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It's Even More Dangerous Than We Thought — Online Pornography, Webcams, and Teens

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The New York Times has broken a story that demands immediate attention. In “[Through His Webcam, A Boy Joins a Sordid Online World](#)” by reporter [Kurt Eichenwald](#), the paper points to an alarming and relatively new phenomenon — teenagers acting out in their own porn products that are sold to sexual predators.

Eichenwald traced the story of Justin Berry, who started using his webcam at age 13. Intending to make friends online, he found himself sought by adults looking for child pornography.

Here’s how the paper introduced the story: *The 13-year-old boy sat in his California home, eyes fixed on a computer screen. He had never run with the popular crowd and long ago had turned to the Internet for the friends he craved. But on this day, Justin Berry’s fascination with cyberspace would change his life.*

Weeks before, Justin had hooked up a Web camera to his computer; hoping to use it to meet other teenagers online. Instead, he heard only from men who chatted with him by instant message as they watched his image on the Internet. To Justin, they seemed just like friends, ready with compliments and always offering gifts.

Now, on an afternoon in 2000, one member of his audience sent a proposal: he would pay Justin \$50 to sit bare-chested in front of his Webcam for three minutes. The man explained that Justin could receive the money instantly and helped him open an account on PayPal.com, an online payment system.

“I figured, I took off my shirt at the pool for nothing,” he said recently. “So, I was kind of like, what’s the difference?”

Justin removed his T-shirt. The men watching him oozed compliments.

So began the secret life of a teenager who was lured into selling images of his body on the Internet over the course of five years. From the seduction that began that day, this soccer-playing honor roll student was drawn into performing in front of the Webcam - undressing, showering . . . and even having sex - for an audience of more than 1,500 people who paid him, over the years, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Eichenwald’s report is lengthy and important. Justin Berry hid his involvement from his mother, but was eventually hooked further into the business of providing porn by his father, who discovered the boy’s business and wanted to capitalize on it.

The New York Times and [Kurt Eichenwald](#) deserve to win a [Pulitzer Prize](#) for this report. Parents, youth workers, and all those who care about young people should read this article, distressing as it is.

SEE ALSO: My commentary, “[Courting Danger Online—Teenagers and the Internet](#),” published December 1, 2005. I discussed this issue on the December 2, 2005 edition of [The Albert Mohler Program](#) [[listen here](#)]. The program will be

rebroadcast Thursday, December 29, with a new update on the Eichenwald report.

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