Online Safety 3.0: Youth Risk on the Social Web

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Evolution of Online Safety

Children as victims:

1.0 (most of the 90’s) Pornography & predators:
   Protecting children from bad adults. Children as consumers of information, not as creators and based on assumptions of risk, not actual research

2.0 (around 2005) Recognizing that kids can create content harm other kids and themselves. Protecting children from cyberbullying & posting inappropriate or dangerous content
Online Safety 3.0

- Research-based, not fear-based, so relevant
- Flexible, layered – not one-size-fits-all
- Respectful of youth agency – stakeholders in positive outcomes, not just potential victims
- Positive, empowering: Not just safety *from* (bad outcomes) but safety *for* good outcomes
- Digital citizenship + media literacy = full, constructive participation society
4 Types of Online Safety

• Physical safety – freedom from physical harm
• Psychological safety – freedom from cruelty, harassment, and exposure to potentially disturbing material
• Reputational and legal safety – freedom from unwanted social, academic, professional, and legal consequences that could affect you for a lifetime
• Identity, property, and community safety – freedom from theft of identity & property
The ‘Net effect’

For the most part, online issues are a reflection of offline life, however, the Internet does change things a bit

- **Persistence & searchability:** Net as permanent searchable archive
- **Replicability:** ability to copy and paste from anywhere, to anywhere
- **Scalability:** high potential visibility
- **Invisible audiences:** you never know who’s watching
- **Blurring of public and private:** boundaries not clear

**AND**

- **Disinhibition:** Lack of visual cues reduces empathy

Source: danah boyd: *Taken out of Context*, 2008
What parents worry about

• Predation
• Viewing inappropriate content
• Posting/sending inappropriate content
• Cyberbullying & harassment
• Online addiction
• Online contributing to destructive, illegal or inappropriate behavior
• Device security & social engineering
What we now know

...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
Predation
Question:
What proportion of American 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
You've seen the headlines
It’s a trick question
The study asked about “unwanted sexual solicitation”

• That is not the same as predation
• Most solicitations came from other youth
• Most were not aggressive or dangerous
• Most were handled by the young person
Online sexual abuse is horrific, but it's not an epidemic

Confirmed cases of child sexual abuse

Source: NCANDS / Finkelhor & Jones, 2006
What the Internet Safety Technical Task Force Found

• Cases typically involved post-pubescent youth who were aware that they were meeting an adult male for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity.

• Minors are not equally at risk online. Those who are most at risk often engage in risky behaviors and have difficulties in other parts of their lives. The psychosocial makeup of and family dynamics surrounding particular minors are better predictors of risk than the use of specific media or technologies.

• Bullying and harassment, most often by peers, are the most frequent threats that minors face, both online and offline.
"Posting personal information does not by itself increase risk."

--Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 2/07
Inappropriate content
Parental controls like fences around swimming pools....

To keep them safe around all water, we teach kids to swim
Ultimately, the best filter runs between the child’s ears, not on a device.

Protection that last’s a lifetime

Training wheels for young kids
Cyberbullying
Bullying has been around for a very long time, but cyberbullying...

- Can often be in both “real world” & online
- Can follow them home
- Can stick around forever
- Happens in social networks, chat, e-mail, text messaging and phone calls
- “Power imbalance” not necessarily based on physical characteristics
- Girls more than boys
What is Cyberbullying

- Flaming
- Harassment
- Denigration
- Impersonation
- Outing
- Trickery
- Exclusion
- Cyberstalking

Source: Nancy Willard, Center for Safe & Responsible Use of the Internet
A lot of Kids Impacted

Studies are all over the map
Generally between 15% to 30%

Physical bullying in the past year went down from 22 percent to 15 percent between 2003 and 2008

Source: Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine: David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, Richard Ormrod, and Sherry Hamby
Some Kids More than Others

54% of Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Youth cyberbullied in past 30 days

Source: Warren Blumenfeld and Robyn Cooper, Iowa State Univ.
Never too early

“Cyberbullying and victimization begins as early as the 2nd grade for some children”

Source: Survey of Internet and At-risk Behaviors, Rochester Inst. Of Technology 2008
Serious Consequences

“Children who are bullied may be afraid to go to school. They may complain of headaches or stomachaches and have trouble concentrating on schoolwork. In the long term, the consequences of bullying may be even more severe. Children who are bullied have higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and other mental health conditions. Children who are bullied are more likely to think about suicide. Some of these wounds may linger into adulthood.”

How you treat others affects you

“Youth who engage in online aggressive behavior by making rude or nasty comments or frequently embarrassing others are more than twice as likely to report online interpersonal victimization.”
Most kids don’t bully

![Graph showing bullying statistics](chart.png)

Any of these (net): 38%

Q905: Thinking about bullying online, have you ever...? Please select all that apply
Q907: Thinking about bullying by cell phone, have you ever...? Please select all that apply
Base: All respondents (n=655)

Source: Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey
Perceived norms affect behavior

“The most common (and erroneous) perception, however, is that the majority engage in and support such behavior. Multisite analysis reveals that perceptions of bullying behaviors are highly predictive of personal bullying behavior—more so than actual school norms.”

Source: Assessing Bullying in New Jersey Secondary Schools: Applying the Social Norms Model to Adolescent Violence: Craig, Perkins 2008
Climate should reflect reality

“Schools must work to create a climate in which responsible use of Facebook and instant messaging programs (for example), is “what we do around here” and “just how it is at our school and among our students.” This can occur by focusing attention on the *majority* of youth who *do* utilize computers and cell phones in acceptable ways..”

Source: Social Norms and Cyberbullying Among Students: Cyberbullying Research Center
Examples of positive norming

80% of Crystal Lake 6 - 8th grade students say students should NOT tease in a mean way, call others hurtful names, or spread unkind stories about other students.

Source: Assessing Bullying in New Jersey Secondary Schools: Applying the Social Norms Model to Adolescent Violence: Craig, Perkins 2008
Encourage your child to share his or her concerns. Listen in a loving manner and support your child's feelings.

Learn as much as you can about the situation. Ask your child to describe how and when the bullying occurs and who is involved.

Teach your child how to respond to the bullying. Don't promote retaliation or fighting back against a bully. Instead, encourage your child to maintain his or her composure.

Contact school officials. You might also want to encourage school officials to address bullying — including cyberbullying — as part of the curriculum.

Follow up. Keep in contact with school officials. If the bullying seems to continue, be persistent.

Boost your child's self-confidence. Help your child get involved in activities that can raise self-esteem, such as sports, music or art. Encourage your child to build friendships and develop his or her social skills.

Know when to seek professional help. Consider professional or school counseling for your child if his or her fear or anxiety becomes overwhelming.

http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bullying/MH00126/NSECTIONGROUP=2
Sexting
Ill-advised and often illegal
'Sexting'

• Nude or sexually explicit photo-sharing or text messages
• Usually via cellphones, but possible via other devices and Web
• **Illegal when involving minors**
• A few prosecutors have charged teens with production, possession, distribution of child porn
Non-legal consequences

• Emotional or reputational damage
  – Feeling humiliated
• School discipline
• Invisible viewership – can be forwarded to anyone
• Potentially searchable on the Web, possibly forever
How Common is Sexting?

An early survey found that 20% of teens sent a ‘sext’

Which led to stories like this:
But a recent Pew Study Found

- 4% sent a text
- 15% received a text

People sent sext messages to

- Boyfriend or girlfriend 20%
- Someone had a crush on 21%
- Ex boyfriend/girlfriend 19%
- Best Friend 14%
- Friends other than best 18%
- Someone I don’t know 11%
- Classmates 4%
- Someone else 14%
- Decline to answer 3%

Source: Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey, 2009
Why do kids ‘sext’?

• Teen “romance” – expression of shared intimacy with partner
• Flirting
• Showing off (party behavior)
• Impulsive risk-taking
• Peer pressure
• Revenge
• Bullying or intimidation
• Blackmail/Extortion
“Sextortion”

Research is needed to determine if it’s a big risk or just a few cases
Did bad things happen after sexting?

The photo was forwarded to an authority figure and I got in trouble 2%

The photo was posted online where many people could see it 1%

The person I sent the photo to threatened to send it to someone else 4%

I accidentally sent the photo to the wrong person 2%

The persons I sent the photo to made fun of me 2%

The photo was forwarded to someone I didn't want to see it 2%

Source: Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey, 2009. Based on kids who sent texts (n=54)
What should a parent do?

• Have a family discussion, explain consequences
• If happens...
  – Stay calm
  – Make sure they *stop immediately*
• If image received, tell them *not to forward it*
• Talk with other parents & teens involved
• Think carefully before involving police (could implicate your own child)

• *More advice at ConnectSafely.org/sexting*
When law enforcement needs to be involved

- If intimidation, blackmail or extortion is involved
- If someone is distributing images
- If groomed or pressured by an adult

Image: Norman Rockwell “The Runaway”
1958 Saturday Evening Post cover
Youth behavior in context of sexually charged culture

• Young people see what’s around them

• Young people are growing up in what sexual abuse prevention specialist Cordelia Anderson has referred to as a “sexually toxic culture.”

• Reinforced by media, fashion industry, TV, movies, gaming, everywhere
“There ought to be a law”

- Think about unintended consequences of any legislation
- Many laws now in place can be applied to online risks
- Most problems have to do with youth behavior, not criminal activity
Fear Can Cause Irrational Behavior

“Among the many lessons of the homeland terrorist attacks of 2001 was that fear has powerful public health implications. People chose to drive instead of flying, thereby raising their risk of injury or death. Thousands took broad-spectrum antibiotics to prevent possible anthrax infections, thereby accelerating antimicrobial resistance. Such potentially harmful actions were taken by people seeking a sense of safety because they were afraid.”

Dealing with the dangers of fear: the role of risk communication.
Gray GM, Ropeik DP. Harvard Center for Risk Analysis
One-size does not fit all

**Primary**: new media literacy & citizenship all students, grade levels, appropriate subjects

**Secondary**: more focused prevention e.g., bullying, sexting; taught by experts *as needed & developmentally appropriate*

**Tertiary**: prevention *and* intervention for youth already at risk; done by social workers, mental health professionals, etc.
Online Safety Technology Working Group
Report to Congress

- Provide targeted online-safety messaging and treatment.
- Avoid scare tactics and promote the social-norms approach to risk prevention.
- Promote digital citizenship in pre-K-12 education as a national priority.
- Promote instruction in digital media literacy and computer security in pre-K-12 education nationwide.
He said it best

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”

From: Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s
First Inauguration Speech (3/4/1933)
Cornerstones of Online Safety 3.0

- Media literacy / Critical thinking
- Digital citizenship
Advice to children & services providers

“With great power comes great responsibility”
-Ben Parker, Spiderman
Thank you!

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