

Vogue after it was discovered that, 10 years earlier, as a teenager, she'd posted a tweet grumbling about her class's "stupid Asian" teaching assistant, and another tweet saying she was "Googling how not to wake up with swollen, Asian eyes".

But the story doesn't quite end there. Among those who called for McCammond's sacking was Christine Davitt, *Teen Vogue's* social media manager. It then emerged that, 11 years earlier, as a teenager, Davitt herself had posted tweets featuring a racial slur. Davitt, thankfully for her, remains in her job.

How alarming, though, to think that you could be fired for a view you held as a teenager. Indeed, fired for a view that you may never really have held at all. Rather than the public proclamation of some deep-seated belief, it may simply have been an immature expression of annoyance, an unthinking use of slang, or even just a joke intended to amuse the tiny band of friends who follow you online.

Yet now, years or even decades later, it's cost you your job, your prospects, your ability to pay your rent. You're being punished as an adult for your sins as a child. Sins that, at the time you committed them, may not even have been considered sins at all.

But these days, the past is invariably judged by the standards of the present. Which means that, on social media, you not only have to avoid offending people who might read your words now – you also have to avoid offending people who might read your words 10 or 20 years' time. Which isn't easy – because you have no idea what might cause offence in 10 or 20 years' time. Eating meat? Driving a car? Enjoying *Mrs Brown's Boys*? Your guess is as good as mine.

All I can say is: I'm glad we didn't have social media when I was a teenager. Goodness knows how many of today's ethical certainties I would have violated 25 years in advance.

Luckily, my son is too young even to know what social media is. But when he finds out, I'm going to ban him from using it – for his own good. No doubt he'll be angry, and consider it cruel and unfair. But I'm sure he'll come round to my point of view, in a decade or three. The risk simply isn't worth it.

Forget buying your children books, and taking them to museums, and hiring them a private tutor. If you want to boost their career prospects, the best thing you can do is rip their phone from their hand and smash it to bits.

Read more on children and social media:

- **Parents to blame for snowflake generation, says social media star and mother of nine**
- **Will your children's social media posts come back to haunt them?**
- **How Big Tech is coming after your kids**