

THE THIRD WAY CULTURE PROJECT

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**THE PORN STANDARD:**  
Children and Pornography on the Internet

*A Third Way Report*

JULY 2005

## Executive Summary

The Internet is transforming the experience of growing up in America. It is also transforming the job of being a parent in America. The internet brings the world – the good, the bad, and the ugly – to the American family’s doorstep. It brings the ruins of ancient Athens to that doorstep, but it also brings the red light district of Bangkok. As a consequence, the Internet has radically eroded the capacity of parents to control what their children are exposed to and at what age they are exposed to it.

This is especially true when it comes to parents’ ability to control whether and when their children are exposed to sexually explicit images and messages. Internet pornography has become a large and lucrative online industry, and one that is successfully reaching a child audience. The ease with which pornography is accessed online has made a mockery of the restrictions that society has traditionally placed on the access of minors to sexually explicit materials. While it is as difficult as ever for a teenager to walk into a 7-Eleven® and buy a soft-core pornographic magazine, it is as easy as point-and-click for them to view hard-core pornographic streaming video online.



There is simply no adequate system in place today to protect children from those who would peddle hard-core pornography to them. Most of the online pornography industry operates on a flimsy honor system, with few or no requirements in place to keep children from viewing pornographic sites. The thin veil separating a child from pornography today is their truthful response to the choice: “If you are 18 years of age, press ENTER. If you are less than 18 years of age, LEAVE NOW.” Moreover, many of today’s tech-savvy children have little difficulty uninstalling blocking software intended to prevent them from accessing sexually explicit sites.

Online pornography is increasingly accessible to children outside the home, as well as through wireless devices that leave parents with virtually no ability to monitor, filter or track. This accessibility is complicating the efforts of parents to supervise their children's online activities. Teenagers now have access to sexually explicit images and messages via wireless laptops, BlackBerries®, two-way pagers, camera phones, instant messaging and chat rooms.

Parents are not the only ones who have their hands full coping with the challenges posed by the rise of a vast and largely unregulated online world that mixes quick profits and sex without limits. Law enforcement is struggling to cope with this new world and to combat a rising wave of related criminal activity. Tragically, the exploitation of children by internet pornographers in search of quick profits extends beyond just the sale of their product to minors. Thousands of children today are abducted and abused in the process of producing online pornography. Indeed, because of its relatively lawless nature, the Internet has become highly attractive to a wide array of criminals who seek to prey on children, whether they are pedophiles soliciting children for sex or pornographers seeking to exploit children for commercial gain.

This report details the extent to which the large and powerful internet pornography industry is influencing children's lives today. It exposes how accessible to children pornography is on the Internet, despite available technology that pornographers could use, if they wanted to, to keep children off their sites. It describes the extent to which children are viewing pornography and being solicited by sexual predators online without their parents' knowledge. It also reveals some of the strategies that certain internet pornographers are using to specifically target children, as well as the disturbing prevalence with which sex crimes are committed against children in the scramble to profit from the sale of pornographic images on the Internet. In sum, this report makes evident the absence or inadequacy of systems in place to protect children from online exploitation – whether as targeted consumers and abused subjects of internet pornography or as victims of online sexual predators.

The report contains the following findings:

**Finding #1: A large and lucrative internet pornography industry is flooding the Web and seeking mainstream acceptance.**

- The online pornography industry generates \$12 billion in annual revenue<sup>1</sup> – roughly equal to the annual revenue of ABC, NBC, and CBS combined.<sup>2</sup>
- There are 420 million individual pornographic webpages today, up from 14 million in 1998.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Associated Press "Stage Set for '.xxx' Internet Addresses," *CNN.com*, June 2, 2005, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/TECH/internet/06/01/internet.porn.ap/index.html>, accessed on: June 20, 2005

<sup>2</sup> John M. Higgins, "Still Strutting after All These Years," *Broadcasting & Cable*, December 13, 2004, available at: <http://www.vodscape.com/news/Top25Networks.html>, accessed on: June 15, 2005

- The two largest purchasers of bandwidth are companies in the adult entertainment industry.<sup>4</sup>
- By the year 2000, General Motors Corporation (through its subsidiary DirecTV®) was selling more pornographic films each year than Larry Flynt of Hustler®. EchoStar Communications, which is heavily backed by Rupert Murdoch, now generates more revenue from pornography than Playboy®. Other major players in the pornography business today include AT&T®, Hilton®, Marriott International.<sup>5</sup>

**Finding #2: Despite the availability of age verification systems, children have easy access to pornography online and are now among the main viewers of internet pornography.**

- The largest group of consumers of internet pornography are youth 12-17 years of age.<sup>6</sup>
- The average age at which children are first exposed to pornography today is 11 years old.<sup>7</sup>
- 57% of 9-19 year olds with internet access have come into contact with online pornography.<sup>8</sup>
- Even though software now exists that gives website operators the ability to require the same proof-of-age that brick-and-mortar vendors require, only

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<sup>3</sup> Data provided by Secure Computing Corp., 2005

<sup>4</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

<sup>5</sup> The General Motors subsidiary Hughes Electronics launched DirecTV satellite television in 1994. In 2003, General Motors sold its controlling interest in the company to News Corporation (owned by Rupert Murdoch) which continues to operate the service today. At present, DirecTV offers no less than six adult entertainment channels, in addition to 9 channels of HBO and other similar programming. Timothy Egan, "Erotica Inc. - a Special Report: Technology Sent Wall Street into Market for Pornography," *New York Times*, October 23, 2000; "Encyclopedia: DirecTV," *Nationmaster.Com*, available at: <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/DirecTV>, accessed on: June 11, 2005

<sup>6</sup> Mark B. Kastleman, *The Drug of the New Millennium: The Science of How Internet Pornography Radically Alters the Human Brain and Body*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Granite Publishing, Orem (UT), 2001; see also, <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>, accessed on: July 18, 2001; Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005; Crystal Roberts, *Internet Filtering and Blocking Technology: The Most Effective Methods of Protecting Children from Pornography*, Family Research Council, Washington (DC): September 3, 1999, available at <http://www.copacommission.org/papers/is99g2pn.pdf>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>7</sup> Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005

<sup>8</sup> Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, *UK Children Go Online: Final Report of Key Project Findings*, Economic and Social Research Council, London School of Economics and Political Science, London (UK): April 2005, available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/children-go-online/UKCGOfinalReport.pdf>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

- 3% of pornographic websites require age verification that goes beyond the honor system.<sup>9</sup>
- 74% of pornographic websites display free “teasers” of pornographic images on their homepages and within their websites that require no payment, credit card, or adequate age verification.<sup>10</sup>
- The industry itself admits that 20-30% of its traffic comes from youth under the age of 18.<sup>11</sup>

### **Finding #3: Elements of the industry directly target children for viewing online pornography and for performing illegal acts in pornographic videos.**

- Many pornographic websites operate based on a business model that depends on attracting as many visitors to their sites as possible, regardless of whether they are of legal age.<sup>12</sup>
- Specific web strategies, such as meta-tagging, porn-napping, cyber-squatting, and doorway-scamming are used to attract children to pornographic sites.<sup>13</sup> In a case that is representative of a broader trend, a 56-year-old Florida man made \$1 million, in part by using misspellings of domain names like Disneyland®, Teletubbies®, and Britney Spears to lure children to specific pornographic websites. Owners of the sites paid this man for the hits he generated on their sites.<sup>14</sup>
- During one six-week period, according to researchers monitoring the Web, 140,000 child pornography images were posted to the Internet.<sup>15</sup>
- Revenue estimates from child pornography range from about \$200 million to more than \$1 billion per year.<sup>16</sup>
- Approximately 20 new children appear on pornography sites every month – many kidnapped or sold into sex.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Dawn Kawamoto, "Man Arrested in Domain Deceit," *CNET News.com*, September 2, 2003, available at: [http://news.com.com/Man+arrested+in+domain+deceit/2100-1025\\_3-5071133.html](http://news.com.com/Man+arrested+in+domain+deceit/2100-1025_3-5071133.html), accessed on: July 15, 2005; Erin McClam, "Feds Arrest Florida Man in 'Mousetrapping' Online Porn Scheme," *Associated Press*, September 3, 2003

<sup>15</sup> E. Renold and S. J. Creighton, *Images of Abuse: A Review of the Evidence on Child Pornography*, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, London: October 2003

<sup>16</sup> "Businesses Must Not Tolerate Child Porn," *Red Herring Magazine*, January 3, 2002, available at: <http://www.redherring.com/Article.aspx?a=4033&hed=Business+must+not+tolerate+child+porn>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>17</sup> Paul Clarkson, "Baby Porn Soaring," *The Mirror*, March 4, 2003

## **Finding #4: Children are viewing online pornography and being solicited by sexual predators without the knowledge of their parents.**

- 60% of 15-24 year olds either know how to get around filtering software or know someone who can show them how.<sup>18</sup>
- Pornography is now available to children through “anywhere, anytime” technologies available on wireless devices. These are difficult, if not impossible, for parents to monitor, filter, or track.
- One-third of children 11-17 have their own cell phones today; it is expected that half will have them within the next couple of years.<sup>19</sup> Pornography already constitutes half of the multimedia traffic carried by U.S. wireless operators from outside of their own portals. Revenues from pornography delivered via mobile wireless devices are projected to increase by more than 50 percent in 2005 and perhaps triple by 2009.<sup>20</sup>
- 64% of teens say that teens do things online that they wouldn’t want their parents to know about.<sup>21</sup>
- 20% of children (10-17 years old) receive unwanted sexual solicitations online.<sup>22</sup> Parents are unaware when their children are sexually solicited online in 49% of cases.<sup>23</sup>

## **Finding #1: A large and lucrative internet pornography industry is flooding the Web and seeking mainstream acceptance.**

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<sup>18</sup> *Generation Rx.Com: How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park (CA): December 2001, available at: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=13719>, accessed on: June 15, 2005

<sup>19</sup> Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005

<sup>20</sup> "Mobile Adult Content: Text, Images and Video," Second Edition, Juniper Research, Basingstoke (UK): February 2005

<sup>21</sup> Amanda Lenhart, *Protecting Teens Online*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington (DC): March 17, 2005, available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Filters\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Filters_Report.pdf), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>22</sup> David Finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell and Janis Wolak, "Youth Internet Safety Survey," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice, Washington (DC): March 2001

<sup>23</sup> David Finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell and Janis Wolak, *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Alexandria (VA): June 2000, available at: [http://www.missingkids.com/en\\_US/publications/NC62.pdf](http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/NC62.pdf), accessed on: July 15, 2005

Long gone are the days when pornography was confined to a few downtown movie theaters, the backrooms of some video stores, and a smattering of seedy stores selling “adult books.” The rise of the Internet has revolutionized the pornography industry and has dramatically extended its reach and influence. Pornography is now big business and it is only expected to spread still more widely with advances in “anywhere, anytime” technologies for accessing the Internet. Commensurate with this deep and broad market penetration, the pornography industry is seeking and increasingly receiving mainstream acceptance and influence.

***“It’s an enormous business... there’s a lot of money to be made.”***

– Sean Kaldor, analyst with  
Nielson/NetRatings

As an industry that combines low production costs with the promise of quick profits, pornography is one of the few businesses that have been profitable on the Internet from the very beginning. As a result, it has experienced explosive growth. There are more than 420 million individual pornographic web pages today, up from 14 million in 1998.<sup>24</sup> Pornographic materials represent a staggering share of overall internet traffic; as much as 60 percent of all sites viewed on the Web today are sexual in nature.<sup>25</sup> The sheer volume of pornography available online is so great that there is now a separate pornography search engine – “Booble” (www.booble.com), modeled on Google®. This is hardly surprising once one realizes that a search for “porn” on Google® returns 31,300,000 links in 0.10 seconds.

As a result of this skyrocketing growth, internet pornography is now a booming, multi-billion dollar industry that runs the gamut from large consolidated firms delivering users access to hundreds of affiliated sites, to smaller fly-by-night operations catering to niche audiences and “just about every kink.”<sup>26</sup> The industry employs thousands of people, while generating billions in revenues for site owners, web hosting companies, and computer-hardware firms. Internet pornography now generates \$12 billion annually – equal to the revenue of CBS, NBC, and ABC combined.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the two largest purchasers of bandwidth

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<sup>24</sup> Data provided by Secure Computing Corp., 2005

<sup>25</sup> Jim Dyar, “Cyber Porn Held Responsible for Increase in Sex Addiction; Mental Health Experts Warn of Adverse Impact on Job, Family,” *Washington Times*, January 26, 2000

<sup>26</sup> Jeordan Legon, “Sex Sells, Especially to Web Surfers,” *CNN.com*, December 11, 2003, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/internet/12/10/porn.business/>, accessed on: June 27, 2005

<sup>27</sup> John M. Higgins, “Still Strutting after All These Years,” *Broadcasting & Cable*, December 13, 2004, available at: <http://www.vodscape.com/news/Top25Networks.html>, accessed on: June 15, 2005; Associated Press, “Stage Set for ‘.xxx’ Internet Addresses,” *CNN.com*, June 2, 2005, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/TECH/internet/06/01/internet.porn.ap/index.html>, accessed on: June 20, 2005

are companies in the adult entertainment industry.<sup>28</sup> It is expected that innovations in broadband and wireless access will spur still greater growth in the years to come. Worldwide revenue from mobile phone pornography is expected to reach \$1 billion in 2005 and could triple or more within a few years.<sup>29</sup>

In keeping with its large size and vast growth potential, the internet pornography industry is seeking and increasingly receiving mainstream acceptance. The pornography industry has established a well-funded lobby, Free Speech Coalition ([www.freespeechcoalition.com](http://www.freespeechcoalition.com)), which is set up as a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit

***“The porn world now has all the trappings of a legitimate industry with considerable economic clout. Besides its own convention and trade publication, it holds marketing and legal seminars. It even has its own lobbyist.”***

- 60 Minutes

corporation. It has an Executive Board consisting of a Chairman, President, Vice-President and Treasurer, along with a nine-member board, a legislative team, an Executive Director, a Membership Coordinator and support staff. Their organizational activities are similar to the tobacco lobby, except that their sole purpose is to protect pornography and pornographers. These activities include education campaigns, state and national lobby activities, and litigation.

Several years ago, the pornography lobby held a rally at the California state capitol “to crow about the

industry’s \$5.175 billion contribution to the state’s economy ... which ... got a significant boost from internet sales of \$875 million.”<sup>30</sup> The Executive Director told the press that the point of the rally was “to communicate to lawmakers that, as an industry, we are now sophisticated and mature, and they have to deal with us.” After all, he argued, “No one considers passing laws regulating the nuclear industry without consulting the nuclear industry first.”<sup>31</sup>

There is evidence suggesting that the pornography industry is succeeding in its quest to go mainstream. As *USA Today* reported, Fox’s primetime drama *Skin* - “a Romeo-and-Juliet love story between the son of a district attorney and the daughter of a ‘porn king’” - was only “the latest of a wave of mainstream projects

<sup>28</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

<sup>29</sup> Cassel Bryan-Low and David Pringle, "Sex Cells: Wireless Operators Find That Racy Cellphone Video Drives Surge in Broadband Use," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 2005

<sup>30</sup> Heidi Kriz, "Porn Industry Knows Its Worth," *Wired News*, April 13, 1999, available at: <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,19104,00.html>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



on TV and film and in books, peeling back the plain brown wrapper from the world of pornography.” Jim Leonard, executive producer of *Skin*, cited the Internet as a mainstreaming force that has helped to make pornography an acceptable form of general entertainment. “I think people are increasingly aware of [the porn business],” he said, “because of the Internet and the universality of cable and satellite.”<sup>32</sup>

The examples of the mainstreaming of pornography in popular culture abound. *Boogie Nights*, a film about the pornography industry in the 1970s, featured former popstar Mark Wahlberg and played in mainstream theaters across the country. The Showtime series *Family Business* tells the story of “the professional and personal life of porn producer and single father Adam Glasser.” HBO aired a six-part documentary called *Pornucopia: Going Down in the Valley*. Silhouette Productions has produced a porn/reality TV show called *Can You Be a Porn Star?* Porn star Jenna Jameson’s book,

**“What is happening is that young people are beginning to think that this kind of human behavior and relationship is average and acceptable. They don’t see it as rare. So it changes their view of the world during their formative years, and I can’t imagine that’s a good thing.”**

– Psychologist

published by Regan Books of Harper Collins, is titled *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*. While promoting her book, Jameson appeared on the cover of *New York* magazine and was profiled by *E! True Hollywood Story*. She is now in negotiations to star in her own reality show on A&E.<sup>33</sup>

Between the billions of dollars in revenues it generates and the increasing acceptance it is receiving within popular culture, it is perhaps inevitable that the pornography industry has also begun to be embraced by leaders in business and finance. Pornography is now a big-time profit engine, in which large mainstream businesses have major stakes. By the year 2000, General Motors Corporation – through its subsidiary DirecTV® – was selling more pornographic films each year than Hustler’s Larry Flynt. In 2003, GM sold DirecTV® to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. EchoStar Communications, which is also heavily backed by Rupert Murdoch, now generates more revenue from pornography than Playboy®. Other

<sup>32</sup> Bill Keveney, “Hollywood Gets in Bed with Porn,” *USA Today*, October 17, 2003

<sup>33</sup> Paul Colford, “Porn Star, Publisher Bear Claws in Lawsuits,” *New York Daily News*, April 13, 2005

major players in the pornography business today include AT&T®, Hilton®, and Marriott International®.<sup>34</sup>

Today, the pornography industry brags about its mainstream connections. The head of the pornography industry lobby, a former defense industry lobbyist was interviewed by *60 Minutes* last year and pointed out that there are companies traded on the New York Stock Exchange who are part of his industry. "Corporations are in business to make money," he said. "This is an extremely large business and there's a great opportunity for profits in it." Furthermore, he said, the profitable nature of the business was changing the view of the industry

***"The industry is big business now. It's mainstream."***

- Bill Asher, Dartmouth graduate, MBA and President of Vivid Video, a billion-dollar business that produces and distributes pornographic videos for hotels, cable companies, and the Internet.

among politicians. Asked what reaction he gets when he tells politicians that he is a lobbyist for the pornography industry, he replied, "Initially, I think there's a degree of shock. But when you explain to them the size and the scope of the business, they realize, as all politicians do, that it's votes and money that we're talking about."<sup>35</sup>

The growth of internet pornography over the last decade has been explosive. The industry has achieved a dominant online presence, reaching into nearly every American home and touching the lives of

every person, young and old. As access to the Internet becomes more universal and more mobile, it is expected that the pornography industry's wealth, power, and influence on American society will continue to grow. Given just how large this industry now is, it is not surprising perhaps that it is well on its way to attaining mainstream acceptance and has begun to exercise enormous economic and political clout. Like it or not, the internet pornography industry is now a towering presence on America's economic, political, and cultural landscape.

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<sup>34</sup> Timothy Egan, "Erotica Inc. - a Special Report: Technology Sent Wall Street into Market for Pornography," *New York Times*, October 23, 2000

<sup>35</sup> "Porn in the U.S.A.," *CBS News - 60 Minutes*, September 5, 2004, available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/11/21/60minutes/main585049.shtml>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

## **Finding #2: Because of easy access and inadequate age verification systems, children are among the main viewers of internet pornography.**

Even as the pornography industry seeks mainstream acceptance among social elites – from Hollywood to politicians and business leaders – it remains an industry that shows little appreciation for the traditional rules that govern mainstream business. In particular, it flaunts the rules that prohibit Main Street, brick-and-mortar businesses from marketing and selling age-inappropriate products to minors.

All 50 states have laws preventing the sale of pornography to minors. Nonetheless, the internet pornography industry has fought to prevent implementation of similar laws regarding the sale or viewing of pornographic material online.<sup>36</sup> Though brick-and-mortar adult entertainment vendors are required to verify the age of their customers by checking a government-issued identification, similar vendors on the Internet use the “honor system.” Though most video stores relegate pornographic videos to a separate area of their facilities and obscure them with barriers, most internet sites allow children to view hardcore pornographic movies and images for free without any form of age verification – starting on the first page.

	<b>Brick &amp; Mortar</b>	<b>Online Pornography</b>
<b>Age Verification</b>	<b>Government/State-issued ID</b>	<b>Honor System</b>
<b>Viewing Material</b>	<b>Relegated to Private Room/Obscured by Barriers</b>	<b>Free Hardcore Images/Video</b>

The statistics make it clear: self-regulation in the internet pornography industry is not working. The largest group of viewers of internet pornography are youth 12-17 years of age.<sup>37</sup> Nearly six-of-ten children ages 9-19 have viewed pornography

<sup>36</sup> Such as helping to fund legal challenges to COPA. See Richard Willing, "Supreme Court Revisits Internet Pornography Law," *USA Today*, March 3, 2004

<sup>37</sup> Mark B. Kastleman, *The Drug of the New Millennium: The Science of How Internet Pornography Radically Alters the Human Brain and Body*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Granite Publishing, Orem (UT), 2001; see also, <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/resourcesservices/stat.html>, accessed on: July 18, 2001; Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005; Crystal Roberts, *Internet Filtering and Blocking Technology: The Most Effective Methods of Protecting Children from Pornography*, Family Research Council, Washington (DC): September

on the Internet.<sup>38</sup> 70% of 15-17 year olds say they have had multiple exposures to hard-core pornography.<sup>39</sup> The average age at which a child is first exposed to pornography today is 11 years old.<sup>40</sup> Even the industry itself admits that 20 to 30 percent of its online traffic comes from youth under the age of 18.<sup>41</sup>

As much as parents worry about the video games that their children are playing online, children actually spend significantly more time on pornographic sites today than they do on game sites.<sup>42</sup> Even those children who do not seek out pornography are likely to find themselves exposed to it in the course of doing schoolwork or surfing the Internet for information about typical subjects of childhood interest. Only 30% of 15-17 year olds said they have not accidentally stumbled across pornography online.<sup>43</sup>

**“All the boys do it. They kind of brag about it.”**

- Teenage girl, noting the popularity of internet pornography among her male classmates

*Boston Globe* reporter, Bella English, recently interviewed Boston-area parents and children about their experiences with pornography online. One mother recalled researching scouting online and stumbling across sites for men with fetishes for Brownie scouts. “Nothing is sacred online,” she said.<sup>44</sup> A 14-year old girl who English interviewed spoke of calling up pornographic sites when she searched for information on something as seemingly unrelated as submarines.<sup>45</sup>

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3, 1999, available at <http://www.copacommission.org/papers/is99g2pn.pdf>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>38</sup> Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, *UK Children Go Online: Final Report of Key Project Findings*, Economic and Social Research Council, London School of Economics and Political Science, London (UK): April 2005, available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/children-go-online/UKCGOfinalReport.pdf>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>39</sup> *Generation Rx.Com: How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park (CA): December 2001, available at: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=13719>, accessed on: June 15, 2005

<sup>40</sup> Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005

<sup>41</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

<sup>42</sup> "The Netvalue Report on Minors Online - 17 and under - Shows over 25% Visited an Adult Site in September 2000," *Business Wire*, December 19, 2000

<sup>43</sup> *Generation Rx.Com: How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park (CA): December 2001, available at: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=13719>, accessed on: June 15, 2005

<sup>44</sup> Bella English, "The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Another teenage girl simply noted the popularity of internet pornography among her male classmates. “All the boys do it,” she said. “They kind of brag about it.”<sup>46</sup>

**We don't make this stuff up.  
we merely cast our nets into  
the oceans of perversion and  
reel in the tuna of  
tastelessness.**

**To enter our free areas, you must  
certify, under penalties of perjury,  
your date of birth in the  
following form.**

**“I hereby affirm, under the penalties  
of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 1746,  
that I was born on the following  
month, day and year”:**

Month	Day	Year
January	01	1964

[By entering, you also agree...](#)

**ENTER**

or

**Go Away**

**We strongly support parental controls on the internet.**

Internet pornography self-regulation is not working because it is, plainly and simply, a farce. Nearly three-quarters of pornography websites display free teasers of pornographic images on their homepages, even before children are asked to say whether they are of legal age.<sup>47</sup> Only three percent of sites actually require some proof of age from users before giving them access to pornographic

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

material.<sup>48</sup> Two-thirds of sites do not even include an adult content warning.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as many as one in four sites actually use a technique called “mouse trapping” that disables the navigation functions of a user’s browser (such as the “Back” button), so as to prevent a child who stumbles across the site, and does not want to remain, from leaving.<sup>50</sup>

Vendors in brick-and-mortar shops who sell products that are inappropriate for children are generally required to check an individual’s government-issued identification before making a sale to anyone who might be a minor. If internet pornography sites followed similar practices online, it would be of great assistance to parents. Sadly, age verification on pornography sites today is simply a joke. The graphic on the previous page represents what most pornographic websites consider age verification

This is not exactly verification in the sense that Ronald Reagan had in mind when he said, “[t]rust, but verify.” The operators of these sites are trusting, but they are in no way verifying. It is not considered acceptable for the owner of a brick-and-mortar grocery to accept a young person’s word that they are over eighteen, nor should it be considered appropriate for online vendors. Yet this is standard practice among operators of internet pornography sites.

**“Pornography changes boys’ expectation of real girls, and that by default changes reality for the girls. What bothers me is that the girls aren’t outraged by it.”**

- Family Therapist

In fact, this practice is so standard in the internet pornography industry that it is becoming known – as it is copied by online retailers of other adult-only products like tobacco and alcohol – as the “porn standard.” The U.S. cell phone industry is now considering adopting this standard for delivery of pornographic content on cell phones. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the industry is considering “an ‘opt in’ provision that would require cell phone

subscribers to certify they are adults before their phones are enabled to receive adult content.”<sup>51</sup>

This is not child-protection; it is self-protection. It is not designed to prevent children from accessing adult sites; it is designed to prevent parents or others from holding pornographers accountable when children do access these sites.

<sup>48</sup> Typically through credit card authorization. *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Cassel Bryan-Low and David Pringle, “Sex Cells: Wireless Operators Find That Racy Cellphone Video Drives Surge in Broadband Use,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 2005

The message is clear. “Hey, don’t blame us. Blame the kids. They told us they were over eighteen.”

Operators of pornographic sites have traditionally defended the priority that they have placed on self-protection over child-protection by arguing that they cannot be held responsible if children access their sites, because they cannot possibly know who, out there in the anonymity of cyberspace, is choosing to visit their sites. This argument no longer holds water, due to the availability today of accurate and effective age verification software (AVS). Technology exists today that makes it possible for website operators to accurately verify the age of visitors to their sites, utilizing the same forms of government-issued identification that brick-and-mortar retailers ask for when there is a question as to whether a customer is of age.

Many websites today, including websites that sell tobacco and alcohol and websites that show trailers for R-rated movies, use various versions of age-verification software. Because there are few legal requirements in terms of age-verification online, there is great variety in the nature and effectiveness of the software that different sites use. Some sites just ask for a name, a birthdate, and a zip code. They then check this information for consistency against public records. At least there is some attempt, in these instances, to verify that the information given by a visitor to the site is accurate. Still, this is a relatively ineffective screen for the purpose of keeping minors off of sites inappropriate for children, since all a child needs to defeat this system is the name, birthdate, and zipcode of an actual adult, whether that adult is their parent or someone else they know.

The best online age-verification systems replicate the act of “carding,” which is the standard means of verifying age everywhere else but on the Internet. For example, website operators utilizing age-verification software called VerifyME®, can create entrance pages to their sites that ask visitors to enter some of the information that is on their government-issued identification, specifically their first name, last name, and their government identification number (driver’s license number, passport number, etc.). VerifyME® then runs this information against public records and confirms both that the information is legitimate and that the person to which that identification was issued is of age. It is still possible for children to defeat such a system, but it requires that they get their hands on the driver’s licenses or passports of their parents or other adults. It is far easier for parents to make sure that their children do not know the information on their driver’s licenses or passports than to keep their children in the dark as to their birthdates or addresses.

This accurate and effective age-verification technology is readily available to businesses worldwide and could easily be incorporated as a standard feature of all adult websites. Anyone interested enough in child protection to conduct a cursory Google search for “Online Age Verification Software” will find links to no less than seven AVS providers. The question is no longer whether the operators

of pornographic websites have the ability to verify the ages of visitors to their sites before giving them access to sexually-explicit material; the question is whether they have the will to do so. With only three percent of sites today requiring age verification that goes beyond the honor system, it seems fairly clear that they do not have the will to do it, at least on their own.

## VerifyME™

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You must be 18 or older to enter this site.

\* First Name:

\* Middle Name:

\* Last Name:

\* Street Address:

\* Postal/Zip Code:

\* Country:

\* Date of Birth:

\* ID #:

ID # Type:

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\* Contact Phone:

\* Contact Email:

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Even though software is now available that gives the operators of pornographic websites the ability to easily verify the age of their users, utilizing information from the same government-issued identification that gets checked when a minor is carded at 7-Eleven®, the internet pornography industry doggedly defends its farcical honor system. As a result, children are now viewing pornography in large numbers and at very early ages. Whether as a consequence of seeking it out online or simply stumbling across it inadvertently because the Web is blanketed with it, viewing internet pornography – and its images and messages glorifying casual, high-risk sexual behavior – is now a standard part of growing up in America.



### **Finding #3: Elements of the industry directly target children for viewing online pornography and for performing illegal acts in pornographic videos.**

The pornography industry's Washington lobby is using its growing political influence to fight legislative and regulatory efforts designed to tighten protections for children. Having already succeeded in overturning the provisions of a law intended to protect children from exposure to internet pornography, the industry is now taking aim at requirements intended to protect minors from being used as subjects in the production of internet pornography.<sup>52</sup> While this is inconsistent with the image the industry projects of itself as a legitimate, mainstream business, it is highly consistent with the survival and spread of some of the lowest-common-denominator practices that are currently in use by elements of the industry. These practices include the deliberate targeting of children as consumers of internet pornography and the abuse of minors in the production of internet pornography.

These lowest-common-denominator practices have been brought to light in several recent news reports. For example, a 56-year-old Florida man recently admitted to prosecutors that he made \$1 million a year from internet pornography, in part by using misspellings of domain names like Disneyland®, Teletubbies® and Britney Spears to lure children to the websites of pornographers who paid him 10 to 25 cents for every hit on their sites.<sup>53</sup>

***“Even if you’re not looking for porno, you get it. You need a pop-up blocker.”***

- Eighth-grade boy

This confirmed a long-held suspicion of parents' groups that certain pornographers have been deliberately manipulating the algorithms of popular internet search engines to steer children to their sites. Searches by an internet security firm, based on 26 popular children's characters (such as Pokemon, My Little Pony, and Action Man) revealed thousands of links to pornography sites – 30% of them were hard-core pornography sites.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Linda Greenhouse, "Court, 5-4, Blocks a Law Regulating Internet Access," *New York Times*, June 29, 2004

<sup>53</sup> Dawn Kawamoto, "Man Arrested in Domain Deceit," *CNET News.com*, September 2, 2003, available at: [http://news.com.com/Man+arrested+in+domain+deceit/2100-1025\\_3-5071133.html](http://news.com.com/Man+arrested+in+domain+deceit/2100-1025_3-5071133.html), accessed on: July 15, 2005; Erin McClam, "Feds Arrest Florida Man in 'Mousetrapping' Online Porn Scheme," *Associated Press*, September 3, 2003

<sup>54</sup> Fiona Harvey, "International Economy: Porn Websites Abuse Brand Names of Toys," *Financial Times*, November 16, 2000

The unfortunate reality is that from a business-model perspective, it simply does not pay for the operators of pornographic websites to keep children away. In fact, the financial incentives run in precisely the opposite direction. Many website owners operate on a Cost per Mille (CPM) model. They earn an advertising fee per 1,000 displays of an ad on their website. Others operate on a Cost per Click (CPC) model. They receive a referral fee for every time an ad on their website is clicked on. It is contrary to these site owners' self-interest to turn children away, because they get paid for every display or every click, no matter whether the user displaying or clicking is an adult or a child.<sup>55</sup>

Certain operators of pornographic websites have devised strategies to maximize the number of users visiting their sites – strategies by which they intentionally lure children as well as adults to their sites. These strategies include:

- **Meta-tagging:** website operators who use this practice embed keywords in their websites so that their sites will be captured by search engines when internet users conduct specific searches. A couple in Ohio recently bragged to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

***"This is a problem that's going to get worse from the standpoint of potential victims because we have more and more children with Internet access."***

- Peter Gulotta,  
Child Safe Internet FBI Special Agent

about embedding meta-tags such as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny into their pornographic website to attract people who search those words. When asked what parents can do to prevent him and others like him from exposing their children to internet pornography, the husband replied, "nothing, really."<sup>56</sup>

- **Porn-Napping:** This practice was common several years ago, but Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has taken steps recently to discourage it. Porn-napping is the practice of buying up domain names that are not renewed after they expire, so as to target the audience of the original site. For example, when Ernst & Young let the registration expire on their children's money management site, [www.moneyopolis.org](http://www.moneyopolis.org), the domain name was purchased by a pornographer. Subsequent visitors to the site were redirected to [www.euroteensluts.com](http://www.euroteensluts.com).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Dick Thornburg and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography, & the Internet*, Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Content, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington (DC): 2002

<sup>56</sup> Diana Keough, "Web Master: There's Nothing Parents Can Do to Stop I-Porn," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 17, 2005

<sup>57</sup> Dina El-Boghdady, "When Domains Go Unrenewed, the Opportunists Swoop In," *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2001

- **Cyber Squatting:** Pornographers sometimes purchase unregistered domain names that are closely related to other, commonly-visited websites, so as to target visitors to these other sites when they make a typo or mistakenly substitute a .com for .org or .gov in entering the address into their web browser. Until recently, www.whitehouse.com was a pornographic website.<sup>58</sup>
- **Doorway Scamming:** Internet pornography companies have figured out ways to design their sites around non-porn themes so they appear higher on the search engine results page.

Tragically, children are not only exploited by internet pornographers as targeted consumers; they are also exploited as subjects of, and participants in, the production of internet pornography. As a consequence of the sheer volume of the

***“We are in the middle of a technological arms race. As soon as the police crack one approach the criminals come up with another. The police have stopped counting because the number of child porn images available on the net are overwhelming.”***

- Jon Carr, Internet Watch Foundation

money involved, internet pornography has become a leading contributor to the commercial sexual exploitation of children – a heinous social phenomenon that has made victims of hundreds of thousands of children.

For example, until recently the largest child pornography site in the world was run by a former nurse from Texas named Thomas Reedy. Reedy started out by setting up an internet adult porn business. Eventually, however, “Reedy’s desire for cash led him to galvanise [sic] an illegal but rampant desire for

hard-core child pornography.”<sup>59</sup> Reedy was reportedly the first to sell child pornography on the Internet on a pay-per-view basis. He eventually came to have 250,000 paying customers, earning him \$1.4 million in profits a month. Between 1996 and 1999, Reedy earned \$10 million, 85 percent from child pornography. As the Assistant District Attorney who prosecuted Reedy says, “He was making a tremendous amount of profit off the misery of children.”<sup>60</sup>

As with the Internet and pornography generally, child internet pornography is an exploding growth industry. There was a 345% increase in child pornography sites

<sup>58</sup> Julia McCord, "Web of Danger: Protecting Children from Abuse on the Internet," *Omaha World-Herald*, February 12, 2005

<sup>59</sup> Pip Clothier, "The World's Biggest Convicted Child Pornographer," *The Independent*, May 13, 2003

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

over just 6 months in 2001.<sup>61</sup> Approximately 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week.<sup>62</sup> The U.S. Customs Service estimates that, despite being illegal worldwide, there are more than 100,000 websites offering child pornography today.<sup>63</sup> Revenue estimates for the industry from child pornography range from about \$200 million to more than \$1 billion per year.<sup>64</sup>

According to Jon Carr of the Internet Watch Foundation, the huge profits that can be made online are fueling a growth in the number of sites that carry child pornography and this growth, in turn, is causing a wave of sexual abuse of children. "We are now receiving 80-85 new reports per week about pay-per-view child porn websites ... I'm absolutely certain that one of the reasons we're seeing the growth is precisely because, following [Reedy's] case, criminals from all over the world realize how much money there is to be made in it."<sup>65</sup> Lieutenant Bill Walsh of the Dallas Police, who caught Thomas Reedy and brought him to justice, soberly reflected upon the challenge law enforcement faces in stemming the growing tide of commercial child exploitation online. "I think some people are quick to pat themselves on the back for the largest internet case in the world. I've got news for you. The next will be the largest. And the next after that will be the largest. These people are not going away."<sup>66</sup>

***"I've got news for you  
... These people are not  
going away."***

- Lt. Bill Walsh of the Dallas Police, who apprehended Thomas Reedy, the operator of a pay-per-view internet pornography site that catered to pedophiles and earned Reedy \$1.4 million in profits per month

Nor is the threat to children going away. Before the advent of the Internet, pedophiles traded a relatively static set of recycled pornographic images; now, the rapid growth of child pornography on the Internet and the competition for profits between sites, has fed an insatiable demand for new images. "More and more children are being abused on a regular basis in order to provide new material for those websites," says Carr. "We know about certain individuals who are, on a regular basis, bringing children into a studio, a garage, photographing

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<sup>61</sup> Data provided by Secure Computing Corp., 2005; Lenny Savino, "Huge Bust Shows How Child-Porn Business Evolved: Internet Allowed Global Reach of Texas Company: Police Arrest Hundreds," *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, August 17, 2001

<sup>62</sup> Maxine Frith, "20,000 Child Porn Images a Week Put on Internet, Says NSPCC," *The Independent*, October 3, 2003

<sup>63</sup> "Businesses Must Not Tolerate Child Porn," *Red Herring Magazine*, January 3, 2002, available at: <http://www.redherring.com/Article.aspx?a=4033&hed=Business+must+not+tolerate+child+porn>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Pip Clothier, "The World's Biggest Convicted Child Pornographer," *The Independent*, May 13, 2003

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

them and within 48 hours that material is up on the Web.”<sup>67</sup> One such predator was Ronald Pasqualino, “an East Coast drifter with at least 16 aliases.”<sup>68</sup> Pasqualino reportedly victimized more than 200 minors, mostly young boys, in 11 states and Canada. He kidnapped some and lured others with drugs and alcohol. He used them to produce “*Boys Gone Wild*” videos portraying males engaging in sexual activity alone or with another male.”<sup>69</sup>

Pasqualino’s victims are not alone. Approximately 20 new children appear on pornography sites every month – many kidnapped or sold into sex.<sup>70</sup> An estimated 325,000 U.S. children age 17 or younger today are prostitutes, performers in pornographic videos, or have otherwise fallen victim to commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>71</sup> 293,000 American youth are currently considered “at risk” of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>72</sup> Worldwide, 1.2 million children are trafficked each year and two million children are sexually exploited in the commercial sex industry.<sup>73</sup>

The internet has created enticing financial rewards for those unscrupulous enough to exploit children in the pursuit of profits. The incentive to lure children onto pornographic websites is built into the basic business model by which many operators of pornographic sites operate. As a result, bad actors have developed specific strategies for marketing online pornography to children. More disturbing, there seems to be no end to the online demand for child pornography. In the hyper-profitability that it has brought to the sale and glorification of sex without limits, the Internet has created new and pernicious dangers for children.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Franci Richardson, "Suspect Perv Nabbed - Police: "Sex Predator" Has Hundreds of Victims," *Boston Herald*, May 19, 2005

<sup>69</sup> Shannon O'Boye, John Burnstein and Barbara Hijeck, "Sex Offender's Case Grows: Pembroke Officers Team up with State," *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, May 21, 2005

<sup>70</sup> Paul Clarkson, "Baby Porn Soaring," *The Mirror*, March 4, 2003

<sup>71</sup> Richard J. and Neil Alan Weiner Estes, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*, School of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (PA): September 18, 2001; Mark Memmot, "Sex Trade May Lure 325,000 US Kids," *USA Today*, September 9, 2001

<sup>72</sup> Richard J. and Neil Alan Weiner Estes, *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*, School of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (PA): September 18, 2001

<sup>73</sup> *The State of the World's Children 2005*, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), New York: 2005, available at: <http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/english/sowc05.pdf>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

## **Finding #4: Children are viewing online pornography and being solicited by sexual predators without the knowledge of their parents.**

Parents have a critical role to play in supervising and talking to their children about their online activities. However, parents are finding that their control over the influences to which their children are exposed is being rapidly eroded by new and largely unregulated technologies. Parents are fighting a losing battle today against the online pornographers and sexual predators and, unless they receive some help from the broader society, it will continue to be a losing battle.

Parents cannot always be present to supervise their children's online activities. The majority of teenagers' online use occurs right after school, when working parents are not home.<sup>74</sup> Even in households where parents are always home when children are home, supervision of children's online activities is becoming increasingly challenging. Pornography is now available to children via wireless

***“It disturbs me, because I think it completely distorts sexuality, and I don't want him to see women like that. I don't want him to think that's what sex is all about.”***

– Mother of three, after she found out her 13-year-old son had been accessing pornographic websites afternoons after school

devices – anywhere, anytime technologies that are difficult if not impossible for parents to monitor, filter, or track. Teenagers now have access to wireless internet laptops, BlackBerries®, two-way pagers, camera phones, instant messenger, and chat rooms.

To focus on just the most common of these technologies, one-third of children ages 11 to 17 have

their own cell phones today; it is projected that half will have them within the next couple of years.<sup>75</sup> Pornography delivered over mobile phones is now a burgeoning business, “driven by the increase in sophisticated services that deliver video clips and streaming video, in addition to text and images.”<sup>76</sup> According to some analysts, half of the multimedia traffic that U.S. wireless operators carry from outside of their own portals today is pornographic. Parents'

<sup>74</sup> “Browsesafe - Internet Filtering,” *Trinity Broadcasting Network*, available at: [www.browsesafe.com](http://www.browsesafe.com), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>75</sup> Bella English, “The Secret Life of Boys: Pornography Is a Mouse Click Away, and Kids Are Being Exposed to It in Ever-Increasing Numbers,” *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 2005

<sup>76</sup> Antone Gonsalves, “Mobile Phone Users Buying up Porn-on-the-Go,” *TechWeb News - Internet Week*, February 11, 2005, available at: <http://www.internetweek.com/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=60400366>, accessed on: July 15, 2005

groups are alarmed. “Twelve- and 13-year-old boys are very curious and they’re going to buddy with their friends to see what they can find,” a representative of the American Family Association recently told the *Wall Street Journal*. “Most parents are not aware the technology exists that allows kids to receive files on cell phones.”<sup>77</sup>

Many parents rely on blocking software to try to limit their children’s exposure to pornography when they are unable to closely or fully supervise their children’s online activities. Currently, 54% of internet connected homes with teenagers have filtering software in place – up from 41% in December of 2000.<sup>78</sup> The very names that companies use to market this software – Net Nanny, for instance – appeal to parents’ desire for a technology that can provide substitute supervision. Yet, blocking software is not always as effective as parents might wish it were.

Consumer Reports recently reviewed eleven popular brands of blocking software, and none were found to be 100% effective. None received an “excellent” rating. Only three of the eleven received a “very good” rating.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, blocking software is only effective if children are not tech-savvy enough to uninstall and reinstall it or to otherwise tamper with it. According to a survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, 60% of 15-24 year olds either know how to get around blocking software or know someone else who can show them how to get around it.<sup>80</sup>

***“It’s not nearly as easy for an adult to supervise children who might seek or be inadvertently exposed to sexually explicit materials online as it is when such images are available in books or on the family television set.”***

- Dick Thornburgh, former U.S. attorney general and chair of the National Research Council Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography

<sup>77</sup> Cassel Bryan-Low and David Pringle, "Sex Cells: Wireless Operators Find That Racy Cellphone Video Drives Surge in Broadband Use," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 2005

<sup>78</sup> Amanda Lenhart, *Protecting Teens Online*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington (DC): March 17, 2005, available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Filters\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Filters_Report.pdf), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>79</sup> “Consumer Reports: Ratings - Filtering Software: Better, but Still Fallible,” *Consumers Union of U.S.*, June 2005, available at: [http://www.consumerreports.org/main/content/display\\_report.jsp?FOLDER%3C%3Efolder\\_id=597373&ASSORTMENT%3C%3Eeast\\_id=333133&bmUID=1118344138398](http://www.consumerreports.org/main/content/display_report.jsp?FOLDER%3C%3Efolder_id=597373&ASSORTMENT%3C%3Eeast_id=333133&bmUID=1118344138398), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>80</sup> *Generation Rx.Com: How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park (CA): December 2001, available at:

The fact that parents are losing control is evident in a wide gap that has developed between what children are actually experiencing online and what parents know about what their children are experiencing online. Both parents and kids are aware that this gap exists. According to research conducted as part of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 64% of teens say that teens do things online that they wouldn't want their parents to know about.<sup>81</sup> Some parents probably think of this gap as something that affects other parents but does not apply in their own cases. All parents, however, cannot be exceptions to the rule. According to additional research, 62% of parents of teenagers are unaware that their children have accessed objectionable websites.<sup>82</sup> More startling is the finding of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that 49% of children who received sexual solicitations did not tell anyone about it.<sup>83</sup>

Parents have the most important job in society: keeping their children safe and raising their children to be respectful and responsible members of society. This job is more challenging today than it has ever been in the past. Never have children been subject to so many influences beyond the control or supervision of parents as they are today. One of the most extreme manifestations of this broader phenomenon is the widespread exposure of children, via the Internet, to both a seemingly endless variety of explicit sexual material and the aggressive sexual advances of online predators.

To argue that parents, and parents alone, should be responsible for shielding their children from inappropriate images and influences online is both unrealistic and unfair. Not only do parents have to contend with what their children may be exposed to on a home computer. Increasingly they must worry as well about what their children are exposed to at the mall or on the school bus, due to the spread of portable, wireless devices. The internet bazaar is our new American main street. Unfortunately, on this new American main street, the shopkeepers do not keep products that are unsuitable for children "behind the counter," nor do they demand proof of age before selling adult products to minors.

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<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=13719>, accessed on: June 15, 2005

<sup>81</sup> Amanda Lenhart, *Protecting Teens Online*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington (DC): March 17, 2005, available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Filters\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Filters_Report.pdf), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>82</sup> "Browsesafe - Internet Filtering," *Trinity Broadcasting Network*, available at: [www.browsesafe.com](http://www.browsesafe.com), accessed on: July 15, 2005

<sup>83</sup> David Finkelhor, Kimberly Mitchell and Janis Wolak, "Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth," National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Alexandria (VA): June 2000, available at: [http://www.missingkids.com/en\\_US/publications/NC62.pdf](http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/NC62.pdf), accessed on: July 15, 2005



## Conclusion:

The pornography industry – once relegated to the shadows of society – has harnessed the power of the Internet to become as lucrative a business as network television. Its rapid growth in presence and profitability is increasing its influence on politics and American society. If the expansion of the past five years is any indication, the number of pornographic web pages on the Internet will soon reach one billion. The anonymous nature of the Internet and the flimsy standards that pornographers have developed for policing child access have made viewing explicit, hard-core sex a common experience among kids growing up in America.

To date, public officials have been slow to regulate any aspect of the Internet. However, society's failure to establish clear rules protecting the interests of children and families has given us the "porn standard" – a minimal, wink-and-nod effort on the part of the industry to put a wall between indisputably adult material and children. The staggering level of online sexual exploitation of children, whether as targeted consumers or abused subjects of pornography, demands that government get off the sidelines.

At a minimum, all commercial internet pornography sites should be required to make use of existing age-verification software to perform the online equivalent of "carding" before giving visitors to their sites access to adult material. "Adults Only" should mean *adults only*. Additional resources should also be provided to law enforcement to crack down on the child-related criminal activity that has grown up in and around the online pornography business. Finally, that business – now a multi-billion dollar industry – should bear the burden of these enhanced law enforcement efforts through a tax on the sale of their products.

On this last point, it is only appropriate that those who profit from the online commercial promotion of sex without limits should pay for the costs that the activities of their industry impose on the rest of society. Whether they be the costs imposed upon taxpayers when they are forced to increase the budgets for law enforcement to combat internet- and pornography-related crimes against children or whether they be the costs to parents when they are forced to supervise their children's every point-and-click online and invest in the latest and greatest blocking software, the social costs associated with the secondary effects of internet pornography should not fall on ordinary taxpayers and their families.

Parents are doing an important job and society has a deep stake in their success. Public officials can no longer sit on the sidelines, while pornographers and sexual predators aggressively solicit our children online. The public and its representatives must choose between the porn standard and the standards that millions of parents seek to enforce for the benefit of their children. Unfortunately, the porn standard is now well on its way to becoming the social standard on the Internet – the new American Main Street. Thus, the refusal to choose should not be confused with a failure to decide. Unless public officials take it upon themselves to act, the prevalence of the porn standard will continue to spread, undermining the influence of parental standards in the lives of America's youth.

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