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## Measuring cyber-aggression: the difference between harassment and bullying, and the influence of differential power

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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.

**CIPHR**  
Center for Innovative  
Public Health Research

## BACKGROUND

Some researchers have conceptualized harassment as a more general measure of peer aggression than bullying. Often, however, these two groups are grouped together when discussing “cyberbullying.”

To our knowledge, no survey has included measures of both harassment and bullying in the same survey to better understand whether and how these two different groups of youth differ.

➡ What is the relationship between harassment and bullying?

## BACKGROUND

When considering bullying specifically, some researchers have argued that differential power is *the* central defining factor that differentiates bullying from other types of aggression. There is a dearth of information however, about whether this is truly an important factor to consider.

➡ Does differential power matter?

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HARASSMENT AND BULLYING?



Image from: <http://www.define-theline.ca/>

## GROWING UP WITH MEDIA SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- Baseline data collected August-September, 2006. Wave 3 data (the focus of today's talk) were collected August – November, 2008
- IRB approval from CDC IRB
- Participants were recruited from Harris Poll On Line
- 1,586 households (one caregiver, one child) were randomly recruited and subsequently surveyed online
- Youth surveys took on average, 30 minutes
- Youth eligibility:
  - Aged 10-15 years
  - Use the Internet at least once in the last 6 months
  - English speaking

## WEIGHTING AND RESPONSE RATES

- **Weighting:**
  - Data were weighted to match the US population of adults with children between the ages of 10 and 15 years;
  - Propensity scoring was applied to adjust for self-selection into the HPOL; and in subsequent waves, the propensity to respond versus not
- **Response rates:**
  - Initial, Wave 1 response rate was 28%
  - At Wave 3, 73% ( $n = 1,158$ ) of baseline respondents responded; 85% of Wave 2 participants responded at Wave 3

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WAVE 3 RESPONDERS VERSUS NON-RESPONDERS\*

Demographic characteristics	Wave 3 responder (n=1,150)	Wave 3 non-responder (n=132)	P-value
Average age at W1	12.7	12.6	.64
Male sex	52%	51%	.76
White race	69%	72%	.37
Hispanic ethnicity	22%	16%	.07
Low household income (<\$35,000 py)	25%	25%	.88
Caregiver is married	74%	73%	.77

\*Weighted data

## MEASURING HARASSMENT

Now we have some questions about things that young people sometimes do when they are on the Internet.

In the past 12 months, how many times did the following happen to you while you were on the Internet?

- Someone made a rude or mean comment to me online.
- Someone spread rumors about me online, whether they were true or not.
- Someone made a threatening or aggressive comment to me online.
- Someone posted a video or picture online that showed me being hurt (by things like being hit or kicked) or embarrassed (by things like having their pants pulled down) for other people to see. *I did not want them to post it.*
- Someone my age took me off their buddy list or other online group because they were mad at me.

Short version: Cronbach's alpha = 0.84, Factor loadings: .75-.86

Long version: Cronbach's alpha = 0.84, Factor loadings: .53-.81

## MEASURING BULLYING

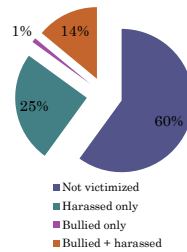
The next questions are about bullying and harassment. We say a young person is being bullied or harassed when someone else or a group of people repeatedly hits, kicks, threatens, or says nasty or unpleasant things to them. Another example is when no one ever talks to them. These things can happen at school, online, or other places young people hang out. It is not bullying when two young people of about the same strength fight or tease each other.

In the last 12 months, how often have you been harassed or bullied...?

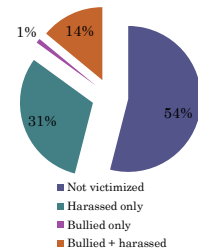
- o At school
- o **On the Internet**
- o On cell phones via text messaging
- o On the way to or from school
- o Somewhere else

## OVERLAP OF CYBERBULLYING AND INTERNET HARASSMENT VICTIMIZATION

Short version



Long version



## DOES DIFFERENTIAL POWER MATTER?



Image from: <http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2012/06/19/502551/new-york-legislature-passes-cyberbullying-protections/>

## TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT SURVEY METHODOLOGY

**Bullying** includes things like the following: repeatedly being teased or having nasty or cruel things said; repeatedly being hit, kicked or pushed around; repeatedly being excluded or left out; or repeatedly having rumors spread.

We say a young person is being **bullied** when something nasty or cruel happens:

More than once

More than just one day

Is between people of different power or strength – this might be physically stronger, socially more popular, or some other type of strength

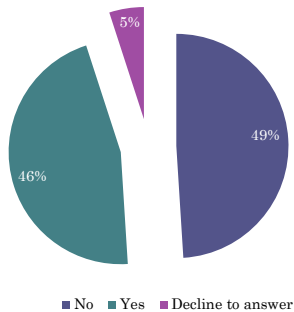
These things can happen anywhere like at school, at home, or other places young people hang out.

In the last 12 months, how often have you been **bullied**...?

- o In person
- o By phone call
- o By Text message
- o Online

Was it by someone who had **more power or strength** than you? This could be because the person was bigger than you, had more friends, was more popular, or had more power than you in another way.

### DIFFERENTIAL POWER AMONG THOSE WHO REPORT BEING BULLIED ONLINE



### TEEN HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY METHODOLOGY

- Fielded August 4, 2010 - January 17, 2011
- IRB approval from CIRBI, UNH IRB, and GLSEN IRB
- Parental permission waived
- Data collected online
- Surveys were completed in 23 minutes, on average
- Participants recruited through Harris Interactive. Invitations emailed to a stratified random sample of U.S. residents among four groups:
  - 13 to 18 year olds
  - Adults with a 13 to 17 year old in their household
  - Adults with a child under 18 in their household
  - A general population of adults

### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS (N=3,777)

Youth characteristics (weighted data)	%
Age (Mean)	15.6
Male	50%
Race	
White	69%
Black	16%
Mixed race	7%
All other	8%
Hispanic ethnicity	18%
Lower than average household income	28%
LGBQ sexual orientation	7%
Living setting	
Urban	27%
Suburban	32%
Small town / rural	41%
Born again Christian	27%

### MEASURING BULLYING AND DIFFERENTIAL POWER

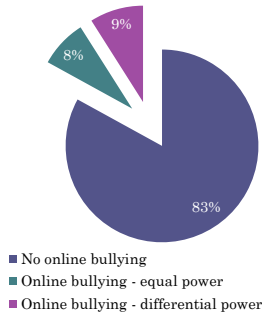
Now we have some questions for you about bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment can happen anywhere, like at school, at home, or other places you hang out. In the past 12 months, how often were you bullied or harassed by someone about your age...?

1. In-person
2. By phone call (on a cell phone or landline)
3. By text message
4. Online
5. Some other way

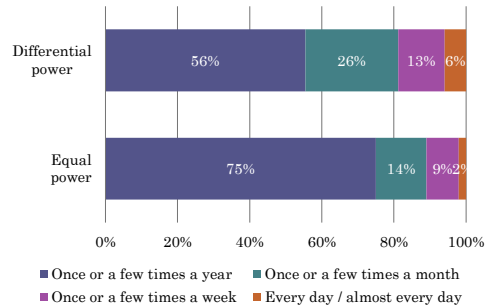
Thinking just about the past 12 months, were you ever bullied or harassed by someone who had more power or strength than you? This could be because the person was bigger than you, had more friends, was more popular, or had more power than you in another way.\*

\*Differential power question asked for all bullied youth, so it is possible that the differential power was with a bully in a different mode

### PREVALENCE RATES OF PAST YEAR ONLINE BULLYING AND DIFFERENTIAL POWER



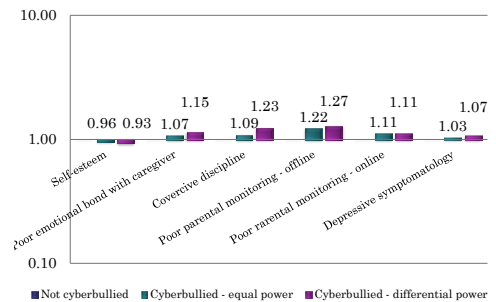
### FREQUENCY OF PAST YEAR ONLINE BULLYING AND DIFFERENTIAL POWER



### IMPACT OF BULLYING BASED UPON DIFFERENTIAL POWER

Impact of bullying	Equal power	Differential power	P-value
Interferes somewhat/a lot with school work	22%	48%	<0.001
Interferes somewhat/a lot with friendships	31%	54%	<0.001
Interferes somewhat/a lot with parental relationships	13%	31%	<0.001
Very/extremely upset about bullying	29%	64%	<0.001
Being bullied is just a part of life for someone like me (somewhat / strongly agree)	27%	42%	.002
(somewhat / strongly) Disagree that there are people in my life can protect me from bullying	12%	23%	.02

### RELATIVE ODDS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGE ASSOCIATED WITH CYBERBULLY VICTIMIZATION



All comparisons are statistically significant (p<0.05)

## LIMITATIONS

- Data are from online samples and are based upon self-report. Findings should be replicated using different methodologies to ensure consistency of findings
- Differential power was not directly tied to online bullying; it's possible that youth were bullied through multiple modes and DP was through a different mode

## SUMMARY: HARASSMENT VERSUS BULLYING

Across two different studies, using two different ways of asking the question, about 17% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past year

Most youth who have been bullied have also been harassed, but the converse is not necessarily true. Thus, under the umbrella of 'peer aggression', harassment is a more generalized form and bullying is a more specific form.

## SUMMARY: DIFFERENTIAL POWER

Differential power matters: Youth bullied by someone with more power than them report greater impact in their lives as a result of the bullying.

You have to \*ask\* about differential power. Simply having it in the question is not enough.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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