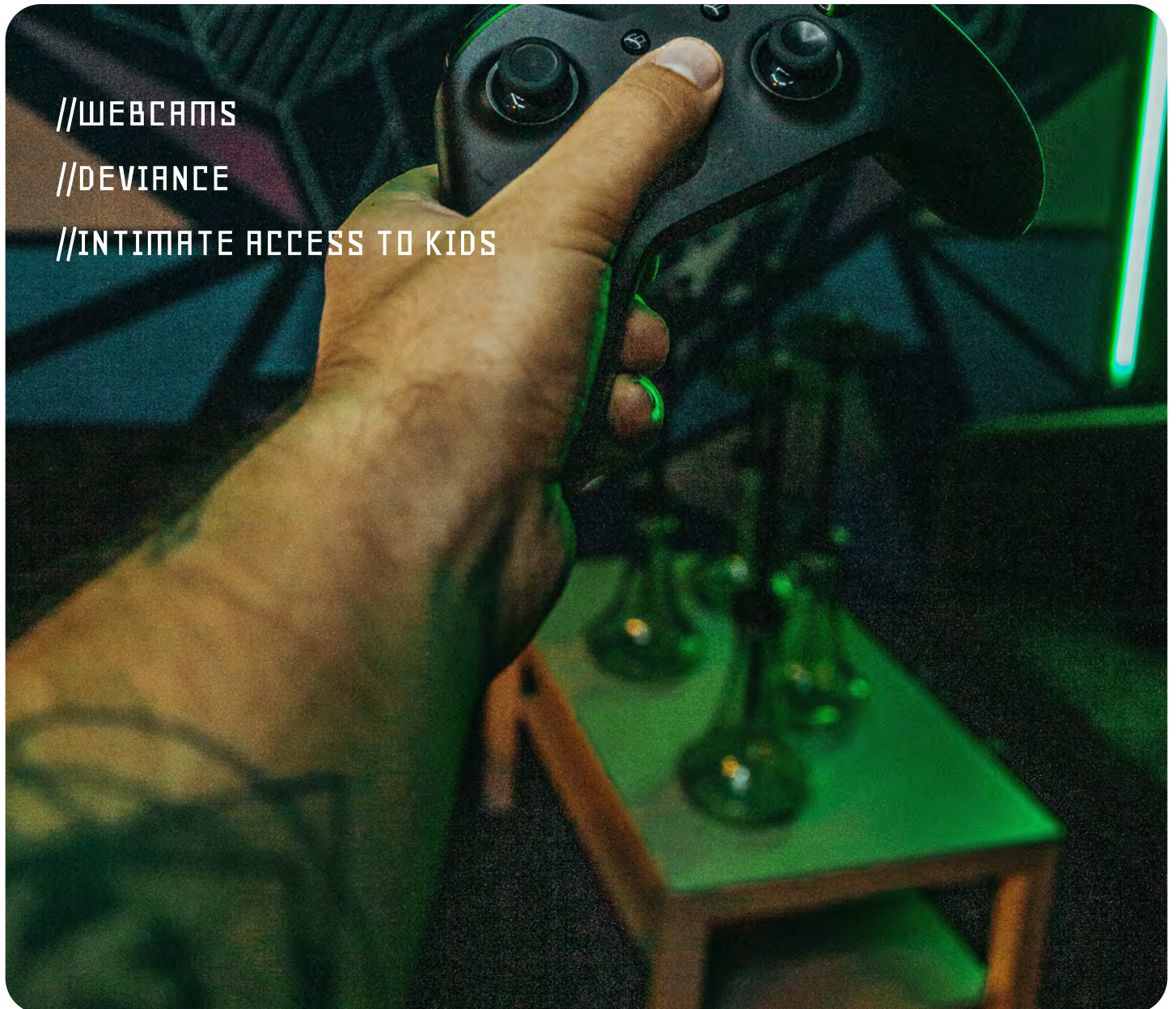


SWATTING

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live streaming violence



//WEBCAMS

//DEVIANCE

//INTIMATE ACCESS TO KIDS

ACTIVE SHOOTER CALL
HOAX GONE WRONG

Innocent, unsuspecting victims at home.

SWATTING VICTIMS
FOUND ON TWITCH

Your surroundings may put you at risk.

SWATTING ON TWITCH

by Alex Rodrigues

Many swatting victims were using Twitch, a live streaming platform that allows users to record live from their computers [often in their bedroom]. Someone viewing a Twitch channel sees the streamer's face, computer screen and surroundings.

In 2017, Wichita police responded to an active shooter call, quickly killing the lone gunman with no victims injured. The episode appeared to embody police bravery and responsiveness in the face of potential disaster. However, the moment turned tragic when officers learned the call was a hoax and that the slayed perpetrator was, in fact, an innocent, unsuspecting victim at home. This terrible incident reflects a growing pattern of online harassment that blurs the line between prank and violence called "swatting." This week alone, several well-known online personalities fell victim to swatting. In one case, a popular live-streamer, Clara "Keffals" Sorrenti, awoke to police at her front door because of an email that said she had killed her mother and planned to attack city hall (Grayson, 2022). Thankfully, police figured the alert was false before anyone was injured, but that is not always the case. Consequently, parents must be aware of the harm of swatting to help youth circumnavigate such risks.

Although many are unfamiliar with the act, swatting is not new. Swatting, which involves someone falsely reporting an active shooter or other violent scenarios, first appeared in the early 2000s. Swatting derives from the special weapons and tactics (S.W.A.T.) units that respond to active shooters and emergencies. In a swatting scenario, the perpetrator provides the address for the alleged shooter, which is typically a third

party unaware of the impending danger. Police then respond to the address, sometimes harming or killing the victim in the ensuing chaos. Swatting differs from other types of false emergency calls because it frequently includes a visual element. That is, many swatting victims are live streaming, or broadcasting, at the time, resulting in the police assault being televised to the world. Many high-profile swatting victims were live streaming at the time, using popular platforms like Twitch.

Twitch is a streaming service that allows users to record live from their computers. A typical Twitch channel involves an individual live streaming game playing while sharing webcam footage of his face and response. Someone viewing a Twitch channel sees the streamer's computer screen and footage from his webcam, including the person's surroundings (e.g., bedroom, etc.).

Livestreaming has become particularly popular in the gaming community, as highly skilled gamers can earn money from sharing their gameplay online. For perspective, Twitch became the fourth largest source of Internet traffic in 2014, and Amazon purchased the company later that year for \$970 million.

Twitch and similar platforms allow viewers to interact with and donate to their favorite content producers. Users can access creators in a highly intimate, novel way.



DONT LEAVE PERSONAL CLUES

Being cautious when interacting with strangers online will reduce the risk of problems. Ensure that online usernames do not include clues about one's whereabouts or personal life. Second, if one wants to stream from home, be conscious of the surroundings

INTIMATE ACCESS TO KIDS



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Twitch and similar platforms allow viewers to interact with and donate to their favorite content producers. Users can access creators in a highly intimate, novel way. While this feature helps foster close-knit, collaborative communities, it can also breed deviant behavior.

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While this feature helps foster close-knit, collaborative communities, it can also breed deviant behavior. By innocently live streaming from their room and chatting with online fans, a streamer may accidentally place themselves at risk of swatting. Bad actors can collect information about a Twitch streamer by carefully observing the person's room via webcam or eliciting key details through online chats. This form of data gathering is called social hacking and involves manipulating a person into sharing their details. Over time, one can collect a streamer's personal information, including home address. Armed with this information, a bad actor can make a fake 911 call, setting a “swatting” episode into motion.

The motivations behind swatting are varied. Some “swatters” act out of spite and anger, while others see the act as a simple prank. However, as demonstrated by the story above, the consequences of swatting are far from harmless. Aside from threats

to one's physical health, both victims and officers can develop lasting psychological effects from the life-threatening experience. Additionally, false alerts drain valuable emergency service resources diverting them needlessly. So, what can one do to protect themselves and their families from swatting? While state and federal governments are considering laws to stop the behavior, the Internet's anonymity and size make prosecuting perpetrators difficult. However, exercising reasonable safety measures and commonsense can likely shield one from falling victim to swatting. First, one must be mindful of the details they share online.



EXERCISE CAUTION

Scan your room

Being cautious when interacting with strangers online will reduce the risk of problems. Ensure that online usernames do not include clues about one's whereabouts or personal life. Second, if one wants to stream from home, be conscious of the surroundings. Take time to scan the room and remove identifying information (e.g., pictures, high school memorabilia). Third, ask law enforcement if they are aware of the problem, and if so, what actions they are taking to combat it. For instance, the Seattle Police Department created

a voluntary registry where one can register concerns about future swatting attacks. Therefore, if the department receives an alert about an active shooter at a registered address, police know to proceed cautiously.

By sharing these insights, we hope to prevent unnecessary hurt and death. Additionally, talking about swatting with youth may prevent them from engaging in the activity, inadvertently causing harm, and facing possible legal action.

LIVE
CAMS



CONCERNS?

Have questions about our resources or interested in having Dr. Rodrigues speak at your next event? We would love to hear from you.



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THE DIGITAL BIRDS AND BEES TAKES A LOOK AT ONLINE PLATFORMS AND DIGITAL WELL-BEING TO HELP MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, PARENTS AND KIDS UNDERSTAND THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF SEXUAL EDUCATION ON THE INTERNET.

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