

Researching Children's Rights Globally in the Digital Age London, 12 February 2015

# What's the Problem? Opportunities and barriers to (researching) children's rights in a digital, global age

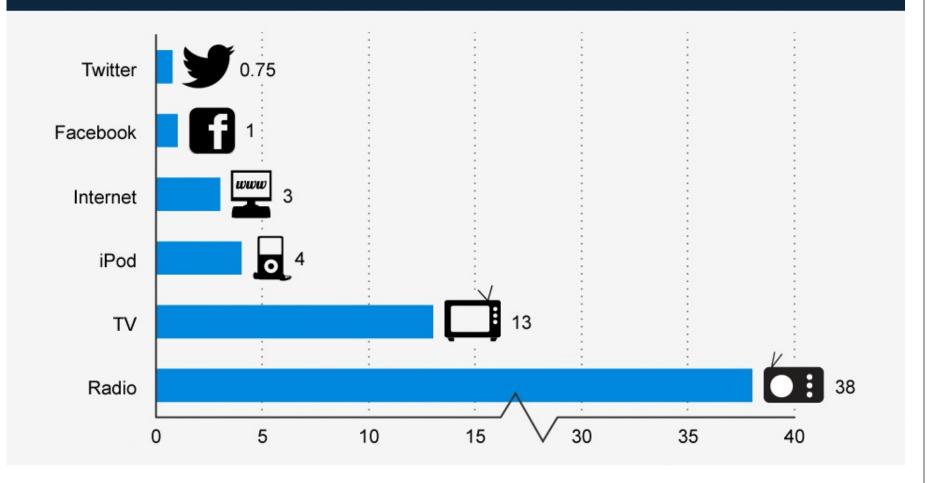
The South African Scenario

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#### The Rapid Rise of Social Media

Time to reach 50 million users worldwide (in years)





## Children in South Africa



- 36% of SA population under 18
- 23% of children live with both parents
- 32% live in a household with no employed adult
- 55% live under the poverty line
- 22% have experienced violence at school
- 48.7% have been exposed to violence in community

## ICTs in South Africa

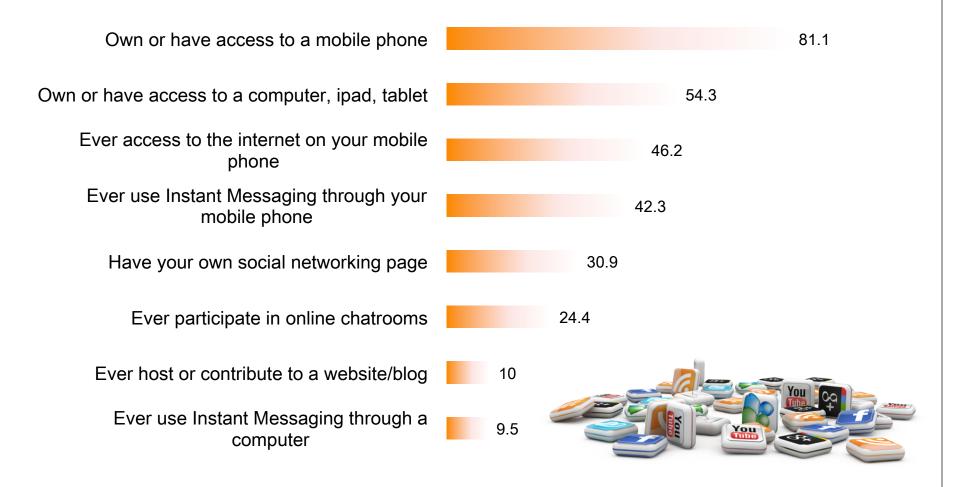
H/H has a mobile phone 88.9



H/H has a landline 14.5



### Use of social media and ICT in SA





# **Experiences of Online Violence**

Experienced some form of online violence or aggression in previous 12 months

Had an 'online fight' with someone where angry and rude language was sent in a chat room or social networking page via the computor or mobile phone

Had rude and insulting messages about you sent via computer or mobile phone

Had messages sent or posted about you that were hurtful, with the intention of damaging reputation or friendship

Had someone share secrets or embarrassing pictures or information about you online without your permission

Had someone use your account and pretend to be you by sending messages etc and trying to ruin your reputation

Been threatened with harm or intimidated by someone online

Had someone send sexually explicit images or messages about you by using a phone or computer

20.9

14

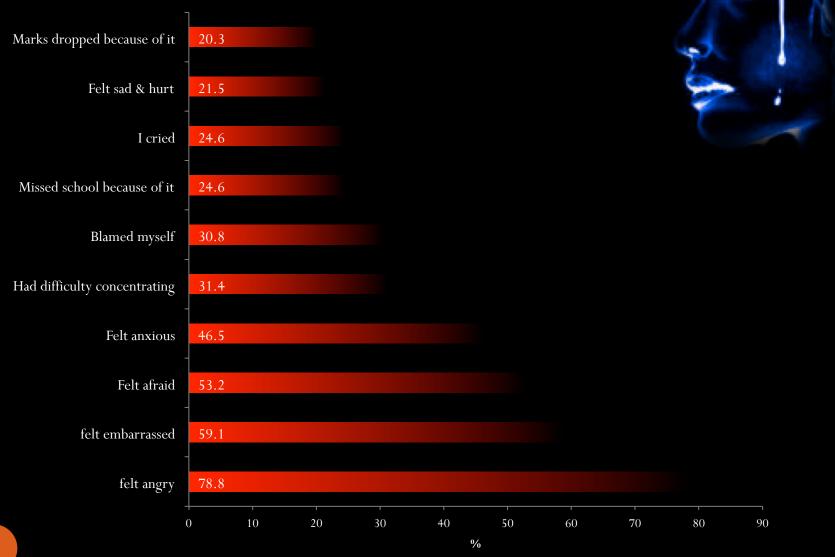
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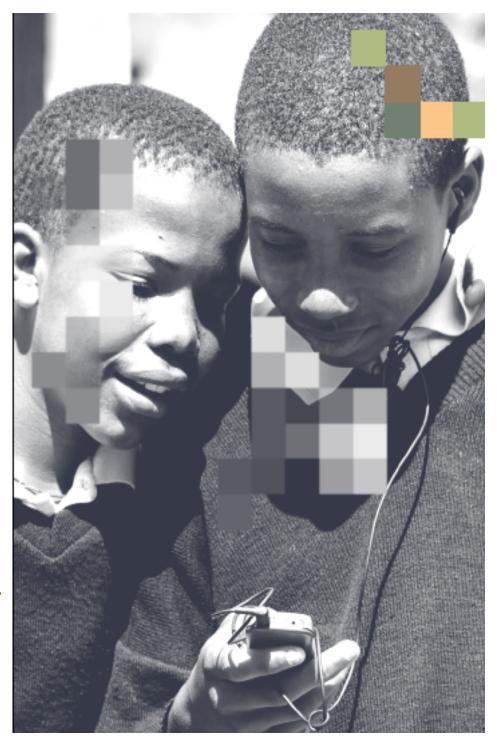
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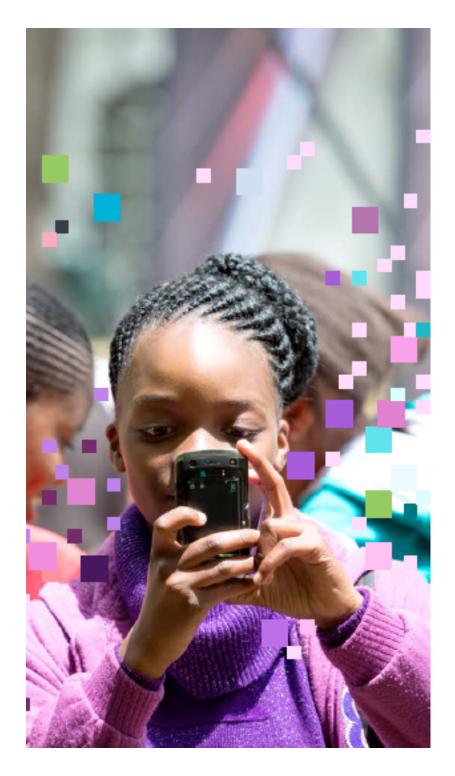
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# Methodological Challenges

- → Impact of legislation on participation:
  - Criminalization of sexting
  - Mandatory reporting
- Appropriate measures of harm?
- Institutionalizing data collection (ownership, quality, funding)
- What constitutes evidence?
- Challenge of research uptake and advocacy when outside existing policy agenda/direction





# **Research Opportunities**

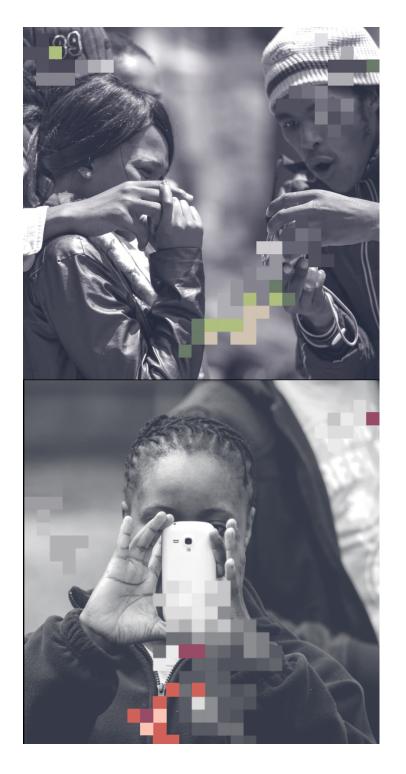
Prioritization of VAC, including online, in Government's National Plan of Action on VAWC

→ (constraints of conceptualization/language)

National epidemiological studies (Optimus, NSVS)

→ (but cross sectional, single sample, limitations)

Political buy-in and support



# **Research Questions**

- What are the kinds of online experiences children consider harmful and how they would characterise the harm they encounter.
- What is the relationship between the wider context of violence, inequality and poverty, and access to, and usage of ICTs and social media, and related vulnerabilities attached to online experiences? Are there shared or multiple vulnerabilities, or does vulnerability in one domain impact on vulnerability in the other.
- → What is the most useful conceptual framework for framing our understanding of and research into children's use of ICTs, risks and harms?

# Towards Better Understanding Young People's Experience

- → More contextualized research:
  - → Unpacking risk (what is it, how does it develop, response, who's most at risk)
  - →Risks in different contexts high/low violence; urban/rural; marginalized/wealthy)
  - → Young people's agency in developing resilience
  - → Developing reliable data systems
  - → Developing tailored interventions (not one size fits all)





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