Updated: November 2019

See society through social media

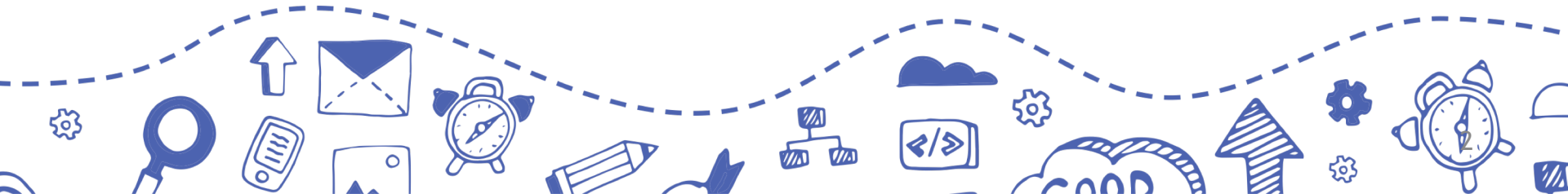
UCL

Designed to support the knowledge and skills required for the OCR A Level Sociology course.

CC BY NC

Welcome to the course!

- What are the aims of the project?
- Objectives: what will we be doing?
- How this project be useful for me?
- Project plan



Meet the team

Tom McDonald
A university teacher who researches social media in China

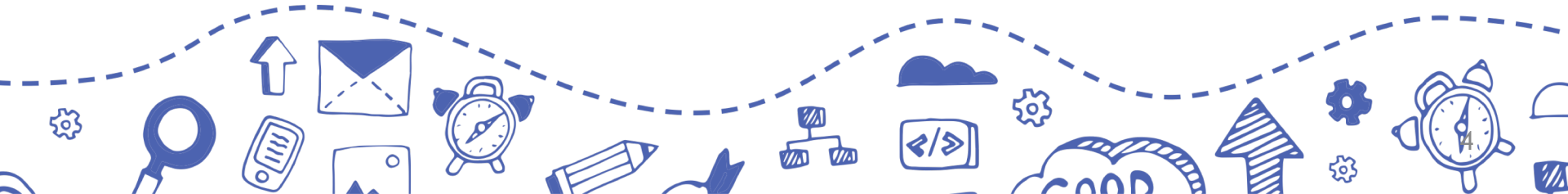
Laura Pountney
A sociology teacher at a Sixth Form college in the UK

Candy Hiu Wa Chan
A liberal studies teacher at a secondary school in Hong Kong

Laura Haapio-Kirk
A research assistant on the Why We Post project

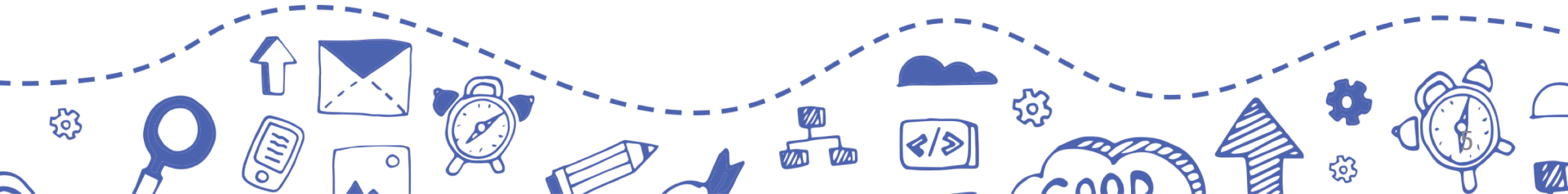
What are the aims of the project?

- To improve your knowledge and exam skills
- To explore a major research project which has links to a number of areas of your course
- To strengthen your understanding of research methods
- To understand the impact of social media around the world
- To interact with students in Hong Kong to explore the role of social media there and here



Objectives: What will we be doing?

- Learning and applying key sociological concepts and theories, checking your knowledge
- Using short films and online activities to explore the research and findings
- Working individually and in groups to carry out your own small scale research
- Creating online storyboards
- Visiting speaker/meeting a researcher



Improving your conceptual and theoretical knowledge

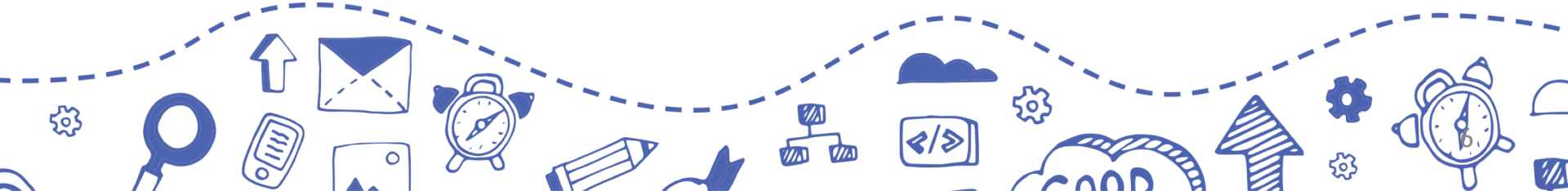
Learning how research is done, meeting researchers

How will this project be useful for me?

Connecting with students in Hong Kong

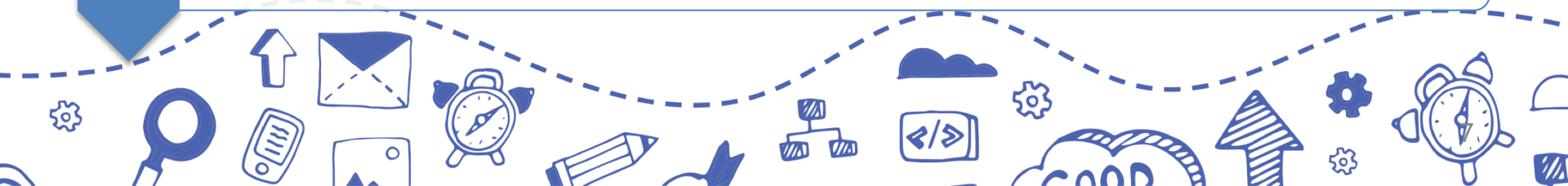
Exploring academic texts

Applying examples to exam



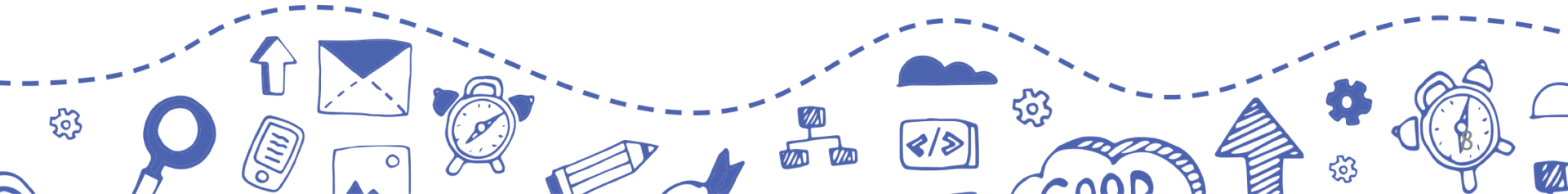
Plan

1. Defining social media
2. Researching new social media: the methodology of Why We Post
3. What are the key findings of the research?
4. How can you apply these findings in your exams?
5. Knowledge exchange with Hong Kong students
6. Conclusions: What have we learnt?



Activity: p3

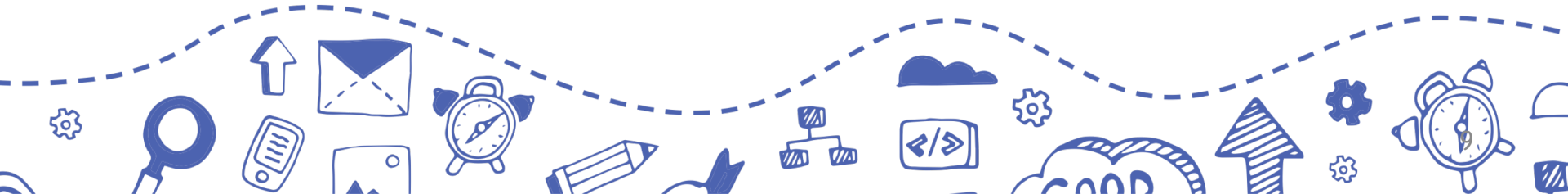
- In your own words, in pairs discuss what ‘new social media’ means
- Write a definition
- What are the problems with trying to define social media?
- Share your definition with the pair next to you - is yours the same as theirs?



Definition

Social Media

New forms of shared information which involve different types of communication, based on new forms of technology



Definition

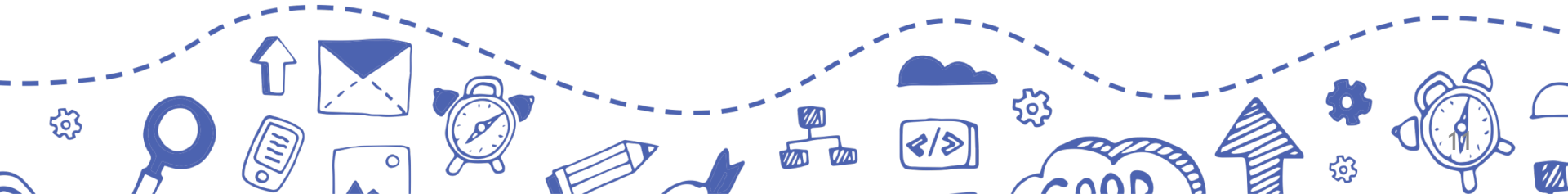
What is social media?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=627Ksat_Csk

Social Media

New forms of shared information which involve different types of communication, based on new forms of technology

How are different types of social media used to communicate? p3

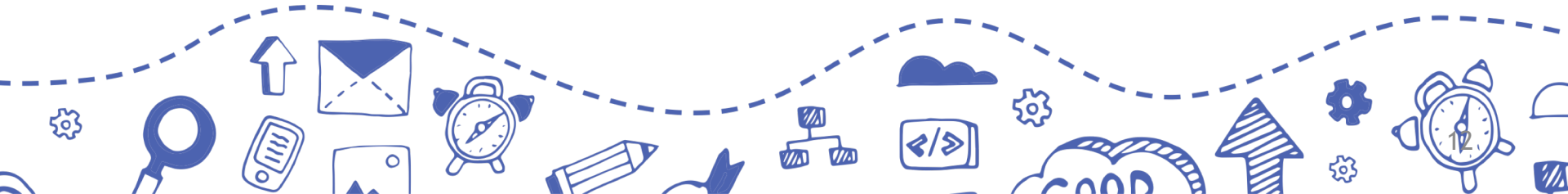
- Using the images on p3, make notes on the ways you think others (or yourself) use different platforms
- Think about who you use each platform to communicate with, friends or family or work colleagues?
- Why?



How do we research social media?

Imagine that you have been given a large sum of money to carry out research into the impact of social media. Using your knowledge of sociological research methods knowledge, answer the following questions

- Which methods would be most suitable and why?
- How is researching social media different to studying other areas of social life?
- Who would you wish to research as part of your sample and why?
- What sorts of skills might your research team need?
- Where would you base your research and why? (online/offline)
- What are the practical, ethical and theoretical issues with your research?
- How would you record your results?
- How would you present your findings and why?
- Who might the results be useful for and why?
- Could your results be used to create social policy? If so, how?
- What have you learnt from this activity about the challenges and possibilities of researching the impact of social media?



Prompt sheet

confidentiality

going native

anonymity

rapport

social desirability

qualitative/quantitative

representativeness

positivist

interpretivist

verstehen

sampling validity

hawthorn effect

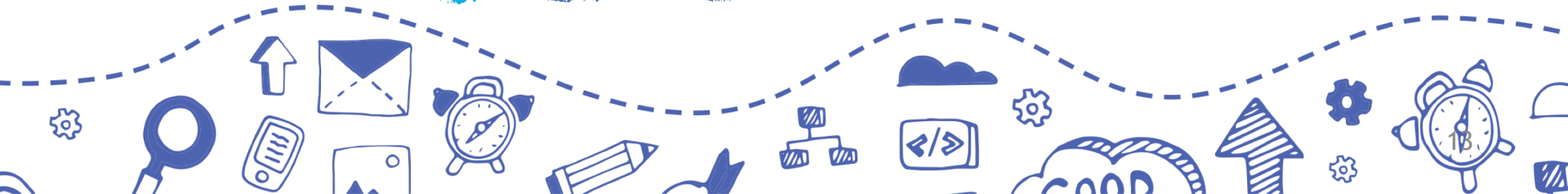
consent

cost

time

skills

deception

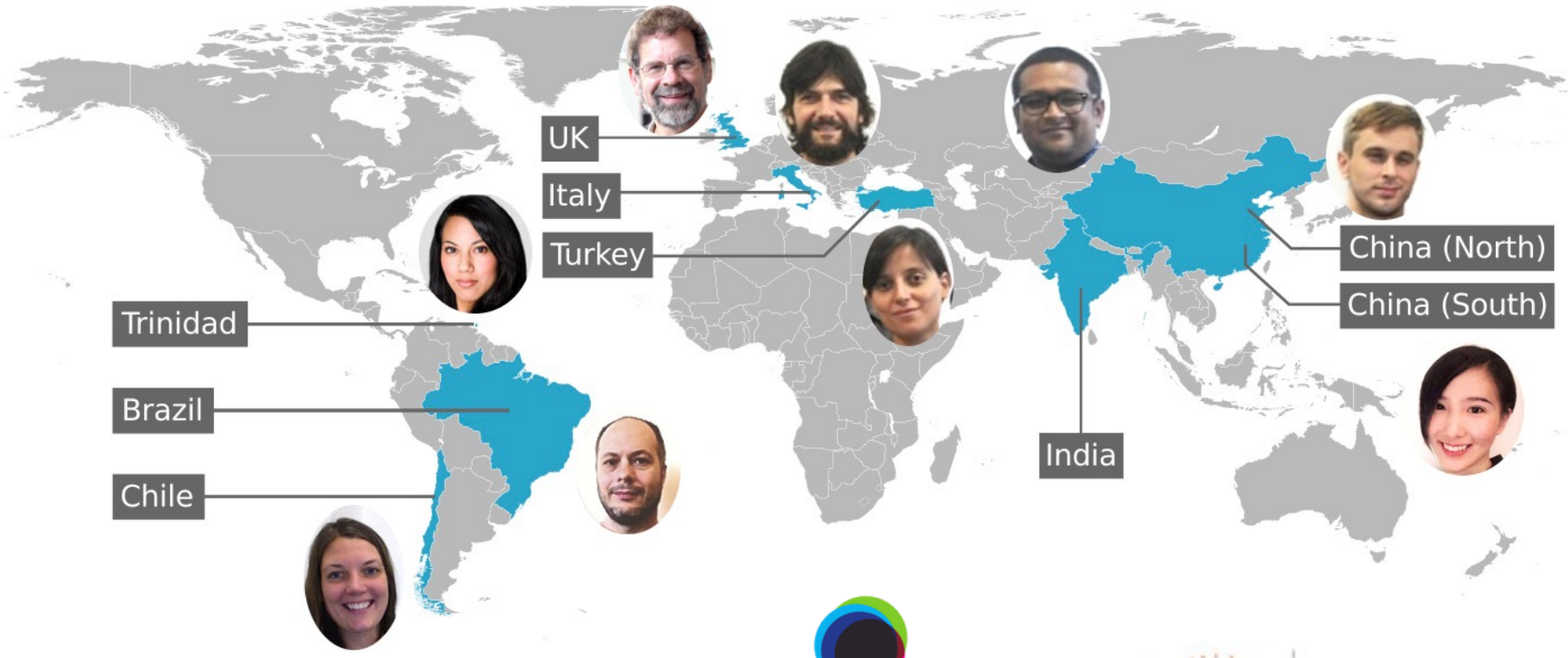


Why We Post

- Use worksheet p7 to record your research about the research project
- Be ready to feedback to the rest of the group
- The following slides will help if you are learning about the project as a class

www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post

Global Social Media and Global Social Anthropology



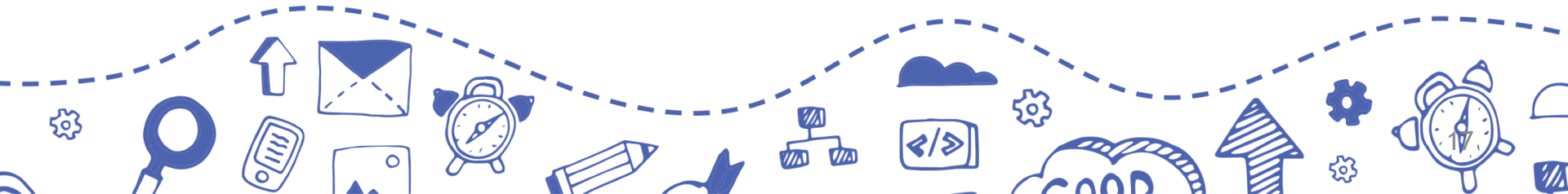
Global
Social Media
Impact Study

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission
Supporting top researchers
from anywhere in the world

https://youtu.be/kDZy4LZQSNI

Research methods used

- Watch the following clips and make notes
  - What did you learn about the way the research was organised and changed?



Research methods used

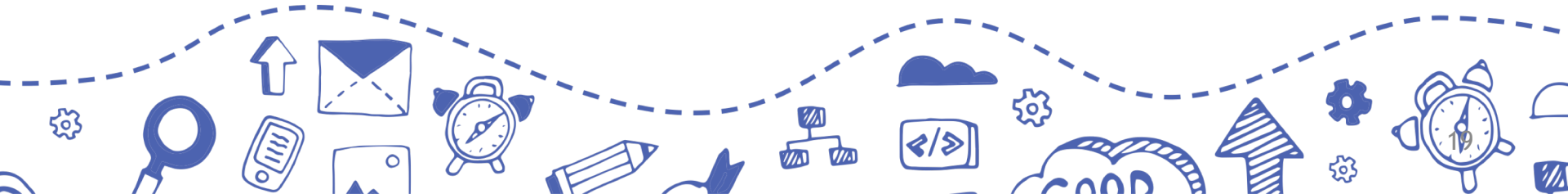
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzdjDWrAXuM

Watch this clip and make notes – what did you learn about the way the research was organised and changed?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_cYs82XQy4

Findings

- The results of the research are presented in a number of different formats
- Ethnographies (all free to download)
- Short films (note the paintings and calligraphy also used here)
- Graphs
- Tables
- Stories
- Images

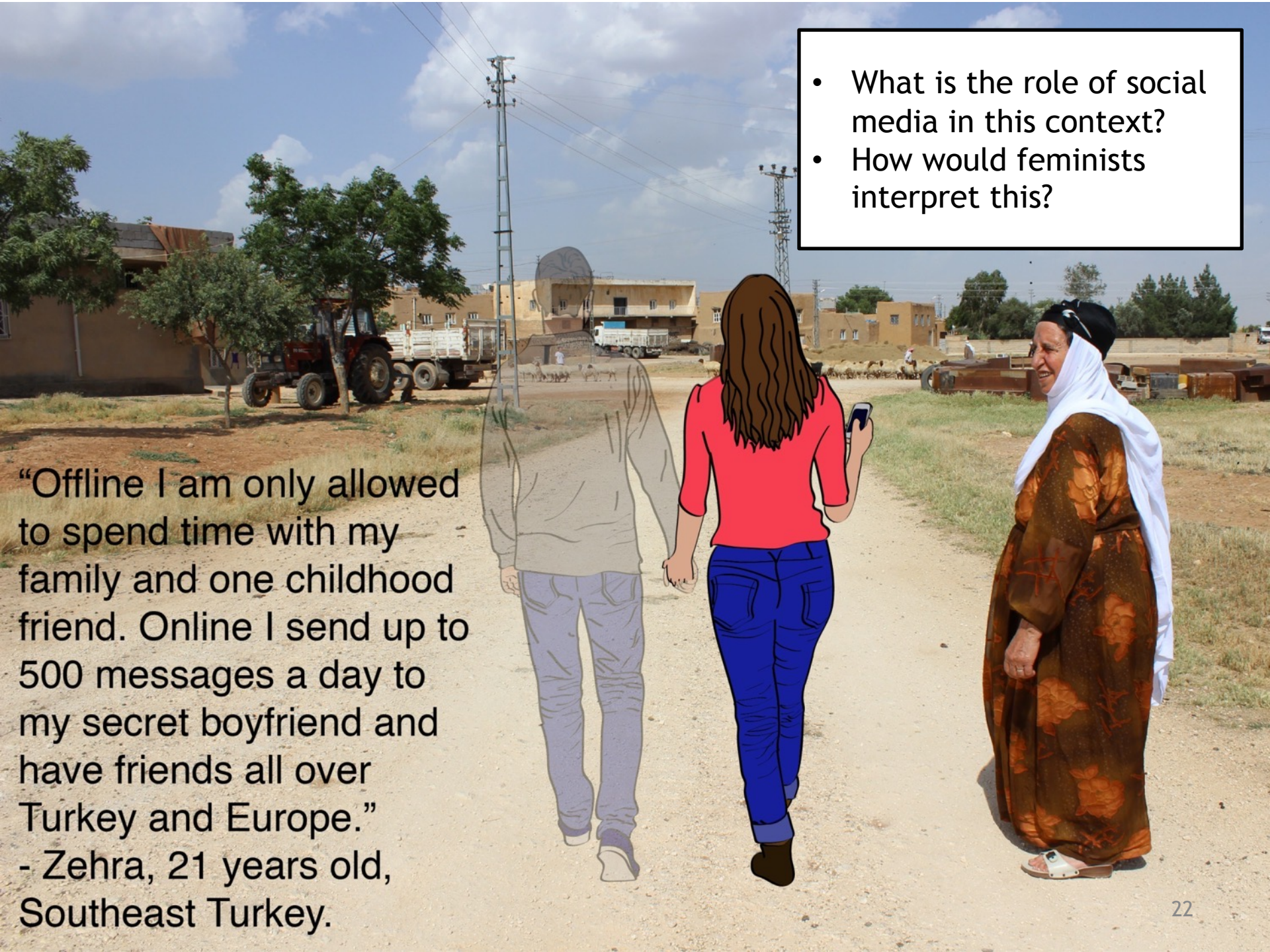


- What does this finding suggest about the impact of social media on equality/inequality?

In our Brazilian and Trinidadian fieldsites people often post photos of themselves in 'high class' settings such as at a gym or swimming pool, but this does not translate to enhanced social standing offline.

- How does this evidence challenge the view that social media leads to less people having less privacy?

Cici (17, South China) first heard the word 'privacy' in a TV soap opera. To her, it sounded very fashionable and modern. In her dormitory four girls slept together in two beds. In the factory she shared a room with eight girls. "At night, everyone talks with their boyfriends on the phone, it's as noisy as the food market...there are no secrets at all because you can always hear each other and see each other." Cici started to message more on QQ rather than talking on the phone with her boyfriend. This was her first experience of the kind of privacy she had heard about on TV.


• What is the role of social media in this context?
• How would feminists interpret this?
"Offline I am only allowed to spend time with my family and one childhood friend. Online I send up to 500 messages a day to my secret boyfriend and have friends all over Turkey and Europe."
- Zehra, 21 years old, Southeast Turkey.

- How does this finding challenge the idea that social media leads to a lack of privacy and more social relationships/ interaction?

THE ENGLISH GOLDILOCKS

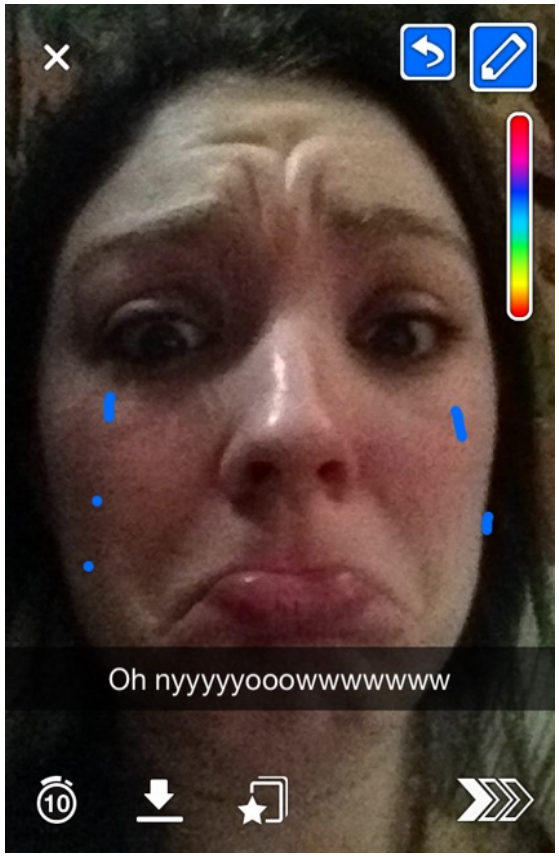
The English use scalable sociality to make sure that their relationships are neither too hot or too cold. They like relationships best when they are sort of grey, like the weather.

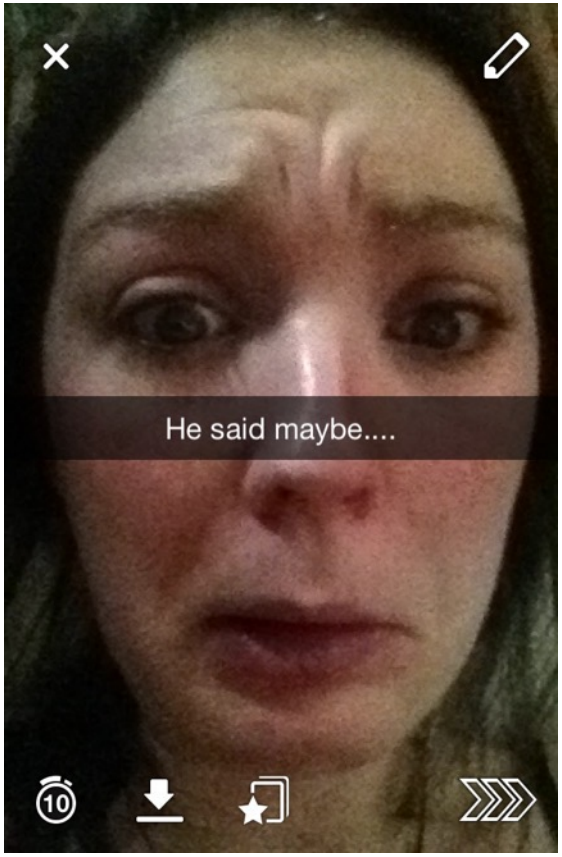
Among English school pupils there are three main genres of selfie.

The ‘classic selfie’
Highly stylised for the right ‘look’, often posted on Instagram.

The ‘groupie’
On Facebook school pupils posted five times as many selfies showing friendship groups than individuals alone.

The ‘uglie’
A favoured mode on Snapchat, the best way to take an uglie is point the phone upwards from below the chin.


Oh nyyyyyooowwwwwww


He said maybe....

!!!!!yay!!!!!

Good karma

In our south Indian fieldsite many people
enhance their Karma with the good deed of sending positive or religious memes to their friends throughout the day.

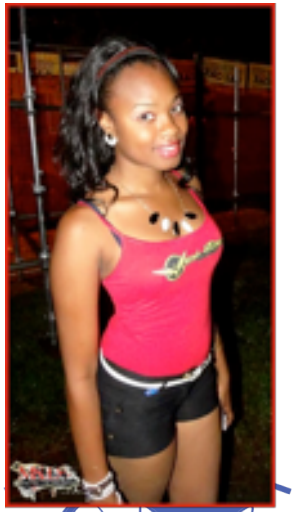
You be lurking

Roger (23) from Trinidad has a reputation to maintain as being cool and laid back. But recently he found out that his girlfriend cheated on him with a friend. Roger didn't want to reveal his feelings in front of everyone he knew and especially not on Facebook. But he knew his ex was checking his Facebook page so he shared this Kermit meme instead.

Paradise

Every day Francisco (30), in Chile, posts multiple memes to his Facebook profile. One meme shows Eve explaining to Adam that since they don't have any clothes, food, or hospitals, they must be in that paradise called Chile. This is
typical of the way Northern Chileans make fun of their own marginality as opposed to people in Santiago, the capital.

Trinidad



England

"When I broke up with my ex, I posted emotional status updates on my QQ. This way my ex could see how I was suffering, without talking directly to him. But at the same time my family could see everything and they got worried.
That's why I moved my posts to WeChat, where my ex was but my family wasn't."

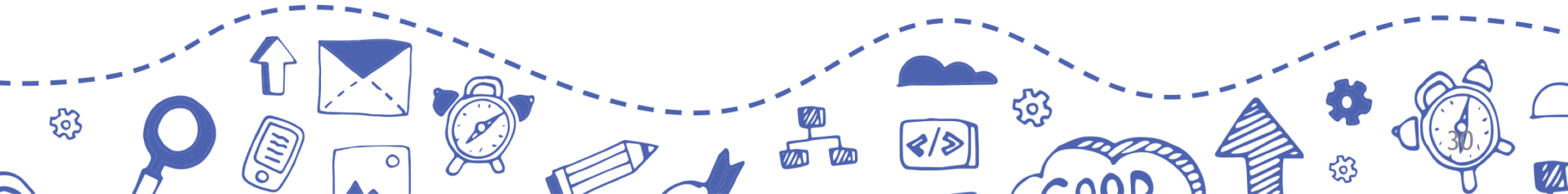
- Huang Ling, 19-year-old factory worker, South China

Qualitative Discoveries

Website discoveries to be explored and noted on p10-14 of your pack

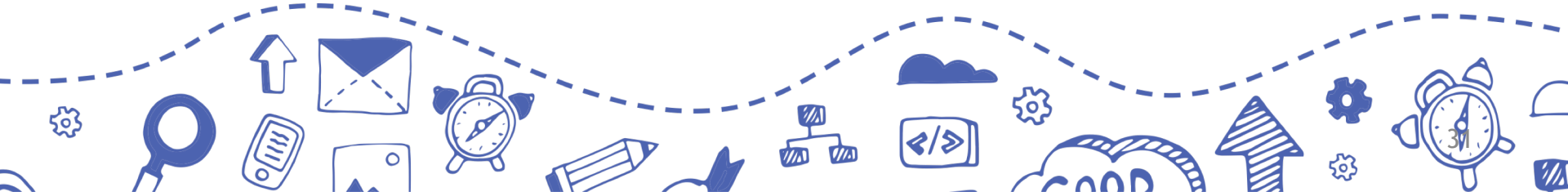
2. Survey results p15-23 of your pack

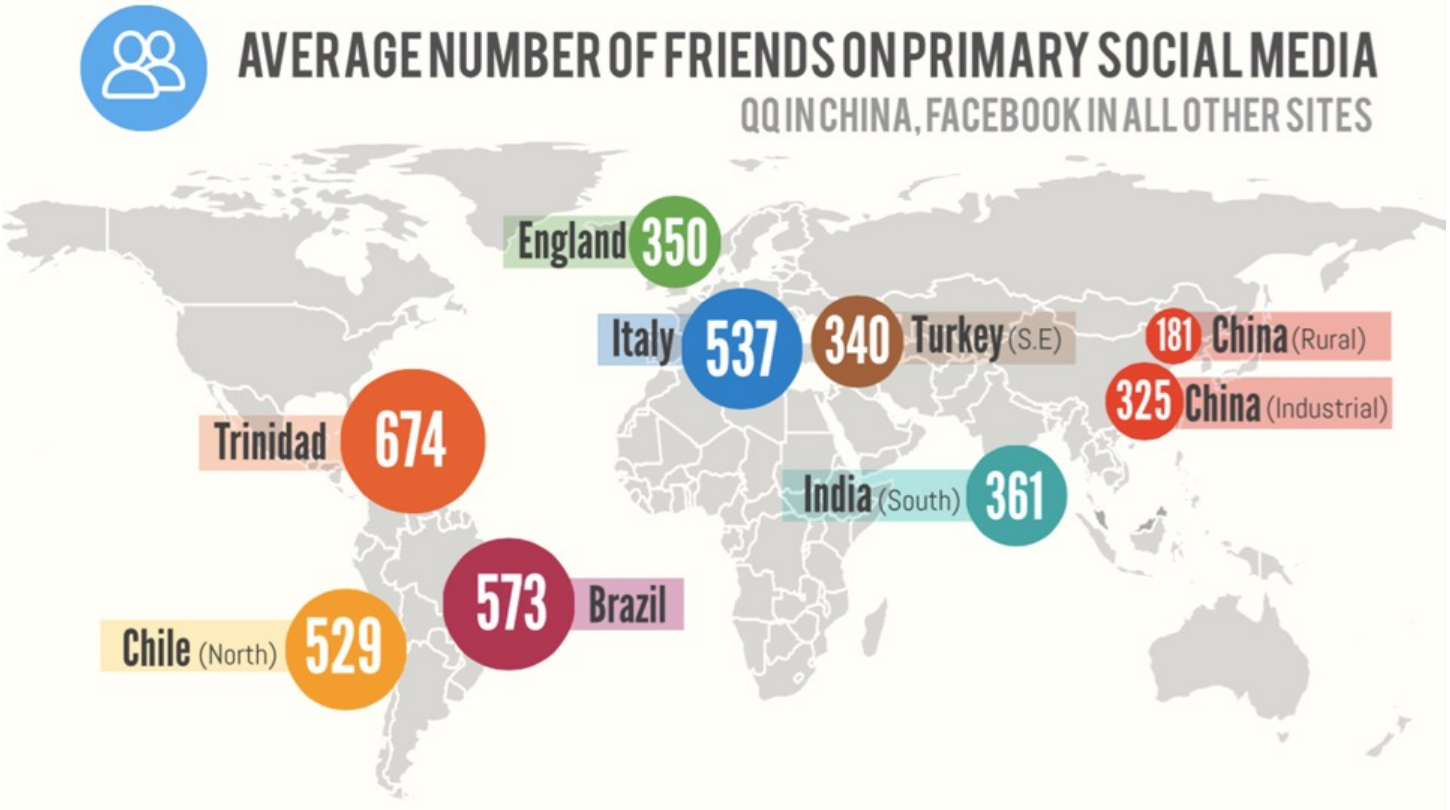
- Ethnographic accounts
- New Concepts



Survey results (p15-23 of your pack)

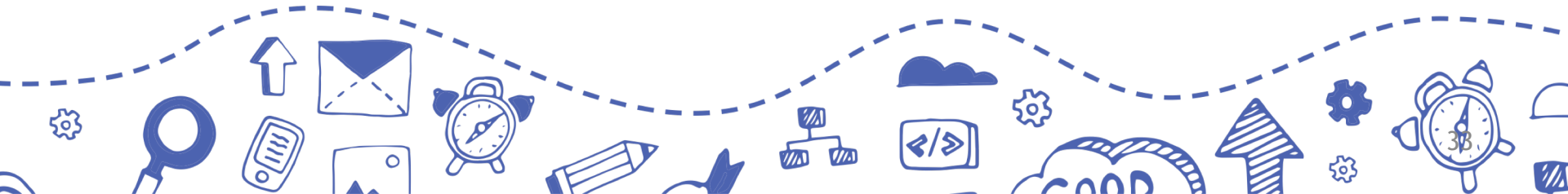
- Explore each graph or table and think about the kinds of data each provides.
- Try to interpret each graph, what does it tell us about the impact of social media in each context and globally?
- Are there any patterns? Does your interpretation match other people around you?
- Try to use the concept grid p 15 to guide and inform your observations
- What can we learn from this activity?

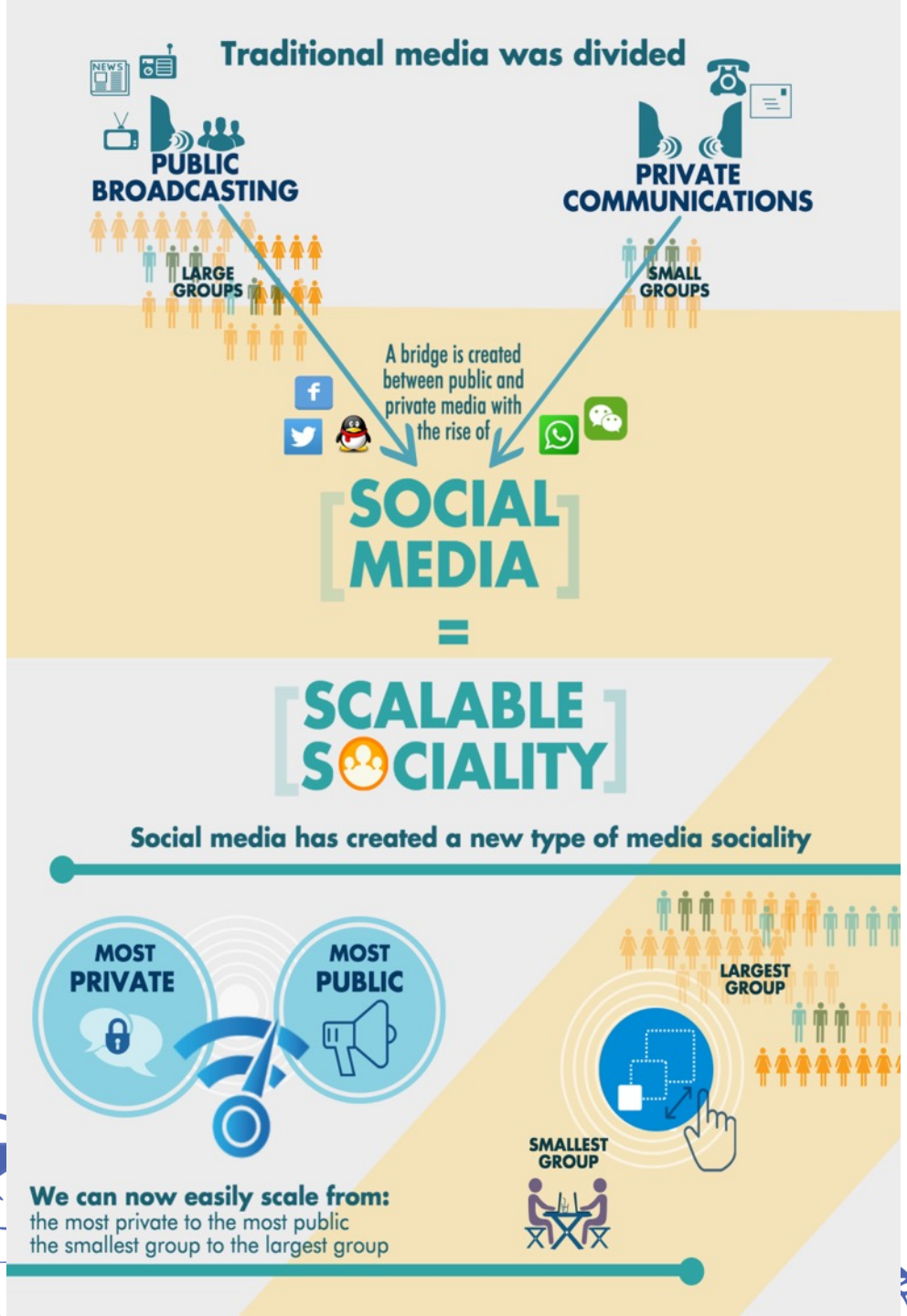



AVERAGE NUMBER OF FRIENDS ON PRIMARY SOCIAL MEDIA
QQ IN CHINA, FACEBOOK IN ALL OTHER SITES
England 350
Italy 537
340 Turkey (S.E)
181 China (Rural)
325 China (Industrial)
Trinidad 674
India (South) 361
573 Brazil
Chile (North) 529

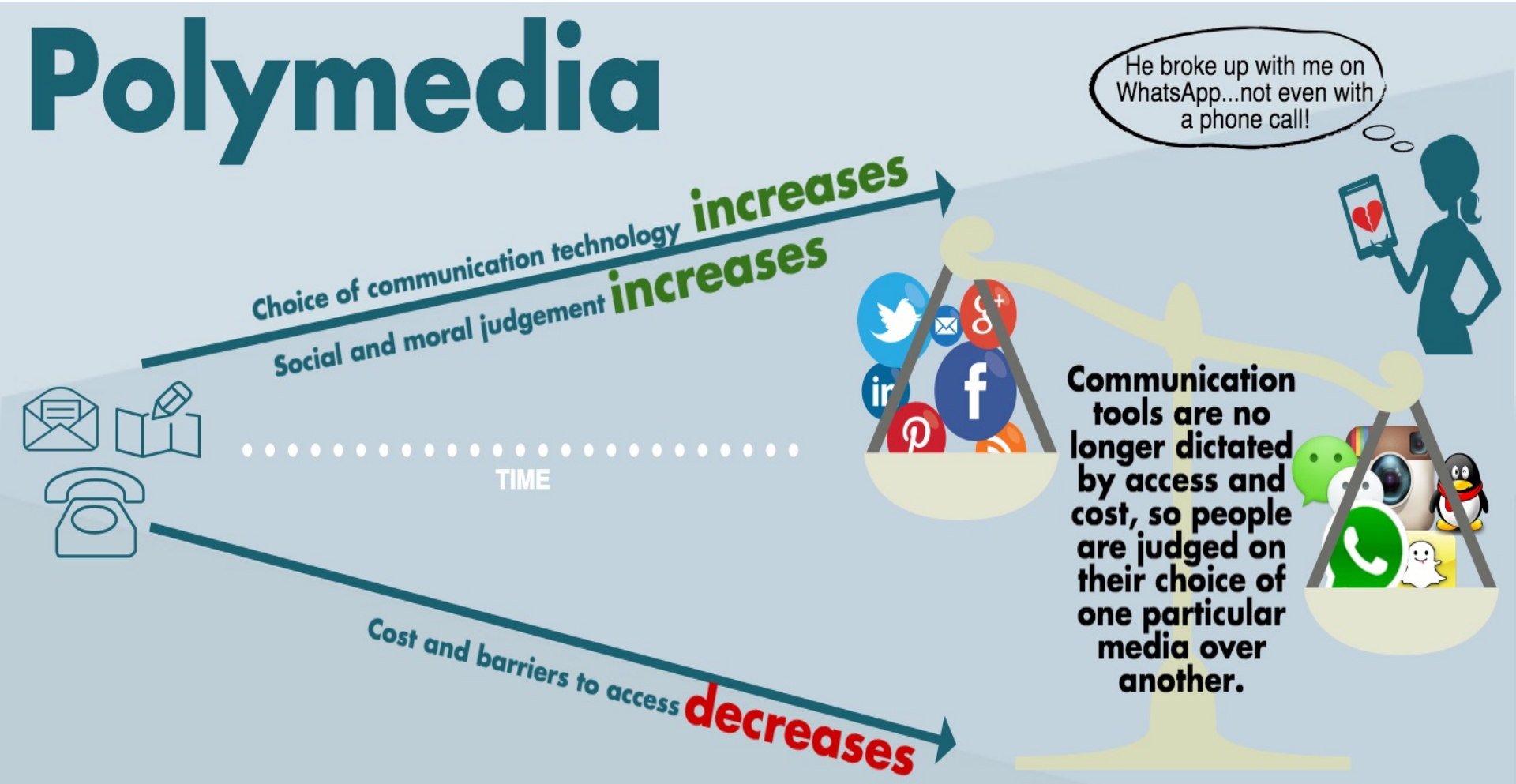
Conceptual findings

- The following slides contain the main new concepts that arose from the research
- What do you think each concept is and what do they mean?




Traditional media was divided
PUBLIC BROADCASTING
PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS
LARGE GROUPS
SMALL GROUPS
A bridge is created between public and private media with the rise of
SOCIAL MEDIA
=
SCALABLE SOCIALITY
Social media has created a new type of media sociality
MOST PRIVATE
MOST PUBLIC
LARGEST GROUP
SMALLEST GROUP
We can now easily scale from:
the most private to the most public
the smallest group to the largest group

[Polymedia: the idea that no social platform can be understood without first understanding the others that exist alongside it]



Content migration

The key to social media → is not the platforms → but genres of content → that migrate → across platforms

Arguments

School playgound → BlackBerry Messenger → England → Twitter
BlackBerry Messenger → Trinidad → Facebook

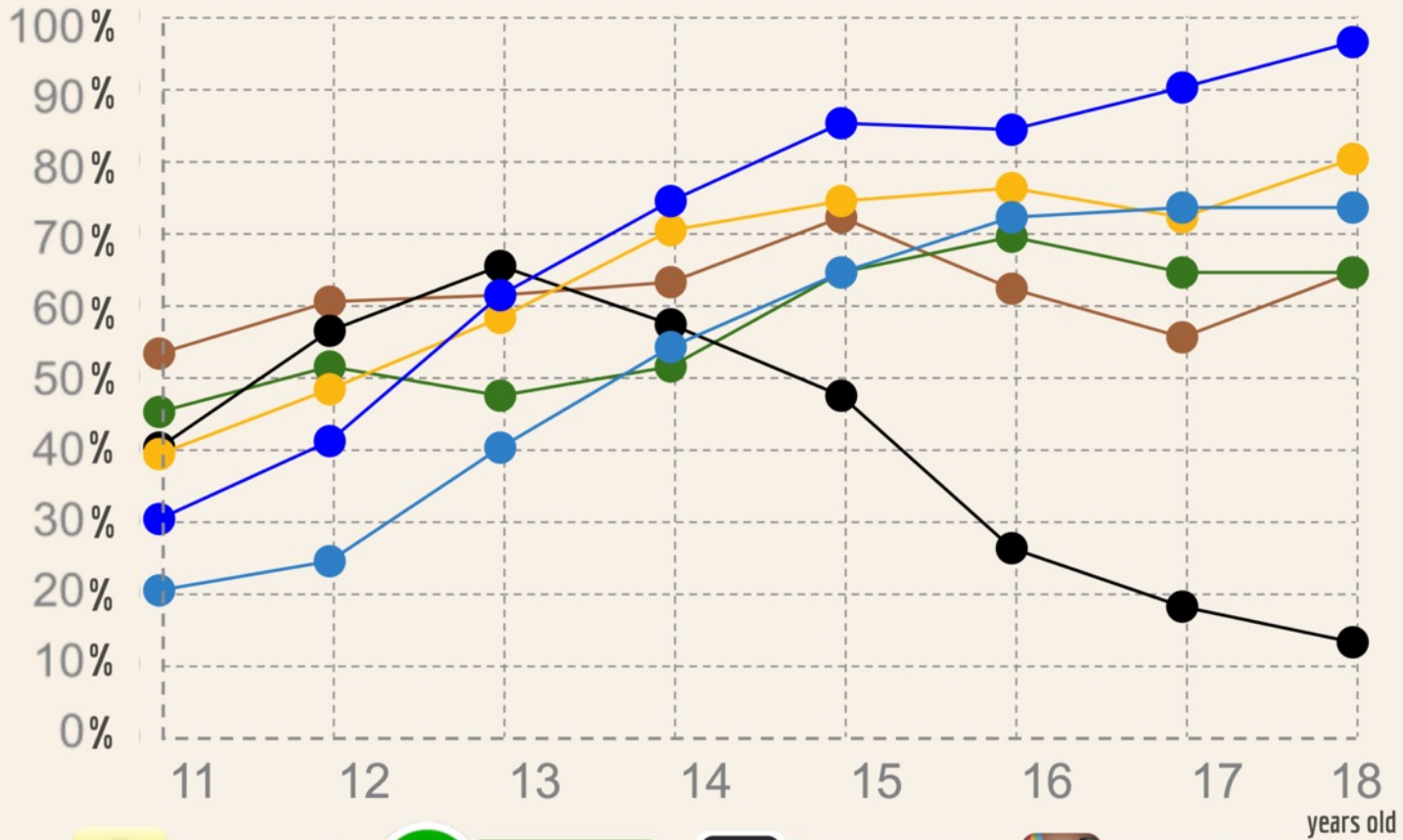
In both England and Trinidad we found that negative banter and arguments between school children migrated from the playground to BBM, then to Twitter in England and Facebook in Trinidad.

Memes

In our Brazilian and Indian fieldsites genres of content such as memes moved quickly from Orkut to Facebook, then to WhatsApp.

Orkut → Brazil → India → Facebook → WhatsApp

PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR 11 TO 18 YEARS OLDS IN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND



Sample size=2,496

SCALABLE SOCIALITY

PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

for 11-18 years old in schools in England

INSTAGRAM

where pupils welcome strangers who can appreciate their images

FACEBOOK

where pupils interact with other groups such as family, work colleagues, neighbours

TWITTER

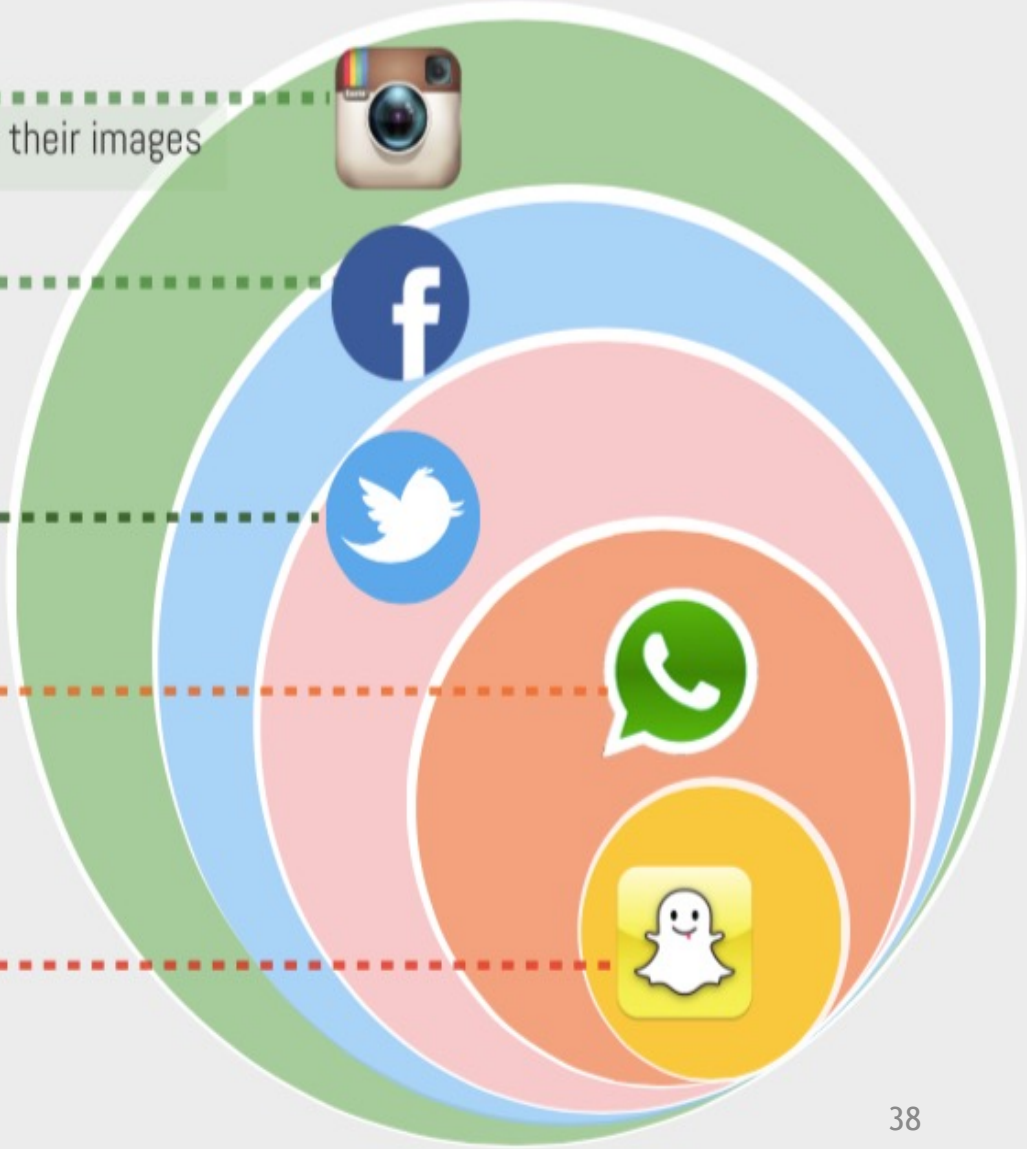
The main platform for school banter

WHATSAPP

often class groups, usually one of single sex where can discuss the other sex, and another that includes both sexes

SNAPCHAT

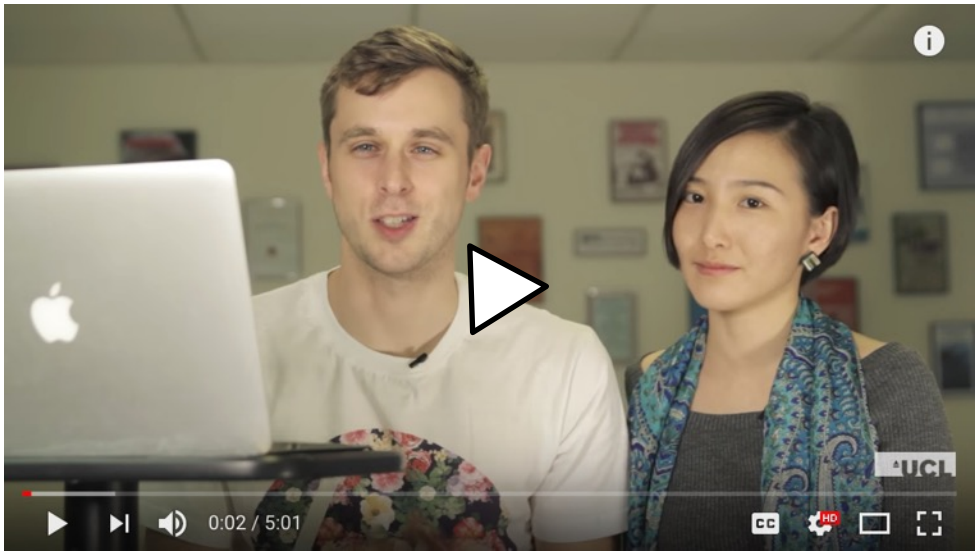
shared only amongst a few trusted friends



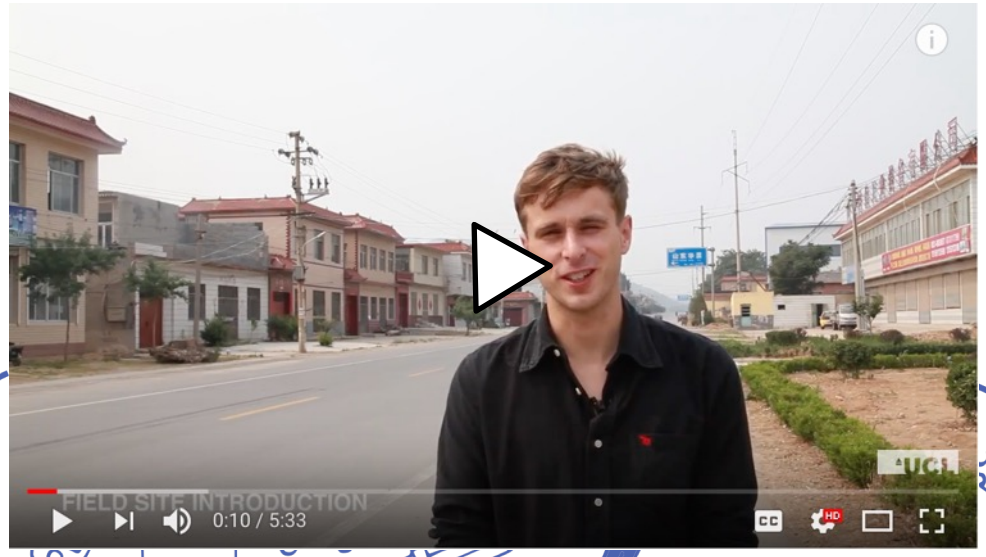
Ethnographic evidence

- On p 24-30 you'll see a summary of the 15 month ethnographic research carried out by Tom McDonald
- Read the summary then answer the questions on p31-32

Ethnography: Introduction



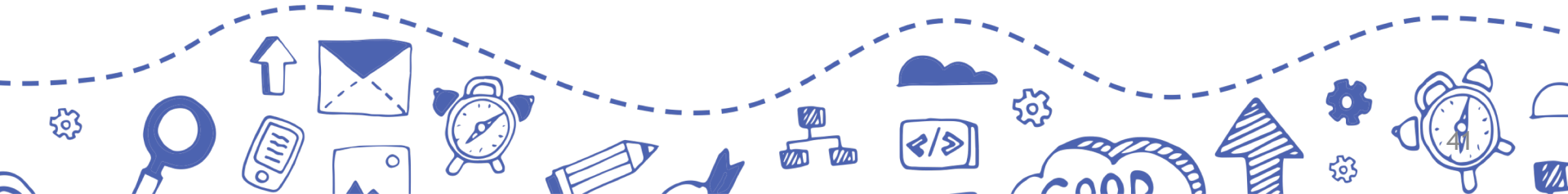
Social media in China: an introduction
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qROXrmyMbQ



Introduction to Ashnan Town
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=savEmkpxkSA

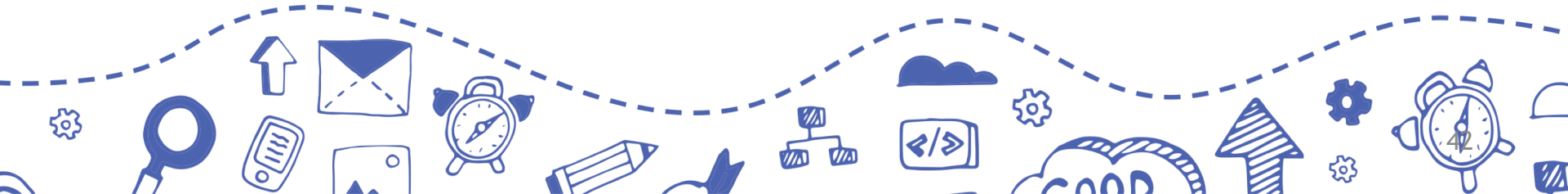
Applying what you've learnt

- Now turn to your student pack page 42 onwards you will see a range of activities
- You can work on these independently or ask your teacher for help.



Activities

1. Match the concepts p34
2. Types of globalisation p37
3. Problems with defining globalisation gapfill p38
4. Applying theoretical perspectives p39
5. Does globalisation and social media lead to cultural homogeneity? p42
6. What are the positive and negative effects of social media? p46



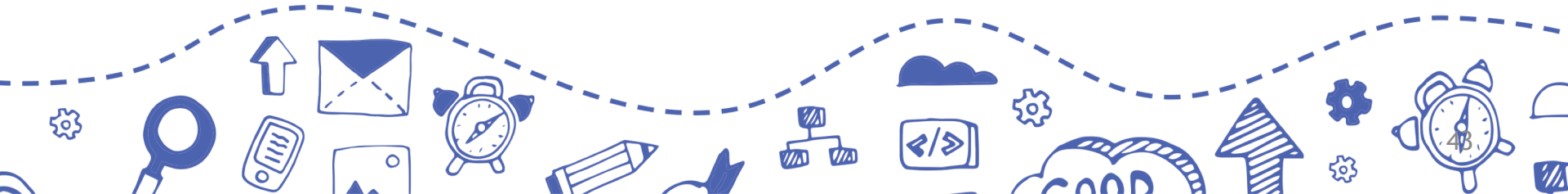
Over to you!

Think through your own use of social media and reflect on your interactions with Hong Kong students by making one of the following:

short video

storyboard

prezzi



Website

www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post

Explore our discoveries, stories from the fieldsites, and over 100 films on our website.

Multi-language e-course and website

Free online course

The Anthropology of Social Media is a 5-week e-course on the uses and consequences of social media for people around the world.

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