Sound The Alarm: Social Media, AI and the Systems That Will Create Sexual Predators



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We all know that social media platforms (MySpace,Facebook/Meta, Instagram, SnapChat, Pinterest, YouTube, Reddit, TikTok, LinkedIn, Weibo, Tumblr, VSCO and others) have become a mainstay in both our personal and professional lives. As a society, we use these platforms to share photos of family gatherings, photos of sporting events, videos of personal events, network and to often share our personal triumphs and tragedies. We use the platforms to engage in private and public chats to communicate, socialize and comment on society at large. As a result, as a society, we have submitted much of our private lives to these platforms and use them on a daily basis from the smartphones that we carry.

What we all do not recognize/realize is that behind these innocent uses lies a dark underbelly that will lead to potential civil and criminal liability to parents, children and other third-parties. This same technology will result in the unknowing creation of sexual predators. Every social media platform uses algorithms and some type of artificial intelligence to operate. The programs look at a user's content, their engagement on the platform and the amount of time that the user is on the platform. Without notice to the user, the algorithms and artificial intelligence then analyzes this data to understand user preferences with a goal of predicting what kind of content the user wants to see. Over time, the platform's advertisements and search responses are designed to conform to the user's preferences. The goal is to provide the user with a better experience. However, to the users, these same systems influence the user's choices and ultimately what information a user sees on social media.

Users of social media platforms often share with their friends, followers and the public at large photographs of themselves. These photographs are often at significant events in a person's life – wedding, prom, 4th of July celebration at the beach, birthday parties…etc. The photographs are generally innocuous and show families/friends/users having a great time. When a

user posts something that violates the social platform's privacy or community standards, the user may be requested to remove the offending post. Other than that limited oversight, social media platforms provide users with a largely unregulated platform to express themselves as they see fit.

Starting in around 2017, technology software began to appear that permits a person to artificially undress individuals and create realistic pornographic models. Used improperly, this technology permits a user to screenshot a photograph from a social media site of a person who has granted access to their photos and create an electronically painted pornographic image of the same person. Sadly, the images are not only graphic, but the artificial intelligence technology at issue has the ability to create an image based upon the person's appeared genetic and ethic appearance – to make it more lifelike.

As parents, we need to be aware that the use of social media has and will continue to expose our children to these algorithms, artificial intelligence and readily available software. The use of this software will result in civil lawsuits being filed against parents and other supervisors of the children for negligence, defamation and other privacy torts. It will also likely result in attempted criminal charges being brought by end users of the software and those who view the images. If we continue to provide our children with access to smartphones and fail to adequately monitor the use of the software on those phones, our children will both be victims of the image creation, but also fall victim to the social media platform's purposeful direction of their use. If as parents, we continue to provide our children with unmonitored use of "Apple Pay" or "Google Wallet", our children will continue to be able to pay for, with a simple click, the use of this software. And, sadly, if we do not immediately become engaged, we will send our young children — unarmed and unaware – into a dark world wherein they may find it normal or appropriate to create these types of images of their neighbors, friends and your children. Ultimately, we will have allowed our own children to use this software to become predators to other children.

So, what do we do? Do not fall victim to the "keep up with the Jones's" mentality. Do not provide your child with a smartphone until your child is of such an age that you believe they should be exposed to this software. Do not permit your child to access social media platforms without significant parental oversight – if you are not able to provide that oversight, do not allow them to download the software. Monitor and limit the applications that your children can put on their phones. Do not provide your child with "Apple Pay" or "Google Wallet" without creating parental protections for the use. Access their phones daily/weekly and view the photos that they have stored on the phone. And, finally, do talk to your children about this invasive technology, the risks associated with its use and how they want to project themselves to the world. You may find that by having these conversations with your children will save you the pain and anguish of having to address the results discussed.

To read more about this subject please click here.

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