



SELFIECOP

SELFIES & SEXTING THE PERFECT STORM

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Introduction

SelfieCop is the brainchild of John Condron & Ronan Diffily and Web Governance Consultant, Shane Diffily.

Cases of Cybercrimes resulting from teenagers misusing their phones as part of their sexual interactions and explorations, is a recurring problem. The idea for SelfieCop transpired out of the need to reduce risks and dangers these practices pose to vulnerable young people.

The **NSPCC** (2012) appealed to technology providers to ***produce 'easy to use, age appropriate tools'*** designed to avoid, reduce or try to dispel distress which results from the creation, dissemination and exhibition of unwanted sexual images and texts.

SelfieCop is an app created for parents by parents to do exactly that!

Until now there has been no effective purposefully developed software available which filters the contents of mobile phones and safeguards our children from potentially damaging material.

Dr Maureen Griffin (2011) founder of ISFSI identifies that whilst 'Net Nanny' software will block unsuitable internet material on home computers, children are accessing the internet via popular mobile internet access without essential parental control filters.

"The best parental control, when it comes to internet and mobile technology safety, is parental involvement". ISFSI, 2010

How does it work?

If a child takes any type of digital media, be it video or picture on or to their phone the SelfieCop app will notify the parent or guardian via email of the picture/video taken.

- The email will contain a copy of the image/video.
- It is received within seconds of the child taking these items.
- The app has in built security measures whereby a child cannot delete the pictures or videos while offline.
- If the child takes a picture/video when there is no network coverage or when the SIM card is removed, once network contact is re-established or when the SIM card is reinserted the SelfieCop application will have stored the items, sending them on sequentially to the parent via email.
- If the child tries to tamper with i.e. delete the app, a message of doing so is sent directly to the parents/guardians email account.
- After an image is taken it is immediately and permanently deleted from our servers, so either the parent/guardian will possess a copy of the digital media.

SelfieCop has the ability to detect any picture message received or taken through all current mediums of instant messaging including **SnapChat, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram.**

Previously, there was no way for parents to know what images/videos were being distributing between their kids and their friends on Snapchat.

9 out of 10 parents never knew that inappropriate contact was made (Netlingo, 2010).

Are the images/videos depicting something that should not have been conveyed?

Automatic deletion of picture messages and videos seconds after being delivered and received is a signature feature of SnapChat and a favourite social and mobile platform amongst adolescents.

Bielenberg (2014) highlights the growing **fears concerning SnapChat** over rampant 'sexting'. This topic will be further explored throughout the literature review as well as other societal factors which are influencing this unfavourable harmful behaviour.

According to research **three-quarters** of Irish 13-14 year olds and nearly half of those aged 11 to 12 are active on social networking sites (Sheehan, 2014). Over one third of all 9-16 year olds (**36%**) have a profile on a media sharing platform (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014).

Findings from their Irish report 'Net Children Go Mobile' show that overall **21% of Irish children say that they have seen sexual images** in the past 12 months, online or offline. **1 in 5** (20%) have been bothered by something on the internet in the past year, a two-fold increase on the figure reported by 9-16 year olds in for the EU Kids Online survey in 2011.

Seeing sexual images is primarily related to age.

47% of older teens have seen sexual images in the past 12 months in comparison to **11% of younger children**. The number of teens who have seen sexual images and who were upset by the experience; rises in the younger age brackets.

The receiving of sexual messages also increases with age: **4%** of children aged 11-12 say that they have received such messages. **10%** of 13-14 year olds and **22%** of 15-16 year olds report to having received sexual messages online. The statistics also suggest that, seeing sexual images is more common among boys and older teenagers, yet younger children and girls are more likely to be upset by what they come across.

Dawn of the Selfie

The advent of the '**Selfie**' the digital self-portrait has become the newest trend in web culture amongst younger social media users (Sifferlin, 2013).

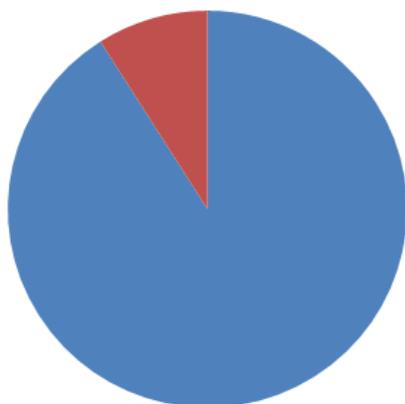
Albeit not a new phenomenon, **#selfie** began to appear back in 2004 on photo sharing site Flickr and MySpace (Rutledge, 2013). The term selfie was defined in the UrbanDictionary.com in 2005 as:

“A picture taken of yourself that is planned to be uploaded to Facebook, Myspace or any other sort of social networking website. A selfie is usually accompanied by a kissy face or the individual looking in a direction that is not towards the camera.”

Rutledge (2013) attributes its resurgence to expanding technological innovations and the fact that more people have mobiles with cameras. More than **31 million Instagram photos** have been hashtagged **#selfie**, and according to a recent study by the Pew

Research Center, **91 percent** of teens have posted a selfie online (Walker, 2013).

15,000,000 youths use instant messaging worldwide (netlingo.com 2013).



Pew Research Center, 91 percent of teens have posted a selfie online

It is used daily by more than a **third of Irish 13-16 year olds** (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014).

Teens and tweens are migrating from costly text messaging with the number of texts falling from **30%** since the start of 2012, as reported by Irish telecoms regulator Comreg.

Instagram is the most popular media sharing platform in Ireland according to 42% of 9-16 year olds (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014). Mobile Internet access allows for easy real time posting of photos and videos via free instant messaging services and blogs such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Viber, Flickr, Twitter, Tumblr, kik, and Facebook Messenger.

Among those aged 12-15 with a smartphone, an estimated 187 instant messages (IM) are sent in a typical week. This volume of instant messages is equivalent to the volume

of text messages sent by all 12-15s with a mobile phone (193 texts) and the volume of text messages sent by all children with a smartphone (195 texts) (ofcom, 2012).

Teenager's inquisitive nature places them at the forefront of new technologies, pushes their boundaries, facilitating self-exploration and the freedom that these social and media platforms bring (Jaishankar, 2011 cited in Agustina, 2012 pg. 1046).

When Selfies go wrong

Social validation matters amongst teens.

Selfies are considered a form of self-exploration and provide a way of participating and affiliating with peers, according to clinical psychologist Dr. A. Letamendi, cited in Sifferlin (2013).

However, the author argues that this doesn't mean that all self-portraits are acceptable.

What happens when selfies go wrong?

Selfies can convey strong visual messages, some of which may be perceived by others as suggestive.

- **21.5%** of teens post photos on social networks
- Teens in revealing clothing are featured in **7.5% of** these images
- **4.1%** feature intoxication (McAfee, 2012).

Children and teens only have awareness within the context of their own experience.

Parents need to explain to their children why it's not appropriate to send sexually suggestive pictures and to establish which type of pictures are acceptable and which are questionable (Ruthledge; Sifferlin, 2013).

Sexting

Selfie culture has triggered a ripple effect, giving rise to another problematic phenomena known as '**Sexting**'.

A risky behaviour described by Jaishankar (2011) cited in Agustina (2012 pg.1046) as a threshold for online victimization. It involves the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive pictures or videos between children and teens by phone or through social networking sites.

Teen sexting is defined as:

“The practice among teens of taking nude or partially nude digital images of themselves or others and texting them to other teens, emailing them to other teens or posting them on web sites such as Myspace or Facebook”, (Halloran Mclaughlin, 2010).

Some definitions also include *“the transmission of sexually explicit text messages.”* (NCMEC, 2013).

Sexting is becoming increasingly prevalent according to Ringrose et al, (2012). Lipkins et al. (2009) surveyed a sample of teens aged 13-19 years from it they discovered a sexting percentile of 63.6% female to 72.7% male.

Given the rapid developments in mobile phone and internet technology and the proliferation of mobile phone ownership amongst teens the future is worrying.

Correspondently, forensic psychologist Dr Maureen Griffin cited in Sheehy (2014)

concur that sexting is now a national concern with **one in four Irish children** as young as 10 years old partaking in the practice.

Sex is ubiquitous within our society: on prime-time TV, in magazines, films and on the net (Halloran McLaughlin, 2010).

According to APA (2007) adolescent exposure to sex through such mediums is associated with the acceleration of sexual activity. Correspondingly, sexual activity is generally associated with sexting.

Sending a sexually explicit message may not have the same social implications as sending a photo. The latter appears to be a marker for sexual risk and is linked to higher rates of sexual activity than text messaging (Houck et al. 2014; Englander, 2012). Englander's study shows that **57% of non-sexters** in contrast to 86% of sexters reported to being sexually active.

Sexting therefore may primarily be motivated by sexual pleasure.

Nonetheless, Lane (2011) ascertains that there's no such thing as safe sext.

Cosmo.girl (2008) revealed that teens (69%) typically send nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend.

However, sexually suggestive images are commonly shared amongst third parties according to 44% of the sample surveyed.

Moreover, in 2013 the NSPCC/ChildLine survey revealed that **six out of 10** teenagers said they had been asked for sexual images of themselves. A report prepared for the NSPCC by Ringrose et al. (2012) cautiously highlight harmful elements associated with sexting such as coercion, harassment, blackmailing, bullying and even violence. The

role of parents and educators as well as these aforesaid implications will be explore in an effort to justify the reason for the creation of this essential parental control application.

The role of parents and educators

Lenhart (2009) reports parents, educators and advocates are growing concerned about the role social media plays in the sexual lives of teens and young adults.

Houck et al. (2014) identify that while adolescents may be more digitally savvy than their parents, serious negative outcomes may result from their lack of maturity and inattention to the consequences. This may be particularly true for youths identified by the researchers as 'at-risk' of higher rates of sexual risk behaviours because of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

However, the sending of sexually explicit photos is becoming an **everyday occurrence** amongst teens and children via the social media, partially because school officials and parents aren't tackling the issue (Sifferlin, 2014).

According to one study, around **80% of parents** report that they have no idea how to find out what their children are doing online (Kay, 2013).

Interestingly, an Irish study conducted by Cotter and McGilloway (2011) examined the nature and prevalence of cyber bullying among a sample of adolescents aged 12-18 years and found that, greater than **90% of participants owned a mobile phone** and almost the same percentage reported that their mobile phone and internet use went uncontrolled by their parents.

Over 80% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most common medium for cyber bullying (Dosomething.org). Dr Griffin adds that parents have a responsibility for the monitoring their child's phone and internet use. Clinicians, parents and health programs should discuss sexting with early adolescents (Kouck et al, 2014). Authors suggest starting the discussion about appropriate digital and sexual behaviours before adolescence.

"The Grandma Rule"

Despite knowing the psychological risks and potential legal implications associated with sexting many teens still send sexually explicit photos (Strassberg et al. 2013).

In a survey conducted by MTV and to Associated Press only half of the respondents considered the idea that information or images they posted online might negatively affect them later (www.athinline.org).

According to Griffin (2014) children and teenagers don't understand the wider implications. Researchers have found that the adolescent brain undergoes major development including hormonal changes, and changes in the 'emotional' limbic system and the more 'rational' frontal cortex.

Compounded by hormonal changes, younger teens experience fresh emotional responses, which may influence their decision making, such as rage, fear, aggression, excitement and sexual attraction. These changes can potentially cause teens to partake in risk taking behaviours and they frequently misinterpret parents and teachers.

Older teens start to gain symmetry, processing emotions and achieving control over impulses as the functionality of pre frontal cortex overrides the limbic system (Nixon, 2011).

Irrespective, there's no changing your mind in cyber space anything you send or post will never truly go away (Jacobs, 2010).

It may be easier to be more provocative or outgoing online, but whatever is written, posted or sent contributes to real-life impressions (nv-cpc.org). Englander (2012) adds that, once a digital image is sent via the social media you lose control of it.

It may be then forwarded and copied endlessly causing serious unintended psychological consequences. The rights of those violated receive little protection by the law. Internet providers are not obliged to remove content for invasion of a person's privacy or even defaming them.

Firstly, teens need to consider “The Grandma Rule”.

Is this really an image you want your grandchildren to come across? Is what you're posting something you'd want your grandmother, boss, future employer, parents, teachers, lecturers or future in-laws to see? If not...then perhaps it's not a good idea to post it! (Lachance, 2013).

These images left behind tracing the social lives of teens are referred to by Wikipedia.org as 'active digital footprints which will be indexed and searchable by Google regardless of any current privacy settings on social media sites. Lastly, this means that important people like those mentioned above, who may be instrumental in our children's future may be influenced by what they see before them.

Legal Implications

It's a **criminal offense** for children under 18 to receive sexually explicit pictures on their phone. Likewise, when a minor takes and sends a nude image of themselves they may in fact be producing and or distributing child pornography, leading to the risk of criminal prosecution (Englander, 2012).

Such prosecution seems increasingly unlikely and regarded as inappropriate in sexting cases accordingly to the literature.

Coercion

The main motivation to 'sext' is linked to pressure or coercion (Englander, 2012).

Half of all sexting may be coercive with twice as many girls than boys being affected. Furthermore, the research revealed that sexting is inclined to have a greater negative impact when it is coerced and those youths most at risk are more impacted socially and emotionally by the experience (Perren and Hornung, 2005; Englander, 2012).

This form of sexual harassment is usually carried out by peers, a potential date or boyfriend rather than by a stranger online, the comparison being fourfold. Englander advises that capitulating to such pressure will not solve young people's problems but may in fact compound them.

Conversely, coerced sexters may be frightened away from confiding in an adult, allowing the threat to become counterproductive. Parry Aftab, an internet security expert cited in Celizic (2009) reports that of a sample surveyed, **44% of boys** have

seen sexual images of girls in their school and about **15% have disseminated them** on breaking up with their partners. Thus, individuals must bear in mind that although a person sending nude pictures to a 'trusted' partner may not be responsible for the actions that the recipient may take or the subsequent consequences of these actions, they must strongly consider the risks.

Cyberbullying

Teens are particularly vulnerable to the harms associated with teen sexting. The intentional circulation of inappropriate or threatening messages, offensive pictures and video clips are regarded as the most damning type of bullying (Cotter and McGilloway's, 2011). Now more commonly referred to as 'cyber bullying', it was first coined by Canadian Bill Belsey to describe

'The use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others'. (Cited in Butler et al. 2010 pg. 84)

Cyber bullying is similar to face-to-face bullying in that there is a power imbalance and a sense of helplessness on the part of the victim to fight back against aggressors (Butler et al. 2010).

13% of Irish 13-14 year olds maintain they have been bullied on social networking sites, in contrast to 6% who report that they were bullied face-to-face in the past twelve months (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014). Correspondingly, participants in Cotter and McGilloway's study (2011) considered cyberbully to be worse than the traditional form of bullying and more likely to go unnoticed by adults.

Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse. Students reported an underlying sense of helplessness primarily as their demise may be witnessed by a wide audience and the bully is shielded by the anonymity the internet offers. This adds a new dimension to this powerlessness taunting the victim 24hours a day, 7 days a week with no safe haven.

Girls are more likely to become the victim or perpetrator of cyber bullying (Cotter and McGilloway, 2011; Butler et al. 2010). 12-15 year old girls are more likely than boys to say they have been bullied online in the past year (13% vs. 5%) (Ofcom, 2012).

Cyberbullying and Suicide

A survey carried out by MTV and the Associated Press (www.athinline.org) exposed a link, though not necessarily a causative factor, between cyberbullying and emotional distress in teens and young adults.

Moreover there been several media reports that have linked suicides with the decedents being identified as targets of cyber bullying (Marshall, 2009 cited in Butler et al. 2010 pg 87). In Irish media Sheehan (2014) reported on the escalating concerns about cyber bullying and the probability that it contributed to a number of teenage suicides in Ireland last year.

Victims of cyberbullying were almost **three times more likely** to report that they had also contemplated suicide at some point in time, with similar statistics considering dropping out of school. In terms of sexting activity approximately **12 percent of those who engaged in the practice have contemplated suicide** according to the MTV

survey. Fundamentally however, the survey did not attempt to construe whether the suicidal ideations were related to the often adverse consequences of sexting.

Certain tragic stories have garnered much attention by the media (Celizic, 2009, Burleigh, 2013).

Victims are harassed, taunted and humiliated following the posting of unfortunate images taken, for example, when victims were allegedly under the influence of alcohol or, for others when they are forced into a false sense of security fulfilling their partner's fantasies.

Images in such cases are disseminated following a breakup, becoming embedded in phones all over their schools and if more horrifyingly circulated on the internet. The ultimate tragedy befalls those who are bullied. They can no longer see a way out and succumb to the inner turmoil created by cyberbullying, taking their own lives.

For the perpetrators, charges of disseminating and possession of child pornography are sometimes incurred. School administrators in many of these cases have been found negligent in responding to cases of cyberbullying.

Schools respond poorly to bullying according to over two-thirds of students. This coincides with aforementioned findings. A high proportion of school goers think that, adult help is infrequent and ineffective, with 1 in 4 educators seeing nothing wrong with bullying, only intervening 4% of the cases (Do something.org).

Moreover, the reality exists, that sexting and the incidence of cyber bullying is rising due to the rapid development in information and communications technology (Cotter and McGilloway, 2011). In 2009 Lenhart recommended that internet providers must

aim to reduce and control the sharing of harmful material by developing some type of preventative interventions. Congruently O'Brien (2008) cited in Cotter and McGilloway (2011) pg 54, stresses that, cyber bullying may be more effectively managed if there are greater technological advances with regards to mobile phones.

*"Teen sexting is all a way of magnifying girls' fantasies of being a star of their own movies, and boys locked in a room bragging about sexual conquest. **It's a perfect storm of technology and hormones.**" (Lori Andrews, Institute for Science, Law and Technology Chicago cited in Burleigh, 2013)*

Impulse driven teens of both sexes with raging hormones are circulating what amounts to child pornography. The ability to record and communicate gang-sex assaults via the Internet magnifies the victims torment and adds a new slant to an old and horrid crime, the majority of which are against women. Boys, who in many cases are newly an adolescent see such acts as pranks with phones and passed-out girls. The reality is that, if embroiled the ultimate charge – rape – means the end of their lives before it begins.

Cyberbullying has a unique ability to hurt and destroy an individual's character and self-esteem and it could have even more serious consequences than face-to-face bullying. Damning words from a peer can stay forever etched in a person's mind and, more enduring in nature is the written word with its ability to reach the target at any time and in any place (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Butler et al. 2010). It has been recognized by Aftab (2009) as the cause for most adolescent suicides. Cyberbullicide became known as the phenomena of killing yourself as a direct result of social media torture (Suler, 2004). Feeling like an outcast amongst your peers can evoke overwhelming negative

emotions and may affect the way some teens respond to school, learning and life.

Exposure to social media networks amplifies these responses (McDonnell, 2009).

Researchers at Yale school of medicine (Kim and Leventhal, 2008) analysed 37 studies from across the globe including the USA and the UK which examined bullying and suicide among children and adolescents. The majority of the studies found that any participation in bullying increases the risk of suicidal ideations/behaviours amongst both those being bullied and the perpetrators. Five papers report that victims were two to nine times more to report suicidal ideations though researchers could not conclusively whether bullying leads to suicide. Youths today are more likely to be subjected to bullying on platforms such as social networking, gaming or instant messaging. The evolving phenomenon that is cyberbullying increases the need to educate users in technology safety and the appropriate reporting of misuse or abuse.

Further consequences of Cyber Bullying

A parent may also be accountable for the consequence of his child's misconduct if their own negligence caused or provided the opportunity for it. For instance, negligence may result from their failure to exercise a reasonable control of the activities of their child.

For example giving the child a mobile phone with which it could be used by the child in a way that would be dangerous to other people, may possibly mount to breach of a duty of care (Butler et al. 2010).

Stranger Danger

According to the CEOP (Children Exploitation and Online Prevention) centre, in 2012 approximately **50,000 people** in the UK were involved in the downloading and sharing indecent images of children (IIOC).

Just **over 8,000 transactions** occurred through facilities such as webmails, social networking and to a lesser extent mainstream file hosting services. These reports comprised of 70,000 still and moving IIOC, some of which were duplicated images, a two-fold increase on 2011. In keeping with the previous year's values approximately one fifth (21.2%) of the total amount of IIOC's assessed by the CEOP were self-generated by their subject (self-generated indecent imagery, SGII). This included 16,200 self-generated still images and 113 self-generated moving IIOC's.

The sharing of personal information on social media sites is accelerating with 91% posting photos of themselves, up from 79% in 2006; 71% post the place where they live, up from 61% and 20% share their phone number, up from 2% (Madden et al. 2013).

The internet not only offers children a separate identity but it provides a setting for other risk taking opportunities, including posting personal risky photos online. 70% of teens hide online behaviours from their parents. Such activities make children more accessible to online predators who find kids through social networking blogs, chat rooms, instant messaging, email, discussion boards etc. (McAfee, 2012; CEOP, 2012).

Alarmingly, **38% of Irish teens** don't know all their friends on Facebook in person and many teens often disregard online friends as dangerous strangers (Connector 360;

McAfee, 2012). It is estimated that in 2012 a quarter of 8 to 11 year olds and a third of 12 to 15 year olds communicate online with people they don't know in the real world.

The data represents 100% and 41% increase in respective age groups on 2011 (CEOP, 2012). 12% report to have met someone offline whom they only knew from online exchanges and 29% have been stalked or contacted by a stranger online (McAfee, 2012; Taylor, 2014). Englander (2012) discovered that 6% of sexters were being pressured by unknown strangers online, with girls more likely to sext in response to this pressure.

Examination of IIOC by the CEOP in 2012 revealed 75% of images analysed were at level 1 on the Sentencing Council (SC) i.e. nudity or erotic posing with no sexual contact, 2% at level 2, 8% at level 3 and 15% at level 4 i.e. Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children, or both children and adults.

Predators wishing exploit and groom unsuspecting victims, subtly gaining the trust of the victim, trying to dispel inhibitions by progressively introducing sexual content into conversations or by introducing children to sexually explicit material. This may rapidly escalate into deceiving children to produce indecent images of themselves or to engage in sexual chat or sexual activity over webcam. 10% of the moving imagery assessed by CEOP depicted penetrative sexual activity.

While the majority of SGII is freely produced by teens a small number of these images are produced as a result of deception, coercion or exploitive conduct by an adult. An eventual catastrophic scenario, following the culmination of online engagements, could lead to a meeting between the predator and the child for sexual purposes (microsoft.com; CEOP, 2012).

Analysis of reports received by CEOP shows that **20% of images** analysed depicted sexual contact between a child and an adult. Further findings revealed that 35% of 13 and 14 year olds accounted for the largest single victim group with **11 to 12 year olds accounting for 26%** and **15 to 16 year olds represent 22%** of the total surveyed.

Female victims were apparent in 80% of all reports. The most frequent offending platform was on social networking sites 48.5%. Instant messaging and chat accounted for another 31%. The threat from the use of these platforms is likely to increase as live video chat is widely accessible on smart phones via applications such as Skype, Facetime and Tango.

Key Statistics: Popularity, Ownership, Access & Use

Youths aged 12-15 are prolific social networkers spending more time online using their mobile phones and given the choice their mobile phone is the device they would miss the most (Ofcom, 2012).

Samsung and other android Smartphone devices are becoming more favourable amongst teens. Smartphone ownership has increased among all children aged 5-15 (28% in 2012 vs. 20% in 2011), with a 21 percentage point increase among children aged 12-15 (62% in 2012 vs. 41% in 2011). From 12 years of age onwards smartphone ownership outstrips ownership of other mobile phones (Ofcom, 2012).

They are **less expensive, more accessible and more customizable** than Apple's iPhone(iOS). A fact that was unimaginable 12 months ago is also partially being attributed to clever advertising campaigns within the smartphone market (Heller, 2013).

A report by analyst firm Piper Jaffray in 2010 forecast that, Google's ecosystem; Android would be the ultimate operating system running on around half of the smartphone market. iOS would hold a mere 20-30% market share.

Indeed, Android's dominance grew with the platform running on about 80 % of new smartphones shipped (McCracken, 2014). Despite its resurgence McCracken alludes that Android's gain has not been iOS's detriment. In December 2013, Piper Jaffray analysed 25,000 tweets sent to @Santa with the hashtag #WishList. 29.9% of the messages came from those between age 14 and 17. Apple iPhone was the most attractive item with 49% of the tweets received. "Galaxy" accounted for 14% while Android completed the top ten, mentioned on 3% of the tweets. The iPhone is the most desired phone by 64% of Irish teenagers surveyed by Mulley (2010). A state of equilibrium exists in the US market for instance, Android has 51.5 % share and iOS has 41.8%.

Data from The Pew Research and American Life Project's "***Teens and Technology 2013***" study revealed that most US teens (12-17) own a mobile phone and almost half (37%) of them own smartphones. Figures are up 23% from 2011.

An Irish report by O'Neill & Dinh (2014) also identified a similar Smartphone user population (35%) amongst 9-16year olds. Given the ease with which smartphones can be used to create, capture and upload media content, it is undeniably the most used device for daily internet access followed by laptops (29%) and tablets (27%).

Conversely, Connector 360 (2014) using a much smaller sample size, cited ownership of smartphones amongst Irish teens at a staggering 96.83%. Irrespectively, there is a substantial increase in Smartphone ownership and mobile phone access via this

medium is equally pervasive. From the **ages 9-12 years** twice as many girls than boys own a smartphone. This gender gap balances out once children become teenagers. Furthermore, those personally owning an internet-enabled device increases with age (O'Neill & Dinh 2014).

Findings from the Irish report '**Net Children Go Mobile**' by O'Neill & Dinh (2014) show that overall 21% of Irish children say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, online or offline. 1 in 5 (20%) have been bothered by something on the internet in the past year, a two-fold increase on the figure reported by 9-16 year olds in for the EU Kids Online survey in 2011.

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The receiving of sexual messages also increases with age: 4% of children aged 11-12 say that they have received such messages. 10% of 13-14 year olds and 22% of 15-16 year olds report to having received sexual messages online. The statistics also suggest that, seeing sexual images is more common among boys and older teenagers, yet younger children and girls are more likely to be upset by what they come across.

Access

A recent American survey found that 93% of youths (12-13years) had access to the Internet (Houck et al. 2014). This figure is further substantiated by the CEOP (2013)

citing that 91% of UK teens living in a household have access to the internet. In Ireland, the average of first time use is 9 years of age (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014).

One in four teens go online using their phone rather than a desktop or laptop computer (Lenhart, 2012). One Irish study (O'Neill & Dinh, 2014) investigating access and use, risks and opportunities of mobile internet use amongst 500 9-16 year olds reveals that 63% of children use the internet several times a day. This figure reflects a much higher proportion internet usage amongst Irish teens in the past 4 years. Previous research conducted by Mulley (2010) reported that 25% of youths accessed the Internet on their phone daily.

'*Bedroom culture*' a term coined by Livingstone & Bober (2006) (cited in O'Neill and Dinh, 2014, pg. 10), refers to practice of teens accessing the internet from their own bedroom.

From ages 13 years and upwards this is becoming increasingly conventional. Youths using the internet alone comprise one in seven internet users aged 5-7 (14%), one in four aged 8-11 (24%) and over half of those aged 12-15 (55%), 22% accessing several times a day. **Time spent online amongst Irish 12-15 year olds is rising** (from 14.9 hours a week in 2011 to 17.1 in 2012) with users spending as much time in a week online as they do watching television (Ofcom, 2012; O'Neill and Dinh, 2014).

Social Media

68% of Irish teens parents do not monitor what they post online 100% use social media to chat with friends **71%** use social media to upload and share pictures and videos

(Connector 360). 8-11 year old have an average of 92 friends on Facebook with this number rising to an average of 286 for 12-15 year olds.

Implications for how children protect and share personal information therefore exist, when one considers that personal data available to “friends” on social networking sites may be potentially shared with a vast number of people (Ofcom, 2012) 1 in 5 Irish children (22%) have had contact online with people they have never met face to face (O’Neill and Dinh, 2014).

Justification for infringing on children’s privacy?

“The fact that young people’s experience of the internet is now predominantly a mobile one, mediated by the use of smartphones, creates a very different environment in which parents, carers and educators need to consider how to best support children’s and young people’s safe and responsible use of the internet.” O’Neill & Dinh (2014)

Direct parental supervision of their child’s internet use is becoming increasingly unfeasible (CEOP, 2012).

How can parents support children’s internet safety?

This generation is surpassing their parents understanding of technology leaving some parents overwhelmed. Indeed, **23% of parents** surveyed admitted that they are not monitoring their children’s online behaviours for this reason. **74% of parents** (to 10-23 year olds) claim they don’t have the time to keep up with modern online advancements. When Teens do share, parents need to beware. Young people use their parent’s

limited knowledge base and time constraints to their advantage. Despite being aware of the threats associated with risky online activity, they continue to engage in this behaviour. By parents allowing teens to participate in unmonitored online activity children are being exposed to real dangers with real consequences. Interestingly, 39% of parents of youths aged 10-23 years claim to have set parental controls on home computers and mobile devices, only 23% of youths agree (McAfee, 2012; 2013)

Mediation

Parental mediation strategies represent ways in which parents can monitor, guide or support their child's internet use (Shmueli and Blecher-Prigat, 2011). Nathanson (1999, 2001a) cited in Livingstone and Helpser (2008) extracts three broad strategies of parental regulation from the literature. These include active, co-viewing/co-using and restrictive mediation.

1. **Active mediation** may vary from actively talking about the child's internet use, promoting safety awareness and responsibility, regulating time spent online.
2. **Co-viewing/Co-using** involves the parent being present while the child is online, thus sharing in what is happening but without commenting on the content or its effects.
3. **Restrictive mediation** involves setting rules that restrict use of the medium, including restrictions on time spent, location of use or content (e.g., restricting exposure to violent or sexual content), without necessarily discussing the meaning or effects of such content.

In McAfee's survey half of teens sampled reported that they would actually change their online behaviour once they knew their parents were watching.

The increased use of restrictive mediation by parents decreases the likelihood of children being exposed to online risks. **49 % are setting parental controls**, 44% are obtaining email and social network passwords. Mediation is structured according to age, whereby parents are much more involved in the mediation of younger children's use of the internet (Shmueli & Blecher-Prigat, 2011; McAfee, 2012).

The level of mediation is reduced by parents – especially restrictions - as children get older (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Duerager & Livingstone, 2012).

Children's privacy vis-à-vis their parents

Notwithstanding, teens are progressively deceiving their parents about their online interactions despite half of parents insisting that they are in control of monitoring their children's online behaviour.

Over **70%** have discovered ways to avoid parental monitoring, in comparison to 45% in 2010; 34% hide or delete images or videos; 10% have unlocked parental controls to disable filtering (McAfee, 2012).

Nevertheless, children's privacy in today's technological world is a growing concern (Shmuel and Blecher Prigat, 2011). Risks from online predators, paedophiles, cyberbullies, and other online dangers are omnipresent.

Traditionally, “good parents” were encouraged to trust their children. Nowadays taking the risk of error in trusting children may lead to detrimental outcomes for them.

Therefore safeguarding children is strongly encouraged and good parenting is associated with monitoring. This indisputably involves invading their privacy in some way (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008 cited in Shmuel and Blecher Prigat, 2011 pg.793; Williams et al 2005).

When it comes to their online activity teenagers demand a certain level of privacy, and predictably, this opinion gathers momentum as they mature. 22% aged 1-23 years admit to using a mobile phone and password to hide online activities from parents (McAfee 2013) **38% would feel offended** if they found out their parents were spying on them with Facebook parental controls.

However, Shmuel and Blecher (2011) argue that children’s interest in and right to privacy should be weighed and balanced against other personal, familial and social interests and is believed to be **best protected** by their parents.

Governing Bodies

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)(1989) see children as rights-holders, entitled to special care, assistance and protection appropriate to their age and stage of development. Principles vital to realizing these rights include:

- *the right to have their best interests considered in all decisions and actions affecting them and,*

- *the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity.*

The State is primarily responsible for safeguarding children's rights. In addition the Irish Constitution and the UNCRC, which Ireland has ratified, recognize the importance of respecting a child's right to privacy, the right to a good name and protection of their identity.

Duties of the state also involve the consideration of parents' rights and to support them in fulfilling their parental roles and responsibilities. The rights of others are also recognized by the UNCRC when defining children's rights.

Children have a responsibility, in accordance with their evolving capacities, to respect their own and others' rights for instance children's right to freedom of expression ought to involve valuing the rights and reputations of others (Ombudsman for Children, OCO, 2014).

The **Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)**, the independent statutory body responsible for promoting and monitoring children's rights in Ireland has handled approximately 6,000 complaints brought by parents on behalf of their children since its initiation in 2002. Parents are their child's strongest advocate and their primary role and responsibility is to protect their children.

Lawmakers believe that what a child lacks in maturity, experience and capacity for judgment a parent possesses. Until a certain age society dictates children are in need of adult guidance, so when they're physical or emotional safety is in jeopardy, whatever

concerns they have about privacy is counterbalanced by society's interest in their protection. It may be argued that children have an individual right for privacy against their parents, this right should be qualified according to the child's age and evolving capacities. However, the parents' right to direct the upbringing of their children prevails over children's right to privacy (Shmuel and Blecher Prigat; OCO, 2014).

Even under the UNCRC confusion exists about children's privacy in their relationship with their parents. Clarification on how we should protect children's privacy vis-à-vis their parents in the contemporary digital era has yet to be answered.

The following points provide a framework for this argument cited in research conducted by Shmuel and Blecher (2011).

- While the need and justification for recognizing a right to privacy increases as the child matures, so does the need to protect them.
- Evolving capacities of the child suggests that, as children mature, greater recognition should be given to their right to privacy.
- Conversely the risks entailed by privacy are much higher for youth than for younger children. Like the old saying: small kids, small problems, bigger kids, bigger problems.
- Essentially, when parents' obligation to respect their children's privacy conflicts with their primary duty to protect and care for their children, the latter should obviously prevail.
- However, recognizing that children are entitled to privacy entails that there must be prior consideration as to whether protecting a child necessitates an invasion

of her privacy, and whether an invasion of privacy would advance the child's safety.

- Either too much or too little privacy can create imbalances which seriously jeopardize the individual's well-being.
- Parents should respect their children's privacy. But it is not an overall and absolute right.
- Privacy should be granted to children from their parents according to their age and capacity.
- Parents must bear in mind children need private spaces in their homes, and from their parents.
- The correct balance should be sought in each case according to its circumstances, the (real) best interest of the child, the nature of the danger, the age of the child, and her capacities.
- The value of privacy must not be overlooked.
- Without privacy there can be no respect, love, friendship or trust

Rather than trust taking on the guise of monitoring and parental controls, it may be achieved by parents engaging in frequent dialogue in the tween years before experimentation in deceptive, risky behaviour is considered.

Addressing the need for online safety and its potential implications and outcomes of unsafe online establishes the parents as an expert, confidant, and the go-to source as children navigate and create their presence in the online world.

Conclusion

Sexting is not only a national problem but a growing global crisis.

The SelfieCop app aims to deter children from misusing their phones thereby reducing the risks and dangers associated with suggestive images and sexting.

The creators have **answered a call by the NSPCC** to produce an easy to use age appropriate tool which offers parental control filters for mobile devices. Ultimately assisting parents to monitor potentially damaging images distributed from their child's phone.

Mobile phone ownership amongst teens are multiplying, android smartphones (with in-built cameras) are increasingly desirable. They are less expensive, more accessible and more customizable than Apple's iPhone. Given the ease with which smartphones can be used to create, capture and upload media content, it is undeniably the most used device for daily internet access.

As the saying goes '*a picture paints a thousand words*', and instant picture and video messaging is now commonplace among teens and tweens, the art of texting is less so.

Despite knowing the psychological risks and potential legal implications associated with sexting many teens still send sexually explicit photos. Furthermore sending a sexually explicit photo into the wrong hands has wider implications than that of a text message.

This validates our efforts to zone in on this particular function of social media.

As android is the ultimate operating system running on around half of the smartphone market the makers of SelfieCop have honed in on this platform and are in the process of developing the Apple equivalent.

The literature suggests that parents and schools officials aren't tackling the problem of sexting and other harmful elements associated with it including coercion, harassment, blackmailing, bullying.

Offensive pictures and video clips are regarded as the most damning type of bullying and the launch pad for online victimization. Cyberbullying consequently adds a new dimension to bullying, mercilessly taunting the victim 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Notwithstanding, researchers have cited links between cyberbullying and suicide.

Cyberbullying therefore increases the need to educate users in technology safety and the appropriate reporting of misuse or abuse.

Once more the creators have responded to the plea to develop some type of preventative interventions and for greater technological advances with regards to mobile phones

Direct parental supervision of their child's internet use is becoming increasingly unfeasible leaving some parents overwhelmed. By some parents allowing teens to participate in unmonitored online activity children are being exposed to real dangers with real consequences.

Teens have reported that they would actually change their online behaviour once they knew their parents were watching. Nevertheless, children's privacy in today's

technological world is a growing concern. Risks from online predators, paedophiles, cyberbullies, and other online dangers are omnipresent. Good parenting is associated with monitoring. This indisputably involves invading their privacy in some way.

However, a child's right to privacy should be weighed and balanced against other interests and this is believed to be best protected by their parents. Even under the UNCRC confusion exists about children's privacy in their relationship with their parents. Clarification on how we should protect children's privacy vis-à-vis their parents in the contemporary digital era has yet to be answered.

Restrictive mediation in the form of **SelfieCop** aims to find a level of equilibrium between the child's protection and privacy and the parent's ability to provide it.

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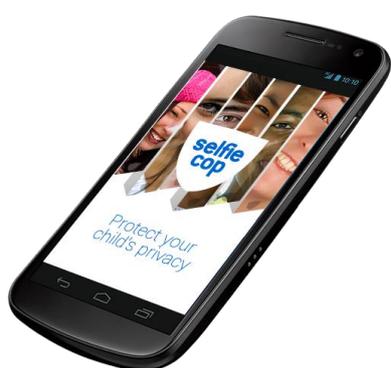
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