

Article

Postdigital Bodies: Young People's Experiences of Algorithmic, Tech-Facilitated Body Shaming and Image-Based Sexual Abuse during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic in England

Jessica Ringrose ^{1,*} , Betsy Milne ² , Tanya Horeck ³  and Kaitlynn Mendes ⁴ 

¹ IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, London WC1H 0AL, UK

² Centre of Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry, University College London, London WC1H 0AL, UK; elizabeth.milne.22@ucl.ac.uk

³ Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge CB1 1PT, UK; tanya.horeck@aru.ac.uk

⁴ Department of Sociology, Western University, London, ON N6A 3K7, Canada; kaitlynn.mendes@uwo.ca

* Correspondence: j.ringrose@ucl.ac.uk

Abstract: In this paper, we draw upon a study exploring how COVID-19 and social isolation impacted young people's (aged 13–18) experiences of online sexual and gendered risks and harms in England during nationwide lockdowns and upon their return to school. We explore the complexities, tensions and ambiguities in youth navigating algorithmised feeds on social media apps such as TikTok and content featuring idealised cis-gendered, heterosexualised feminine and masculine embodiment. Young people repeatedly witness hateful and abusive comments that are algorithmically boosted. We argue that this toxic content normalises online hate in the form of body shaming and sexual shaming, developing the concept of the postdigital to analyse the offline, affective, embodied and material dimensions of online harm, harassment and abuse. We also explore young people's direct experiences of receiving harmful comments, including girls' and gender and sexuality-diverse youth's experiences of body and sexual shaming, as well as boys' experiences of fat shaming; which, in many instances, we argue must be classified as forms of image-based abuse. Using our postdigital lens, we argue that the ways heteronormative, cis-gendered masculine and feminine embodiment are policed online shapes behaviour and norms in young people's everyday lives, including in and around school, and that better understanding and support around these issues is urgently needed.

Keywords: social media; TikTok; Instagram; gender; algorithms; masculinities; femininities; LGBTQ+



Citation: Ringrose, J.; Milne, B.; Horeck, T.; Mendes, K. Postdigital Bodies: Young People's Experiences of Algorithmic, Tech-Facilitated Body Shaming and Image-Based Sexual Abuse during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic in England. *Youth* **2024**, *4*, 1058–1075. <https://doi.org/10.3390/youth4030066>

Academic Editors: Julia Coffey and Diego Gomez-Baya

Received: 6 February 2024

Revised: 10 July 2024

Accepted: 19 July 2024

Published: 23 July 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

In this paper, we explore the contradictory and often ambiguous experiences of young people negotiating increased screen time during COVID-19 and upon their return to schools after national lockdowns. We look at their encounters with gendered bodies across platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. In Section 1 of the paper, we explore the content young people reported engaging with during their enforced time at home with their devices, such as what they were viewing, commenting upon, and sharing and on which platforms. Young people explained that gendered “thinspiration”, “getting ripped” and “sexualised” content was popular during the lockdown and intensified the pressures they felt to embody idealised femininity and masculinity. We also look at young people's contradictory engagements with ostensibly “body positivity” content on these platforms. While influencers' resistance of traditional body and beauty ideals (e.g., posting images of themselves when they are bloated) normalised different body types and appearances, this body positivity was often contextualised within a more pervasive culture of body negativity and shaming on these platforms—most commonly found in the comment sections on influencers' posts. Similarly, LGBTQ+ body and appearance

positivity content received hate and abuse online. We argue that social media platforms such as TikTok boost this controversial, toxic engagement in ways that ultimately amplify negativity and normalise the casual commenting upon bodies in identity-specific ways as we explore.

In Section 2 of the paper, we dig into young people's personal experiences of body shaming both online and in school, which we argue is closely interlinked with sexual shaming. We argue that body shaming is rooted in idealised metrics that quantify the self and others [1] exploring how these are (cis-)gendered, heterosexualised and racialised. We look at cis-gendered heterosexual boys' experiences of fat shaming, which is organised around particular idealised masculine embodiments. Next, we look at sexual shaming, exploring experiences of LGBTQ+ young people and cis-gendered girls, including appearance ranking and rating metrics. Finally, we explore how, when sexually explicit images are shared non-consensually (and therefore illegally), they are often circulated as means of sexually shaming and vilifying those who appear in the images, which we argue is a compounded form of technology-facilitated gender-based and sexual violence or image-based sexual harassment and abuse [2–4].

Throughout the paper, we work with the notion of a postdigital "algorithmized self" [5] to consider how social media algorithms feed users with recommended content, continuously adjusting to users' interests and likes, creating a feedback loop that can intensify both positive and negative experiences on these apps. We develop a platform-specific analysis to explore how the gendered dynamics of body shaming play out via specific features of apps, such as posts and comments [6]. We argue that young people's witnessing body shaming and slut shaming, including image-based harassment and abuse, is a postdigital, affective phenomenon [7]. By this, we mean that normalised toxicity and hate online shape how young people present themselves in online social media environments (e.g., posting images or videos of themselves) but also how they manage and experience their embodiment and relationships offline at home, in public and at school. Indeed, many young people deliberately abstained from creating content featuring themselves, which we understand as a coping and self-protection strategy. Sheth et al. [8] have argued that toxicity in social media environments needs to extend beyond how many platforms classify what is harmful as "threats, obscenity, insults, and identity-based hate", advocating the need to include "harassment . . . misinformation, radicalization and gender-based violence". We adopt this expanded notion of toxicity, exploring how young people navigate social media ecosystems. In our conclusion, we advocate for developing a better awareness of how this toxicity is being experienced, as well as better strategies for supporting youth in managing social media apps, affordances and features.

2. Contextualising the Postdigital Body: Body Shaming, Sexual Shaming and Social Media Research

Sociological and feminist research on body image has explored how the contextualised norms of appearance, embodiment and ideals of beauty are socially imposed [9–11]. Feminist media scholars also show how the 'male gaze', and sexual objectification of women's bodies historically stems from the commodification of female bodies for male consumption and pleasure [12]. Masculinity scholars have also demonstrated how certain embodied forms of masculinity become hegemonic in wider society [13]—and the role of media representations in maintaining the dominance of these embodied characteristics in everyday lifestyles [14,15]. Gendered appearance and body norms are also hierarchical across culture and context: certain racial norms (whiteness) and class norms (middle-class sensibility), as well as heterosexual norms, are constructed as the most desirable, although the specific manifestation depends on the group context. For example, heteronormativity creates hierarchies and technologies of feminine 'sexiness' [10] and masculine desirability, shaping gender performativity, construction of self and responses to others on social media feeds [16].

In all media contexts, there are modes of attracting “eyeballs” so that content will be seen and consumed. Legacy media platforms, such as TV and print, have used images of women’s bodies to sell products—as per the adage “sex sells” [12]. Social media, however, has introduced a new context for the representation of gendered bodies that is premised on self-produced content and “selfies” [17]. This context is referred to as a visibility and attention economy [18]. A large body of research has looked at the norms of feminine visibility on social media platforms and how these are performed and negotiated to create visual currency around qualities like thinness [19]. There are also studies on the economic elements of social media feeds capitalising on idealised femininity, including micro-celebrity and influencing via idealised self-productions [20,21]. Researchers have also begun exploring idealised masculinities online; for instance, the emergence of men who are fitness influencers and their promotion of masculine body characteristics, such as having a “six-pack” and narrow hips [22] or racialised masculinities [23].

There has been copious psychological research documenting the risks, including bodily dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, that are associated with young people’s exposure to and failure to conform to these gendered body image ideals online [24]. Psychological scholars tend to argue that social media puts young people, particularly girls, at risk. However, risk, media effects research is overly simplistic and hence problematic [25]. The relationship between young people and social media is not a one-way hypodermic needle of media effects rather, young people are navigating the content and the feeds that they receive through social media engagement in complex ways.

Young people are therefore, “producers”—both producers and users—of content [26]. Another way to conceptualise young people’s complex engagement with body norms on social media is to consider the specific platforms they use and their technological features and affordances [27]. TikTok’s recommender algorithm curates feed by users’ “likes” and viewing preferences, creating a feedback loop. For instance, if “thinspiration” content is liked and repeatedly watched, more and more of this content will be delivered on the users’ “For You” page [28]. This function has been noted to have created an “algorithmized self” [5]. Increased screen time during COVID-19 lockdowns created increased engagement with apps like TikTok [29,30] and its algorithmically controlled content [31]. Our interest is in how this specifically shapes users’ relationship to body image, body shaming and sexual shaming. We argue that the material manifestations of embodiment [32] of these postdigital algorithms need to be fully grappled with.

Beyond these digital and algorithmised representations of idealised bodies, the comments on these images are often illustrative of toxic societal policing of bodies and body shaming and hate. Fat shaming, for instance, was noted to have increased markedly during COVID-19, with concern over lockdown weight gain [33,34], which also intersected with childhood obesity discourses. According to Shah [35] the selfie, as a visible and public digital object, invites a commentary on the self, which frequently “mimic[s] the structures of gendered violence and abuse that are hidden in the discourses of digital cultural practices” (p. 88). While feminist media scholars have documented the presence of these toxic environments online, particularly against women and their bodies [36] there is a need to research how young people (including boys and LGBTQ+ youth) are engaging in this problematic and often discriminatory (e.g., racist, transphobic, homophobic) reaction online and to what extent it shapes their postdigital experiences and behaviours.

Finally, we consider how sexual shaming and body shaming become intertwined in young people’s comments (online and in school) on digital images of peers’ bodies—whether the images are consensually shared (e.g., bikini image posts on Instagram) or non-consensually shared (e.g., private nude images in a Snapchat group chat). While sociological research points to girls’ personal experiences of digital body shaming [37] less research has explored how these experiences are intertwined with sexual shaming. Sexual shaming has historically been understood as a form of “sexual bullying” in schools, which we question, arguing that we should think about sexual shaming as a form of discrimination and harassment based on gender biases, sexual double standards and

sexism [38,39]. Indeed, the concept of “slut shaming” has been usefully explored as a form of violence against women and girls in recent research [40]. We turn to these feminist framings of sexual violence, including technology-facilitated sexual violence [3] and image-based sexual harassment and abuse [2,41–43] to think about how to classify body shaming and sexual shaming of images as discriminatory practices, as forms of hate, but also harassment and abuse.

There has been very little research on body shaming or fat shaming amongst boys in general [44] and even less research on body shaming and masculinity online and sexual shaming of teenaged boys’ intimate images online [45,46]. There is likewise little research on body shaming and sexual shaming of LGBTQ+ young people in social media contexts [47]. In the next sections, we address these gaps.

Throughout, we explore the material becoming [48] of the postdigital body, which is the process of unfolding the embodied self online, and how body and sexual shaming practices shape these subjectivities. “Postdigital” is a concept that refers to how the online and offline are entangled, affective lived experiences—in other words, it helps us grapple with how experiences online are digitally mediated but with “real life” material embodiments [7]. Our examples consider how online and “offline-ness” [49] entangle, bleeding into one another, and in relation to the topic of this paper, how does hate in online environments profoundly remediate everyday experiences and behaviours of young people in relation to their own and others’ bodies.

3. Methodology

Our study aimed to explore the new and/or increased sexual and gendered risks and harms young people faced across a range of digital platforms during and after COVID-19 lockdowns. We administered an online survey to 551 young people of all genders (aged 13–18), which asked participants about their gendered patterns of online risk and harm during COVID-19 [30]. To expand on our survey findings, we used a combination of focus groups and individual interviews with youth, parents/carers, and school staff/safeguards from May to July 2021, immediately following three major UK lockdowns. We conducted 17 focus groups with 65 young people and individual follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of 29 young people in five comprehensive secondary schools across England. All focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in schools and were approximately one hour in length. The focus groups were arranged according to year group and self-identified gender. Most groups were made up of between 2 and 6 participants and were either all girls or all boys, with one mixed-gender group aligning to a pre-existing friendship group. The research followed strict ethical guidelines of gaining parental consent for youth and informed consent from youth during the interviews, which were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim; participants chose their own pseudonyms, and transcripts were anonymised.

The group Interviews began with participants filling in a short demographic survey. We opened the discussion with a statement about treating the conversations taking place in confidence as we would be discussing sensitive issues around social media content and its impact on them as young people. Next, they were asked to engage in a visual and arts-based methodology task of writing/drawing on a mobile phone template with their views on what they liked and did not like about social media. Based on creative and participatory arts based research with youth [50] this task was designed to enable young people to reflect upon their own social media use and to visually depict some of their experiences and opinions. The mobile phone/social media application templates provided a stimulus to think about what they see on screen (see Figure 1 below). The young people could then share what they had written if they chose, and it provided stimulus to further discussion.

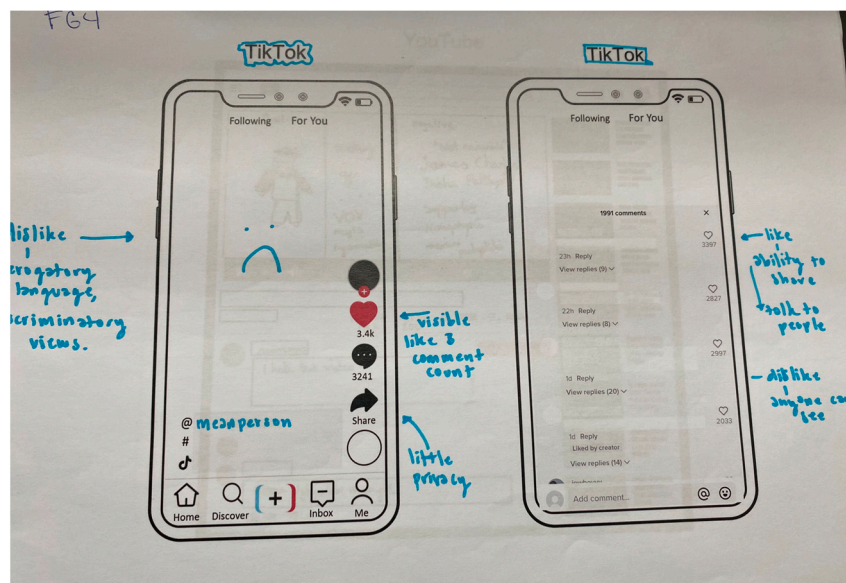


Figure 1. Year 9 boy: likes and dislikes on TikTok template.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Increased Engagement with Algorithmic Body Feeds

In this first section, we explore young people's increasing and repetitive engagement with algorithmised body image and beauty ideals through platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

We found that young people commonly engaged with platforms that rely on algorithms to curate digital content (i.e., images, videos, reels, memes, etc.) to match user preferences. In our survey, 83.4% of respondents were on Instagram and 64.7% were on TikTok. These statistics are higher than those of OfCom (2023), who found in their survey with social media users aged 8–17 that 62% of respondents were on TikTok and 47% were on Instagram. This difference could be explained by the context of COVID-19, as 96.2% of teens responded in our survey that they spent more time online during COVID-19; 65.8% increased their time on TikTok, and 52.8% increased their time on Instagram.

Our qualitative research mirrored these findings, as most participants described how their time spent on these algorithm-based digital platforms increased during lockdown. For example, a Year 12 boy stated that his screen time increased from four to six hours on TikTok because he had “nothing else to do”. The young people's drawings featured their likes and dislikes of these platforms, with many drawings depicting issues with online images, including selfies and influencers' feeds. Young people frequently commented that they most disliked “hateful comments” about people's bodies on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In the example from Figure 1 the young person dislikes “derogatory language” and “discriminatory views”, as well as “comment count” and “lack of privacy”.

In their engagement with algorithm-generated feeds, participants frequently described coming across images and videos depicting idealised feminine body types and beauty standards, such as images of influencers and celebrities in their “For You” pages. For example, a Year 9 boy stated that celebrities with plastic surgery “set the beauty standards a lot higher than what it should be”. Participants also described consuming social media content surrounding fitness and thinness regimes that circulated particularly during COVID-19 lockdowns. One Year 9 girl described seeing on TikTok and Instagram “loads of videos about people working out everyday” and promoting “how to get your glow up over lockdown”. The young people discussed how the algorithm meant they could not control the content they would see:

Lyla: During lockdown. . . you'd see these videos that's like, “Oh, my new fitness plan has just been released, go and follow it”, and then you'd look at the comments and everyone's

doing it and then sometimes you'd send it to your group chat and be like, "Are any of you doing this? I know some of my friends, they went out in the morning before class at 6 am and did runs", meanwhile I was just in bed and I was like, "Right".

Liz: TikTok for instance, if there's a video you could try and avoid all of that but you can't control what comes up next. You could be trying to totally avoid it and just focus on yourself but if you see a video come up you can't help but see it because you can't say no before knowing it was there. You can't help what comes up on your view page so sometimes you'll see stuff that you're like, "Oh, I wish I didn't actually see that online because that's just made me feel worse".

There is a sense of ambiguity and contradiction at play; Liz notes feeling out of control and unable to *avoid* content like the fitness videos, which is a marked shift from the idea of young people seeking out content; instead, they are now navigating an algorithmically controlled feed which includes regularly viewing videos that simply "come up" and which they did not wish to see or which made them "feel worse". There is also an interaction between what they see on TikTok and their group chats, as noted by Lyla, which leads to comparison amongst themselves in their peer groups.

The other girls in this discussion added that this made them feel "demotivated" and "guilty for not pushing [themselves]". Participants described how seeing "fitness people and models" on social media "gives you more insecurities" because "you don't feel like you match the standard" (Year 9 girls).

Another Year 9 girl specifically critiques TikTok's algorithm for promoting eating disorder content:

Elsie: It's an algorithm. Once you like one of the videos, you're going to get two more. And once you like those videos, you're going to get four more, and it just doubles. I mainly see positive videos, but I've been on some other friends' accounts and TikTok, say, if you had an eating disorder, it would post you a lot of eating disorder content. And not positive. Negative. It's a rather negative app.

Here again, we see the sense of repetition and an increase in content fed through the liking function and the algorithm cultivating a user-tailored feed based on user engagement/interest [28], creating what researchers have called a short video "echo chamber" [51]. Young people are aware of this function and are offering their appraisal of it.

To further understand the prevalence of body shaming on TikTok, it is important to look at the figures regarding who uses the app. Women dominate the TikTok platform both as users and creators, representing 57% and 53.79%, respectively, with 18–24-year-old women being the largest user group at 23.8% and the platform estimated to reach 843 million people worldwide [52] hence, it is unsurprising that the body and beauty ideals promoted on the platform are highly gendered and (hetero)sexualised and were viewed as negatively impacting cis-gendered heterosexual girls in particular. According to one Year 9 boy:

Jonny: Girls are more affected, because they think they need to look like that, otherwise they're not good enough. . . it starts at a younger age with girls . . . I don't think I've ever really heard a girl say, "I love how I look. I'm confident in my own body".

Despite young people acknowledging the prevalence of filtering and editing of images made possible on the apps they were using, and many images of celebrities or 'big creators' being 'fake' as they put it, they still noted that this was having a negative impact, particularly on girls. It is also important to note how sexualised much of this content was; as one year 9 girl told us, influencers who wear "lots of makeup" and look like "sex dolls" determine "what a girl should be". Whereas fitness content came through via algorithmised feeds, girls also described how boys actively circulated sexualised images of girls' and women's bodies on their own social media profiles (e.g., reposting on "Stories"). A Year 9 girl described how "a lot of boys" in her year were reposting Kylie Jenner's bikini pictures on their story and calling her "fit". In addition to these representations of idealised

feminine thinness or fitness, some girls described how boys frequently repost and save images as wallpapers of girls in lingerie from Instagram and TikTok. Rachel described the trend of “girls posting their bodies” on social media to promote their OnlyFans accounts, which is a “website where you pay to see girls’ pictures”. (As noted on *Internet Matters*, ‘OnlyFans is an online platform and app created in 2016. With it, people can pay for content (photos, videos and live streams) via a monthly membership. Content is mainly created by YouTubers, fitness trainers, models, content creators and public figures in order to monetise their profession. It is also popular with adult content creators’ [53]. This evidences how the trend of “solopreneurs” or “sexpreneurs” [54] on OnlyFans has crossed over into the algorithmised feeds of young people. Rachel describes this onslaught of sexual images in social media feeds: “I think it’s mainly for 18-plus, but because they [OnlyFans influencers] put it everywhere, younger people are able to see it a lot more”.

The constant circulation of celebrities’ and influencers’ feminine bodies among their male peers created what Rachel called “really, really high beauty standards”, whereby the boys “expect you to be like them”. She also described how boys’ consumption of pornographic images of women on their social media feeds creates boys’ expectation for “girls [her age] to do the same thing”.

Boys also discussed viewing content that features masculine ideals of muscularity and thinness, creating body image pressures and insecurities. As one Year 10 boy explained, people were posting videos on TikTok during COVID-19 about “spending six months getting a ripped summer body” and how it “made you more self-conscious”. Another boy describes the idealisation of “skinny white boys” and not being able to fit into this norm. A culturally specific and classed stereotype of masculinity emerged in some regions of the study, where young people also talked about the stereotype of “big hard road men” with skinny track pants and bomber jacket silhouettes that boys would supposedly try to emulate. In addition, boys described how girls learn to idealise boys with “chiselled jawline[s]” and “nice back or hands” from the images they see of “models, celebrities, footballers” online. The boys felt frustrated that they “can’t fit into [the] category” of desirable heteronormative masculinity they believe girls want. These masculine body ideals construct norms of idealised heterosexual and cis-gendered masculinity, and those not fitting these bodily ideals faced critique and shame, as we discuss further in the paper.

4.2. *The Perils of ‘Body Positivity’: Witnessing Hateful Comments and Backlash on Viral Posts*

Many young people also commented upon “body positivity” trends on social media, which they felt could sometimes be helpful in countering idealised and unrealistic beauty ideals. For example, a girl in Year 9 describes how body-based insecurities were “normalised” on social media. She gives an example:

Sam: I remember one day I was feeling really bad and then I saw this picture and was like, “Bloating is normal”. I was like, “Oh, it’s not just me. Everyone does it”. It was kind of normalised and it makes you feel better.

Other girls—and some boys—confirmed that these body positivity posts made them feel better and described seeking out accounts featuring this content. Dom (Year 10 boy), who spoke at length about the bullying he received around his weight, described liking TikTok influencers who are “larger than someone else and they still show off their body”. These sentiments show how imperatives within a “confidence culture” [55] to “love your body” are not just limited to girls and women but can also apply to boys. At the same time, young people were sceptical of body positivity discourses as one girl described how this positivity was often met with negativity: “If someone’s fat and wearing a bikini they get made fun of because they’re fat and you shouldn’t be in a bikini”. Another year 11 girl specifically critiqued policing of the feminine embodiment when discussing how body positivity images of women with “hairy armpits and hairy legs” would often receive negative comments such as “Eew, that’s for men not women, go shave”. Dom stated that body-positive influencers receive hateful comments on their videos, such as, “Oh, go do some exercise” or “Go on a treadmill”. Dom depicted the contrast between the influencers’

positivity about their body 'I like the way I look' and the negativity that they receive in his drawings below such as 'why ur fat', 'ew your ugly'; 'go do some exercise' (Figure 2).

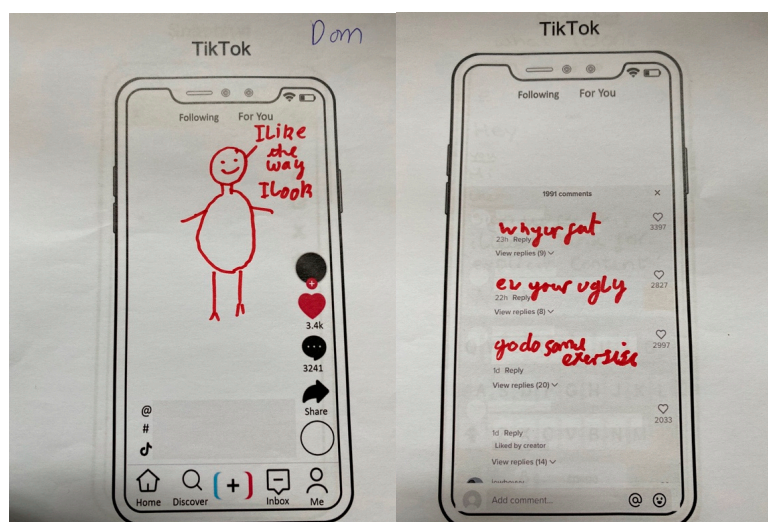


Figure 2. Year 10 boy: likes and dislikes on TikTok template.

Similarly, a Year 9 participant stated: "I see a lot of body shaming on TikTok. It's mainly girls that are targeted, I think. Say for example if a woman posted herself either doing a TikTok dance or something, you would maybe go in the comments and you would see horrible, horrible comments, just body shaming and making someone feel horrendous about themselves".

The policing of women's bodies often went beyond the enforcement of idealised feminine thinness, as young people described instances where women influencers would experience slut-shaming in the comments on their posts. A group of Year 12 girls described this phenomenon on TikTok:

Tiffany: You'll get girls who have big boobs, basically, and their whole comments are like, 'Oh yeah, she's got her boobs out', 'Someone's down on followers', all that sort of thing.

Int: Will these be people you know who are posting these videos or the comments?

Solange: I guess mainly famous people, I think, the famous people are in the videos, or famous TikTok people, and then just normal random people commenting on it.

This quote shows the entanglement of body shaming and sexual shaming common on celebrity social media content, which normalises these practices [56].

Body negativity and hateful comments about appearance also intersected with LGBTQ+ discrimination and racism. For example, a Year 10 boy stated: "I have loads of people who I love watching videos of on TikTok, but they get put down because they're part of the LGBTQ+ or they're a different colour. And that's just one of the things I like, and also dislike, about TikTok". Another Year 10 boy stated similarly: "I dislike some of the hateful language used in the comments towards like different race and LGBTQ+ on stuff like TikTok and Instagram". He later explains that these comments were on videos that "went viral". We see heightened youth awareness or digital literacy here regarding the understanding of the rapid spread of videos with the number of comments driving the spread of content virally, in this case, hateful, toxic content.

In addition, participants described how LGBTQ+ influencers were also the targets of hate if their appearance did not align with the heteronormative gender binary. For example, Elizabeth (Year 9) stated: "I've seen videos on TikTok, I think, of a boy, and there was one where he had make-up on and was wearing a dress. And there were a lot of supportive comments, which were really nice, and then there were some just saying, like, I think there was someone saying, like, is this your coming out?" and "this isn't really a man". So, while

images and videos of influencers represented and celebrated LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming bodies were increasingly visible online, backlash and discriminatory responses to these images and to young people openly identifying with such content reinforced the pressure on young people to align with the established norms of a heteronormative gender binary.

While these experiences were not targeted at the young people directly, simply *witnessing* the play of hatred in commenting and interactions on viral posts that appeared in their algorithmised feed had an impact on young people's participation online. This is a postdigital dynamic where the norms created in the online space shape behavioural responses, including generating anxiety around making personal posts for fear of reactions and negativity. This is evident in the image below, where what is 'bad' about Instagram is noted as "hate comments" on posts, connected to "feeling self-conscious about other posts" (see Figure 3).

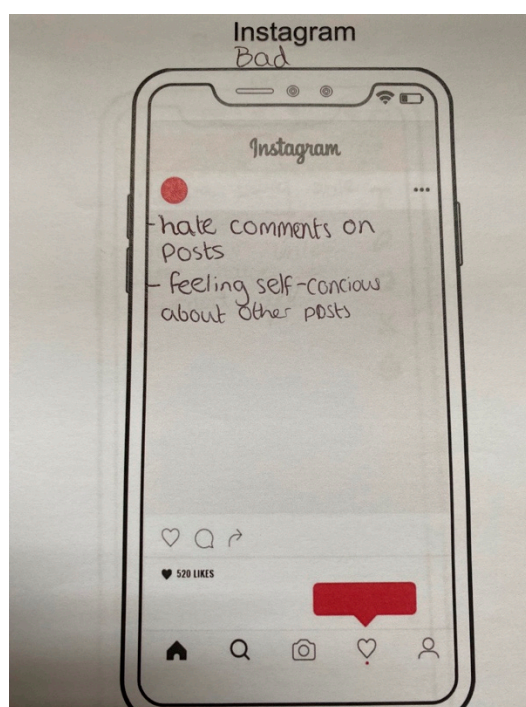


Figure 3. Year 10 girl: dislikes on Instagram template.

Importantly, hateful and discriminatory or toxic content is not arbitrary or random but generated through attention economy processes that garner visibility for controversial and remarked-upon content [8]. Higher comment volumes create more impressions on TikTok and Instagram, signalling to the algorithm that "many people are interested in the comments so the videos will be directed into more people's feeds and 'For You' page". Our findings also indicate that young people felt trapped in algorithmic TikTok loops, especially during lockdown.

In the next sections, we explore how these viewing practices and norms have impacted young people's direct experiences of body shaming, discussing how their online experiences intersect with their offline experiences in complex ways. We suggest that norms they have *witnessed* through their social media feeds are also directly shaping their own use and engagement on these platforms and the way their own and their peer's bodies are policed, regulated, shamed—and sometimes abused—online.

4.3. Experiencing Postdigital Body Shaming

In addition to witnessing algorithmised appearance ideals and body shaming on influencers' viral posts and comments from unknown users, young people commonly

described instances where they or their peers were directly targeted by body shaming. Their personal experiences of body shaming occurred in diverse and dynamic ways depending on the platform and its respective features. In our survey, 18.8% of respondents experienced body shaming or mean comments online about the way they look since COVID-19 began. Of those respondents who experienced this shaming, 54.6% said that body shaming had increased during the pandemic, and 65.9% said that they were upset by the experience. A total of 45.1% of respondents had increased their time on Snapchat, and it was the most common platform on which body shaming occurred (35.3%), followed by “Other” (23.5%) and Instagram (11.7%). A total of 31.3% increased their time on WhatsApp, and messaging apps were also a major site for hateful messages. In the following sections, we break these experiences down according to gender and sexual identity categories.

4.3.1. Hegemonic Cis-Gendered Heterosexual Masculinities, Gender Binaries and Policing Non-Normative Bodies

While our survey found that only 13% of boys reported experiences of body shaming, our qualitative research clearly demonstrated that although boys may not discuss or admit it as readily as girls, they were experiencing shaming messages in group chats and direct messages on Snapchat and Instagram as a form of “banter”, and this was mostly fat shaming. Paul (School 1, Year 11) described receiving routine messages in group chats and direct messages about his weight: “It wouldn’t be like cyberbullying, it wouldn’t be like every day you’d get a text from someone saying, ‘You’re fat’, it’d just be like little comments”. This is significant in that he directly says that these episodes are not cyberbullying because they are not targeted and repetitive enough; they are just “little comments”, indicating the normalisation of this type of toxic and abusive behaviour and the assumption that boys should just accept this. Adrian described how he would often receive comments from his friends: “Aw, shut up ‘Fatty’”. Adrian claimed: “it wasn’t nice, because these people you would consider to be your friends”, but that he decided to “do something about it” and lose weight in response. Here, changing one’s appearance and losing weight was deemed to be easier than challenging cruel or offensive comments.

Similarly, in a Year 10 focus group, two of the three boys involved described being “fat-shamed” both offline and online when they were younger. One boy described how he “used to be very big”, and he was called “obese” by his peers, which he found “embarrassing” and drove him to lose weight. The other boy described being called “double-chin” and being sent death threats online. He added that when he was younger (Year 6), the bullies “think it’s a funny joke, but they don’t realise the person it’s going to doesn’t feel like it’s a joke, they’re being put down and not feeling like they’re with everybody else”. Again, as above, this boy explained that this harassment “becomes more a jokey banter when you get older” where “it’s not necessarily bullying anymore . . . it’s just people taking a joke”. We can clearly see the ways in which “banter” is positioned as a joke so the body shaming common in cis-gendered homosocial masculinity cultures is diminished in importance and used to normalise harm that boys have to ‘take’ or accept [57].

The heteronormative standards surrounding hegemonic cis-gendered heterosexual masculinities are constructed in relation to “others” who are associated with femininity or gayness [58]. Our survey looked at the categories of Gender Sexuality Diversity (GSD) [59] which refers the range of “sexual and gender minority” identities now expressed by young people [60]. Inter/national research has consistently highlighted the marginalisation of GSD subjectivities at school, including the verbal and physical bias-based harassment experienced by GSD young people or young people perceived to be gender non-conforming [59]. The acronym SAGD is also used and refers to “Sexuality and Gender Diverse” young people [61]: “SAGD acronym, is inclusive of diverse sexual attraction, behaviour and identity and gender identity and expression (including young people who may identify as LGBTQA+)”.

We found 28.3% of sexual minorities experienced body shaming. This body shaming was often combined with discriminatory rhetoric. For example, one Year 11 girl described

her experience of having her group chat with her friends hacked by boys in her year who started calling her an “emo fag” and “fat”. Likewise, several gay, bisexual and non-binary young people told us of the challenges of representing themselves online because of fears over body and appearance shaming.

Our survey also asked about experiences of sexual shaming (rumours, gossip and/or lies spread about their sexual behaviours, being called a “slut” or “player”). We found that 20.5% of cis-gendered girls, 19.1% of gender minorities and 24.2% of sexual minorities experienced sexual shaming compared to only 4.1% of cis-gendered boys. So, girls and gender minorities were *five times* more likely to be sexually shamed than cis-gendered boys, while sexual minorities are nearly *six times* more likely. Also of note, of those who experienced sexual shaming, 38.6% said it increased during COVID-19.

Related to sexual shaming of sexual minority youth, a boy who identified as bisexual described the pressures to not appear “flamboyant” online. In this case, he described how his close male friends would often vocalise at school that LGBTQ+ influencers were “shoving their sexuality down each other’s throats”, and this criticism was extended to some openly gay students at school. When questioned about what shoving sexuality down others’ throats meant, they said it was:

“plastering it everywhere. . .wearing pride flags 24/7, purposely heightening your voice, your actions and your movements and your words are overexaggerated massively”.

Normative masculinity codes of embodiment are carefully policed so that boys who act “flamboyantly” are marked as gay. Although this participant identified as bisexual, he said that because of these hateful attitudes, he would never come out at school or post anything online that displayed his sexuality.

Finally, 22.7% of gender minorities experienced body shaming. Gender-diverse, non-binary and transgender youth are especially vulnerable to criticism and shame that specifically targets their bodies and appearance [62]. A year 10 non-binary gender young person described experiences of in-person harassment in school where their gender non-conformity compounded with other intersectional elements, including racism and ableism:

I’ve had quite racist comments, I’ve had body-shaming comments. And because I’m disabled, I get a lot of comments about that as well. But that’s kind of why I’m scared to post online, because I’m scared people will start coming on there and saying things as well.

In this example, the young person’s experience of discrimination in school prevented them from posting anything online to protect themselves from experiencing the same form of discrimination online. Here we can once again see how intersecting vulnerabilities and marginalised subject positions converge for gender and sexuality-diverse young people who become scared to make online posts in case young people at school will see it, and it will further intensify harassment.

4.3.2. Risky Bodies: Fit or Shit Ratings, Slut Shaming and Image-Based Sexual Abuse

According to our survey, 23.6% of girls experienced body shaming. A specific form of body shaming that strongly relates to social media app affordances, such as “like” economies, were experiences of being “rated”, a quantification of the self through metrics of attractiveness. In our survey, 30.2% of sexual minorities, 23.8% of girls and 19% of gender minorities compared to only 9.7% of boys experienced being rated. The most common platforms that this rating occurred on were Instagram (31.6%), Snapchat, (26.3%) and WhatsApp (15.8%). One participant explained how Instagram accounts would pop up that took images from other accounts, and students would:

Amanda: comment what they find attractive about them and not attractive.

Jane: Excuse my language but they would say ‘fit or shit’, and if you’re fit they will rate how good you are, if you’re shit then no.

Amanda: Yeah. A score out of 10

The participant recounts a “fit or shit” rating system and being scored out of 10. Others explained how images would be taken (copied or screenshotted) without permission from students’ Instagram accounts and posted onto another student’s Instagram account “without your will” and subject to the rating:

Molly: there was an account going round, and my best friend was put on there. . . it was saying how ugly she was.

Sonia: The caption would be “rate this person out of 10, 1 being ugly and 10 being amazing”, and then the people would comment. . . It would start off with rating, and then it would go onto mean comments. It’s happened to people in this school.

Young people’s images are screenshotted without their consent and reposted onto another Instagram account in order for them to be rated and ranked “ugly or amazing”. They also explained that these are called “mug accounts”, where pictures of young people “looking a bit awful” and/or were unaware of being photographed are posted and subject to rating and rankings. The images are either taken at school without consent and posted or copied without consent from young people’s social media apps (which are often private, so the abuser is tapping into a trusted “friend” category) and then shared with others non-consensually in order to shame and abuse. These experiences fall into a grey area since they are not perhaps categorised as sexually explicit images and therefore illegal, but they are images taken or shared non-consensually and then subject to hateful comments and violate privacy rights. These experiences are also happening from known individuals in the school environment, and they directly shape young people’s experiences in and around the school in their real and material interactions and relationships. At present, we do not have categories beyond cyberbullying to describe these practices, but we argue that they are indeed forms of image-based abuse [41].

Body shaming and rating were often closely interlinked with experiences of sexual shaming, which 20.5% of girls had experienced. The way online posts are then discussed and dissected at school became clear when a Year 9 girl, Liz, explained that people would often pore over peers’ Instagram posts in school, particularly, saying “something bad” or “oh my god” when someone posts a picture that is “risky” such as wearing a bikini. Images of bodies that show skin (e.g., a bikini) are deemed “risky” because they can become subjects of harassing discussions at school. The link with sexual shaming became even clearer in a discussion with the year 11 girls, one of whom, Thea, explained how one of her friends was targeted in science class:

Thea: I think it was two lessons ago in science when someone was like her style and dressing is weird, she looks weird, it’s not nice. She should get some proper clothes, she’s dressed like a slut. She’s not covering herself, she’s going to get raped if she keeps getting it on. Your clothes don’t determine if you’re going to get raped or not. I think that teachers or people just around the world that teach sex education could be any person really to keep it in their pants, you shouldn’t rape someone based on what they’re wearing. I don’t think you should be slut shamed either. Loads of comments like she has her arse out for England. What’s that got to do with you, if she wants to have it out let her have it out, it’s not your problem is it? She’s not affecting you, is she?

Int: Who was making these comments in your science class?

Lorri: Mainly boys at our school. Girls can say it too. Girls are no better than boys to be honest. But you can get these girls who slut shame other girls, and these boys who agree. I think the only reason girls do it in front of boys is because they want to look cool. . . [in front of] their boyfriends, sneaky links. . . whatever. . .

In this example, image-based slut shaming becomes the topic of discussion in the science class leading to sexually harassing comments like “she’s going to get raped”. We can also see the girls critiquing this logic of victim blaming and slut shaming and challenging rape myths like girls are asking for sexual violence because of their clothes; they also call for teaching boys to “keep it in their pants”. They also explain how girls slut shame other

girls to “look cool” in front of boys they like (their boyfriends or “sneaky links”- boys that girls are intimate with even if their relationship is not official). Thea and Lorri are actually critiquing the sexual double standards within the heterosexual economy that drive aggression, competition and shaming between girls.

Girls also experienced private harassment and body shaming about online posts, typically in direct messages. For example, one girl described how her friend received a Snapchat message from a boy saying: “you’ve got a flat arse”. Another Year 10 girl describes how girls are labelled as “pruders” when they “dress too modestly” and “sluts” if they dress “too revealing”, in relation to an episode where a boy slut-shamed her in a direct message on Instagram after she posted a photo of herself in a summer dress.

Daphne: I’ve been slut shamed online and what I was wearing wasn’t even revealing, it was just a little summer dress type thing. And I deleted the post because I didn’t want that sort of attention that I was getting. . . . It was on Instagram and it was someone who I used to be friends with [who] messaged me . . . this really horrible comment that I don’t really want to repeat. And it made me feel awful and I blocked the person, I deleted the post because it just made me feel so awful. And it really sucked because I considered them a good friend and then we sort of like, over the months we just stopped talking to each other. . .

Daphne describes the intense care needed to manage online body posts around what to reveal in order to manage an age-old continuum of prude vs. slut. It is also significant that the boys’ sexual shaming comments are so “horrible” she cannot repeat them; they are experienced as “awful”, and we suggest these should be characterised as a form of online harassment but with tangible and lasting offline postdigital impacts.

Girls were conversely idealised and deemed desirable if they were conservative in their social media presence. According to Christine (Year 12, School 3), boys like girls who have “barely any Instagram followers”, “haven’t got many tagged photos”, and “don’t post pictures of their body”. Moreover, Christine goes on to explain how girls’ attractiveness (to boys) is premised on appearing “conservative”, “keep[ing] to themselves”, “cover[ing] up”, and “not bei[ng] for anyone else except for the boy that they’re with”. Cis-gendered, heterosexual girls were rewarded by boys for sexual purity and modesty (through limited social media participation), which aligns with hegemonic ideals of masculine control over women and girls and homosocial competition with other men (Connell, 1995 [13]).

Finally, the entanglement of girls’ bodies and sexual shaming experiences was particularly evidenced in our discussions surrounding sexual image sharing, referred to as nudes or semi-nudes. As noted in the global research literature on sexting, sexual double standards and slut shaming is pervasive in image exchange [63–65]. In our research, girls who were “exposed” for sending nudes were then publicly sexually shamed. Rosie (Year 10, School 3) described how boys were learning from other boys and men online that girls are “slags” and “whores” for sending nudes. Often, the way the images came to public attention at the school was through the non-consensual sharing of the nude on phones in class. A year 12 girls focus group (School 3) describes this phenomenon:

Michelle: I remember in year nine art a certain boy showing me regularly girls’ nudes that he’d got. He’d be like, ‘Look how saggy her tits are’, and stuff like that, and it’s all like a massive joke. But then when he was begging for it, I’m sure it wasn’t funny.

Rosie: But then you think of the poor girl who’s then getting rinsed behind her back for her literal underage naked body. How fucked up is that?

This quote illustrates the pressure that girls experience to send nude images in the first place (“he was begging for it”) and the consequent body shaming (“saggy tits”) they are subjected to once they comply. As emphasised by Rosie, this context of body shaming has the potential to be particularly damaging because it involves criticising and mocking (“rinsing”) the most intimate parts of a girl’s body (publicly at school with the peer group) during a developmental time in their lives when they are seeking body image reinforcement and developing their sexual self-esteem (Burkett, 2015 [63]; Bianchi et al.,

2017 [64]). In this episode, slut-shaming and body-shaming collide in response to what is an underage, therefore technically illegal, nude image of a girl's body. No longer simply seen as non-consensual sexting or nebulous child exploitation, researchers have begun to clearly identify how such experiences are actually forms of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) [41] and image-based sexual harassment [43].

Finally, although only 4% of boys reported sexual shaming, they discussed episodes where cis-gendered boys experienced body shaming combined with sexual shaming in response to non-consensually shared images. For example, a Year 11 boy stated:

Alex: This guy sent the nudes to a girl, and the girl had obviously somehow obtained that picture and saved it to her phone, and then that got sent round most of the girls really, and he got shamed for having a small penis.

The sexual shaming in this episode happens very differently than for girls. The boy was not slut shamed for sending the image itself, rather the focus was on the penis size, which illustrates the enforcement of the sexualised masculine ideal for cis-boys and men to have large penises, which has been previously discussed in research on boys' experiences of image-based sexual abuse [45,46]. We also encountered several instances across two schools where LGBTQ+ boys' nude images were shared non-consensually. In these cases, body shaming converged with homophobia. A year 10 boy discussed how an instance of non-consensual sharing of the "gay guys' dick" involved a combination of "homophobic shaming" and "body shaming" around penis size, showing the complex ways LGBTQ+ discrimination, body shaming and sexual shaming intersect in image-based abuse experienced by gender and sexuality diverse youth.

5. Conclusions

Our study confirms what was widely acknowledged by mainstream media during COVID-19: that there was a dramatic increase in screen time. We examined how algorithmised body image ideals were fed to young people through platforms like Instagram and TikTok that were increasingly present in their lives during lockdown conditions, with TikTok, in particular, becoming one of the "most frequently downloaded and used technologies of the pandemic" [31]. We explored young people's feelings of contradiction and ambiguity in their relationship to apps like TikTok and the algorithmic feed, which they both enjoyed but meant they were unable to avoid some of the content, creating a sense of lack of control. We found that young people feel unsettled by how algorithms work and experience their engagement with algorithmic content as a set of contradictory tensions where they feel responsible (at fault) for viewing algorithmically mediated content, some of which is not of their own direct choosing. The young people feel that how the algorithm actually works is ambiguous or unclear, yet they have a sense of complicity in the process by participating in their viewing, which can create a sense of contradictory feelings and a sense of ambivalence—they are caught in a set of tensions regarding algorithmic content.

In particular, we looked at how young people negotiated idealised norms of cis-gendered heterosexual femininity and masculinity within their TikTok and Instagram feeds, finding these norms highly constraining. Even what is ostensibly body positivity content, which young people followed and appreciated, was subject to backlash and hate, contributing to the tensions and contradictions in their engagement with the platforms. For instance, we found that the commenting functions created the most opportunity for unmoderated hate through algorithmic boosting of posts with high comments, which meant toxicity spread rapidly. This normalisation of body-based hate surrounding LGBTQ+ and body positivity content has serious impacts on young people: it reinforces normative ideals, which young people must then navigate, often unsupported.

Next, we also looked at young people's direct experiences of body shaming and sexual shaming, which were intimately interconnected in a heterosexualised economy of value. We explored how fat shaming was normalised as harmless "banter" by boys in alignment with dominant masculinity norms, which made it very difficult for them to challenge. We also looked at the heterosexualised rules of engagement: LGBTQ+ youth were sexually

shamed for their perceived flamboyance, whereas cis-gendered heterosexual girls' images were scrutinised via rating and ranking systems that reproduced age-old sexual double standards, making their bodies risky and subject to slut shaming harassment and abuse. Finally, we looked at incidents in which non-consensually shared sexual images (nudes) were used for purposes of body and sexual shaming, considering the compounded harms in these experiences, which we positioned as forms of image-based harassment and abuse. We looked at all these as examples of postdigital peer relationship cultures where what happens online travels offline, shaping material embodiments [11] in and around school.

We conclude by outlining some shifts that are needed to support and address youth body and sexual shaming and the gender and sexual power dynamics, heteronormative and gender binary logics that are used to police and regulate young people's masculinities and femininities. Young people are aware of the challenges with social media networks, platforms and apps, as we have shown, but their own solutions are not to ban phones or take draconian measures that would reduce the important fun and sociable elements of mobile media but rather to find better support strategies. Young people suggested they wanted to see better digital sex education, more support for victims and strategies to "educate the harasser", as well as better responses from both schools and social media companies.

Following their lead, we think that we need new tactics for managing algorithmic habits and programming [66]. We need to go further than "digital detox" recommendations since unplugging does not remove the imprints of "perfection" that are being internalised via social media [67]. What is needed is a better understanding of how the platforms work, how they are being used and how some of these elements can be responded to. For example, the TikTok "For You" page is a recommender algorithm; understanding the economic context of these platforms and basic awareness of how toxicity can generate more impressions and visibility for hateful feeds could be incredibly helpful for young people to discuss at school.

Another goal of this paper was to reframe many forms of body hate and shaming as image-based (sexual) harassment and abuse (IBSHA) [43]. We urge the importance of recognising and addressing forms of non-consensual dynamics online, as well as acknowledging the relationship between body shaming, sexual shaming, and image-based harassment and abuse. There is also a need to increase digital literacy and awareness of gender and sexual power and dominance in online contexts and how these bleed into school settings through postdigital dynamics. In other words, what happens online does not stay online and needs to be taken seriously. Many incidents we explored are not simply "banter", as young people position them, nor are they reducible to "bullying" as school-based policy and practice may identify them with the aim of minimising them. When we situate these experiences into a safeguarding framework, we can see that some may be legal but are nevertheless harmful, while others are illegal, yet many young people are not aware of their rights or how to respond.

Recognising the gendered/sexual complexities of these encounters, taking them seriously and responding to these practices as harmful, including understanding when they are illegal, would better support young people in what are often devastating and life-altering practices of shaming, hate and discrimination, harassment, and abuse. We advise that school-based resources and programming should incorporate sensitive and relevant resources for understanding and managing the impacts of popular platforms like TikTok in order to better manage how these shape peer dynamics in and around schools and how they shape young people's postdigital lives [68]. Of course, the tech platforms and apps themselves also need to take responsibility for safety concerns and image-based harassment and abuse. Creating better tools for child-friendly engagement, including the "family tools" recently introduced by Instagram to encourage family engagement with the platform to better understand security and privacy on the app, are important improvements. Overall, networked or postdigital teens are savvy social media producers, but they need support from adults, parents, schools and tech companies in managing toxic norms of embodi-

ment in a market economy designed to create a lack and perpetual desire for impossible bodily ideals.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.R.; Methodology, J.R. and K.M.; software, B.M.; formal analysis, J.R., B.M., T.H. and K.M.; investigation, J.R., B.M., T.H. and K.M.; data curation, B.M.; writing—original draft preparation, J.R. and B.M.; writing—review and editing, J.R., B.M. and T.H.; visualization, J.R.; supervision, J.R.; project administration, K.M. and B.M.; funding acquisition, K.M., J.R. and T.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: Financial support for the conduct of this research was provided by the following research grant: Combatting gendered, sexual risks and harms online during COVID-19: Developing resources for young people, parents and schools. UKRI COVID-19 Rapid Response Calls. Reference AHRC AH/W000423/1.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This research involves human participants and ethical approval was attained by the University of Leicester Media, Communication and Sociology Research Ethics Committee. (approval code: 29116-km350-ss/mc:media&communication; approval date: 3 March 2021).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was collected from all participants; informed consent from parents was collected for all participants under 16 years of age.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in the study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

References

- Lupton, D. *The Quantified Self*; Wiley: London, UK, 2016.
- McGlynn, C.; Rackley, E. Image-based sexual abuse. *Oxf. J. Leg. Stud.* **2017**, *37*, 534–561. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Powell, A.; Henry, N. Sexual Violence in the Digital Age. *Soc. Leg. Stud.* **2016**, *25*, 397–418. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Ringrose, J.; Milne, B.; Mishna, F.; Regehr, K.; Slane, A. Young people's experiences of image-based sexual harassment and abuse in England and Canada: Toward a feminist framing of technologically facilitated sexual violence. *Women's Stud. Int. Forum* **2022**, *93*, 102615. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bhandari, A.; Bimo, S. Tiktok and the 'algorithmized self': A new model of online interaction. *AoIR Sel. Pap. Internet Res.* **2020**, *2020*, 11172. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bucher, T.; Helmond, A. The Affordances of Social Media Platforms. In *The Sage Handbook of Social Media*; Burgess, J., Marwick, A., Poell, T., Eds.; SAGE Publications: London, UK, 2017; pp. 233–253.
- Evans, A.; Ringrose, J. More-than-human, more-than-digital: Postdigital intimacies as a theoretical framework for intimate therapeutics and technology-facilitated sexual violence. In *Social Media and Society*; SAGE Publications: London, UK, 2024.
- Sheth, A.; Shalin, V.L.; Kursuncu, U. Defining and detecting toxicity on social media: Context and knowledge are key. *Neurocomputing* **2022**, *490*, 312–318. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bartky, S.L. Skin deep: Femininity as a disciplinary regime. In *Daring to Be Good: Essays in Feminist Ethico-Politics*; Bar On, B.-A., Ferguson, A., Eds.; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 1998.
- Evans, A.; Riley, S. Technologies of Sexiness: Sex, identity, and Consumer Culture. In *Sexuality, Identity, and Society*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2015.
- Coffey, J. Creating distance from body issues: Exploring new materialist feminist possibilities for renegotiating gendered embodiment. *Leis. Sci.* **2019**, *41*, 72–90. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Rosalind, G. *Gender and the Media*; Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, 2007.
- Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1995.
- Ricciardelli, R.; Clow, K.A.; White, P. Investigating Hegemonic Masculinity: Portrayals of Masculinity in Men's Lifestyle Magazines. *Sex Roles* **2010**, *63*, 64–78. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Waling, A.; Duncan, D.; Angelides, S.; Dowsett, G.W. Men and masculinity in men's magazines: A review. *Sociol. Compass* **2018**, *12*, e12593. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Manago, A.M. Negotiating a sexy masculinity on social networking sites. *Fem. Psychol.* **2013**, *23*, 478–497. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Senft, T.M.; Baym, N.K. What does the selfie say? Investigating a global phenomenon. *Int. J. Commun.* **2015**, *9*, 1588–1606.
- Banet-Weiser, S. *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*; Duke University Press: Durham, NC, USA, 2018.
- Goodyear, V.; Andersson, J.; Quennerstedt, M.; Varea, V. #Skinny girls: Young girls' learning processes and health-related social media. *Qual. Res. Sport Exerc. Health* **2021**, *14*, 1–18. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Duffy, B.E.; Hund, E. "Having it All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding among Fashion Bloggers. *Soc. Media Soc.* **2015**, *1*, 2056305115604337. [[CrossRef](#)]

21. Marwick, A.E. The Algorithmic Celebrity. In *Microcelebrity Around the Globe*; Abidin, C., Brown, M.L., Eds.; Emerald Publishing Limited: Leeds, UK, 2018; pp. 161–169. [CrossRef]
22. Angrish, K.; Oshana, D.; Gammage, K.L. Flex Friday: A content analysis of men’s fitspiration on Instagram. *Body Image* **2024**, *48*, 101651. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
23. Whitehead, S.; Ringrose, J. Memetic masculinities: Exploring acializedd homosociality and networked misogynoir in teen boys’ Instagram social media diaries. In *Global Perspectives on Youth and Young Adults: Situated, Embodied and Performed Ways of Being, Engaging and Belonging*; Blaikie, F., Ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2021; pp. 99–121.
24. Perloff, R.M. Social Media Effects on Young Women’s Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research. *Sex Roles* **2014**, *71*, 363–377. [CrossRef]
25. Ringrose, J.; Coleman, R. Looking and desiring machines: A feminist Deleuzian mapping of bodies and affects. In *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*; Coleman, R., Ringrose, J., Eds.; Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, UK, 2013; pp. 124–144.
26. Bruns, A. Towards produsage: Futures for user-led content production. In *Proceeding of the 5th International Conference on Cultural Attitudes towards Technology and Communication*; School of Information Technology: Melbourne, Australia, 2006; pp. 275–284.
27. Boyd, D. Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications. In *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*; Papacharissi, Z., Ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2010; pp. 39–58.
28. Schellewald, A. Understanding the popularity and affordances of TikTok through user experiences. *Media Cult. Soc.* **2023**, *45*, 1568–1582. [CrossRef]
29. Seguin, D.; Kuenzel, E.; Morton, J.B.; Duerden, E.G. School’s out: Parenting stress and screen time use in school-age children during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J. Affect. Disord. Rep.* **2021**, *6*, 100217. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
30. Horeck, T.; Jessica, R.; Betsy, M.; Kaitlynn, M. Young People’s Experiences of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence during COVID-19: Final Report, Anglia Ruskin University. Available online: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10186290/1/Ringrose_Young%20people’s%20experiences%20of%20technology-facilitate%20gender-based%20violence%20during%20COVID-19.pdf (accessed on 1 July 2024).
31. Kendall, T. From Binge-Watching to Binge-Scrolling: TikTok and the Rhythms of #LockdownLife. *Film Q.* **2021**, *75*, 41–46.
32. Rich, E. A New Materialist Analysis of Health and Fitness Social Media, Gender and Body Disaffection: ‘You Shouldn’t Compare Yourself to Anyone. . . but Everyone Does’. *Youth* **2024**, *4*, 700–717. [CrossRef]
33. Dolezal, L.; Spratt, T. Fat shaming under neoliberalism and COVID-19: Examining the UK’s Tackling Obesity campaign. *Sociol. Heal. Illn.* **2022**, *45*, 3–18. [CrossRef]
34. Alberti, F.B. Fat shaming, feminism and Facebook: What ‘women who eat on tubes’ reveal about social media and the boundaries of women’s bodies. *Eur. J. Cult. Stud.* **2021**, *24*, 1304–1318. [CrossRef]
35. Shah, N. The Selfie and the Slut: Bodies, Technology and Public Shame. *Econ. Political Wkly.* **2015**, *50*, 86–93. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24481830> (accessed on 31 January 2024).
36. Thorpe, H.; O’Leary, G.; Ahmad, N.; Nemani, M.J. “If You Didn’t Exercise during Lockdown, What Were You Even Doing?”: Young Women, Sport, and Fitness in Pandemic Times. *Youth* **2023**, *3*, 847–868. [CrossRef]
37. Cassidy, L. Body shaming in the era of social media. In *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Shame: Methods, Theories, Norms, Cultures, and Politics*; Lexington Books: Lanham, MD, USA, 2019; Volume 157, p. 396.
38. Ringrose, J. *Postfeminist Education? Girls and the Sexual Politics of Schooling*; Routledge: London, UK, 2013.
39. Ringrose, J.; Renold, E. Slut-shaming, Girl Power and ‘Sexualisation’: Thinking through the Politics of the International SlutWalks with Teen Girls. *Gen. Educ.* **2012**, *24*, 333–343. [CrossRef]
40. Goblet, M.; Glowacz, F. Slut Shaming in Adolescence: A Violence against Girls and Its Impact on Their Health. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2021**, *18*, 6657. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
41. Henry, N.; McGlynn, C.; Flynn, A.; Johnson, K.; Powell, A.; Scott, A.J. *Image-Based Sexual Abuse: A Study on the Causes and Consequences of Non-Consensual Nude or Sexual Imagery*, 1st ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2020. [CrossRef]
42. McGlynn, C.; Johnson, K.; Rackley, E.; Henry, N.M.; Gavey, N.; Flynn, A.; Powell, A. ‘It’s Torture for the Soul’: The Harms of Image-Based Sexual Abuse. *Soc. Leg. Stud.* **2020**, *30*, 541–562. [CrossRef]
43. Ringrose, J.; Regehr, K. Recognizing and addressing how gender shapes young peopl’s experiences of image-based sexual harassment and abuse in educational settings. *J. Soc. Issues* **2023**, *79*, 1251–1281. [CrossRef]
44. Kehler, M.; Borduas, C. “Isn’t That a Girl Problem?”: Boys, Bodies, and the Discourse of Denial. *Boyhood Stud.* **2021**, *14*, 65–89. [CrossRef]
45. Ringrose, J.; Harvey, L. Boobs, back-off, six packs and bits: Mediated body parts, gendered reward, and sexual shame in teens’ sexting images. *Contin. J. Media Cult. Stud.* **2015**, *29*, 205–217. [CrossRef]
46. Mandau, M. Homosocial positionings and ambivalent participation: A qualitative analysis of young adults’ non-consensual sharing and viewing of privately produced sexual images. *MedieKultur* **2020**, *67*, 55–75. [CrossRef]
47. Jozsa, K.; Kraus, A.; Korpak, A.K.; Birnholtz, J.; Moskowitz, D.A.; Macapagal, K. “Safe Behind My Screen”: Adolescent Sexual Minority Males’ Perceptions of Safety and Trustworthiness on Geosocial and Social Networking Apps. *Arch. Sex. Behav.* **2021**, *50*, 2965–2980. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
48. Coleman, R. The becoming of bodies: Girls, media effects and body image. *Fem. Media Stud.* **2008**, *8*, 163–179. [CrossRef]
49. Nelson, E.L.; Perry, M.; Rogers, T. Introducing Offlineness: Theorizing (Digital) Literacy Engagements. *J. Lit. Res.* **2020**, *52*, 101–107. [CrossRef]

50. Renold, E.J.; Bragg, S.; Ringrose, J.; Milne, B.; McGeeney, E.; Timperley, V. Attune, animate and amplify: Creating youth voice assemblages in pARTicipatory sexuality education research. *Child. Soc.* **2024**, *1*–28. [CrossRef]
51. Gao, Y.; Liu, F.; Gao, L. Echo chamber effects on short video platforms. *Sci. Rep.* **2023**, *13*, 1–17. [CrossRef]
52. Howarth, J. TikTok Users Age, Gender and Demographics. 2023. Available online: <https://explodingtopics.com/> (accessed on 28 November 2023).
53. Internet Matters. What Is OnlyFans? What Parents Need to Know. Available online: <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-onlyfans-what-parents-need-to-know/> (accessed on 1 July 2024).
54. Vickers, E.; Brooks-Gordon, B. Growth and diversity of the online solopreneur and sexpreneur. *Curr. Opin. Psychol.* **2023**, *49*, 101474. [CrossRef]
55. Orgad, S.; Gill, R. *Confidence Culture*; Duke University Press: Durham, NC, USA; London, UK, 2022.
56. Ouvrein, G. Celebrity appearance-shaming: Innocent bashing forms or reconfirming gender norms? A study into the explanations of adolescents' celebrity appearance-shaming intentions. *Cyberpsychol. J. Psychosoc. Res. Cyberspace* **2023**, *17*, 1–19. [CrossRef]
57. Whittle, J.; Elder-Vass, D.; Lumsden, K. 'There's a Bit of Banter': How Male Teenagers 'Do Boy' on Social Networking Sites. In *Online Othering. Palgrave Studies in Cybercrime and Cybersecurity*; Lumsden, K., Harmer, E., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland, 2019. [CrossRef]
58. Pascoe, C.J. 'Dude, You're a Fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities* **2005**, *8*, 329–346. [CrossRef]
59. Ullman, J. Trans/Gender-Diverse Students' Perceptions of Positive School Climate and Teacher Concern as Factors in School Belonging: Results from an Australian National Study. *Teach. Coll. Rec.* **2022**, *124*, 145–167. [CrossRef]
60. Bragg, S.; Renold, E.; Ringrose, J.; Jackson, C. 'More than boy, girl, male, female': Exploring young people's views on gender diversity within and beyond school contexts. *Sex Educ.* **2018**, *18*, 420–434. [CrossRef]
61. Storr, R.; Nicholas, L.; Robinson, K.; Davies, C. 'Game to play?': Barriers and facilitators to sexuality and gender diverse young people's participation in sport and physical activity. *Sport Educ. Soc.* **2021**, *27*, 604–617. [CrossRef]
62. Heiden-Rootes, K.; Linsenmeyer, W.; Levine, S.; Oliveras, M.; Joseph, M. A scoping review of research literature on eating and body image for transgender and nonbinary youth. *J. Eat. Disord.* **2023**, *11*, 1–35. [CrossRef]
63. Ringrose, J.; Harvey, L.; Gill, R.; Livingstone, S. Teen girls, sexual double standards and 'sexting': Gendered value in digital image exchange. *Fem. Theory* **2013**, *14*, 305–323. [CrossRef]
64. Burkett, M. Sex(t) Talk: A qualitative analysis of young adults' negotiations of the pleasures and perils of sexting. *Sex. Cult.* **2015**, *19*, 835–863. [CrossRef]
65. Bianchi, D.; Morelli, M.; Baiocco, R. Psychometric properties of the sexting motivations questionnaire for adolescents and young adults. *Rass. Psicol.* **2016**, *33*, 5–18.
66. Pedwell, C. Mediated habits: Images, networked affect and social change. *Subjectivity* **2017**, *10*, 147–169. [CrossRef]
67. Gill, R. *Changing the Perfect Picture: Smartphones; Social Media and Appearance Pressures* City University: Beijing, China, 2021.
68. Ringrose, J.; Mendes, K.; Horeck, T.; Desborough, K.; Milne, B. *Equipping Young People to Navigate Post-Digital Sexual Violence Final Report—AHRC Follow on Funding for Impact and Engagement Project School Based Digital Defence and Activism Lessons*; University College London: London, UK, 2023. Available online: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10186206/1/UCL_DigitalCultures_A4_EquippingYoungPeopletoNavigatePostDigitalSexualViolence_JUN23_v8.pdf (accessed on 1 July 2024).

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.