

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
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**Living safe and productive lives.  
Young people, learning, wellbeing,  
and safety in a global information  
world**



"I've paraphrased, summarized, outlined, compared, contrasted, and inferred. Can I just read now?"





# Burnout Generation

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/annehelenpetersen/millennials-burnout-generation-debt-work>



# Safety in Digital Environments: Context

- Children's increasing immersion in online environments
- Discourses around helping children to “stay safe” online
- Concerns raised by parents and practitioners over potential negative knowledge, emotional and social consequences of online interactions
- Safety framed in terms of potential online risks: web content, user generated content, sexual content/messages, stranger contact, cyberbullying, personal data misuse
- Criticism of effectiveness of youth internet safety programs (Jones, et al 2014 – Crimes Against Children Research Center, USA)
- Public anxiety, moral panic over impact of technology on childhood innocence, shaped by media celebrations of cases



**"We've got a crisis of enforcement ... Right now we are incentivizing companies to not know that children are on their sites ... They've literally been rewarded for pretending that there are no children on their sites."**

**Josh Golin**

**Executive director of the  
Campaign for a  
Commercial Free  
Childhood**

# The Problematic of Digital / Online Safety

- **Multiple terms:** internet safety, media safety, online safety, digital safety, cyber safety
- **Circular definitions:** safety is about trying to be safe, without explication of what “safety” and “safe” mean / are, or articulating underpinning assumptions
- **Implied notions of guiding and protecting children by others:** children not capable of protecting themselves
- **Boundaries of digital safety:** adult consensus about range of risks; focus on risks and excluding opportunities
- **Conceptions / evidence of harm unclear – empirical measurement very difficult, ethical aspects**
- **Huge debates around who is responsible for empowering and protecting children online: government, educators, industry (content and service providers), families.**
- **Absence of proven educational strategies in internet safety programs (Jones, Mitchell & Walsh, 2014)**



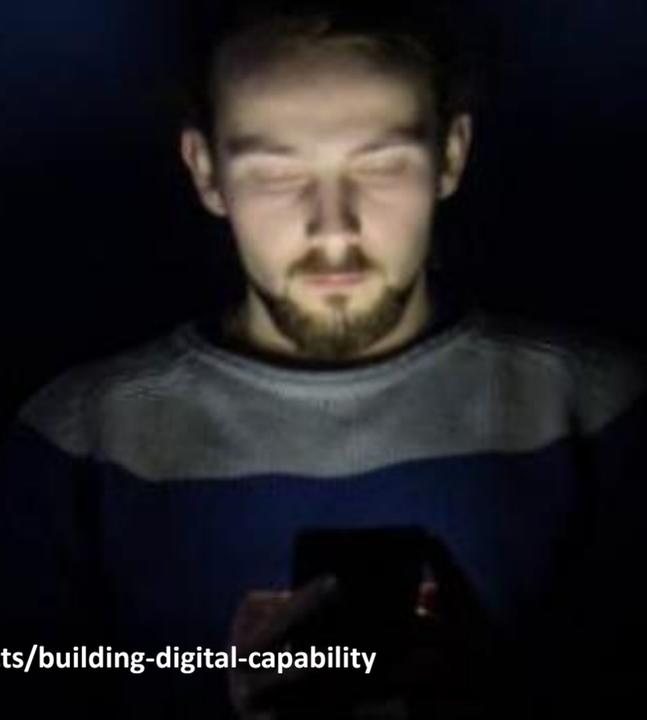
# Moving our Thinking

- **Continuities between children's online and offline worlds – online activities as extensions and modifications of practices located in everyday life.**
- **Reject over-celebratory notions of “digital natives” (Prensky).**
- **Reject technological determinism accounting for radical societal transformations due to technology.**
- **Public anxiety, moral panic over impact of technology on childhood innocence and freedom – move beyond panicky accounts of the dangerous internet based on high-profile small number of cases.**
- **Safety is important – protection must be balanced against enabling children's rights, pleasures and opportunities, including opportunities for risk-taking.**
- **Conceptions of harm unclear – empirical measurement very difficult. In EU study, claim of harm rested with the child. Risk does not mean harm.**
- **Moving beyond information literacy, digital literacy, digital citizenship (all of which are vitally important) to a more holistic focus on child: digital wellbeing**

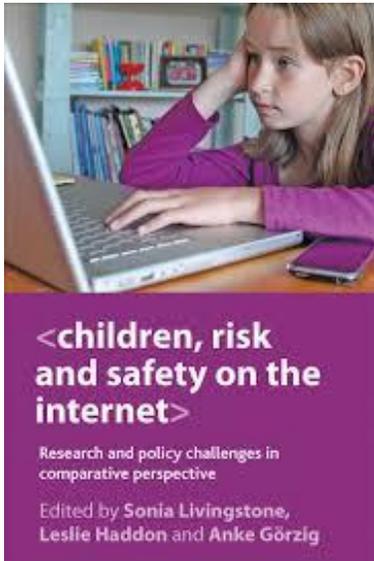


# Digital Wellbeing

- “Capacity to look after personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings” (JISC, 2017)
- Realigning technology with humanity’s best interests
- Acting safely and responsibly in digital environments
- Using personal digital data for positive wellbeing benefits
- Using digital media to foster community actions and wellbeing
- Managing digital stress, workload and distraction
- Acting with concern for the human and natural environment when using digital tools



# EU KIDS Online. Listen to the voices



- **1,000 internet-using children aged 9-16 per country, + one of their parents/carers; 25 European countries; overall, 25,142 sample size.**
- **Focus on 4 main risks: encountering pornography; bullying / being bullies; sending receiving sexual messages (sexting); going to offline meetings with people originally met online.**
- **Children interviewed face-to-face to obtain responses, and for most sensitive questions, were given a questionnaire form to complete on own.**
- **For each child, one parent / carer given questionnaire with matching questions**

# EU KIDS ONLINE: SOME KEY FINDINGS

- Kids are willing to share personal data as they extend friendship circles with the addition of global contacts – common in online gaming.
- No simple distinction between “Friends” and “Strangers” – many strangers are actually friends of friends.
- Having a public profile that includes personal contact information, and being in contact with hundreds of people during activity on SNS did not seem to make children especially vulnerable to data misuse
- Experimenting with self online: Kids play “pretend” from childhood.
- Developmental theories indicate that adolescents do experiment with their identities and self-presentation.
- Overall: no evidence that experimenting with self-presentation is associated with actually experiencing harm from online risks
- **Helping children craft meaningful profiles; what constitutes a good profile**



# EU KIDS ONLINE: SOME KEY FINDINGS

- **Cyberbullying: peak between ages 13-16; More girls than boys victims of cyberbullying.**
- **Mostly on social networking sites and instant messaging, less common via email, gaming websites and chatrooms.**
- **While low, most victims expressed varying degrees of being upset, especially girls and younger children.**
- **Children who experience more psychological difficulties are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying.**
- **Sexting: 15% respondents 11-16 said they had seen or received sexual messages in last 12 months (3% posted them).**
- **Quick fire, under the radar, privacy and anonymity. For some, form of electronically mediated flirtation.**



# EU KIDS ONLINE: SOME KEY FINDINGS

- **Pornography:** Children are held to be innocent, yet we implicate them in dangerous sexuality.
- **Very little direct research in relation to digital porn.** Links between risks, incidents and actual harm are genuinely tenuous.
- **23% had encountered sexual images online and offline (including TV, video, film – extension of everyday life.**
- **Overall, of those who had encountered such images, 32% bothered by it; for some, a form of sex education. Most coped well and got over the experience quickly.**
- **Stranger Danger: most offline meetings connected to family friends.**
- **Most relevant finding: those children who are vulnerable offline (impact of psychological difficulties) are likely to be vulnerable online.**



# COPING AND RESILIENCE

- Exposure to risks is part of everyday life
- Children's resilience to risks varies - some cope with adversity better than others.
- RESILIENCE = Positive patterns of adaptation in the context of risk or adversity
- COPING = efforts to adapt to stress or other disturbances created by stressor or adversity
- How do kids respond?
  - *Fatalistic response*: ignore. Hope goes away, limit use of internet
  - *Communicative response* – seek social support and talk to someone. (peers, parents). Most predominant strategy identified in study.
  - *Proactive response* – being adaptive, trying to reduce or eliminate harm in the future: deleting messages, deleting content, blocking senders eg cyberbullying, especially when strong level of being upset → try to fix the problem. This improves resilience.



**COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSES AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES**

# Mediation: Managing Internet Relationships

- Children identify role of teachers in providing advice in terms of ways to use internet safely.
- From perspective of children, advice included:
  - Explained why some websites are good or bad
  - Help when finding something difficult on the internet
  - Suggest ways to use internet safely
  - Suggest ways to behave towards other people online
  - Talk about what to do if something on the internet bothered you
- But when encountering different risks, not usually likely to talk to a teacher – data showed they identified friend, mother / father, brother / sister, trusted adult over teacher. Teachers seen as trusted advisers in terms of avoiding risks, but not in terms of seeking support if upset about something related to the internet. Trust issue

# Educational Interventions

- interventions are not based on exaggerations of the nature and scale of risks
- Focus on the development of coping and resilience strategies
- Empower children to cope, provide advice to parents on how to mediate, and ensure school websites contain appropriate positive support and guidance.
- Avoid top-down interventionist approaches which tend to be negative and ascribe blame and fear (this is akin to bullying tactics).
- Develop active strategies equip children to manage online risks themselves in so far as they are able and practical to do.
- Enabling children to craft meaningful profiles; what constitutes a good profile.
- Build resilience, coping and self-efficacy through awareness of self-help resources that build understanding and provide proactive strategies that do not overdramatize the risks.
- Anonymous help lines where children can discuss their issues in anonymity and privacy.
- Open up communication avenues that create opportunities seek social support and talk to someone (peers, parents, teachers). Build trust.



**148 students in Grades 5 – 10; IB school Qatar**

**Self-reported responses to 28 checklist items, as well as open-ended questions, developed by the Open University UK titled “Being digital: Digital literacy skills checklist” available at:**

**<http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/accessible/accessible-pdf-35-self-assessment-checklist.pdf>**

- **Protocols with online communication**
- **Identifying quality of information**
- **Online researching**
- **Online production**

**41%**



**59%**



# FINDINGS

## Confidence in digital worlds

### Highest confidence

- technical skills of using digital tools
- accessing and selecting information sources
- perceptions of personal capacity
- participation in online environments

### Higher levels of confidence

- searching for information
- finding information, evaluating sources,
- keeping track of found information through bookmarking and citations;
- participating in forums
- chatting with others online.

### Lower levels of confidence

- advanced technical skills
- integrating and using different media into research projects as different approaches to representing ideas
- analysis and synthesis of information and the construction of one's own knowledge.

## Perceptions of competence

1. Name some things that you find easy to do online?

2. What do you think that the (school) library can do for you to help you to become a good online learner?

3. What some of the difficulties you encounter when you are online?

# From Digital Confidence to Digital Competence: An Evidence-Based Action Plan

Research Processes and Effective Reading in Digital Environments: Stages, processes, strategies, and immersive experiences with feedback loops

Digital Safety: Personal safety; technical safety; managing technical disruptions

Instruction for Digital Wellbeing

Intellectual Property: Citation, authority, copyright, ethical use of information

Knowledge Construction: Information evaluation, organization, analysis and synthesis

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# ONLINE SAFETY AS CORE ELEMENT OF DIGITAL LITERACY: QUESTIONS

- How do students define and describe online safety?
- What does it mean to be safe in an online world?
- How do students recognize whether a website is safe or not?
- What are the actions/strategies students use to ensure they are safe in online environments?



<https://www.turnerusd202.org/schoology/parent-and-student-resources/digital-safety>

# Research Methodology

- Perceptions about unsafe websites
- Grades 5 to 10 in 2 schools in Philippines. (425 Students approximately)
- Series of regular library classes: general theme of digital awareness and safety
- Mind mapping activity: unsafe websites
- 38 groups (5-12 per group)



# Findings

Category 1: Sexual and violent content;

Category 2: Malware pop-ups and spam;

Category 3: Privacy and security issues;

Category 4: Technical errors/virus/auto download;

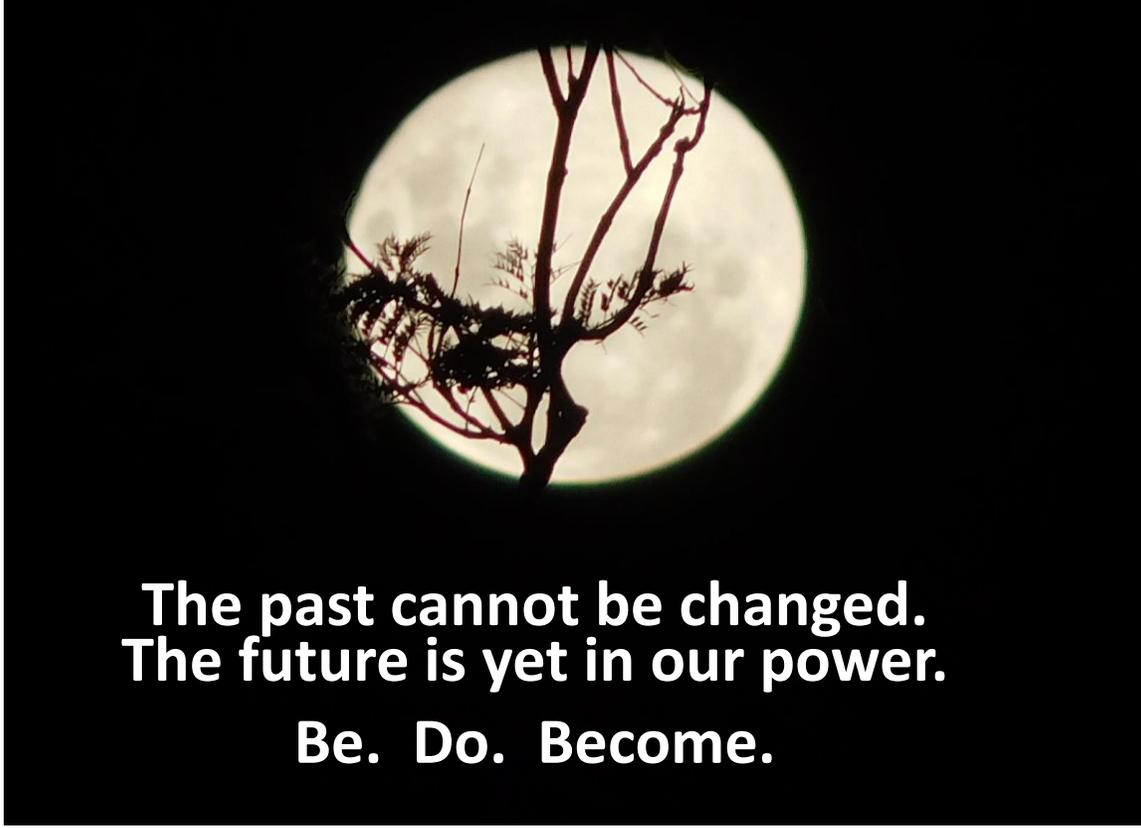
Category 5: Social media: unsolicited sharing;

Category 6: Search engines: unsolicited sites.



# Finding Insights

- **Specific knowledge of technical terms: eg Deep Web, Torrent; specific knowledge of risk web sites and malicious files.**
- **Predominant conception of being unsafe online centers on aspects of access, technical structures, potential for technical harm.**
- **Limited acknowledgement of role of self in the safety equation: eg stranger danger, establishing privacy boundaries, cyberbullying indicators, managing offensive posts, interactions and images.**
- **“Unsafe” predominantly seen as system problem, not as personal-social-interaction problem: No explication of active role of self in the digital environment.**
- **Shift from technical notions of unsafe, to understanding and enacting the role of self: building a mindset of digital safety; digital wellbeing**



**The past cannot be changed.  
The future is yet in our power.  
Be. Do. Become.**