

Internet Corruption

Here's what many parents and grandparents do not understand: The Internet is profoundly changing the behavior of American children and stunting their emotional growth. Many eight-year-olds now exposed to things that 13-year-olds didn't know just a decade ago.

In Syracuse, New York, not exactly Sodom, at least nine girls, ages 11 to 13, took nude pictures of themselves and electronically sent them to various boys. Quicker than you can say "incredibly dumb," said pictures were posted on the Internet so that every kid in town could take a look.

A 17-year-old, Michael Wixson, has been arrested but not for posting the pictures on the 'net; apparently that's legal in New York state if there's no sexual activity involved. No, Wixson was only charged after he sent the naked pictures to a 15-year-old—that involved "corrupting a minor."

Police say they were stunned that some of the parents of the involved girls thought this was no big deal. In fact, according to reporting by WSYR-TV, a few of the parents are angry with the cops for even investigating!

So now we get a hint as to why their children would do such a thing.

Look, the truth is that many kids are stupid, but kids have always been dumb. I broke records for dumbness. The difference today is that dopey kids find each other very fast on the 'net, and what they see and hear on the machines that now dominate their lives has changed their thinking patterns.

Every child can see images of Britney Spears and Paris Hilton flaunting their sexuality without consequence. Kids have instant access to salacious material that was very difficult to obtain just ten years ago. If a parent is not proactive in

monitoring computer and cell phone use, children can run wild in cyberspace.

Sadly, adult reaction in some cases is capitulation. As reported in this space a few weeks ago, the school board in Portland, Maine, not exactly Gomorrah, voted to give 11-year-old girls birth control pills and not tell their parents. Now every kid in that city has gotten the message: If you want to have sex, it's okay with school authorities.

The Internet has broken down almost all boundaries. There are now actual clubs for child molesters—websites that tell predators how to abuse kids, where to find them, and how to get away with the evil act.

There are torture websites, virtual child porn displays (which the Supreme Court ruled legal), and all kinds of criminal acts acted out on the computer screen. And every kid with a mouse can find these things.

Just think about what's happening here. Children as young as eleven sending nude pictures of themselves to their friends. No fear, no hesitation.

It is a high-tech "Lord of the Flies," a free-for-all of destructive behavior driven by millions of innocuous-looking machines that sit openly in family rooms all across the country.

Here's an instant message every parent should understand: The situation is dire.