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### Violence on the Internet: How many youth are really looking?

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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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## 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



- Youth violence is a significant public health issue (USDHHS, 2002).
- Consequences include not only injury and death, but community impacts such as health care costs and lost productivity (CDC, 2007).
- Estimates of combined direct and indirect costs associated with youth violence in the United States are more than \$158 billion every year (CDC, 2007).

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## Background




- Research on the effects of violence on behavior has been ongoing since the 1950's, culminating in references in two major US Surgeon General's Reports (1972; 2002).
- Today, there is general agreement in the scientific community that viewing violence, at least for some children, "increases aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviors" (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000).

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## Research questions




- What is the rate of exposure to violence on the Internet?
- What is the cross-sectional association between exposure to violence online and expression of seriously violent behavior offline?

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## Definitions: Exposure to Violence




In the last 12 months, have you gone to or seen the following types of websites?

1. A website, including **news-related sites**, that shows pictures of war, death, 'terrorism'
2. A website that shows **cartoons**, like stick people or animals, being **beat up, hurt, or killed**
3. A website that shows pictures of dead people or people dying. Some people call these 'snuff' sites.
4. A website that people would call a 'hate' site. A "hate" site is one that tells you to hate a group of people because of who they are, how they look, or what they believe.
5. A website that shows **satanic rituals**, such as devil worship or Satan worship

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## Definitions: Seriously Violent Behavior




Youth were asked about the frequency of engaging in behaviorally specific seriously violent behaviors in the previous 12 months:

- 1) Behavior likely resulting in murder (i.e., stabbing or shooting someone);
- 2) Aggravated assault (i.e., threatening someone with a weapon; attacking someone resulting in the need for medical care);
- 3) Robbery (i.e., using a knife or gun or some other kind of weapon like a bat to get something from someone else); and
- 4) Sexual assault (kissing, touching, or doing anything sexual with another person when it was not wanted by that person).

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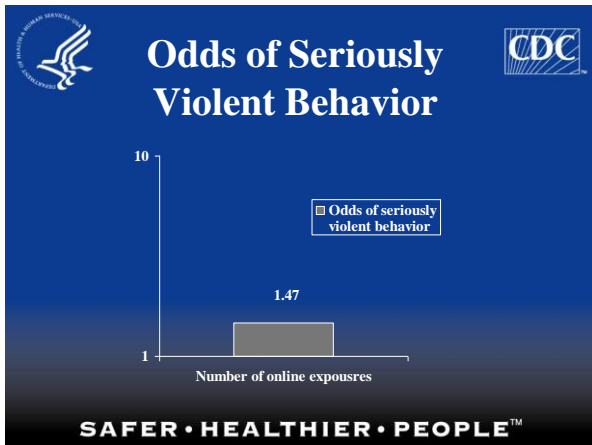
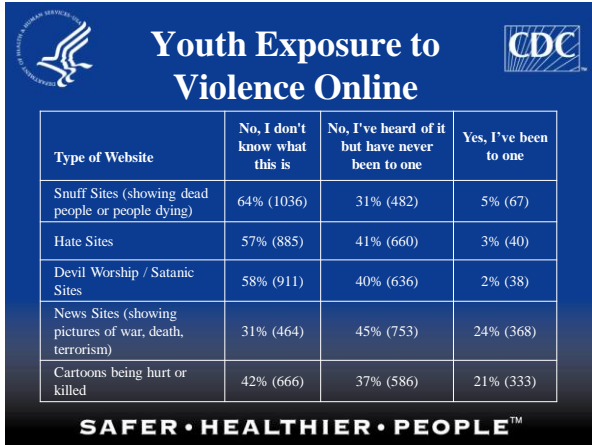


## Statistical Methods



- Six households were dropped because they didn't meet the criteria of having valid data for 85% of the variables.
- Stata was used to compute statistical analyses
  - Differences in the distribution of characteristics by report of seriously violent behavior were tested using F-statistics.
  - Associations were quantified using logistic regression.


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### Odds of Reporting Seriously Violent Behavior Given Exposure to Violence Online

Type of website	No, I don't know what this is		Yes, I've been to one	
	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value
Snuff Sites (showing dead people or people dying)	0.5 (0.3, 1.0)	0.04	2.1 (0.8, 5.6)	0.13
Hate Sites	0.7 (0.4, 1.2)	0.21	4.5 (1.6, 13.0)	0.005
Devil Worship / Satanic Sites	0.6 (0.3, 1.1)	0.08	4.8 (1.6, 14.2)	0.004
News Sites (showing pictures of war, death, terrorism)	0.6 (0.3, 1.3)	0.19	1.2 (0.6, 2.2)	0.65
Cartoons being hurt or killed	0.9 (0.4, 1.8)	0.71	1.4 (0.7, 2.8)	0.30

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## Characteristics of Youth Who have Been Exposed to Internet violence



- ↑ Male
- ↑ Older
- ↓ Low household income
- ↑ Delinquent peers
- ↑ School behavior problems
- ↑ Witnessing violence in real-life
- ↑ Alcohol and marijuana use
- ↑ Poor emotional closeness with caregiver
- ↑ Respond to stimuli with anger (STAX-I)

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## Summary



- 37% report exposure to violence on at least one type of web site in the last year
- The odds of reporting seriously violent behavior increase 47% with each additional type of violent web site reported by youth

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## Summary




- Concurrent reports of seriously violent behavior most strongly associated with:
  - **death** sites (OR = 4.8) and
  - **hate** sites (OR = 4.5)
- **Not knowing** about death sites (OR = 0.5) seem to be protective against concurrent reports of seriously violent behavior

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## Limitations of GuwM Data



- Data are cross-sectional.
- No way to determine directionality of associations
- Findings are relevant to households where both the child and the adult use the Internet.

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## Limitations (cont)

- Respondents were not observed during the data collection process.
- It is possible that:
  - Children were monitored by their parents
    - 22% of youth indicated someone was close enough to see the screen when they were responding
  - Parents completed the youth survey.



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## Implications

- Youth can engage in healthy and unhealthy behaviors on the Internet.
- Youth who report engaging in unhealthy behaviors online are significantly more likely to also report:
  - Substance use
  - Poor relationship with caregiver
  - Exposure to violence in community

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## Implications

- Child health professionals should be aware of the possibility that youth are sexual aggressors online, not just targets.
- Healthcare providers and others working with youth should be aware of the child's violent media diet.
- Renewed effort to educate the public about the importance of actively reducing all violent media exposures is justified.

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