Developing Discernment: The Intersection of Social Media, AI, and Critical Thinking for Year 6 Girls

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Abstract

This action research study sought to assess the impact of exposure to, and engagement with, generative artificial intelligence (Gen-AI) in a social media context, on girls' critical thinking skills. The AI age has given birth to an unrealised deficit in discernment of what is, and what is not, real online; an issue this study intended to address. A class of 18 Year 6 girls (11-12 years old) from Seymour College, an independent all-girls Uniting Church school in Australia , were introduced to AI tools that were considered cutting edge at the time of the study and explored their impact on online media, such as video, image, and text generation. Students also created and engaged with their own non-digital social media platform to mimic the emotional experience of social media. These approaches set out to develop students' critical thinking, focusing on the processes of inquiring, generating, analysing, and reflecting according to the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2026). This study used a mixed-methods approach to data collection through interviews, questionnaires, reflection, teacher observations, and student work. Findings identified that through prolonged exposure to AI-generated content, the students' ability to think and speak critically improved. Students also built confidence in analysing content to seek its purpose and motivation. Most interestingly, students accepted the fact that social media will be part of their lives at some point, despite their newfound awareness of its pitfalls and risks. It is an interest of the researcher to assess the long-term efficacy of this intervention as the girls reach the age of 16, where, in Australia, social media will become legally available to them. An implication of this research is to see how soon this work can begin with younger students, and what possible interventions can assist girls who already use social media.

Glossary

Critical Thinking: Skills and dispositions used to question, assess and analyse media, situations and experiences, to make a rational decision with the least emotive influence.

Generative AI (Gen-AI): A technology which generates text, images, videos, and audio based on user input and prompts. Examples are Chat GPT, Murf AI, Microsoft Co Pilot, Claude and Sora.

Develop: Growth in an area to become more mature and advanced.

Seymour Snap: A student-created analogue (non-digital) social media platform used for posting memes and comments in the classroom.

Discernment: The ability to assess and make judgements about the quality or validity of media.

Social Media: A variety of online platforms which allow users to post, share, and comment on content. Examples are Instagram, Facebook, X and YouTube.

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It has always been a maxim of mine that if a student is happy at school, then the learning will follow. Positive emotions help develop a positive mindset which, in turn, has a positive impact on student learning (Frederickson, 2001). When considering the International Coalition of Girls' Schools action research topic of "Navigating the AI Frontier," student wellbeing leapt to the forefront of my mind. Furthermore, when considering my research question, I reflected on the progression of AI since November 2023 (the introduction of Chat GPT, a large language model) until now. Its capabilities today, in comparison to late 2023, are incomparable. This begs the question, what will AI be like in another two years? Even more related to my project is the question: How can I make a lasting and meaningful impact on my class that transcends the rapid and unpredictable progress of AI?

The wellbeing of young girls is inextricably connected to the way in which they view themselves in relation to others (Mazzeo et al., 2024). Social media provides a gateway into the lives of others, as one of my students called it, "global show and tell," and allows any user to view and engage with the gamut of lifestyles and interests that are portrayed in social media. Many of the girls in my class either have their own smart phone or have access to it at home through an iPad. This is where I saw my opportunity to equip my class with the necessary skills to traverse the world of online media, and AI's influence on it, as they approached their teen years. At this point, my research question took shape: *How can the use of AI tools to engage with online media develop critical thinking skills for Year 6 girls?*

My research focus was that of: discernment between what is, and what is not, real; what is the purpose behind a given post or piece of content; and what is this (content) trying to make me feel and why? It is these guiding questions which drove my action.

During my action research, legislation placing a ban on social media for under 16-year-olds was introduced by the Australian Federal Government and came into effect on December 10, 2025. Initially, this seemed like a stumbling block, but as statistics released revealed its efficacy, my research is still

relevant and timely. In summary, approximately 4.7 million social media accounts have been closed as of January 16, 2026 (eSafety Commissioner, 2026). Despite this, there have been temporary spikes in the use of alternative social media platforms, while many existing platforms, such as Tik Tok and YouTube Shorts, do not require an account to view content. It is suggested by Galanis et al. (2025) that Tik Tok is one of the most addictive social media platforms and can have detrimental effects on the mental wellbeing on its users, which leads to the conclusion that unrestricted access to viewing Tik Tok allows a workaround for adolescents.

My research is grounded in an action research methodology, which seeks not only to assess the impact of my research on my class, but also to assess the quality of my teaching and reflective practice (Mertler, 2025). My action consisted of three phases designed to build students' understanding of AI's capabilities and implications for social media and their lives over time, before students used AI themselves. Given the age of the girls in my class, using digital social media was not possible, but it was my ultimate goal to develop the girls' discernment and healthy scepticism enough to apply those skills in their future.

Literature Review

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the lives of today's youth and their future, is rapidly evolving. Whilst AI may make many aspects of students' education streamlined and more personalised, an area worth serious consideration is its impact on social media, a dominant pathway of building and maintaining social connections for young people (Salehi et al. 2025). Furthermore, AI's output needs to be viewed critically to ascertain accuracy and relevance. Larson et al. (2024) highlight the need for critical thinking when using Gen-AI as its wide use can" lessen individual willingness and ability to engage in meaningful critical thinking about its output" (p. 373), given its speed and perceived accuracy. Critical thinking is widely identified as a highly desirable skill to be developed in young learners (Choudary et al. 2016; Sun & Hui, 2012). Sun and Hui (2012) state that "it is of paramount importance to

guide adolescents to master the thinking skills well in order to foster learning, leadership, and positive youth development" (p.2). Critical thinking is a universally valued educational outcome and is sought by many countries, including Australia and the US, to be improved (Bensley, 2023). Not only is it a valuable skill in the classroom, but there is also, arguably, a more pertinent domain where critical thinking plays a vital role for young people: on social media (Ku et al., 2018; Davies, 2026).

Social media has established itself as the primary source of news, entertainment and communication for a large percentage of the world's population, with children and adolescents from 10 to 17 years old, using social media not only for news and entertainment, but to connect with others (Stuchbery, 2026). Its importance to this generation (Gen Alpha) cannot be understated. With the advent of AI and its rapid growth in ubiquitousness and power, its effect on young people through social media is significant. Saheb et al. (2024) discuss the convergence of AI with social media and have identified some key areas of interest: AI as an algorithm to create targeted content and marketing for the user based on data collected through social media use and generative AI as a method of content creation and a tool for generating misinformation, such as deepfakes.

Key social media platforms, such as Snapchat, Tik Tok, and YouTube, serve as popular forms of entertainment and social connection for many young people. In Australia in 2024, an estimated 80% of young people aged 8-12 years old had at least one account on one of the aforementioned platforms, with this number increasing as they reach early teen years (eSafety Commissioner, 2025). Given these statistics, social media is demonstrably impactful for young people as a key source of information due to its convenience, appealing video-based style and ability to 'like' and 'share' (Selnes, 2023).

A study conducted by Jarman et al. (2024) identifies key motivations for adolescents to engage with social media, namely "social interaction, information sharing, escapism, passing time, social capital, and appearance feedback" (p.2). This study also notes that female adolescents use more appearance-focused platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram, than their male counterparts. It is well documented

that a large percentage of adolescent girls who use social media experience body-image issues due to the content they are viewing (Demetriou et al., 2025; Pedalino & Camarini, 2022). Furthermore, Mazzeo et al. (2024) highlight the direct connection in adolescents between social media use and eating disorders, depression, low self-esteem and psychological stress. In fact, the greater the use of social media, the higher the negative impact on adolescent girls.

Social media has a harmful impact "because it claims to represent 'reality', yet the images presented are often unrealistic" (Mazzeo et al., 2024, p. 2588). The discussion continues to identify these harmful images as self-portraits (selfies) that have been heavily edited with software to present an objectively "perfect" image. AI can not only make these images seem even more perfect, but has a wider and more significant impact on how girls see themselves. One such application of generative AI is the virtual influencer (VI), the popularity of which is growing considerably. Hewapathirana and Perera (2024) provide a variety of definitions of VIs, but simply stated, they can be described as computer generated avatars that resemble humans. As influencers, they are tireless and infinitely programmable, and capitalise on their authentic fakeness, and use humour, idealised beauty, and brand focused messaging as a means of product and brand awareness.

Considering the challenges young girls today face with the increased effectiveness and addictive nature of social media and AI, my questions were: What can be done about it? How can we teach our girls to discern the purpose of, and identify agendas behind, influencers' content (both human and AI)? A report by Stankov et al. (2025) identifies a range of factors that, when working in tandem, can help girls and young people mitigate the negative impacts of social media. Whilst many existing online digital literacy platforms fall short of what is required, as they "fail to foster critical thinking and lateral reading skills because they focus on surface-level features, limiting students' ability to evaluate the credibility of online information" (Stankov et al., p. 231), a more comprehensive and tailored approach can help students in a profound and lasting manner. Given this latest research, I believe that teaching

critical thinking skills while viewing and creating generative AI content is a way of demonstrating that social media, while enjoyable and fun, can use a variety of methods to make the viewer think and feel a certain way.

Dwyer (2023) defines critical thinking as “a metacognitive process—consisting of a number of skills and dispositions—that, through purposeful, self-regulatory reflective judgment, increases the chances of producing a logical solution to a problem or a valid conclusion to an argument” (p.1). The set of skills that are integral to the critical thinking process can vary depending on the context, but ACARA (2026) defines four main elements of the process as inquiring, generating, analysing, and reflecting. It is these key skills, which are transferable across all areas of learning, that I intended to develop in my students. A study by Redaelli et al. (2025) found that “understanding critical thinking skills is an indicator of the ability to recognise misinformation and fakeness” (p.6), but much like the findings of Stankov et al. (2025), the building of mastery in critical thinking must be a comprehensive, measured, and multi-faceted approach, which is not what is being done in current educational approaches.

From my research, there is little in existence that explores the convergence of AI, critical thinking, social media, and girls aged 10-13 years old. I was curious to investigate if girls develop strong critical thinking skills, then they will be able to see the intention of AI generated social media content. For example, the content’s impact on the emotions of the viewer to market a product or lifestyle, beyond its polished and entertaining nature. This would empower girls to make informed choices and minimise the negative, and potentially devastating, impacts of AI generated social media.

Research Context

I am a Year 6 teacher at Seymour College, an independent, Uniting Church girls’ school in Glen Osmond, South Australia. In 2025, the student population comprised 700 students, including 103 boarders. The College strives for “complete achievement” for each girl, regardless of their domain of interest.

For my action research, I asked my Year 6 class of 18 girls to participate. They were the most logical choice as I am their classroom teacher for most subjects (excepting specialist subjects). At the time of the research, I had been their teacher for six months and had pre-existing relationships with nine of them, being their Year 4 maths teacher in 2023. My research was conducted over Semester 2 for 13 weeks.

I acquired permission to conduct action research with the girls through a letter of consent sent to parents, including consent to conduct video interviews. Students chose their own pseudonyms to add a level of "fun" to the process. I clearly communicated to students and parents how the data would be used to serve the report.

The Action

As this topic was curriculum adjacent, I had to be intentional about how the research could be conducted without impacting curriculum-based lessons. Each week, two to four 30-minute blocks were used for the research, which was entitled SMAICT (social media, AI and critical thinking). It was split into three key phases (see Table 1):

Table 1

Table of Phase Description

Phase	Week	Focus
Phase 1: Building Awareness	1-5	• Generative AI demonstrations to provoke reactions • Exploring the link between social media and emotions • Case studies of popular influencers (both human and AI)

Phase 2: Controlled experimentation and exposure	6-12	• Weekly "Which Face is Real" (West & Bergstrom, 2019) Quizzes • Development of Seymour Snap • Weekly posts and likes on Seymour Snap profiles • Experimentation of Gen-AI to create different texts
Phase 3: Future focused thinking and consolidation	13-15	• Interviews with Year 10 students who use social media • Development of quick reference guides for critical thinking • Reflection on unit

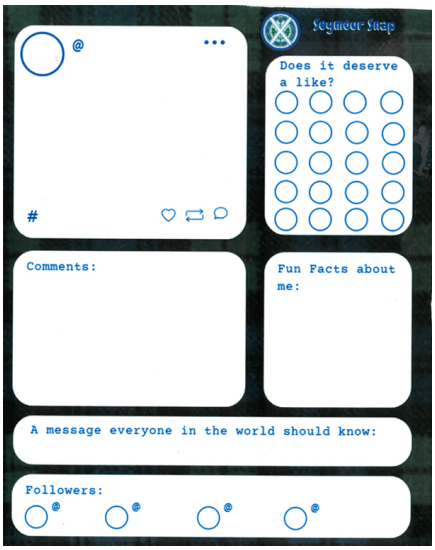
To ensure immediate engagement, the girls were played a news report that was generated using a text-to-voice AI platform, Murf AI, detailing that Seymour College would be taking enrolments for boys from the start of the following year. This was the first of many activities to demonstrate not only the power of Gen-AI to convince an audience, but also the simplicity in which it can be created. Alongside these experiences, the girls were shown the physiological side of the effects of social media, such as dopamine hits, the infinite scroll, and its contribution to social media's addictive nature.

The second phase of my action concentrated on developing the girls' critical thinking skills through regular exposure to one or the other AI generated image tests, typically in the form of 5–8 minute quizzes . Alongside this, the girls began to experiment with Gen-AI to create a variety of media, including tweet - style posts and fake news articles. The purpose of this was to allow the girls to experience the suggested simplicity, established in Phase 1, of these platforms. The other key

component of this phase was the creation of Seymour Snap created with Gen-AI (see Figure 1). The intention behind this idea was to simulate the emotional highs and lows of receiving recognition (in the form of “likes” for posts). The crux of Phase 2 was for the girls to independently and organically connect the use of social media and Gen-AI and recognise that AI plays a key role in creating potentially harmful or misleading content.

Figure 1

Seymour Snap Page, Designed by Year 6 student Astrid



Phase 3 acted as a short period of time to consolidate the learning and experiences from the entire SMAICT unit. The girls were given opportunities to share their thoughts formally with each other and to interview a class of Year 10 students (permission was sought and accepted by the girls and their teachers) about their own social media use, namely their feelings about it. The latter experience allowed the girls to hear what the social media/AI experience was like in reality and proved a valuable experience for shaping their overall feelings and opinions of their potential social media use.

Data Collection

As my 13-week action involved a wide variety of new experiences for my class, I employed a mixed-methods approach by gathering qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data proved extremely useful in identifying the girls' existing experiences of social media and use of Gen-AI, particularly at initiation of the action. Using Likert Scale questionnaires, I was immediately provided with data which displayed the wide range of experiences with, and knowledge of, social media/Gen-AI. I continued to use this method as pre- and post- experience questionnaires, which indicated the impact of said experience. Using a tally method to record the girls' success in identifying AI or not was a simple yet effective way to capture their growth over time.

As the focus of my action was developing critical skills, which required students to recognise "fast intuitive-experiential [thinking]" (Bensley, 2023, p. 7) as a knee-jerk and emotional reaction to what they are viewing, qualitative data were essential in tracking the gradual process of this. I employed a variety of methods to capture these data, as polyangulation (Mertler, 2025) is at the heart of quality action research. Students were interviewed in groups of three from the halfway point of the action through to its conclusion. Questions were open-ended and allowed for free-flowing conversation, which allowed the girls to share more freely about their experiences. Students reflected on their learning in class discussions, the observations of which were recorded, and in written reflections in their journal. It was important that the girls had multiple chances to reflect on the unit's learning, as it was mostly unfamiliar territory for them. I provided the same open questions to the girls in their written reflections and group interviews to test for any inconsistencies in responses. Other forms of data collection to inform the next steps of the action included student work, field notes, and recorded lessons for accurate observations.

Data Analysis

The data from this study were analysed using Mertler's (2025) three step analysis process: organisation, description, and interpretation. Data collected were coded, organised, and grouped for trend identification. The data were then interpreted to address the research question. The clearest patterns connected the girls' emotional reactions, both positive and negative, to provocative AI-generated content with their ability to think critically.

Discussion of Findings

After completing the data analysis, I identified the following three themes which indicate the effect and impact of my action on the girls' critical thinking skills when engaging with AI tools and online media.

Continued Exposure to, and Creation of, AI Generated Materials Enhances Girls' Ability to Apply and Articulate Critical Thinking Processes

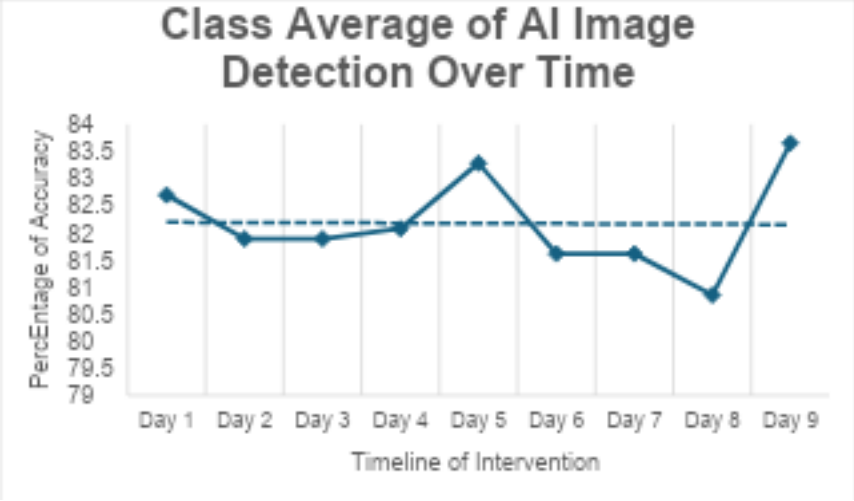
Daily engagement with AI-generated content had a profound effect on the girls' belief in their ability to discern what is real and what is AI- generated. The girls' reaction to the fake news report early in the intervention was one of panic. Many of the girls commented that they were shocked. SJ said, "I'm going to move schools is this is real?" and another, Regina, saying, "at first I believed it and I thought the world was going to end." Two of the 18 students were not convinced by this news and commented that, "I know it's not real, but I still feel sad." (Theodosia) and "Why would this happen? It seems like a lie!" (Jassie). This was the first step in identifying key critical thinking processes and aligns with the "fast intuitive – experiential thinking" (Bensley, 2023 p. 7) style of processing, as outlined in Bensley's dual-process theory of critical thinking. It also indicates the varied levels of critical thinking and awareness in the class.

Toward the end of the intervention, almost all girls were able to articulate what steps they had taken when deciding whether something was real or AI-generated. For example, AI-generated images viewed had slight imperfections that the girls noticed and recorded when deciding which is real. Many of

the girls commented on “the ears are weird” or “look at the background,” which was decidedly not real. Small circular grey spots, which the girls referred to as “black holes” or “watermarks” were a strong indicator, and I observed the girls would talk in small groups to help each other. Another aspect to this development of critical thinking was some students thinking about the “why” of the content. Mabel said in an interview that “It matters because someone may be trying to trick you.” This was not a common outcome across the class, with many of the girls merely looking for “it is or is not AI”. As mentioned in group interviews, 14 of the 18 students agreed that they had begun to view all content online as potentially AI, not just in class. Belle said, “It’s like an instinct now [looking at media],” and Astrid said “it’s a habit. Every time I look at something, there’s a voice that says this could be AI.” Interestingly, despite the girls’ ability to articulate that their critical thinking improved, their ability to identify AI generated images showed a gradual, almost insignificant, level of improvement. Some girls’ abilities declined over time, many remained static, and several showed improvement. The class average (as displayed in Figure 2) shows that the girls’ ability *en masse* showed some growth.

Figure 2

Graph Displaying the Class Average of AI Detection Over Time



Ultimately, the impact of the daily quizzes was greater than anticipated. The girls’ ability to explain their processes, “look for the black holes,” “why would this happen,” “check another website,” or even

“use common sense,” was impressive and demonstrates the success of continued exposure. There was a discrepancy, however, in the fact that the girls felt as though they were better at identifying AI but their actual abilities remaining largely unchanged.

Girls' Belief of the Negative Impact of AI on Social and Online Media does not Dissuade them from Using it in the Future

Social media was decidedly a double-edged sword in the eyes of the girls, but the potential downsides were not enough to steer them away from it. We discussed the impact of AI- generated virtual influencers, such as Lil Miquela. Hazel was “shocked that a robot can be an influencer”; a sentiment shared by all the girls, with some girls being concerned with the fact that “she [Lil Miquela] was programmed by a man” and “she looks real except for her perfect skin ” (Mabel).

Survey responses from the start of the intervention indicated that more than half the students thought that social media does not have a positive influence on their lives. Many of the girls also knew that social media contributes greatly to comparing one’s life with others, which can have detrimental effects (Mazzeo et al. 2024), and had at one time or another been made to feel sad or upset about something they had seen on social media.

The Year 6 girls spent time interviewing Year 10 girls about their social media experiences and then reflected on the interviews. Kenzie said that “it [social media] isn’t worth the negative feelings that come with it,” and Astrid said that “they [Year 10 girls] take multiple selfies to get the best one and then share that.” Regina’s reflection was far more direct, “they said they saw scary/disturbing stuff but they still liked it.” Even though the experiences of older girls were not those of the girls in my class, the impact of their answers was clear from the post-interview survey, which showed that questions pertaining to the influence of social media on personal wellbeing had answers that were more negative than earlier. That is, where there may have been some ambiguity of where the class sat on this issue at the start, the end of this process showed that more students had adopted a more pessimistic view of social media.

Despite these changes in attitude, in the final interviews of the intervention, almost all girls said they intend to be on social media when they came of age. Olivia said she would “be more careful now” on social media, while Astrid said, “I feel more equipped to be on social media, but the good stuff doesn’t outweigh the bad stuff.” Belle said “I feel better about being on social media, but I don’t know if I want to.” These comments indicate some level of caution will be taken by the girls as they embark on their social media journey.

Awareness of Emotional Manipulation on Social Media Enables Girls to ask Critical Questions About the Purpose and Motivation of Content

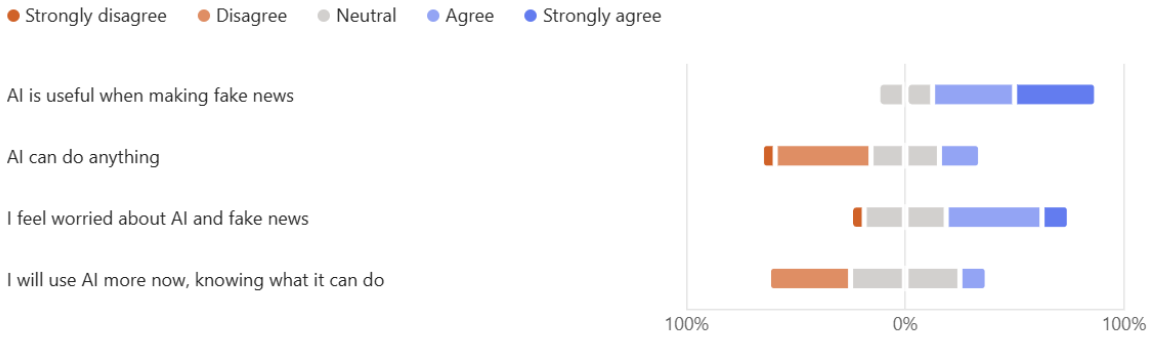
The nature of emotional manipulation on social media can be both direct and insidious, but by identifying key indicators and understanding AI’s role in streamlining this, the girls were able to look beyond the content and seek the motivation. Through explicit examples of fake news and then the application of AI tools to create fake news articles, the girls understood both the simplicity of the creation of said content but also identified reasons for its creation. In reflections after a task, most of the girls expressed surprise at how simple it was to create convincing fake news articles; for example, Mabel said “it is so easy to just spend five minutes creating something that is super believable.” It was interesting to see the dichotomy of fear and wonder manifest across the class of the implications of fake news. Girls who saw the negative implications used phrases such as “sort of scary,” “I’m a little worried,” “Yes, I am worried,” “Nervous,” “makes me feel a bit sick.” There is a consideration that my own opinions may have permeated through, particularly in the silences which follow questions like, “What do you think this means? Is fake news a good thing or a bad thing?”

The girls who looked with a sense of wonder were fewer in number but were excited by the prospects of the capability of the technology to streamline their work. In a group interview: Taylor said, “it makes me feel relaxed … It is super quick and simple,” and Hazel said, “it’s really easy.” It could be said that these girls either do not see the implications or are not concerned with them. Figure 3 shows that most girls agreed that AI is useful in making fake news and that most are concerned about the impact of

AI on fake news. Interestingly, two out of the 18 girls claimed they will use AI more after the fake news activity.

Figure 3

Survey Conducted After the Fake News Activity



At the end of the intervention, the girls created acrostic checklists as a reference for what to do on social media. This was a student-driven design task, as I observed the success of Seymour Snap was partially due to the student-designed aspect. Theodosia's acrostic checklist (see Figure 4), for example, displays clear steps to follow when viewing content that makes one feel a certain way. Note the focus on emotions as being the indicators of potential manipulation: "VIEW why you feel the way you do." This checklist not only indicates understanding and validation of the purpose of the intervention, but also that a student-created checklist can be vital in prolonging the effects of the intervention.

Figure 4

Theodosia's Acrostic Social Media Checklist

Conclusions

During this study, there were many occasions where its impact was yet to be seen and I was concerned that the approach was ineffective and perhaps just fun for the students. At its conclusion, it became clear, however, that the students had become more discerning and sceptical of media they saw online. They became more overt in their scepticism and often questioned the quality of an AI response and discussed it with peers. Students saw Gen-AI as an entertaining entity which did add some value to social media in the form of outlandish videos with convincing yet unrealistic representations of everyday items. This latter finding indicates that there was not a blanket "no" to Gen-AI from the girls, but rather they understood its current value in their lives. The fact that almost all the girls accepted that social media will be a part of their lives eventually, most likely as soon as they have access, affirms the notion of their thinking critically about it; namely, approaching social media rationally and with the knowledge of manipulative content exists and can be subtle.

There is no doubt of the impact of this intervention; however, there were some limitations. When the girls would see SMAICT on the day's schedule, they anticipated seeing AI- generated material. It came to a point where they would even doubt the quality of other lessons materials, often asking, "Is this AI, Mr Earlam?" One could argue that this was a fringe benefit of the study, but it did put them in a certain mindset in later lessons. Another draw back was that this cohort have now moved to middle school and tracking their progress over time will prove difficult and, therefore, making the long-term efficacy of the action unclear given the social media ban.

Looking to the future, I would like to continue this study with this class as they move closer to age 16 and see how they engage with social media legally and assess the long-term efficacy of my intervention. As the wellbeing of girls is a site-wide priority, and Gen-AI continues to improve, each girls' discernment skills are of the utmost importance. Finding a way to have year-level appropriate content

from Year 4 (9 and 10 years old) through to senior school would create a scope and sequence which could arguably prepare girls more completely to engage in the Gen-AI-influenced world of social media.

Reflection

The action research process had some surprising benefits beyond its findings. Making the time to sit down with my students and discuss their learning gave me incredible insight into their opinions, thoughts, and who they are. It is all too often that conversations have an agenda, given the tyranny of curriculum and time, and these interviews provided profound moments of connection and understanding. These moments affected our entire classroom experience, making it richer and more rewarding for both my students and me. Also, the process itself revealed my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and allowed me to reflect on what I can do to improve my practice. The self-doubt that crept in during the journey was not unique to action research; often during bespoke literacy and numeracy units I ask myself, “is this even working?” but end results are usually validating. The most valuable outcome for me was the girls’ final reflections on the unit, which were honest. Their self-confidence seemed genuinely increased, and it is a privilege to have been a part of that.

I would like to whole-heartedly thank Mrs Vanessa Browning and the board of Seymour College for giving me this opportunity, even when my research idea changed significantly after the ICGS Conference in Philadelphia. Thanks go to Natalie Paelchen, Heather Brumby and Emily Rogers for their ongoing support throughout the process. I would also like to thank Debbie Hill, Laura Blankenship and ICGS for their guidance during this unfamiliar process to me. Their organisation, knowledge and warmth have made the monthly meetings something to look forward to, regardless of the early hour.

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