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### Youth perpetration of online sexual solicitation: Internet use and psychosocial characteristics

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\* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses can be found in: Ybarra ML, Espelage DL, Mitchell KJ. The co-occurrence of Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation victimization and perpetration: associations with psychosocial indicators. *J Adolesc Health*. 2007;41(6 Suppl 1):S31-41.





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## Background

- An estimated 97% of youth use the Internet (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future, 2005).
- The majority of adolescent Internet-health research has focused on victimization (e.g., Finkelhor, Mitchell, Wolak, 2000; Wolak, Mitchell, Finkelhor, 2006; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, Finkelhor, 2006) and health seeking behavior (e.g., Grey, Klein, Noyce et al., 2005; Ybarra & Suman, 2006).



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## Background: The positive side of the Internet

- About one in four adolescents have used the Internet to look for health information in the last year (Lenhart et al., 2001; Rideout et al., 2001; Ybarra & Suman, 2006).
- 41% of adolescents indicate having changed their behavior because of information they found online (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002), and 14% have sought healthcare services as a result (Rideout, 2001).

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## Background: The negative side of the Internet

- Internet harassment has increased from 6% to 9%, while unwanted sexual solicitation decreased from 19% to 13% from 1999 to 2005 (Mitchell, Wolak, Finkelhor, 2006).
- Just over one-third of youth targeted by Internet victimization report feeling very/extremely upset or afraid because of the incident (Wolak, Mitchell, Finkelhor, 2006; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, Finkelhor, 2006).

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## Problem Statement




Despite recent research which has highlighted the impact negative interpersonal experiences some young people are having online (e.g., unwanted sexual solicitation, harassment), **little has been reported about the ways in which youth are using the Internet to act out.**

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## Panel Presentations




- Describe the Growing up with Media (GuwM) study
- Use GuwM data to examine:
  - Instigation of unwanted sexual solicitation;
  - Intentional exposure to pornography online – especially violent content; and
  - Intentional access to violent web sites.

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## GuwM Methodology




- Conducted between August 24 to September 14, 2006
- Participants recruited from Harris Poll On Line
- 1,591 households (one caregiver, one child) were surveyed online

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## Harris Poll On Line



- HPOL is a double opt-in panel of millions of respondents.
- HPOL data are consistently comparable to data that has been obtained from random telephone samples of general populations when sampling and weighting is applied.



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## GuwM Eligibility

- **ADULT**
  - Be a US resident member of the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel
  - Be the most (or equally) knowledgeable of the youth's media use in the home
  - English speaking
- **YOUTH**
  - Aged 10-15 years
  - Use the Internet at least once in the last 6 months
  - English speaking



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## GuwM Data Methods

- Sample selection was stratified based on youth age and sex.
- Sample was also stratified between “novice” and “experienced” survey participants.



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## GuwM Data Methods

- To control the sample and the increase response rate, the following steps were taken:
  - Password-protected access to the online survey
  - 1 reminder invitation to non-responders
  - Cash incentives (\$10 for adults, \$15 for youth)
- On average, the adult survey took 5 minutes and the youth survey took 21 minutes

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## Growing up with Media Data Analyses

- Response rate was 26% (rates can range from 5-50%)
- Propensity scoring was applied to adjust for the adult's (i.e., recruitment target) propensity to be online
- Data were weighted to match the US population of adults with children between the ages of 10 and 15 years

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## Growing up with Media Data Analyses




- For analyses, cases were required to have valid data for 85% of variables examined.
- Regression estimates are adjusted for 'dishonesty' (6%) and the report of someone in the room near enough to see the computer screen (22%).

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## Youth Demographic Characteristics



- 48% Female
- Mean age: 12.6 years (SE: 0.05)
- 71% White, 13% Black, 9% Mixed, 7% Other
- 19% Hispanic
- Median household income: \$50,000-\$74,999
- Median time spent online on a typical day: 31 minutes – 1 hour


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## Background




- Adolescent sexual aggression
  - 5% of adolescent males and 1% of adolescent females ever engaged in sexual violence perpetration.
  - Correlates include:
    - Nonsexual deviance (e.g., starting fights)
    - Alcohol and drug use
    - Sexist attitudes
    - Anger
    - History of sexual abuse

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## Background



- Online sexual solicitation
  - 13% of youth (10-17 y.o.) Internet users reported an unwanted online sexual solicitation in the past year (1 in 7).
    - 70% girls and 30% boys
    - 81% ages 14 or older
  - 4% received an aggressive sexual solicitation
  - 14% of solicitations from offline friends and acquaintances

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## Research questions




- What is the national 1-year prevalence of youth engaging in technology-based sexual solicitation?
- What are key risk markers for engaging in technology-based sexual solicitation?

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## Definition




- Technology-based sexual solicitation
  - Trying to get someone else to talk about sex online when they did not want to
  - Asking someone online for sexual information about themselves when that person did not want to tell
    - (really personal questions, like what his or her body looks like, or sexual things he or she has done)

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## Definition



- Technology-based sexual solicitation
  - Asking someone to do something sexual online when the other person did not want to
  - Sending a text message that was sexual in any way when that person did not want to receive it
  - Sending a picture text message that was sexual in any way when that person did not want to receive it

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## Other variables



- Offline sexual aggression
- Exposure to sexual material
- Internet use characteristics State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory
- Caregiver-child relationship
- Exposure to violence
- Substance use
- Demographic characteristics

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## Statistical methods



- Chi-square: bivariate differences in characteristics between solicitors and non-solicitors
- Logistic regression: parsimonious model identifying key risk markers for engaging in sexual solicitation perpetration

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## Results




- **4%** (n = 58) of adolescents said they had sexually solicited someone through the Internet or text messaging at least once in the last year.

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## Demographic characteristics




Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Youth age (mean)	13.53	12.59	.000
Female	47%	48%	.94
Household education	53%	36%	.008
Household income	15%	12%	.47
Parent unemployed	5%	5%	.90
White race	73%	72%	.84
Hispanic ethnicity	15%	18%	.54

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## Internet use characteristics




Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Frequency: 7+ days/week	65%	34%	.003
Intensity: 2+ hours/day	47%	20%	.001
Instant messaging	52%	22%	.001
Chat rooms	12%	3%	.002
Social networking sites	41%	16%	.001
Internet in bedroom	42%	33%	.33

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## Substance use




Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Alcohol	66%	11%	.000
Marijuana	41%	4%	.000
Inhalants	24%	1%	.000
All other drugs	17%	1%	.000

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## Online Victimization




Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Any sexual solicitation	83%	13%	.000
Asked to talk about sex	69%	9%	.000
Asked for sexual info	78%	9%	.000
Asked to do something sexual	62%	5%	.000
Received sexual text m.	20%	2%	.000
Received sexual picture txt	21%	1%	.000

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## Sexual aggression and anger



Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Propensity for anger (STAXI) – mean	21.28	18.73	.000
Offline sexual aggression	34%	1%	.000

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## Exposure to sexual material



Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Any X-rated material	86%	18%	.000
X-rated movies	53%	9%	.000
X-rated magazine	71%	11%	.000
X-rated web site	58%	8%	.000
Any sexually violent material	41%	3%	.000

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## Parent-child relationship



Characteristic	Solicitors	Non-solicitors	P value
Coercive discipline	5.92	5.45	.004
Emotional closeness	6.75	7.87	.000
Monitoring	7.34	9.18	.000

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## Key risk markers (LR)




Characteristic	B	SE	OR
Household education	.99	.43	2.7
Instant messaging	1.5	.44	4.5
Social networking sites	1.2	.44	3.4
Offline sexual aggression	1.4	.57	4.1
Parental monitoring	-.35	.13	.70
Online sexual solicitation v	2.1	.45	8.3
Exposure to violence	1.3	.64	3.8
Exposure to pornography	1.9	.50	6.6

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## Conclusions



- Prevalence rates – equal for girls and boys
- Cycle of online sexual solicitation – victimization and perpetration
- Online and offline sexual aggression
- Link with pornography

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