S. (2016) Students Perceptions of School Climate as Predictors of Office Discipline Referrals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53 (3), pp. 492-515.
- Gan, D. Jenkins, L. (2015) Social Network Privacy - Who's Stalking You? *Future Internet*, 7 (1), pp. 67-93.
- Gee, J. (2010) *New Digital Media and Learning as an Emerging Area and 'Worked Examples' as One Way Forward*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gerlitz, C. and Helmond, A. (2013) The like economy: social buttons and the data-intensive web. *New Media & Society*, 15 (8), pp. 1348-1365.
- Gibbs, M., Meese, J., Arnold, M., Nansen, B. & Carter, M. (2015) #Funeral and Instagram: death, social media, and platform vernacular. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18 (3), pp. 255-268.
- Gibson, M. (2016) Youtube and Bereavement Vlogging: Emotional Exchange Between Strangers. *Journal of Sociology*, 52 (4), pp. 631-645.
- Gibson, J. J. (1986). *The ecological approach to visual perception* (1st ed.). United States: Erlbaum, Lawrence Associates.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2018) Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism and Psychology*, 18(1), pp. 35-60. doi: 10.1177/0959353507084950
- Gill, R. and Orgad, S. (2015) The Confidence Cult(ure). *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30 (86), pp. 324-344, DOI: 10.1080/08164649.2016.1148001
- Gill, R. (2016) Post-Postfeminism?: New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times. *Feminist Media Studies* 16 (4), pp. 610–630.
- Giroux, H. (2011) *On Critical Pedagogy*. London: Continuum.
- Harris, A., and A. S. Dobson. (2015) Theorizing Agency in Post-Girlpower Times. *Continuum* 29 (2), pp. 145–156.
- Gillborn, D., Demack, S., Rollock, N. and Warmington, P. (2017) Moving the goalposts: education policy and 25 years of the black/white achievement gap, *British Educational Research Journal*, 43 (5), pp. 848–874.
- Gillborn, D. (2010) The colour of numbers: surveys, statistics and deficit-thinking about race and class. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25 (2), pp. 253–276.
- Gillborn, D. (2008) *Racism and education: coincidence or conspiracy?* Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.

- Gobo, G. Molle, A. (2016) *Doing Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Golob, S. (2015) Subjectivity, Reflection and Freedom in Later Foucault. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 23(5), pp. 666-688, DOI: 10.1080/09672559.2015.1091029
- González-Polledo, E. (2016) Chronic Media Worlds: social Media and the Problem of Pain Communication on Tumblr. *Social Media + Society*, 2 (1), pp. 1-11.
- Gray, D. (2014) *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage.
- Gregory, A., Cornell, D. and Fan, X. (2011) The Relationship of School Structure and Support to Suspension Rates for Black and White High School Students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48 (4), pp. 904-934.
- Granholm, C. (2016) Blended lives: ICT talk among young vulnerable people in Finland. *Young*, 24 (2), pp. 85-101.
- Groening, S. (2010) From 'a Box in the Theatre of the World' to the world in your living room' cellular phones, television and mobile privatization. *New Media & Society*, 12 (8), pp. 1331-1347.
- Gross, M. (2013) What Makes people Click?. *Current Biology*, 23 (7), pp. 1-4.
- Gursimsek, O.A. (2016) Animated GIFs as a Vernacular Graphic Design: Producing Tumblr Logs, *Visual Communication*, 15 (3), pp. 329-349.
- Hanley, C. (2018) Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari: an Exploration of Writing as Assemblage. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51 (4), pp. 413-423.
- Hargittai, E. Litt, E. (2011) The Tweet Smell of Celebrity Success: Explaining Variation in Twitter Adoption in a Diverse Group of Young Adults. *New Media & Society*, 13 (5), pp. 824-842.
- Hall, S. (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in: Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity, Community Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 222-37.
- Hammesley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Hart, M. (2015) Youth Intimacy on tumblr: A Pilot Study, *Young*, 23 (3), pp. 193-208.
- Harvey, L., Ringrose, J., & Gill, R. (2013). Swagger, ratings and masculinity: Theorising the circulation of social and cultural value in teenage boys' digital peer networks. *Sociological Research Online*, 18 (9), pp. 46-58.
- Hay, P. J. (2009) Students' Perceptions of Schooling in a Senior Secondary Education System. *Australian Journal of Education*, 53 (1), pp. 54-68.
- Hemmings, C. (2005) Invoking affect, *Cultural Studies*, 19 (5), pp. 548-567.

- Hickey-Moody (2013) 'Affect as Method: Feelings, Aesthetics and Affective Pedagogy' in: Coleman, R. and Ringrose, J. *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 79-95,
- Hillis, K., Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (2015) *Networked Affect*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Hine, C. (2005) *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hine, C. (2015) *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied, and Everyday*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Hjorth, L. and Lim, S.S. (2012) Mobile intimacy in an age of affective mobile media, *Feminist Media Studies*, 12 (4), pp. 477-484, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2012.741860
- Hjorth, L. and Pink, S. (2014) New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media, *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2 (40), pp. 40-57 DOI: 10.1177/2050157913505257
- Hogan, B. (2010) The presentation of self in the age of social media: distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30 (6), pp. 377-386.
- hooks, B. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Huffaker, D. A. and Calvert, S. L. (2005), Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 (2). doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00238.x
- Hutton, F., Griffin, C., Lyons, A. C., Niland, T., & McCreanor, T. (2016). "Tragic girls" and "crack whores": alcohol, femininity and facebook. *Feminism and Psychology*, 26 (1), pp. 73–93.
- Ingold, T. (2008) Binding Against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World. *Environment and Planning A*. 40 (1), pp. 1796-1810.
- Jackson, C. (2002). 'Laddishness' as a self-worth protection strategy. *Gender and Education*, 14 (2), pp. 37–51.
- Jeffrey, C. and Dyson, J. (2013) Zigzag capitalism: youth entrepreneurship in the contemporary global south. *GeoForum*, 49 (1), pp. 1-3.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M. and boyd, d. (2016) *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, learning, Commerce and Politics*. London: Polity Press.
- Joffe, H. (2011) *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kahne, J. Bowyer, B. (2018) The political significance of Social Media Activity and Social networks. *Political Communication*, 35 (3), pp. 470-493.

- Kaplan, AM and Haenlein M (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53 (1), pp. 59–68.
- Keller, J., and Mendes, K. and Ringrose, J. (2016) Speaking ‘unspeakable things’: documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of Gender Studies*, pp. 1-15, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1211511>
- Keller, J. (2015) *Girls’ Feminist Blogging in a Postfeminist Age*. London: Routledge.
- Keller, J. and Ringrose, J. (2015) But the feminism goes out the window!: exploring teenage girls’ critical responses to celebrity feminism. *Celebrity Studies*, 6 (1), pp. 132-135.
- Keller, J. M. (2012) Virtual feminisms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15 (3), pp. 429-447, DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2011.642890
- Kember, S., & Zylinska, J. (2012). *Life after new media: Mediation as a vital process*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kennedy-Lewis, B., Murphy, A. and Grosland, T. (2016) Using narrative inquiry to understand persistently disciplined middle school students, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29 (1), pp. 1-28.
- Kofoed, J & Ringrose, J. (2012) Travelling and sticky affects: exploring teens and sexualized cyberbullying through a Butlerian-Deleuzian-Guattarian lens. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33 (1), pp. 5-20.
- Köhl, M. and Götzenbrucker, G. (2014) Networked technologies as emotional resources? Exploring emerging emotional cultures on social network sites such as facebook and Hi5: A Trans-Cultural Study. *Media Culture and Society*, 36 (4), pp. 508-522.
- Korobkova, K. and Black, R. (2014) Contrasting visions: identity, literacy and boundary work in a fan community. *E-Learning and digital media*, 11 (6), pp. 619-632.
- Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukophadhyay, T. and Scherlis, W. (1998) Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being? *American Psychologist* 53 (9), pp. 1017-1031.
- Kupiainen, R. (2013) Dissolving the school space: young people’s media production in and outside of the school. *Policy Futures in Education*, 11 (1), pp. 37-46.
- Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing Interviews*. London: Sage.
- Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford, University Press.
- Lamont Hill, M. (2018) “Thank you black twitter”: state violence, digital counterpublics and pedagogies of resistance. *Urban Education*, 53 (2), pp. 286-302.
- Lapointe, A. A. (2017) “It’s not pans, it’s people”: student and teacher perspectives on bisexuality and pansexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17 (1), pp. 88-107.
- Lewis, R., Marine, S. and Kenney, K. (2018) I get together with my friends and try to change it’. Young feminist students resist ‘laddism’, ‘rape culture’ and ‘everyday sex-

- ism. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27 (1), pp. 56-72, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2016.1175925
- Liamputtong, P and Ezzy, D. (2006) *Qualitative Research Methods*. Victoria: Oxford University Press.
- Light, B. (2013) Networked Masculinities and Social Networking Sites: A Call for the Analysis of Men and Contemporary Digital Media. *Masculinities & Social Change*, 2 (2), pp. 245-265.
- Lin, S. S. (2013) On Mobile communication and youth “deviance”: beyond moral, media and mobile panics. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1 (1), pp. 96-101.
- Loader, B. Vromen, A and Xenos, M. (2016) Performing for the Young Networked Citizen? Celebrity Politics, Social Networking and the Political engagement of Young people. *Media, Culture and Society*, 38 (3), pp. 400-419.
- Loader, B. And Mercea, D. (2011) Networking Democracy: Social Media Innovations and Participatory Politics, Information. *Communication & Society*, 14 (6), pp. 757-769
- Loader, B. (2007) “Young Citizens in the Digital Age: Disaffected or Displaced?” in: by Loader, B. (ed.) *Young Citizens in the Digital Age*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-18.
- Lunneblad, J., Johansson, T. and Odenbring, Y. (2017) Relational Trouble and Student Victimization at Schools - Categorisation, Caring and Institutionalisation, Pedagogy. *Culture and Society*, 21 (3), pp. 389-401.
- Lyons, A. C., Goodwin, I., Griffin, C., McCreanor, T. and Barnes Moewaka, H. (2016) Facebook and the Fun of Drinking Photos: Reproducing Gendered Regimes of Power. *Social Media + Society*, 2 (4), pp. 1-13.
- Manago, A. M. (2013). Negotiating a sexy masculinity on social networking sites. *Feminism & Psychology*, 23 (1), pp. 478–497.
- Mann, B. L. (2008). Social networking websites: A concatenation of impersonation, denigration, sexual aggressive solicitation, cyber-bullying or happy slapping videos. *International Journal of Law and Information Technology*, 17 (3), pp. 252–267.
- Mannay, D. and Morgan, M. (2014) Doing Ethnography or Applying a Qualitative Technique? Reflections from the ‘Waiting Field. *Qualitative Research*, 15 (2), pp. 166-182.
- Marshall, D. P. (2010) The promotion and presentation of the self: celebrity as marker of presentational media. *Celebrity Studies*, 1(1), pp. 35-48, DOI: 10.1080/19392390903519057
- Marwick, A. and boyd, d. (2010) I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13 (1), pp. 114-133.
- Massumi, B. (2015) *Politics of Affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Massumi, B. (2007) *Movement, Affect, Sensation: Parables for the Virtual*. US: Duke University Press.



- Matthews, B. and Ross, L. (2010) *Research Methods: A Practical Guide for the Social Sciences*. London: Longman.
- Matthiesen, N. (2018) A question of access: metaphors the field. *Ethnography and Education*, 15 (1), pp. 1-15.
- McAllum, M. (2014) "Bisexuality Is Just Semantics...": Young Bisexual Women's Experiences in New Zealand Secondary Schools. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 14 (1), pp. 75-93.
- McDonald, K. (2000) *Struggles for Subjectivity: Identity, Action and Youth Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McFadden, M. (1995) Resistance to Schooling and Educational Outcomes: questions of structure and agency. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 16 (3), pp. 293-308.
- McLellan, R. and Nicholl, B. (2012) Creativity in Crisis in Design & Technology: Are Classrooms Climates Conducive for Creativity in English Secondary Schools. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 9 (1), pp. 165-185.
- McRobbie, A. and Garber, J. (2006) 'Girls and Subcultures' in: Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. (eds.) *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 2nd Ed. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Meikle, G. (2016) *Social Media: Communication, Sharing and Visibility*. London: Routledge.
- Meikle, J. (2012) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/sep/17/gcse-ebacc-michael-gove> accessed 11th September 2019.
- Mendick, H., Allen, K. and Harvey, L. (2015) 'We can Get Everything We Want if We Try Hard': Young People, Celebrity, Hard Work, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 63 (2), pp. 161-178, DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2014.1002382
- Mishler, E. G. (1991) *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Mishna, F., McInroy, L. & Lacombe-Duncan, A. (2015). Bridging the Gap: A Mixed-Method Investigation of Cyberbullying. Abstract from Conference. SSWR (Society for Social Work and Research. [www.sswr.confex.com/sswr/2015/webprogram/Paper-22728.html](http://www.sswr.confex.com/sswr/2015/webprogram/Paper-22728.html).
- Muller, J. (2000) *Reclaiming Knowledge: Social Theory, Curriculum and Educational Policy*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Niccolini, A. D. (2018) 'The Rape Joke': censorship, affective activisms, and feeling subjects, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27:1, 102-113, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2016.1202104.
- Nowell, S. (2014) Using disruptive technologies to make digital connections: stories of media use and digital literacy in secondary classrooms. *Educational Media International*, 51 (2), pp. 109-123, DOI: 10.1080/09523987.2014.924661

- O’Keeffe, G. and Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011) The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents and Families. *Paediatrics* 127 (4), pp. 800-804.
- Pangrazio, L. (2013). Young people and Facebook: What are the challenges to adopting a critical engagement? *Digital Culture & Education*, 5 (1), pp. 34-47.
- Pantea, M. (2018) ‘You Can Change the World’: Young people and youth organizations becoming entrepreneurial. *Young*, 26 (3), pp. 232-249.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015) *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2009) The Virtual Geographies of Social Networks: a comparative analysis of Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld, *New Media & Society*, 11 (1&2), pp. 199-220.
- Perryman, J., Maguire, M. Braun, A. and Ball, S.J. (2018) Surveillance, Governmentality and moving the goalposts: The influence of Ofsted on the work of schools in a post-panoptic era, *British Journal of Education Studies*, pp. 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2017.1372560.
- Perryman, J. Ball, S.J. Braun, A. and Maguire, M. (2017) Translating policy: governmentally and the reflective teacher. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 32 (6), pp. 745-756.
- Pham, M. (2011) Blog Ambition: Fashion, Feelings and the Political economy of the Digital Raced Body. *Camera Obscura*, 26 (1), pp. 1-37.
- Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2017) Individualising the Future: the Emotional Geographies of Neoliberal Governance in Young People’s Aspiration. *Area*, 49 (3), pp. 288-295.
- Pitts, M. J. and Miller-Day, M. (2007) Upward Turning Points and Positive Rapport-Development Across Time in Researcher-Participant Relationships. *Qualitative Research*, 7 (2), pp. 177-201.
- ProQuest. (2016) Focus on the fandoms: how unique interests create community. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/docview/1507813744?accountid=14511> [Accessed 4th May 2016].
- Quinn, J. (2018) Respecting Young People’s Informal Learning: Circumventing Strategic Policy Evasions. *Policy Futures in education*, 16 (2), pp. 144-155.
- Ramdarshan Bold, M. (2016) The Return of the Social Author: Negotiating Authority and Influence on Wattpad. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, pp. 1-20, DOI: 10.1177/1354856516654459
- Ramsey, L. R. and Horan, A. (2016) Picture this: women's self-sexualization in photos on social media, *Personality and Individual Differences*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.06.022>
- Reay, D. (2001) 'Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': Gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom, *Gender and Education*, 13 (2), pp. 153-166, DOI: 10.1080/09540250120051178
- Reiter, H. Schlimback, (2015) NEET in Disguise? Rival Narratives in Troubled Youth Transitions. *Educational Research*, 57 (2), pp. 133-150.

- Renninger, B. (2014) "Where I can be myself ... where I can speak my mind" : Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment. *New Media & Society*, 17 (9), pp. 1513-1529.
- Renold, E. (2017): 'Feel what I feel': making da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activisms on how sexual violence matters, *Journal of Gender Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2017.1296352
- Renold, E. (2010) 'If You Don't Kiss Me, You're Dumped': Boys, boyfriends and heterosexualised masculinities in the primary school. *Educational Review*, 55 (2), pp. 179-194, DOI: 10.1080/0013191032000072218
- Renold, E. (2002) Presumed Innocence: (Hetero)Sexual, Heterosexist and Homophobic Harassment among Primary School Girls and Boys. *Childhood*, 9 (4), pp. 415-432.
- Renold, E. and Ivinson, G. (2014) Horse-Girl Assemblages: Towards a Post-human Cartography of Girls' Desire in an Ex-Mining Valleys Community. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35 (3), pp. 361-376.
- Retallack H., Ringrose J., Lawrence E. (2016) "Fuck Your Body Image": Teen Girls' Twitter and Instagram Feminism in and Around School' in: Coffey J., Budgeon S., Cahill H. (eds) *Learning Bodies. Perspectives on Children and Young People*, vol 2. Springer: Singapore.
- Ringrose, J. (2007) Successful Girls? Complicating Post-Feminist, Neoliberal Discourses of Educational Achievement and Gender Equality. *Gender and Education*, 19 (4), pp. 471-489.
- Ringrose, J. and Renold, E. (2016) Cows, Cabins and Tweets: Posthuman Intra-acting Affect and Feminist Fires in Secondary School in: Taylor, C. and Hughes, C. (eds.) *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*, London: Palgrave.
- Ringrose, J. and Renold, E. (2016) Teen Feminist Killjoys? Mapping Girls' Affective Encounters with Femininity, Sexuality, and Feminism at School, in: Mitchell, C and Rentschler, C. (eds.) *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, New York: Berghahn.
- Ringrose, J., Renold, E. and Egan, E. (2015) *Children, Sexuality and Sexualization*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ringrose, J. and Renold, E. (2014) "F\*\*k Rape!": exploring affective intensities in a feminist research assemblage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20 (6), pp. 772-780.
- Ringrose, J. (2011) Beyond Discourse? Using Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis to explore affective assemblages, heterosexually striated space, and lines of flight online and at school. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43 (6), pp. 598-618.
- Robards, B. and Lincoln, S. (2017) Uncovering longitudinal life narratives: scrolling back on facebook. *Qualitative Research*, 4 (17), pp. 1-15.
- Roberts, M. (2015) 'A big night out': Young people's drinking, social practice and spatial experience in the 'liminoid' zones of English night-time cities. *Urban Studies*, 52 (3), pp. 571-588.

- Robinson, K. (2006) Reinforcing hegemonic masculinities through sexual harassment: issues of identity, power and popularity in secondary schools, *Gender and Education*, 17(1), pp. 19-37.
- Rollock, N., Gillborn, D., Vincent, C. and Ball, S. J. (2015) *The Colour of Class: The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Rose, N. (2010) *Inventing ourselves: psychology, power and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511752179>
- Rossi, U. and Di Bella, A. (2017) Start-Up Urbanism: New York, Rio de Janeiro and the Global Urbanization of Technology-Based Economies. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49 (5), pp. 999-1018.
- Sedgwick, E.K. (2003) *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Seko, Y. and Lewis, S.L. (2016) The Self-Harmed Visualized, and Reblogged: Remaking of Self-Injury Narrative on Tumblr. *New Media & Society*, pp. 1-19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816660783>
- Shin, W., Singh, B., Cho, J. and Everett, A. (2015) A new understanding of friendships in space: Complex Networks Meet Twitter. *Journal of Information science*, 41 (6), pp. 751-764.
- Schulz, P. (2020) Recognizing Research Participants Fluid Positionalities in (Post) Conflict Zones. *Qualitative Research*, 11: (1), pp. 1-18.
- Silvashanker, K. (2013) Cyberbullying and the Digital Self. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 52(2), pp. 113-115.
- Silverman, D. (2011) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Skelton, C. (2010) Gender and achievement: are girls the “success stories” of restructured education systems? *Educational Review*, 62 (2), pp. 131-142, DOI: 10.1080/00131910903469536
- Smyth, J. (2006) When Students Have Power: student engagement, student voice, and the possibilities for school reform around ‘dropping out’ of school. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9 (4), pp. 285-298.
- Spohrer, K. (2016) Negotiating and contesting ‘success’: discourses of aspiration in a UK secondary school, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(3), 411-425, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2015.1044423
- Spradley, J. (2016) *Participant Observation*. Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Sriwilai, K. and Charoensukmongkol, P. (2016). Face it, don't facebook it: impacts of social media addiction on mindfulness, coping strategies and the consequences of emotional exhaustion. *Stress and Health*, 32 (4), pp. 427-434.
- Stern, S. (2008) ‘Producing sites, exploring identities: youth online authorship.’ in: Buckingham, D. (eds.) *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, The John D. and Catherine

- T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 95–118. doi: 10.1162/dmal.9780262524834.095
- Stoycheff, E., Liu, J., Wibowo, K. and Nanni, D. (2017) What have we learned about social media by studying facebook? A Decade in Review. *New Media & Society*, 19 (6), pp. 1-13.
- Strand, S. (2012) The White British–Black Caribbean achievement gap: tests, tiers and teacher expectations. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38 (1), pp. 75-101.
- Strand, S. (2011) The limits of social class in explaining ethnic gaps in educational attainment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37 (2), pp. 197-229.
- Sugiura, L., Wiles, R. and Pope, C. (2016) Ethical challenges in online research: public/private perceptions. *Research Ethics*, 4 (1), pp. 1-16. Sage: DOI: 10.1177/1747016116650720
- Sung, Y., Lee, J. ; Kim, E. ; Choi, S. M. (2016) Why we post selfies: Understanding motivations for posting pictures of oneself, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 97, (1), pp. 260-265. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.03.032>
- Tamboukou, M. (2008) Machinic Assemblages: Women, art education and space. *Discourse*, 29 (3), pp. 359–375.
- Taylor, C. and Hughes, (2016) *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*. London: Palgrave MacMillan
- Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S. and Higgins-D’Alessandro, A. (2013) A Review of School Climate Research. *Review of Educational research*, 83 (3), pp. 357-385.
- Tan, E. (2013) Informal Learning on “YouTube”: Exploring Digital Literacy in Independent Online Learning. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 38 (4), pp. 463-477.
- Taylor, C. (2020) Slow singularities for collective mattering: new material feminist praxis in the accelerated academy. *Irish Educational Studies*, 39 (2), pp. 255-272. DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2020.1734045
- Taylor, C. (2013) ‘Mobile Sections and Flowing Matter in Participant-Generated Video: Exploring a Deleuzian Approach to Visual Sociology’ in: Coleman, R. and Ringrose, J. (eds.) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 42-60.
- Tickle, S. (2017) Ethnographic research with young people: methods and rapport. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 17(2), pp. 66-76.
- Turkle, S. (1995) *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Touchstone.
- Turkle, S. (2005) *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Unlusoy, A., De Haann, M., Leander, K. and Volver, B. (2013) Learning Potential in Youth’s online networks. *Computers & Education*, 68 (1), pp. 522-533.

- Valkenburg, P., Peter, J. and Schouten, P. (2006) Friend Networking Sites and Their Relationship to Adolescents' Well-Being and Social Self-Esteem. *CyberPsychology & Behaviour*, 9 (5), pp. 584-590.
- Van Dijck, J. and Poell, T. (2015) Social Media and the Transformation of Public Space. *Social Media + Society*, 1 (5), pp. 1-5.
- Van Doorn, N. (2011) Digital Spaces, Material Traces: How Matter comes to Matter in Online Performances of Gender. *Media Culture and Society*, 33 (4), pp. 531-547.
- Vromen, A., Xenos, M. and Loader, B. (2014) Young People, Social Media and Connective Action: from organisational maintenance to everyday political talk. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(1), pp. 80-100.
- Wadham, B.; Owens, L. and Skryzpiec, G. (2014) Taking Relationships to Schools: Power, Authority and Identity Work in Young People's Dispositions to Schooling. *Power and Education*, 6 (2), pp. 130-144.
- Waite, C. and Bourke, L. (2015) Using the Cyborg to Re-Think Young People's Uses of Facebook. *Journal of Sociology*, 51(3), pp. 537-552.
- Wakefield, J. (2014) Do we need to rescue our kids from the digital world. BBC News. Available at: [http:// www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27501984](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27501984) (accessed 21 July 2017).
- Walker, J. (2005) Mirrors and shadows: The digital aestheticisation of oneself. Proceedings of Digital Arts and Culture: 184–190.
- Ward, V. (2013) Toddlers becoming so addicted to iPads they require therapy. The Telegraph. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/10008707/Toddlers-becoming-so-addicted-to-iPads-theyrequire-therapy.html> (accessed 21 July 2017).
- Warfield, K. (2016) Making the Cut: An Agential Realist Examination of Selfies and Touch, *Social Media + Society*, 4 (1), pp. 1-10.
- Warfield, K., Cambre, C., and Abidin, C. (2016) Introduction to the Social Media + Society Special Issue on Selfies: Me-diated Inter-faces, *Social Media + Society*, 1-5.
- Warfield, K. (October, 2016). "Reblogging someone's selfie is seen as a really nice thing to do": spatiality and emplacement within a non-dominant platform vernacular on Tumblr. Paper presented at the Association of Internet Researchers Conference. Berlin, Germany.
- Warfield, K. (2017) MirrorCameraRoom: the gendered multi-(in)stabilities of the selfie, *Feminist Media Studies*, 17 (1), pp. 77-92.
- West, A. and Bailey, E. (2013) The development of the academies programme: 'privatising school-based education in England 1986-2013'. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 61(2), pp. 137-159.
- Whiteman, N. (2012) *Undoing Ethics*. London: Springer.
- Wiederhold, A. (2014) Conducting fieldwork at and away from home: shifting researcher positionality with mobile interviewing methods. *Qualitative Research*, 15 (5), pp. 600-615.

- Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Willott, S. and Lyons, A. C. (2012) Consuming male identities: masculinities, gender relations and alcohol consumption in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 22 (1), pp. 330-345.
- Weedon, C. (2004) *Identity and culture: narratives of Difference and Belonging*. Maidenhead : McGraw-Hill Education.
- Youdell, D. (2012) Fabricating 'Pacific Islander': pedagogies of expropriation, return and resistance and other lessons from a 'Multicultural Day'. *Race ethnicity and education*, 15 (2), pp. 141-155.
- Zappavigna, M. (2016) Social media photography: construing subjectivity in Instagram images. *Visual communication*, 15 (3), pp. 271-29.

## Appendix 1

### Danielle's interview transcript.

I: the first thing I'd like to begin with is to jog your memory a little bit, by asking you what are the first things you remember ever doing online.

R: Umm. I was first introduced to the internet when I was about six, with my parents and stuff, with my dad showing me things on Youtube and things. But when I started using it on my own was when my friend started introducing me to Youtube, people like, Youtubers such as, danisnotonfire, Charlieissocoollike and Amazing Phil. That was when I was about eleven and I used other things, things like club penguin and that sort of thing, but I never really used it before then.

I: and what was club penguin about?

R: Yeah, that's when I was about eight. It's a game that gets children from about six to nine to play online. But it wasn't really social media, you didn't really have any contact with anyone else.

I: So when did you actually come to use social media?

When I was about, in year seven so I was about eleven.

I: and what sort of things did you do, or liked doing on social media?

R: well, I started watching Youtubers, because my friend recommended them, so I watched, the fine bros, Charlieissocoollike, Danisnotonfire and stuff like that. And as I got older I got more into Youtubers, like Lukeisnotsexy and that sort of thing, so when I was about twelve, I had Facebook and then when I got an iPhone, I got Instagram, Tumblr, which I use a lot, Snapchat, which I don't use that often but many people do, and Wattpad. Mainly since then, I've been using Tumblr, Youtube and Instagram and Wattpad. Oh yeah and Twitter.

I: There are so many things that you're doing. I'd like to ask you about what you do on these different platforms, because there might be some that become more keen on, and then others you leave for a bit and then come back later to them. So you've mentioned Wattpad, so what is it that you do on it?

R: I do a lot of things on Wattpad. Wattpad is a creative writing, fanfiction website, it can be used for things other than fan fiction but most people use it for fanfiction. You can publish anything that's creative writing on there. I've started using maybe about a year ago, maybe a bit more, over a year. My friend was using it and she recommended it to me so I posted a chapter of a book about a Youtuber called Joey Graceffa, and umm, when it got about fifty people reading it, I was going to leave it there but then I decided to write another chapter, and it got popular and I turned it into a sort of book. Lots of stuff on there have about thirty chapters, I only did fourteen on my first one, and my second one was a story on Youtubers called Zöe and Alfie. I did one on them, and I only



did fourteen chapters on that and I finished it and I started writing another one which I'm writing currently about five seconds of summer, and it has ninety four people reading because I've only just started. I am also working on one, which is about Youtubers called Dan and Phil and that has about one thousand one hundred and ninety reads.

I: Wow. So what are the chapters about? Can you take me through one of your chapters on Wattpad?

R: Umm. I write chapter plans on my notes on my phone. I plan the entire book, so for example the one I'm writing on Dan and Phil is about a boy with an unfortunate speech impediment and he has to go to university. The first chapter is about him packing all his stuff and leaving to go to a completely new place with his unfortunate speech impediment which has caused anxiety because it's been quite hard for him. Stuff like that. So, I get to build up on it.

I: What makes you write and publish on Wattpad?

R: I just really love creative writing, not at school, but I love to write, at school is like, honestly all you can write about is this poem or that poem, or holidays, it's so repetitive you just can't write about anything else. Like even if I tried I'd be asked to do it again, no, it's not possible. And on Wattpad I see people with books on there, with like 3.8 million reads. I have this person who is my favourite author on there, she makes stuff about one direction, which I don't like particularly, but she's like an amazing writer, and it makes me want to write so I do it. In a way I know people are not dying to read my chapters but it does make me want to write more, like I know that someone is going to give it a read and my work is getting read by people. It doesn't matter whether I know them or not, it's about what we do together, like I write they read, sometimes I read and they write.

I: And how does it feel to have so many people reading what you write?

R: Well, compared to some, mine is just, like it's not actually that many people compared to other people's but I don't care about that, but when I hit one thousand which happened about two weeks ago, I was like really happy because I didn't expect it to come this far. For so many people to like what I was doing, and enjoy something that I put a lot of work into.

I: Have you spoken to your teacher about how you feel?

R: No! If I did I'll be in trouble, or my teacher will probably be a bit thrown I think, because I'm like a good student, no wait, I think I might have done once, because I think she likes me but it didn't go too well, so, no, never again. The truth is English is probably one of my favourite subjects, and I like her [the teacher] but honestly, it is just boring. I mean, I know nobody cares about what I write at school because it's not relevant, because it won't go into an exam or coursework, or anything else.

I: So when do you do it, when do you publish?

R: Everyday. Like, I don't publish everyday, I try to. Each chapter I write is between two to five thousand words long. I did it a lot over the summer holidays, I have school and homework but I still try to write as much as I possibly can. I have six books already, not all completed, two completed and four with chapters on the go.

I: Wow. That is very ambitious! You also mentioned Facebook, can you tell me bit more about your story with Facebook?

R: When I was eleven my parents said I was allowed Facebook, so I got it and I used it a lot for about six months and then, umm. Someone hacked into my account and had left hurtful things on someone else's and they thought it was me, and then caused a bit of trouble at school and stuff and I didn't react the best to it so I just decided to leave it for a bit. But I don't really use it, not just because of what happened because everything was explained and the person knew that I hadn't said those hurtful things. I closed my account and then set it up again. But I don't really use much Facebook, because what's on there doesn't really interest me that much.

I: So what sort of things would you do on Facebook?

R: I'd post things, like pictures, like when I go on holiday, Facebook is the place to like publish holiday pictures and stuff, it's easy and people expect you to publish pictures of holidays and stuff. That's kind of it, I'm on a fan group on there, for Dan and Phil and I talk to my friend Harry who moved away and I speak to him via Facebook. Stuff like that.

I: Ok, so posting pictures, the fan group and talking to friends. And what's the fan group on?

R: It's Amazing Phil and Danisnotonfire, so I can post things but I don't really use that one that much, I'm more into Tumblr, Twitter and Instagram.

I: Then you mentioned Twitter, what is it about Twitter that interests you?

R: Umm. I keep up with people who I like, Youtubers, bands like five seconds of summer, I speak to my Internet friends, but I use Instagram more for that. I get people notifications, so people like Emma Blackberry, members of bands, so whenever I see them appearing on my phone I go in and retweet stuff but I very rarely tweet something original, I just retweet things or talk to people on there. Or voting for bands and stuff, normally you can vote via Twitter. I use it because I'm a fan of Youtubers, I don't have a fan account but I follow fan accounts and I I just retweet things that they tweet to support them. Like what five seconds of summer. It's mainly for following celebrities.

I: What's five seconds of summer?

R: It's a pop/rock band from Australia, the members are Callum Hood, ...Luke Hemmings, they're all nineteen apart from Ashley who is twenty one. They're not like a boy band. They're not like One Direction. Like there's a lot of stigma around one direction but I like them but no, they're not like one direction.

I: And what about Tumblr?

R: I love it. I find it so easy. At first I found really difficult, I've had it since I was thirteen. You can post GIFs, video edits, pictures, you can pretty much do anything on Tumblr, I post more original stuff on there than I do on Twitter but I also reblog people's things. It's basically like a blog website, but maybe more public, less private than a blog. They're mainly for fandoms, photography or flaunting weird interests maybe.

I: Fandoms?

R: A fandom is like a fanbase but people tend to be more active, you're more online, doing stuff, posting, talking about it. People think of it as obsessed or too much but it depends, I have loads, because it's important to me, it's what I do. I don't see it as obsessive or addictive. That's just rude, people say, why do you do this? Why do you do that? Why do you do it all the time? They make you feel like, like there's something wrong with you, like addicted or mad. I'm happy being a bit of a reject, but that's all different when you're online, because you belong. It's really important to me, I've learnt a lot, like a lot from being online and people online. But it depends a lot on what role in the fandom you play, like what sort of fan, girl/boy you are. I have tons, I have the Youtube fandom, the 5SOS fandom and I always follow the blogs on Tumblr.

I: And what makes you so interested in Tumblr and blogs?

R: It is, It also has bits of like, my school is really bad at teaching things about err, I don't really know how to say this, but like, PSHE stuff, they feel that we don't really need to know any of this stuff, I've learnt almost everything from Tumblr because they have loads of, like, sexuality posts and stuff like that, anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist blogs, there are lots of feminists on Tumblr too. I use it a lot, like everyday I'm on it, It's like a sort of cool place to air your opinions and rant a little bit. I rant about school because PSHE stuff is so pointless. My friend follows me on Tumblr and she runs her blog on this sort of stuff, because she's pansexual and she posts things along those lines, she's made me think a lot about this sort of stuff.

I: But that is really interesting because you've said you've learnt on Tumblr?

R: Yeah, my school is rubbish at teaching anything in relation to this. They haven't even started to brush against issues around consent, bisexuality, homosexuality, etc, and that sort of thing and I've learnt it all from Tumblr. Like we haven't even been taught this, we were just told once that there was straight and there was gay and there's nothing in between and I thought that doesn't actually really apply to me. Like Tumblr taught me even things, like, transgender, pansexual, panromantic, biromantic, gender fluid and stuff like that, and I feel that I was learning about me. So now I have greater knowledge of things like that, it's changed the way I look at myself but it also, like, shows up how other people feel awkward about this sort of stuff. But everyone on Tumblr is like accepting and stuff, so I can be more open about stuff. I've great friends on Tumblr. Like my mum says that this stuff is unreal, how much I know and the words I come up with. So lately we've talked about me being biromantic asex-

ual and she's also learning from me. I think she's more interested in me knowing stuff, more than anything else.

I: So your mum and dad know about your Tumblr interactions?

R: Yeah, she's not really in the know about how these things work, but she knows about this. I also Skype my Tumblr friends, so, even if they're not in the UK, we chat and see each other. She knows about that and she's seen them a few times.

I: Great. Can you give me an example of how you've come across something that you feel has made you think deeper about something on Tumblr?

R: Umm. Well, there are these two Youtubers called Jack and Dean who did a song called 'Consent' about consent, instead of just taking the piss out of it, they actually made a song about it and I found a link to that on Tumblr, and also in school we haven't even been told this, we just don't discuss this. They also have another cool one called 'Coming out' about how difficult it might be to come out as anything else but straight, like being straight is not coming out, it's just like the norm. So like anything else, it's coming out because you're saying something like outside of the norm, so, yeah, Tumblr is it for me.

I: And can you tell me more about how you communicate on Tumblr?

R: I have lots of internet friends, which are on Tumblr, by private messaging, you can private message eon there. I was brought up, like lots of people say, like, everyone on the internet wants to kill you and in some cases I'm sure that's true, but it really isn't like that, it's not always like that. People say like, never trust anyone on the internet but lots of my internet friends are probably, like, apart from my parents trust most in the world and I've become really attached to and I love all of them so much and they count as real friends.

I: And yet, you've never met them.

R: I skype two of them very often, my best internet friends is Australian, and the time differences are insane so I can either call them at 1.00 in the morning or 5.00 in the morning, or if I can catch them, 10.00 pm.

I: And you've been developing these friendships for over how long?

R: Umm. My newest internet friend, we've only know each other for about a month, but I have other friends, like someone called Ashley, we've been friends for over six months and my best internet friend, we've been friends for over a year now. I mainly use Instagram for seeing them and chatting to them and also Tumblr, I've met them on Tumblr and it's like you know they like the same things as you, like with Tumblr it's difficult to dislike something, so. You follow blogs of things you like and you reblog their stuff so it's like always building up on good stuff, like on other social media things can get a bit weird, like Twitter or sometimes Facebook, because people might piss you off of just say something inappropriate but on Tumblr is all like, reblog, like, or share, so you're like, more positive and supportive overall. Like you're not going to re-

blog something to appear on your own blog if you don't like it or find it cute, like you're less likely to be critical or just an idiot about something.

I: Umm. What does it do for you? Tumblr, what do you think it's done for you?

R: I think, I'd say it's helped me quite a bit because umm, it's taught me things like, I've learnt things, which have also made me think about myself, a bit more about, things my school hasn't taught me and that most things don't matter, even like things to do with mental health and stuff like that. It's just like a massive supportive community. It's like you can talk to people and they can give you answers and they know what you've gone through, because they're around my age. I also think like all the stuff around sexuality, it's helped lots of people, it's helped me to be comfortable with myself in so many ways, like to make me feel ok about things I think about and believe but can't really discuss very openly at school.

I: Umm. Do you also have school friends or other friends on Twitter?

R: Yeah, like even on Instagram, I have an account, a fan account which has over a thousand followers and on Tumblr, I have my friend Gemma, my friend Dara, my friend Harry, my friend Olivia and like that, people that follow me. The majority of people that follow me are people that I don't know, but I do speak to some of them. So I do have friends from school but not many because a lot of people in my school don't have the same interest as me.

I: So you mentioned Instagram as well?

R: I have two accounts so, one is my personal account which is private, like you need to request to follow me and I share pictures of like my cat, I use it like Facebook but I use it more often. Yeah, so I basically post pictures like that, things that I've been doing, I've only got about eighty followers on that. I don't use that account as much as I use my fan account, my fan account I've had since early last year, so, I saw lots of other people doing it so I thought I might as well just do it. I post things mainly about Youtubers, like Thatcher Joe, Emma Blackery, Joey Graceffa and Casper and Joe, so I posted pictures of them and stuff but as time went on I started posting pictures of Amazing Phil and Dan is not on fire and now I post things of 5SOS.

I: So people see this, they like it and they follow you.

R: Yeah, so anyone can follow me on this account, I don't give any personal information, they know what I look like and that I live in London and that's it but and I have one thousand three hundred and something followers, that's not very much compared to other people but I don't really care that much. It has days when it goes up a lot and some other days it's quite, but I don't really mind.

I: You are so active and support these people so much, why?

R: Well, I think these people who I've posted about and followed and supported so much are like the most important people to me apart from my family in the entire universe. Many people think that it's dumb, and that these people don't

even know me, but actually I've met three Youtubers whom I love very much, they're, that was amazing. Lots of them I've met through book signings and that was amazing, one of my favourites is Joey Graceffa, released a book and I went to his book signing and chatted to him and took a picture with him and it was just amazing, that was in June. Lots of people think it's quite stupid since the majority don't know that I exist and the ones I did meet don't remember me because I'm just lost in the crowd over a million people, and umm...but that doesn't matter, I don't think, if that makes sense because they have changed my life, they have taught me so many things, I still think they're the best thing that has ever happened to me like I've been watching them and listening to them since I was a lot younger, like basically a child although I don't feel like one anymore. So the fan accounts, the post it's kind of me making sure that they know that I appreciate them and that, like, I support what they do, to show that they're the best thing ever. Like one of them followed me back and I cried and I told a friend and it was sweet, like on Twitter if people follow you back you private chat with them, but I basically just wrote, if you put it on word, like a three page essay about how proud I was of them, how far they've come and that what they do is appreciated.

I: Umm. And these Youtubers that you're following and that you like so much, what is it that they do that you admire or like so much?

R: Well, with three of my favourite Youtubers, Dan is not on fire, Amazing Phil and Joey Graceffa among many others, but for example Joey is gay and he came out on his birthday, so May, on the 16th of May, he did it in quite a very dramatic way, which is he'd been planning music video and he also wrote a book, and the day before the book was published he uploaded a music video before his birthday, it was his biography. He had quite a hard childhood like his mum was an alcoholic and he was bullied a lot and he was questioning his sexuality and stuff like that, so it basically showed his life up till then, non one knew apart from like him and his friends and boyfriend and stuff, that he was gay. So at the very end of the video it was him battling with his conscience that he was gay and then this person appeared like a bad version of himself, and it was in like a fairytale setting and then he frees a boy who is in a cage and then out of nowhere these two boys they kiss and the bad version of himself vanishes. The whole fandom exploded, like, people were very supported and it encouraged other people to come out including my friend and it helped those people, like other people to come out. There's also Dan is not on fire, and he's like, Dan is what they call, he's a self-proclaimed internet cult leader, which he's very ironic but he's got some really valid points. He talks about what not to do if people are mean to you on the internet, he's twenty four but when he was nineteen he had a massive existential crisis, like, that's, it's still going on to this day but not so severe but it was really big and it caused him to have depression. He lived and still does live with his best friend Phil who helped him get through it and the two of them make videos and stuff like that, to help people understand like issues of childhood and growing up. Like Phil is absolutely a lovely person, he's just really nice and kind and sweet and they helped me to be more like them, become more like them and help people and if I can introduce other people to them and Dan recently got five million of subscribers, it doesn't seem like a big deal but to me that means a lot.

I: So you've been like growing up with these Youtubers, watching their stuff on-line and listening to them on social media?

R: Yeah, they've impacted me a lot, not mainly when I first started watching them. Like maybe at the beginning it was more like they were funny and liked them but as I've become more mature I've like realised what their content is actually doing for people and stuff like that, and it is quite important to me and it is important for a lot of other people.

I: So you feel these interactions on social media and the way you live through social media have changed you.

R: Yeah, it's just become a natural sort of thing. It's not for everyone, like no one in my school except for two friends follow me on Wattpad and other social media, because a lot of people in my school don't like the things that I do, they're not into fandoms, they think I'm weird for liking people I don't know so much. To them it's stupid but they mean the world to me.

I: How do you see yourself developing on social media?

R: Well, I used to like post really bad pictures and badly edited photos, like screenshots with weird filters and stuff like that, and my first chapter on Wattpad was disgraceful, I have to admit it wasn't very good indeed, but I've improved over time. I now post a lot of photos of Dan and Phil which are really good, and umm, I don't want to sound self-centred but, it's made me mature, it's helped me mature. I wouldn't really, consider myself selfish in the first place, but it's made me more aware of other people's problems in the world and umm, I've joined this lovely community of people online, I've made friends and I found people whom I have grown to love and respect. Some of them I've met, others not, but that doesn't matter, the important thing is that I know that they're there and that they make my life better. It's like when people talk about childhood friends, who used to live next door, or across the road and that they'd play together and these would be happy memories. Although I also have friends who come around etc, I also have these memories and these people but these people are on my networks, they're there, they're real, they're important. But also, I've met them in person, many of the Youtubers, in Piccadilly Circus I met him, I had the book he'd written in my bag, and the entire time I was bouncing in my seat, he'd recently hit about five million subscribers, people from Holland, people from America, I was waiting for about two hours before we got to see him and I met him and he was really lovely. Really lovely.

I: Yes, and in fact it's quite important, because you have access to such huge networks.

R: Yeah, huge. It's like people before the internet, or proper platforms of social media they had, more physical fanbases, so it's like that but it's better because you haven't got people around you to criticise you, or judge you, like physically, looking at you. You can just express yourself in a way that you want that even if it's not related to the fandom, people can help you because it's a massive community and what brings us together is all of these things that we like or people we like that we have in common.

I: How different are things in your life with the Internet?

R: We went to Wales during the school holidays, and there was no wi-fi, except for in a little car that was like half an hour away, and there was no signal, really bad. The phone signal doesn't really matter to me because I don't text, rarely. It made me feel weird, I just wanted to talk to my friends on the Internet, I wanted to publish things on Wattpad and I couldn't, I couldn't post it. I got notifications about videos being posted and I couldn't watch them. It made me feel like jittery, like coming off a drug, like coming back I was just on my phone and wrote loads, non-stop.

I: You're in contact with so many things and people. How does this change you?

R: It kind of gives me a, like a global view on everything, like although I might be just sitting here I have eyes everywhere, through Twitter, through Instagram, through Facebook, I'm there and connected and it's all like real time, I'd be lost without it, my third eye, haha.

I: Haha. You also mentioned people at school are sometimes a bit off with you because of what you like.

R: Well yeah, a few people in year nine like, might come up to me and say, oh my God I like your backpack, if it's like Joey's, they'd be like that's so cool. But other people are like who the hell is he? Why do you have it? He's not like a celebrity or anything. When in fact, they are, in my eyes they are. They've been in magazines etc, but people are like hostile toward what they stand for or who they are, so, they might be a bit hostile because of what these people stand for and what they represent.

I: And what is that? What do they represent?

R: Like for example, Joey, he's like absolutely great, he stood up for himself, he came out really publicly, like I said before, he didn't care, he came out, he gave people a lot of courage to stand up for themselves. So some people at school don't like that or are not like, like they do not agree with what he stands for. I don't know if they are like homophobic or just plain ignorant or, they just don't care about these issues, but I do, and even if I get a bit of bullshit at school I don't care. That's who I am.

I: Wow, that's quite brave on your part.

R: Haha. Yeah well, that's me. I'm not like, I don't need the recognition or like the approval. Like at school things can be hard but I know so many people who think like me and understand my weird side, I don't need everyone at school to like me. I'd rather not be super liked, I don't know.

I: What do you mean by not being liked? Do you feel disliked?

R: No, not really, I have good friends but I don't know it gets really frustrating sometimes, like I prefer to try and be myself, I mean, I don't like a lot of things that happen at school so it doesn't bother me if I'm not super liked or popular.



I: So, what happens that you don't like, like anything in particular you could tell me about?

R: so, err, like, in corridors it can get bad, where boys and girls are like dying to touch each other and also boys being so rude grabbing you whether you want to be grabbed or not... there is a lot of stuff happening... because the school's such a big maze and you have these long corridors and dodgy corners.... there's this stupid game, finding out if you're ticklish and boys will grab you by the waist or the ribs and squeeze it to see if you laugh, and it's both annoying when people laugh and when they don't because they just shouldn't be grabbing you at school...and then another one does it and it turns into this big crowd, cringey, I have had it happen to me a few times but I don't laugh, so then you're weird and everyone starts like thinking, you think you're all that. The whole thing just makes me cringe... And if you don't like it then they say you're too skinny anyway, or you're too fat, or you're spastic.

I: But your teachers are around? Like supervising corridors? Do you report this?

R: I do, I do, I tell my mum and my mum has actually spoken to the head of year about this. She told me she spoke to my head of year. Teachers are there but most of the times in their rooms and after lessons they are more like, absent like, not supervising.

I: Yeah, this doesn't sound good at all, I suppose your head of year is one person to tell but it's good your mum knows about this, as well as your head of year.

R: yeah, my mum knows, I mean with my sister going to the same school we talk to each other and then at home too, we talk too.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that you haven't mentioned, I think I've gone through lots of things with you and it's nearly lunchtime.

R: Err, no not really, I just really liked talking about this, it was cool to talk about my writing and my tumblr.

I: Thank you so much again, I loved listening to you too!

## Appendix 2

### Online observations samples and field notes

Online observations were recorded through field notes for this study. They are a mixture of both descriptive and reflective elements used to create palpable impressions of the school, classroom and other school environments. They were recorded by the researcher over a whole academic year, during term times. Some of these field notes were produced during Saturday school sessions and others during weekdays when the researcher was in school. I present a combination of field notes referring to specific events at the school.

Fieldnote 10:

Library area.

The library is made up of a series of shelves which offer quiet little corners for readings. Some of these corners have squishy pillows and other comfy seating to make students feel welcome. However, the library does not have a lot of natural light and it is quite dingy in places. There is someone on duty when students are in the library and this means that students are not expected to be in the library by themselves. So the library is very rarely used at the school. Since the library is used very little by students, this has meant that some students are using it to check their phones in secret. Some of the students in the library at this very moment quickly put their phones away as I walk through the library to check books on the shelves. It seems strange that students are not encouraged to use this space more creatively in the school, since many teachers struggle with space during the week.

Fieldnote 15:

Room Chaos!

As I came in to the school today there are new rules to sign in, the front desk officer is writing people's names today and I have to spell my surname twice. I joke about how it would have been easier to do it myself but she says that she has to do it herself from now on until further notice since there were a couple of parents spotted in the school with no identification passes and the school were making sure this was not to happen again. As I come into my normal classroom I am greeted by the teacher who abruptly says that my room has been changed as she has lots of students coming to see her on that Saturday. I try to find the supervisor of the Saturday school to find out where I am to teach today but lots of rooms are being used by teachers. Lots of teachers have come in on the Saturday to see and work with their students. When I

find the supervisor I ask why it seem so busy this week, “there is a drive by the SLT to target D grade students and work with them to push numbers up, you know how it is”. I hadn’t been assigned a room yet so had to walk along corridors to find a room suitable for my expected numbers of students and the IT facilities, time is ticking and I need to start setting up soon. Eventually after walking for what seems about ten minutes we find a room and I start setting up only to find that my expected number of twenty students quickly drops down to 8 due to students hurriedly being asked by teachers to join their sessions for that week. This means my class is disrupted numerous times and each time my classroom is emptier. This upset the dynamic of the class that day but it shows the changing climates of the school too. A few weeks ago my classes were not to be disrupted and the numbers were expected to be high, but as the need for targets to be met arises my session felt very precarious this week.

Fieldnote 20:  
“Guesstimates”.

Today the school feels a little tense, with staff in their classrooms, sat at their computers intensely looking at their screens. The usual morning chat and offers of a cup of coffee or tea are not heard in classrooms and corridors. On the contrary there is very little talk amongst teachers and some of the rooms have closed doors, something that does not happen very often as most staff have their doors open before students start drifting in. Teachers are busy and the mood is palpably tense. When there is talk it is brief and revolving around one thing, data predictions for students at A-level. They have to be in by Monday, many teachers have decided to come on a Saturday to get this done, with many saying - “I just don’t have the quiet time to do this during the week”, “the week is too full on to do this properly”- Similarly. other teachers express their frustration at this data exercise - “I’m not good at this at all and who wants to be wrong?”, “I hate providing something tentative that doesn’t translate into real life”, “This is too important for them [students] and we barely get enough time to do it”. The school calls them “guesstimates” and they are important for UCAS applications and university choices made by students. I did not anticipate the stress that it produces for teachers. Teachers don’t want to be burdened with the responsibility to predict grades that are too high and cause disappointment, or too low and be wrong about their students. This makes me feel so glad I don’t have this pressure because of my position as an enrichment tutor. I have been experiencing some of the effects of these pressures, particularly because my groups and students are now taken out of my sessions without much warning or consideration of what students might prefer to learn about on Saturdays. The needs of the school appear to always come first.

## Appendix 3

### Letter of consent used

Re: Research Project into uses of social media (letter to be explained to research participants at workshop led by the researcher)

#### **Informational Letter for Parents and Students**

This letter is a consent informational letter to be used as part of a doctoral research project undertaken by the student Jessie A. Bustillos Morales at UCL Institute of Education. The Headteacher and Senior Management Team have been informed of the research and they have agreed that the aforementioned researcher can conduct research at this site.

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and you can choose to participate in 1 or all 3 stages of research. The school building will be used as a setting to collect the data, unless you or your parents prefer a different setting, such as somewhere in the community, or home. Therefore, please be aware of the following:

- You can choose to participate in one, two or all stages of research.
- You can choose to stop your participation even if you have started participating. In this case you can also ask the researcher to exclude any or all data that the researcher might hold.
- You can ask the researcher not to use some or any of the data that might have been collected online or offline during your participation.
- You can create your own pseudonym to be used in the research study. If preferred by the research participant the researcher will create one.
- Any information you provide during the research will be confidential to me, which means that neither you nor your school will be identified. In the case of online posts, the researcher will also anonymise these, by blurring any tags, hashtags, usernames and/or stamps that make your identity public.
- You can choose for your face to be blurred in any online data collected, such as profile pictures, posts, images shared etc.
- Further, all data collected will be kept in a secure place, out of the research site, in accordance to the Data Protection Act (1998).
- Also, you will be allowed to withdraw from the research at any time, regardless of which stage of research you are involved in.
- If you have concerns about any stage of the research you can talk to the researcher or a close teacher at the school.
- After the research study has been written you will be able to read the research report if you so wish.

The main aim of the research study is to identify the ways in which young people use and engage with online digital technologies, such as, social media platforms.

An initial stage of the research involves an ethnographic interview with me. This interview involves an informal and unstructured interview where I ask you to explain your uses and experiences of and in social media platforms. These interviews will be recorded and I might make some notes during the interview. Again, you do not need to disclose or talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or uneasy. The interviews will be organised in a way that does not interfere with your class attendance at the school.

There will also be a brief period of online observations on Facebook, or other social media platforms. The period will be defined with your consent and observations will stop after a specified date to be agreed with you. You could choose to 'friend' me on the social media platform or just take me through your social media yourself in a separate occasion. You could choose either of these options, or both. You do not need to show or disclose any information that might make you uncomfortable or uneasy. During this period I will take some screenshots of content and with your permission they might be used in the research. If you wish to send screenshots yourself and for the researcher not to take any screenshots, this will be possible and the researcher will ask you of your preference before online observations begin.

Further, the data gathered will provide information to understand and explore the experiences of young people in highly digitised societies, such as, the UK. It might also be used to create strategies and practices for sustainable safety considerations and policies which can be used to inform schools, teachers, parents and other young people.

The research project supervisor is Professor Jessica Ringrose and Professor Stephen Ball.

Should you require further information about the research please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Jessie Bustillos

