Peadophilia in chat rooms and im

Conversing Over the Internet Talking or Stalking? News Item: Rosen, Amy, P. 6th March 2008 " Danger Lurks as Youths Head on to the Internet", http://atlanticville. gmnews. com/news/2008/0306/Front_page/023. html Word Count: ????? A Presentation of the Issue Talking to peers through internet chat rooms and instant messaging (IM) is the latest sensation among today's adolescents and preteens, with 75% of teenagers using instant messaging and 48% of them accessing it on a daily basis (Rosen, 2008).

These programs provide an ideal environment for people to talk to friends and meet people from around the world and share common interests. Statistics show that the average teenager has thirty people on their instant messaging contact list, ten of which they have never met offline (Mader, 2005). The average person spends 4. 7 hours a week using these services (Mader, 2005). The behaviour of people using these programs and websites can be less than respectable.

Nearly four in ten (39%) teenagers have pretended to be someone else and 31% say something online that they wouldn't have said in person (Rosen, 2008). Mostly this misconduct is due to the lack of parental supervision. 72% of parents are unaware that their children use IM programs (Mader, 2005); 42% of parents don't check what their child types in chat rooms and IM (Davis; Grabert, 2005) and 95% of parents don't know the meaning of common slang used by kids to warn when their parents are watching, e. g. POS (parent over shoulder) and P911 (parent alert) (Davis; Grabert, 2005).

However, the anonymity of these sites as well as the lack of parental supervision creates the perfect hunting ground for paedophiles. Of children who use the internet, 45% are asked for personal information by someone they don't know, 30% consider meeting in person someone they don't know and 14% actually meet in real life a person they met online, only 18% tell an adult about a person who contacted them online (Walsh, 2006). In 2005 13% of children aged 10-18 were sexually solicited online (someone attempted to persuade them to commit sexual acts) (Finkelhor; Mitchell; Wolak, 2006). Chat rooms and IMs have become little more than a place for mudslinging and a hunting ground for paedophiles; this could pose a real threat to the entertainment, arts and leisure industry.

B The IT Background of the Issue Chat rooms began as a way for businesses to send messages to each other on their local network using BBS (bulletin board system) (Ries, 1997). This was limited however because each network only had a finite number of ports to connect computers to. In 1988 the IRC (internet relay chat) protocol was developed (Birbal, 2007). AOL (America Online) was the first company to utilize IRC to successfully market a chat room, where people from all over the world could meet and talk (Ries, 1997). Today the standard chat room website has a box where all the typed chat is displayed [fig.

(i)], a place for the person to sign in or enter a screen name [fig. 1 (ii)], grouped sections for a variety of topics/age groups [fig. 1 (iii)] and a text box for the person to enter the text they are communicating [fig. 1 (iv)]. In the future, chat rooms may well integrate some of the most loved traits of IM,

such as VOIP (voice over internet protocol) and file sharing. In 1996 the first instant messenger program ICQ (I seek you) was born (Birbal, 2007).

ICQ was purchased by AOL but then fell apart when AIM (America Online instant messenger), Yahoo messenger and MSN messenger (now Windows Live messenger) were introduced. IMs generally have a contact list [fig. 2 (i)], a window where typed text appears [fig. 2 (ii)], a text box where the user types their messages [fig. 2 (iii)], the option to start a VOIP session or video conference [fig. 2 (iv)] and a list of people participating in the conversation [fig.

2 (v)]. Today more than 24 million children are regularly online (Virtual Imagination, 2003). fig. 1: An example of a chat room – Weird Town fig. 2: An example of an IM client – Windows Live Messenger? C The Impact of the Issue Communication over the internet offers many advantages.

It allows people from all around the world to meet often, depending on the chat room or IM, already knowing they share a common interest. They can even help each other, most secondary school students use IM for school projects (Mader, 2005). Whereas SMS, telephone and email all require people to know each other, chat rooms and a number of IM programs allow you to contact anyone else online. Most chat rooms even encourage you to take the opportunity to meet new people. The ability for people to remain anonymous allows them to be whoever they want to beThis anonymity however can cause a lot of problems, especially if there are no moderators to sort out disputes.

Many ill-mannered teens and preteens use chat rooms and IM programs and a lot of the time there is bad language and in many cases harassment. In 2005 9% of children were harassed online. In a third of these cases the youth was very or extremely distressed by the incident (Davis; Grabert, 2005). Another problem caused by the ability for people to display themselves as anyone, is paedophiles that use the chat rooms to find and lure victims.

These predators most often pretend to be someone close to the age of their victim in order to gain their trust. This process is often called grooming. 13% of children were sexually solicited online in 2005, 75% of these were asked to meet the person offline, in 27% they were asked for a sexual photo of themselves, 18% had the person come to their home and 3% were bought travel tickets to visit the person (Davis; Grabert, 2005). Perhaps even more dangerous, is that most chat rooms allow users to have a profile page where they can talk about themselves. Most of these pages are viewable to anyone who wants to look at them and not many teenagers and preteens think about the dangers of putting their full name, school and even home address on their page.

Even the couple that have the insight not to put their personal details on their page are in danger, because quite often there is links from their page to a friend's page, and if the friend has listed their school than even the responsible person could still be kidnapped by a paedophile who abducts them on their way home from school. D Solutions to Problems Arising from the Issue The simplest solution to the problem of paedophiles that use the personal information from people's profile pages is to put more effort into educating kids to never put personal information somewhere that can be

publicly accessed. Also there could be warnings posted above each section when you go to edit your page that say don't put any personal details in this section. There are two problems with this solution. Firstly not everyone will take heed of the warnings.

Secondly surveys have revealed that 75% of children will willingly give out personal information about themselves and their families in exchange for goods and services (Virtual Imagination, 2003). Another answer to this problem that would work for chat rooms would be to make it law for every chat room to have at least one moderator in it making sure no one gives out their personal details. This would also help ease the problem with excess profanity and cyber harassment/bullying. However with all the millions of chat rooms on the web from many different countries it would be hard to enforce any laws. Also, many websites won't want to have to pay for a moderator to be on the chat rooms twenty-four seven.

Furthermore, this unfortunately wouldn't work with IM as they are generally one on one. About the only other feasible solution would be for chat rooms to put in a language blocker. These are generally used on games to prevent swear words, but they could also possibly be used to block phrases that looked to be street addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or School names. The advantage would be this blocker could also be programmed into IM programs.

However, like most people work out in games that use swearing filters is that there are ways around these filters by slightly modifying the word or phrase or by putting one letter at a time so that it can be read down the page. Yet, if

all these solutions were to be implemented, despite their flaws, it would help reduce the problem of chat room paedophiles. ? E Selection and Use of Sources Bibliography Birbal, P. 3/7/2007, " The History of Instant Messengers", http://www. techbirbal. com/viewtopic.

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Abuse Statistics", http://www. snapshotspy. com/online-child-abuse-statistics.

htm#child, Virtual Imagination, (29/3/2008) News ItemWith the click of a computer mouse, people in other parts of the state, country or the world can steal, threaten and lure people into dangerous and sometimes even fatal situations. Children and teenagers very often fall victim to online predators that trick them into a false sense of friendship and subsequently lure them into circumstances that can change their lives forever. The Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office is coming to the aid of the public by not only catching and prosecuting these criminals, but by empowering residents with knowledge about precautions that can protect young people and deter potential Internet predators. Detective Robert M.

Angelini of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office Computer Crimes Unit visited the Manalapan Englishtown Middle School (MEMS) Jan. 30 to present a program for parents about Internet safety. MEMS Principal Robert Williams informed the parents that earlier that day Assistant Prosecutor Kevin Clark visited the school and presented a program on Internet safety to the students. The problem of Internet predators is something most parents have heard about and most children believe cannot affect them.

Angelini's presentation opened the eyes of the 35 or so parents who attended the program. Technology is here to stay," Williams said. " It's a great tool in business offices and at home, but you must use it wisely because it's very easy for kids to navigate into treacherous waters. This is the seventh year we've invited the prosecutor's office here to talk to the kids

and it's always interesting to see the light go off in the students' heads as they listen very attentively to the program.

" Angelini prefaced his presentation by saying, " There are terrible instances that can occur via the Internet or using technology, but it's also the best tool your kids can have. It's going to help them immensely in their education and their lives. " He mentioned how students have access to the Internet even when they are not home. Many phones and video games now have Internet access and some allow players to actually hear each other's voices and to speak to each other during the game with no control over the language used. Angelini said children " don't think about the dangers because mostly every one of them feels like they are invincible and nothing can ever happen to them and no one could ever hurt them because they're smart enough that they would never get hurt by a predator.

He described some of the cases the prosecutor's office has investigated. Endangering the welfare of children is one of the most frequently investigated crimes over the Internet. This includes the distribution, manufacturing or possession of child pornography; children getting seduced into meetings for sexual reasons; kidnapping; homicide; terroristic threats and bullying. Angelini presented statistics which showed that one in five children received sexual solicitations and one in 33 received aggressive sexual solicitations. An aggressive sexual solicitation means the person who contacted the youngster wanted more from them such as an in-person meeting, a phone call or a photo. One in four children had unwanted exposure to pornography and one in 17 was threatened or harassed.

Less than 10 percent of those solicitations were reported to police and less than 25 percent were reported to parents. The majority of incidents occurred in Internet chat rooms. There is blocking software that can help, but youngsters learn how to get around the blocks by going online and finding directions on how to do that. He also discussed the dangers of chat rooms and explained how detectives monitor chat rooms by posing as 14-year-olds.

Many predators just go from one child to another asking to meet with them. Teenagers are particularly at risk when they chat with people they do not know, he said. Angelini said predators may prey on children who feel their parents are too busy with their own lives to take the time to talk to them. The predator befriends them and gains their trust, becomes a confidant and eventually sets up a meeting. They even tell them lies to tell their parents such as, " Tell them your friend's father is taking you to the ball game.

Angelini also mentioned incidents in which teenage girls take illicit photographs of them and forward them to a boyfriend. When the couple breaks up the photos often end up circulating throughout the Internet. Parents plead with detectives to help them delete the photos from the Internet, but he said there is no way to do that. mistake made earlier in life can have serious consequences.

He advised parents to be involved in their child's computer activities and to discuss the dangers. Inappropriate advances should be copied in a separate file and printed and reported to the police or the computer crimes division. Angelini also discussed the pitfalls of myspace. com and other sites that show profiles that list personal information, hobbies and where people live.

There are age requirements to sign up but children under 14 can lie about their age because there is no policing system and no one reads the rules. Angelini said myspace.

com is very helpful when children younger than 14 are reported to be using the site. Parents can call (310) 258-2751 or send an e-mail and tell the operators that the user identification is a child's and the service will shut them right down. He said predators use certain methods to contact people through sites such as myspace. com. One parent in the MEMS audience pointed out another pitfall of those kinds of sites. The parent said a problem can occur when young adults start to apply for jobs and prospective employers do a search on the Internet and find personal profiles that can shine a negative light on the person and influence the employer to hire someone else.

He said anyone can sign on to MySpace. com and look at a person's page without their permission because it is all public knowledge. Perhaps the most heart-wrenching segment of the seminar was the final one that discussed cyber-bullying. When people are online they are anonymous. No one can see what they look like and very often the smallest children in a class become the cyber bullies.

The bully also cannot see his or her victim and does not know if the victim is crying, so they keep going, relentlessly ripping into the other person. Angelini said some victims strike back at cyber bullying in a violent way. He said attention must be paid to those who have sites that talk of killing people, death or hurting themselves. Those people could be in trouble or

cause trouble for others. Cyber-bullying can come in the form of stealing passwords or a cell phone from an individual and sending insulting messages to people in the address book, impersonating the victim and making untrue statements in the name of that person. Other forms of cyber bullying include starting online fights, using vulgar language, harassment, and sharing secrets and posting them on the Internet for all to see.

Angelini said cyber stalking is repeated harassment and explained that it is illegal to stalk, harass or terrorize a person. Civil lawsuits can be brought against people who engage in the act of invasion of privacy, defamation of character and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Sometimes the emotional distress caused by bullying is not always seen until it is too late. Children have been driven to suicide by the vicious actions and words of others.

Angelini played a video of home movies, set to the music of Elton John, about Ryan Patrick Hallihan, a middle school student who killed himself because he was bullied. The video showed photos of the boy with his family. After he killed himself his parents said, " If we only knew. " They blamed bullying and cyber bullying for their son's death and called his middle school " a toxic environment like so many schools across the nation. " They said no one did anything to stop the problem. The prosecutor's office is training teachers to recognize the players in cyber bullying.

Angelini said there is no absolute solution to all of the problems brought to light by Internet use. Forbidding a child from using a computer is not the answer because the child will go to a friend's house and use that person's

computer. He said good parenting is the key. Education, youth empowerment and parent involvement is important. Communication and interaction with one's child is most helpful.

Be aware of what they are doing and make them aware of the dangers out there and the places they should avoid, such as open chat rooms. Monitor the information they are putting out there and remind them of what can happen. Know the warning signs of children heading for trouble. If they refuse to talk about what they are doing online and minimize the screen as soon as you walk in, take a closer look at what is going on. He suggested that parents look at the child's online profiles and those of their friends. What parents can do: • Get involved talk to kids about the dangers of the Internet • Keep computers out of bedrooms computers with the Internet should be in a public area of the house • Monitor your child's online activities check your child's blog learn who is on their buddy list let them know you'll be checking up on what they do online consider using a monitoring program • Restrict who can contact your child online most instant messaging services can be set up to reject messages from unknown names Check cell phone records review the monthly billing statement for unknown names or an increase in text messaging • Choose a generic user or profile name create a screen or profile name that does not profile their age, sex or location • Block unsafe content turn off explicit lyrics in iTunes (under Preferences) turn on Google Safe Search use parental controls on game systems (PlayStation, Xbox, PSP) • Ego surf Look up your name and address and children's names on Google, Technorati and other search engines regularly • Learn the language learn commonly used phrases such as: BRB (Be Right Back)A/S/L

(Age/Sex/Location) POS/P911 (Parents Over Shoulder/Parent Alert) more abbreviations can be found online by entering " chat acronyms" into Google • When things get out of hand contact your local police department or Computer Crimes Unit of the Prosecutor's Office Source: Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office Statistics • 51% of teenage users are online daily • 62% of parents check up on their child's Internet usage only 33% of teens think their parents do so • 65% of parents and 64% of teens believe that teens are doing things online that they would not want their parents to know about 75% of teens use instant messaging (IM) • 48% do so on a daily basis • 39% of teens have played a trick on someone online by pretending to be someone else on IM • 31% of teens have written something on IM that they wouldn't say to someone in person • 25% of teens who go online daily have had information meant to be private be forwarded on by the recipient • 6 in 10 kids online have gotten an e-mail or IM from a stranger; more than 1 in 2 have written back • 1 in 33 kids has been aggressively solicited to meet their " cyber friend" in person • 1 in 4 kids ages 10-17 has been exposed to unwanted sexual material online