LGBT Youth, Technology, and Sexual Health

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IMPACT
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LGBT youth are like “tech” canaries

- Their “early adoption” and often transgressive use of technology forecasts patterns of healthy and unhealthy use by other youth and...eventually adults.
In 1998, a large (N = 6,872) online survey found that the majority of LGBT youth were “coming out” online before doing so in the real world (! OutProud!, 1998).
Online health information seeking

- General Health
- Sensitive health
- HIV/AIDS
- LGBT info

All Teens 14-17 (Pew) vs. LGBTs 16-20 (Q2)
Need for sexual health research on LGBT youth

- High prevalence of HIV among young MSM and lack of prevention response.
- Difficult process of achieving sexual self-acceptance and potential for family and peer rejection and internalization.
- Barriers to developing healthy romantic relationships.

Proportion of HIV/AIDS cases among adolescents and young adults, 2004 – 2007 (CDC)

- Male MSM: 60%
- Female Heterosexual: 25%
- Other: 5%
48% of Chicago young MSM had sex with someone they met online. BUT significant differences by race.

- Black 89% lower odds, $p < .001$
- Hispanic 50% lower odds, $p = NS$

(Garofalo et al., 2007. Am J Public Health)
But does how you meet your partner influence your sexual risk behaviors?
Early 2000s: Internet as a “risk environment”

The Internet as a Newly Emerging Risk Environment for Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mary McFarlane, PhD
Sheana S. Bull, PhD, MPH
Cornelis A. Rietmeijer, MD, MPH

JAMA, July 26, 2000—Vol 284, No. 4

Associations between internet sex seeking and STI associated risk behaviours among men who have sex with men

A Mettey, R Crosby, R J DiClemente, D R Holtgrave

Tracing a Syphilis Outbreak Through Cyberspace

Jeffrey D. Klausner, MD, MPH
Wendy Wolf, MPA
Lyn Fischer-Ponce, MPA
Ilene Zolt, BA
Mitchell H. Katz, MD

JAMA, July 26, 2000—Vol 284, No. 4
247 participants enrolled 2007-2008

Participants self-identified as LGBT or attracted to the same gender.

Recruited using a modified form of respondent driven sampling (Seeds: 15% flyers, 14% agency staff, 9% events; sprouts: 53%).

Age 16-20 at enrollment (mean = 18.3 years), with 31% under 18 years old.

Mustanski et al., 2010. Am J Public Health
Measurement of Partner and Relationship Characteristics Among YMSM

- HIV Risk Behaviors: count of the total number of unprotected anal or vaginal sex acts within each sexual partnership.

- If the partner was met online (1) or offline (0)

- If the partner was considered “casual” (0) or “serious” (1): Serious partners were defined as “someone with whom you’ve had an ongoing relationship with, like a lover, boyfriend or girlfriend, or someone you dated for a while and feel very close to.”