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Harrison, Tom

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A Pragmatic Approach to Integrating Moral Theory for Cyber-flourishing

Dr. Tom Harrison*

Online risks and harms, including cyber-bullying, trolling, revenge porn and digital harassment, are an everyday reality in many young people's lives. Educators are increasingly being called upon to address these concerns but are not adequately equipped to do so. In this article the case is made for a new educational model for cyber-flourishing. The model is constructed through a pragmatic approach to moral theory, adopting the central tenets of deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics, and showing how these can be integrated and put to work by teachers to tackle online harms. The model is comprised of three core components, cyber-rules, cyber-wisdom and cyber-flourishing, and each is explained in detail in the article. Cyber-rules must be put in place by schools to provide the foundations for the cultivation of character and cyber-wisdom. Cyber-wisdom is the individual quality of doing the right thing, at the right time, especially when no one is looking. Cyber-flourishing is defined as authentic happiness that comes from living morally in the online world, and is the utility value that we should all strive for. The article concludes by outlining nine educational practices that demonstrate how teachers can adopt and implement the model in their schools. The model is the first attempt in the world to integrate moral theory into an educational model that provides an overarching and whole-school approach to tackling pressing everyday online concerns.

Dr. Tom Harrison is a Reader in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, UK.

*Corresponding author: Tom Harrison, University of Birmingham, t.j.harrison@bham.ac.uk, @DrTomHarrison, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2767-465X

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Introduction

Online risks and harms, including cyber-bullying, trolling, revenge porn and digital harassment, are an everyday reality in many young people's lives (Cocking & Van den Hoven, 2018). Whilst it has been argued that these immoral actions online somewhat mirror immoral actions offline, the Internet offers certain affordances that mean traditional moral transgressions can gain increased weight and become more prolific (Bartlett, 2015; Dennis and Harrison, 2020). The online habitus so many of us exist in can lead to 'ordinary' people taking actions against the 'better angles' of their nature (Cocking & Van de Hoven, 2018, p. 3; see also Suler, 2004). As is so often the case, schools are expected to address such societal ills and viewed by some as a front line in the battle against online moral transgressions (Ribble, 2015). Teachers and other school staff fulfilling pastoral roles are expected to educate for what is widely called 'digital citizenship' against a backdrop of poor research on effective practice. It might be argued that teachers are shooting in the dark whilst trying to hit a moving target. To address this problem, I make the case, in this article, for a new practical model to inform educational approaches to addressing online harms.

The model introduced in the paper is constructed through a process of what might be called pragmatic theorising. It adopts the central tenets of the three best known moral theories, deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics, and shows how these can be integrated and put to work by teachers to tackle online harms. This approach rejects any form or reductionism that pits one moral theory against another or any attempts to codify ethics into discreet moral systems (Williams, 1985). Through the promotion of an integrated approach, I hope to improve critical understanding of how moral theory, in the absence of convincing empirical evidence, might underpin whole-school approaches to educating for cyber-flourishing. In this article I detail how the model can be used to underpin digital citizenship education where the focus is on morally good online action. I conclude the article by outlining nine educational practices that show how the model might be integrated into schools and classrooms.

The Internet can, as the inventor of the world wide web Sir Tim Berners-Lee has recently claimed, be a force for good.[1] History has shown us that this is unlikely to happen organically. It will take intervention from tech companies, governments, institutions and individuals. Although I here outline the role that schools, teachers and those with pastoral responsibilities might play to ensure the Internet contributes to rather than diminishes human flourishing, this is not to distract from the significant responsibility that governments, tech companies and individuals must play if we are to live in an online world that is worth living in.

After briefly describing the purpose of the new model and key concepts, I provide four reasons why a new model is necessary. Having made the case, I then describe the components of the model in detail before concluding with an overview of how the model might be applied by schools, teachers and other educational professionals in practice.

A new educational model for cyber-flourishing; purpose, concepts and context

Before making the case for the new educational model for cyber-flourishing, I will start by defining its purpose and the key concepts it is built upon. In order to do so, I must first say something about

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[1] The open letter was published on 12th March 2019 and can be found on the Web Foundation website here: https://webfoundation.org/2019/03/web-birthday-30/

where the model might be situated in schools. At its broadest, digital citizenship can be loosely defined as the ability to participate in society through digital means and depends on aspects including access to technology, digital skills and wider issues of inclusion and inequalities (Mossberger & Tolbert, 2007). A form of digital citizenship education (or related terms such as e-citizenship, online citizenship, cyber-citizenship) is primarily taught in secondary schools in the UK as part of the Personal, Social, Health and Education (PSHE), citizenship education, and/or computer science curricula. In many schools, this constitutes lessons on subjects such as e-safety, digital democracy, cyber-bullying and related topics. Lessons are complemented with whole-school activities including communications home, assemblies and invited speakers. I envisage the new model for education for digital flourishing bringing a coordinated, planned, whole-school approach to an important element of the wider efforts to educate for digital citizenship. To explain how this might be achieved, I need to first unpack the concept of digital citizenship education.

Digital is a loose and widely used term, and in this article, I employ it to refer to anything that pertains to the use of the Internet. In this general sense, the terms 'cyber' or 'online' can be used as synonyms. *Citizenship* commonly refers to the legal status or membership of a political state. On this reading, a citizen is an individual recognised in law as enjoying certain rights and possessing certain responsibilities. Understood more broadly, citizenship involves active engagement within one's varied communities, contributing to them ethically and morally and as such, citizenship is a contested and multi-layered concept. Citizenship education in England has tended to focus more on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, as opposed to their legal status. The citizenship education curriculum, building on the original Bernard Crick vision for the subject, has traditionally focussed on three interlinked areas: political literacy, community involvement and morally good action. Here I focus primarily on the latter – morally good action. In particular, the focus is on reducing online harms that are widely deemed to be immoral, including cyber-bullying, trolling, fake news and online harassment. This is not to dismiss the importance of political literacy or community involvement, just to state that the model does not focus on these areas. Moreover, it is not to underplay the explicit links between citizenship and moral action made clear in the so-called Crick Report on citizenship education (Crick report, 1999). As argued by Ribble (2015) and others such as Hughes and Burke (2014), digital citizenship is partly about 'norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour' (Ribble, 2015, p. 15). Such a conception might be criticised by scholars who draw on critical theory and take a more politicised approach to digital citizenship as embedded within systemic inequalities (see, for example, Emejulu & McGregor, 2019). However, scholars who are concerned about the model furthering existing power structures and not having due regard for individual autonomy and critical expression will hopefully be reassured when I describe the purpose and nature of the model.

The purpose of the educational model is to outline a whole-school approach to cyber-flourishing that seeks to reduce online harms and can be integrated into broader approaches to digital citizenship education. The focus on cyber-flourishing assures the model is not deficit based, or about responding to a moral panic. Cyber-flourishing is defined here by drawing on the Aristotelian notion of *Eudaimonia,* which is widely translated as human flourishing, happiness or well-being and is founded on the general theory of virtue ethics (Kristjánsson, 2015). Cyber-flourishing is about living well and living morally in the online world (Harrison, 2020). It is about the possession and display of character virtues, such as compassion, justice, honesty and courage, which might be considered the building blocks of character as they are concerned with morally praiseworthy conduct (Harrison et al., 2017). The most important of these virtues is what I have previously termed cyber-wisdom (Harrison, 2016). Like its Aristotelian forebear (*phronesis*), the term might be contested and a lengthier discussion of how the term is defined can be found in Matthew Dennis and Tom Harrison's (2020) article in the Journal of Moral Education. Importantly, the focus on cyber-wisdom renders criticism that the model might contribute to indoctrination or the promotion of existing power structures inaccurate. At its heart, cyber-wisdom is the ability to think critically, autonomously, independently and in the

moment, when faced with an online moral dilemma. This might, for example, include being courageous and challenging dominant structures or discourses if they are deemed to be unjust. In this sense, the ultimate purpose of the model is to show how we can educate children and young people to make free use of the Internet and through making wise moral judgements to utilise its reach and connectivity to improve the lives of individuals and society more broadly.

Placing cyber-wisdom for cyber-flourishing at the heart of the model recognises the many challenges the Internet presents to those seeking to live morally online. Due to the affordances the Internet offers its users, such as being able to communicate with others at any time, at speed and without regard to location, it is not possible to moderate morality solely through deontological or utilitarian approaches (see Plaissance, 2014; Vallor, 2016; Dennis & Harrison, 2020). The model utilises these moral theories in support of a virtue ethical approach where young users are supported to *do the right thing online* and not solely because of rules (deontology) or a calculation of consequences (utilitarian), but because they possess certain virtues, including cyber-wisdom. As such, in the model, deontological and utilitarian based educational approaches provide the foundations and serve in support of an overarching virtue ethical educational approach to tackling online harms. This move recognises that in philosophy virtue ethics, as an approach to normative theory that focuses on the character of the agent, has established itself as a suitable alternative to other ethical theories (e.g., Hursthouse, 1999; Russell, 2009). Virtue ethics thus provides a basis on which we can cultivate qualities in children and young people that can help them to act morally and ethically online, even when no-one is watching.

Why do we need an educational model for cyber-flourishing?

Given that all schools, in some form, teach digital citizenship, a reasonable question might be – why do we need a new model? Given the current milieu, I argue that a new approach is required to underpin an explicit, coordinated and planned whole-school approach to an important element of digital citizenship – that of online morality. I make the case for the new model on the following four interrelated grounds: i) the prevalence and detrimental effects of online harms; ii) the affordances that the Internet offers mean we cannot adopt traditional approaches to addressing these online harms; iii) the bewildering array of resources and strategies currently on offer make it hard for teachers to know where to start; and iv) the fact that we cannot, yet, rely on empirical data to guide practice. I will address each of these reasons in turn.

i) **The prevalence and detrimental effects of online harms**

The early Internet pioneers had high hopes that the Internet would revolutionise the world as well as improve it. Rana Foroohar (2019) argues in her book '*Don't be Evil'* that their first hope has undoubtedly been realised, but we are a long way off realising their second. The picture is more complex than this. The Internet might also be viewed as the unsung hero of the recent COVID-19 pandemic; amongst many other things, helping parents to educate their children at home, scientists to share information quickly round the world and keeping us entertained during lockdown. The benefits the Internet brings to our lives are often underappreciated. This is, in part, down to its perceived negative impact on our wellbeing, morality and overall human flourishing.

The detrimental effects of living online have been well documented. The list of 'social ills' attributed to the Internet is long and growing. These include, concern at the rise of online incivility, fake news and misinformation damaging trust (e.g. Lazer et al., 2018), the so-called rise of 'evil online' (e.g. Cocking & Van de Hoven), evil sub-cultures on the dark net (e.g. Barlett, 2015), a decoupling of scientific and technical advancement from democratic advancement (e.g. Vallor, 2016), to name a few. These headline concerns sometimes mask the real and everyday issues that teachers are expected to

deal with – such as cyber-bullying, online plagiarism, misinformation, online harassment, trolling and sexting.

The nature of morality on the Internet has been dealt with in numerous publications. The debate can be divided by those who promote the Internet as largely a force for good (e.g., Shapiro, 2019), those who see it as morally corrupting (e.g., Cocking et al., 2018) and those who present a more balanced view (e.g., Livingstone, 2014). I have not got space in this article to discuss in depth the nature of the impact of the Internet on everyday life and wellbeing. What is clear is that the Internet provides children and young people with affordances that changes their perception of what is morally right and makes it more likely they will act without moral probity in their online interactions (see point ii). What is less clear is how intentional children and young people are about their online misdemeanours, with suggestions these are brought about due to a 'moral fog' (Cocking & Van den Hoven, 2018), unintentionally (Harrison, 2014) or because of 'acute technosocial opacity' (Vallor, 2016). Online affordances make it hard for children to discern appropriate moral rules or, in Vallor's words, 'identify[ing], seek[ing], and secur[ing] the ultimate goal of ethics – a life worth choosing; a life lived *well'* (2018, p. 6, emphasis in original*)*.

Given the prevalence and potential severity of online harms and the challenges they present to flourishing, it is incumbent on teachers (alongside parents, governments, tech companies and individuals themselves) to address this issue. This reason itself does not provide a prima facia case for a *new* educational model – just the need for a model or framework to guide practice.

ii) the affordances the Internet offers mean we cannot adopt traditional approaches to addressing online harms

The case for a new model starts with making a case for why we can't simply adopt older and more traditional approaches to character education, citizenship education and PSHE and direct these at lessons on the Internet and online harms. Significantly, in 2014, a report found that for the first time, young people in Britain are more likely to be bullied online than face-to-face in the playground (Livingstone et al., 2014). I argue it is the affordances that the Internet offers young people that make cyber-bullying and other online harms more likely. I use the term affordances drawing on the work of Psychologist James J Gibson (1979) to mean 'what the environment offers an individual'. The term is now regularly used in the fields of technology and society (e.g., Norman, 2013).

These affordances include the following:

- Reduced rules, monitoring and enforcement, creating a feeling that the Internet is unregulated, and bullies will not be caught by teachers, parents or other authorities (Harrison, 2016).
- Ability to be anonymous, which lessens individuals' fear of exposure, repercussions or fears about censure (Mishnan et al., 2009), reduces their sensitivity towards victims (Ang and Goh, 2010) and increases their confidence through invisibility, making it more likely they will do things that they otherwise wouldn't (Suler, 2004).
- Lack of synchronous feedback loop (Suler, 2004) and visual clues (Cross et al., 2009) means individuals are not faced with the immediate emotional response that might make them check or change their behaviour, leading to a reduction in accountability cues in private self-awareness and might lead to a decrease in self-regulation (Campbell, 2005); a decrease in 'social presence' can reduce empathy and feelings of guilt (Malti, et al., 2010).
- Increased connectivity enables individuals to undertake moral misdemeanours, such as cyber-bullying, at any time and from any place, including when they are alone and unsupervised (Mishnan et al., 2009).

Of course, some of these affordances can be used for benign as well as toxic purposes (Suler, 2004) and are also the reason why the Internet is popular. They are also the reason why we need a new model to deal with the ways that technology has impacted on society, which takes into account the changing ways we interact and behave with each other online. The model responds to these affordances and shows how we can teach children and young people to use them to enhance rather than negatively impact on human flourishing.

iii) the bewildering array of resources and strategies currently on offer make it hard for teachers to know where to start.

Education for digital citizenship is big business. A search on TES (a platform with teaching resources for teachers) returned the following number of resources for secondary school teachers for these terms: digital citizenship – 1041; fake news – 481; cyber-bullying – 320; trolling – 100, revenge porn – 29.[2] TES is just one of many sites that teachers turn to when looking for inspiration. There are also many charities and organisations, such as Common Sense Media, UK Safer Internet Centre, Childnet, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), that offer advice, support and educational resources. Academics have published books and articles that discuss evidence-based approaches to addressing online harms through education. For example, Campbell and Baumen (2018) have edited a book containing the description of 13 international evidence based programmes that have been found to reduce bullying online. Other researchers have published frameworks for digital citizenship. These include Ribble (2011) who suggests nine components of digital citizenship, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), which also advises of nine digital citizenship components, and the iKeepSafe organization (see http://www.ikeepsafe.org/) that advises five components required for digital safety (Searson et al., 2015). On top of these publications, government agencies and departments have published reports about online harms that make recommendations for educational practice. These have not translated into clear advice from the Department for Education (DfE) who currently encourage schools to develop their own curricula by taking guidance from organisations such as the PSHE Association. There is even less guidance in the citizenship education curriculum where the focus, if anywhere, tends to be on digital forms of political literacy and online social action. The plethora of advice, support and resources is enough to make teachers' heads spin as they seek to develop coordinated approaches to education for digital citizenship that are evidenced based and respond to the moral concerns of the day. In absence of consistent guidance, many schools are left to develop their own, often ad-hoc, approaches to digital citizenship. The new model is proposed to address this situation as it provides a moral theory-based framework to guide overall practice.

iv) we must start with a theoretical model as we cannot yet rely on empirical data to show us the way

A final challenge I address, before describing the new model, is to explain why it is theoretical, not empirically grounded. The simple answer is the paucity of quality and/or comprehensive research in the field. The pace of technological change has left research into its impact on human flourishing in its wake. We simply don't have reliable data about how the Internet impacts on human morality, nor how education should respond. In a fast-becoming infamous article, Amy Orben and her colleague Andrew Przybylski (2019) undertook detailed research using large data sets to investigate the links between adolescence, wellbeing and digital technology use. They showed how easy it is, when running the data, to find headline-worthy results. However, many of their analyses produced what is known as false positives; if the data was to be analysed again, a different result would probably be found. Orben and Przybylskis showed that it is almost impossible at the present time to make

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[2] Searched on the 26th June 2020

conclusive claims on the ways in which technology use impacts on wellbeing. Their findings are perhaps not surprising given the many well-known limitations associated with studying the field. Few studies are impervious to claims against their validity. Limitations include: trying to make inference about individuals from vast population wide data sets; the challenge of keeping up with new omnipresent technologies which are often superseded before there is time to study them properly, leading to a lack of any longitudinal studies; and a reliance on self-reported data – studies based on children telling about their use of the Internet that likely contain delusional bias.

Because empirical research cannot, as yet, tell us what we need to do, we must rely on theoretical models to provide a framework for overarching practice. Although there are some helpful studies that support particular interventions that target particular issues, there is no research that supports an overarching and intentional approach to educating for moral digital citizenship. For now, practitioners must draw on data when it is deemed helpful and fill in the gaps with well thought-out theory.

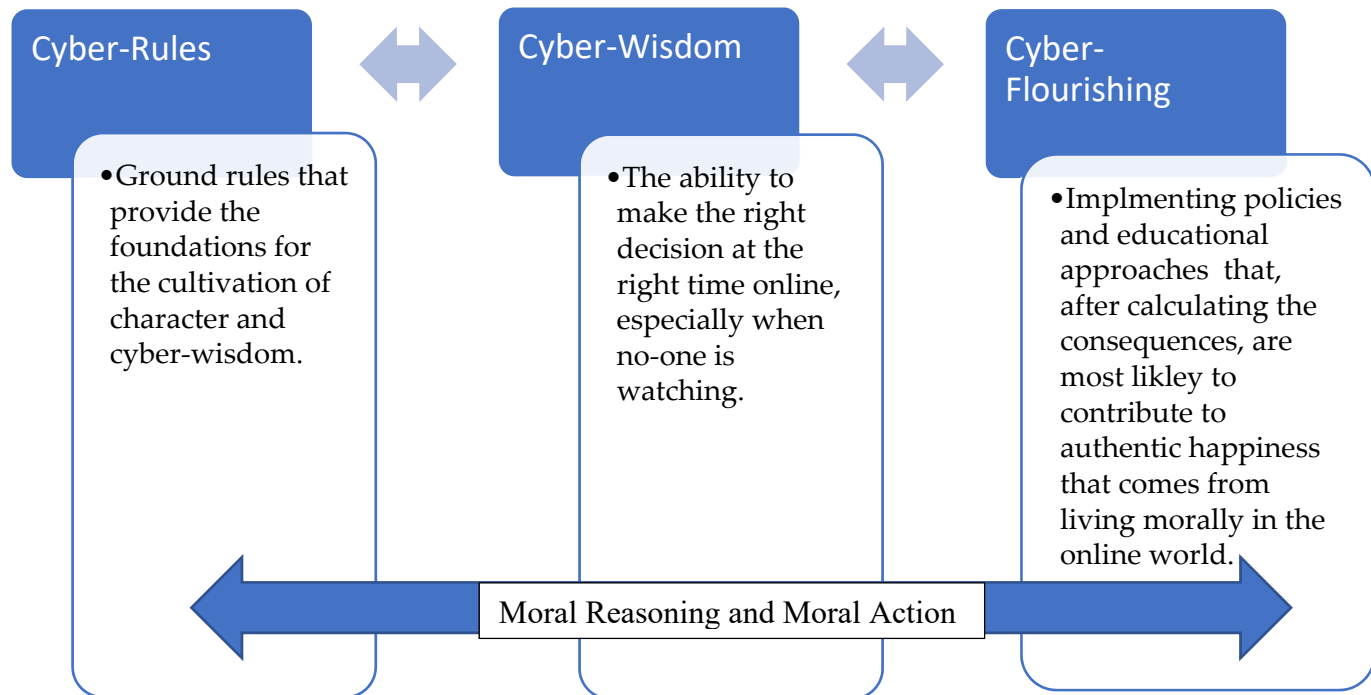**Theoretical underpinnings of the new educational model for digital flourishing**

If schools are to address the complex and prevalent moral concerns that the Internet has presented pupils with, then they need to utilise all the tools available. This calls for non-reductive theorising, drawing on the best of what we know from centuries of moral theory and applying it to the challenges of the day. The educational model for enhancing cyber-flourishing is inspired by the work of Bernard Williams (1985) who rejected the codification of ethics into discreet moral theories. In the model I integrate elements of deontological, utilitarian and virtue ethical theory, employing their central tenets when they are useful to address real life concerns. I am aware that I might be accused of being over pragmatic in my theorising; ignoring the nuances and critiques that have characterised centuries of academic and popular thought on the question '*what is the right thing to do in any given situation*'. Whilst recognising the need for complexity, I make no apologies for being pragmatic and presenting a model that policy makers, school leaders and teachers can grapple with. My aim is to provide a bird's-eye view into how these key theories might be integrated into an educational model that targets online interactions that lead to hurt or harm. It is up to policy makers, schools and teachers as to how they interpret and implement the model. This will depend on many factors, including the school context and culture and the changing nature of new and emerging technologies.

It is important to state that previous attempts at frameworks for digital citizenship do contain elements of moral theory without being explicit about them. For example, the popular nine-component framework outlined by Ribble (2015) places a strong emphasis on character, virtue and teaching young people to make autonomous decisions but does not discuss virtue ethical theory. The components in the International Society for Technology in Education and iKeepSafe (Searson et al., 2015) frameworks are more deontological in nature and largely about informing young users about rules and guidance on Internet use. The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens that introduces eight proficiency levels and examples of use (Vuorikari et al., 2016) focuses on digital literacy and knowledge of technological use but does include netiquette as one of its components. An analysis of these frameworks shows they all draw implicitly on moral theory. I argue, that making the moral theory that underpins the model explicit will help teachers utilise popular deontological and utilitarian strategies in service of an over-arching virtue ethical approach to reducing online harms.

I will now outline and provide a conceptualisation of each of the three moral theories that underpin the educational model for cyber-flourishing. Figure 1 below provides an overview of how of how the three moral theories might work together in practice. Cyber-wisdom, drawing on virtue ethics, is placed at the centre of the model to show how deontological and utilitarian approaches contribute to the development of this quality. Cyber-rules, drawing on deontology, are the ground rules that

schools must put in place to provide the foundations for the cultivation of character and cyber-wisdom. Cyber-flourishing reconstructs utilitarian theory, to prioritise authentic happiness from living well and living morally in the online world as the utility that actions should be measured against. The aim is that schools weigh up alternatives and implement policies and educational approaches that are most likely to enhance cyber-flourishing – as the commonly agreed utility.

Figure 1: New Educational Model for Cyber-Flourishing

Cyber-Rules
- Ground rules that provide the foundations for the cultivation of character and cyber-wisdom.

Cyber-Wisdom
- The ability to make the right decision at the right time online, especially when no-one is watching.

Cyber-Flourishing
- Implmenting policies and educational approaches that, after calculating the consequences, are most likley to contribute to authentic happiness that comes from living morally in the online world.

Moral Reasoning and Moral Action

Deontology - Cyber-Rules

Deontology is based on the moral principle that it is one's duty to follow rules and guidelines and draws on the philosophy most commonly associated with the philosopher Immanuel Kant. Most schools run on deontological principles; they set rules about behaviour, draw up policies to guide school life and implement codes on staff conduct. Rules-based approaches are also a common way that schools manage their pupils' Internet use and access and are one of the core components of the educational model for cyber-flourishing.

Cyber-rules are the policies, guidelines and codes of conducts that schools should put in place to help their pupils use Internet enabled technology in a way that contributes to digital flourishing. Cyber-rules do a number of jobs, including limiting pupils' mobile phone use to when it is needed for the purpose of positive and constructive learning, ensuring that the content children access through the schools' Internet is appropriate and making explicit expectations on online behaviour. Cyber-rules should be constructed with an eye to the future and implemented when they contribute to the development of character and cyber-wisdom. Cyber-rules should be understood as both limited and limiting; they will likely be abstract, won't attend to the specifics of any situation and are primarily concerned with making clear the minimum expectations on behaviour.

Despite prevailing policy, cyber-rules should not include outright bans of mobile phones or other Internet enabled devices. As mobile phones are deemed to be distracting and/or damaging, many

schools have taken steps to ban or limit their use (Diamantes, 2010; Humble-Thaden, 2011). In some countries, the policy on school-wide bans has been decided by governments, such as France, Israel, and some Canadian and Australian states (Selwyn and Aagaard, 2019). Whilst bans have been shown to be broadly supported by the general public (Selwyn and Aagaard, 2019) and deemed necessary by teachers (Qiufeng et al., 2014), they are not conjunct to the development of cyber-wisdom. To develop wisdom, pupils have to learn how to live morally well with the technology in their lives.

Research shows that rules on phone and other technology use are inconsistently implemented by teachers; some ban them in their classrooms completely whilst others are more lenient in enforcing the policy (Hopke and Marsh, 2011). Furthermore, it has been found that pupils get around rules by using phones in their pockets during the school day (Redmayne et al., 2011) or use them openly during class (Lenhart et al., 2010). Some teachers resist bans for principled reasons. These include a belief that it is not helpful to install mindsets in children that phones and technologies are necessarily harmful (Selwyn et al., 2019) and that banning phones diminishes educational opportunities (see Orlando, 2019) and is contrary to a wealth of literature in fields such as e-learning and media education (see Cook, Pachler and Bachmair, 2011; Erstad, Gilje and de Lange, 2007; Ozdamli and Uzunboylu, 2015). For either practical or principle reasons, many teachers don't consider school policies on mobile phone use to be effective (Qiufeng et al., 2014; Qiufeng et al., 2017). Instead of outright bans, the model proposes that schools implement a set of ground rules that outline acceptable use that specifies when pupils can use their phones and other Internet-connected devices (Ribble, 2015).

Cyber-rules are conceptualised in the model as ground rules as they provide the foundations for character development and growth. They serve to help pupils understand what is expected in terms of appropriate use of the Internet and will also likely reduce online harms such as cyber-bullying occurring on school grounds. They also ensure that lessons are not inappropriately interrupted when pupils are distracted by looking at their phones. The rules and policies should be commonly agreed across all stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers) and should be realistic, reasonable and enforceable. The process of constructing them will require balancing legal obligations with the realities of student culture and tools (Diamantes, 2010; Humble-Thaden, 2011). Furthermore, there is no 'off the shelf' blueprint for rules – schools have to construct them based on what works for the communities they serve. School leaders have to rely on their judgement, knowledge and, at times, instinct, when constructing bespoke policies on Internet access and use.

Guiding the development of the cyber-rules should be two questions: i) how do they contribute to cyber-flourishing in society? and ii) how to they contribute to the cultivation of cyber-wisdom in pupils? These questions are essential if the aim of the model – to educate pupils to 'do the right thing, at the right time online when no one is looking' (Harrison, 2016) – is to be realised. Given the challenges of enforcing rules in the cyber-world, pupils are as likely to follow them due to the character qualities they possess rather than because they are being dogmatically enforced. Research has shown that in practice pupils and teachers frequently negotiate boundaries around mobile phone usage in classrooms through relationships founded on trust and respect (Charles, 2012). There might also be times when pupils have to take a character-based decision to break a rule for a moral reason. For example, pupils should be able to use their mobile phones to call for assistance in an emergency. Less dramatically, pupils might access their phones during a lesson to help them complete a learning task. Pupils with cyber-wisdom will know when rules are to be followed and when it is necessary to break them for a greater moral purpose.

Utilitarianism – Cyber-flourishing

Utilitarianism is based on the principle that the 'right thing to do' is the action that brings the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people' and draws on the philosophy most commonly associated with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarian principles might be said to be commonplace in education, as policy is often decided by weighing up a range of desired outcomes – for example, debates about when and where budget and resources should be used and directed. In the model, I seek to reclaim utilitarian philosophy from such debates and reconstruct it to suit the present purpose. In order to do so, I define the utility or desired goal of the model in terms of cyber-flourishing. Utility is achieved when our online engagement contributes towards a notion of the common good. Cyber-flourishing should be viewed as a form of authentic happiness, where collective wellbeing and happiness is prized over individual pleasure, hedonism or indulgence. On this reading, it requires Internet users to take moral actions that enhance rather than diminish the lives of others and to strive to avoid committing online harms. This might be viewed as the goal for online living or what Kristjánsson calls 'a general blueprint of the good life' that can be conveyed 'through teaching: a consciously accessible, comprehensive and systematic – if also flexible and open-textured – conception of what makes a human life go well' (2015, p99).

Such an approach suffers from the standard objections about utilitarianism – namely, that it is difficult to predict the consequences of our actions. It is further limited by the fact that the affordances of the Internet make the prediction of online actions even harder to calculate (Harrison, 2016). For example, many young people are left with problematic digital legacies because of items they have posted or tweeted in the past. Likewise, many young people report they accidently bullied someone else as they were not able to see how their post might be interpreted or where it might end up. The same issue applies to sexting, rife in many schools, as pupils have not been able to predict the consequences of sharing explicit pictures. This does not render utilitarian approaches useless, it just limits them.

There are two important jobs utilitarian theory can help with that will contribute to the overall goal of cyber-flourishing. Firstly, schools should educate their pupils about what authentic happiness and cyber-flourishing is, to help them to construct a moral blueprint for online living. This means encouraging moral imagination in pupils to think about the online worlds in which they would like to live, work and play. Secondly, schools can incorporate activities into their curriculum that prepare pupils to think about the consequences of their actions. These will likely include stimuli like films and stories that provide insight into others' lives online. These can help pupils to pause before sending a post or status update and think through the possible consequences of their actions – a process the moral philosopher Nancy Snow (2019) calls 'techcheck'.

The aim of utilitarian based educational activities would be to help pupils develop an insight into the potentially traumatic effects of their online interactions in order to help them pause and reflect before they post. To get them to think about the potential outcomes of their actions, from the relatively passive and unthinking unidirectional habits of liking, retweeting and following, to the more troubling and deliberately aggressive behaviours, including trolling and cyber-bullying. It is also to encourage empathy and a sense of reciprocity in pupils, in the hope that they become increasingly other-regarding in their online interactions.

Cyber-Wisdom – Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is a theory that originates in the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle. His argument was that if we want to help people to 'do the right thing', then we have to educate them in character and virtue. Character is so important to the model because ultimately pupils have to learn to manage their own use of the Internet, guided by the virtues. As I have previously explained, this requires

schools to focus on the cultivation of techno-moral virtues (Vallor, 2016), of which the most important is cyber-wisdom (Harrison, 2016). The educational model for cyber-flourishing places virtue ethics at the centre and cyber-wisdom as the core component around which schools should build their strategies. This is because the overall aim of the model is to educate virtues and cyber-wisdom in pupils so that they can autonomously manage their use of the Internet in a way that contributes to their own and others' happiness, wellbeing and overall flourishing. The requirement is for schools to be planned, conscious and reflective in their approach to developing character qualities through being explicit about their character education offering.

Character education has been experiencing a resurgence in schools in many countries. This has been driven by an understanding that an overly narrow curriculum, with an exclusive focus on knowledge and attainment, is not sufficient to help children respond to the demands of the day and the future. For example, taking a lead from Heckman et al. (2014), the OECD have actively explored how to introduce a new set of PISA tests that measure character and social emotional outcomes alongside the current tests of maths, science and language.[3] Such a move has been replicated by some countries. Singapore has placed character and citizenship at the heart of their educational offer, and in the UK the national inspection body, OFSTED, has placed character as one of their outcome measures in its new framework. As these countries and others develop strategies, approaches and curricula for character education, it is incumbent on them to ensure there is a focus on living well in the digital age.

Character education has been variously defined and applied. In the model, I advocate that character education must be underpinned by virtue ethical moral theory as it is the most suitably attuned to meet the moral demands posed by the Internet. When it is underpinned by virtue ethics, character education is less likely to be challenged on grounds that it is indoctrinating, paternalistic and conservative (Kristjansson, 2015), whilst also retaining a primary focus on moral and intellectual virtues (in comparison with positive psychology that has been generally more concerned with performative character strengths, like resilience). I don't have space to expand on these critiques in this paper, but make the case that virtue ethics is well placed to defend from them as it respects individual autonomy and difference (Jubilee Centre, 2017). What is key is that the approaches don't focus on blindly instructing children how to behave well online, but seek instead to cultivate and hone cyber-wisdom. As a reminder, cyber-wisdom is the meta-virtue that enables us to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way but applies this to our conduct in the online environment (Harrison, 2016b). It is a multi-component construct, an intellectual virtue and, importantly, a paradigmatically human quality that is honed over time, through experimentation and critical reflection on action. We develop the quality through our experiences of living online and by sometimes making mistakes and learning from them. Those who possess the quality must also have habituated virtues that are in accordance with moral behaviour (Darnell et al., 2019; Ferkany, 2019; Jubilee Centre, 2017; Kristjansson, 2015a, 2015b; Schwartz and Sharpe, 2010; Russell, 2009; Hursthouse, 2006).

What an explicit approach to character education for cyber-flourishing might look like has been outlined in detail in previous publications (Dennis and Harrison, 2020; Harrison, 2020). Its key elements include the following: providing pupils with a language of character and an understanding about why the virtues – including honesty, compassion, justice, courage and wisdom – matter in day-to-day online interactions; utilising this language to help pupils reflect on their day–to-day experiences of living online and the decisions they make – a form of experiential learning. A reconstructed character education-based approach, as advocated by the model, might look as follows. Firstly, pupils are judged not on if they comply with a set of rules, but the character qualities they

[3] http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/Fostering-and-Measuring-Skills-Improving-Cognitive-and-Non-Cognitive-Skills-to-Promote-Lifetime-Success.pdf

display in their day-to-day online interactions. Secondly, education starts with pupils' experiences of using online technologies and their experiences of life online, not through worksheets about abstract examples or principles. Thirdly, children are taught a language of character that frames their evaluation of online interactions – they learn to ask is this the compassionate, honest or just action to take? Fourthly, it allows children to make mistakes online and support and mentoring is provided to learn from those mistakes. Fifthly, the focus is on honing the overarching quality of cyber-wisdom (putting the virtues into practice in real life), not on the individual virtues themselves.

Such a virtue-led approach can be bolstered by drawing on deontological and utilitarian approaches. There will be times when it is necessary to remove phones as well as implement codes of conduct that outline acceptable use. Likewise, it is useful to share examples with children of the consequences of online actions that have resulted in online harm – such as children who have committed suicide after being bullied. These experiences can build the moral consciousness of children and inform their thinking when they try to calculate the consequences of their own actions.

Having presented the moral theories central to the model, I will now turn to the important task of showing how these are integrated to inform a new approach to practice.

Applying the Model in Schools and Classrooms – Nine Educational Practices

I conclude this article by briefly sketching nine practices that demonstrate how the model might be applied by teachers and others with pastoral responsibilities in their schools and classrooms (chart 2). Each of the educational practices draws on two of the moral theories. In the chart, virtue ethics is centralised as deontological and utilitarian approaches are implemented in support of an overarching goal of the development of character and cyber-wisdom.

	Deontological	Virtue Ethics	Utilitarian
Deontological	**Ground Rules** Develop, alongside parents, teachers and pupils, a bespoke set of school ground rules about Internet use and access.	**Experiential Learning** Pupils are actively guided to use the Internet virtuously throughout the school day and given opportunities to reflect on whether their Internet use is having a positive or negative effect on themselves and others.	**Netiquette** Teaching pupils about online behaviour and expectations. The list of guidelines for respectful communication online should all have the aim of enhancing cyber-flourishing.
Virtue Ethics	**Moral dilemmas** Moral dilemma activities that pupils debate and discuss to learn about when they should comply with the rules and when the rules should be challenged for virtuous reasons.	**Character Education** A taught character education programme where pupils are supported to develop cyber-wisdom.	**Virtue vison and language** Developing and implementing a shared common language across the school, focusing on cyber-flourishing as a desired outcome.

Utilitarian	Coaching	Exemplars	Narratives
	Behaviour policy that focuses on character development through character coaching. The focus of the coaching is on actions that contribute to cyber-flourishing, when pupils are found to have committed online harms.	Exemplars of online wisdom and virtue introduced to students through curricula activities. The exemplars help pupils understand the possible positive or negative consequences of online interactions.	The use of film, narratives, guests and other whole-school activities that provide insight into the consequences of online actions and how they might contribute to or diminish cyber-flourishing.

A set of **Ground Rules** should be developed by schools to determine when pupils can access their Internet-enabled devices and for what purpose. The rules should be developed by taking into account the views of teachers, pupils and parents, and take into account the age and stage of pupils. They will likely become less restrictive as pupils get older. The rules should not demonise technologies nor drive its use underground, but make clear when it is and is not appropriate for students to use the Internet on school grounds. The rules should be updated annually to take into account new technology hardware and software. It is important that teachers are given autonomy to use their professional judgment when enforcing the rules, understanding there might be moral reasons children break them and that pupils should be allowed to experiment in order to develop the cyber-wisdom required to manage their own Internet use.

Netiquette is a popular term used to describe guidelines that establish expected standards of pro-social behaviour online – mainly detailing what is or is not considered respectful communication (Vuorikari, et al., 2016). There is no official set of netiquette guidelines and schools and organisations are required compile their own lists to suit their context. These might include items such as not posting harmful comments, making your identity clear in all communications, respecting privacy, not using offensive language in social media posts and not sharing sexual images, amongst others. It is useful for schools to draw up netiquette list and display it prominently in the school. The guidelines will make it clear to students the minimum expectations on their online behaviour as well as act as a reminder about expected conduct. Research has shown that netiquette policies are negatively correlated with cyber-bullying behaviour (Park et al., 2014).

Experiential Learning charts the move from netiquette and ground rules to character and cyber-wisdom. It is about pupils learning from living in the cyber-world. Experimental learning has an established pedigree in educational studies – Dewy, Piaget and Vygotsky were all advocates. This requires a paradigm shift for some schools and requires them to cease viewing smartphones and other Internet-enabled devices as the enemy but permits their use when used wisely. For example, teachers might allow phones to be used in the classroom to complete learning tasks but could also be more innovative and encourage pupils to use their phones to carry out digital citizenship projects or learning related to Personal, Health, Social and Economic education (PSHE). These subjects in particular have been marked out for overuse of worksheets as the basis for learning about 'real-life' issues and such a paradigm shift could be both innovative and exciting. Mobile phones' use as an effective learning and teaching tool has been extensively documented (Chuang and Tsao, 2013, Gromik, 2012, Martin and Ertzberger, 2013).

Until pupils have developed cyber-wisdom, there must be consequences when the rules are not followed, and these should include a form of **character coaching**. The consequences should be clearly set out in the policy relating to acceptable Internet use (Kolb, 2011; Clark, 2012) and consistently applied across the school by all teachers. Those tasked with enforcing the sanctions should show wisdom to evaluate each occurrence on merit and understand if rules have been broken for morally good or bad reasons – to take into account permissible circumstances and contexts for use. It is advised that these consequences prioritise character coaching as opposed to strategies that enforce unreflective compliance. Behaviour management strategies in schools that have a character focus are becoming more common. These include elements of the following approaches: restorative justice, which encourages pupils to see first-hand the consequences of their misdemeanours with the hope of eliciting compassion and empathy in the perpetrator; character coaching, so that pupils are made to reflect on their actions and how they matched up to school and individual character expectations as opposed to punishments, such as detention. Meta-analysis by Jeynes (2017) found positive associations between character education and specific behavioural outcomes, such as increased self-control, reduced disruptive behaviour, fewer school suspensions, better moral judgement and higher expressions of love, honesty and compassion. Likewise, Diggs and Akos's (2016) meta-analysis revealed character education programmes were associated with lower student school referrals (i.e. tardiness and suspensions; d = - 0.24) and more positive student internal perceptions (i.e. adaptive attitudes and beliefs; d = 0.45). These studies suggest that behaviour policies where character coaching is key, when pupils have been caught undertaking moral misdemeanours online, is a promising way forward.

The use of **Moral Dilemmas** in character education is becoming increasingly commonplace; they can help pupils notice the morally relevant and virtue-salient aspects of their digital lives. These might be seen as a form of priming – preparing pupils for online ethical situations that they might encounter and in which they have to make a decision about the appropriate moral course of action. Dilemmas can also help pupils understand the relationship between different types of moral rules – for example, when they make a decision following a rule because they are concerned about the consequences or because they believe it to be the virtuous thing to do. Dilemmas could be introduced in many forms – including virtual reality, gaming or animations. Though thinking about and discussing the dilemmas the aim is for pupils to build reflective moral reasoning, allowing for the empowerment of the ethical self through autonomous decision making. A trial of a taught school-based programme utilising dilemmas linked to the Internet showed that it improved the virtue perception and reasoning of those who participated in it, compared to a control group (Harrison, Burns and Moller, 2018). Another recent study has shown how online discussion boards that feature ethical dilemmas can contribute to moral reasoning (Hedayati-Mehdiabadi et al., 2019).

Schools that adopt taught approaches to **character education** include themes relating to digital citizenship and cyber-flourishing in their curricula (Jubilee Centre, 2020). In the UK, schools are increasingly adopting more explicit approaches to teaching character education whilst encompassing topics such as PSHE and Citizenship. Character curricula will look at issues linked to ethics, wellbeing, citizenship and health through a character lens. The central question that guides character education teaching and learning should be *who do I need to be?* not *what do I need to know?* Including topics related to digital citizenship in a character education programme of study will make it clearer to pupils that the virtues they display online are not divorced from those they display offline. Character education programmes of study should include looking at moral harms online through a character lens and include topics such as cyber-bullying, trolling and fake news. They should not be simply knowledge-based, but ultimately about virtuous action.

If pupils are to have a vision of living morally well online then they need help to develop a **virtue vision and language**. Schools can help students develop a virtue-based blueprint for living well

online through encouraging them to reflect on their use of the Internet and how this equates to their ideal for living well online. Time, built into the curriculum for refection, alongside journaling, blogging or online check-in activities could be utilised for this purpose. An activity, organised at the start of each academic year, that requires students individually and in groups to use their moral mindsets to map out how they would like to live with others online will provide a vision to aspire to. The language of character and virtue, aligned to technological use, can be introduced to students through explicit sessions and then reinforced through day–to-day school life in routine school dialogue as well as more formal communications.

Many schools use **narrative** form to introduce moral ideals related to the Internet to their pupils. An increasingly common approach to the cultivation of moral imagination is through the use of story or narrative (Carr and Harrison, 2015). Activities include showing films about young people who have committed suicide after being cyber-bullied and bringing in speakers whose lives have been affected negatively by online harms. The purpose of these real-life narratives is to provide insight in the often-unintended consequences of online harms. Examples of programmes that primarily adopt such an approach include the Media Heroes, which aims to train students in perspective taking through different methods such as using the 'Let's fight it together' (Chilnet international, 2007), role play and examining the potential legal consequences for perpetrators of cyber-bullying. The programme is based on a hypothesis 'that education through the conveyance of potential negative impact for the victims and by promoting empathy with the victims influences attitudes in a positive way.' The programme was evaluated through a controlled trial and was found to reduce cyber-bullying and increase socio-emotional skills and subjective well-being. Another example is the Social Networking Safety Promotion and Cyberbullying Prevention programme, introduced by the Arizona Attorney General. This includes stories that induce adolescents' perceived threat in cyberbullying, the several cyberbullying cases such as Megan Mier's suicide story, other newsworthy stories of perpetrators who got caught and arrested for cyberbullying other adolescents and Arizona's cyberbullying prevention laws (Roberto et al., 2014).

The use of **exemplars** in moral education have an excellent pedigree (see, e.g., Zagzebski, 2015). They can inspire what might be called a moral imaginative mindset in pupils, encouraging pupils to think beyond their current online actions and towards what might be possible. They can also encourage admiration and emulation, although concerns about how far these should be seen as ideals have been raised. A good starting place is to encourage pupils to imagine how they would like to live online and then think of people who exemplify this. These might include their offline and online friends as well as more famous Internet role models, including influencers and gamers who act with wisdom and virtue. Exemplars, brought forward by teachers or the pupils themselves, can be introduced in various ways through curriculum activities linked to subject content, through assemblies or invited speakers.

Conclusion

In this article I have introduced a new model for cyber-flourishing that draws on deontological, utilitarian and virtue ethical theory. I show how the model can be applied in schools as part of an overarching approach to digital citizenship education. I make the case that the model is necessary for four interrelated reasons. These are: i) that children and young people are increasingly exposed to online harms; ii) the affordances that the Internet offers, such as instant communication at any time and any place and the ability to act anonymously, mean we cannot adopt traditional approaches to addressing these online harms; iii) that there is currently a bewildering array of resources and strategies available to teachers to use to teach digital citizenship, and it would be helpful if there was some theoretical framework by which to organise them; and iv) we cannot, yet, rely on empirical data to guide practice. Having detailed the core components of the model, cyber-rules, cyber-flourishing

and cyber-wisdom, I conclude with a brief overview of nine practices that will help pastoral leaders implement the model.

All schools are different, and therefore it is the responsibility of pastoral leaders to interpret the model and apply it to suit their contexts. Although the components and practices do draw on empirical studies to support their effectiveness, the model as whole has not been tested. What is required now is a trial to test the model and to evaluate how effective it is at reducing online harms. Given the significance of the challenge, there will be no shortage of schools willing to test the model. The challenge will be to construct a suitable methodology and outcome measures that can rigorously evaluate its effectiveness over time.

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