

“Sooner or Later Guys Ask for a Sexual Photo:” Experiences of Electronic Sexual Coercion Among Adolescent Girls in San Diego County

Marissa Salazar, Jay Silverman, Melanie Rusch, Anita Raj, &
Elizabeth Reed

University of California, San Diego
Center on Gender Equity and Health
University of California, San Diego



Objective

- To identify the various elements and scenarios of electronic sexual coercion (ESC) among adolescent girls in San Diego County.





Adolescent Girls Experience High Rates of Sexual Violence

- 1 in 5 female high school students and 1 in 4 female college students have been physically and/or sexually abused by a male partner^{6,7,10}
- 10% of US adolescents have experienced non-partner sexual violence¹¹
 - 17% of middle and high school aged females report an unwanted sexual experience perpetrated by peers.¹¹
- In addition to face-to-face sexual violence, adolescent girls may also experience violence and coercion across multiple venues.
 - Electronic communication technology (ECT) is a relatively new venue in which adolescent girls may experience sexual harassment and coercion.

Adolescents Use Electronic Communication More Than Any Other Age Group

- Globally, adolescents and young adults use social media more than any other age group
 - In the US specifically, 88% of adolescents have access to a cell phone, and 92% go online daily
- Facebook is used most frequently among adolescents (71%), followed by Instagram (52%) and Snapchat (41%).
- Adolescent females use social media more frequently than males.





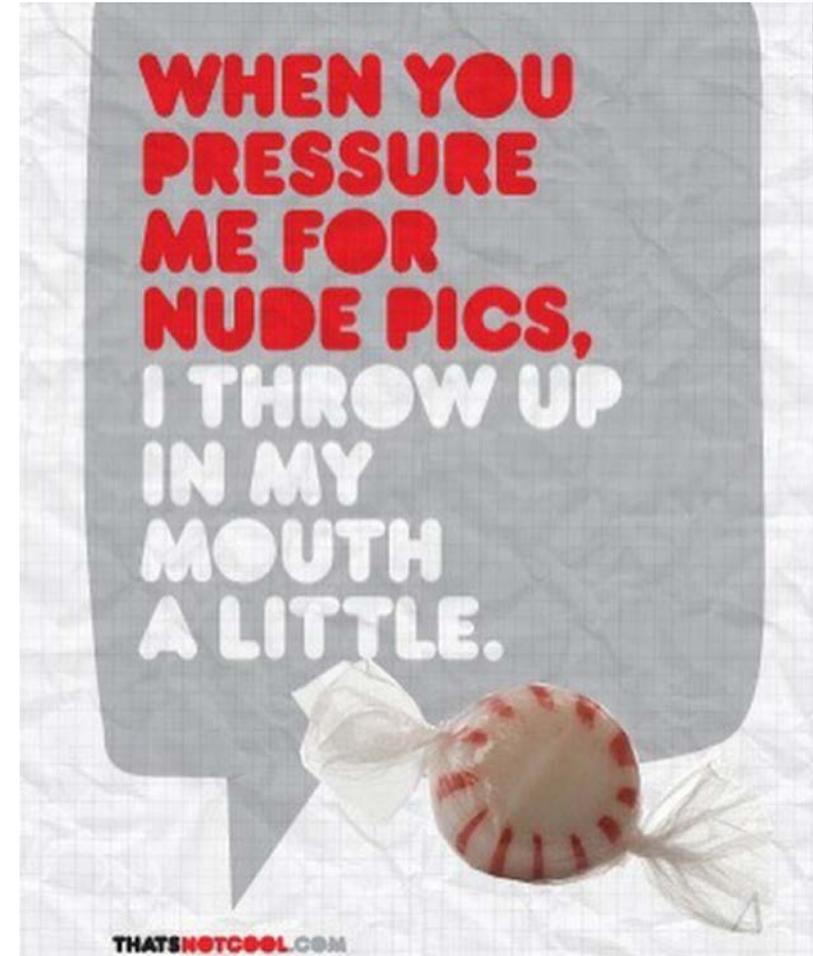
Social Media and Sexual Violence: Current Work

- Compared to males, adolescent females experience higher rates of sexual harassment and solicitation from males met online.¹²
- Majority of work on sexual harassment online has focused on coercive sexting¹³⁻¹⁵
 - Often measured within the context of an intimate relationship or do not consider perpetrator type
 - The definition of coercive sexting differs across studies

Social Media and Sexual Violence:

Current Gaps

- More work is needed to identify the multiple types of scenarios, perpetrators, and elements involved in sexual violence and coercion via social media among adolescents
- Need a comprehensive set of quantitative measures and consistent terminology to describe sexual violence and coercion via social media.



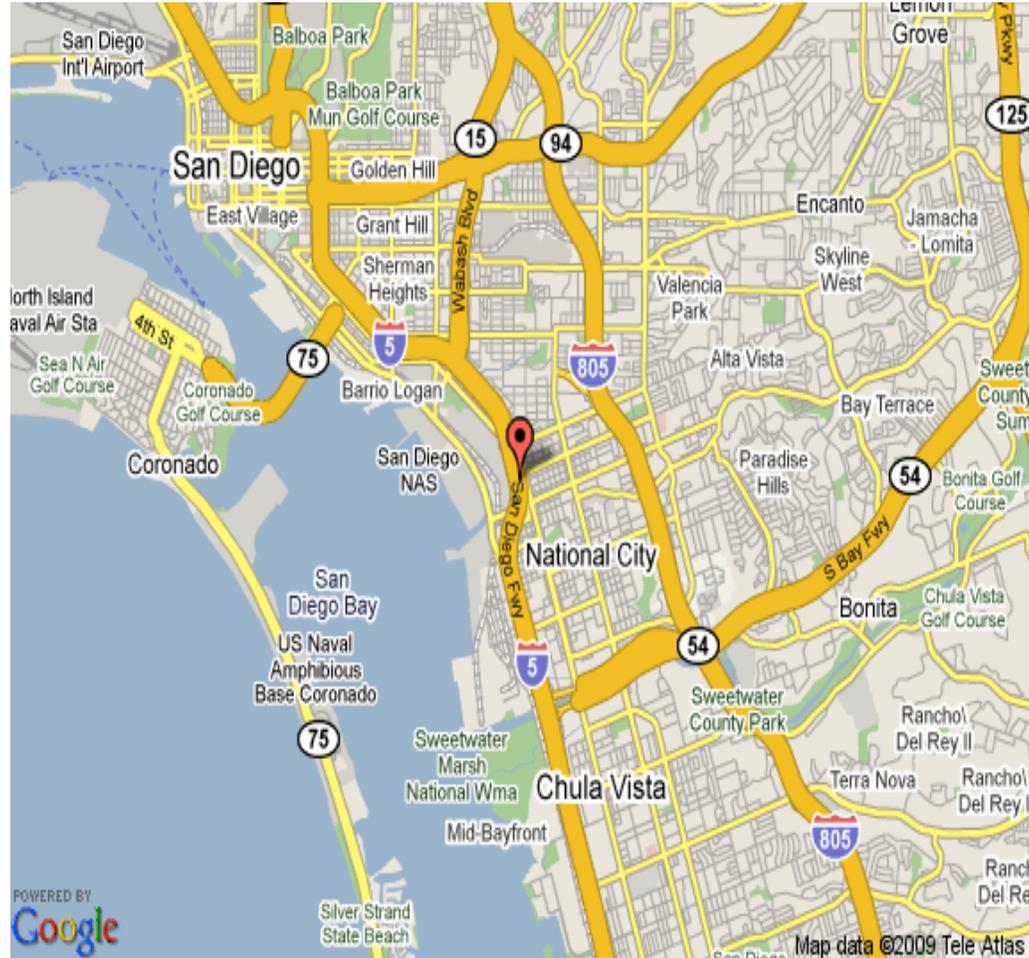


Girls' Health Study Overview

Investigation of social, environmental, and economic factors related to STI and unintended pregnancy

- Population: Girls aged 15-19, sexually active in the past 6 months, recruited from a health clinic and teen center in National City.
- Quantitative surveys (n=159): Social media use, sending/receiving sexual photos, economic vulnerability, violence, sexual risk behaviors, family planning, social networks, mapping of physical environments, etc.
- In-depth Interviews (n=26): a subset of participants who reported risk factors in quantitative surveys (e.g. sending/receiving sexual photos) were invited to participate in qualitative interviews.

Study Site Location





Identifying Scenarios of Sexual Coercion over Social Media: Qualitative Methods

- Interviews featured questions about social media use and the specific scenarios and perpetrators of experiencing sexual coercion over social media
- Interviews were conducted by female research assistants
 - Audio recorded, approximately 60 minutes
- The constant comparison method was used to identify thematic elements around coercion that occurred over social media.
 - Two members of the research team independently coded each interview
 - Atlas Ti was used for qualitative analyses

Results

- Scenarios of experiencing sexual coercion over social media:
 - Receiving unwanted sexual photos from males
 - Being pressured to send sexual photos
 - Sharing sexual photos without permission
 - Pressure to meet in person with the intent of sexual activity



Receiving Unwanted Photos & Being Pressured to Send Pictures Over Social Media

- *“A guy [friend] randomly sent me a [picture of his penis] and he was like, ‘you like it? Send me one.’ And I was like, ‘Umm... no, thank you,’” and he was like, ‘Come on ... we’re just friends.” So... we were really close ... but I didn’t want to do that...”*
- *“Like I’ve had guys ask me on Facebook for nudes. And I’m like “What? I don’t even know you.” But I think it just starts like “Hey” like Hey...conversation, and then it keeps going down and then sooner or later they ask for the picture.”*



Pressure to Send Photos Over Social Media

- *“Like I didn’t want to [text a sexual photo]... I felt pressured to do it [send a sexual photo]. I was just more afraid he was gonna tell people that I’m a wuss or something like that [so I sent the photo].”*
- *“They [guys] ask [girls] to send photos, and you think this guy likes me so you’re like ‘oh my gosh, ok [I will send a photo].’”*



Sharing Sexual Photos Without Permission

- *“...like in middle school and high school, girls would send [sexual photos] it to one guy thinking that it was only gonna stay with that one guy, and then I would even get it on my phone.”*
- *“I guess this girl,...she sent a [sexual] picture out to one of the football team members and it got all around the football team. From the football team it went to the whole school.”*



Pressure to Meet in Person with the Intent of Sexual Activity

- *“He followed me [on Twitter] and then, like started talking to me [online and [we met in person] and then, he was really like, rude. He was like “you have a nice butt,”...and [when we hung out in person] he tried to [touch me] and I was like ‘no I don’t want to, please stop’ and then he started talking crap about me on Twitter.”*
- *“We started talking through Facebook....[when we met in person] at the end..., he was like “Oh, you don’t want to give me a kiss.” And I was like ‘What the hell [and we didn’t talk again].’”*



Defining Electronic Sexual Coercion (ESC)

- Based on our findings, adolescent girls experience multiple scenarios of sexual coercion via electronic communication.
- A comprehensive set of measures is needed to define electronic sexual coercion (ESC) as the following:
 - Receiving unwanted sexual text messages and/or photos
 - Being pressured to send sexually explicit photos or text messages (sexting)
 - Having sexual photos posted without the sender's permission
 - Being pressured, forced or tricked to meet in person with the intent to coerce or force sexual activity



Conclusions and Future Directions

- Lack of standardized measures to assess ESC calls for more work to design valid and reliable scales assessing ESC perpetration and victimization.
- Sexual violence research and prevention programs need to consider experiences of coercion experienced over social media.
 - Prevention programs should be cognizant of how this technology can be used in a controlling and sexually coercive manner in order to reduce these types of behaviors among adolescents.

Acknowledgements

Investigators:

Elizabeth Reed, ScD

Anita Raj, PhD

Jay Silverman, PhD

Girls' Study Team

Brooke West, PhD

Argentina Servin, MD, PhD

Marianna Torreblanca

Lidia Monjaras

Emily Romero

Bianca Devoto

Sara Kidman

Funding:

- NIDA T32 (DA023356, PI: Strathee)
- STI Risk among Adolescent Females: Activity Spaces and Spatial Mobility (R21 HD073610-01A1; PI: Reed)

Thank you!!