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Breaking down social media: The good, the bad, the ugly

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28/10/2024

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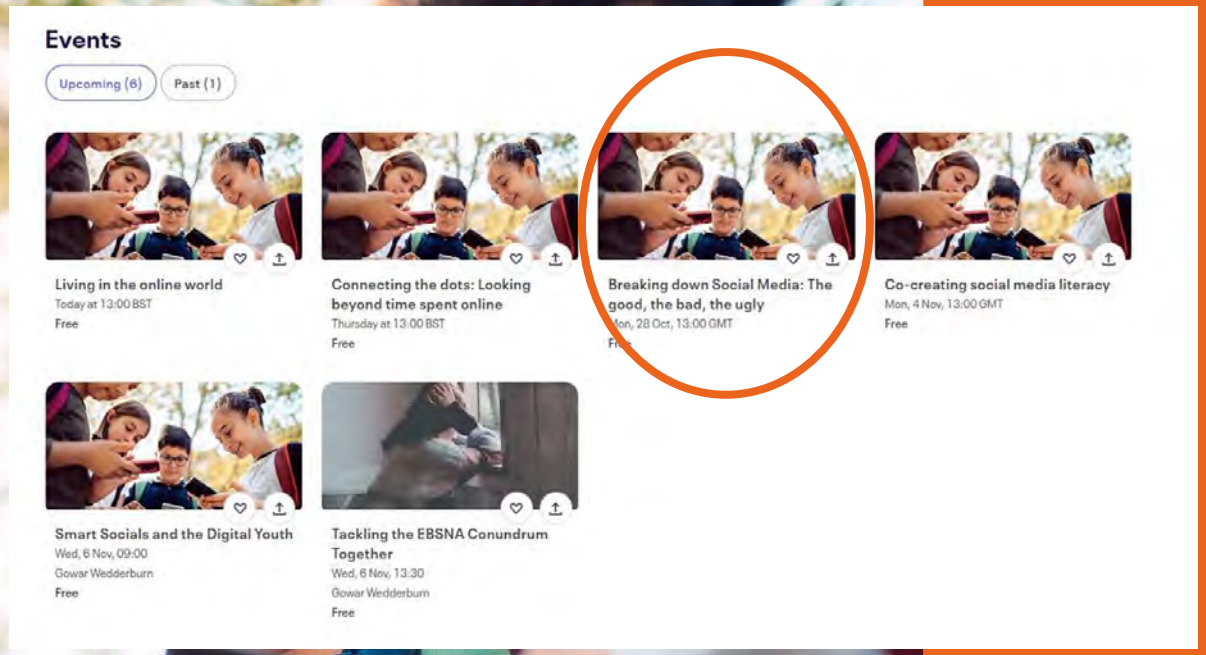

Breaking down social media: The good, the bad, the ugly

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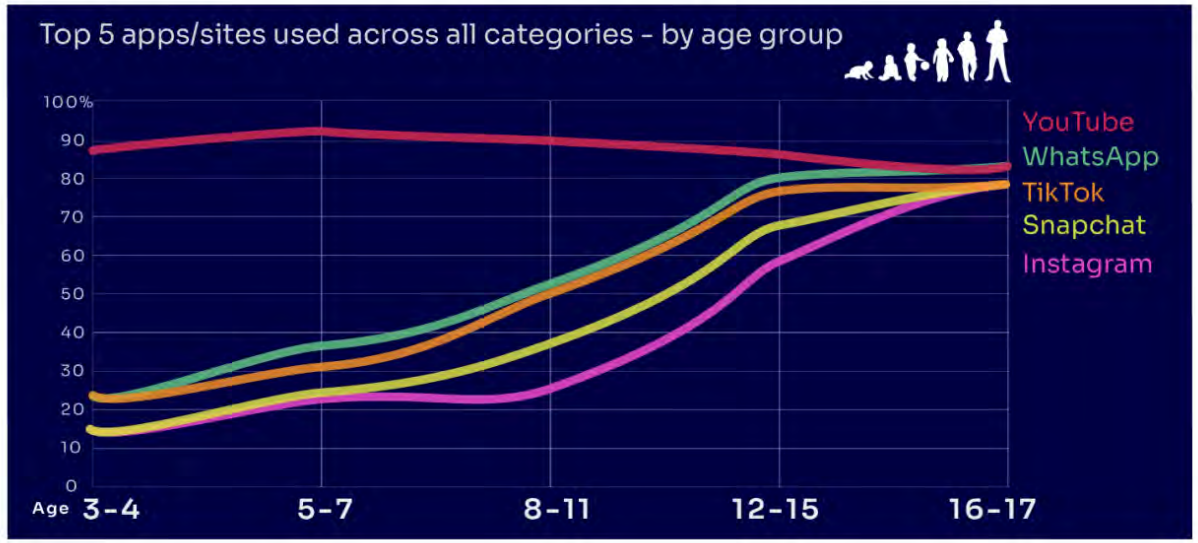
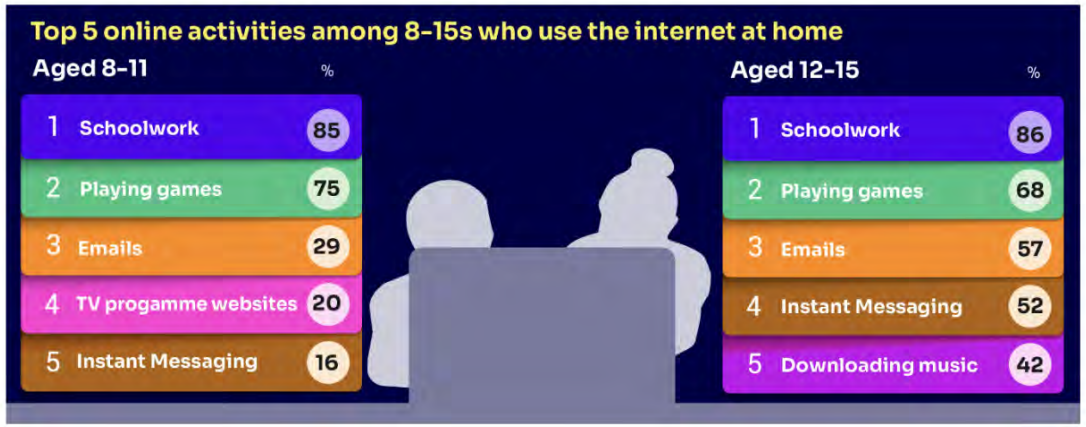
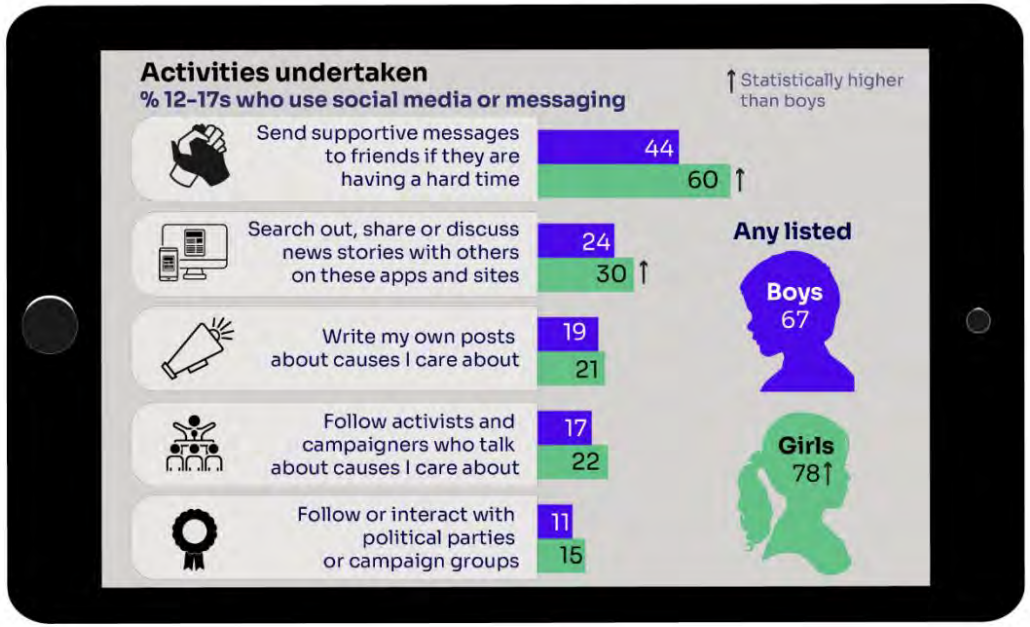
Children's online behaviours





- We know children and adolescents are using social media.
- We know that children and adolescents are using the internet to communicate with others.



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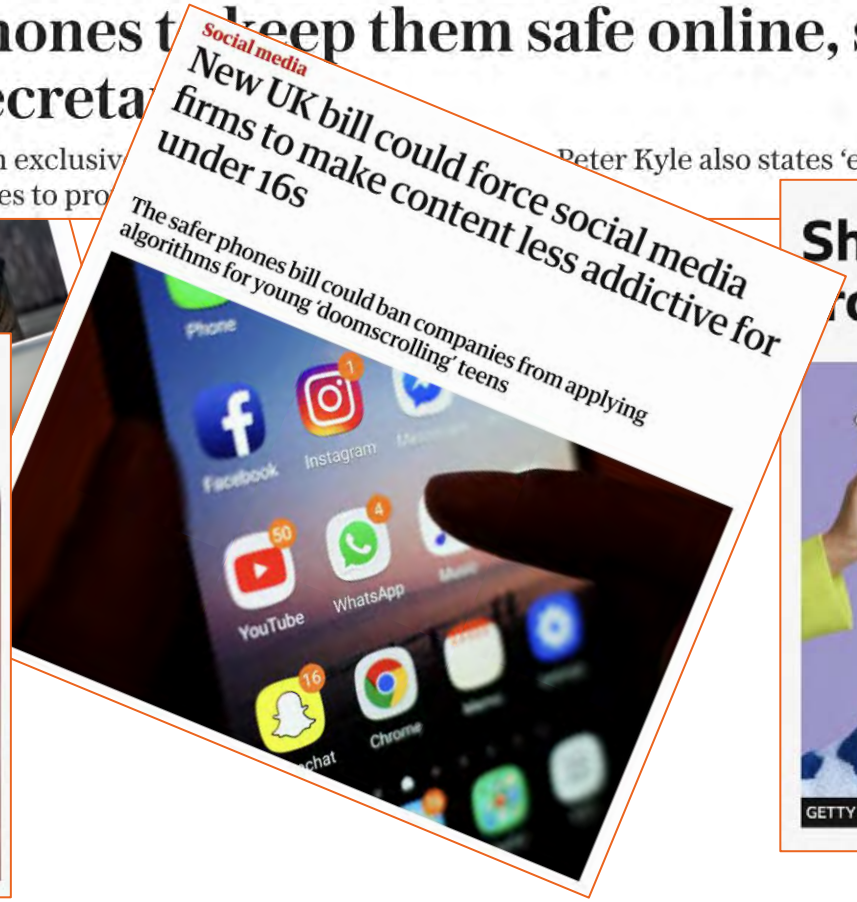
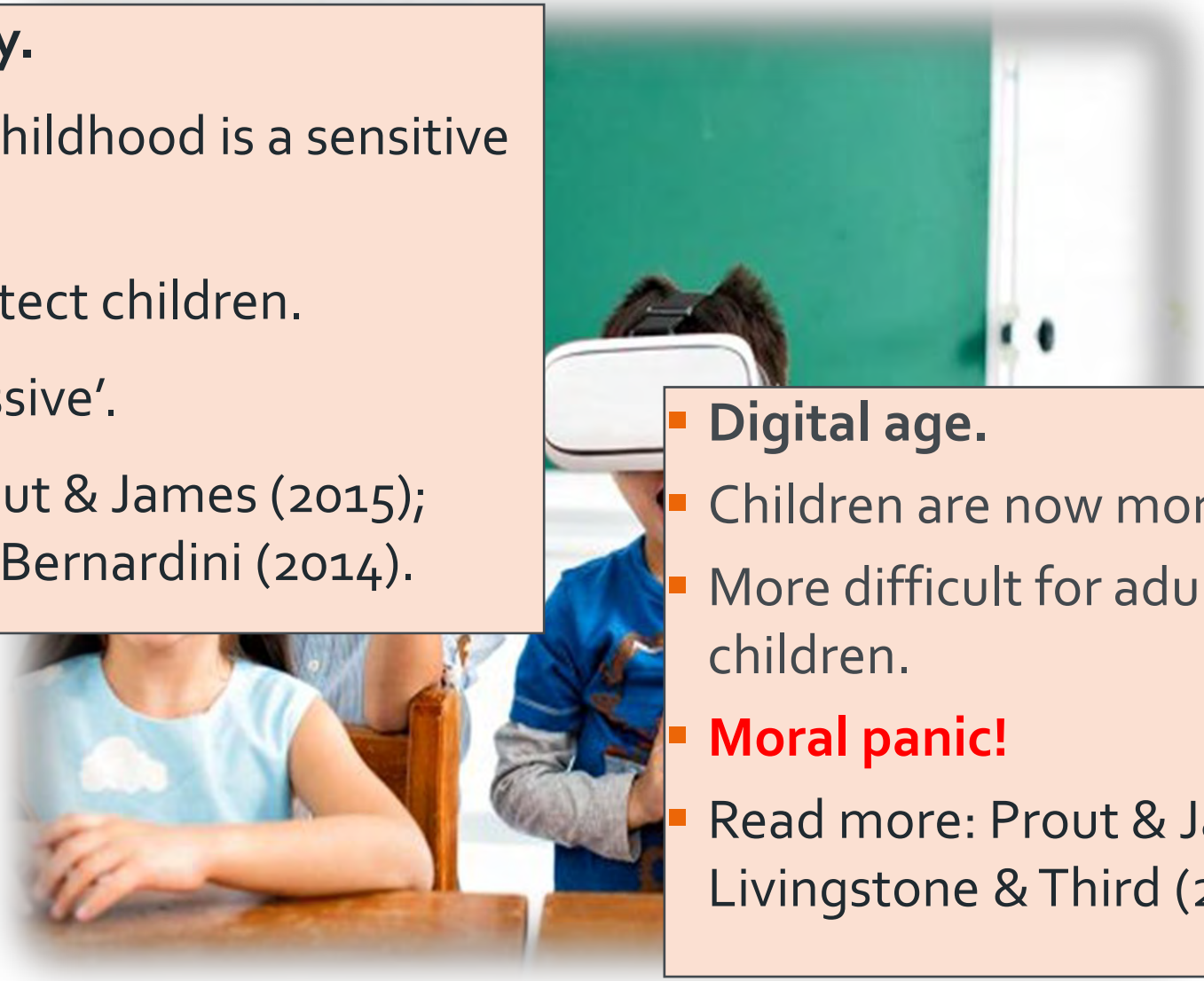


Protecting children

The social construction of childhood

- **Adultist society.**
- We know that childhood is a sensitive phase of life.
- We want to protect children.
- Children as 'passive'.
- Read more: Prout & James (2015); Corsaro (2017); Bernardini (2014).



- **Digital age.**
- Children are now more 'active' in society.
- More difficult for adults to protect children.
- **Moral panic!**
- Read more: Prout & James (2015); Livingstone & Third (2014).

The social construction of childhood

- "Children must be given the freedom to use the internet and protected from the dangers associated with it, the balance depending on their capabilities" (p.23).

Protection

Provision

Participation

- "Internet standards and formats must be open, interoperable and inclusive" (p.23).

- "The right to seek, receive and impart information freely, and to associate freely with others for social, political and cultural purposes" (p.23).

(Livingstone, 2014)

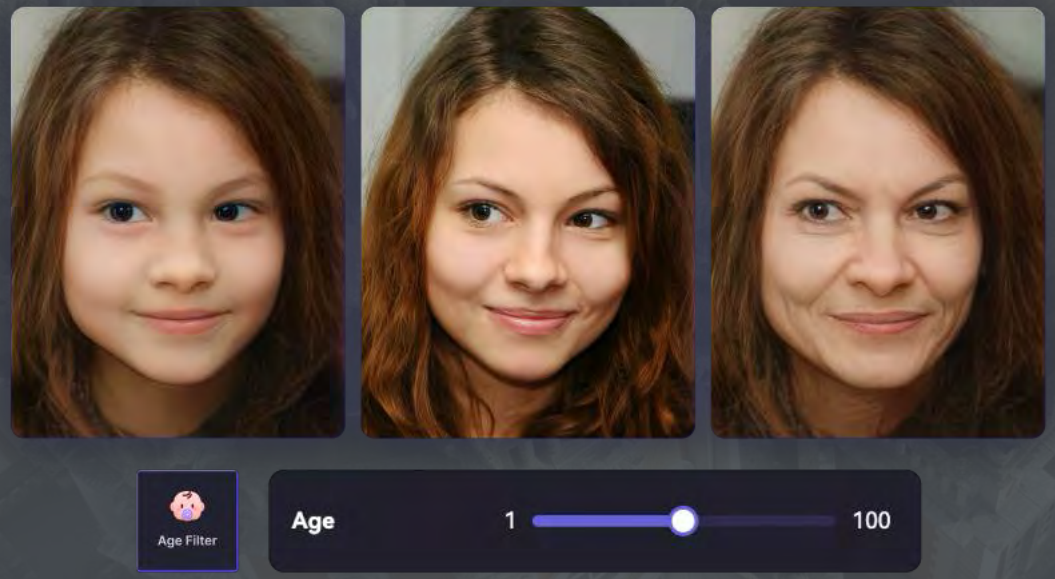
The good, the bad, the ugly

Social capital

- **Bonding**
  - Maintaining pre-existing relationships/connections.
  - Communicating online with friends/family.
- **Bridging**
  - Maintaining 'weak ties' with acquaintances.
  - Forming new relationships/connections.

Ahn (2012); Williams (2019); Cao et al. (2013)

Self-presentation



- **Real self**
  - Posting an unedited selfie.
- **Ideal self**
  - Posting an edited selfie.
- **False self to explore**
  - Portraying a pretend persona in an online game.
- **False self to impress**
  - Pretending to be on holiday.
- **False self to deceive**
  - Catfishing.

Michikyan et al. (2015)

International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning
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Adolescent Perceptions of the Risks and Benefits of Social Networking Site Use

Beatrice Hayes, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK*
Ravinder Barn, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
Dawn Watling, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
Alana James, University of Reading, UK

- Online survey with adolescents aged 13-18 years.
- Adolescents (particularly females) seek social autonomy.
- Bonding social capital with friends online enhances this.
- Adolescents view bonding with family as risky.
- Parents seeing this may result in negative or embarrassing feedback.

Computers in Human Behavior
Volume 130, May 2022, 107147

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Children's risk and benefit behaviours on social networking sites

B. Hayes [a], A. James [b], R. Barn [c], D. Watling [d]

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- Online survey with children aged 7-12 years.
- Children's active use (particularly self-disclosing) associated with bonding and bridging social capital.
- Children who bond and bridge social capital reported higher self-esteem.
- Children who bond social capital may experience both cyberbullying perpetration and victimisation.
- Presenting the real self associated with higher self-esteem.
- Time spent online did not predict self-esteem → this supports our understanding that how long we spend online is not a risk in itself.

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British Journal of Educational Psychology (2021)
www.wileyonlinelibrary.com

"The world we live in now": A qualitative investigation into parents', teachers', and children's perceptions of social networking site use

Beatrice Hayes[1]*, Alana James[2], Ravinder Barn[1] and Dawn Watling[1]

[1]Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK
[2]University of Reading, UK

- Interviews with children aged 7-12 years, parents and teachers.
- Children talk about communicating with friends and family online as the greatest benefit of their social media use.
- Children echo parents' and teachers' concerns of stranger danger (in some cases: verbatim!).
- Children were far less knowledgeable of the "more likely" risks (e.g., cyberbullying).
- Techniques used to protect themselves were very reactionary (e.g., blocking) but proactive techniques were hardly mentioned.

Hayes, B., James, A., Barn, R. & Watling, D. (in prep.). Children's use of social networking sites upon mental health and wellbeing: A longitudinal study.

- Longitudinal survey with children aged 7-12 years over 2 time points (six months apart).
- Bonding social capital associated with poor mental health six months later.
- Bridging social capital associated with better wellbeing six months later.
- Exploring different versions of the self online was associated with higher self-esteem six months later.
- Presenting the real self was associated with lower self-esteem six months later.

Break out room discussions

1. What measures can be put into place to protect children from the risks of social media (please consider different educational settings)?

2. How can we ensure that these measures do not limit children's access to the benefits of social media?

3. How can parents/guardians and educational settings work together to both protect children from the risks of social media whilst also encouraging access to the benefits?

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