

Submission to The Vermont Senate Education Committee



**Social Media
Victims
Law Center**

Laura Marquez-Garrett
February 20, 2024

SMVLC (as of January 9, 2024)

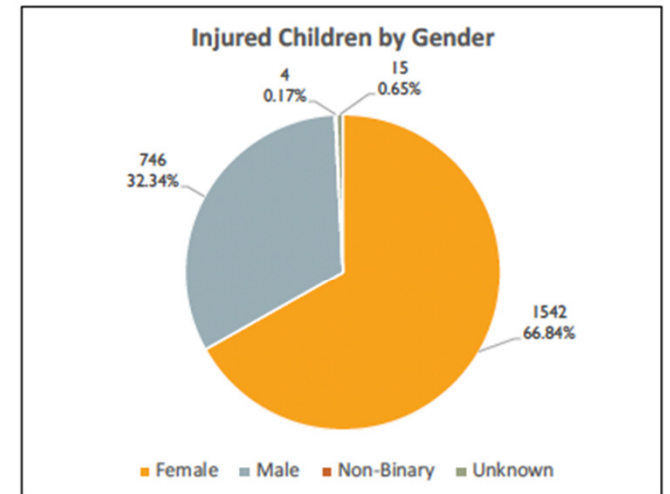
Percentages of 2307 open cases; most injured children have multiple identified harms.

Wrongful Death / Suicide – 245 cases, 10.62%	Severe Depression – 2000 cases, 86.69%
Attempted Suicide – 951 cases, 41.22%	Bullying – 1731 cases, 75.03%
Self-harm – 1375 cases, 59.60%	Exchanged Explicit Photos – 1087 cases, 47.12%
Suicidal Thoughts – 1546 cases, 67.01%	Sexual Contact With Person Over 18 – 489 cases, 21.19%
Eating Disorders – 1236 cases, 53.58%	Sex Trafficking – 97 cases, 4.20%
Unhealthy Concerns with Body – 1776 cases, 76.98%	Sleep Deprivation – 1669 cases, 72.35%

Statistics of SMVLC Wrongful Death Clients

- Total Wrongful Death Clients – **245** cases (10.61% of open cases)
 - 34.29% of total wrongful death victims are Female (84 clients)
 - 65.31% of total wrongful death victims are Male (160 clients)
- Suicide Cases – **74** cases (3.21% of open cases)
 - 45.95% of these suicide victims are Female (34 clients)
 - 54.05% of these suicide victims are Male (40 clients)
- Murder Cases – **5** cases (0.22% of open cases)
 - 80% of Murder victims are Female (4 clients)
 - 20% of Murder Victims are Male (1 case)
- Accidental Death Cases – **166** cases (7.20% of open cases)
 - 27.71% of Accidental Death victims are Female (46 clients)
 - 71.69% of Accidental Death victims are Male (119 clients)
 - 0.60% of Accidental Death victims are Non-Binary (1 client)

152 Accidental Death cases are drug related (147 fentanyl poisonings, 5 other overdose), 11 cases are Challenge deaths (9 Blackout Challenge, 2 Benadryl Challenge), 1 case is Russian Roulette, 1 is Subway Surfing, 1 is Unknown (possibly suicide)

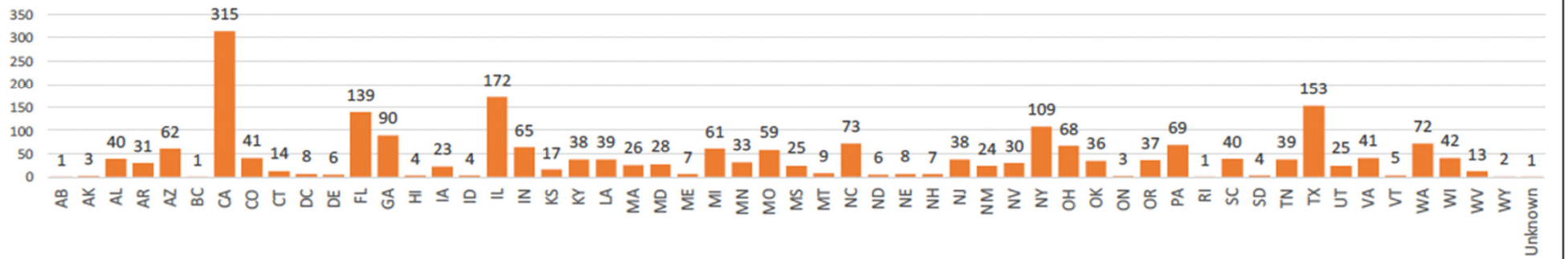


SMVLC (as of January 9, 2024)

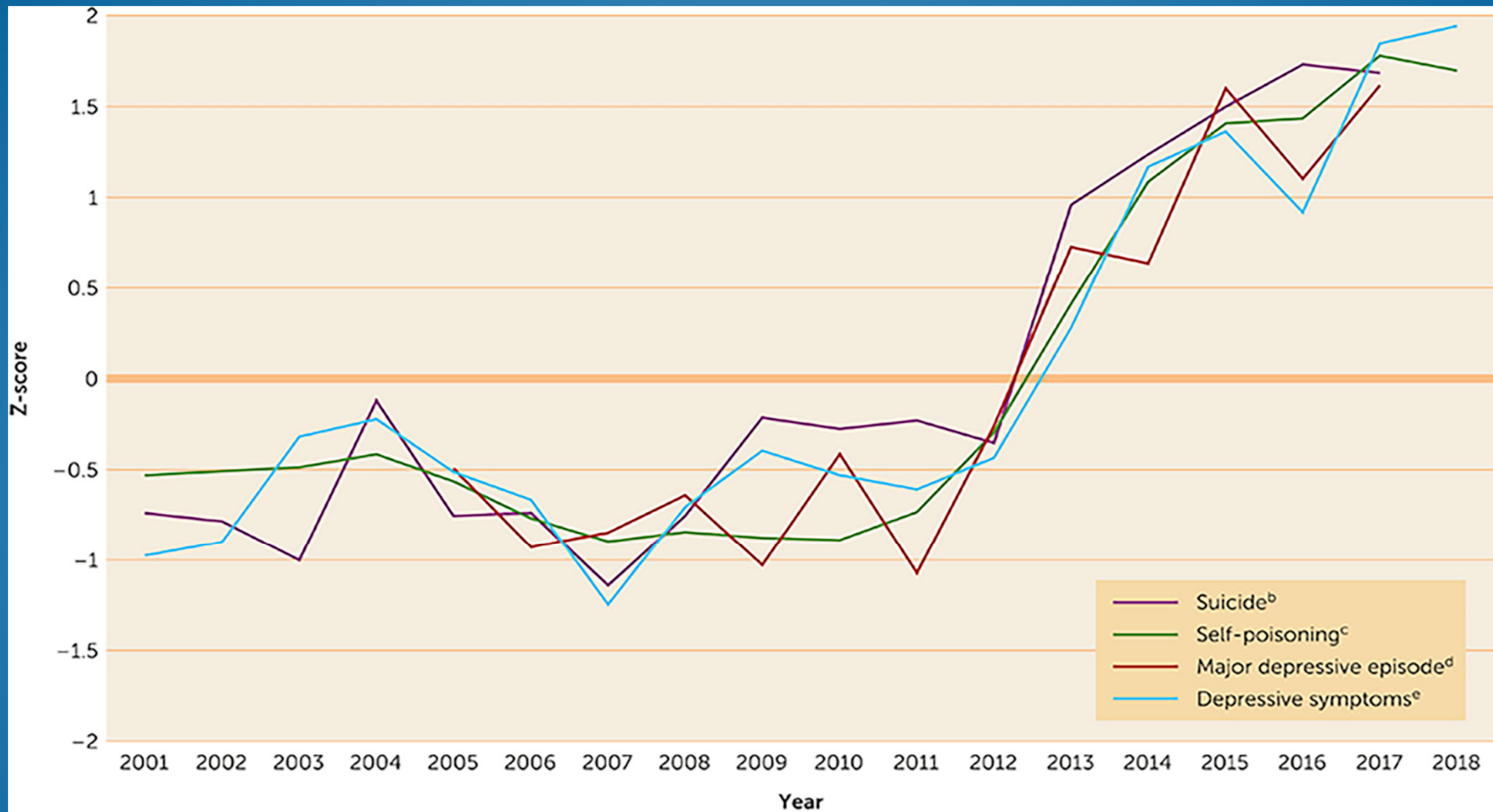
Breakdown of SMVLC Clients by State

(SMVLC has clients in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. SMVLC has 1 client in Alberta, 1 client in British Columbia and 3 clients in Ontario, Canada)

Count of Cases by State



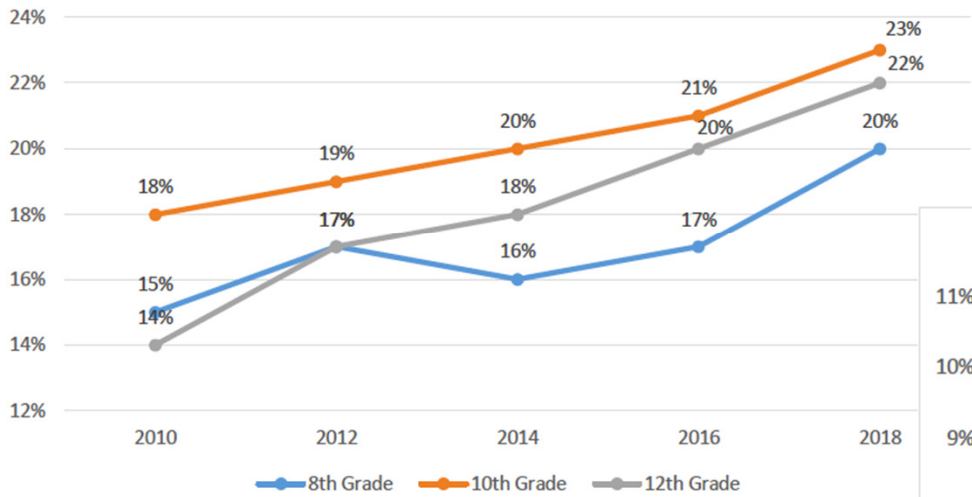
Social Media is Causing Harms



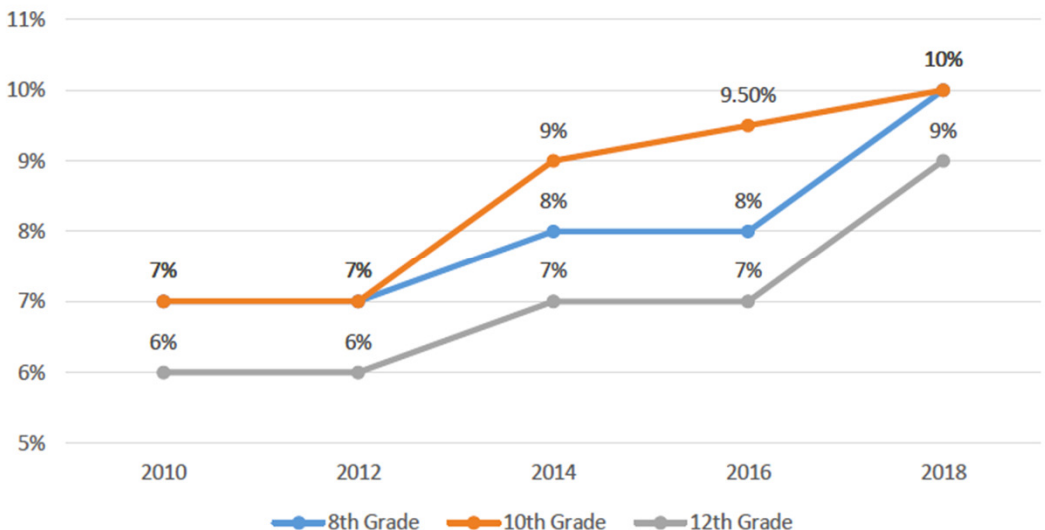
Source: Twenge, *Increases in Depression, Self-Harm, and Suicide Among U.S. Adolescents After 2012 and Links to Technology Use: Possible Mechanisms* Psych Res Clin Pract 2:1, 2020

King County (Washington State), Healthy Youth Survey from 2010 to 2018,
www.askhys.net

Considered Attempting Suicide



Attempted Suicide



January 17, 2024, “#BigTech @Minors: Social Media Algorithms Personalize Minors’ Content After a Single Session, but Not for Their Protection,” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4674573

December 27, 2023, “Social media platforms generate billions of dollars in revenue from U.S. youth: Findings from a simulated revenue model,” <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0295337>

May 2023, American Psychological Association, Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence, <https://www.apa.org/topics/social-media-internet/health-advisory-adolescent-social-media-use.pdf>

September 28, 2023, Center for Countering Digital Hate, TikTok’s Toxic Trade, <https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TikToks-Toxic-Trade-Steroids-and-Steroid-Like-Drugs.pdf>

March 2023, Suicide, Incels, and Drugs: How TikTok’s deadly algorithm harms kids, https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/eko_Tiktok-Report_FINAL.pdf

March 8, 2023, Social Media, Fentanyl & Illegal Drug Sales: A Report from the Colorado Department of Law, <https://coag.gov/app/uploads/2023/03/Colorado-AG-Report-Social-Media-Fentanyl-Illegal-Drug-Sales.pdf>

July 7, 2021, YouTube Regrets, A crowdsourced investigation into YouTube’s recommendation algorithm, https://assets.mofoprod.net/network/documents/Mozilla_YouTube_Regrets_Report.pdf

December 5, 2023, (Redacted) New Mexico Attorney General Complaint,
<https://www.nmag.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023-12-05-NM-v.-Meta-et-al.-COMPLAINT-REDACTED.pdf>

November 22, 2023, (Less Redacted) 33-state Attorney General Complaint,
<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/Less-redacted%20complaint%20-%20released.pdf>

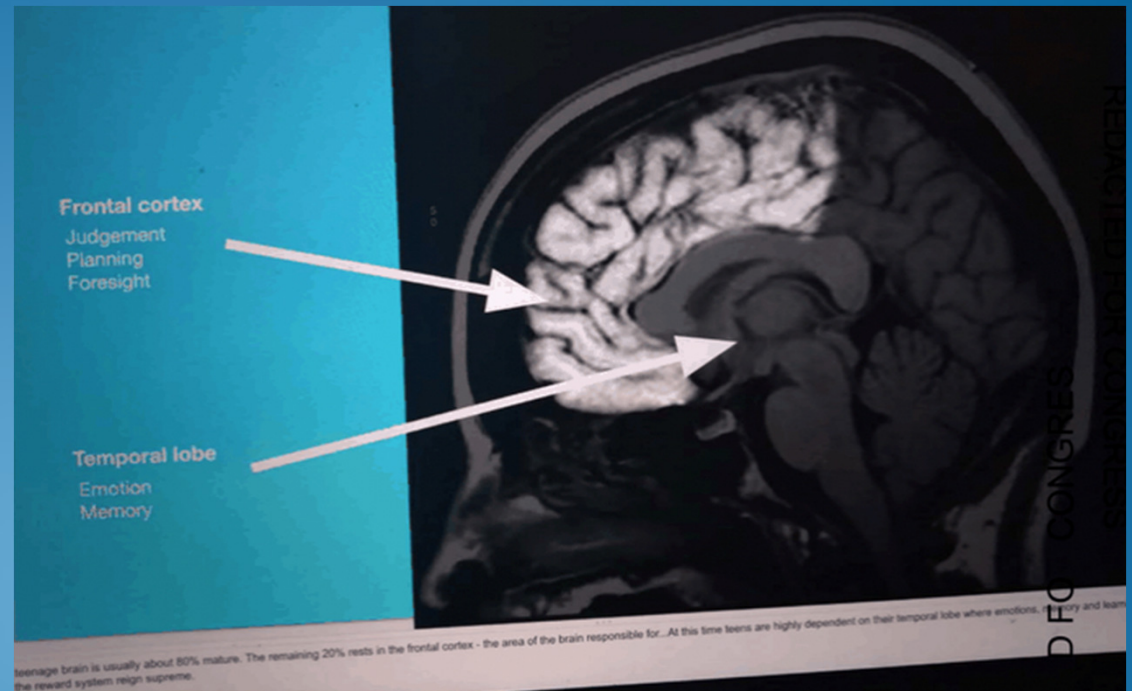
October 24, 2023, (Unsealed) Vermont Attorney General Complaint,
<https://ago.vermont.gov/sites/ago/files/2023-12/Unsealed%20Complaint.pdf>

October 24, 2023, (Unredacted) Massachusetts Attorney General Complaint,
<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/24138802-massachusetts-v-meta-complaint-unredacted>

Kids and Adults Experience Social Media Differently

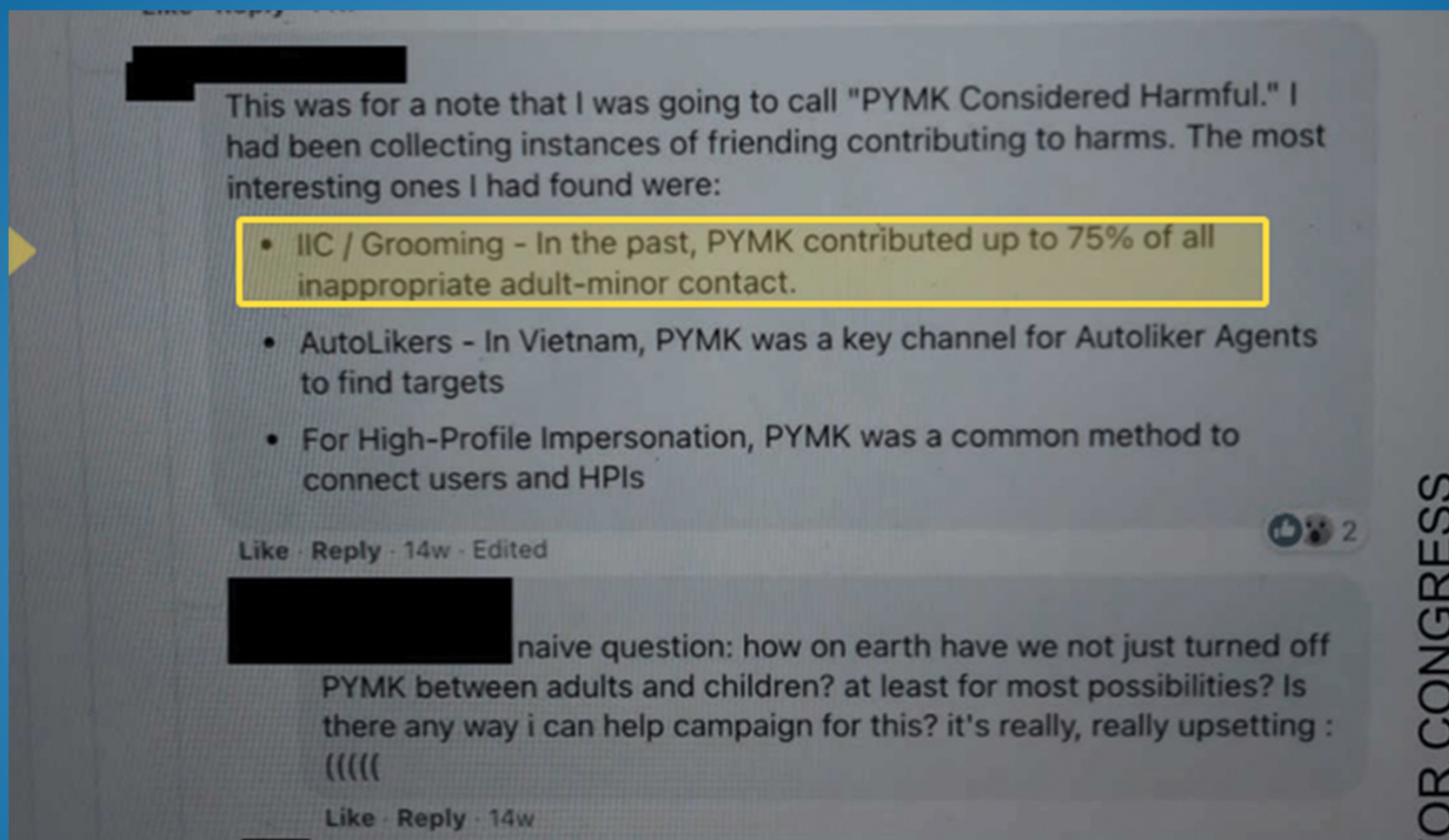
Why Instagram?

- The teen brain is **easily stimulated** by novelty, making discovery surfaces very engaging if content is fresh.
- Teens are **still developing self control**. They are motivated by the prospect of immediate rewards.
- Teens are **highly dependent on their temporal lobe** where emotions, memory and learning, and the reward system reign supreme.
- Teens' decisions and behavior are mainly driven by emotion, the intrigue of novelty and reward. While these all seem positive, they make teens **very vulnerable** at the elevated levels they operate on. Especially in the absence of a mature frontal cortex to help impose limits on the indulgence of these.



Source: Meta Platforms Inc., The power of Identities: Why Teens and Young Adults Choose Instagram, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23322855-copy-of-copy-of-why-teens-and-young-adults-choose-insta_sanitized

“PYMK” stands for “People You May Know,” which is Facebook’s (algorithmically driven) user recommendation system.



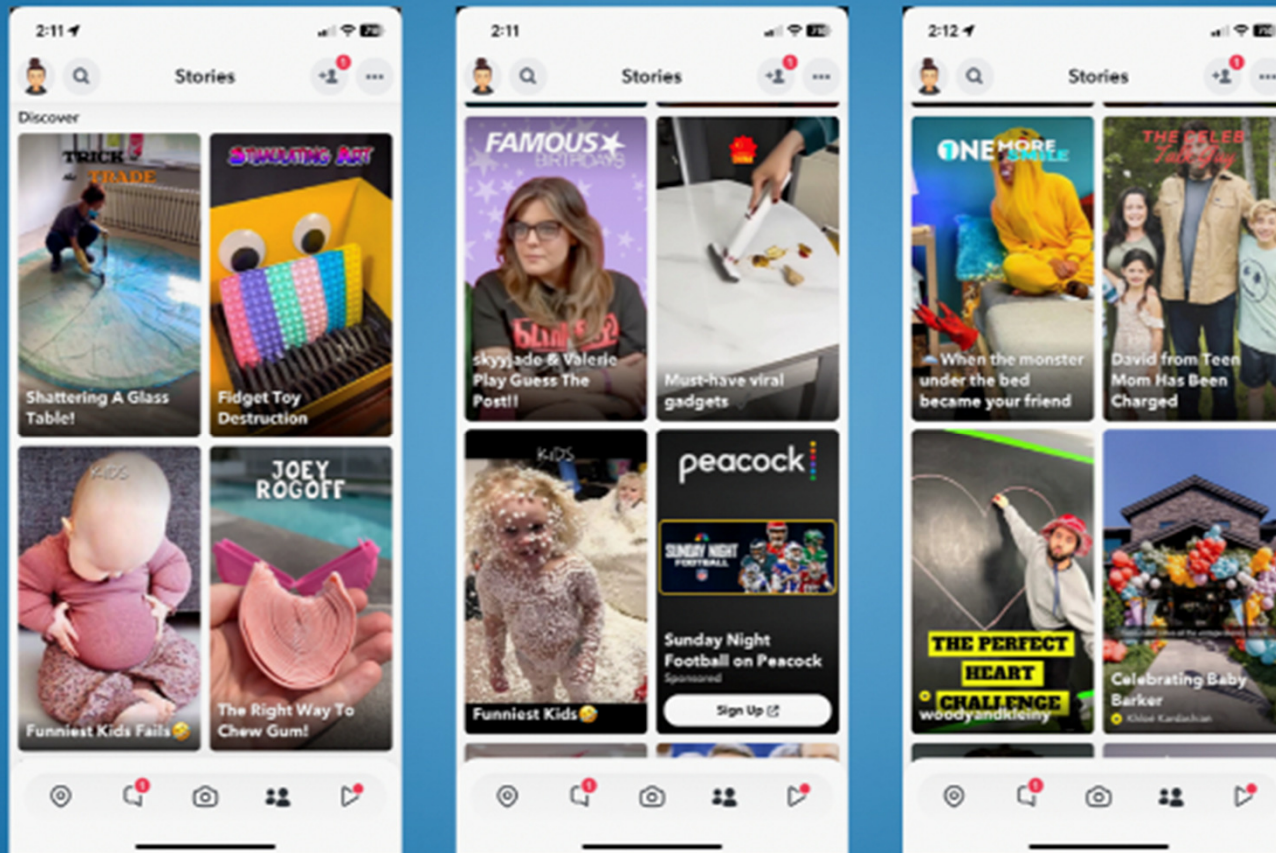
Source: Meta Platforms, Inc., Growth, Friending+PYMK, and downstream Integrity Problems, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23322845-friending-and-pymk-downstream-integrity-problems>



*Tweens are herd animals
and want to find communities
where they fit in.*

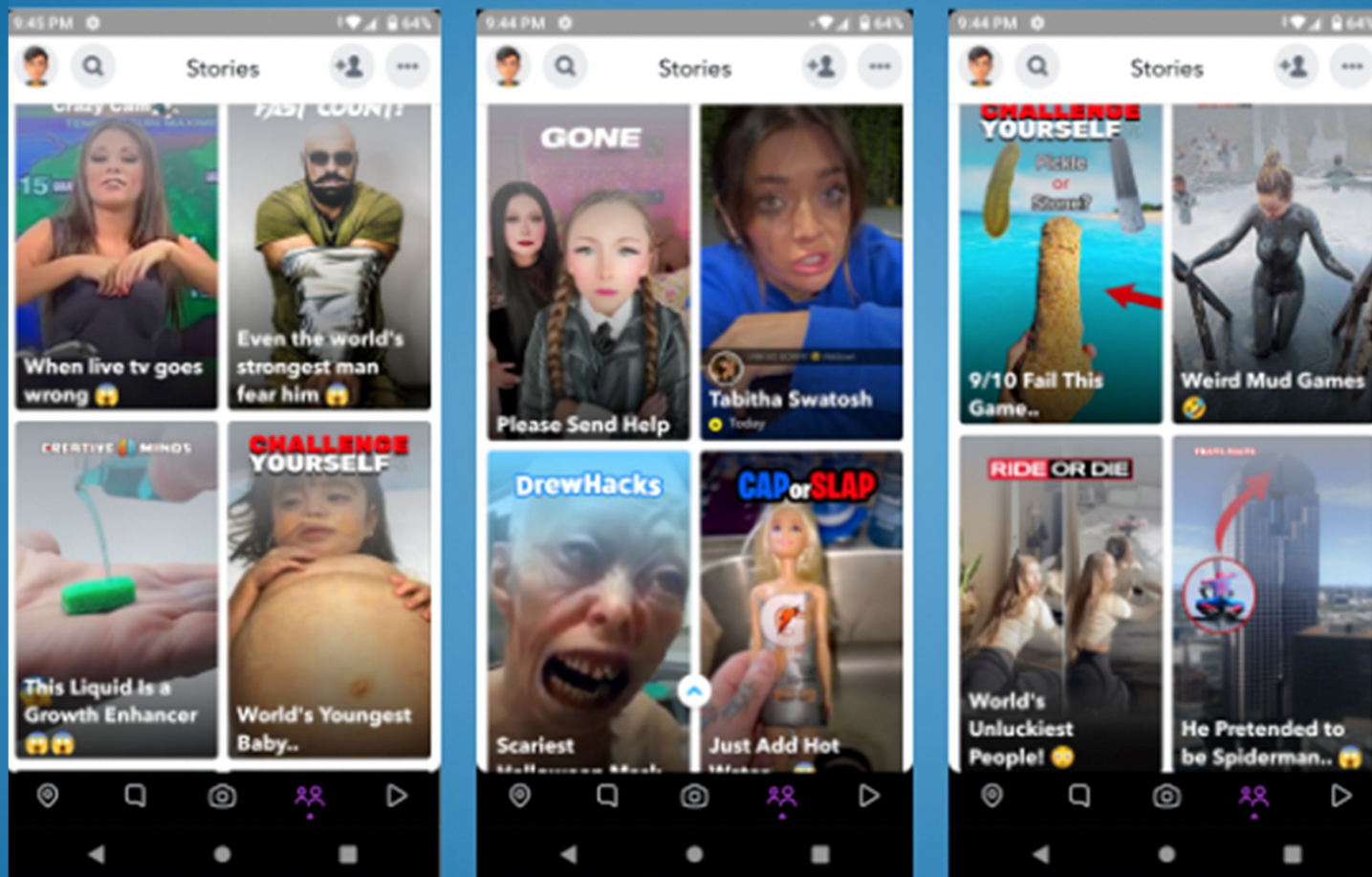
2017 Meta Research Paper

46-year-old female (no searches)



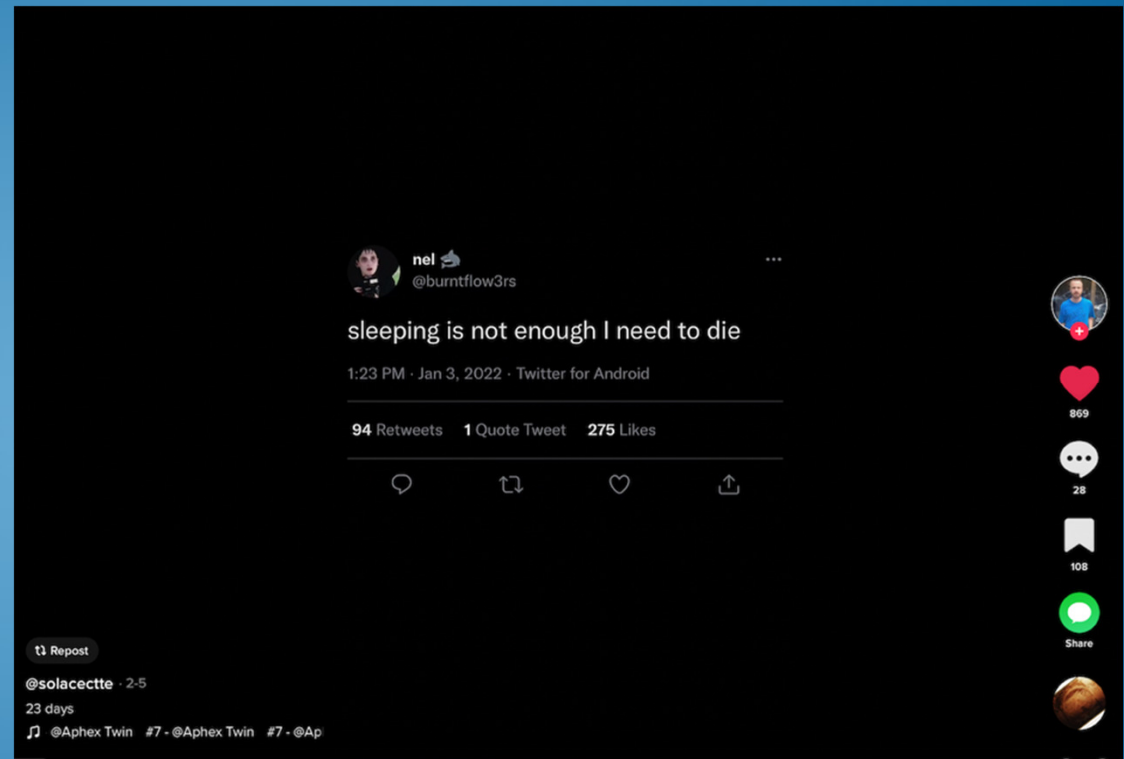
* From a Snapchat feed feature Snap claims to monitor, as opposed to one containing postings by users on a "friend" list.

14-year-old male (no searches)

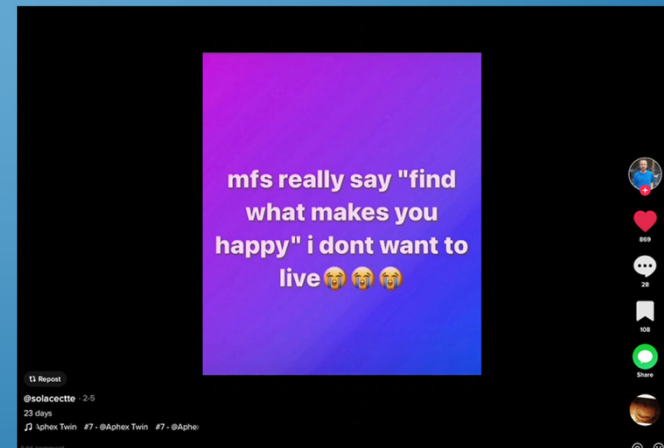
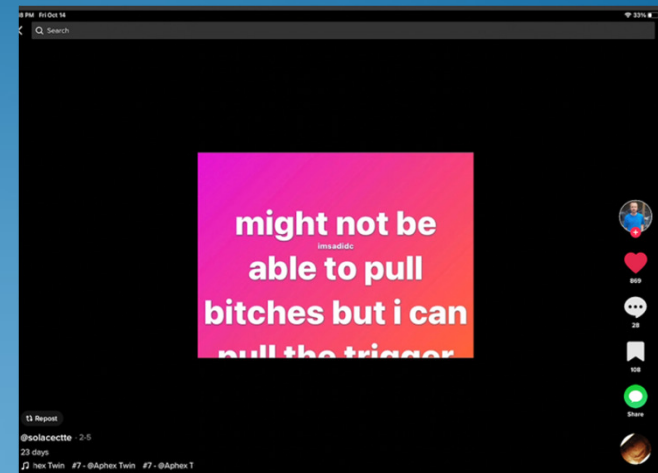
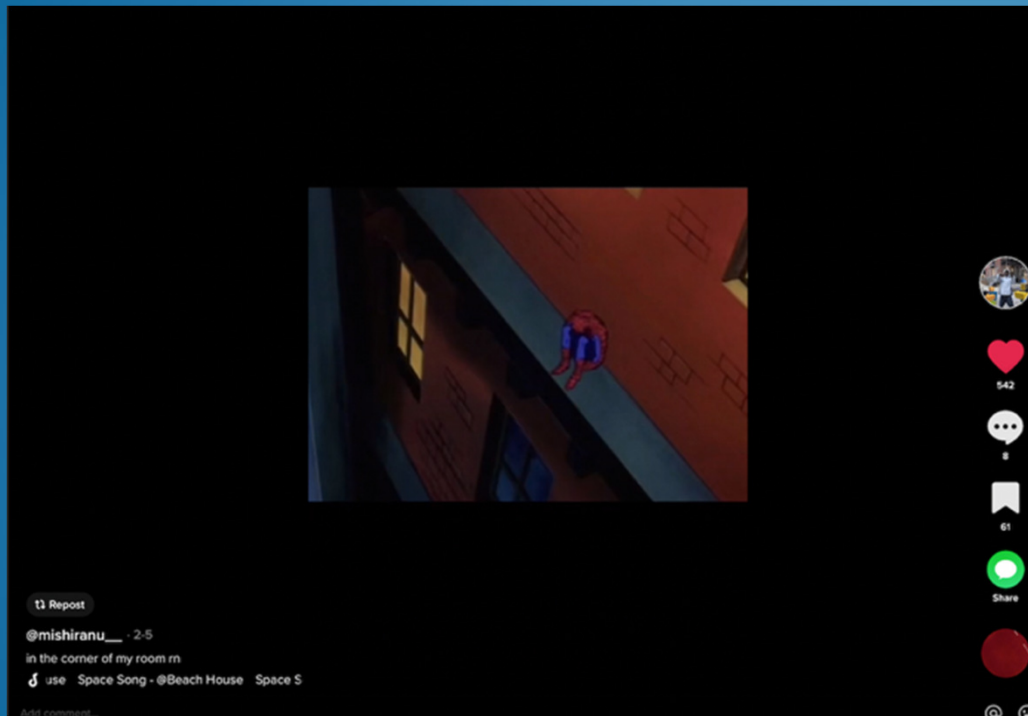


* From a Snapchat feed feature Snap claims to monitor, as opposed to one containing postings by users on a "friend" list.

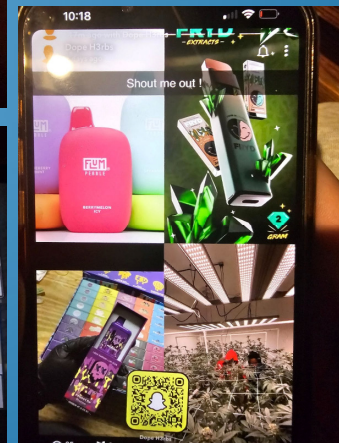
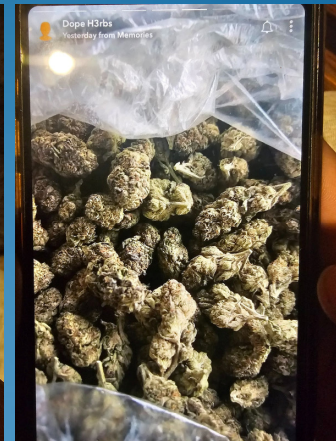
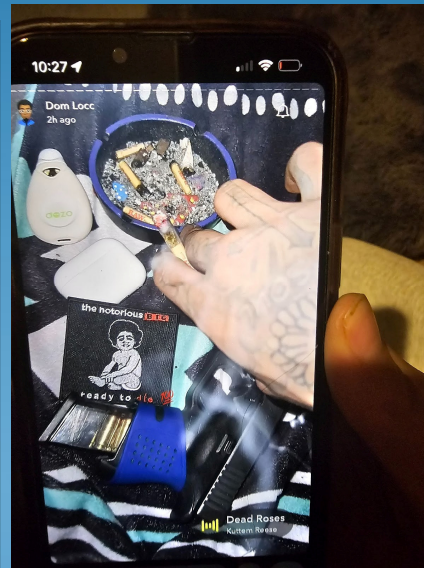
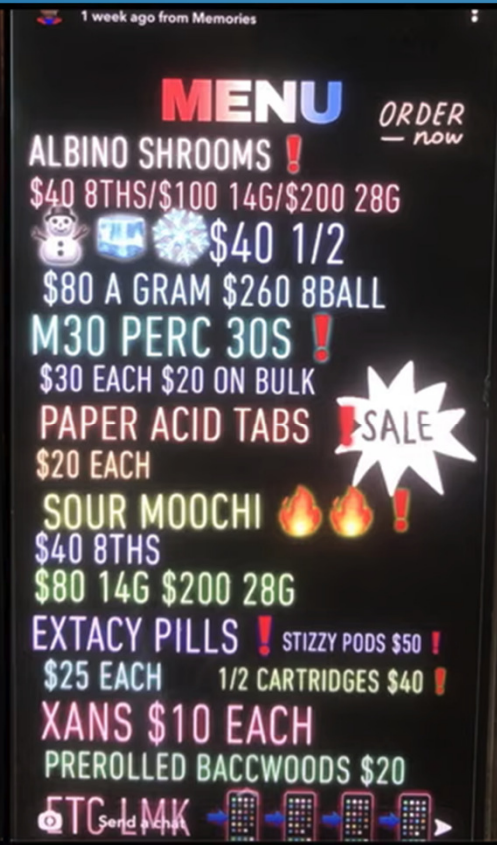
What TikTok chose for a 16-year-old the same day he searched for “Motivational Speech”



What TikTok chose for a 16-year-old the same day he searched for "Motivational Speech"



Not About What Kids are Seeing, but What Platforms are Pushing to them ...



The [National Crime Prevention Council](#), or NCPC, called on the Justice Department investigate social media platforms such as Snapchat, which are allegedly being used to sell drugs like fentanyl to kids.

In a letter to the [Justice Department](#), NCPC Executive Director Paul DelPonte said the fentanyl crisis is claiming too many lives, prompting the attorney general to step in.



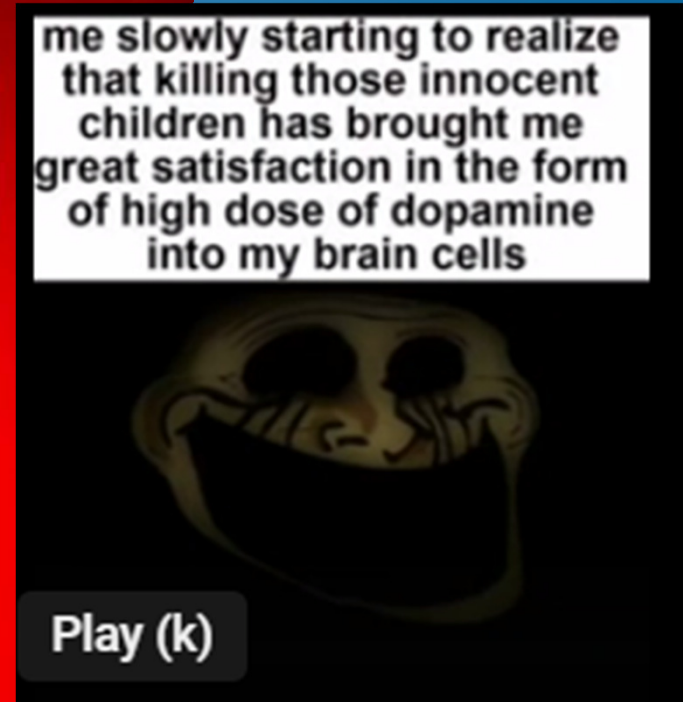
He went on to say that Snapchat is a "digital open-air drug market" that allows dealers to advertise and distribute fake pills to tweens and teens who are unsuspecting and that they may be lured into obtaining dangerous and deadly drugs.

"The platform gives drug dealers the ability to hide behind encrypted technology and posts that disappear from public view within 24 hours or less," DelPonte said. "This is not protection of free speech. It is aiding and abetting of the worst kinds of criminal acts."

September 2023

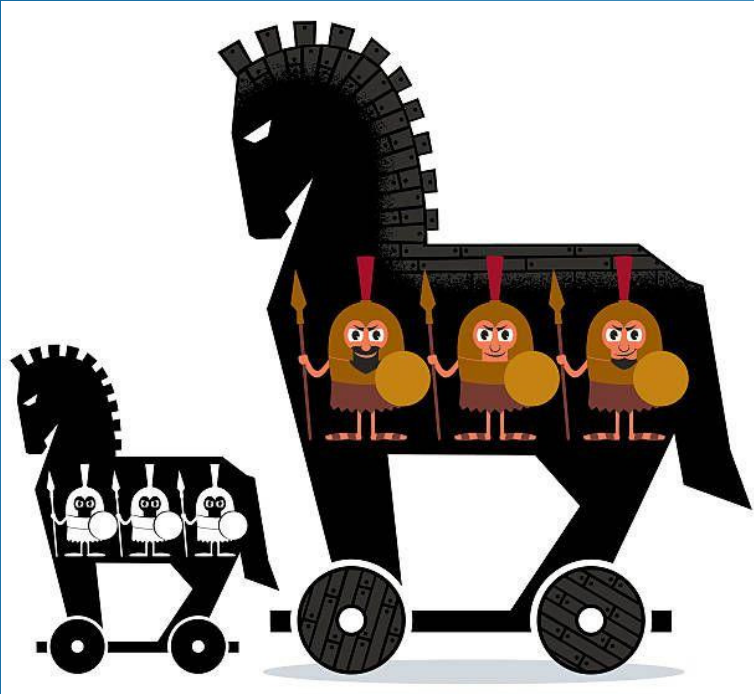
“Peppa Pig” clip recommended to a 10-year-old YouTube user

Also, a relatively common TikTok image in connection with depression, suicide, and self-harm



Big Tech in Our Schools

“It’s part of the curriculum”



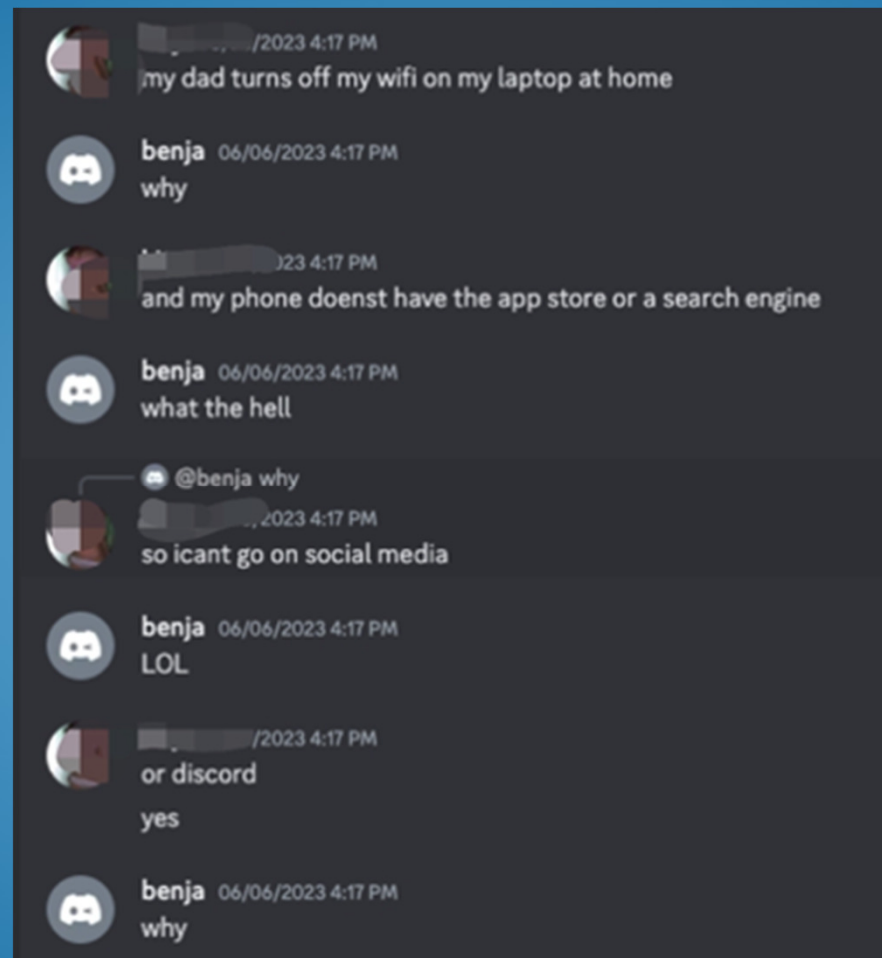
- Chrome Books
- Accessible Wi-Fi
- Direct Messaging and other “classroom” apps
- In classrooms and extracurricular activities
- Apps for homework, participation, even entry

- Are we allowing Big Tech to create an educational infrastructure that presumes the necessity of devices and platforms capable of causing real harm to children?
- We need to ask ourselves whether such devices and platforms are truly necessary, or if we can teach about technology without forcing it into every aspect of our children's daily lives.
- Convenience and necessity are not the same.

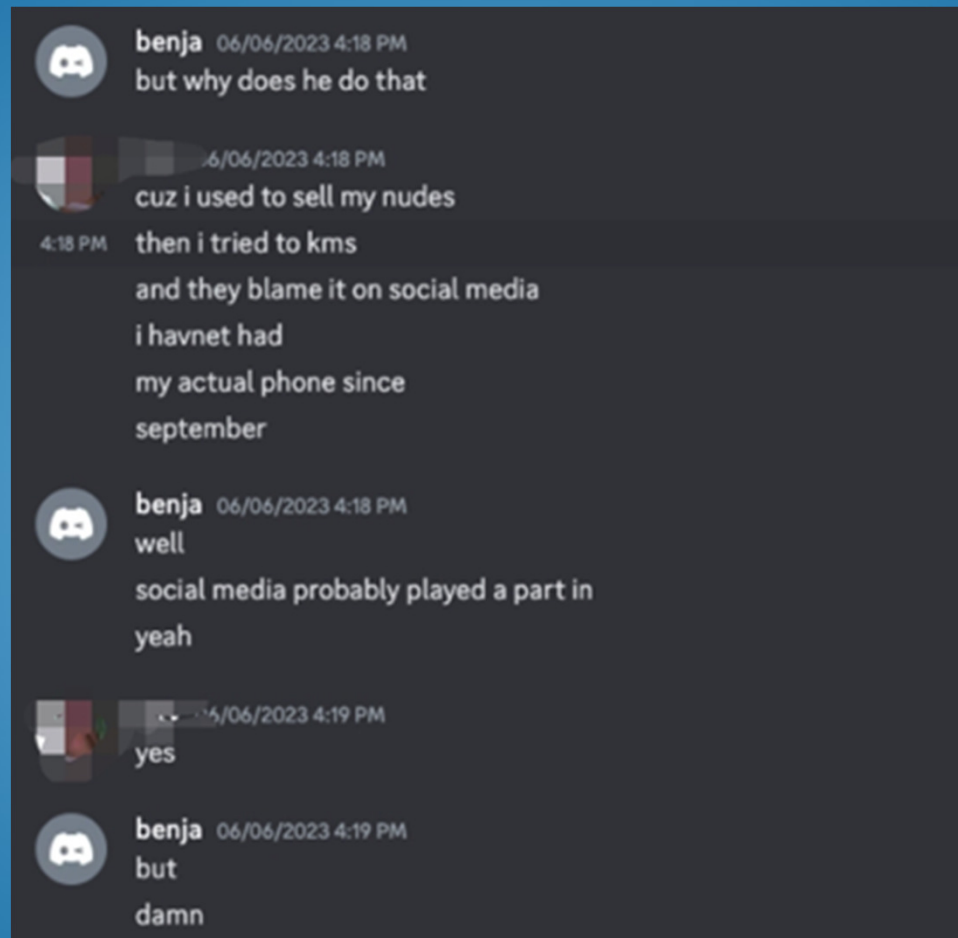
2023: School Chromebook conversations

- The following images were taken from a school-issued Chrome Book being used by a fourteen-year-old student.
- These are just some of the conversations she was having while in class.
- Her parents previously told the school about her issues with social media, that their child had no access at home, and that they did not want her having access to a school issued device because such access would be harmful.
- The school said it was using available software to prevent social media access (but that no software is perfect), and that the device is part of their curriculum such that parents have no choice.

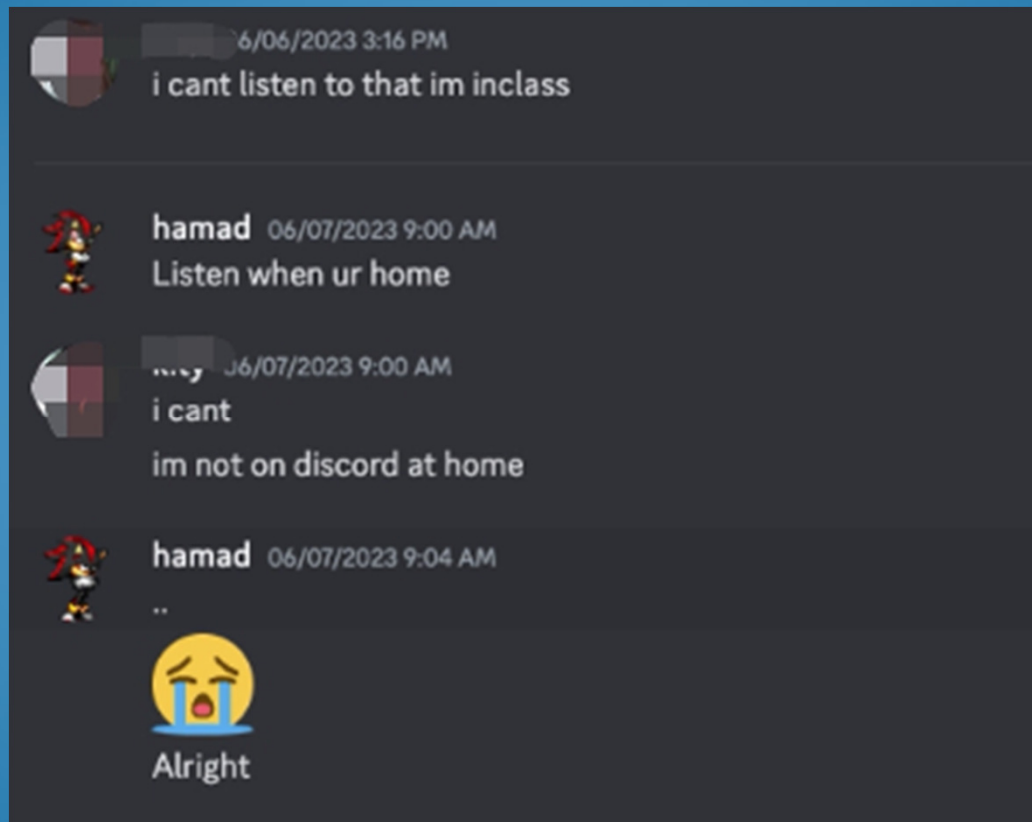
2023: School Chromebook conversations



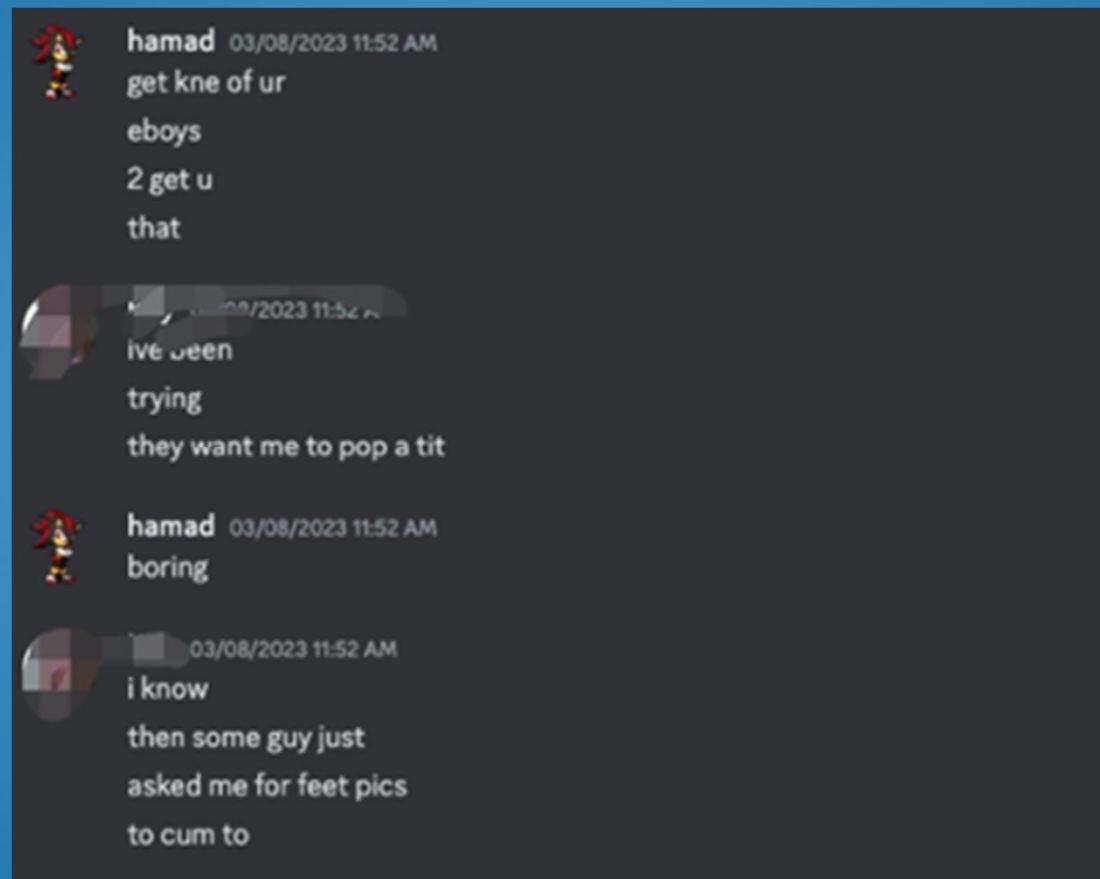
2023: School Chromebook conversations



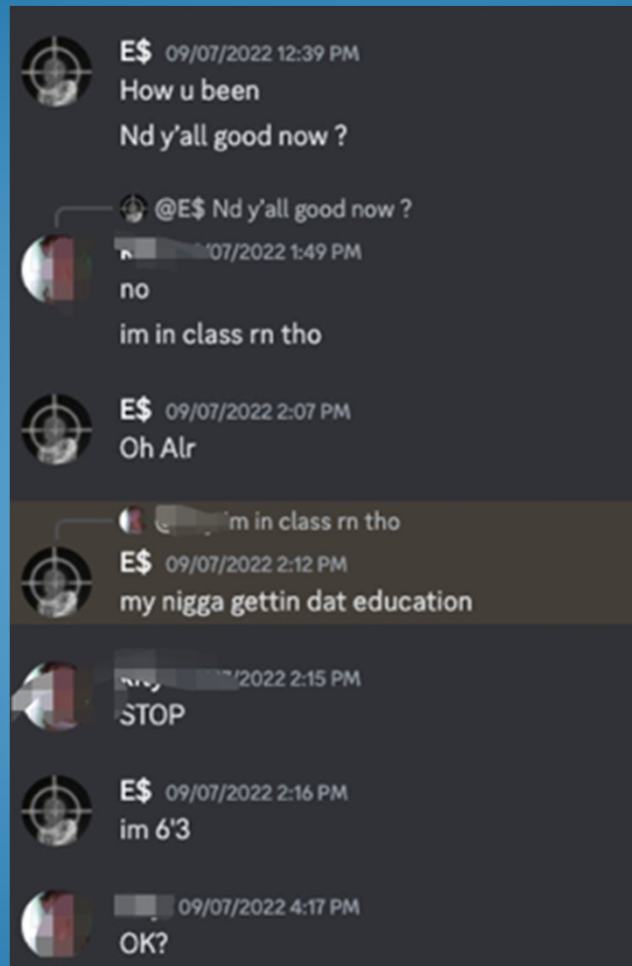
2023: School Chromebook conversations



2023: School Chromebook conversations



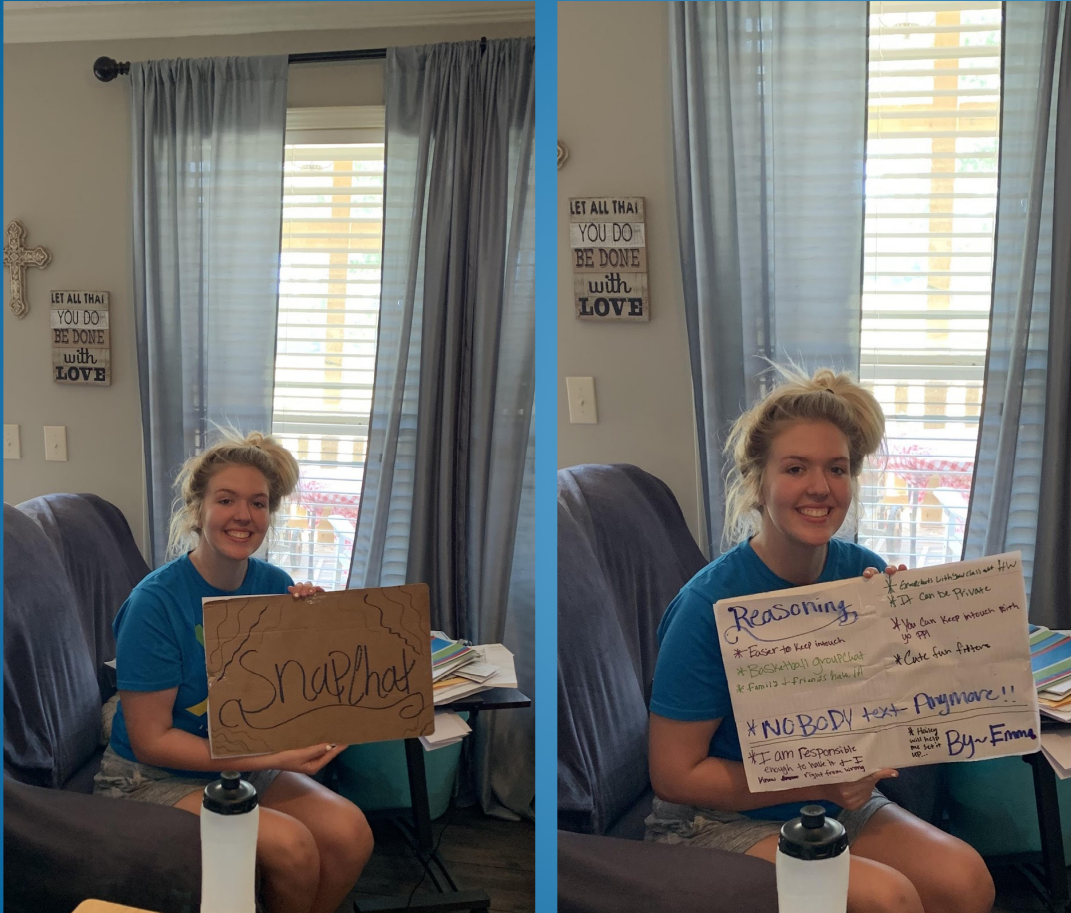
2023: School Chromebook conversations



2023: School Chromebook conversations



Emma Claire Gill (2004-2021)



August 2020

- Easier to keep in touch
- Basketball group chat
- Family & friends have it
- Group chats with your class HW [homework]
- It can be private
- You can keep in touch with PPL
- Cute fun filters
- NOBODY text ANYMORE!!

Emma Claire Gill (2004-2021)

255. Emma Claire died on August 8, 2021, less than one year after being allowed access to the Snapchat social media product and four months after being allowed to keep her phone at night—which was allowed in case she needed to talk with friends about her classmate’s tragic suicide, also believed to have been proximately caused by social media, which happened in April

Michael Brewer



25 Q. When did you first open a Snapchat account?

1 A. When I was around 10 or 11.

2 Q. And did you have your own phone then? Or did
3 you use some other device?

4 A. I had my own phone.

5 Q. Okay. Why did you want to open a Snapchat
6 account?

7 A. For the filters.

8 Q. Okay. So the filters --

9 A. So that --

10 Q. -- tell us what you liked about the filters.

11 A. Well, one of my old familiar friends, Coach
12 Mike McKeever -- you probably don't need to -- need to
13 know that -- but he was my old lacrosse coach and we
14 were really close. And he showed me the Snapchat filter
15 with the dog sticking his tongue out.

**“If YouTube is dangerous, why does our teacher show us
YouTube videos in class?”
(1st grader)**

- There are “tech” alternatives
- The privacy and safety of students while at school should be our highest priority