

## ABSTRACT

Facebooked Selves:  
Online Identity Construction at a Trinidadian Girls' Secondary School

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An investigation is made into the factors which determine the construction of identities on Facebook among the girls of an academically-gifted secondary school in Trinidad. The focus was on how external forces and individual choice impact self-representation.

The study's main method was devised theatre, utilising the conventions of ethnography. The devising process, in which the subjects created a play through improvisation that illustrated their views on Facebook use, empowered the subjects by allowing them to participate in the production of knowledge about themselves and to present their point of view before an audience. This process of creating the play was beneficial in allowing the subjects to discuss and justify their choices. After a final script was produced, it was analysed as a text. As well, ongoing observations of the subjects' Facebook use was made over the course of several years.

Gender, age, school, parents, peers, and media are the main considerations that guided how the girls chose to represent themselves on Facebook. While aspects of morality and responsibility concerned their adult audience, finding common ground was the users' main concern with their intended peer audience.

This work offers a Trinidadian perspective on the study of youth engagement with social networking sites, and at the same time updates general research on the topic and discusses implications for their identity constructions. It finds the factors which guide the girls' online activities: while teenagers go online to be with friends, they recognise the public nature of these activities and take into consideration audiences for whom their expressions are not intended. It sheds light on a space inaccessible to most authority figures and shows how coming of age is reflected in teenagers' Facebook use.

Keywords: Kessey Jemmott; adolescent development; secondary school; Catholic education; drama; girls' education; Facebook; identity construction; Trinidad & Tobago