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Comparing online and offline sexual behavior in a national sample of youth: Findings from the Growing up with Media survey

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* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting CIPHR for further information.



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Sexual behavior among US adolescents

- 48% of high school students have **ever** had sex
 - 7% had sex before the age of 13 years
 - 15% have had sex with 4 or more people
- 35% have had sex with someone in the past 3 months
 - 62% used a condom at last sex

Data are from the 2007 YRBS available at:
http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/yrbs07_us_overview.pdf

Unwanted sexual experiences

- A history of child sexual abuse victimization is associated with ever having sexual intercourse as well as indications of risky sexual behavior for adolescents (Luster & Small, 1997; Nagy, DiClemente, & Adcock, 1995; Nelson, Higginson, & Grant-Worley, 1994; Stock, Bell, Boyer, & Connell, 1997; Upchurch & Kusumoki, 2004; Erickson & Rapkin, 1991; Lodico & DiClemente, 1994; Riggs, Alario, & McHorney, 1990).
- It is unknown how this translates to:
 - Other forms of unwanted sexual contact – particularly technology-based contact
 - Perpetration

Research questions

How are online and offline unwanted sexual experiences related to each other?

What is the likelihood of ever having had sexual intercourse based upon online and offline unwanted sexual experiences?

Growing up with Media survey

- Longitudinal design; Fielded 2006, 2007, 2008
- Data collected online
- National sample (United States)
- Households randomly identified from the 4 million-member Harris Poll OnLine (HPOL)
- Sample selection was stratified based on youth age and sex.
- Data were weighted to match the US population of adults with children between the ages of 10 and 15 years and adjust for the propensity of adult to be online and in the HPOL.

Eligibility criteria

- Youth:
 - Between the ages of 10-15 years
 - Use the Internet at least once in the last 6 months
 - Live in the household at least 50% of the time
 - English speaking
- Adult:
 - Be a member of the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel
 - Be a resident in the USA (HPOL has members internationally)
 - Be the most (or equally) knowledgeable of the youth's media use in the home
 - English speaking

Youth Demographic Characteristics

	2006 (n=1,577)	2007 (n=1,189)	2008 (n=1,149)
Female	50%	50%	51%
Age (SE)	12.6 (0.05)	13.7 (0.05)	14.5 (0.05)
Hispanic ethnicity	18%	17%	17%
Race: White	70%	72%	72%
Race: Black / African American	15%	13%	14%
Race: Mixed race	7%	9%	9%
Race: Other	8%	6%	6%
Household less than \$35,000	25%	24%	25%
Internet use 1 hour+ per day	47%	49%	52%

Prevalence rates of sexual activity and unwanted sexual experiences (victimization and perpetration)

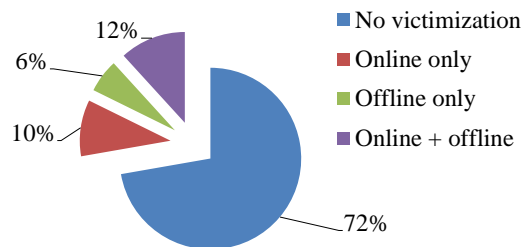
Sexual activity

- 16% of 12-17 year olds reported having had sex ever in 2008
- 3% reported having sex for the first time in the past year
 - 79% reported using a condom at last sex
- The report of sexual activity:
 - Increased two-fold with each year increase in age (OR = 2.0, $p < 0.001$).
 - Was equally likely for boys and girls (OR = 0.8, $p = 0.25$).

Unwanted sexual experiences: victimization

- 18% reported **school-based** victimization: being asked someone to talk, do something sexual, or provide sexual information when they didn't want to
- 18% reported **Internet** victimization: being asked someone to talk, do something sexual, or provide sexual information when they didn't want to
- 10% reported **text messaging**-based victimization: receiving a sexual text message, or sexual picture when they didn't want to receive it

Online – offline overlap Unwanted sexual experiences: victimization



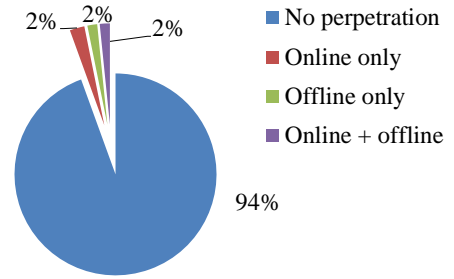
NOTE: Online includes text messaging

Unwanted sexual experiences: perpetration

- 3% reported **face-to-face** aggression: *forcing someone to do something sexual**
- 3% reported **Internet** aggression: asking someone to talk, do something sexual , or provide sexual information when the person didn't want to
- 2% reported **text messaging**-based aggression: sent a text message, or text picture / video that was sexual in any way

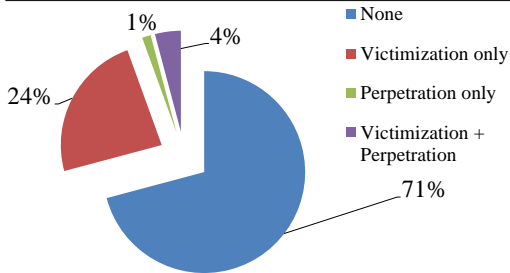
*definition is different from face-to-face (school) victimization

Online – offline overlap Unwanted sexual experiences: perpetration



NOTE: Online includes text messaging

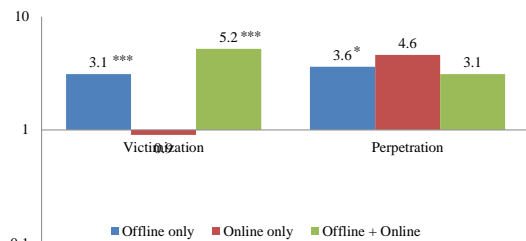
Victimization - perpetration overlap Unwanted sexual experiences



NOTE: 1-year prevalence rate for perpetration is 5.53%. Different %'s in these two graphs is due to rounding

Associations between unwanted sexual experiences and sexual activity

Relative odds of sexual intercourse (ever) given unwanted sexual experiences



Represents two separate logistic regression models. Reference group for each is the 'none' group: not victim; not perpetrator. "Online" includes text messaging.
 ***p<=0.001; *p<0.05

Relative odds of sexual intercourse (ever) given unwanted sexual experiences

Personal characteristics	Odds ratio (95% CI)
Victimization of unwanted sexual experiences	
None (Reference group)	1.0
Online only	1.9 (0.9, 4.0)
Offline only (school)	0.5 (0.1, 1.7)
Online + offline	2.6 (1.2, 5.4)
Perpetration of unwanted sexual experiences	
None (Reference group)	1.0
Online only	1.1 (0.4, 3.1)
Offline only	3.7 (0.4, 31.6)
Online + offline	1.2 (0.3, 4.9)
Other potentially influential factors	
Male	0.6 (0.4, 1.1)
Age	2.0 (1.7, 2.4)
Intentional exposure to x-rated material	2.8 (1.8, 4.5)
Almost all / all media consumed depicts kissing, fondling, sexual activity	2.4 (1.1, 5.6)

Limitations

- Curiously low report of sexual intercourse (ever), somewhat but not entirely explained by our larger age range
- Unobserved self-report
- Findings need to be replicated – preferably in other national data sets
- Our response rates are strong (above 70% at each wave), but we're missing data from 30% of participants...we are statistically adjusting for non-response though

Take aways

The frequency of young people reporting victimization experiences online is similar to that of offline experiences; the same is true for perpetration

The Internet is just but one environment youth are interacting in. Professionals working with youth are encouraged to view the Internet as one of many influential environments in which young people must navigate daily for positive youth development.



Take aways

Sexual intercourse may be related to unwanted sexual experiences – particularly for youth who are victims both online and offline.

Data provide sufficient evidence for further inquiry into a potential offline / online interplay of unwanted sexual experiences for some young people.