

Louise Chittenden

An analysis of the protection offered to children by social
networking sites

M B A

University of Wales

Swansea Metropolitan University

2010

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed (candidate)

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to express my sincere thanks to Steve Griffiths who as my Dissertation Supervisor, provided support and encouragement throughout the whole process.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey and focus group, which provided a valuable insight into the views of parents on the research topic.

Thank you to my friends and work colleagues who have also provided support and encouragement and put up with me on 'bad days'.

To Dave who is constantly by my side with love, support, encouragement and chocolate. Thank you for your patience, understanding and unwavering love. I am a better person because of you!

To my parents and my sister and Wayne who provide unconditional love and support and encouragement, who are always proud of me whatever I do, thank you for being there for me.

To Dave's parents and both of our families, thank you for being there for us.

In loving memory of Nanny Taylor, Granddad Evans and Nanny Chitty.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT	viii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 THE PROCESS.....	6
1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	8
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 DEFINITION OF A CHILD.....	10
2.2 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING	12
2.3 BEBO	13
2.4 FACEBOOK	14
2.5 MYSPACE.....	15
2.6 AGE RESTRICTIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.....	16
2.7 RISKS OF USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	18
2.8 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	19
2.9 REALITY/VIRTUALITY.....	21
2.10 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	23
2.11 SOCIAL CHANGE.....	25
2.12 CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY	26

2.13	HEALTH	29
2.14	PRIVACY	30
2.15	ETHICS	32
2.16	CYBERETHICS	35
2.17	ETHICS IN THE MEDIA	39
2.18	ETHICS AND PERSONAL INFORMATION	39
2.19	CENSORSHIP	42
2.20	REGULATION OF THE INTERNET	44
2.21	MEDIA	47
2.22	ADVERTISING	48
2.23	CYBER BULLYING	50
2.24	SUMMARY	52
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	55
3.1	RESEARCH RATIONALE	55
3.2	RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	55
3.3	METHODOLOGY	56
3.4	RESEARCH PARADIGMS	56
3.5	DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES	59
3.5.1	SURVEY	59
3.5.2	SURVEYMONKEY	60

3.5.3	PILOT STUDY	61
3.5.4	FOCUS GROUP	61
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS	62
3.7	TIMESCALE FOR RESEARCH.....	63
3.8	RESEARCH RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	64
3.9	RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	64
4	RESULTS AND FINDINGS	68
4.1	SURVEY RESULTS	68
4.1.1	CHILDREN AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	69
4.1.2	SAFETY AND DANGERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.....	71
4.1.3	MONITORING USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THE INTERNET	72
4.1.4	AGE RESTRICTION	76
4.2	FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK	79
4.3	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	83
4.4	REFLECTIONS ON METHODS AND RESULTS	84
5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	86
5.1	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	87
5.2	CONCLUSIONS	87
5.3	REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH	91

5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.....	92
5.4.1	AUTOMATIC PRIVACY SETTINGS	92
5.4.2	AGE RESTRICTIONS.....	93
5.4.3	SAFETY BUTTON	94
5.4.4	RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAFETY	96
5.4.5	PRE-TEEN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE	99
5.5	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT	99
5.5.1	EDUCATION.....	99
5.5.2	REGULATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.....	101
5.6	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS.....	101
5.7	GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	102
5.8	FURTHER RESEARCH	103
6	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	105
	APPENDIX A COPY OF SURVEY ABOUT CHILDRENS USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FROM SURVEYMONKEY.....	126
	APPENDIX B SURVEYMONKEY SUMMARY RESULTS	129
	APPENDIX C TABLES AND CHARTS SHOWING SURVEY RESULTS	133

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Simplified timeline of Social Networking Sites (2000 – 2007).....	12
Figure 2: Stakeholder Map for social networking sites	21
Figure 3: Social and technological interaction model.....	25
Figure 4 Classification of Actions: Legal V Ethical for social networking sites.....	35
Figure 5: Constraints of Cyberspace Activities	37
Figure 6: Screenshot of researcher’s Facebook page	42
Figure 7: Survey Results showing frequency of social networking site usage by children	70
Figure 8: Survey results showing whether parents monitor their children’s use of social networking sites.....	73
Figure 9: Survey results showing parents awareness of lower age restrictions on social networking sites.....	77
Figure 10: Author’s Flow chart to show current communication directions	97
Figure 11: Author’s Flowchart to show how communication should be in an ideal world	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Features of research paradigms	57
---	----

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to identify whether children are protected from online dangers that they may face whilst using social networking sites. The dangers that face children whilst online were identified along with 3 social networking sites that are popular at the time of writing.

The literature review provided a background of theoretical information along with information from journals, Government commissioned reports and relevant websites. This review of literature revealed that currently social networking sites and the internet in general are not regulated. However it would appear that America is making the most progress towards regulation, but the constitution can provide further issues with this subject as regulation can be seen as impinging on human rights to access information via the internet. The UK Government is following suit and has commissioned a number of reports such as the Byron Review (2008) and the creation of CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre) to review online safety for children. The Byron Review (2008) states that further work is required to ensure better protection of children whilst online and CEOP continue to work towards the same aim

A mixed methodology was adopted for this research and an online survey via SurveyMonkey (2008) was used to gather data. The survey was aimed at parents of children who used social networking sites. To compliment and support the online survey a small focus group was held. The focus group, consisting of 6 parents, was used to provide further insight and perspective of the views of parents about their child's use of such sites. Both the survey and the focus group took place in February 2010.

The research showed that almost 70% of parents surveyed had children who used social networking sites which confirmed that such sites are of growing interest to children. The survey also revealed that parents are aware of online dangers that are faced whilst using social networking sites but whilst some parents are aware of controls and software to enable the filtering out these dangers, others are not confident in their technical abilities to deal with them.

The research reveals that children are protected from online dangers to a certain extent, but more protection is required. This protection should be available via the social networking sites and through parents along with improvements of regulations from the UK Government. To address the issues raised, this research makes recommendations to parents, the UK Government and social networking sites along with possibilities for further research.

1 INTRODUCTION

Online social networking is proving to be a very popular pastime. To be able to use the online social networking sites, internet access is required and according to the Office for National Statistics (NSO, 2009) in 2008 the number of UK households that had Internet access was 16.46 million, and this was an increase of 1.23 million since 2007. However, more recent figures from the National Statistics Office (2009) show that in 2009 this had increased to 18.3 million which was 70% of the total UK households and an increase of just under 2 million since the previous year. Alongside these figures is the fact that access to the internet is increasing through the use of new technology such as mobile phones and mobile internet connections for lap top computers, allowing for Internet access 'on the go'. The ease of access therefore allows the increase in popularity of the social networking sites. Social networking can be classed as a form of computer mediated communication or CMC as it is known, along with emailing and using chat rooms.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social network sites are "*web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*". The Office of Communications or OfCom (2008) report on social networking states that "*social networking sites are those which allow users to set up online profiles or personal home pages, and develop an online social network*".

Social networking sites allow for people to connect because of their similar or shared interests. There are sites for different interests such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace which are social sites whereas Visible Path and LinkedIn are for business links with Sagazone as a social networking site specifically for people over the age of fifty years.

Social networking sites are used for a variety of reasons and obviously a key point is communication. However Ofcom's (2008) research shows that users of such sites fall into categories that define their usage based on behaviour whilst using the sites. For example the report found that there are a minority of people who "*use the sites in short bursts to meet new people and be entertained*". Therefore this group are actually socialising, whilst another group "*crave attention and comments from others, by customising their profiles*" and more typically there is the group who "*use the site to rekindle old friendships, often from school or university*".

Online social networking sites are rarely out of the news and are a very hot topic. For example the BBC (2009) reported that a woman was sacked by her employer for being off work sick but was found to be using Facebook. The company argued that as the woman was off sick due to a migraine that prevented her from using a computer in work it should have prevented her using Facebook. Another example according to Wright (2009) is that a page has been set up using a CCTV photo as the profile photograph to help track down a suspected rapist. The profile has been set up by the boyfriend of the victim to help track down the assailant. These types of articles raise ethical questions for example, as the law says innocent until proven guilty, Facebook could be criticised for allowing a photograph of a 'suspect' to be put on such a page. A further ethical question is raised in the case of the ill employee using Facebook whilst off sick, as the company

could be criticised for watching the profile page of an employee that is on sick leave. It could also be argued that the woman with the migraine should not have been off sick if she was well enough to use Facebook but not well enough to do her job. Obviously these are not the only ethical and corporate social responsibility questions being raised by the use of social networking sites with other issues raised such as security and protection of vulnerable users e.g. children. It is pertinent to analyse what the owners of such sites do to protect the users. In addition evaluating whether it is the responsibility of the site owners or the user to protect him/her self is a continuing discussion in the literature and the web community.

Whilst the media brings news items of interest to the attention of the public, it is necessary to consider that it is very likely these news items have been sensationalized to increase the sales or viewing figures of the public. The items may well have a biased view point. The media normally cover the items that are of either 'bad news' or 'good news' and 'every day' mundane items will normally not appear. However, the media does report cases that may be of interest to the public. An example of this is the case reported by Steel (2010) about the 17 year old girl who was groomed by a registered sex offender via Facebook. Whilst posing as a 19 year old boy, a registered sex offender who was actually 33 years old arranged to meet the girl and subsequently raped and murdered her. This case illustrates the dangers that may be faced by users of social networking sites. Given the reservations about the reliability of the media as a source, the number of such cases and the reflection of public concern are open to questioning.

Every company or social networking site has a corporate responsibility to its users. According to Reynolds (2003) social responsibilities are identified by companies and *“declared in a formal statement of a company’s principles or belief’s”*. Crane and Matten (2010) state that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is aligning a business with the stakeholders expectations. As reported by OfCom (2008) despite age limits set by the social networking sites, 27% of 8-11 year olds (3000 surveyed) who are aware of the sites say that they have profiles on such sites. The age limits set by these sites are usually that the user has to be 13 years old or above to have a profile, and yet the figures from the report show that children below the age limits are using the sites. This in itself creates an ethical risk and the safety of users of the site could arguably be a social responsibility. The responsibility would be to protect younger users from bullying and viewing age restricted pictures and videos along with protection from internet predators such as paedophiles.

The OfCom (2008) report shows that children under the defined lower age limit (which is set by the social networking sites) have account and profiles, which can leave them vulnerable and at risk from many dangers. The term vulnerable can be defined as *“defenceless, at risk, unguarded and unprotected”* (Thesaurus 1997), and this is what all users of the internet and social networking sites can become if they are unaware of the risks involved in using such technology. However the term vulnerable can be applied to different groups of people. For example with regard to social networking sites and the example which has been brought to light by the OfCom report (2008), it is possible to see that children under the age of 13 who use the sites despite the age limit being set at 13 years or above are vulnerable to the risks that arise from using such sites. However

there are no legal age limits and the internet and social networking sites are generally 'unregulated environments'. The age limits are set for reasons and with use of internet sites the reasons can be wide and far reaching. Children can be at risk of viewing unsuitable 'pop up advertisements' that can appear on the screen of a user, but will normally be related to the age group of those using the site. Obviously the use of the site by younger children will leave them exposed to content such as images and products inappropriate for that particular age group. Another such group that could be defined as vulnerable are people who are not computer literate and do not have an understanding of the reaches of social networking sites. This group will generally be unaware that unless certain precautions are taken to protect their information by selecting options during the set up and use of such site, any information that they post and share on the site may be viewed by users worldwide and they may be unaware that an example of this is identity theft.

Another major issue to be investigated is the security of information posted by the users on a profile page offered on the site. The profile page is set up for the user to insert their personal information. The profile will usually have details such as full name, email address and telephone number, along with their date of birth and a space for a profile picture. This information is then available to anyone who has access to the profile page. When setting up an account with the site, users are given an option of having a public or private profile. The public profile option allows all users access to the information on the profile page. Bearing in mind that as Facebook has approximately 350 million users (Zuckerman, 2009); there are opportunities for identity theft and fraudulent use of a

user's information. Facebook also allows for a private profile which only allows access to friends who have been given access permission by the user.

The increase in popularity of social networking sites, along with the ease of access to such sites increases the publicity of potential problems. The highlighting of such issues draws the attention of the public to the fact that not all users of social networking sites use them to communicate with friends and that these sites can be used for purposes that are illegal or inappropriate.

1.1 THE PROCESS

The research methodology is the process by which the information for this study will be collected. According to Collis and Hussey (2009) research is a systematic, methodical approach to a process of investigation and the object of this research is to increase knowledge. With this in mind the approach of this study will be of a qualitative nature. Qualitative research, as stated by Punch (2008), is *“empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers”* and can also be the *“methods used to represent a way of thinking and to collect data”*, and Collis and Hussey (2009) believe it to be the *“examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities”*.

Qualitative research will be carried out under the phenomenological paradigm or humanistic approach. According to Collis and Hussey (2009) the phenomenological paradigm is *“concerned with understanding human behaviour from the participants own frame of reference”*. This will enable the study to produce qualitative data in small samples and will generate theories about the topic rather than testing various

hypotheses. The process of using a focus group of parents will be adopted to analyse the qualitative data, and will be useful for obtaining the views and perspectives of parents about the social network sites policies and procedures with regard to the lower ages limits for users and privacy policies and safety of use of the sites. An online survey will also be used to collect the opinions of parents about the way children use social networking sites. Prior to the survey going 'live' online, a pilot study will be carried out to enable the researcher to make any necessary changes to ensure the survey is suitable for the research. In adopting the afore mentioned methodologies it is necessary to note that the world of social networking is ever evolving and changes on a minute by minute basis, and this fact makes the phenomenological paradigm suitable to evaluate whether children are vulnerable users of social networking sites and the best methods of protection. In the undertaking of the use of mixed data sources, the process will allow a review of different perspectives. This study will adopt the use of data triangulation in the process of data collection. Easterby-Smith *et al* (2010) state that data triangulation is where data is collected from different sources or at different times during the study of a phenomenon. It can be argued that this process can encourage productive research and it is proposed that an online survey will be used via SurveyMonkey (2009) to obtain current users information and opinion along with relevant journals and books and academic theories. Whilst surveys are usually associated with quantitative research rather than qualitative research, opinion of users of social networking sites would be a valuable resource to this study, giving valuable insight on how the users have viewed the issues raised by this study. Alongside the survey, a focus group of approximately 6 people will be held, using the questions from the online survey to obtain further in depth

information that is not possible from an online survey. White (2005) states a group of people who are brought together to obtain their opinions about a specific subject or topic are called a focus group. However it is necessary to be aware that the dynamics of the group may lead to some of the group participating less than others, but will also generate ideas and provide valuable insights into the reactions and perceptions of the group.

In the undertaking of this research, the opinions of academics and experts will be sought via a review of literature relating to the topic of social networking and ethics relating to it.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research is to identify whether children are vulnerable as users of social networking sites and to discover whether they need further protection. To carry out this research it will necessary to identify the risks that face the children who are users of social networking sites, and it will also be necessary to scrutinize the policies and procedures currently in place for the users of these sites to access in order to protect themselves. It is also vital to investigate whether the social networking sites have social responsibilities to these vulnerable users to protect them from such risks.

The objectives of this thesis are:

1. To fully evaluate literature that is relevant to social networking, the use of the internet and ethical risk.
2. To apply concepts of risk to children as vulnerable users in the context of misuse of social networking sites.
3. The collection of data using of an online survey and a focus group, in order to evaluate the views and perceptions of how children use social networking sites.
4. To generate conclusions on how to make social networking sites more socially responsible and to make children more secure while they use the sites.
5. To make recommendations for the social networking sites, and to several relevant stake holders who are involved with social networking sites and the protection of children, whilst using the internet.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide a comprehensive review of social networking sites and the dangers and issues that are presented whilst these sites are being used by children and young people. During this review of social networking sites, various forms of academic literature, relevant websites and electronic documents will be quoted and consulted. This will present a well balanced comparison of the negative and positive issues relating to this subject. Even though social networking sites are a fairly recent phenomenon there are a large number of electronic documents, sources and websites available for consultation which should enable a fuller review to take place, as academic literature is at present a fairly limited resource. Due to time constraints this investigation will focus on three of the most popular social networking sites that are available at the time of writing, these being Facebook, Bebo and MySpace. This chapter will give an overview of each of the three sites.

2.1 DEFINITION OF A CHILD

To begin to understand whether a child is vulnerable whilst using social networking sites, it is necessary to define the term 'child'. According to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (2008) or the NSPCC as it is known "*there is no specific law that defines the age of a child across the UK. Specific age limits are set out in the legislation relating to different areas of policy and there are also differences between the UK nations*". However, the UN convention on the Rights of a Child (1989), which was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by the UK Government in 1991, states that "*a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier*". Within the UK each

country has its own duties and responsibilities but England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland agree that *“a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th Birthday”*. It is however necessary to investigate whether the definition of a child is a current definition as with the progress of teaching practices and technology a young person or child may now be more sophisticated and intelligent than the same person but twenty years ago. Obviously the definition by age is applicable but each child will have different abilities and intelligence levels and may therefore be more able to understand a situation where caution is required than a child of the same age but with less technological experience or a lower intelligence level. For the purposes of this study, the definitions mentioned will be used as they are currently accepted for use by the UK Government.

So with this definition of a child, it is necessary to look at the possible risks likely to be faced by a child using social networking sites. There have been great leaps in technological advances in recent years, resulting in many households which have one or even two computers with internet access, and according to the Office for National Statistics (2009) in 2009 the number of UK households with Internet access was 18.3 million, and this was 70% of UK households. Along-side these figures is the fact that access to the internet is increasing through the use of new technology such as mobile phones and mobile internet connections for lap top computers, allowing for Internet access ‘on the go’. Thus we can see that this in turn allows ease of access to the social networking sites which are proving to be increasingly popular. This is leading to more and more children accessing social networking sites without any parental control.

2.2 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking sites are a global phenomena and according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites are “*web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*”, whilst the Office of Communications or OfCom (2008) as it is also known, 2008 report on social networking states that “*social networking sites are those which allow users to set up online profiles or personal homepages, and develop an on line social network*”.

Social networking raises a number of ethical issues and there are many different sites available for use, depending on requirements. In 2007, figures showed that over 1 million users signed on to the site called Facebook every week, or approximately 200,000 daily, Crunchbase (2009). Figure 1 shows a timeline of social networking sites that came into existence between 2000 and 2007, OfCom (2008).

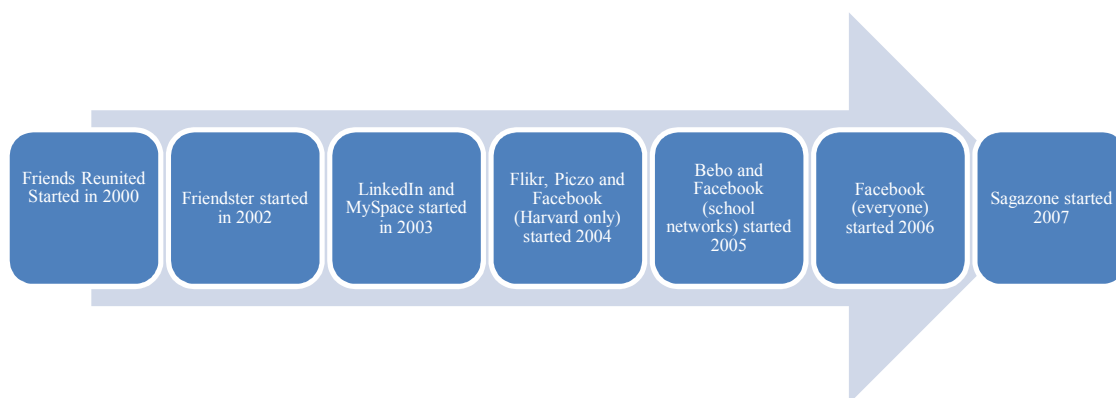


Figure 1: Simplified timeline of Social Networking Sites (2000 – 2007)

Source: OfCom Social Networking Research Document, April 2008

2.3 BEBO

Bebo is a social networking site with a marketing strap line of *“connect with your friends through discussion, entertainment, discovery and expression”*, Bebo (2008) and also states that *“it’s your life on line – a social experience that helps you discover what’s going on with your world and helps the world discover what is going on with you”*.

Bebo was founded in 2005, and is owned by Aol.com and is also a majority owned subsidiary of Time Warner Inc., Bebo (2008). Users of Bebo can set up a profile page, which they then control and decide on which privacy settings are used for their profile, although there is a default setting for users who are under eighteen years old and this means the profile page is automatically private. For users over eighteen, it is their own responsibility to protect their personal information. There is a minimum age limit of thirteen years old for users of Bebo. There are three levels of status for profiles and they are public, private and fully private. Public profiles are available to be seen by any user, whereas the private profiles can only be viewed by previously approved ‘friends’, who the user approves as a ‘friend’, and any member of groups that the user may have joined. The fully private profiles only allow ‘friends’ access to the profile and the user does not have membership to groups such as schools or colleges. However, those with public profiles can apply a setting of age restrictions to anyone who contacts them, to protect them from anyone outside of a certain age group from contacting them. Bebo’s website terms of use, Bebo (2008), has various recommendations for users to keep them and their information safe, such as not sharing personal contact information and *“exercising discretion in deciding what information you disclose on the internet”*. The site

also recommends that users between thirteen years old and seventeen years old discuss with parents and guardians the information they plan to post on the internet. The information section of the site gives 'common sense' warnings to users to protect themselves and at the same time offers automatic safety clauses for users under 18 who may not be aware of the issues with posting personal information on the internet. Bebo appears to have incorporated corporate social responsibility into the social networking site by including tips and hints on protecting personal information. Bebo have been provided with a safety button by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre or CEOP (07/08). This button is automatically on every the profile of every user, Bebo (2009) and allows users to contact services who can help with issues of online safety such as ChildLine, Beatbully. Other online safety groups that are linked with the Bebo site are Netsafe, Connectsafely, and Wired Safety.

2.4 FACEBOOK

Facebook was launched in the USA by Mark Zukerman in February 2004, Crunchbase (2009). Zukerman launched the site for Harvard Students to keep in touch and communicate and it proved so popular that within a few weeks it was extended to a further 30 colleges. By 2005 Facebook had opened up to high schools in the USA and then to work networks, and eventually to anyone with an email address in 2006. In 2007 figures show that over 1 million users signed up to Facebook every week which was approximately 200,000 daily, Crunchbase (2009). According to the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerman *"more than 350 million people around the world use Facebook"*, Zuckerman (2009) and Facebook (2006). The site allows users to create a profile page and allows users to *"connect and share with the people in your life"*,

Facebook (2006). The Privacy settings are controlled by the individual users and can allow “*friend, friends of friends or everyone*” access to the profile pages. As with Bebo, ‘friends’ are those that the user specifically allows to access their profile page, and ‘everyone’ is setting the profile to allow public access. However Facebook does recommend that permission of parents is sought prior to users who are minors posting any information. The site has a lower age limit of thirteen years old. The privacy policy also provides advice for parents to give to children whilst using the site and internet in general, but does not appear to have links to online/internet safety societies.

2.5 MYSPACE

MySpace is a social networking site marketed as an “*online community that lets you meet your friends’ friends*” MySpace (2008), and was launched in 1993. However the website information shows that MySpace is more than a general social networking site and allows for communication between “*single people who want to meet other singles*” and “*business and co-workers interested in networking*” along with allowing “*friends to talk on line*”. The minimum age limit for this site is also thirteen years old but the site states that it will remove any profile where the user is believed to be under thirteen years old, under eighteen years old but representing themselves as older and also if the user is over eighteen years old and is representing themselves as younger. MySpace also mention that it is “*a global lifestyle portal that reaches millions of people around the world*”, MySpace (2008), and that common sense rules must apply as they do in the ‘real world’ and users must protect themselves. There are reminders to users that profiles and forums are very much public spaces and personal information should not be posted. It is also advised that any information or photographs that would make the

user easy to find by strangers is not posted. Each page on the website has a “*report abuse*” button to allow for users to report any inappropriate content whilst the terms and conditions of use state that each user is solely responsible for any content that is posted on their profile page.

2.6 AGE RESTRICTIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Most social networking sites have a lower age limit, which is set to prevent children being faced with age inappropriate materials. The age limits set for the three sites being investigated for this study (Facebook, Bebo and MySpace) all have lower age limits of 13 years old. The date of birth of the user is requested on application to the sites, but there appears to be a lack of verification checks as the OfCom (2008) report states that 27% of 8-11 year olds (3000 surveyed) who were aware of the sites say that they have profiles on the sites. The figures in the OfCom (2008) report show that despite the sites having lower age limits children are still setting up profiles and using the sites. This report reveals that further investigation is required to discover if age verification is carried out by other companies and web based sites. Another area for further research is to discover whether age limits are broken elsewhere by children and whether it could be a problem. An example of age limits being broken by children is the age limit for having sex which is 16 years old. The media is constantly reporting on cases of underage girls becoming pregnant, but there are not many stories published about how many underage couples are having safe sex and not getting pregnant, so it could be argued that underage sex is not a problem if safe sex is practiced. However there are obvious ethical arguments that the law was set to protect underage children and they are not old enough to emotionally deal with the issue of sex, along with religious

arguments. The first issue with the social networking sites is that in general they can be used free of charge, but if there was a charge for registration, a credit or debit card would be required and this in theory would make it easier for the companies to verify age.

Hiller *et al* (2008) reported that in America, a company called Xanga, an online website, was fined by the Federal Trade Commission for *“failing to protect children’s privacy as required under the Children’s online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)”*. The site, as many of the social networking sites currently available, had a lower age limit of thirteen years old. However at the registration section of the site, there were no restrictions and those entering a date of birth that deemed them thirteen years old or younger were allowed to continue with registration and use of the site. Information given at the registration point, such as age, address and telephone number were posted on the online profile of the child which created a huge security risk to the child. Hiller *et al* (2008) stated that in the USA despite various regulations being in place, the responsibility appears to be pushed back on to the parents to protect their children whilst using the internet, and to ‘empower’ the parent to participate in the child’s activities on the internet so that they are aware of which sites the child is viewing and being exposed to.

However there are obviously difficulties in verification of age via the internet and an example of an industry that experiences these difficulties is the online gambling industry. Griffiths and Jawad (2008) quoted the Gambling Online Magazine (2004) as stating that even physical, land based casinos have difficulties with *“detecting and deterring problem gamblers however, even with opportunities presented by the physical*

presence of underage gamblers at land-based casinos, no gambling jurisdiction is one hundred per cent effective in keeping out underage gamblers". Whilst other studies such as Roney *et al* (2003) show that it is more likely for children to become addicted to something than it is for adults in the same situation, children are more likely to access internet gambling sites and if there is a lack of enforced identification processes attached to the site, they are more likely to behave irresponsibly, Clarke (1998). Griffiths and Jawad (2008) state that the Gambling Act mentions that there should be "*reasonable steps to determine the individual's age*" but there is now clarification on what the steps are. With these difficulties facing the gambling community, it becomes apparent that social networking sites will face the same difficulties in verifying the age of the users of the sites, especially with the added difficulty of the lack of charge for using the networking sites. However it would appear that even with a registration charge, as with the gambling sites, age verification would still be huge problem.

2.7 RISKS OF USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites are essentially web sites that enable users to chat and post information that is personal to them. The sites are available on the world-wide-web and can be viewed by anyone in the world with access to the necessary equipment.

There are risks that are inherently involved with the use of social networking sites and according to TechMission (2000) "*objectional inappropriate content*" is just one of them. Users are free to post information on their pages however, this information may not be appropriate for a child to view. Inappropriate material may be obscene language or images, racist or violent material and/or sexually explicit material or pornography. It is also possible that children using the social networking sites allow themselves to become

vulnerable by posting information and photographs that can appear provocative, without understanding the information can be misconstrued and can leave themselves vulnerable to predators contacting them. Social networking sites are also frequently used by adults, and unfortunately there are adults who will use the sites to prey on children or teenagers in order to exploit them. A recent case of this highlights the issue. According to Carter (2010) and Steele (2010), a registered sex offender was jailed for the rape and murder of a 17 year old girl whom he groomed and then met via the use of Facebook. The registered sex offender registered on the site using fictitious details and provocative photographs, posing as a 19 year old boy and became 'friends' with the girl. An arrangement was made to meet and he subsequently raped and murdered the girl in an area near to her home. This case highlights the issue of how easy it can be for a user to pose as a fictitious person or use a different persona whilst using the social networking sites. It also highlights how dangerous it can be to become 'friends' with people with whom the only contact is through the site.

Advertisements on social networking sites can also prove to be a risk to users, as they may contain inappropriate material. This is especially an issue if the user is below the recommended lower age limit of the site, as the advertisements can be age inappropriate or related to the sex industry. These advertisements leave users vulnerable to the impact of viewing such images.

2.8 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

All social networking sites have Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) to their users and those affected by its business and Crane and Matten (2010) state that corporate social responsibility is the aligning of a business with the stakeholder's expectations. In

the case of social networking sites, the stakeholders can be seen in Figure 2. Sternberg (2000) criticised stakeholder theory because although it was well intentioned, it was unworkable and immeasurable and especially in the case of an internet business as there would be immeasurable amount of stakeholders which would be impossible to source. However for this study it is possible to create a stakeholder map from the aim of this research, to investigate whether children are protected from online dangers whilst using social networking sites. Many users are aware of the dangers of using the internet and social networking and people are generally suspicious of anything that appears to be too good to be true, but there are users who will not be aware of such dangers, such as children. Many social networking sites have lower age limits, so users have to be above a certain age to register and have a profile page. However, Ofcom's social networking report (2008) states that that 27% of 8-11 year olds (3000 surveyed) say that they have profiles on the sites. The figures in the OfCom report show that despite the sites having lower age limits, children are still setting up profiles and are therefore open to the risks of online bullying (also known as cyber bullying), viewing age restricted materials (photographs and videos) and paedophiles. Another responsibility that social networking sites have towards the stakeholders is a right to privacy and protection and the sites have various advice for the users. Many of the sites are now working to provide better advice on how to stay safe whilst online and to provide help and assistance when something offensive is viewed, by installing a 'report' button in conjunction with government run schemes.



Figure 2: Stakeholder Map for social networking sites

Source: adapted from Wiess (2008)

2.9 REALITY/VIRTUALITY

The lives of many children are surrounded by technology and whereas years ago it was natural for a child to be outside playing, it is now commonplace to find a child sat in front of a computer, or a games console. Many children would find it difficult to last any period of time without some form of technology and as Mayo and Nairn (2009) argue *“technology is no longer part of children’s lives – it is part of them”* and their research has showed that children now spend twice as much time in front of a computer screen than they do in the class room. With this information in hand, the question is raised as to whether children can deal with both the real world and the virtual world, and also

whether the lines are blurred between the two. For example the OfCom Social Networking Report (2008) has comments from children who were interviewed about the use of social networking sites with many stating that they are normally quiet and shy 'in real life' but feel they can be more confident and create a different image of themselves because they cannot be seen whilst using such sites. It was also stated that users of the social networking sites lie about information to create a more competitive profile to allow them to 'compete' with other people of the same age. It appears that the anonymity of these sites gives users more confidence to say things that perhaps they would not in the 'real' world, and to reveal more information about themselves. Spinello (2003) quotes Gavison (1984) defining anonymity as "*the protection from undesired attention*" but in the case of social networking it would appear to give a false sense of security to users. This can lead to other problems, such as cyber bullying, cyber predators and identity theft. A major issue with social networking sites is that users are free to create their own personal profile pages, picking and choosing what information they enter and there are limited checks performed by Facebook on that information. For example when signing up to be a user of Facebook, you are required to give your date of birth and name and a valid email address. Further information is also required but it is optional whether or not it is entered. Any information entered on the users profile page is at the discretion of the user, but it could be argued that there is a temptation to exaggerate or adjust the information to make the profile look better. It has been known for users to create online personalities that are far from the real life version, thereby being able to use the sites to create a 'virtual lifestyle'. This can lead to problems when the Facebook life impacts on real life. It can be difficult for people to differentiate between real life and their Facebook

persona and it can lead to problems. The confidence gained can also lead to the blurring of the 'lines' between the real and virtual world, where they feel safe and secure and this can create issues with lowered perceptions of danger, perhaps due to ignorance and age. Despite knowing that their own profile is enhanced to make them more fashionable or popular, the false sense of security that is given by the anonymity allows the disbelief that there are people with less innocent motives for giving false information on their profiles.

2.10 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The increase in use of the internet for communication, via email or social networking could be viewed as having both a positive and a negative effect on social relationships. It could be argued that the improvements in technology and the increase in popularity of social networking sites allow for people to communicate with far more ease than in the past when traditionally letters were written and posted by what is now commonly known as 'snail-mail' and by using the telephone. However in the past not every family had a landline or telephone in the house. It was quite common for there to be only one or two houses in the street with a telephone installed or alternatively there would have been a telephone box in the street. With the introduction of the internet, and social networking sites it has now become a very popular pastime to 'reconnect' with friends from the past or colleagues from a previous job via such sites. According to Kraut *et al* (1998) *"interpersonal communication is an important home use for the internet"* and Watt *et al* (2002) argued that the internet improved the amount of social contacts a person had. In contrast to this, Kiesler *et al* (1984) believed that *"social standards will be less important and communication will be more impersonal and more free because the rapid exchange*

of text, the lack of social feedback, and the absence of norms governing the social interaction redirect attention away from others and toward the message itself". This could mean that the internet will slowly damage social relationships by removing the invisible barriers, such as body language and the politeness that is shown when in a face-to-face discussion. Certainly it is quite easy to misinterpret something that is written in text rather than spoken because of the emphasis which can be placed on certain words or the body language which is used during the discussion. In the networked world where longer hours are being worked and less time spent on socializing due to the current economic situation, using computer mediated communication (CMC) is a convenient way to keep in contact with people who would perhaps not be available to meet up in person.

Lessig (1999) believed that by using four modes in the analysis of individuals it is possible to show how society and technology interact. This concept shows that there are four influences that can affect human behaviour and these are social norms, architecture, the law and markets. See Figure 3 for a diagram of this model. Social norms are the expectations and pressures exerted on individuals by family and friends; the architectural influence relates to computer codes which are the basis for the functions and software which enables computers to work. The law is the power of the Government and state and the markets are the economic forces and how those forces influence people. For example in the current economic climate, the VAT rate has been lowered to try to persuade the public to increase their spending during a period of recession. When the spending and economic markets improve the VAT rate will be returned to the original rate of 17.5%. It is necessary to be aware that all four of these

modes interact with each other as well as with the individual and can exert a pressure on the individual which can either be subtle or acute.

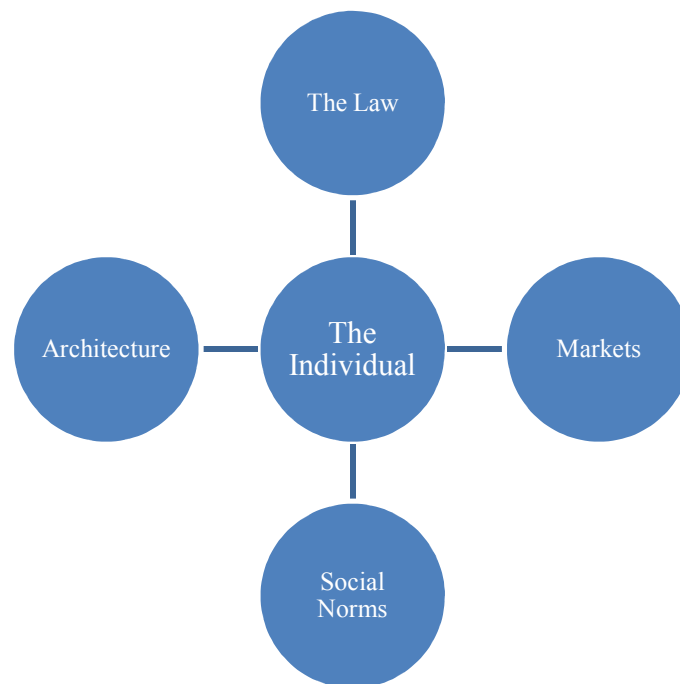


Figure 3: Social and technological interaction model

Source: Lawrence Lessig (1999)

2.11 SOCIAL CHANGE

Significant developments of technology and the internet are causing major changes in the way which business and communication are carried out. It could be argued that these changes are also causing social change. It is therefore necessary to understand that there will be both a positive and negative side to these changes with some benefitting people and businesses and some not.

Johnson (2001) states that "*social and technological change continuously occurs*" and therefore it is necessary to investigate what is "*ordinary change, evolving change and*

revolutionary change". Johnson (2001) uses banking as an example because it could be argued that banking has changed fundamentally due to the advances in technology. For example customers can now access their accounts via the intranet so this is "*essentially a matter of electronic activity*". On the other hand the banks have not changed dramatically as the functions of banks are still as they have always been – dealing with money and customer accounts. Assumptions are made on both sides of the argument and these assumptions may or may not be correct. This ties in with investigating whether technology is causing social change as assumptions are made about whether, for example, technology is good or bad for society. Jones (1999) states that the internet "*is not only technology but an engine of social change that has modified work habits, education, social relationships generally*", therefore stating that the use of the internet and social networking sites has already changed society and the way it interacts and it is likely that it will continue to do so.

Weizenbaum (1976) stated that technology could prevent social change and used a USA case to support this theory. The case was based at the end of the second world war and Weizenbaum believed that the introduction of technology at the time prevented the institutions in the case, from having to make fundamental changes and although the technology enable the institutions to handle large volumes of data, their essence did not change at all.

2.12 CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY

As previously mentioned, the lives of children appear to revolve around the use of technology to keep in touch with friends and the latest trends. Most schools now have computers available for the children to use, both at primary and secondary levels and of

course lessons in using the computer such as computer information technology. This means that children use computers from a very young age. With the increase of computers and the internet in households, children are very often able to use a computer before they can read properly. Gibbs (2003) quoted Kohlberg (1969) as arguing that “*children form ways of thinking through their experiences which include understanding of moral concepts such as justice, rights, experience and human welfare*”, so children learn from their experiences and it would be wrong to assume that just because they are young they do not understand. Being introduced to technology at such a young age will bring a few disadvantages along with the advantages of being able to use them proficiently. The main disadvantage would be that there is no fear in relation to using computers, and they may therefore not be aware of the related risks. Therefore it is possible for the children themselves to become perpetrators as well as victims of unethical behaviour, to other users including children or even to the social networking sites themselves. These risks can also become apparent to the inexperienced computer user who posts information assuming that it will be relatively secure. The user may assume it is the responsibility of the social networking site to keep the information the user posts on it safe and secure. Lack of experience can also lead to the posting of more personal information on a profile site than is necessary. When setting up a profile page certain information is required such as a current email address but there are other items that are requested but are not essential to the process. The OfCom report (2008) shows that the majority of respondents knew what the privacy status of their social networking sites profile was, and whether that status is usually available to ‘friends’ or open for public viewing. If a profile page has the ‘public’

status, anyone with access to the site can view the profile page and all the information included on it along with photographs and personal information. The OfCom report (2008) showed that there was a group of users who were concerned about the safety and security of using a social networking site and this group consisted mainly of adults and parents who did not use the sites themselves. The comments made by this group were mainly about fears of *“teenage girls being stalked, either online or offline”* and although they allowed their children to use such sites, they would monitor the amount of time spent using them.

Preston (2008) raised an issue that also very relevant to this study. As technology continues to evolve, security measures are constantly be reviewed and updated. However as fast as this is happening *“pornographers find new and ingenious ways to circumvent filters”* and the amount of web pages that contain sexually explicit materials continues to increase. The economic climate also adds to the problem, as more and more less expensive, electronic devises are created that are internet enabled, and they are available at a more inexpensive price because they do not have any filters or protection on them. Preston (2008) also believes that *“a generation of tech-savvy children is being exposed to sexually explicit material that is not age-appropriate, that they cannot fully process, and that they lack the judgment and experience to contextualize”*. Preston’s (2008) research, which was based in America, stated that the solution to protection for vulnerable users of the internet is not as simple as ‘blanket’ regulation. The research conclusion was that people had the right to pornography free internet access if they so wished, but it needed to coexist with the right to be able to access *“constitutionally protected internet pornographic material”* for those who wanted

to access it, which means that what is accessed or blocked on the internet is down to the individual users and their preferences.

2.13 HEALTH

As the number of homes with computers and internet connections continues to rise, the time spent using the equipment increases leading to a reduction in the time spent on other activities such as sport and exercise. Adams and McCrindle (2008) stated that *“the lack of opportunity for cardiovascular development and large muscle movement may well be a contributing factor leading to growing obesity and ill health in the general population”*, and they go further by arguing that the growth of the information technology of computers and games consoles, and more specifically the marketing of such products to children and young people, is adding to the health and obesity problems within the UK. As the population moves with current trends and spends more time using games consoles and communicating via social networking sites alongside the ability to also shop online, the overall life style becomes more and more sedentary which in turn can lead to major health issues.

The sedentary lifestyle is a major issue within the UK and as children are more aware of technology and the major part it is now playing in their everyday life, they are being brought up with technology as the norm seeing it as a perfectly normal pastime to spend all day either in front of the television or a computer or games console. With this in mind the UK Government's health department (2008) launched a campaign called Change 4 Life. The aim of the campaign, which was launched in January 2009, was to get society as a whole to *“prevent people from becoming overweight by encouraging them to eat better and move more. It is the marketing component of the Government's response to*

the rise in obesity. The campaign aims to inspire a societal movement in which everyone who has an interest in preventing obesity, be they Government, business, healthcare professionals, charities, schools, families or individuals, can play their part".

The campaign sponsors certain television programmes suitable for children to help get this message across and by aiming to encourage children to learn about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. The education of parents to help them to change eating and snacking habits of their children and to encourage proper exercise instead of allowing children to use computers and watch television all day is also included in these programmes.

2.14 PRIVACY

Privacy is an issue that can be a problem in relation to social networking. This is because there is a limited amount of control over what other users publish. Users can publish comments about other users and photographs. This can lead to problems as the photographs may not be suitable for posting, or may not be the users to publish which can lead to copyright issues. Facebook state that they monitor material published on the site to a certain extent but rely heavily on users 'flagging up' objectionable materials. This is then 'reviewed by a team trained to "use their judgement"' to delete or permit the item', MacMillan (2009). This same team deals with issues that arise with certain groups who have online profiles with Facebook. Facebook states that 'users are forbidden from posting material that is "hateful" or "threatening"', but Facebook faces a big challenge in cases where content posted is offensive but does not necessarily violate laws or the sites terms and conditions of use. It has been reported that the number of web pages that promote hatred and racism is continuously increasing and it is estimated that

“Facebook is the biggest venue, accounting for 30% of all online instance of hate”, MacMillan (2009). To react to these cases could show that Facebook are making a stand either ethically or morally, but by not reacting it could portray an unethical image which may harm the company’s reputation.

Halbert and Ingulli (2005) state that *“tension between privacy and ‘the need to know’ is heightened as computer technology revolutionizes information gathering. The process has never been so fast, so efficient, so omnipresent”*. This could be viewed as creating a threat to communication as the speed with which communication is now possible could lead to the removing of barriers of politeness and courtesy and lead to communication without constraints. Whereas Rubin (1994) argues that even during communication via the internet *“it is possible for users to simultaneously maintain both privacy and public contact”* but warns users to be aware of *“inhibitors normally present in face-to-face communication interaction with others are absent”*. The lack of inhibitors discussed by Rubin (1994) can provide users with a false sense of security and allow them to act differently than if they were communicating in the real world. Halbert and Ingulli (2005) describe privacy as having two main aspects. The first is the desire or need to share information with a trusted friend and the second aspect is *“privacy through limited communication”* which will aid in setting boundaries *“of a mental distance”* in all situations. The setting of boundaries whilst communicating aids the creation of a level of respect and a level of privacy.

Adediran (2002) states that *“privacy is difficult to achieve in a world driven by information and communication”* and this is supported by Forder and Svantesson (2008) who agree and believe that due to technology *“the law struggles to keep up with*

technological development". This appears to be an issue as currently the internet is generally unregulated and can lead to *"the law being a reactive entity rather than proactive"* with regard to use of the internet.

According to Nair (2006) privacy issues on the internet have intensified since the introduction of camera phones. These mobile phones which often have quite sophisticated cameras built into it, now enables the process of taking photographs without the requirement for both a phone and a camera. This often allows photographs to be taken often without the subjects consent, as the camera is 'concealed' as part of the phone. Nair (2006) uses a case of a school in India to illustrate this fact, where photographs were taken in an 'inappropriate situation' and were rapidly circulated via a mobile phone to the internet. Following this case all mobile phones were banned from all public schools in the area. This case certainly highlights the issues of privacy and the internet, but also it is possible to see that as many children use both the internet and mobile phones, privacy and protection of children using these technologies becomes more difficult as the technology advances. Langford (2000) argues that it is essential to *"preserve our electronic integrity"* and therefore privacy and protection of personal electronic data is essential to a society that is increasingly using the internet to communicate shop and conduct business.

2.15 ETHICS

According to Crane and Matten (2010) *"business ethics is the study of business situations, activities and decisions where right and wrong (morally) are addressed"*. This can also be applied to issues other than those that are business related. Pratley (1997) thought that *"business ethics studies existing corporate policies that have an impact on*

human and environmental well being. These actual policies and behaviours constitute business morality, which is expressed as a given set of convictions and activities, both inside and outside a corporation, on business issues". After reviewing different theoretical definitions it becomes apparent that ethics and morals are connected and both come into play when discussing ethical issues.

The rapid growth of technology and the use of technology can raise many ethical issues. Issues may be dealt with differently if dealt with via technology for example it may be easier to deal with a problem via email as it may be easier to express an issue via text rather than by face to face. With this in mind it is possible to see that as the increase of usage of the internet will lead to the rise in ethical dilemmas.

Deontological ethics has the *"understanding that moral action should be guided by certain overriding rights and duties"* at its core according to Halbert and Ingulli (2002). This type of thinking follows the basic rules of respect for people and property, with freedom of speech and honesty. The Deontological approach to ethics does not give freedom to do things just because there is an ability to do them whether it is right or wrong, but Halbert and Ingulli (2002) quoted that Immanuel Kant (1785) believed *"human beings could reason their way to a set of absolute rules for morally correct behaviour"* and that principles could be made universal or made to apply to everyone. The main problem with this theory is that there is no guidance on how to deal with conflicts of principles.

Whilst using the internet, it is very easy to 'click' on something and be taken to page or site that you were not intending to use. This can cause embarrassment and also cause

problems as many work places now monitor usage of the internet and can log which sites are being accessed by staff. There can also be legal implications with use of the internet and an example of this is the downloading of music. This can be done through legitimate sites, where there is a cost for the music and the download is legal, but there are sites which allow file sharing and illegal downloads. These sites allow users to access music files for free and this has implication for the user as this process is illegal, and the money that could have been generated by the legal sale of the music is lost with the music industry and artists losing out. Henderson's (1982) Classification of Actions for Legal V Ethical concepts has been adapted for use with this research and applied to social networking sites and can be seen as Figure 4. This diagram can be used to clarify ethical risks and illustrates that there are actions which can be carried out via social networking sites that are legal and ethical such as children using the sites to contact friends. Alternatively there are also actions which can be classed as illegal and unethical, such as paedophiles contacting children via the internet to groom them for paedophilia. However, whilst the diagram can clarify the ethical risks it does not allow a clear route to highlight the issues as these may be different for certain cultures and the issue may be a matter of opinion rather than a major issue.

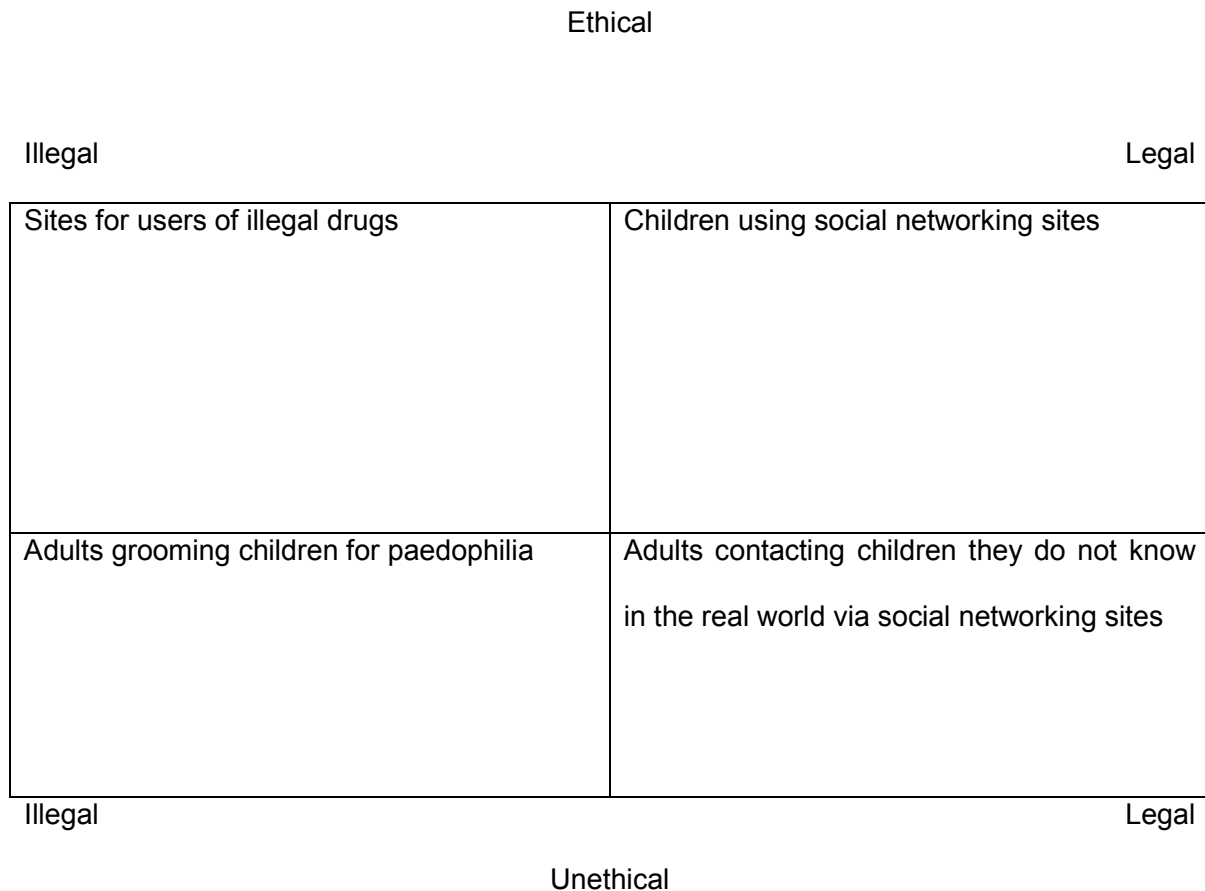


Figure 4 Classification of Actions: Legal V Ethical for social networking sites

Source: Adapted from Henderson (1982)

2.16 CYBERETHICS

There are many ethical issues being raised by the use of the internet for businesses and those using the internet for personal use. Such issues are security, spamming (overloading with unsolicited mail and information), intellectual property rights, hacking (illegal access to a network to steal valuable information), etc. There are many different views on internet ethics, for example Tavani (2007) states that cyber ethics are ethics that cover moral issues regarding computer information technology in the fields of the

internet, computers, privately owned computer networks and communication linked with those fields. Bowie (2005) has a traditionalist view and believes that just because transactions were carried out on the internet, it did not allow for ethics or morals of what is right and wrong to be ignored. Bowie argued the case against illegal downloading of music from the internet and took the utilitarian approach and believed in the protection of copyright and the artist receiving returns for their work, so in a broader sense was stating that the internet should be regulated in its use. Whereas DeGeorge (2005) argued that the internet was unable to be governed and we should alter our ethics to suit the new technology. DeGeorge also argued that the risks in using the internet are minimal and *“the number of persistence of such reports (of issues such as credit card fraud and privacy issues) tends to undermine general confidence and trust in the security of which the internet is capable”*. Lessig (1999) took a different view in that the laws were too strict and the intellectual property rights via the internet should be distributed to the consumer rather than the owner.

The internet is a global resource and Spinello (2003) states that the internet is more than a communication tool but it is *“the centre of a global information infrastructure that is creating a new social and economic order characterized by global connectivity and the decentralization of authority”*. Spinello also argues that whilst the internet makes communication easier it also allows for the ease of negative communication and information such as libellous materials, sexually explicit and pornographic materials and ethical issues. Spinello argued that the application of basic core morals could improve the constraints that already exist and created a framework which can be seen in below in Figure 5. The constraints that already exist can also be seen in Figure 5, as the

modules labelled Law, Code, Norms and Market. These are all political control mechanisms which are used to regulate ethics and corporate social responsibility.

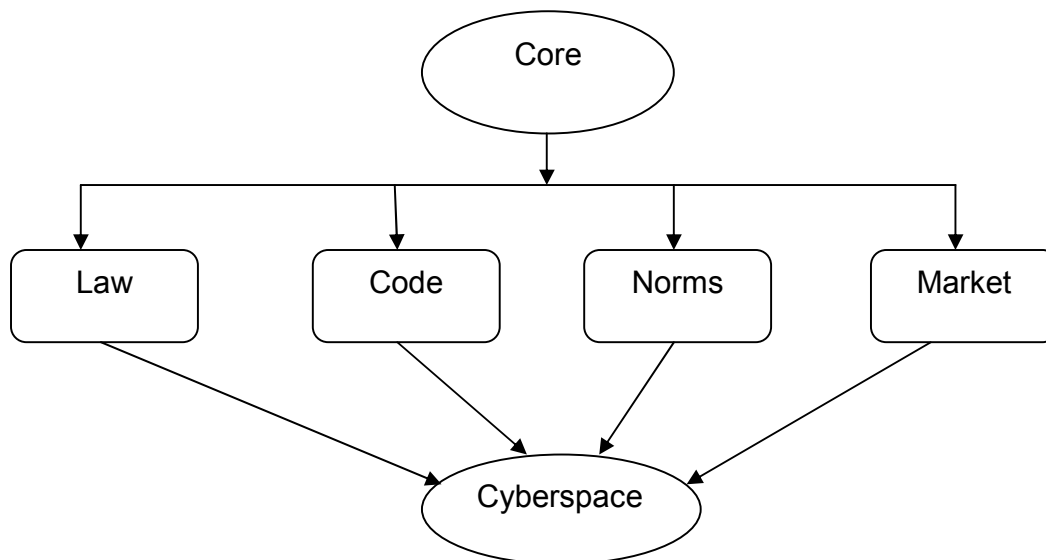


Figure 5: Constraints of Cyberspace Activities

Source: Adapted from Spinello (2003) and Lessig (1999)

By applying the framework to the case of social networking sites it is possible to see that there is an apparent issue with the law section. The phenomena of social networking sites is global and there is no common jurisdiction of law as each country will have different laws and cultures and what may be perfectly legal in one country may be illegal in another. However it may also be argued that if the larger countries start to apply regulations to the internet, the smaller countries may be able to follow suit and apply similar regulations. The code section of the framework incorporates the software solutions that are available. There are numerous different software applications that can be used to filter out offensive images and phrases, along with giving the user the ability to block access to certain websites and portals of information, thus giving control over

what the computer is used for, however it would be necessary to ensure that the software used is regularly updated to ensure that it is up-to-date with the continuing evolution of the internet. There 'norms' section covers behaviour that is acceptable and appropriate, and is also known as 'netiquette'. It is the rule of thumb that is followed by the majority of users and in the 'real world' it is frowned upon to stray outside of the boundaries of what is acceptable, so this would need to be the case in the virtual world as well. The final section of the framework is the market section which will often be driving force for the very being of sites on the internet. The internet does not have the boundaries of that are faced in the 'real world' as it is globally accessible and this in itself may lead to ethical issues.

It is necessary to note that ethics and morals may be different in different countries in the world. However in general terms what is deemed as right and wrong is the same worldwide, with the exception of some extreme views. This obviously will differ slightly due to different cultures and religious views which need to be taken into account when reviewing ethical issues created by the internet. With the continued growth and use of the internet in both the business world and for personal use, it will become more and more difficult to govern and control the purposes for which it is used. However it is becoming apparent that there is need for some form of regulation and the governments of the world are looking into ways that this can be done without intruding on privacy laws. Hauptman and Motin (1994) argued that morals and ethics still apply even if using a computer or the internet to communicate, and real world behaviour should not differ even in a virtual world.

2.17 ETHICS IN THE MEDIA

Online social networking sites are rarely out of the news and are a very hot topic. For example the BBC News (2009) reported that a woman was sacked by her employer recently, for being found using Facebook whilst at home on sick leave. The company argued that as the woman had a migraine which prevented her from using a computer in work and had therefore stayed at home, it should also have prevented her using Facebook at home. Another example according to Wright (2009) is that a page has been set up which includes a CCTV photograph as the profile photograph to help track down a suspected rapist. The profile was been set up by the boyfriend of the victim to help track down the assailant. These types of articles raise ethical questions such as the law says innocent until proven guilty, Facebook should question whether to allow a photograph of a 'suspect' to be put on such a page. Obviously these are not the only ethical questions to be raised and it could be argued that both the user and the social networking site have responsibility to consider ethical issues that are raised by posting certain information and searching for certain information.

2.18 ETHICS AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

As previously discussed, social networking sites are mines of personal information available for anyone who has the inclination to review unless of course the user has had the sense and ability to use the privacy settings to ensure that the information can only be accessed by those with specific permission. With this in mind, it is possible to see why using social networking sites to review prospective employees is becoming more popular but it is the question remains as to whether this is ethically and morally correct. The profile page of users on social networking sites are awash with personal

photographs and information about social occasions, descriptions of general moods or feelings all of which would not necessarily be information they would necessarily present to a prospective employer. Foulger *et al* (2009) researched this very issue, by investigating the use of social networking sites by pre-service teachers in the USA and reviewed the ethical vulnerabilities that faced the pre-services teachers whilst training for the role of teacher/educator and using social networking sites. The research mentions a particular case of a pre-service teacher who was not given a teaching qualification, but a lower qualification, due to photographs of drunken antics that were posted on a social networking site. The research investigates whether the social lives or the information of that social life posted on a social networking site of an individual could have a bearing on their ability to carry out the job they are training to do, as the social networking sites may portray a lifestyle that is not conducive to an educational role. The study by Foulger *et al* (2009) concluded that there is a lacking in the education of professional ethics for pre-service teachers and whilst social networking sites are very useful in teaching and learning opportunities, further education about ethical dilemmas and professional ethics is required to help prevent issues occurring.

It is widely reported via the media that it is now commonplace for employers to obtain information about prospective employees from social networking sites, and not necessarily just those sites set up for business purposes. The researcher of this study encountered an example of such a search for information via the news feed section on their personal Facebook profile. A Personnel Manager, posted a request for information on the profile page of another ex-colleague (a Store Manager), about a prospective employee who had previously worked with the store manager (see Figure 6), Facebook

2010. The information requested stated the prospective employees name and also mentioned what employment position had been applied for. This request was then published on the news feed (a page which is updated when a friend of a user updates a profile or posts something new on their profile page) and was available to view by all friends of both of the involved parties. Professional ethics obviously had not been considered by the Personnel Manager and this may have been due to lack of knowledge about how the information would be viewed and how many people it would be available to. The Personnel Manager was obviously unaware that 'messages' can be sent in a way in which only the sender and receiver can view them and therefore the message would not be available for viewing by all friends. This case brings to light many ethical and moral dilemmas with privacy and confidentiality as just two of them. The information on the message of the prospective employee was available to all of the friends of the sender many of whom may work in the same or similar industry. The information may also be made available to the current employer of that person and therefore affect the current position with that employer.



Figure 6: Screenshot of researcher's Facebook page

Source: Facebook.com (2010)

2.19 CENSORSHIP

In 1949 the New York Times was quoted as saying *"the problem with television is that people must sit and keep their eyes glued on a screen; the average American Family hasn't got time for it"*. Nowadays many households will have more than one television and according the Office for National Statistics (NSO, 2009) 16.46 million UK households had internet access in 2008, which was an increase of 1.23 million since the previous year (2007). Whilst considering these figures it is also necessary to consider the technological improvements which allow for internet access on 'the go' such as mobile phones, mobile internet access and Wi-Fi connections which allow people to connect to the internet whilst in a cafe or coffee shop for example. Since the early days of television, Adams and McCrindle (2008) believe that there have been improvements in the ease of regulation of broadcasts along with 'rating information' which allows adults to restrict programmes or channels being accessed by children. However it is

also more difficult to regulate broadcasts due to the sheer number of channels now available via satellite systems and this has led to more broadcasts and channels for adult materials which previously were not broadcast on television. White (2006) however, takes a different view point and states that the internet should be uncensored and should remain that way to continue in accordance with free speech. White's (2006) research investigates how sexually explicit materials are widely available on the internet, but they are not as big a danger as the media make it out to be and that people have the choice to avoid looking at such materials, as they would in the real world. White (2006) also uses the utilitarian argument that whilst harm may be caused by accessing certain explicit materials on the internet, more harm would be inflicted by censoring information that is available. Hollingshead (2005) reported that in the 1980's the release of films on video were not covered by the cinema certification which lead to an influx of films which were later named 'video nasties' because of the content of the films. This influx created an issue which the film industry dealt with by creating self certification, so the industry created a certification system to allow purchasers of the films to know what to expect and to make a decision whether they were suitable viewing for certain age groups. This self regulation of the industry helped limit the number of complaints as purchasers were pre-warned of the content of the film. The issue of protecting children from harmful, explicit materials on the internet appears to be a big topic in America and the debate is heightened by the constitutional rights of Americans which gives them the right to 'freedom of speech' and impacts on the debate of censorship of the internet as it is argued that by censoring the internet the constitutional rights of Americans are being affected. White (2006) argues that the internet is only the

medium of communication and that information is available but people have a choice what to access whilst using that medium, therefore the internet should not be censored. This is a very liberal view which calls for users to self-regulate their actions whilst using the internet and does not appear to allow for a governmental regulation.

2.20 REGULATION OF THE INTERNET

Nair (2006) wrote that *“technology does more good than harm”* but argued that it was vital to ensure that measures were taken to create a safe environment (on the internet) for children to use. The passing of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 in America was used by Nair (2006) as an example of the first legislative action to regulate content on the internet. However the act was ruled as ‘unconstitutional’ as it imposed *“impermissible burden on the free expression rights of adults”*. Following on from this act the US Government drafted the Child Online Protection Act (COPA) in 1998 but this also was deemed as unconstitutional. The US Government believed that there was a need for protection of children and the vulnerable whilst using the internet but had to ensure that any protection did not impinge on any constitutional rights.

In the February of 2009, Safer Internet Day was launched by InSafe and the European Union (2009), which is a European Union collaboration aiming to *“make the internet a safer place, especially for children”* and *“is a network of Awareness Centres promoting safe, responsible use of the Internet and mobile devices to young people across the world”*. The aims of the group are to *“fight illegal content and harmful behaviours on the Web such as bullying or grooming”*. The organisation holds an annual event in February to raise the awareness of the issues. In 2010 Facebook joined the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) (2010) on Safer Internet Day. The social networking site became a

member of the IWF to enable better protection of its users against issues arising whilst using the internet, and the aim is to help stop such networks with abuse from users whose intentions are not appropriate. Facebook becoming a member of the IWF shows that the company is committed to ensuring the safety of its users, but could also be used as publicity to advertise the site in a positive light. The IWF (2010) was established in 1996 and was to provide the UK with a reporting mechanism for illegal online content. The organisation works with the government and online industry along with various charities to reduce the availability of illegal content.

The UK government commissioned a report by Dr Tanya Byron (2008), to review the risks facing children *“from exposure to harmful or inappropriate material on the internet or in video games”*. The review was carried out over a period of approximately 6 months and amongst the conclusions was the fact that child safety is a major concern whilst using the internet, and that a focus should be made to reduce the amount and availability of inappropriate and harmful materials on the internet. It was also concluded that parents should be empowered to control and manage their children’s use of the internet which could lead to access of inappropriate and harmful materials. The review also states that with the internet being a global phenomena it would never be completely safe, and there was a need to educate children regarding the content they may face and how to deal with it. It is just as important that parents are educated and provided with tools and information together with details of who to contact if something goes wrong. The report also stated that a new culture of social responsibility was required to ensure the safety of children, and to help arm parents with the knowledge to protect their child whilst using the internet. The review had a number of

recommendations to make, with the first being the creation of a UK Child Internet Safety Council, that could draw up better regulations and provide information and education regarding the use of the internet. Another recommendation was that better use of certain laws was required to regulate the use of inappropriate materials and sites, along with a public information campaign to highlight internet safety. The review had a number of recommendations, some of which appear to have been implemented already but there are still further inroads to be made.

Another UK Government initiative is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) centre. CEOP was launched in 2006 with the aim of protecting children from harm whilst using the internet. CEOP is involved with the law enforcement of the UK and deals with mainly sexual harm and abuse but currently does not provide protection regarding cyber bullying or harassment. CEOP is linked with major children charities within the UK such as the National society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The initiative launched the International Youth Advisory Congress (IYAC) to *“provide an international platform that engages children and young people globally and empowers them to provide a direction that improves online safety and security for children”*. According to CEOP (07/08) IYAC was held to enable young people to have their views and experiences about online safety heard, and for IYAC to use these experiences to improve on safety and security whilst online. These online safety groups and the IYAC can hopefully work towards providing the necessary safety advice to enable protection of children whilst they use social networking sites and the internet.

2.21 MEDIA

As the popularity of social networking increases so does the regularity of the mention of sites in newspapers and on television. It could be argued that whilst the increase in regularity of the appearance of such sites in the media continues, so will the popularity. Alternatively there is a general suspicion of the media to sensationalise news reports and make the circumstance of a 'story' appear better or worse than the case may be. It could be argued that an example of such sensationalising can be seen in the reports of 21 friends, who were all teenagers/young people from Bridgend, in South Wales, who all committed suicide within a two year period of each other, Hockaday (2008). The newspaper reports stated that the suicides were linked through the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, to form a suicide pact. In essence the reports were inferring that the use of social networking sites encouraged this 'suicide pact', whereas the local police and parents believed that more young people were committing suicide because the media were sensationalising the issue and making it seem to be an appealing way to obtain attention. Another online term that may be used to define sensationalising stories is 'flaming'. According to Joinson (2003), flaming is the term used to describe "*negative or antisocial behaviour on computer networks*", and can be the term used to describe "*antagonistic or aggressive message trading*". Flaming is quite commonly used on social networking sites and chat rooms to encourage a heated discussion or argument and to encourage people to join malicious or hate groups on the sites. Castellá (2000) stated in Joinson (2003) that a comparison of flaming between internet and email users and flaming face-to-face showed that flaming was much more

likely to take place between the internet and email users than those who were face-to-face due to the lower level of inhibitions felt whilst communicating online.

Media also brings the issue of role models to the research. Children are influenced by people who are in the media, whether because they are a pop star or a sports star, and they place the role model in high esteem and try to emulate that person. In relation to social networking sites this can be an issue as if a role model carries out an action that is shown in the media, then children may believe the action is one that they can copy, even if this is not the case. Ellicot (2010) cites the case of Ashley Cole, a prominent well known football player who allegedly sent nude photographs of himself via a mobile phone to a model. This has been well published on both the television as well as in magazines and newspapers. This publicity may lead children to believe that it is acceptable to take photographs of themselves or others and send them to others or social networking sites without the full understanding of the implications of such an action and this questions whether a child understands privacy or whether there is voluntary naivety in the case of the child.

2.22 ADVERTISING

As social networking sites in general are free to use all that is required is access to a computer with an internet link. Once this access is obtained use of the site and the ability to create a profile page is free of charge. So the question is raised - how do social networking sites make money? The sites use advertising to make money and according to Bebo (2008) the advertisement is free to create and place on the site, but the creator of the advertisement has to make a payment to Bebo per 'click' or visit that is made by a Bebo user to the advertisements links. Bebo (2008) then allows advertisements that are

considered suitable to the user to appear on the users profile pages for their use. These decisions are usually linked to information collected from the user's historical activities and information. This is a process regularly used by companies trading in an online basis only such as Amazon, who are one of the biggest online store and sell books, CD's, computer games, etc. The site searches the historical records of previous purchases and searches to create a 'personalised recommendation' list, which gives the customer a list of products relating to previous purchases and may therefore be of interest to the user. This is a tool that allows people to view products that they may not be aware of helping to increase the selling power of the company. It now appears that social networking sites are using similar systems to advertise to their users, thus increasing the profit made by the companies that run the sites. With social networking sites using this method, security of information need to be considered, especially with regard to the use of children's information, and the advertisements would need to be age related.

It is evident that children are an ideal tool for marketing companies to use. The very idea of 'pester power' comes from children seeing a product and 'pestering' their parents until they buy the product for them, and the children's market is a very lucrative market. Children want to have the same toys and products as their friends and with them being an impressionable source it could be argued that advertisements on social networking sites are also a lucrative market. Schor (2005) argues that "*children have become conduits from the consumer marketplace into the household, the link between advertisers and the family purse*" and with them being more aware of the media and the latest trends and fashions, children can be targeted by advertisements on social

networking sites as the sites allow users to 'become a fan of' certain products. When a user becomes a fan of a product, this information will then be posted on the pages of their 'friends' on the site, who then also have the choice to become a fan of the product, and the advertisement is being spread amongst the social group. Del Vecchio (1997) was quoted by Schor (2005) as stating that "*kids have very little control over the world in which they live. Therefore, they love to gain any measure of control over their sphere of existence....Control touches a strong need that children have to be independent*", so being able to express an opinion on a product that is liked is an important issue for children and one that advertisers are able to use to their advantage. However in Sweden it is illegal to use advertisements on TV which are aimed at children under the age of 12. According to Mitchener (2001), Sweden hopes to roll out this prohibition across the European Union, and it would appear that other countries are attempting to change advertising laws to protect children, by banning advertisements of junk and fast food during children's television peak viewing times. Whilst implementing such regulations, considerations need to be made about the loss of revenue that is created from advertisement and whether the loss of revenue would have a detrimental effect on the finances of the country. Certainly there would appear to be a necessity for protecting children from unsuitable advertisements both on television and whilst using social networking sites.

2.23 CYBER BULLYING

To understand cyber bullying, it is necessary to understand what bullying is. According to Bullyonline (2010) bullying is "*persistent, unwelcome behaviour*" such as name calling, invalid criticism. So cyber bullying is the same issue but is carried out via

computers or new technologies, or as the UK Government (2010) state “*cyber bullying is when one person or a group of people try to threaten, tease or embarrass someone else by using a mobile phone or the internet*”. Another view from the Wiredsafety organisation (2010) is that cyber bullying is “*when one child targets another child using interactive technologies*”. The Wired Safety organisation (2010) also states that cyber bullying takes place always with a “child, preteen or teen” and if an adult is involved the issue becomes either cyber stalking or cyber harassment, and furthermore that cyber bullying is “*only limited by the child’s imagination and access to technology*”. A recent article Steele (2010) report a case of cyber bullying which resulted in the cyber bullying victim, who was a 15 year old girl, committing suicide. The victim was “*tormented by pupils who poked fun at her on Facebook*”. The media is now highlighting cases of cyber bullying on almost a daily basis. There are now numerous websites and organizations set up specifically to provide help and advice about cyber bullying. The frequency of cases of cyber bullying is increasing at the same time as the use of technologies and social networking sites and the advice available to help victims of cyber bullying is very much, common sense advice. The UK Government (2010) has a page which gives tips for use with general social media such as keeping records of any bullying emails or communications received, along with the date and time together with the information relating to the sender. It is also recommended that common sense be used before posting any information and comments as they can be seen by everyone, including parents, police and prospective employers.

Another website called Bullying.co.uk (2010) also has common sense warnings to young people advising they show an adult or a parent anything they view on the internet

which either upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable. The site also mentions that there are certain actions which breach UK law and legislations, such as *“it is against the law in the UK to use the phone system – which includes the internet – to cause alarm or distress”* and it also mentioned that if threats are made it could contravene the 1997 Harassment Act. The majority of site’s concerning the safety of children using the internet and social networking sites state cyber bullying as a main area for concern. A report in The Guardian (2006) showed that 1 in 10 teenagers had experienced bullying online and 11% of 12-15 year olds had been either bullied victimised or harassed. A later report from the Guardian (2009) showed that 47% of 14 year olds had experienced some form of bullying whilst 41% of 15 year olds had also reported a form of bullying. With technology being so accessible to children of all ages and access to the internet now being so mobile with the use of mobile telephones and laptops the opportunities for bullies continues to grow.

2.24 SUMMARY

This chapter reviews a wide range of issues and subjects that arise whilst investigating the social networking phenomena, along with the academic theories and expert journals. The process of reviewing the relevant literature has revealed that the use of social networking sites is becoming increasingly popular with children and adults alike, and this popularity is aided by the accessibility of the necessary equipment to access the social networking sites, via mobile phone, lap top computers or home computers. The NSPCC (2008) stated that there is not a specific law that defines the age of a child, but the UK Government (1991) agreed that *“a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th Birthday”*. However the three social networking sites which were reviewed for

this study Bebo (2008), Facebook (2006) and MySpace (2008) all have a lower age restriction for users of 13 years old, yet only Bebo and Facebook make recommendations that users under the age of 18 years old, should obtain permission from their parents or guardians before posting any information and/or photographs on a profile page.

This chapter also investigates which risks and dangers face users of social networking sites, along with how the exponential growth of the phenomena is affecting society and the habits of society. There appears to be a number of issues that are raised by the fact the social networking sites are on the internet, such as privacy of information, censorship, advertising and cyber bullying. These issues are also apparent in the real world but this chapter reveals how they could affect users of social networking sites and could allow for world wide access of personal information if the privacy settings of the sites are not applied to individual profiles. There is also a review of whose responsibility it is to protect children whilst they use such sites. The study reviews the current privacy policies of the sites along with current UK Governmental reports and studies which have investigated the use of social networking sites in the UK along with the Byron Report (2008) which is an internet safety report that was also commissioned by the UK Government.

A further issue investigated by Chapter 2 is whether ethics apply to the use of these sites and if 'real world' ethics are different to 'online' ethics. Sections 2.15 through to 2.18 investigates this subject and Bowie (2005) stated that even activities carried out online should not allow for the ethics and morals of what is right or wrong to be ignored

whilst DeGeorge (2005) argued that the internet is not able to be governed and therefore ethics should change to suit the new technology.

With the use of the internet and social networking sites continuing to increase with in the UK, the issues raised and investigated in this chapter are current and relevant to anyone with children as well as users of social networking sites and the internet in general. The study continues with a review of the research methodology in the next chapter.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE

The aim of this study was to investigate whether children are protected from online dangers whilst using social networking sites. This research adopted the use of an online survey and a focus group as the method of obtaining further information, opinion and perspective on this topic. These methods were in addition to the literature review that was carried out to provide an insight into theory surrounding the phenomena that is social networking sites. This research aimed to provide all interested parties such as parents, teachers and the UK Government with recommendations on how to improve the safety of children whilst using such sites along with highlighting relevant issues that could provide the basis for further research in the future.

3.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this research is to investigate the issue of whether children are safe whilst using social networking sites. This study adopted an online survey and focus group in order to achieve its objective of reviewing user experience of social networking sites. The following objectives seek to justify this approach:

1. To fully evaluate literature that is relevant to social networking, the use of the internet and ethical risk
2. To apply concepts of risk to children as vulnerable users in the context of misuse of social networking sites
3. The collection of data using of an online survey and a focus group, in order to evaluate the views and perceptions of how children use social networking sites

4. To generate conclusions on how to make social networking sites more socially responsible and to make children more secure while they use the sites.
5. To make recommendations for the social networking sites, to several relevant stake holders who are involved with social networking sites and the protection of children, whilst using the internet.

The social networking sites are used via the internet which is a worldwide source of information, and as such this could leave children in a vulnerable position. The risks that are faced by children whilst using social networking sites will be identified and the current policies and procedures for safety and privacy of the sites will be scrutinised. Whilst carrying out this research it is necessary to investigate whether the sites have a social responsibility to the users to ensure that they are protected and whether the user also should shoulder some of the responsibility to protect themselves.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

According to White (2005), a methodology is the way in which a researcher investigates the relevant subject and is the “*philosophical basis on which the research is founded*”, where are Riley *et al* (2000) believed that it is a difficult task to structure research as it is by the very meaning of it, organic.

3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

It is widely written that the choice of research topic will determine the research methodology, and once the topic has been decided, it is then necessary to examine which of the two main research paradigms applies to the research. Riley *et al* (2000) believed that both paradigms had a common aim, which was to obtain an understanding

of behaviour but each approaching from different directions. The positivistic paradigm takes the approach that true knowledge is scientific and seeks to discover the facts but *“has little regard to the subjective state of the individual”*, Collis and Hussey (2009). Alternatively, the phenomenological or humanist paradigm takes the approach of building an understanding of human behaviour *“from the participants own frame of reference”*, or as Saunders *et al* (2009) states it can be the interpretation of human behaviour and understanding *“the way humans make sense of the world”*.

The main features of both paradigms can be seen below:

POSITIVISTIC PARADIGM FEATURES	PHENOMENOLOGICAL PARADIGM FEATURES
Usually produces quantitative data	Usually produces qualitative data
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Deals with testing of hypothesis	Deals with generating theories
Information collected is specific and precise	Information collected is rich and subjective
Reliability is high	Reliability is low
Validity is low	Validity is high

Table 1: Features of research paradigms

Source: adapted from Collis and Hussey (2009).

Due to the nature of the paradigms they can be described as quantitative (positivist paradigm) and qualitative (phenomenological paradigm). Quantitative analysis is mainly involved with statistical data and methods and according to White (2005), the result will be in numerical and statistical form and the main difference between this analysis and

qualitative analysis is that non-statistical procedures are used for qualitative analysis as it concentrates on behaviours and reactions of humans.

As this study is investigating whether children are safe whilst using social networking sites, it is a study of human behaviour and is therefore covered by the phenomenological paradigm. According to Saunders *et al* (2009) qualitative techniques produce data with high validity, and gives research findings *“that are really about what they profess to be about”*, and also state that qualitative methods may produce results and attitudes that are not revealed whilst using quantitative methods. However due to the nature of the study there will be a crossover of methods of collecting data which according to Collis and Hussey (2009) allows the research to take a more complimentary, broad view of the research questions. For this study a survey will be undertaken, aimed at parents or guardians, which traditionally is viewed as a positivistic methodology as Collis and Hussey (2009) state that the survey method deals with a sample group of the population, and it is possible to use the results to make generalised findings about the population. However for this study, although the research paradigm is phenomenological, it assists the research to be able to survey a sample group of the population to discover information about parent and guardians perceptions and views about their children’s use of social networking sites.

This study will adopt the use of data triangulation in the process of data collection. Easterby-Smith *et al* (2010) state that data triangulation is where data is collected from different sources or at different times during the study of a phenomenon. It can be argued that this process can encourage productive research and it is proposed that questionnaires will be used to obtain current users information and opinion along with

relevant journals and books and academic theories as well as a small focus group of parents to allow for further information and opinions to be obtained to strengthen the research. By undertaking a mixed methodology it is hoped that as stated by Sudweeks and Simoff (1999), any issue or weakness of an individual methodology will be outweighed by the strengths of the combination of the methodologies. White (2005) states that the benefits of a mixed methodology will enable a comparison of results, which gives a *“far more information about the topic under investigation”*, and should allow for the benefits of each method used to be felt.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

3.5.1 SURVEY

White (2005) describes a survey as a way of *“describing and explaining some aspect of a population”* and as previously mentioned Collis and Hussey (2009) thought that surveys enabled the researcher to study a sample of the population and use the results to make generalised findings. Witmer *et al* (1999) believed that computer mediated communication (CMC) had potential as a mode of study especially with the exponential growth of technology, so with these viewpoints in mind, the research has chosen to carry out a survey via the online survey company SurveyMonkey (2009). This method was chosen for a number of reasons, one being that a survey can enable *“the collection of a large amount of data from a sizable population in a highly economical way”* Saunders *et al* (2009). The online survey company was used to allow for the target sample group to have easy access to the survey and allow it to be completed at the convenience of the participant, in complete confidence. The survey will be completely anonymous and the participants will not be contacted by the researcher. However,

contact information of the researcher was given to each participant on the survey to enable them to obtain feedback of the research should they require it. The survey can be seen as Appendix A. A survey needs to be easy to understand, with uncomplicated questions that enable an easy answer, but the answer needs to be sufficient enough to provide the information that is required by the researcher. Surveys, in their very nature are usually quite structured and this should lead to reliable results. The survey for this study was reviewed prior to its release to participants by the relevant tutor and was validated for use within the boundaries of this research.

3.5.2 SURVEYMONKEY

SurveyMonkey is an online tool for creating surveys and making them instantly available to recipients. “*SurveyMonkey enables people of all experience levels to create their own surveys*” and “*gives thousands of people the feedback they need to make informed decisions*”, SurveyMonkey (2009). The tool is available online and is free to use to a certain level of questionnaire or survey, after which a membership fee is payable. SurveyMonkey is a useful tool for companies to obtain customer or employee feedback, along with education, training and research. The system also allows for the analysis of the results to be carried out by the software, in a format to suit the researcher, such as graphs and pie-charts.

SurveyMonkey promotes a practise of fair information and has a link to well known privacy prevention software to demonstrate the company’s commitment to privacy and confidentiality of customers and recipients personal information.

Wood *et al* (2004) state that there are various advantages of using online research methods such as the ease of access to large sample groups, along with the ease of use of the software to make the survey easier to complete. They also state that there is a possible “*disinhibiting effect*” of the anonymity of the internet which may lead to more honest responses.

3.5.3 PILOT STUDY

To ensure that the survey is understandable and useable, a pilot study is recommended. Saunders *et al* (2009) suggest that is necessary to test the survey, so that it can be refined to ensure ease of use for the respondent and that no issues with recording the data arise. The survey was sent out to 6 parents that were known to the researcher. The researcher asked each of the 6 pilot study respondents to give verbal feed back to allow for amendments and improvements to be made to the survey prior to being sent out to the other respondents. As a result of the feedback, the structure of one question was amended slightly, to ensure the respondent had the opportunity to give a full answer. The pilot study was sent out and the feedback was returned within a 24 hour period.

3.5.4 FOCUS GROUP

Collis and Hussey (2009) state that a focus group is a method used to obtain feelings and opinions of a group of people, and is associated with the phenomenological paradigm. They also state that a focus group is the observation of the behaviour of a group of people and this method of data collection enables all relevant topics to be discussed by the interaction of the members of the focus group. However Saunders *et al* (2009) argue that the researcher should only be involved in a focus group as an

observer and not a participant, which should allow for reliable results and make for an easier collection of data as it happens during the focus group. It was decided that a focus group was to be set up in order for the researcher to obtain more in depth feedback on the subject, as the online survey would only allow for either a positive or negative response to questions or a limited answer. It was felt that by observing a focus group, whilst the topic was discussed, a clearer perspective would be obtained with more information and detail.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The main challenge with the data analysis is how to give put it into a useful structure and reduce the amount of data. Once a structure has been given to the data it will be suitable to use to develop the original aims of the research and can be used to support existing theories or lead to the creation of new theories. The data analysis should lead to the answers of the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Tesch (1995) mentioned that there are four distinct sections of qualitative analysis, with the first being the need to understand the language and the second being able to discover the regularities in the results. The third section is the ability to understand the meaning of the results and then fourth being the ability to reflect on the results and draw conclusions. Collis and Hussey (2009) stated that informal methods of analysis are often used by researchers and this can mean the reduction of information by examining any patterns or repetitive results. This is a useful method of analysis as it can reduce the amount of data that the researcher has to work with and can lead to clearer results. It is now possible to use various types of software to help with the analysis of the results obtained in research and in the case of this study, SurveyMonkey (2009) was used to

compile and launch the online survey. The software within this programme will enable the analysis of the results to be produced into relevant graphs, pie-charts and tables which will be clear and easy to use.

It would be interesting if the data that is produced from the online survey and focus group was contradictory as it would allow for scope for further research in this area. However it is hoped that the focus group will provide a more in depth perspective to the topics within the survey allowing the researcher to have more information to analyse.

It has been argued that there is a process to follow for the analysis of qualitative data and Lindlof (1995) created a four stage process. This process involved continuous analysis of data which is updated and modified at different stages of the research followed by the reduction of data by categorising and prioritising the information. The next stage is the researcher gaining an understanding of the respondents/participants motives and aims whilst using social networking sites and this is followed by the explanations provided by the analysis of the data from the study.

3.7 TIMESCALE FOR RESEARCH

A timescale for a research project is essential framework from which research can be carried out. With this study the theoretical back ground was carried out from August 2009 until January 2010. Following on from the theoretical research, a survey was compiled and tested on a pilot study of respondents in the middle of January 2010. Once the pilot study was complete and the survey was amended to suit the feedback from the pilot study and the online survey went 'live' on survey monkey at the beginning of February 2010. Whilst the online survey was 'live' and available to respondents, a

focus group was held to obtain further information on the topic. The survey remained 'live' for a period of 3 weeks and the data collection and analysis took place at the end of February/beginning of March 2010. The later stages of March 2010 were for the researcher to add results, and conclusions to the research, following up with any relevant recommendations that became apparent from the research. Early April 2010 was the date for the first draft of the research to be completed, and a final version to be ready for submission at the end of April 2010.

3.8 RESEARCH RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

White (2005) describes reliability as consistency of the research carried out and validity as ensuring the research answers the questions the study poses. Whereas Riley *et al* (2001) state that reliability is about replication or being able to reproduce similar or the same results and validity as the idea of a measuring device to measure the research being carried out. Riley *et al* also describe validity as "*matter of judgment*". Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and that a study has validity if the results prove or demonstrate what the research set out to prove. This study has cross methods of research and covers phenomenological paradigms, which have low reliability and high validity and also positivistic paradigms which have high reliability and low validity.

3.9 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

As with all methods of research, it is reasonable to expect limitations of some form. In the case of this study one of the main limitations will be gaining access to current, up-to-date academic research and reports, as social networking sites are a fairly new phenomenon. However in contrast to this view, social networking sites are such a

popular talking point and are mentioned on a very regular basis in news reports and news papers and on websites that are run by the UK Government.

A limitation on the study is that research on the actual social networking sites will have to be carried out from outside of the University, as the researcher is a staff member, the use of such sites is not allowed, however it will be possible to research the theoretical side of the study using the University facilities, such as the libraries and computer laboratories. Another limitation to this study would be gaining access to a wide range of participants who use social networking sites. With the time and financial constraints of this study in mind, the researcher decided that it would be more effective to use an online survey which would hopefully meet more of a general response, allowing participants to take part in the survey at a time and place most convenient to them. The time constraints also led the researcher to aim the online survey at parents rather than at children, because it would be impractical to gain the correct authority to survey children which would fall into the relevant age categories required.

Limitations of online surveys are apparent to the researcher with the first being that internet access is required by the participant to enable them to complete the survey, and Sudweeks and Simoff (1999) state that there is an issue of what is real whilst using the internet as a research tool. However, the survey for this study was also available in a hard copy (paper-based) should it be required. The next limitation would be to give access to the online link to the participants. The online survey link will be posted on a social networking site and also emailed to friends and colleagues of the researcher along with other students who were also studying on the same course, and as the survey was aimed at parents, access to this group was readily available.

The use of focus groups may also have limitations as a method of qualitative research as highlighted by Scrimshaw (1990) with the main being that the methods can be time consuming and problems can arise when validating and interpreting the data. Other issues raised by Marshall (1997) would be the difficulty in replicating the study should it be required and it is open to bias. White (2005) argued that it was essential for the researcher to *"blend into the background"* so as not to engage with the group to ensure there are no bias's inflicted on the discussion. Although these limitations are apparent to the researcher, it is felt that the benefits outweigh the limitations, as the information that will be obtained will provide important results about the research.

Witmer *et al* (1999) believed that CMC had potential as a mode of study especially with the exponential growth of technology, but that response rate of surveys and questionnaires could be greatly affected by the length of the survey. With this in mind the online survey used for this study would be limited to 10 brief questions, with multiple choice answers to enable the survey to be completed in a short period of time. This would hopefully limit the chances of the survey not being answered.

An issue with surveys and questionnaires in general, would be that participants may not answer truthfully and may try to provide the answer that they feel the researcher is looking for. Specifically with the survey relating to this study, the questions are relating to parenting issues, and the participants may not feel comfortable answering questions that they believe may put a negative view on their parenting skills. To enable them to continue with the survey rather than not complete it, each question will have a 'prefer not to say' or similar option. This in itself can be a limitation, but it is essential not to make the participant uncomfortable for fear of the survey not being completed. In the

same vein, participants may not want to admit to not having computer technology skills which may help to protect their children whilst using social networking sites by applying relevant filter software. The negative aspects of this method were attempted to be reduced by the use of a focus group in support of the survey, which would allow participants to air their personal views without the limitation of a few lines as with the survey.

As with the use of all technology, an obvious limitation would be the issue of problems with either the hardware (computer, monitor) or software (programmes) that the participant may be using, along with problems with internet connection, which would be out of the control of the researcher.

Another limitation could be that social networking sites and the use of the internet changes on a very regular basis and Jones (1999) argued that internet research is difficult due to the fact that the internet is constantly changing and being updated so what the study may investigate today may not be relevant tomorrow in an ever changing world but with the increasing popularity and usage of these sites the study will cover issues that will remain important into the future.

4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter four will examine and discuss the results and findings of the research that has been undertaken. An online survey via SurveyMonkey (2009) and a focus group of parents were used to investigate the views and perspectives of parents, who have children who use social networking sites. The aim of the research is to discover if children are safe whilst using social networking sites. Due to the time constraints placed on this research it was decided to approach parents, instead of the children, for their views and experiences with their children using social networking sites.

For this research, 3 main social networking sites were used and these were Facebook, MySpace and Bebo. All 3 sites are general social networking sites, as opposed to sites that are slightly more specialised such as dating sites or age related social networking sites which are aimed at users over a certain age. The 3 sites used for this research all have a lower age limit for users of 13 years old. These sites were mentioned in the online survey and the focus group, and appear to be used regularly by the children whose parents were participants in the both the survey and focus group

4.1 SURVEY RESULTS

The online survey was 'live' or available online for approximately 1 month. Details of the survey with an internet link were posted on a social networking site and sent via email to colleagues, friends and family. After the period of a month, the survey had been completed by 64 respondents, all of whom were parents. The survey was 10 questions long, which was the maximum number of questions available via SurveyMonkey (1999) as a temporary member of the site. However, it was possible to formulate the questions in such a way that it was in 2 parts or essentially 2 questions. The copy of the full survey

can be seen as Appendix A and the results summary of the survey can be seen as Appendix B. Appendix C shows the results of the survey in the form of graphs and charts.

4.1.1 CHILDREN AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

To establish whether children are safe from harm whilst using social networking sites, it is necessary to discuss whether they use actually use the sites. The OfCom report (2008) states that of the children that they surveyed about social networking sites, “*49% of children aged 8-17 who use the internet have set up their own profile on a social networking site*”. The survey carried out for the purposes of this research (see question 2 in Appendix C showed that of the parents surveyed almost 70% had children in their household that used social networking sites. This up-to-date information would appear to confirm that more children are now using social networking sites and the resulting bar chart for question 3 Figure 7 of the survey for this research shows that there is at least a daily usage of social networking sites by children in the majority of households of the survey participants. However, it is necessary to note that of the 64 survey participants only 44 answered this question with 20 skipping the question completely, which is almost a third of the total participants.

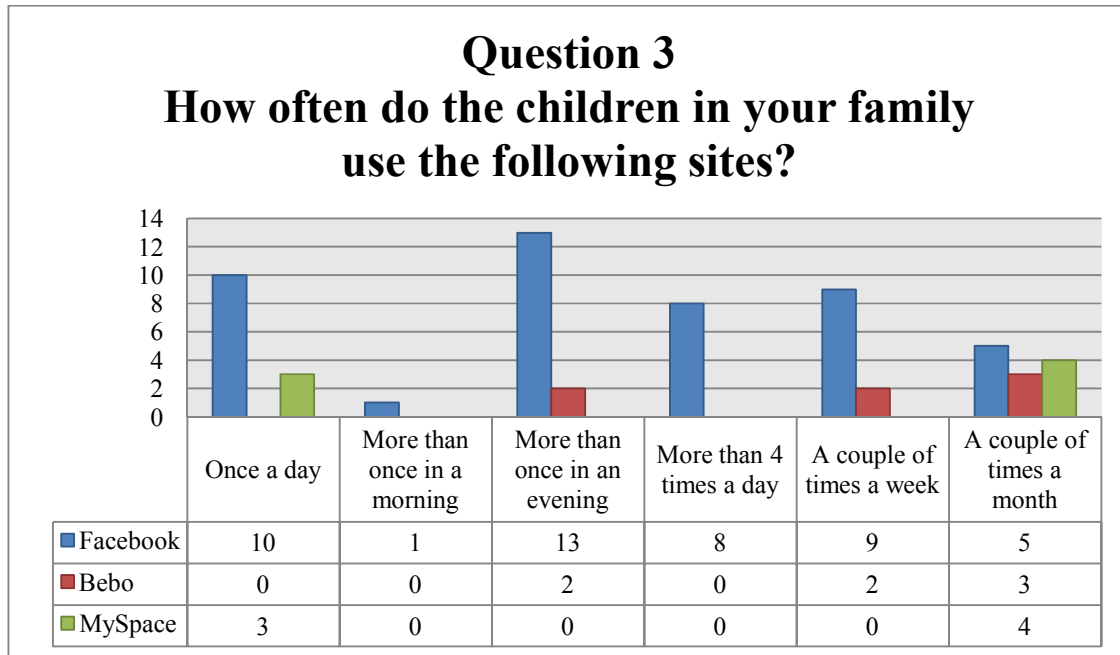


Figure 7: Survey Results showing frequency of social networking site usage by children

Figure 7 also shows the whilst the social networking sites are being used by children on a daily basis, it is also possible to see that Facebook is the most popular social networking site used by the children with well over half of the survey participants children using the site on a regular basis. According to Crunchbase (2009) Facebook was set up in 2004 by Mark Zuckerman as a means of communication for students in Harvard University in the USA. Its purpose was to enable students on the same or similar courses to be able to communicate via a network. The site proved so popular, Zuckerman extended its use to colleges and high schools and eventually to any person who had an email address. The site was not originally aimed at children although it is now available to any above the age of 13 years old, Facebook (2006). The participants of this study had a wide age range of children but the majority were between the ages of 7 and 17 years of age.

4.1.2 SAFETY AND DANGERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Chapter 2, section 2.7 reviewed the risks that face users of social networking sites and according to TechMission (2000) there are a number of dangers and risks facing users of such sites with obscene language or images, racist or violent material and/or sexually explicit material or pornography amongst them. There is also a risk of online predators, who are usually adults and as reported by Steele (2010) can prey on young children by assuming an identity of a young person and then befriending and eventually arranging a meeting. According to Adams and McCrindle (2008) the rise in the number of such cases has led to the UK Government “*introducing a new offence of ‘online grooming’*” which was included in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Unfortunately such cases are still apparent as Steele (2010) reported after a registered sex offender posed as 19 year old boy to befriend a 17 year old girl, whom he then groomed online via Facebook and later raped and murdered. Adams and McCrindle (2008) maintain that “*Children still remain far more at risk from members of the family and people in positions of trust than from strangers – whether strangers in the street or strangers online*”. It is vital to remember that the media often sensationalise stories to make them more newsworthy and although these cases do happen, the media has a tendency to use only the bad news stories and few success stories.

The survey related to this study questioned parents as to how safe they believed their children to be whilst using social networking sites and the internet. The results showed that only 25.4% of the parents surveyed believe that their children were either fairly or very unsafe whilst using such sites however, only 15.3% of the parents believe that their children are safe whilst using social networking sites (see Appendix C question 4) whilst

49.2% believe them to be fairly safe whilst using the sites. Interestingly though, 5 of the participants of the survey chose to skip this question, and unfortunately there was no narrative given as to why the question was avoided.

The survey asked parents if they felt their children were aware of potential dangers that they may face whilst using social networking sites and whether they had discussed these possible dangers with the children. As in the case of previous question, 5 participants skipped this question but 83.1% of parents believed that their children understood the dangers of the internet. The literature review section 2.12 stated that Kohlberg (1969) taken from Gibbs (2003) believed that children appear to learn from their experiences and gain an understanding of what is right and wrong and other “*moral concepts*”, so based on this it is incorrect to assume that children do not understand issues and “*moral concepts*” just because they are young.

The survey also revealed that 96.7% of the parents surveyed stated that they had discussed the dangers that faced their children whilst using social networking sites, and this communication about the possible dangers facing them whilst using such sites can help to them making informed choices about what they choose to access from their profile page.

4.1.3 MONITORING USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THE INTERNET

The monitoring of usage of internet along with social networking sites is a contentious issue. White (2006) argues that there should not be any censorship of information or

images on the internet and that there should be free access to information on the internet.

Monitoring the child's use of social networking sites, presents key problems. The first being that the sites are accessible from computers, laptops and mobile phones, so can be accessed from places other than the home. Mobile technology can make it very difficult to monitor what a child is doing on the site, what they are posting and who they are conversing with. Secondly is the age of the child causes a variation in the ethical risk. For example if the users are teenagers they expect to be treated as young adults and expect privacy and by monitoring their use of social network sites and may result in friction or tension. Figure 8 shows the results of question 7 from the survey, which asks parents about the monitoring of internet and social networking use.

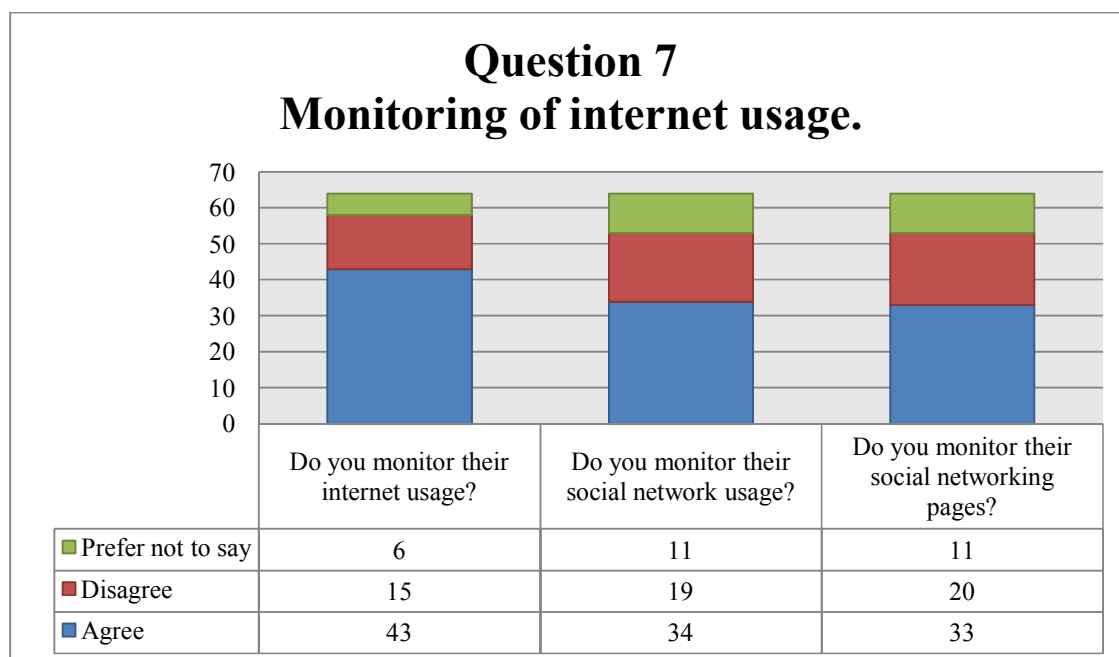


Figure 8: Survey results showing whether parents monitor their children's use of social networking sites

The figures show that just over half of the parents (34) who participated in the survey for this research, monitor their children's use of social networking sites. Surprisingly though 19 of the parents do not monitor their child's use of such site and a further 11 of the parents preferred not to say if they did or did not monitor the usage. A focus group was carried out to further support the survey and this provided further narrative to the results. The parents who preferred not to comment on this question did so because they did not want their parenting skills judged by their actions in relation to this question, they did not want to appear as either bad parents for not monitoring the use or interfering parents by monitoring the usage. The results shown in Figure 8 revealed that more parents monitor the general internet use than that of the use of social networking sites and the individual profile page of the child. These results could reflect that parents are aware of the dangers that face children whilst using the internet but do not believe that the danger is as high whilst using the social networking sites. If this is indeed the case, the results to the next survey question would support this. The parents who were surveyed were asked whether or not they use parental control software, and the results showed that only 39.3% did actually use a form of parental control software. Parental control software is software that allows filters to be placed on what information or websites are accessed through the computer. The filters can be on either certain words or images or on actual sites or types of sites and there are many different types of parental control software available. White (2006) argues that this type of software can cause problems because they can block sites which may be of use, such as gay and lesbian rights. However, it could be argued that gay and lesbian issues should be censored for young and mid teenagers, but this could be at the discretion of the parents.

It should also be considered that these issues may be dealt with during school sex education classes which may or may not be approved by parents. Lessig (2005) argued that the world has changed and we must move with the times and toughen up, meaning that these issues are out there but they can be dealt with. Certain sites that may be of use with regard to health issues may also be filtered out because of certain words. White (2006) says that *"when a filter comes across a site on breast cancer, it disallows access due to the presence of the word 'breast'"*, so in essence White is arguing that censorship can be too imposing and whilst trying to filter out information to protect children and other users, the censorship is also filtering out helpful inoffensive information. It could however be viewed that there is a *"tension between privacy and 'the need to know'"*, Halbert and Ingulli (2005) and it is this tension which may cause issues between the parents 'need to know' what the child is doing via the social networking sites and the need for privacy of the child. However according to Adediran (2002) privacy can be difficult to *"achieve in a world driven by information and communication"* and this appears to be more apparent in recent times. Furedi (2010) argued a different view point entirely by stating that the problem of what may be viewed by a child whilst using such sites is being 'adultised' by the parent. He also stated that *"a significant proportion of 11 year olds have been regularly exposed to pornography"* and the real problem is *"a highly sexualised adult imagination that continually recycles its anxieties through children"*. Thus we can see that Furedi (2010) believe that the problem of children being exposed to inappropriate materials and images is exaggerated by adults views. An example of this would be a young girl trying out make-up products for the first time and applying too much. In the eyes of the parent the child

could look provocative, where as in reality the child is experimenting with the product and possibly emulating a famous personality, and not actually understanding that the famous personality is trying to look provocative. Furedi also argues that adults are imposing their own views on the situation and adultising children without realising that is what they are doing.

4.1.4 AGE RESTRICTION

The three sites that were used for this research (Facebook, Bebo and MySpace) all have a lower usage age limit of 13 years old. However, OfCom (2008) state that 27% of 8-11 year olds (3000 surveyed) say that they have profiles on the sites. This information shows that children are able to open accounts/profiles on social networking sites regardless of the lower age limits. This suggests that the sites are not regulating new and existing profiles, and can leave the users open to vulnerabilities. The sites currently ask all users to provide their date of birth as proof of age, but there is currently no facility for confirmation of the details. However only MySpace(2008) state in that they will move any user that is believed to be under the lower age limit of 13 years old, but Bebo (2008) and Facebook (2006) do recommend that users who are also minors (under 18 years old) seek permission from their parents or guardians prior to posting any information on their profile page.

The survey also asked parents about their awareness of the lower age limits for users of social networking sites. Figure 9 shows the results of question 9, and illustrates that under half of the parents surveyed were aware of the lower age limits which are placed on the sites.

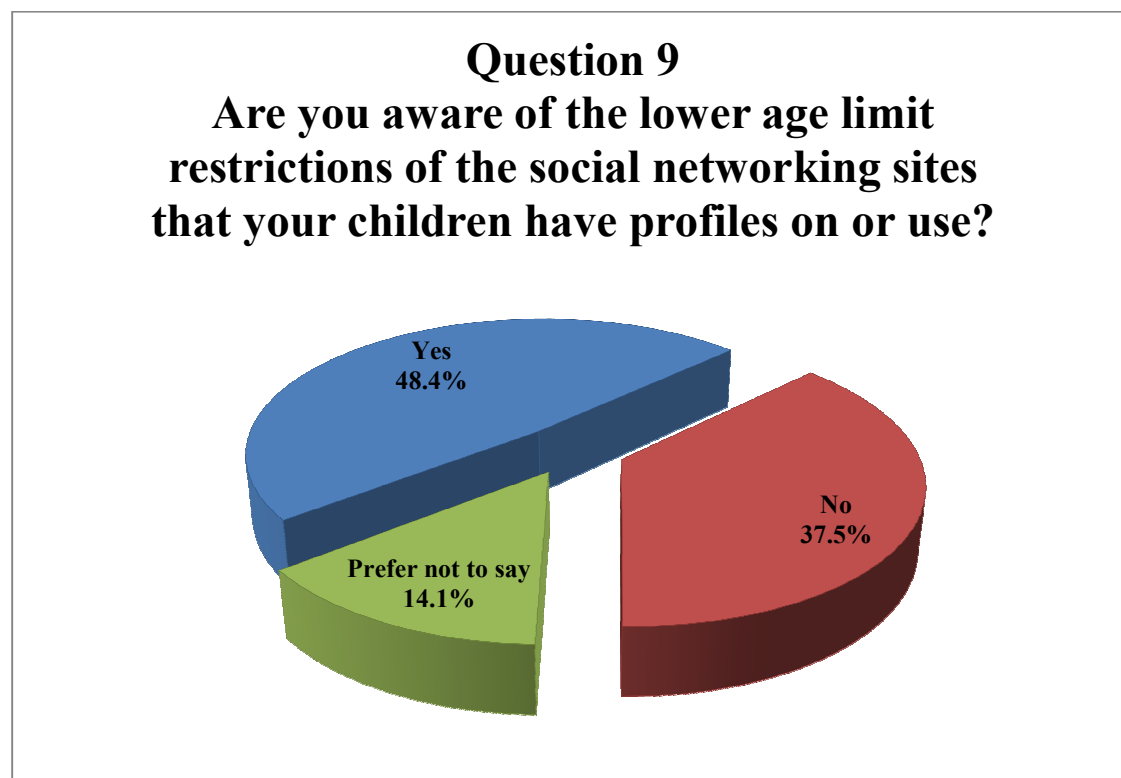


Figure 9: Survey results showing parents awareness of lower age restrictions on social networking sites

Interestingly 14.1% of parents preferred not to answer this question, which again as with question 7 it could be argued that the parents are concerned about being judged on their parenting skills and despite the survey being completely confidential and anonymous. Over a quarter (37.5%) of the parents surveyed were unaware of the lower age restrictions on the use of social networking sites, which is a large number when considering that 69% of those surveyed had children who use such sites. There may be an number of reasons for this and the OfCom (2008) report states that there is a number of over 30 year olds that is not confident with the use social networking sites due to lack of confidence or technical ability, it could also be due to the confidence that the child has with using computers and similar sites, which allows the parent to feel that

the child has the ability to use the site and there for naively allows the child to continue to use the site without checking the terms and conditions of use.

The final question of the survey asked whether the parent would allow their child to use the social networking sites if the child was below the lower age limit. As expected a large percentage (79.3%) of parents said their child would not be allowed to have a profile on a social networking site if the child was under this lower age limit. However, the survey allowed for further explanation of the answer given and these narrative answers can be seen as Appendix C. Only 36 of the parents surveyed chose to give a narrative answer but the results are indicative of 'pester power' playing a large reason in why the children are allowed to use the social networking sites and an example can be seen in Appendix C as respondents 1 and 5. Amongst the narrative it is possible to see that the majority of parents who gave a narrative answer believe that the age limits are set to protect children and comment about how their child is monitored. Another pattern that can be seen from the narrative comments is that the danger or risk most mentioned is predators that use the sites to gain information or groom children. This is an issue that could be taken up for further research in the future.

The survey appeared to be successful in many respects. The survey was completed by a large number of participants (64 in total) and the feedback was positive. The research topic being a very current issue means that parents are aware of the issues and dangers that their child may face whilst using social networking sites and in general would appreciate further information and help on how to protect their children in a virtual world.

4.2 FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

The focus group session took place in January 2010. The group comprised of six parents with children between the ages of 8 and 17 years of age. The focus group was to enable further opinions of parents to be sort about the subject of children using social networking sites. A survey had been compiled for the purposes of this research and was to be distributed via SurveyMonkey (2009). However, it was decided that the focus group would enable the researcher to observe the parents reactions to the survey and during the observation the researcher would be able to obtain more detailed information which would enhance the survey result, Collis and Hussey (2009). They also stated being part of a focus group can be difficult for some participants, but the ability to hear other opinions on a subject will encourage participants to give their own opinions and add further value to the proceedings.

The focus group were given hard copies of the survey that was available online via SurveyMonkey (2009), and were allowed 5 minutes to read and digest the questions prior to discussion. Once the reading time had elapsed the group were asked to discuss and answer each question as a group, where possible allowing for everyone to comment. The focus group would have an opportunity to discuss the survey and answers with each other, whereas the online survey participants would express an independent view and be unable to explain their answers.

On the survey, question 4 asks the participant to state how safe they think the children in their household are whilst using the internet and social networking sites. The responses were split by 3 respondents stating that the children are fairly safe, 2 respondents stating that the children are fairly unsafe and 1 stating that they are

vulnerable and very unsafe. So it could be argued that half of the respondents think their children are fairly safe whilst using the internet and social networking sites whilst the remaining half, think that the children are unsafe. As discussed in chapter 2, section 2.7 TechMission (2000) believed that there are inherent dangers connected with social networking sites. However, in 2006 the UK Government set up CEOP (07/08) which is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre, as it was aware that the internet has inherent dangers that are connected to its use and it was deemed necessary to protect children whilst they were using it. The discussion following this question was quite in depth and went on for a reasonable amount of time. Respondents explained what they thought the dangers facing children that use social networking sites were i.e. sexual predators, cyber bullying, age inappropriate content, pornography and how they feel that children should not be exposed to this sort of material or content. The discussion also covered that some of the respondents thought that the social networking sites had filters or protection of some sort to prevent images and text of an inappropriate nature appearing on profile pages of their users along with automatic age restrictions. As shown in chapter 2 sections 2.3 – 2.5 it is possible to see that the research shows that this is not the case with the 3 social networking sites that were reviewed for this research. In fact of the 3 sites reviewed (Facebook, Bebo and MySpace) it can be seen that only Bebo (2008) actually has an automatic privacy setting for users profiles that are under 18 years old. Bebo also has a setting that can restrict users over the age of 18 contacting any children under 18 years old but this setting has to be instigated by the user itself and is not automatic. The group also believed that the profile pages were monitored by the social networking sites and any inappropriate materials would be

removed and whilst MacMillan (2009) states that Facebook have a team who review any material, language or content that users report as inappropriate, but the team rely on such material being reported by users .

Survey question number 7 raised a discussion between the focus group as it questions whether the parents monitor the usage of the internet, social networking sites and profile pages on social networking sites. Half of the respondents agreed that they monitored the activities of the child on the internet, social networking sites and profile pages whilst the remaining half were split between claiming not to monitor the activities of the children and preferring not to answer. It would appear that the people who preferred not to answer this question chose this option to avoid their parenting skills being judged, as they did not want to appear as if they were 'bad parents' who were not monitoring the online activities of their children or intrusive parents who monitor every activity their child is involved in. However those that did not monitor the online activities were the parents of the children in the older age group and the parents felt they needed to trust the children and respect their privacy.

In contrast to this discussion, the responses to question 8 revealed that 4 out of the 6 parents in the focus group did not use parental control software on the computers to protect their children from any dangers whilst using the internet or social networking sites. Various reasons were given for this answer all of which relate to lack of training or education on how to use or install the software. The four parents who do not use parental control software claim to have access to the software, but lack confidence in the software and how much protection it can actually provide.

The final question on the survey also involved a discussion between the focus group members. The question asked would the parents allow their child to have a profile on a social networking site if they were below the sites lower age limit settings. Four of the parents said that they definitely would not allow their child to have a profile on a social networking site if they were below the age limit. Various reasons were given but the general reply was that the age limit was set to protect children from content that was not appropriate and as the profiles of other users could have any content posted, which would then automatically appear on the profile of the child it was felt inappropriate to allow the child to use the site. However, the remaining parents felt that as long as the child was monitored whilst using the site, it was acceptable for them to have a profile on such sites. The main reason appeared to be 'pester power' as the majority of the children in the same age group used social networking sites on a daily basis and it was important that the child did not feel 'left out' or 'different' from the group of real life friends. The researcher informed the group that the 3 social networking sites used for this research had a lower age limit of 13 years old, and the majority of the focus group appeared very surprised that the limit was as low as 13 years of age, and commented that they thought the lower limits were 15 or 16 years of age. One parent confessed that they were unaware of the lower age limits of the sites and had realised that both children had had profiles on social networking sites whilst they were under the lower age limit however, they were both now above the lower age limit and still used the sites regularly. The parent was quite shocked and expressed how the survey and focus group discussion had 'opened his eyes' to the risks with children using social networking sites. These comments revealed that the parent's ignorance of the

regulations of sites could be an explanation as to why children are using the sites whilst under the lower age limits that are set. However, ignorance of regulations and/or laws does not provide a defence or an excuse to the parents to be able to disregard them.

The focus group was successful event in respect of the fact that it provided the research with some in depth, valuable feedback and the perceptions of parents and their knowledge of social networking sites and how, if at all their children are protected whilst using these sites. The information gained from the focus group was used in conjunction with the online survey, to provide the conclusions and recommendations from this research.

4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Both the focus group and the survey appear to have been successful, producing a range of interesting information and narrative comments. The aims of this research were to discover if children, as users of social networking sites are protected from risk and danger whilst such sites. This research was not aiming to test a theory, but instead to identify issues that are current and applicable to many households and families to make suitable recommendations to the UK Government, industry, social networking sites along with parents and children. The survey combined with the focus group allowed for an in depth view of parents views and perceptions of the use of social networking sites by their children. The results showed that almost 70% of the parents surveyed had children who used social networking sites. According to the data collected the children use the sites more than once a day and only 10.2% of parents think the children are very safe whilst doing so. Of the parents surveyed only 16.9% state that their children are unaware of the risks and dangers that they could encounter via the

social networking sites and 96.7% have discussed the possible dangers with their children. Monitoring the children whilst they use the sites was only carried out by 34 of the 64 parents, whilst 11 parents chose not to comment on whether they did or did not monitor their children whilst using the social networking sites. Perhaps the most surprising result was that under half of the parents surveyed were aware that the social networking sites had a lower age limit on them, and the narrative feedback from the survey shows that 'pester power' or peer pressure is one of the common reasons for allowing a child to have a profile on a social networking site.

4.4 REFLECTIONS ON METHODS AND RESULTS

Since completing the research, there has been an opportunity to reflect on the research experience. This reflection enables the researcher to view the benefits and weaknesses of the research and discuss any changes that would be made if able to repeat this process. A major change would be to interview or survey children who use the social networking sites, to enable an insight into their experiences with the sites and any issues that they have encountered. A longer timescale for the research would enable the researcher to undergo the relevant police checks and procedures to enable contact with children for the research. If this method was implemented, the researcher would still use the online survey and focus group but would also conduct interviews with the parents to enable the perspective and comments of the parents to be compared to those of the children interviewed. However, the reflection on the methods used and the results also enables the researcher to take an overview of the research completed and the researcher believes that if this research was to be duplicated, similar results would be identified. The researcher is however conscious that the internet is a constantly

changing phenomena and what is available today via the internet, may not be in the future.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social networking sites are a growing phenomenon and as previously mentioned there is a limited amount of academic and theoretical information available. However what previous research is available appears to be from the USA and does not match the current situation in the UK but is useful as a research tool. This does show that the perhaps the USA is ahead of the UK in its research into social networking sites and the effects it is having on society, and it could also be argued that the USA is pushing for the phenomenon to be regulated and it is necessary for the UK to follow suit and ensure education and protection for users of social networking sites, especially children. However, it would appear that progress is beginning to be made with the UK Government organisations holding an annual internet safety day in February, BBC News (2010) to raise awareness of how to keep children safe online.

With social networking continuing to increase in popularity along with the constant evolution of technology, the ease with which access to social networking sites can take place also continues to grow. The internet is available for use twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year and the question is still whether there is sufficient protection of children whilst using social networking sites. This research shows that in recent times some progress has been made, with governmental bodies in the UK carrying out research on what harm and danger is on the internet and how it may affect children, by commissioning independent reports such as the Byron Review (2008) and the OfCom report on social networking (2008). These reports have shown that further improvements on protecting children whilst online were required and CEOP (07/08) have also worked towards improving safety by organising and hosting the

International Youth Advisory Congress (IYAC) to provide a platform for children to be involved with online safety issues.

5.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this research were illustrated in Chapter 1 and have largely been achieved. The aim of the research was to identify whether children were vulnerable to danger and risk whilst using social networking sites. The research carried out shows that there are dangers and risks facing children whilst using such sites and these are risks that are recognised by parents, social networking sites and the UK Government and children's charities. However this research has identified that more measures need to be taken to protect children as they use social networking sites. The main objectives of this research were to review and evaluate relevant literature to social networking sites, the internet and the ethical risk which is associated with the internet, along with collecting data via the use of an online survey and a focus group to obtain the perspective and views of parents about their children's use of social networking sites.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The survey carried out for the purpose of this research revealed that children are aware of some of the dangers that they may face on the internet, but the term 'child' still brings connotations of naivety as they lack life experience due to their age. However as adults, there should be an 'inbred' instinct or nature to protect a child from danger, whether it be immediate or through the virtual world and communication of social networking.

One issue that is highlighted by the undertaking of this research would appear to be the lack of regulation of the internet in general. As the internet is a global phenomenon it would appear to be increasingly difficult to regulate. Alongside this is the issue that each country will have laws and regulations that are individual to that particular country, along with a unique culture which in itself highlights the difficulty of regulating such large phenomenon.

Although many of the social networking sites are aware of the dangers and issues that face their users, the common advice appears to be that users of such sites need to be self regulating and have a social responsibility to themselves and other users. The issue of protection against any of the dangers that are mentioned earlier in this study would currently appear to be the responsibility of the individual user by way of common sense with personal information and not posting any information on profile pages, or 'friends' pages that could be used by other less responsible users. If there is information that would not be volunteered during a face-to-face conversation, then that same information should not be posted on a social networking site's profile page. However, the common sense rule is not necessarily apparent to children, and they can be trusting and this trust can be abused by other people. Communication between parents and children about the inherent dangers of using social networking sites and the internet is extremely important, and Stahl (2004) states that communication is vital and it is necessary to talk about and discuss issues and problems. Common sense would also apply to the request to meet face-to-face with a 'friend' who was not known prior to meeting via a social networking site or in the real world, as this could leave the user in a very vulnerable situation as was highlighted by Steel (2010) who reported on the case of the

17 year old girl who was groomed and murdered by a registered sex offender via Facebook. Although a shocking case that illustrates the dangers of social networking sites being abused by predators, it is necessary to remember that there are currently numerous sites that cater for various social networking needs, and cases such as this, although devastating, are relatively few and far between.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that whilst children appear to have some knowledge of the problems and dangers that may face them when using social networking sites, parents have a less clear view. There could be many reasons for this and the main being lack of education and technical knowledge. As previously mentioned children use computers and technology as part of their daily routine and many have done so since a very young age. Computer skills are taught through schools as part of the main curriculum and start in primary school and continue straight through to comprehensive school, and this enables the ease of use of various types of software and hardware. It is necessary to note that alongside this information, many homes now have computers and broadband internet access and this enables children to have continued use and allows them to become more familiar and comfortable with using a computer. The OfCom report (2008) states that there is an age group of over 30 years old people who have “*a general lack of confidence with computers and preferred traditional means of communication*” and although there is awareness of the issues and dangers, the lack of experience and confidence means there is difficulty with applying necessary measures of software protection and where to obtain information about what can be done in order to protect themselves and their children whilst using social networking sites. However it is necessary to be aware that naivety in adults is not an

excuse for leaving a child unprotected in a virtual world and as Langford (2000) states it is no longer suitable to “*merely use the internet without thinking through the wider implications inherent in its use*”. However, these facts illustrate that there appears to be a digital divide between the different generations and this is an issue that will be addressed later in this chapter.

According to Adams and McCrindle (2008) social networking sites create “*strong cohesive communities*” and these provide communication opportunities for a range of people who feel less intimidated whilst using such sites to make contact with people online or for the outgoing individual who enjoys sharing their entire life with the world.

It is necessary to understand that “*the virtual and real worlds have converged for children and the technology is integral to their everyday lives and an essential part of their networks of friends and peers*”, CEOP (07/08). Society and culture have changed with the exponential growth of the internet and social networking. Today children use technology such as computers and the internet as part of their everyday lives and this would not have been the case some 15 years previously. However, the social networking phenomenon has both positive and negative aspects and Langford (2000) argued that It is necessary to move with the times and allow for “*new rules and understandings*” to be developed and that the effects of the internet and the impact those effects have on the users require further investigation to enable the regulation and understanding to move with the ever growing internet phenomena.

The UK Government has already recognised there is a serious issue with regard to protecting children from online dangers, and this is evident in the OfCom report (2008)

and the Byron report (2008) which was commissioned by the Government. The report makes various recommendations and appears to conclude that there is combined responsibility for the safety of children whilst online and that is of the parents, schools and the government. CEOP are working towards all social networking sites having a 'panic button' installed on all profile pages to ensure that users are able to obtain help should they require it with regards to online dangers. Kiss (2010) argues that CEOP and Facebook, who appear to be at a stalemate over Facebook's refusal to install the CEOP panic button on its profile pages, should realise that whilst they are arguing over the situation, the situation is continuing. Both sides have valid points and arguments and should collaborate to ensure the protection of children whilst online and the combined energies of both organisations will ensure a better more thorough protection procedure.

The research has identified that there is limited protection for children from online dangers and risks whilst using social networking sites. There is an immediate need to improve this limited protection and there are recommendations to follow on how this should take place.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH

During the process of this research, various methodologies and processes have been utilised and it is possible to reflect on the research experience and comment on possible changes that could be made that would improve the experience and make better use of the information investigated. The researcher is satisfied with the research that has been carried out however, if it were possible to make changes to what has been completed a longer timescale for the research would be the main improvement made, to allow for more in depth research to be carried out from a wider field. This would be alongside a

larger budget which would also enhance the research. The longer time scale would allow for the survey and focus group to be duplicated or meta-analysis, (for example the same survey and focus group questions to 20 different participant groups). Ellis (2006) quoted Hunter and Schmidt (1990) as stating *“a single study will not resolve a major issue. Indeed, a small sample study will not even resolve a minor issue. Thus, the foundation of science is the cumulation of knowledge from the results of many studies”*. This shows that allowing the meta-analysis of this research should provide a greater in depth result and this extension of the research would give information that could be further analysed and it would be very interesting to discover if the groups all gave similar responses.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

This research had allowed for the identification of key recommendations for social networking sites to allow for the improvement of protection of children whilst they use such sites.

5.4.1 AUTOMATIC PRIVACY SETTINGS

Chapter 2 of this research identified that of the social networking sites reviewed for this study, only Bebo (2008) automatically set the privacy settings of the profile of a user under 18 years old to private. Both Facebook and MySpace have privacy settings but it is the user's responsibility to make their profile private. To ensure the privacy and online safety of all users, it is recommended that all profile pages, regardless of the age of the user, are set to private with settings to allow the user to choose the level of privacy against their own profile page. This ensures that all user's regardless of their technical abilities with regards to their use of computers and social networking sites have their

information automatically protected, with the freedom to change the privacy setting level should they so wish. However this would be an informed choice and any user which changes the privacy setting would also automatically be warned of the dangers that they may face should they change these settings.

Another recommendation would to ensure that the privacy settings have to be read prior to a user being able to set up a profile page on the social networking site, with a tick box to state that they have read and understood them, before the registration can continue. The site should then post regular reminders of general safety information on the profile pages of all users, with extra 'common sense' safety reminders for the lower age groups of users.

5.4.2 AGE RESTRICTIONS

Chapter 2 illustrated that although Facebook, Bebo and MySpace all have lower age limits of 13 years old for users of the sites, the OfCom (2008) report showed that children as young 7 years old had profile pages on such sites. Current registration on the sites request a date of birth and current email address but there does not appear to be any verification of age carried out. At present there are no apparent leaders in this field so there is no precedent for other sites to follow.

Griffiths and Jawad (2008) quoted the Gambling Online Magazine (2004) as stating that even physical, land based casinos have difficulties with *“detecting and deterring problem gamblers however, even with opportunities presented by the physical presence of underage gamblers at land-based casinos, no gambling jurisdiction is one hundred per cent effective in keeping out underage gamblers”*. This would also appear to be the

case with online registrations in general, as well as for social networking sites, and the researcher is aware that this is a big issue for the online gambling community and is an area that requires further investigation which is outside the limits of this research. A number of recommendations have been identified in the case of age restriction. The age limits of such sites should be enforced with parental consent for any user under the age of 16 years old. This could be via email contact with parents at a separate email address, although there is also a possibility of this being fraudulently carried out.

Another area for further research would be the possibility of a UK centralised online identification site. The site would enable details of individuals to be posted on to a centralised site, which would be run by the UK Government that could be linked to the electoral register. The site will allow for companies and social networking sites to verify the age and other details of individuals. Obviously there will need to be strict security measures linked with this suggested site along with further research into what privacy issues it will impede on and how and who it can be used by. Unfortunately further research into such a site is impossible under the time constraints of this study.

5.4.3 SAFETY BUTTON

Currently the three social networking sites that were reviewed for this research have a link to report any inappropriate behaviour to the company that runs the site. However, the UK Government organisation the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre or CEOP (07/08) has created a 'panic or safety button' that can be installed on the social networking site, and will automatically appear on each profile page. The button provides a link to a site with details on how to deal with and report any cases of cyber bullying, inappropriate materials or sexual content. It was reported by BBC News Online (2010)

that Facebook have rejected the opportunity to install the CEOP button onto its site and users profile pages, whereas Bebo have already installed it on its profile pages alongside its own reporting procedure. The CEOP (07/08) is a UK Government organisation and CEOP was actually set up specifically to “*deal with reported allegations and suspicions of any online or offline activity or behaviour that suggests a child is being sexually abuses by an adult or is at potential risk of such abuse*”. However the current remit of CEOP (07/08) does not cover “*other forms of child abuse such as bullying, harassment or racial abuse*”.

The research carried out for this study has highlighted that there is a need for a better, centralised system for reporting issues such as cyber bullying, predators and inappropriate materials and behaviour on all social networking sites. The ‘safety button’ that CEOP has produced is a good basis but currently is limited to reporting forms of sexual abuse and nothing further. If this service could be expanded by way of co-operating with children’s and bullying charities to allow for the reporting of different issues, the panic button will be more appealing to the social networking sites and could be available to all users of all sites.

In Chapter 2, section 2.12, figure 3 it is possible to see Lessig's (1999) Social and Technological Interaction Model. This model shows the 4 influences that affect human behaviour. The recommendation of introducing a safety button for use on the social networking sites is covered by the architecture section of the model, and would allow for users to have immediate help and advice when faced with an issue on the site. The pressures which are exerted on to an individual are covered by the social norms branch

of the model, which could also cover the bad press that social networking sites receive when there is an issue such as cyber bullying or privacy issues in the news reports.

5.4.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAFETY

Currently the responsibility of safety whilst using social networking sites would appear to be that of the user, with the sites giving limited protection via privacy settings which the user has to implement. The researcher has compiled a diagram (Figure 10) to show how the current flow of responsibility and communication is perceived. The diagram has been simplified for this research as in truth the communication flow would be a lot more complicated. If the current situation is viewed in the form of a flow chart, the user, who in the case of this research is a child, would be central to the chart. This is mainly because currently the responsibility for reporting inappropriate materials and images and cyber bullying lies with the user. Also currently there appears to be limited information about privacy and safety flowing back to the user from the social networking sites and the communication flow is quite confusing.

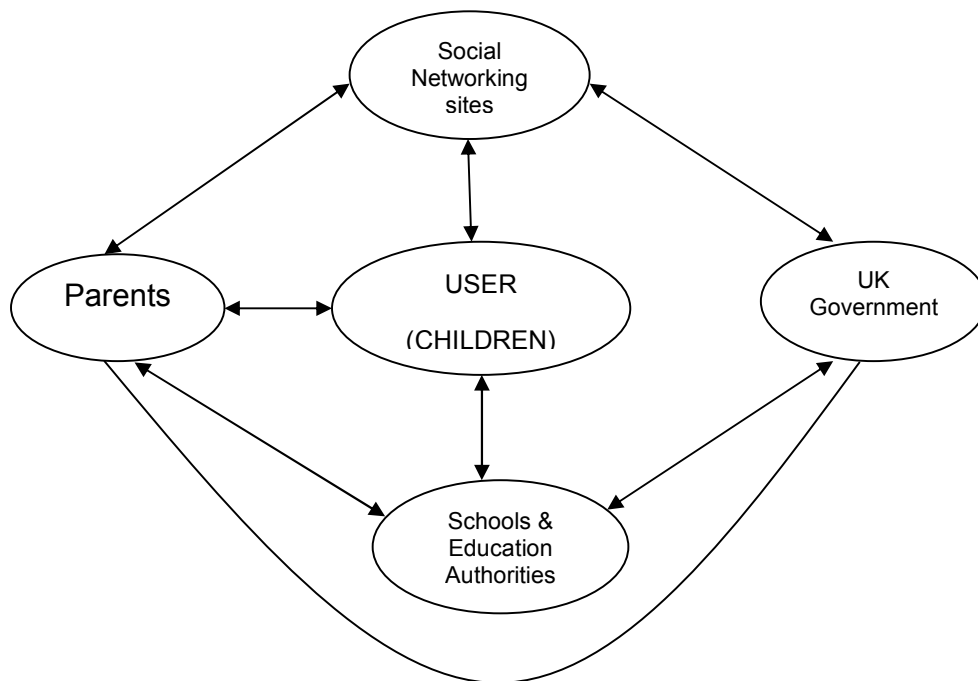


Figure 10: Author's Flow chart to show current communication directions

By the implementation of the recommendations made following this research, the flow of communication and responsibility for safety would change and can be seen as Figure 11. The change in responsibility can be seen as the social networking sites become central to the chart, with information flowing outwards from the social networking sites to the users (children in this case), to the parents of the users, to schools and to the Government. Stahl (1999) stated that dialogue and communication is the cure for most problems, in culture and society and this could be applied to this research, as the participants in the research are best placed to give information on how they and their children are affected by the issues and dangers facing social networking sites. It could

be argued that a negotiated response to the issues raised by this research would be a more informed answer to the problem. Another area for future consideration may be the collaboration of social networking site and CEOP with services involved with the counselling of Paedophiles to obtain further information about how social networking sites are viewed by the predators that use the sites for searching for children to groom. The information gleaned may be of use to improve the security measures used by the sites.

This research has highlighted the need for the social networking sites to become more active in protecting their users from any online dangers, and in doing so will enable users to become more aware of dangers and the combination of this will provide a safer online environment.

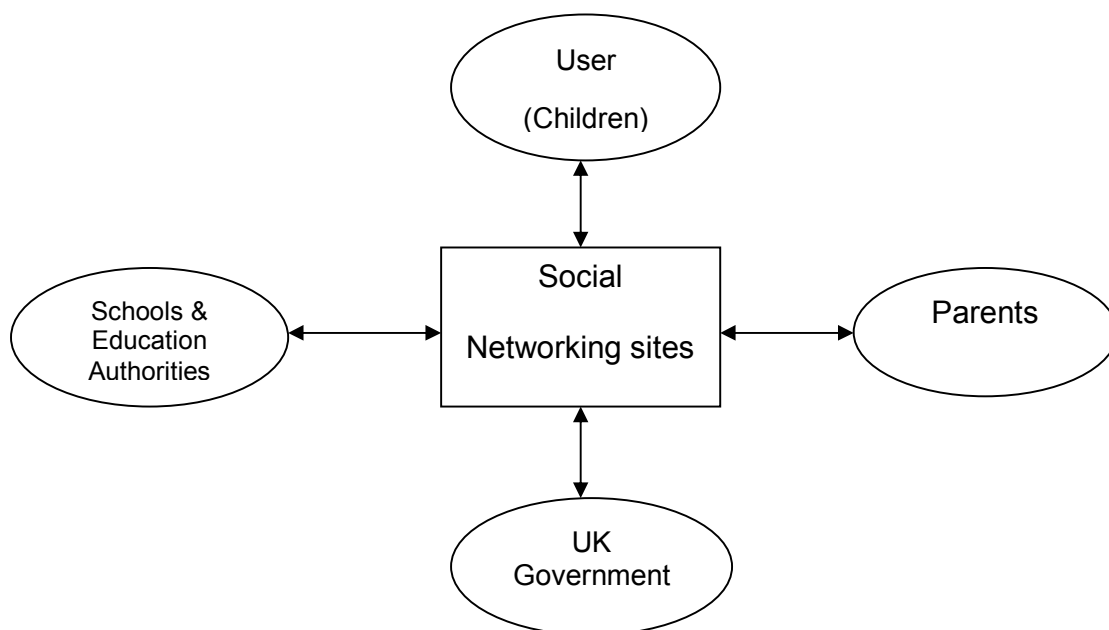


Figure 11: Author's Flowchart to show how communication should be in an ideal world

5.4.5 PRE-TEEN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

Wray (2010) argued that there are gaming sites available to children of all ages and to suit the current trends of children being constantly online the market of online gaming and social networking sites will continue to grow and should be specifically aimed towards the preteen market. To avoid the issues that have been raised by this research, a social networking site which is specifically designed for use by pre-teenage children could be set up. The site would require parental consent prior to a profile being set up and prior to posting of photographs. All profiles would automatically be set to private and friends would be restricted to other members of the site who would be between the specified age group, with no access for any person over the age of 15 years old to become members. Links to and from the site would only be through child friendly sites, with advertising kept to a minimum and age related.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT

During the period of research for this study, the UK Government has been involved in various schemes to highlight issues of online safety. The recent online safety day, BBC News (2010) is a sign that the UK Government is aware of the issues facing users of the internet and social networking sites and is currently undertaking various schemes to help protect users, particularly children.

5.5.1 EDUCATION

As mentioned throughout this research, the use of technology is an everyday activity for many children, with 18.3 million households in the UK having internet access in 2009 which had increased by 11% since 2008 according to the Office of National Statistics (2009). Through the education system, children are being taught computer skills at a

primary school level, and with this teaching and continued use of technology, confidence develops. This research has highlighted various issues and the naivety of children through their lack of life experience is one such issue. This can be combated with continued education about how to use social networking sites safely, and who to report inappropriate behaviour and images to should the need arise.

This research and the survey and focus group highlighted an issue about the confidence of parents and the use of technology. It would appear that parents are nervous about using parental control software as they are unsure on how to install it or use it if it was pre-installed on their computer. Questions 8 and 9 of the survey and the relevant responses can be seen in Appendices B and C. Feedback from the focus group also revealed that the parents felt that the computer skills they had were inadequate to deal with the parental control software and in general to protect their children from online dangers. These results suggest a need for parents to be able to attend short courses on the use of the internet, social networking sites and computers in general. The courses should be available to all communities and parents to enable them to keep their skills up-to-date and enable them to provide online protection for their children in their own homes. The UK Government has set up a scheme called “*Change4life*” which involves the whole family in taking control of their own lifestyles and incorporating daily exercise and sensible eating to reduce the current obesity problem within the UK. A similar scheme could be implemented to encourage the children to help the parents use the internet and to encourage families to use the computer together as a family activity to encourage communication and sensible use procedures.

5.5.2 REGULATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

At present there is little regulation of the internet and social networking sites. Recent activities such as the annual online safety day show that the UK Government recognises that there are safety issues in relation with the use of the internet and social networking sites. Government regulation of social networking sites would help to improve the safety procedures and the implementation of a regulation to ensure that as recommended in 5.3.1 of this chapter, all profile pages are automatically set to private would improve the safety of the users immediately. To coincide with this regulation, as recommended in 5.3.3 a 'safety button' should be available on every profile page of every networking site. The button should be linked to a centralised organisation to give advice on issues of online safety such as cyber bullying, predators, inappropriate images and materials. The researcher is aware that the implementation of regulations and laws is not simple, and the added issue of policing these is a further complication. However, it may be possible to implement regulations that are being used by other large countries, using them as the leading force in the subject. It may also be possible to work with other country leaders and collaborate in the introduction of European or National regulations.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

The research has shown that there is a need for parents to be involved and aware of the online activities of their children. As parents, there is a responsibility to protect children both in the real world and online and to do this there needs to be good communication between the two. The recommendations for parents as a result of this research are generally common sense recommendations such as the need to discuss

the possible online dangers that the children may come across whilst using social networking sites. The next recommendation is to ensure that profile pages are set up with the parent observing to ensure that the password is known by both the child and the parent to allow for monitoring of the profile and information posted and to ensure that the child is above the lower age limit of the site. A further recommendation would be to ensure that the computer is in a 'family' room of the house to enable monitoring of the children's use of the internet and social networking sites.

Education about the use of social networking sites and the internet in general along with computer skills appears to be an issue with parents. To enable the parents to keep up-to-date with technology and how to protect their children whilst using social networking sites, training courses should be sourced, and as recommended previously provided by the Government to allow for parents to be empowered to protect their children's online safety.

5.7 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently the internet and social networking sites are generally unregulated. This is despite the progress made by Governments of larger countries, such as America, to improve regulations. It would appear that a large issue surrounding the regulation of the internet and social networking sites is that it could be viewed as impinging on human rights. Such sites are accessed via the internet which is a global resource and available to anyone with the correct equipment and therefore is wide open for abuse if not regulated in some way. If larger countries such as the USA made progress with regulating the use of the internet and in turn social networking sites, this would enable smaller countries to follow by example and use the standards produced by the larger

countries to implement further regulations on the use of such sites within their own country.

Another general recommendation could be aimed at the computing industry. There are numerous different types of filtering software available, however as previously discussed they may filter out images and text that is not inappropriate. Certain cultures and religions will deem different subjects or images as inappropriate and it may be possible to create a software package that allows certain information to be switched on and off. For example it is possible to change the language of a Facebook profile (Facebook, 2006), by selecting certain options so the profile can be viewed in the French, Spanish, Welsh, etc. With this possibility in mind it may be possible in the future to set profiles according to religious beliefs or culture.

5.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has identified a number of recommendations for parents, the UK Government and social networking sites. However to enable the recommendations to be viable options, further research would be required which would be outside of the scope of this current research. One such area for further research would be to research the viability and connected ethical issues of a UK centralised age verification site for use by sites such as social networking sites as recommended in section 5.4.2. The research would require information from the Government and could possibly be linked with the UK Identity card scheme that is currently being reviewed.

Another area for further research would be whether it would be viable to produce a software package that allows the site to be switched to suit different cultures and

religions as recommended in section 5.7. There would need to be research into the ethical issues along with who would design the software and who would make the decision of what is appropriate for the software.

This research has identified that there is a requirement for better, more sufficient protection for children whilst using social networking sites. The time constraints of this research has limited the reach of this investigation, and in an ideal world a longer timescale would allow for wider reaching study to be carried out to enable further investigations into the viability of the recommendations made and the use of a larger subject group with regard to interviews of children and parents.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acuff, D. S., & Reiher, R. H. (2005). *Kidnapped: How irresponsible marketers are stealing the minds of your children*. New York: Dearborn Trade Publishing.

Adams, A. A., & McCrindle, R. J. (2008). *Pandora's Box: Social and professional issues of the information age*. London: John Wiley & Sons.

Adediran, P. (2002). *A practical guide to business, law and the internet*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

Ajzen, I. &. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Albert, T. C., & Sanders, W. B. (2003). *E-Business Marketing*. London: Pearson Education .

Allison, P., & Race., B. (2004). *The student's guide to preparing dissertatons and thesis*. London: Routledge Farmer.

Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. London: Sage publishing.

Amazon. (2010). *Amazon - New customers*. Retrieved Feb 04, 2010, from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.co.uk>

Amichai-Hamburger, Y. (2005). *The social net: human behaviour in cyberspace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Badaracco, J., & Useem, J. (1997). The internet , Intel and the vigilante stakeholder. *Business Ethics, A European Review*, volume 6 number 1 .

BBC. (2009). *Ill worker fired over Facebook*. Retrieved April 25, 2009, from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/technology/8018329.stm>

BBCNews. (2008). *At a glance: the Byron Review*. Retrieved February 9, 2010, from BBC News Technology: <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/7316700.stm>

BBCNews. (2010). *Facebook rules out installing 'panic button'*. Retrieved March 21, 2010, from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8574727.stm>

BBCNews. (2010). *Online safety for five-year-olds*. Retrieved February 9, 2010, from BBC News Technology: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/8499356.stm>

Beauchamp, T. L. (2001). *Ethical Theory and Business*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Bebo. (2008). *Terms of use*. Retrieved February 4, 2010, from Bebo: <http://www.bebo.com/Termsofuse2.jsp>

Bebo. (2009). *The Press releases*. Retrieved February 4, 2010, from Bebo: <http://www.bebo.com/press.jsp?PressPageID=10152689461>

Biggam, J. (2008). *Succeeding with your Master's dissertation: a step-by-step handbook*. London: Open University Press.

Booth, R. (2008). *Suspected suicides in Bridgend area reaches 17 as schoolgirl found hanged*. Retrieved February 04, 2010, from Guardian (on line): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/feb/20/wales>

Bowie, N. E. (1999). *Business Ethics: A Kantian Perspective*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Bowie, N. E. (2005). Digital Rights and Wrongs: Intellectual Property in the Information Age. *Business and Society Review* , 77-96.

Bowie, N. E., & Werhane, P. (2005). *Management Ethics: Foundation of business ethics*. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). *Social Networking Sites: Definition, history and scholarship*. Retrieved May 16, 2009, from jcmc: www.jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html

Bullying. (2010). *Safety tips for using Bebo, Facebook, MySpace and Youtube*. Retrieved February 2010, 2010, from Bullying.co.uk: www.bullying.co.uk/index.php/young-people/cyberbullying/safety-tips-for-bebo-facebook-myspace-and-youtube.html

Bullyonline. (2010). *Bully online*. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from Bully online: www.bullyonline.org/workbully.htm

Byron, T. (2008). *Byron Review*. Retrieved February 3, 2010, from Department of children schools and familys, UK Government: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/>

Cardon, P. (2009). Online social networks. *Business communication quarterly March 2009 volume 72 number 1* .

Carter, H. (2010). *Facebook killer senenced to life for teenager's murder*. Retrieved March 8, 2010, from Guardian online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/mar/08/peter-chapman-facebook-killer>

Castells, M. (1998). *The rise of the network society*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Cellan-Jones, R. (2010). *Government advice: Browse safely with Microsoft, Reporters blogs*. Retrieved February 9, 2010, from BBC: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/rorycellanjones/2010/02/govenrment_advice_browse_safel.html

CEOP, C. e. (07/08). *Annual review*. Retrieved November 18th, 2009, from CEOP: <http://www.ceop.gov.uk/downloads/documents/annualreview.pdf>

CEOP, C. e. (07/08). *CEOP Partnership strategy*. Retrieved November 18th, 2009, from CEOP: <http://www.ceop.gov.uk/downloads/documents/partnershipstrategy.pdf>

CEOP, C. E. (07/08). *IYAC children and yourn person global online charter*. Retrieved November 18th, 2009, from CEOP: <http://www.ceop.gov.uk/downloads/documents/IYAC.charter.pdf>

CEOP, C. e. (07/08). *The children and young persons global online charter*. Retrieved November 18th, 2009, from CEOP: http://www.ceop.gov.uk/downloads/documents/iyac_charter.pdf

Chaffey, D. (2007 3rd edition). *E-Business and E-Commerce Management*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.

Chaffey, D., Mayer, R., Johnston, K., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2009). *Internet Marketing*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.

Chakraborty, S. (2000). *Values and Ethics for Organisations: Theory and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chou, D., Yen, D., Lin, B., & Cheng, P.-L. (1999). Cyberspace security management. *Journal of Industrial management and data systems* , 353-361.

Clarke, R. (1998). *The technical feasibility of regulating gambling on the internet*. Retrieved February 18, 2010, from a Roger Clarke website: <http://www.rogerclarke.com/II/IGambReg.html>

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2009). *Business Research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2010). *Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crunchbase. (2009, April 29). *Facebook Case Study*. Retrieved April 31, 2009, from Crunchbase: www.crunchbase.com/company/facebook

Daniel, P., & Ivatts, J. (1998). *Children and Social Policy*. London: Palgrave.

DeGeorge, R. T. (2005). *The Ethics of information technology and business*. Blackwell publishing.

DelVecchio, G. (1997). *Creating ever-cool:a marketer's guide to a kid's heart*. LA: Pelican Publishing.

Donaldson, T. (1992). *The Ethics of International Business*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dube, S. (2009, January 1). *Who can you trust in the virtual world?* Retrieved May 16, 2009, from Business Week online: [www. ebscohost.com/bsi](http://www.ebscohost.com/bsi) delivery

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Lowe, A. (2010). *Management Research: An Introduction*. London: Sage.

Ellicot, C. (2010, February 10). *Ashley Cole nude pictures sent to glamour model Sonia Price*. Retrieved March 1, 2010, from Daily Mail online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-1250412/Ashley-Cole-nude-pictures-sent-glamour-model-Sonia-Price.html>

Ellis, P. (2006). Market Orientated and Performance: A Meta-Analysis and Cross-National Comparisons. *Journal of Management Studies* .

Epstein, K., & Tancer, B. (1997). *Enforcement of use limitiations by internet service providers: how to stop that hacker, cracker, spammer, spoofer, flamer, bomber*. Retrieved Nov 11, 2009, from Hastings communications and entertainment law journal: http://www.iipr.org/groups/6164_15.htm

EuropeanUnion. (2009). *Safer Internet Day 2010*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from Safter Internet Day: <http://www.saferinternetday.org/web/guest/safer-internet-day>

Facebook. (2006). *Facebook*. Retrieved Oct 2009, from Facebook: www.facebook.com

Facebook. (2010, February 12). *Facebook Profile Page*. Retrieved February 12, 2010, from Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>

Fildes, J. (2009, December 18). *Measures target child web safety*. Retrieved December 2009, 2009, from BBC news: <http://nes.bbc.co.uk/go.pr/fr/-/1/hi/technology/8398763.stm>

Forder, J., & Svantesson, D. (2008). *Internet and e-commerce law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Forester, T., & Morrison, P. (1994). *Computer Ethics: Cautionary Tales and Ethical Dilemmas in Computing*. Boston: The MIT Press.

Foulger, T., Ewbank, A., Kay, A., Popp, S., & Carter, H. (2009). Moral spaces in MySpace: preservice teachers' perspectives about ethical issue in social networking. *Journal of research on technology in education* .

Fox, S. (2008, June). *Facebook V Reality: who needs to get a life?* Retrieved May 26, 2009, from PC World Vol 27 issue 6: www.pcworld.com

Fresco, A. (2009, November 11th). *Networking sites fail to protect children from abuse, says CEOP Head*. Retrieved November 11th, 2009, from www.timesonline.co.uk: http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and-web/the-webarticle6920945.ece

Furedi, F. (2010, February 26). *Let children be children*. Retrieved March 10, 2010, from Frank Furedi.com: <http://www.frankfuredi.com/index.php/site/article/379/>

Gamblingonline. (n.d.). *Technology is responsible for the birth of on-line gambling, but let's move on to the challenge of credibility*. Retrieved February 18, 2010, from Gambling online magazine: <http://www.gamblingonlinemagazine.com/article-detail.php?articleID=193>

Garton, L., Haythornthwaite, C., & Wellman, B. (1999). Studying online social networks. In S. J. (Editor), *Doing Internet Research: critical issues and methods for examining the net* (pp. 75 - 105). London: Sage Publications.

Gavison, R. (2003). Privacy and the limits of the law, Yale Law Journal volume 89, 1984. In R. Spinello, *CyberEthics: morality and law in cyberspace*. London: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Genova, G. (2009). No place to play:current employee privacy rights in social networking sites. *Business communication quarterly Volume 72 issue 1* , 97-101.

Gibbs, J. (2003). *Moral development and reality: beyond the theories of Kohlberg and Hoffman*. California: Sage Publications.

Golden-Biddle, K., & Locke, K. D. (1997). *Composing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Grande, C. (2007, February 20). Ethical consumption makes mark on branding. *Financial Times viewed in Marketing Strategy and Competitive Postioning by Hooley, Piercy, Nicoulaud 2008* . London: Financial Times.

Grey, D. (2001). *The internet in schools*. London: Continuum.

Griffiths, S., & Jawad, C. (2008). Internet gambling ethics regulation: the UK perspective. In T. F. Spapens, *The regulations of gamblind and the role of crime and addiction*. USA: University of Tilberg Press.

Grossman, L. (2009). Facebook is for old people. *Time south pacific 2 March 2009 Auz NZ edition Vol 173 issue 8* , 36.

Groucutt, J., & Griseri, P. (2004). *Mastering E-business*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Guardian. (2009). *Education*. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from Guardian online: www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/biv/12/cyber-bullying-n-dubz

Guardian. (2006, March 15). *Technology*. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from Guardian online: www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2006/mar/15/news.childrenservices

Guardianonline. (2009). *Social networking and blogs now more popular than email, say Nielsen*. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from Guardian (online): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/blog/2009/mar/09nielsen-social-networks/>

Gunter, B., & Furnham, A. (1998). *Children as consumers*. New York: Routledge.

Halbert, T., & Ingulli, E. (2005). *Cyber Ethics*. London: Thomson South Western.

Harris, R. (2009). *A cognitive psychology of mass communication*. New York: Routledge.

Hart, C. (2000). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. London: Sage Publications.

Hartley, D. (2009, January). *For good or for evil?* Retrieved May 18, 2009, from Certification Magazine: www.ebscohost.com

Hauptman, R., & Motin, S. (1994). The internet, cyberethics and virtual morality. *Online Volume 18 issue 2*.

Hempel, J. (2009). How facebook is taking over our lives. *Fortune* 2 March 2009, volume 159 issue 4, 48-56.

Henderson, V. E. (1982). The Ethical Side of Enterprise. *Sloan Management Review* .

Herring, S. (1996). *Computer mediated communications: linguistic, social and cross cultural perspectives*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Hiller, J., & Cohen, R. (2002). *Internet law and policy*. London: Prentice Hall.

Hiller, J., Belanger, F., Hsiao, M., & Park, J.-M. (2008). Pocket Protection. *American business law journal* Volume 45 Issue 3 , 417-453.

Hockaday, M. (2008, February 20). *Reporting Bridgend*. Retrieved February 04, 2010, from BBC on line: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2008/02/reporting>

Holahan, C. (2006). With online friends like these. *Business week online* 27 Sept 2006 , 13.

Hollingshead, I. (2005, October 15). *Whatever happened to the 'video nasties' row?* Retrieved April 2, 2010, from Guardian online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2005/oct/12/comment.features>

Internetwatchfoundation. (2010, February 9). *Facebook joins Internet Watch Foundation*. Retrieved February 9, 2010, from Internet Watch Foundation: <http://www.iwf.org.uk/media/news.281.htm>

Jawad, C. (2006, July). An analysis of responsible internet gambling websites. *MBA Dissertation, Swansea Metropolitan University* . Swansea.

Johnson, D. (1996). *It's 1996: Do you know where your cyberkids are?* Retrieved November 5, 2009, from Journal of computer and information law 51: http://www.ilpf.org/groups/bib4_15.htm

Johnson, D. (2001). *Computer Ethics*. USA: Prentice Hall.

Johnston, D., & Post, D. (1996). *Law and borders: the rise of law in cyberspace*. Retrieved November 5, 2009, from 48 Stanford law review: http://ilpr.corg/groups/bib4_15.htm

Joinson, A. N. (2003). *Understanding the psychology of internet behaviour: virtual worlds, real lives*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jones, S. (1999). *Doing Internet Research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*. California: Sage Publications.

Keenan, A., & Shiri, A. (2009, March 26). *Sociability and social interaction on social networking websites*. Retrieved October 28, 2009, from Emerald Group Publishing: <http://www.emeralinsight.com/Insight/viewPDF.jsp?ContentType=articl8.Filename=html/Output/Published/EmeraldFullTextArticle/pdf/0350580625.pdf>

Kennison, P., & Goodman, A. (2008). *Children as victims*. Cornwall: TJ International Ltd.

Kiesler, S., Siegal, J., & McGuire, T. (1984). Social psychologist aspects of computer mediated communication. *American Psychologist*, 39, 1123-34.

- Kiss, J. (2010, April 19). *Facebook and CEOP must work together*. Retrieved April 19, 2010, from Guardian Online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2010/apr/19/facebook-ceop-panic-button>
- Kraut, R., Mukhopadhyay, T., Szezypula, J., Kiesler, S., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Communication and Information: Alternative uses of the internet in households. *Proceedings of the conference on computer-human interaction* . New York: ACM.
- Kung, L., Picard, R., & Towse, R. (2008). *The internet and the mass media*. London: Sage publications.
- L., L., C., T., & A., T. (2008). *Computer mediated communicaton: social interatctin and the internet*. London: Sage.
- Lambert, C. (2009, August 7). *The top seven social networking sites for kids today*. Retrieved January 18, 2010, from Timesonline: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/young_times/article6747799.ece?print=yes&randnum=1263812217529
- Landford, D. (1996). Ethics and the Internet: appropriate behaviour in electronic communication. *Ethics and Behaviour, Volume 6 No 2* .
- Langer, E. (1975). The illusion of control. *Journal of personality and social Psychology* , 32.
- Langford, D. (2000). *Internet Ethics*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Lessig, L. (1999). *Code and other laws of Cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.

Lessig, L. (2006). *Code Version 2.0*. New York: Basic Books.

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods*. London: Sage.

Lindstrom, M., & Seybold, P. B. (2003). *Brand Child*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

LinkedIn. (2008). *LinkedIn Join us*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from LinkedIn:
<http://www.linkedin.com>

Livingstone, S. (2009). Debating children's susceptibility to persuasion - where does fairness come in? A commentary on the Nairn and Fine versus Ambler debate. *International Journal of Advertising* , 170-174.

Livingstone, S., & Bober, M. (2005, April). *UK Children go online: listening to young people's experiences*. Retrieved January 30, 2010, from Media@lse:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/children-go-online>

Livingstone, S., & Bober, M. (2005, April). *UK children go online: surveying the experiences of young people and their parents*. Retrieved January 30, 2010, from Media@lse: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/children-go-online/>

MacMillan, D. (n.d.). *Facebook connect: your 8000 hidden friends*. Retrieved February 4, 2009, from Business Week Online:
www.businessweek.com/technology/content/apr2009/tc2009041%5f6649562.htm

MacMillan, D. (2009). Facebook's Holocaust Controversy. *Business week online* 13 May 2009 , 1.

Malamuth, N., Linz, D., & Yao, M. (2005). The internet and aggression: motivation, disinhibitory, and opportunity aspects. In Y. Amichai-Hamburger, *The social net: human behavior in cyberspace* (pp. 163-190). New York: Oxford University Press.

Mann, C., & Stewart, F. (2005). *Internet communication and qualitative research, a handbook for researching online*. London: Sage Publications.

Marshall, P. (1997). *Research methods: how to design and conduct a successful project*. UK: How to Books.

Mayo, E., & Nairn, A. (2009). *Consumer Kids: how big business is grooming our children for profit*. London: Constable & Robinson Ltd.

Mitchener, B. (2001, May 29). *Sweden pushes it's ban on Children's ads article from Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from CommonDreams: <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0529-05.htm>

Montgomery, K., & Pasnik, S. (1996). Action for children in cyberspace. *Centre for media education research*. New York: Centre for media education.

Murphy, M. (2000). *Friends Reunited History*. Retrieved January 27, 2010, from Friends Reunited: <http://www.friendsreunited.co.uk/press/aboutus.htm>

MySpace. (2008). *About us*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.aboutus>

MySpace. (2008, February 8). *Privacy*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.privacy>

MySpace. (2008). *Terms*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from MySpace:
<http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.terms>

Nair, A. (2006 (March - July)). Mobile phones and the internet: legal issue in the protection of children. *International review of law computer & technology*, Volume 20 No 1&2 , 177-185.

Nairn, A. (2009, May 18). *Research Ethics in the virtual world*. Retrieved May 18, 2009, from International Journal of Market Research vol 51, issue 9: www.ebscohost.com

Neumann, P. (1998). Are computers addictive. *Communications of the association of computing machinery*, Volumen 40 .

NSO. (n.d.). *National Statistics Office, Internet Access 2008 Households and Individuals*. Retrieved Jan 10, 2009, from National Statistics Office:
www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=5672

NSPCC, N. S. (2008, Aug). *NSPCC fact sheet looking at the legal definition of a 'child' in the UK by Helen Walters of Safeguarding Information Services*. Retrieved January 24th, 2010, from NSPCC:
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/questions/definition_of_a_child_wda59396.htm
I

Null, C. (2008, June). *How to live your entire life through Facebook*. Retrieved May 25, 2009, from PC World, Vol 27 issue 6: www.pcworld.com

Ofcom. (2008). *Social Networking: A quantitative and qualitative reserach report into attitudes, behaviours and use*. Ofcom (Office of Communications).

Office of National Statistics. (2009, August 28). *Internet Access in the UK*. Retrieved February 18, 2010, from Office of National Statistics Society Information: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nigget.asp?ID=8>

Parton, N., Thorpe, D., & Wattam, C. (1997). *Child Protection: risk and the moral order*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.

Petrack, J. A., & Quinn, J. F. (1997). *Managing Ethics: Integrity at work*. London: Sage Publications.

Porter, M. E. (2004 1st edition). *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for analysing industries and competitors*. Freepress Ltd.

Pratley, P. (1997). *The Essence of Business Ethics*. London: Prentice Hall.

Preston, C. (2008). Zoning the internet: A new approach to protecting children online. *Brigham Young University Law Review* , 1417-1469.

Punch, K. F. (2008). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. Sage Publications.

Quart, A. (2003). *Branded: The buying and selling of Teenagers*. New York: Basic Books.

Reynolds, G. (2003). *Ethics in Internet Technology*. Canada: Thomson Learning Inc.

Riley, M., Wood, R. C., Clark, M. A., Wilkie, E., & Szivas, E. (2001). *Researching and writing dissertations in business and management*. London: Thomson Learning.

Roney, C., & Trick, L. (2003). Grouping and Gambling: A Gestalt approach to understanding the gambler's fallacy. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology* , Volume 57 number 2.

Rubin, A. (1994). Media uses and effects: a uses and gratifications perspective. In J. Bryant, & D. Zillmann, *Media effects: advances in theory and research* (pp. 417-436). Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Salbu, S. (1998). Who should govern the internet? Monitoring and supporting a new frontier. *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology Volume 2* .

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. London: Prentice Hall.

Schor, J. (2005). *Born to Buy*. New York: Scribner.

Scott, J. (1992). *Social Network Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.

Scrimshaw, S. (1990). *Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the study of intra-household resource allocation*. Tokyo: United Nations Press.

Shaffer, H. (1996). Understanding the means and objectives of addiction: technology, the internet and gambling. *Journal of gambling studies* .

Shannon, S. E., & Hsieh, H.-F. (2005). *Three approaches to content analysis*. Retrieved May 2, 2009, from Sage Journals online: www.qhr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/short/15/9/1277

Spinello, R. (2003). *Cyber Ethics: Morality in Law and Cyberspace*. London: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Spooner, A. (1997). *Oxford Thesaurus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Steele, J. (2010, March 9). Facebook sex murderer must serve 35 years in jail. *Metro* , p. 5.

Steele, J. (2010, March 5). Tragic death of girl teased on Facebook. *Metro* . 2010, UK: Metro.

Sternberg, E. (2000). *Just Business: Business Ethics in Action*. Oxford University Press.

Stylman, J. (2009). Digital Next: Facebook's blunder. *Advertising Age* 23 February 2009, volume 80 issue 7 .

Sudweeks, F., & Simoff, S. J. (1999). Complementary explorative data analysis: The reconciliation of quantitative and qualitative principles. In S. Jones, *Doing Internet Research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net* (pp. 29-55). London: Sage Publications.

SurveyMonkey.com. (2009). *Survey Monkey - the easiest way to get the answers you need*. Retrieved November 16, 2009, from Survey Monkey - online surveys: <http://surveymonkey.com>

Tavani, H. (2007). *Ethics & Technology: ethical issues in an age of information and communication technology*. USA: Wiley and Sons.

TechMission. (2000). *Risks of Social Networking*. Retrieved March 1, 2010, from Safe Families org: <http://www.safefamilies.org/socialnetworking.php>

Technology, B. (2008, April 2). Q&A: *Children and safer net use*. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from BBC News Technology: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/technology/7326546.stm>

Tesch, R. (1995). *Qualitative Methodology*. London: Sage.

TheIndependent. (2008, June 2). *are ads on children's social networking sites harmless child's play or virtual insanity?* Retrieved January 26, 2010, from The Independent online: <http://license.icopyright.net/user/viewfreeuse.act?fuid=NjcwNDQyMQ%3D%3D>

UKGovernment. (2008). *Change4life - Eat Well, Move More, Live Longer*. Retrieved January 30, 2010, from Department of health current campaigns: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Currentcampaigns/change4life/index.htm>

UKGovernment. (2010). *Cyberbullying*. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from Direct Government: <http://yp.direct.gov.uk/cyberbullying/>

UKGovernment. (n.d.). *Department of children schools and familys*. Retrieved February 3, 2010, from UK Government: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk>

UKGovernment. (2009). *Ofcom*. Retrieved April 31, 2009, from Get Safe On Line: www.getsafeonline.org/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=1459

UKGovernment. (2010). *Young people, health and relationships*. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from Direct. Government: www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/HealthAndRelationships/bullying/DG_182398

UN, T. U. (1989/1991). UN Convention on the Rights of a Child article 1.

Vallance, E. (1995). *Business Ethics at Work*. Cambridge University Press.

Waters, D. (2008, April 2). *Children flock to social networks*. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/technology/7325019.stm>

Watt, S. E., Lea, M., & Spears, R. (2002). How social is internet communication? A reappraisal of bandwidth and anonymity effects. In S. Woolgar, *Virtual Society? Technology, cyberbole, reality* (pp. 61 - 77). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weizenbaum, J. (1976). *Computer power and human reason: from judegement to calculation*. San Fransico: W H Freeman.

White, A. E. (2006). *Virtually Obscene: The Case for an Uncensored Internet*. USA: McFarland & Company.

White, B. (2005). *Writing your MBA dissertation*. London: Thomson Learning.

Wiess, J. W. (2008). *Business Ethics: A stakeholder and issues mananagment approach*. The Dryden Press.

WiredSafety. (2010). *Stop Bullying*. Retrieved February 2010, 2010, from Wired Safety: www.stopbullying.org

Witmer, D., Colman, R., & Katzman, S. (1999). From paper-and-pencil to screen-and-keyboard. In S. J. (editor), *Doing Internet Research:critical issues and methods for examining the net* (pp. 145-161). UK: Sage Publications.

Wolcott, H. F. (1990). *Writing up qualitative research*. USA: Sage Publications.

Wolfe, D. (2009). E-Banking, meet social networking. *American Banker*, 2 March 2009, Vol 174 issue 40 , 1-6.

Wood, R., Griffiths, M., & Eatough, V. (2004). Online data collection from video game players: methodological issues. *CyberPsychology and Behaviour* , Vol 7 No 5.

Woolgar, S. (2002). *Virtual Society? Technology, Cyberbole, Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wray, R. (2010, April 25). Creating the next dotcom boom could be child's play. *Observer* . London, UK.

Wright, S. (2009, March 29). Facebook Rapist. *Sunday Mirror* . Mirror Publications.

Wu, T., & Goldmith, J. (2006). *Who controls the internet: illusions of a borderless world*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Zuckerman, M. (2009, December 1). *An open letter from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerman*. Retrieved February 7, 2010, from Facebook - Blog: <http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=190423927130>

APPENDIX A COPY OF SURVEY ABOUT CHILDRENS USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FROM SURVEYMONKEY

Childrens usage of social networking sites Survey

Page 1 of 2

Childrens usage of social networking sites

Exit this survey

67%

1. Issue of the research.

	Agree	Disagree
I have received sufficient information regarding the purpose of the study.	☐	☐
I understand that I am free to withdraw from this online survey at any time, and if I do this there will be no further contact from the researchers.	☐	☐
I can refuse to answer any question.	☐	☐
I understand that I am assured privacy/anonymity in any published results	☐	☐

2. Do the children in your household use social networking sites? What are the ages of your children?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Childs age (please add for each child in the household)

3. How often do the children in your family use the following sites?

	once a day	more than once in an morning	more than once in an evening	more than 4 times a day	couple of times a week	couple of times a month
Facebook	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
bebo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
myspace	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ZEhHJsIB8aa8cegNuHmraw%3d%3d>

22/03/2010

prefer not to say

4. How safe do you think your children are whilst using the internet and social networking sites?

- ☐ Very Safe
- ☐ Fairly Safe
- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Fairly Unsafe
- ☐ Very unsafe/vulnerable

5. Do you think that your children are aware of the potential dangers that can be encountered whilst using the internet and social networking sites?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Have you spoken to the children about the potential dangers of using the internet?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Monitoring of internet usage

	Agree	Disagree	Prefer not to say
Do you monitor their internet usage?	☐	☐	☐
Do you monitor their social network usage?	☐	☐	☐
Do you monitor their social networking pages?	☐	☐	☐

8. Do you use parental control software to protect your children when the are using the internet? If so please specify which software you use.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you answered yes please specify which software

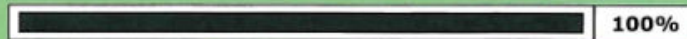
Prev

Next

Survey Powered by:
SurveyMonkey
 "Surveys Made Simple."

Childrens usage of social networking sites

[Exit this survey](#)



9. Are you aware of the lower age limits/restrictions of the Social Networking Sites that your children have profiles on or use?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

10. Would you allow your child to have a profile on a Social Networking Site if they were below the site's lower age limit?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please explain your reason for the above answer

[Prev](#)

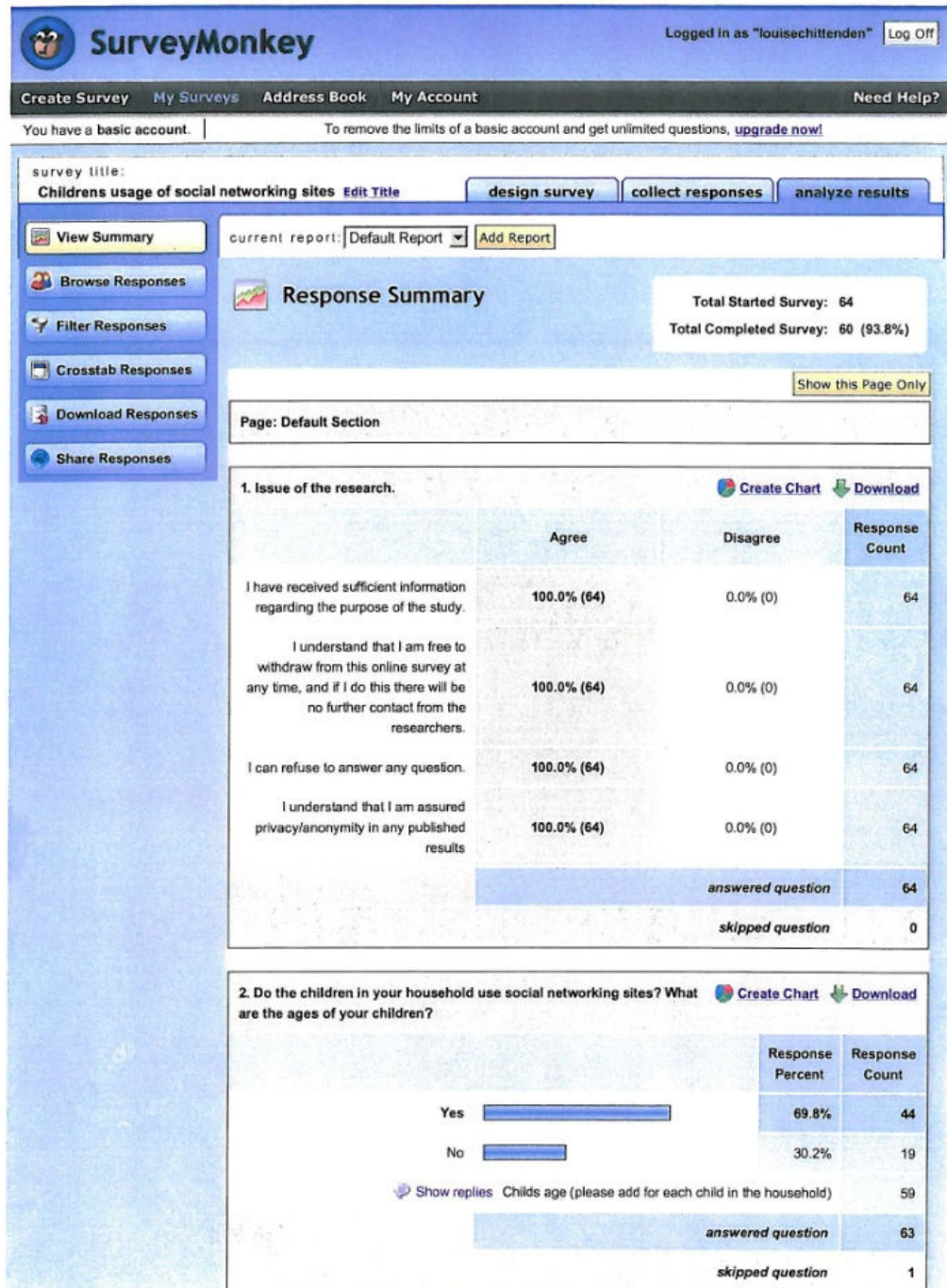
[Done](#)

Survey Powered by:
SurveyMonkey
 "Surveys Made Simple."

APPENDIX B SURVEYMONKEY SUMMARY RESULTS

SurveyMonkey - Survey Results

Page 1 of 4



http://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurvey_Responses.aspx?sm=%2bSJCNEY2frHUsABTBwvmGOX... 25/02/2010

3. How often do the children in your family use the following sites? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	once a day	more than once in an morning	more than once in an evening	more than 4 times a day	couple of times a week	couple of times a month	Response Count
Facebook	22.7% (10)	2.3% (1)	29.5% (13)	18.2% (8)	20.5% (9)	11.4% (5)	44
bebo	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	7
myspace	42.9% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	57.1% (4)	7
Show replies prefer not to say							5
answered question							44
skipped question							20

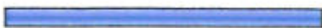
4. How safe do you think your children are whilst using the internet and social networking sites? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very Safe 	10.2%	6
Fairly Safe 	49.2%	29
Safe 	15.3%	9
Fairly Unsafe 	22.0%	13
Very unsafe/vulnerable 	3.4%	2
answered question		59
skipped question		5

5. Do you think that your children are aware of the potential dangers that can be encountered whilst using the internet and social networking sites? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	83.1%	49
No 	16.9%	10
answered question		59
skipped question		5

6. Have you spoken to the children about the potential dangers of using the internet? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	96.7%	59
No 	3.3%	2
answered question		61
skipped question		3

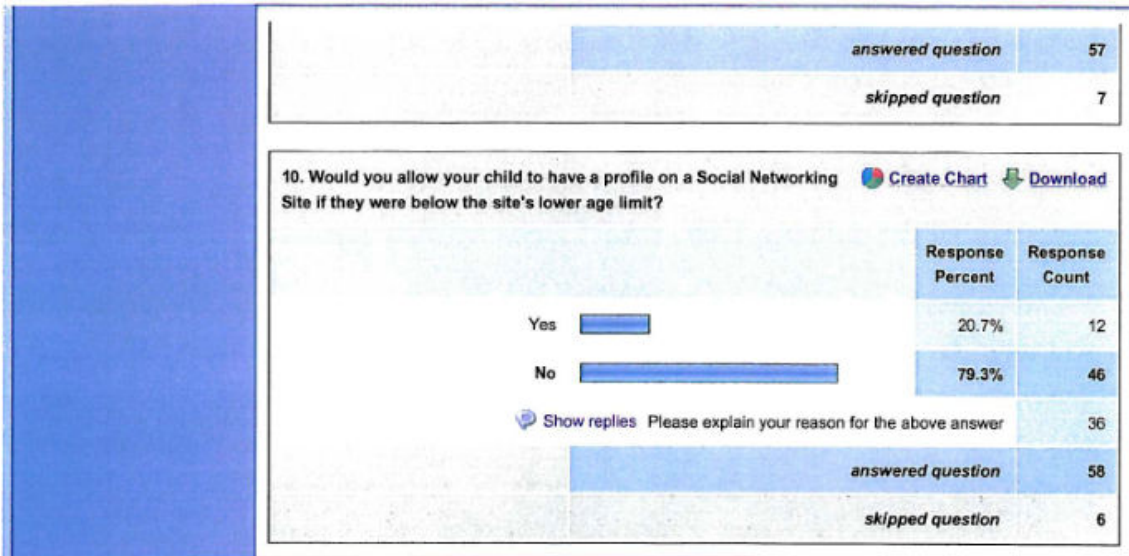
7. Monitoring of internet usage				Create Chart Download	
	Agree	Disagree	Prefer not to say	Response Count	
Do you monitor their internet usage?	72.9% (43)	25.4% (15)	1.7% (1)	59	
Do you monitor their social network usage?	63.0% (34)	35.2% (19)	1.9% (1)	54	
Do you monitor their social networking pages?	62.3% (33)	37.7% (20)	0.0% (0)	53	
answered question				59	
skipped question				5	

8. Do you use parental control software to protect your children when they are using the internet? If so please specify which software you use.				Create Chart Download	
	Response Percent	Response Count			
Yes 	39.3%	24			
No 	60.7%	37			
Show replies If you answered yes please specify which software		19			
answered question		61			
skipped question		3			

[Show this Page Only](#)

Page: survey continued

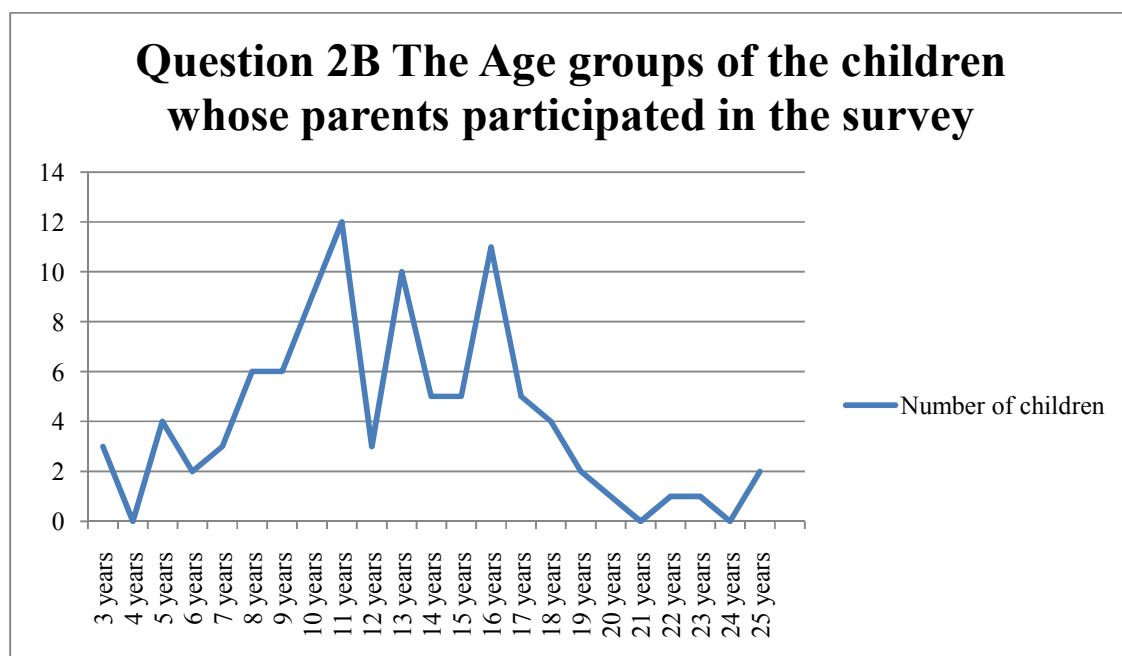
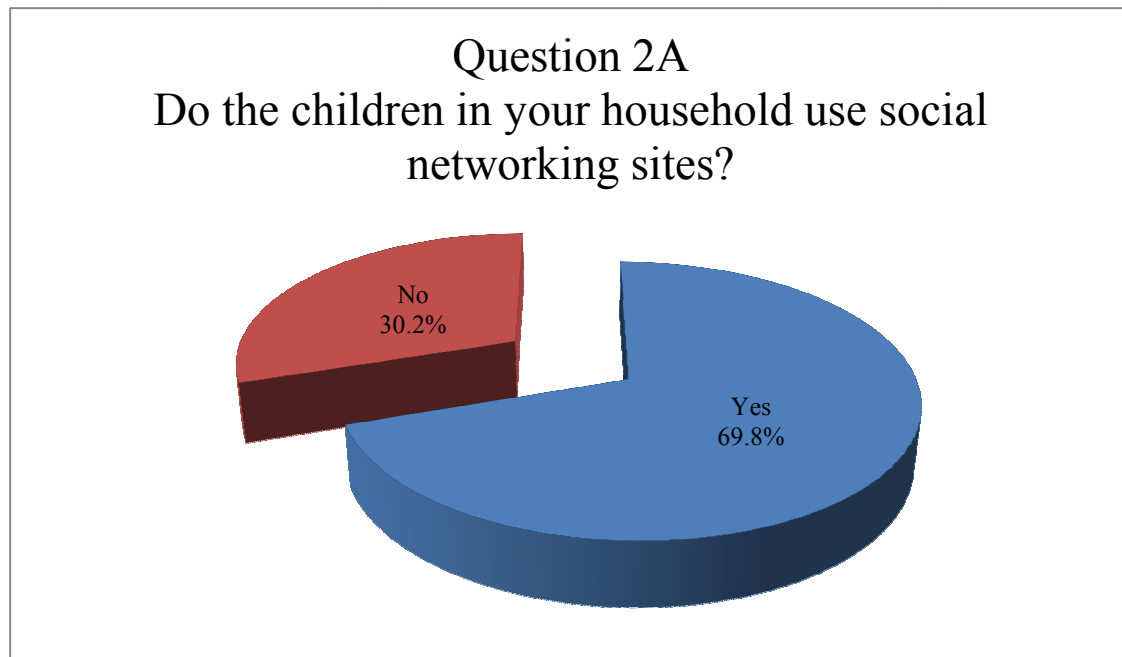
9. Are you aware of the lower age limits/restrictions of the Social Networking Sites that your children have profiles on or use?				Create Chart Download	
	Response Percent	Response Count			
Yes 	54.4%	31			
No 	42.1%	24			
Prefer not to say 	3.5%	2			



[About Us](#) [Anti-Spam Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [Opt Out/Opt In](#) [Contact Us](#) [We're Hiring!](#)

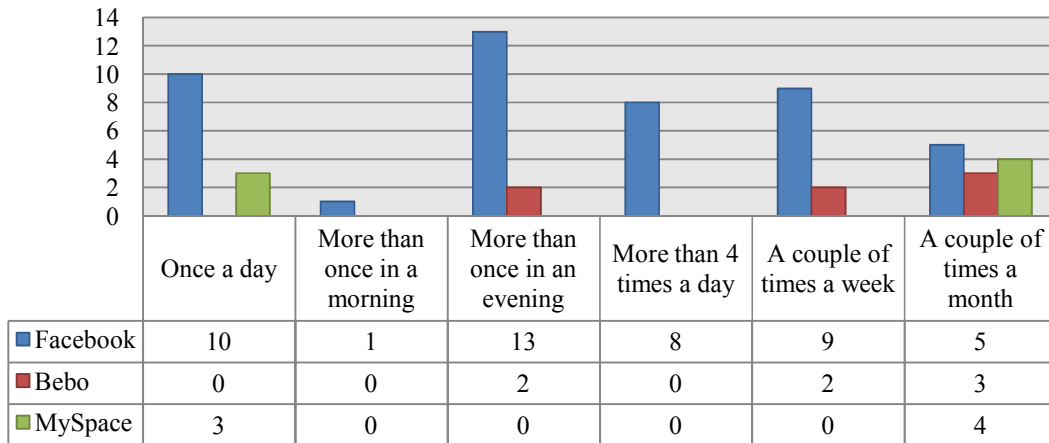
Copyright ©1999-2010 SurveyMonkey.com. All Rights Reserved. No portion of this site may be copied without the express written consent of SurveyMonkey.com.

APPENDIX C TABLES AND CHARTS SHOWING SURVEY RESULTS



Question 3

How often do the children in your family use the following sites?

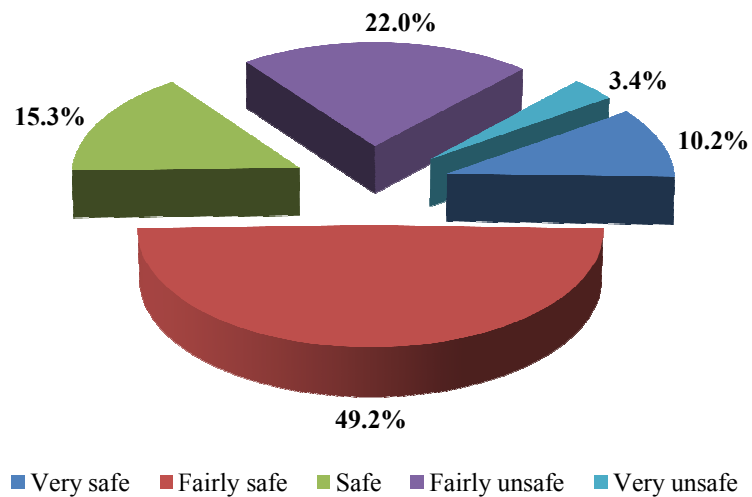


Question 3

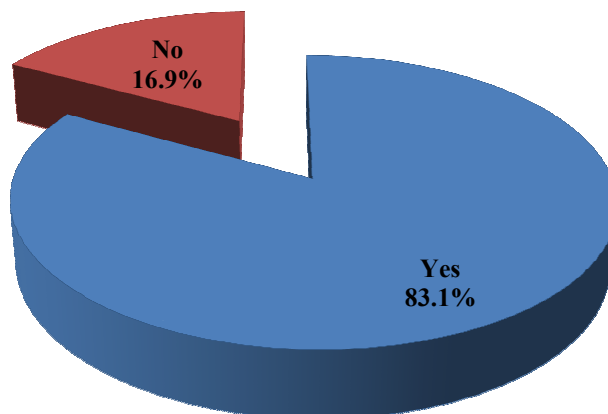
Prefer not to say option given on survey

Respondent	Reply
1	Children do not use listed sites, they use Messenger
2	Never use any social networking sites
3	Never use any social networking sites, children too young
4	Never use any social networking sites, only play games
5	Not at all

Question 4
How safe do you think your children are whilst using the internet and social networking sites?

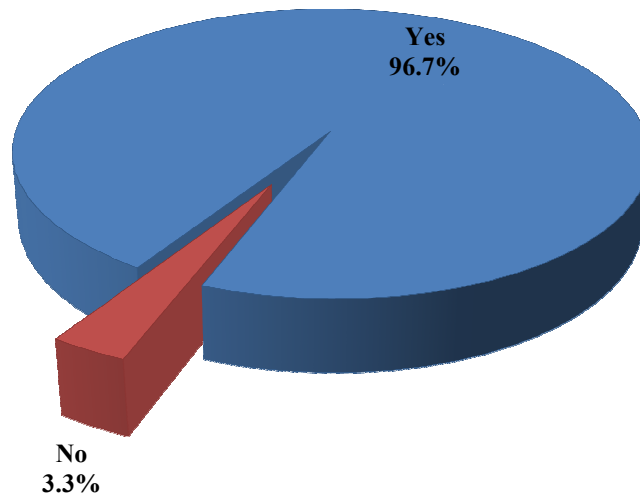


Question 5
Do you think that your children are aware of the potential dangers that can be encountered whilst using the internet and social networking sites?



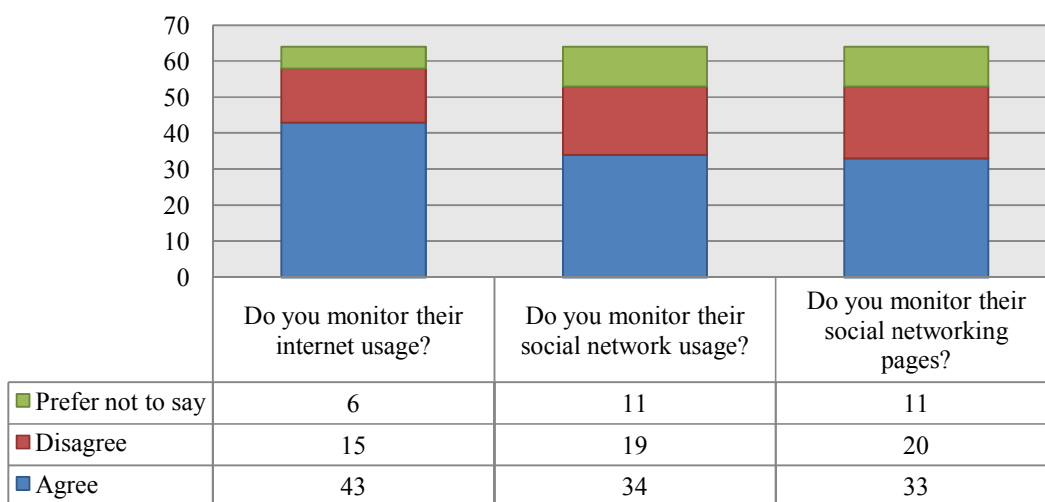
Question 6

Have you spoken to the children about the potential dangers of using the internet?

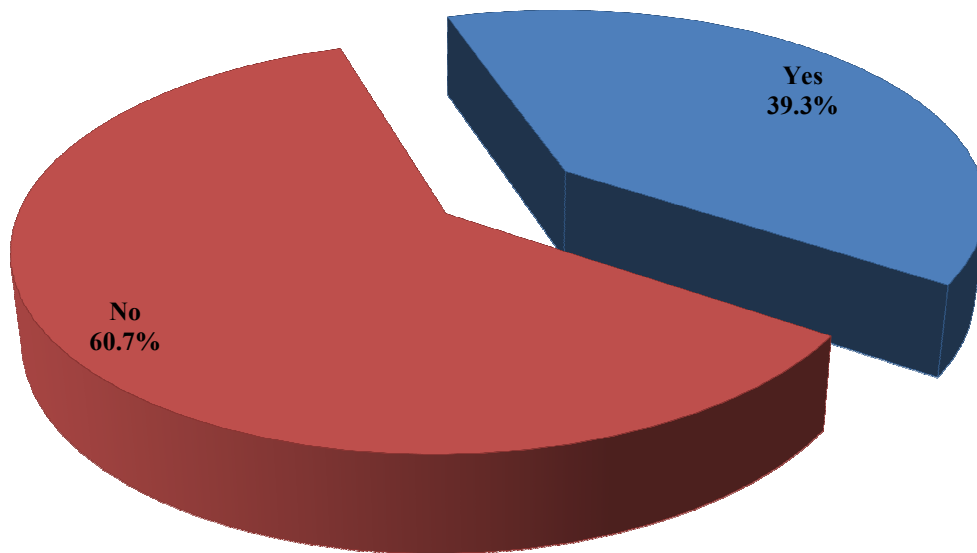


Question 7

Monitoring of internet usage.



Question 8A
Do you use parental control software?

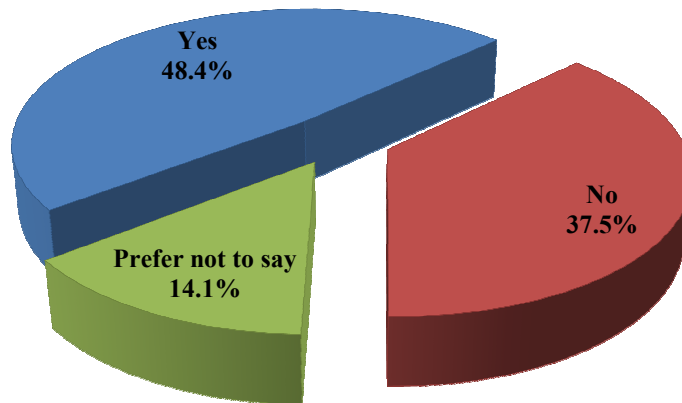


Question 8B Which parental control software do you use to protect your children whilst using the internet?

Respondent	Which parental control software do you use?
1	Not sure
2	MacAfee
3	Family support software
4	Microsoft
5	AOL
6	MacAfee
7	Norton
8	Microsoft Essential
9	Firefox
10	Norton
11	MacAfee
12	Microsoft
13	Google chrome
14	MacAfee
15	BT Internet package
16	NIS
17	Windows
18	Virgin Media
19	Not sure

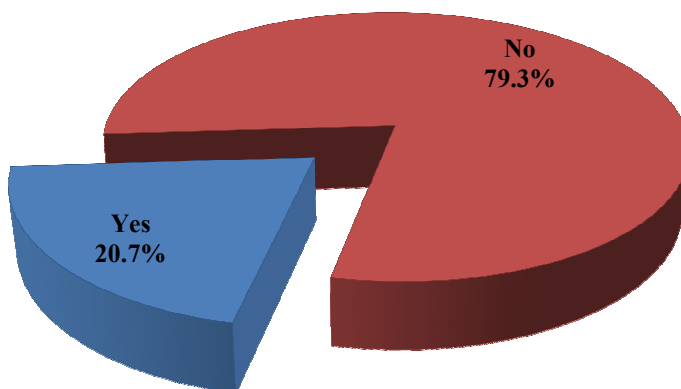
Question 9

Are you aware of the lower age limit restrictions of the social networking sites that your children have profiles on or use?



Question 10A

Would you allow your child to have a profile on social networking site if they were below the sites lower age limit?



Question 10 Would you allow your child to have a profile on a social networking site if they were below the site's lower age limit?

Respondent	Reply
1	I have allowed this as my daughter's friends have one and she wanted one too! I monitor it heavily and she is only allowed to use it when I am in the room. Unfortunately when her peers are on these sites it's very difficult to say no and as long as there is adequate parental supervision I can see little harm in her using one.
2	I assume that they would have lied about their age to get onto the site. So then they could be exposed to age inappropriate material from other users, who think they are older than they actually are.
3	This is not applicable to my circumstances as both my children were adults before these sites have taken off in the way they had
4	Having an older child (she is 16+) I have not had to face this problem, but I would probably allowed her to have a profile on such a site for her social welfare.
5	Only because all his classmates are on the site. My son was the last one to join. He is only allowed to 'make friends' with children that he personally knows. He is not allowed to accept any adults as friends even if he knows them. However, at first it was a bit of a novelty. He hardly goes on the site now.

6	Because one would assume that the age limit had been set for a reason ie- Child protection. I do however monitor my child's usage, regularly view her profile and chat logs and never allow her to set up meetings with people that she has met on line
7	Would prefer that age limit was met but am step-parent and child's parent has already allowed access
8	I don't think it is appropriate
9	We discourage it but do not know if she uses these sites when unsupervised.
10	he has many friends on there I just assumed it is for the correct age, he also talks to family who live away on this site.
11	Although my children are very aware of the internet , I do not allow any profiles/photos of them on any site.
12	My daughter uses the site to keep in touch with geographically distant family members and close school friends only. Her profile is set such that only her friends can see any information.

13	95% of the children in each child's class use fb and so I allow them to also use it - i am not concerned that my children are unaware of the dangers of being online, as a parent interested in internet research they are probably fed up of me. fb and twitters are the largest sns and completely unregulated - this I think is an issue for the government - also since primary school - my 2 sons have receive internet safety advice - pc mort!!! such as don't even post a photo of yourself and use controls to assist privacy. i think this issue is about responsible parenting as well as responsibility of sites.
14	many friends already on the site and daughter enjoys playing the games
15	I am aware of the age limits on social networking sites and would therefore not allow my children to use them. As a family we have never allowed our children to use MSN, Facebook etc. We have done this for a number of reasons. The primary one is the harm that the use of these 'services' can have on the development of a child's social skills. The issue of age limits is therefore redundant at this stage though it would be a factor as the children grow.
16	my child has access to facebook as it is my own account and he plays the games on it, he has access to bebo which i monitor daily and the email address attached to account is mine, he only has contact with his classmates on bebo.
17	I am not aware of the age limits on these sites as they are not well publised.

18	A few months away from the age limit and those already 13 in class in school use it.
19	My child uses my profile
20	There is an age limit for a reason
21	children are too young at present
22	The age limit is a guide to the kind of material that may be circulated on the site. There is probably no control for material unsuitable below that age.
23	unsafe
24	It wouldn't be appropriate as it should then be designed for older children/adults
25	Sites are far too open to unauthorised users etc...
26	All answers base on the fact that children are supervised when using any sites on the internet & that usage is fairly limited.
27	Whilst these networking sites are seen by many to offer opportunities for sex offenders to lure children, there are some wider reaching and fundamental national security issues that can manifest themselves often quite innocently. The use of christian and surnames combined with addresses allow a 'picture' to be created of the family which may rise to issues if the parents are involved in military, defence or counter terrorism activities.

28	Due to the nature of my husband's work we have been advised not to use any social networking sites as a family (security issues) and thus we do not use Facebook, Bebo, etc. Hence some of the questions remain unanswered. Good luck with your dissertation
29	danger that that adults could use info to their advantage
30	They have to understand that age restrictions are there for a purpose - as in all walks of life. It gives them something to look forward to rather than granting them access to everything all at once.
31	I think there too young and we do monitor them on the internet. There is a limit for a reason.
32	I believe that some children are more 'streetwise' and sensible than others therefore age guides cannot always be the right judge
33	Age restrictions are there for a reason
34	Age limits are in place for a reason, if under age some content may not be suitable.
35	so as not to expose them to unsavoury content
36	I dont allow use of social network sites under their own name but allow contact with My friends and family through my sign in when they are monitored and I know exactly who they are talking to.