

2012 SRA BIENNIAL MEETING  
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**SESSION TITLE: 2-035. THE INTERNET AS A  
TOOL FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:  
BENEFITS AND RISK FOR LGBT YOUTH**  
MARCH 8, 12:15 PM TO 1:45 PM

## Study Methods Overview

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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.

## TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to thank the entire Study team from the Center for Innovative Public Health Research (Internet Solutions for Kids), the University of New Hampshire, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Latrobe University, and Harris Interactive, who contributed to the planning and implementation of the study. We thank the study participants for their time and willingness to participate in this study.

## TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY: MOTIVATION

One of the reasons LGBT youth are understudied is because of sample size challenges:

- In a large, population-based survey (N=34,706) of junior and senior high school students in Minnesota, 1.1% of students reported themselves as homosexual or bisexual, and 4.5% reported a primary sexual attraction to persons of the same sex (Ramafedi & Resnick, 1992)
- A population-based study of adolescents 13 to 18 years old suggests that about 5% of adolescents identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (GLSEN, 2005)

With such low base rates (i.e., 1-5% of the general population), it is challenging to randomly identify a representative sample large enough to draw statistically valid conclusions.

## TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY: RECRUITMENT THROUGH HPOL

A 'general' population' was recruited through the **Harris Poll Online (HPOL)** opt-in panel (n=3,989 respondents)

A stratified random sample ((balanced on age and sex) of U.S. residents was identified among four groups of HPOL members:

- 1) 13 to 18 year-olds;
- 2) adults with a 13 to 17 year-old in their household;
- 3) adults with a child under 18 in their household; and
- 4) A general population of adults.

Invitations noted that the survey was about "health and the internet".

## TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY: RECRUITMENT THROUGH GLSEN

An oversample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) teenagers was recruited through the **Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**'s contacts (n=1,918 respondents).

Most GLSEN respondents were recruited through:

- 1) Emails sent with the survey link to their distribution list, and
- 2) Publicizing the survey through targeted advertising on Facebook.

Invitations noted that we were particularly interested in hearing from LGBTQ youth.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- U.S. resident
- Ages 13 to 18
- In 5<sup>th</sup> grade or above; and
- Assent to participate in the survey
  - Parental permission requirements waived
- Valid responses: >5 minute survey, age confirmation at beginning and end of the survey, and 80% of main questions given a 'valid' response

## SURVEY EXPERIENCE

- Online survey
- Conducted between August 4, 2010 to January 17, 2011
- Median survey length: 23 minutes for HPOL, and 34 minutes for GLSEN-recruited participants
- Response rate: 7.2% for HPOL (GLSEN-recruited cannot be calculated)
- No incentives were offered (beyond the typical 'thank you' HPOL members receive for doing a survey)

## WEIGHTING

HPOL data are consistently comparable to data that have been obtained from random telephone samples of the general populations, once propensity weighting and appropriate sample weights are applied.

Weighting procedures were used so that the data would behave as if they were nationally representative, and also to align the two samples so that they could be combined into one dataset:

1. The HPOL (general population) sample was weighted to known demographics of 13 to 18 year-olds based on the 2009 Current Population Survey (e.g., biological sex, school location, and U.S. region).
2. Within the weighted general population HPOL sample, a demographic profile was created for LGBTQ teens and was applied to LGBTQ adolescents recruited through GLSEN.
3. A propensity score was created to adjust for behavioral and attitudinal differences between the two groups.

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS (N=5,542)

- Demographic characteristics
  - Mean age: 15.7 years (SE: 0.03; Range: 13-18 years)
  - 67% White, 19% Hispanic
  - 57% Female
  - 33% Suburban setting, 28% urban, 39% small town
  - 59% household income 'similar' to other people's
- 89% attend public school
- 22% evangelical / born again Christians

## MEASURING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their sexuality or sexual orientation. How would you describe your sexuality or sexual orientation? Please select all that apply.

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Straight/heterosexual
- Questioning
- Queer
- Other, please specify
- Not sure

## DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN SAMPLE (N=5,542)

- Gay: 15% unweighted, 11% weighted
- Lesbian: 8% unweighted, 5% weighted
- Bisexual: 15% unweighted, 22% weighted
- Straight / heterosexual: 64% unweighted, 67% weighted
- Questioning: 8% unweighted, 8% weighted
- Queer: 7% unweighted, 4% weighted
- "Other": 5% unweighted, 3% weighted
- Not sure: 3% unweighted, 3% weighted

Note that the percentages are not nationally representative rates; they reflect the purposeful oversampling of LGBQ youth

## CREATING A MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Responses were categorized based upon a hierarchy that gave deference to labels that reflected a stronger identity on the homoaffiliative continuum in this order: Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning and Straight/Heterosexual.

For example, if an individual identified as "gay" and "queer" they were categorized as "Gay/Lesbian"; if an individual identified as "bisexual" and "questioning," they were categorized as "Bisexual." This reflects the stronger identity that lesbian or gay reflects on the homoaffiliative continuum (i.e., lesbian is 'gayer' than bisexual). The following categories were created:

1. Straight/heterosexual exclusively (i.e., no additional orientation was additionally marked);
2. Bisexual;
3. Youth identifying with another orientation (i.e., questioning, not sure, or other); and
4. Gay, Lesbian, or Queer.

## MEASURING GENDER IDENTITY

What is your gender? Your gender is how you feel inside and can be the same or different than the answer you gave above. Please select all that apply.

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Other, please specify:

[Hyperlink] Why are we asking about both sex and gender?

Biological sex is determined by our chromosomes, our hormones and reproductive organs. Typically, we are assigned the sex of male or female at birth.

Gender refers to cultural values (roles, behaviors, activities and attributes) that a society associates with males and females. Gender also refers to how one defines oneself. For many people, there isn't a difference between these terms, but for some people, their gender is different from their biological sex.

## DISTRIBUTION OF GENDER IDENTITY IN SAMPLE(N=5,542)

- Male: 46% unweighted, 46% weighted
- Female: 55% unweighted, 54% weighted
- Transgender: 3% unweighted, 3% weighted
- Other: 3% unweighted, 2% weighted