Facts, not myths please!

Anne Collier

Executive Director, Editor
NetFamilyNews.org
Co-director
ConnectSafely.org

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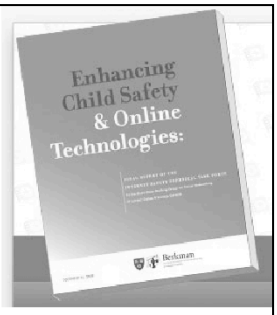
So let's review...



...from youth-risk research:

- ✓ Harassment & cyberbullying = most common risk
- ✓ Not all youth are equally at risk
- ✓ A child's psychosocial makeup & environment are better predictors of online risk than the technology he or she uses
- ✓ No single technological development can solve youth online risk

So let's look at what we as a society now know about youth risk online.

These were the key findings of last year's Internet Safety Technical Task Force, which I served on – the results of a full review of the youth-risk literature in North America (and a good deal of English-language research in Europe.)

• Harassment & bullying affects 1/3 of US teens, according to two separate national studies.

• The youth who are most at risk online are those most at risk in "real life" – we call them at-risk youth or the more old-fashioned "troubled youth," those who come from households where there's conflict or abuse; young people seeking love or validation in high-risk places outside the home; those engaged in self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, gang activity, self-harm, eating disorders.

• What we found is that age verification, which is what we were particularly charged with looking at, can't solve the very rare predator problem with which the state attorneys general who formed our task force were most concerned.

Report: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/pubrelease/isttf/

The kids most at risk *online* are those at risk *offline*

- Online risks not radically different in nature or scope than the risks youth have long faced offline.
- Online-safety messaging needs to be relevant to a child's experience – *one-size-fits-all doesn't work.*
- **Victim profile**: "Jenna," 13; divorced family; "Evilgirl" screenname; frequented sex-oriented chatrooms, where "met" 45-yr-old man; flattery; gifts; he drove across several states.... Upon his arrest, Jenna reluctant to cooperate with police.

Profile source: Finkelhor, CACRC

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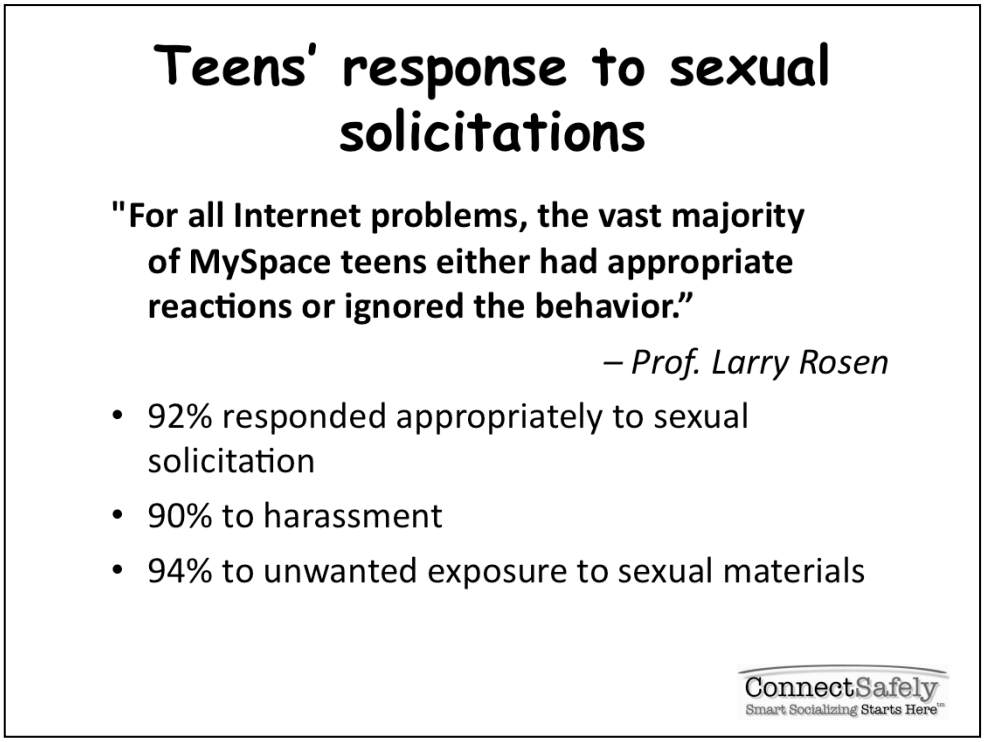
[Profile reported on and linked to here: http://www.netfamilynews.org/nl070518.html#1]

So we now have a much clearer picture of where predation fits into the risk spectrum and who's most affected: youth already considered "at risk."

In detailing the profile, Dr. Finkelhor said: "If you think about what the public impression is about this crime, it's that we have these internet pedophiles who've moved from the playground into your living room through the internet connection, who are targeting young children by pretending to be other children who are lying about their ages, their identities, and their motives, who are tricking kids into disclosing personal information about themselves or harvesting that information from blogs or websites or social-networking sites. Then armed with this information, these criminals stalk children. They abduct them. They rape them, or even worse. But actually, the research in the cases that we've gleaned from actual law enforcement files suggests a different reality for these crimes: The predominant online sex crime victims are not young children; they are teenagers. There are almost no victims in the sample that we collected from law enforcement cases that involved a child under the age of 13. The predominant sex crime scenario doesn't involve violence. Only 5% of these cases actually involved violence. Only 3% involved an abduction.... Deception does not seem to be a major factor. Only 5% of the offenders concealed the fact that they were adults from their victims, and 80% were quite explicit about their sexual intentions with the youth that they were communicating with. So these are not mostly violent sex crimes. They are criminal seductions that take advantage of common teenage vulnerabilities. The offenders lure teens after weeks of conversations with them, play on teens' desires for romance, adventure, sexual information, and understanding, and lure them to encounters that the teens know are sexual in nature with people considerably older than themselves."



The vast majority of teen social networkers respond to risky incoming behavior appropriately, says psychology prof. Larry Rosen at Cal State Dominguez Hills. **Dr. Rosen's definition of "appropriate response"** is:

"Telling the person to stop, blocking the person from commenting on their profile, removing themselves from the situation by logging off, reporting the incident to an adult or to site."

An earlier study by CACRC found that most solicitations are from peers or young adults, not so-called predators, and can be characterized as *flirting*.

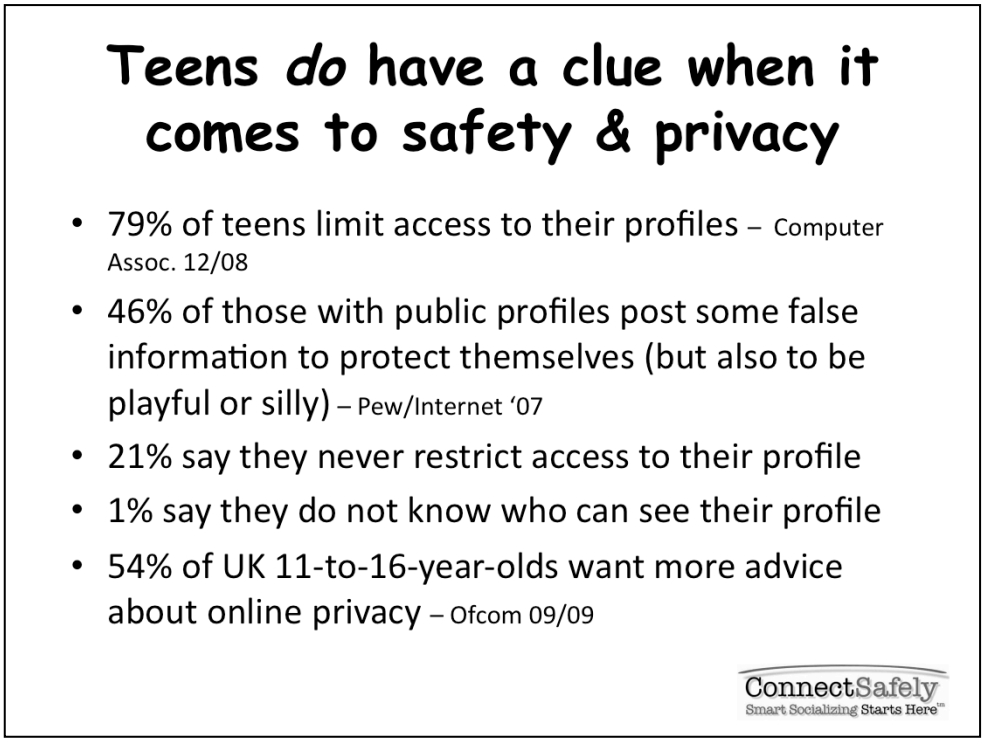
Dr. Rosen also found that fairly low numbers of social networkers were very or extremely upset by such behavior...

• sexual solicitation (19% upset)

• harassment (22%), and/or

• unwanted exposure to sexual materials (20%)

Rosen study in Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, August 2008: "The Association of Parenting Style and Child Age with Parental Limit Setting and Adolescent MySpace Behavior" <http://docs.google.com/gview?attid=0.1&thid=11e993adec902c4f&a=v&pli=1>.



A 12/08 study from Computer Assoc. (http://www.ca.com/us/press/release.aspx?cid=194331), found **that 79% of teens protect their profiles in some way**, and Facebook says its teen users use privacy tools more than adults users (60% compared to 25-30%) http://www.sitepoint.com/blogs/2009/01/11/surprisingly-younger-users-care-more-about-privacy/.

2nd bullet BUT ALSO TO BE PLAYFUL OR SILLY, PEW SAYS - illustrates the **BLURRED LINE BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION on the social Web**, borne out in a recent study at the London School of Economics <http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/10/3/393>: **They often fictionalize some of the info they put on their profiles** 1) to protect themselves and 2) just for fun. (See also "Fictionalizing their profiles" http://www.netfamilynews.org/2008/07/fictionalizing-their-profiles.html).

54% of UK 11-to-16-year-olds want more advice about online privacy, according to a 8/09 study by Ofcom, Britain's equivalent of the FCC <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consumer/2009/09/young-people-want-advice-about-online-privacy/>.

PEW STUDY IN SLIDE: http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/211/report_display.asp

As for predators in social network sites...

"There is no evidence predators are stalking or abducting unsuspecting victims based on information they posted in social sites."

–Crimes Against Children Research Center, March '09

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From a CACRC update we had been watching for since 2006: "Trends in Arrests of Online Predators," by Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell at Crimes Against Children Research Center at U. of New Hampshire, March 2009 <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV194.pdf>

Going even further, USATODAY <http://www.usatoday.com/tech/webguide/internetlife/2009-04-02-online-friends_N.htm> later cited the view of study co-author Finkelhor that **"ongoing studies show that being on a social network site doesn't create risk of sexual victimization."**

And, despite all the news about thousands of registered sex offenders being booted off MySpace, there hasn't been a single prosecution of an offender for contact with a minor on a social network site. If there had been, it would've been in the news. [One news reporter cited had a screenshot of a so-called offender's profile. I looked at it carefully and found that it hadn't been updated since it had been established – any kid could've grabbed the photo off a sex offender Web site and filled in the details as a joke.

http://www.netfamilynews.org/2009/03/major-update-on-net-predators-mostly.html

Question

Has the growth in young people's use of the Internet correlated with a rise in sexual abuse against children?

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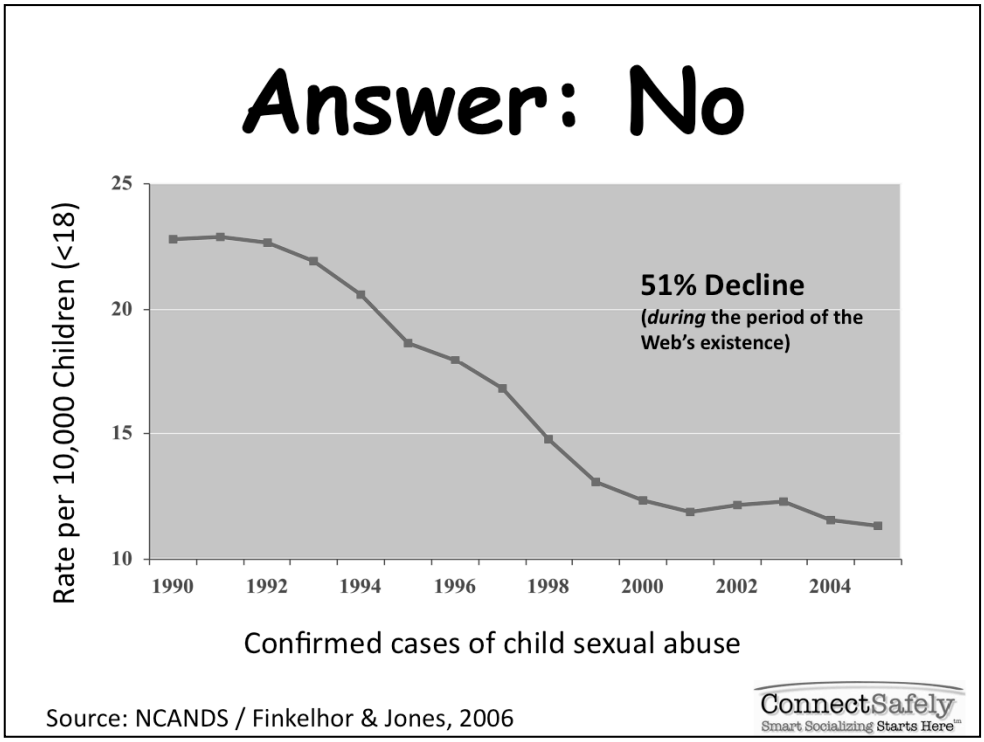

From 1990 to 2005 – the period of time that the Web was born and grew most rapidly – there was a 51% decline in overall child sexual exploitation **– the chart's showing that**: *out of every 10,000 US minors, 23 were abused, with that no. going down to 11 in 2005.*

NCANDS = National Child Abuse & Neglect Data System

AND THE TREND IS CONTINUING....

Latest FBI numbers

- Overall crime dropped 2% from 2007-'08
- All violent crime dropped too
- Rape rate down 9.6% since 2004
- Since over 50% of rapes are against minors, decline in rape = decline in child victimization.

Source: FBI & Finkelhor, 9/09

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From Finkelhor, 9/09: More recently, "the FBI reported that crime dropped 2% from 2007 to 2008. All forms of violent crime were down including the rape rate. While there is no specific child victimization category, bear in mind that well over half of the rapes known to law enforcement are against persons under 18, so *this rape decline is very much a drop in child victimization.* Importantly, the rape rate is down 9.6% since 2004, considerably more of a decline than the overall crime drop during this period."

Question:

What proportion of teens have been approached online by a predator?

A. 1 in 20
B. 1 in 10
C. 1 in 7
D. 1 in 5
E. Almost half

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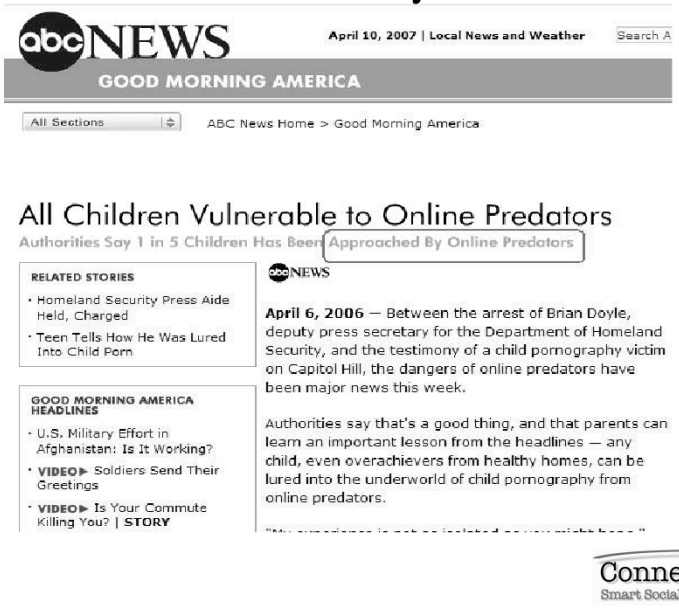
It's a trick question



abcNEWS April 10, 2007 | Local News and Weather Search A

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All Children Vulnerable to Online Predators

Authorities Say 1 in 5 Children Has Been Approached By Online Predators

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April 6, 2006 — Between the arrest of Brian Doyle, deputy press secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, and the testimony of a child pornography victim on Capitol Hill, the dangers of online predators have been major news this week.

Authorities say that's a good thing, and that parents can learn an important lesson from the headlines — any child, even overachievers from healthy homes, can be lured into the underworld of child pornography from online predators.

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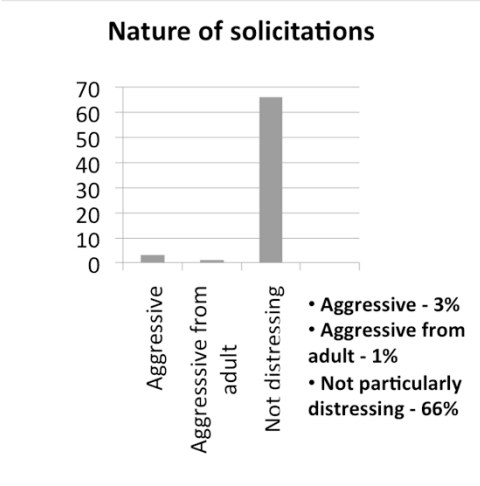
THERE NEVER HAS BEEN A STUDY ON HOW MUCH CHILDREN ARE SOLICITED BY "PREDATORS." NOTE THE HEADLINE: "All Children Vulnerable to Online **Predators**". It's a trick question because the survey *wasn't about predators*. It was about *unwanted sexual solicitations from **anybody** – flirting is often an unwanted sexual solicitation, as the researchers defined the term. Here's what the 2000 study this refers to – updated in 2006 with the figure 1 in 7, so the no. of solicitations had gone down – actually said....*

"Youth identify most sexual solicitors as being **other adolescents** (48% in 2000; 43% in 2006**) or young adults** 18-24 (20%; 30%), with few (4%; 9%) coming from older adults, and the remaining being of unknown age." THE TOTALS: 68% teens & 18-24-year-olds in 2000; 73% in 2006.

What the surveys really said



No solicitations in 2000 study led to physical contact. Only 2 in 2005 did. *"Risk is statistically so rare, it can't be estimated."* - CACRC

39% of the solic. were from fellow teens, 43% young adults (18-25), 18% ages 26+ (the age grp of what we think of as "predators," people shown on NBC's "To Catch a Predator."

Only 3% of the 1-in-7 solic. were aggressive (def: "asking to meet in RL, calling on phone, or sending mail, money or gifts"). And only 1/3 of the 3% were adult-to-teen solic. **SO the no. of adult-to-teen aggressive solicitations was actually 1%,** not the 20% the headlines and fear-mongers wld have parents believe. But also...

NONE of the solicitations in the 2000 study resulted in any sexual contact.

So the study's lead author, David Finkelhor (dir. of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, U. of New Hampshire), told me in an email that the no. of incidents was too low to show up in two separate national samples of 1500 youth. "At 1 in 500 or 1 in 1000 or below we can't estimate" the risk level of predation.

USA

For example, in Pennsylvania...

- In **1 year** (FY '06-'07) Pa. rape crisis centers served **9,934** child victims of sexual abuse
- Over **4 years** (2005 through '08), Pa. had 183 *Net-related* sexual-abuse cases – **8 involved actual minors** (the rest were sting operations with police posing as 12-14-year-old girls)
- **1 case involving a teen also involved contact on MySpace**
- 144 of stings involved **chat**, 11 **IM**, 9 unspecified; the rest were not predation cases
- Only 5 of the 183 cases involved sexual contact
- In 5 of the stings in chatrooms (no minor involved), predator viewed "teen's" MySpace profile
- Research needed into the role social networking does play

Source: Nancy Willard, Center for Safe & Responsible Internet Use, Jan. 2009

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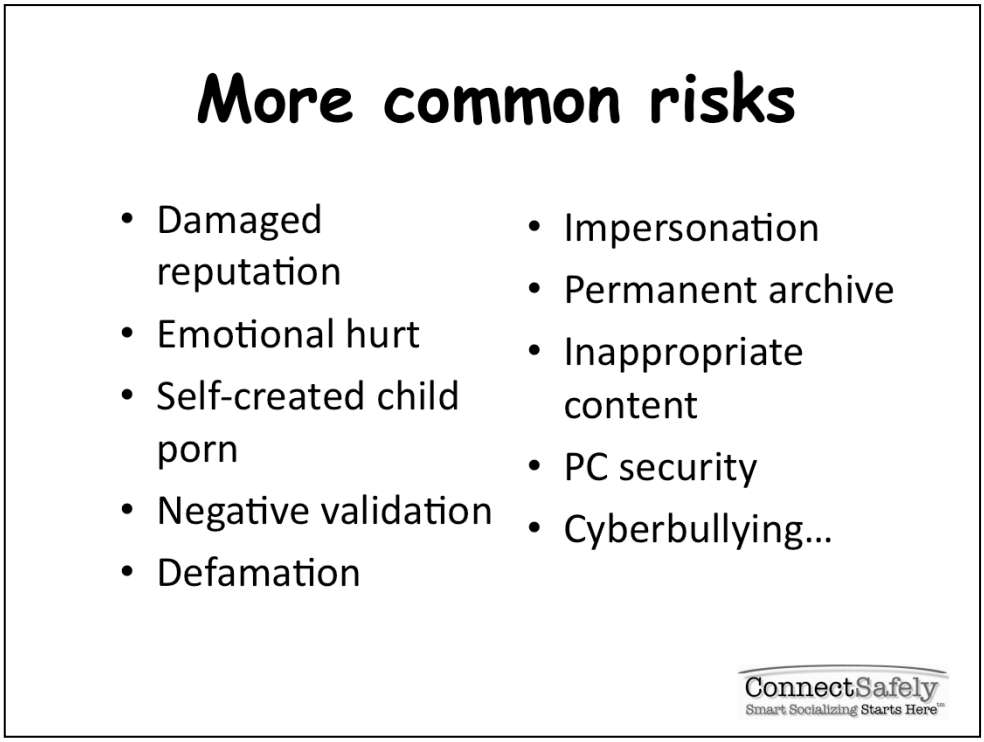
Data from the state of Pennsylvania offers a case study [see http://www.netfamilynews.org/2009/01/pennsylvania-case-study-social.html and http://www.netfamilynews.org/2009/02/sex-offenders-in-social-sites-consider.html.]

"Despite the fact that for the last 4 years, the Child Predator Unit has 10 staff members diligently pursuing online sexual predators, primarily through sting operations, only 8 reported incidents actually involved real teen victims (the rest were police posing as children). This number should be compared to the 9,934 victims of sexual abuse served by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape during *one* fiscal year. Clearly, based on its own data, the Internet is not the primary means that predators are using to contact and communicate with child and teen victims." ***The other arrests were non-predation-related - of individuals found to have child pornography*** *on their computers, all but one the result of an analysis of the computer owned by a person arrested in a sting.*

Despite [the police unit's] establishment of one or more public profiles on MySpace, there has apparently not been one successful sting operation initiated on MySpace in the more than two years during which these sting profiles have been in existence.

From study's Notes: "This author also sought data on predator arrests from Attorneys General Blumenthal and Cooper [CT and NC], as well as all of AGs who signed the agreement with MySpace for the formation of the Task Force. None ... had any data. In a telephone conversation on Sep. 10, 2008, Connecticut Assistant AG Anthony Janotta, suggested reviewing the news reports on http://mycrimespace.com and searching using the terms "abuse, myspace." North Carolina Assistant Attorney General Kevin West stated in a September 18, 2008 email: " I would be happy to share the information you are asking for with you...if the information existed."

[I had a similar, earlier experience while seeking data from AGs, written up here http://www.netfamilynews.org/nl070316.html#1 (March 2007).]



MOST OF THESE THE RESULT OF REASONABLY NORMAL ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR WITH THE IMPACT OF THE "NET EFFECT" I mentioned in my keynote

* Damaged reputation - photos, videos, and information young people post that can affect the views of future employers, university admission officials, people they meet in future, etc. CAN ALSO EMBARRASS FAMILY MEMBERS.
* It's almost impossible to delete what's posted online, and there's the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine.
* The case of two young teens in Florida whose convictions for trafficking in child porn were upheld by a state court of appeals.
* The wrong kind of validation for eating disorders, substance abuse, gang activity, self-harm….
* Impersonation, defamation, etc. can be forms of cyberbullying, which we'll look at more closely in a moment.
* Pornography
* Potential for hacking, downloading malicious software

This *just* in...

Survey on teaching "cybersecurity, cybersafety, and cyberethics" released yesterday:

- Students aren't getting adequate instruction
- 90%+ support this instruction
- 35% of teachers & 50% of administrators say district requires this instruction
- More than 90% of schools filter...

Just yesterday, the National Cybersecurity Alliance released a survey of 1,000 teachers, 400 administrators, and 200 tech coordinators, finding: "Although interest in teaching cybersecurity, cybersafety, and cyberethics, actual time spent teaching these topics in the classroom is low, and there's a "low level of integration" of key topics into "everyday instructional activities."

National Cybersecurity Alliance and Microsoft <http://staysafeonline.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=67&item=50>

"The survey also found a high reliance on shielding students instead of teaching behaviors for safe and secure Internet use. More than 90% of schools have built up digital defenses, such as filtering and blocking social network sites...."

The view over in the UK

Students "given a greater degree of freedom to surf the Internet at school are less vulnerable to online dangers in the long-term."

- **5 of 37 schools "outstanding" in Net safety**
- **Characteristics**:
  - Whole-school-community approach
  - "Managed" rather than "locked down" filtering system

Now look at a study by the British government's education watchdog Ofsted released just last week:

Ofsted looked at the state of online safety in 37 schools for **students aged 5-18**, finding that five of the schools had outstanding Net-safety conditions and instruction.

* Whole school – very individual, school by school, but **"whole school vision**" – with admin, faculty, tech experts, Acceptable Use Policy all implementing consciously, together

* "'Managed' filtering systems," Ofsted explains, "have fewer inaccessible sites than "locked down" systems and so require pupils to take responsibility themselves for using new technologies safely. Although the 13 schools which used 'locked down' systems kept their pupils safe while in school, such systems were less effective in helping them to learn how to use new technologies safely."

<http://www.netfamilynews.org/2010/02/more-online-freedom-for-studentslower.html>.

Teens' lives *saved*, thanks to social-network sites…

- **"Plan To 'Shoot Up' School Foiled"**

Jan 12, 2009: "Deputies in Transylvania County [N.C] said they got a call from a sheriff's office in New York. A teenager there apparently came forward and said she met a 15-year-old on MySpace who said he had a dangerous plan."

msnbc

- **"Facebook friend saves life of suicidal teenager from the other side of the Atlantic"** – UK's *Daily Mail*, 4/5/09

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The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in New York gets more referrals to its Web site from social network sites than it does on the phone. It coordinates **120 hotlines nationwide, offering free, confidential support, 24/7**. They get some 1,500 calls a day nationwide (if someone doesn't answer after six rings, the call bounces to the nearest crisis center) - questions **about depression, relationships, loneliness, substance abuse, how to help friends and loved ones, etc., as well as about suicide.**

Jan. 8/09 AP story: "Police: Teen planning school shooting in custody" A teenager who authorities say was plotting to "shoot up" a North Carolina high school [yesterday] is in custody because of a tip from a teen who chatted with the suspect online [in MySpace], investigators said. They took a 15-year-old boy into custody last Friday and found at his home a computer and DVD with plans for an attack on Brevard High School, Transylvania County Sheriff's spokesman Lt. Brian Kreigsman said... Kreigsman said the teen told a 16-year-old girl from NY earlier that day that he planned to "shoot up a school" on Monday...."The potential was here for this to be a major threat."

See "The social Web's lifeline" http://www.netfamilynews.org/nl070323.html#1

April 5, '09 Daily Mail– **Facebook friend saves life of suicidal teen across Atlantic** http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1167485/Facebook-friend-saves-life-suicidal-teenager-the-Atlantic.html – Maryland, US Facebook friend noticed suicidal warning of16-yr-old boy in Oxford, UK, on her friends list (didn't know name, only school) -> parents notified British Embassy in DC -> Scotland Yard -> local police found 8 possible households, went to all, found boy conscious but in drug overdose, took to hospital, story ended with his release and recovery at home.

Keys to Net-safety solutions

- Awareness of fixed/mobile **Web as a mirror of offline life**, not just technology
- What's happening online is more about **adolescent behavior** than tech, *but...*
- **Technology *affects* outcomes** (Net effect)
- Solutions need many skill sets in **collaboration** (whole-school approach)
- Solutions are a *process* – **"Teachable moments"**

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• Not so much about technology as about adolescent development and behavior, but technology *affects* outcomes.

• Since this is largely about adolescent development and behavior, not technology, the solution is necessarily holistic and collaborative. The multiple skills needed are teens themselves, parents, educators, tech experts, law enforcement, social services, psychologists, and other healthcare professionals. IT expertise is sometimes useful too. Internet-safety "experts" can be helpful in this transitional period, but we should be working ourselves out of a job!

• Solutions are usually a *process* – for most adolescents in non-emergency situations, situations that come up can be used as "teachable moments" so that youth can learn from the experience rather than repeat it. Non-reactive discussion and reflection are needed, not one-shot school assemblies or rules which students can parrot back but which don't change behavior.

[We need to develop strategies for dealing with this new equation: teenage brain + online environment + the Net effect – how to teach self-respect and citizenship in a world that includes the online environment. This is not done without a collective effort ... or overnight! *For example, bullying has been with us for a long time, so cyberbullying doesn't have an instant solution either.]*

Thank you!

Anne Collier
anne@netfamilynews.org
...@connectsafely.org

os3.connectsafely.org