



# The “New” Adolescent Sexuality

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# Why a “new” adolescent sexuality?

- Prolonged adolescence
  - Maturing faster
  - Marrying later
- Medical advances
  - HPV vaccine
  - New contraceptives
- Political influence
  - Abstinence only/Virginity pledges
  - Emergency contraception



# Why a “new” adolescent sexuality?

- New media

- Internet
- Social networking
- YouTube

- Breaking the silence (Sex in the City, Dr. Phil, CSI)

- Speaking the unspoken: sexual taboos



# What is “different” today?

- Sex
- Virginity
- Dating and Relationships
- Sexual minority youth (GLBTQQA...)
- Information seeking
- Communication
- *Disclaimer – how new is it really?*



# Defining “Sex”

- Almost one in four teens who has not had intercourse has engaged in oral sex<sup>1</sup>.
- In 2002, a greater percentage of boys who had not had sexual intercourse reported receiving oral sex (21% vs. 15% in 1999) <sup>1</sup>.
- Almost one-third of 9<sup>th</sup> graders planned on having oral sex in the next six months as compared to one-fourth who planned to have vaginal sex<sup>2</sup>.

*1: Child Trends Data Bank, 2002; 2: Halpern-Felsher, 2005*



# Defining “Sex”

- One in five teens say oral sex is safe sex<sup>1</sup>.
  - One-third of *sexually active teens* say oral sex is safe sex<sup>1</sup>.
  - Condom use during oral sex is rare (1-3%)<sup>2</sup>.
- More than one third of teens say that oral sex is “not as big of a deal” as sexual intercourse<sup>3</sup>.
  - One in four teens report engaging in oral sex to avoid intercourse (18% boys, 33% girls)<sup>3</sup>.
- Teens less likely to believe they will feel guilty or bad about themselves if they engage in oral sex vs. vaginal sex<sup>4</sup>.

1: KFF, 2002; 2: Stone, 2006; 3: KFF, 2003; 4: Halpern-Felsher, 2005



# Defining “Virginity”

- Two-thirds to three-quarters of boys and girls believe they are still virgins if they have either given or received oral sex.
- Girls more likely than boys to view members of either sex as virgins if they engage in oral sex.
- Sexually experienced boys and girls more likely to view members of either sex as virgins if they engage in oral sex.

*Bersamin, et al, 2006*



# Relationships

- “Friends with Benefits”

- 40% of sexually active high school seniors had had sex in a casual relationship.<sup>1</sup>

- “Hooking Up”

- 25% of teens have had a one night stand and another 25% have had sex with someone they have been dating for less than a month.<sup>2</sup>





# Coming Out

- Kids are disclosing homosexuality more than ever before
  - mean age at which lesbians first have sexual contact with other girls is 16
  - it's 14 for gay boys

*Source: Savin-Williams, 2005*



# Coming Out

- Only 35% of GLB youth report their doctor is aware of their sexual orientation
  - Bisexual youth less likely to disclose
  - Discussing sexual health increases chances of disclosure
  - Most youth say they would welcome a supportive discussion of their orientation.

*Source: Meckler, et al., 2006*



# Cyberspace: access to information

- Every day, 70 million adults go online (2004)
  - 71.9 million people visited adult web sites in August 2005 (42.7 percent of the Internet audience)
- No parallel teen data, only anecdotal evidence



# Cyberspace: access to information

- Youth exposure to adult material in 2005
  - 33% exposed to “unwanted” sexual material (up from 25% in 2000)
  - 1 in 7 solicited sexually online (down from 1 in 5 in 2000)
    - 4% of solicitors asked for sexually explicit pictures
    - 4% were “aggressive” solicitations (offline contact)
    - 9% of youth were distressed by these incidents

*Source: Crimes Against Children, 2006*



# Cyberspace: access to information

## ■ Education

- 70% of teens who look up health information talk with friends about the information
- 50% talked to an adult
- 40% changed their behavior
- 44% of online teens have looked up information about pregnancy, birth control, STDs/HIV
- 10% of online teens have looked up information about sexual assault

*Source: KFF Generation Rx*



# Cyberspace: Connecting

## What is social networking for?

- Almost all social networking teens (91%) use these sites to stay in touch with friends they see frequently
- 82% use the sites to stay in touch with friends they rarely see in person.
- 49% use the sites to make new friends.
  - Older boys (ages 15-17) are more likely than girls of the same age to use social networking sites to make *new* friends (60% vs. 46%).
- 17% use the sites to flirt.
  - Older boys are more than twice as likely as older girls to say they use the sites to flirt (29% vs. 13%)

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life, 2006*



# Cyberspace: Connecting

- 25% of 10-17 year olds had formed casual online friendships
- 14% had formed close online relationships
- 2% had formed online romances
- Girls aged 14-17 twice as likely to form close online relationships as girls 10-13

*Source: Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2003*



# Cyberspace: Connecting

- Youth who develop close online relationships are
  - More likely to be depressed
  - Have higher levels of conflict with parents
  - Less likely to communicate with parents
- Troubled youth are
  - more likely to have an online romance
  - less likely to tell parent about meeting an online friend in person
  - more likely to say that the person they met did not look as expected

*Source: Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2003*





# School-Based Sex Education

- The proportion of U.S. teens who had received any formal instruction about birth control methods declined sharply between 1995 and 2002, from 81% to 66% of males, and from 87% to 70% of females
- The proportion of teens who had received only information about abstinence more than doubled to more than one in five.

*Source: Guttmacher Institute*



# Defining “Abstinence” – Federal

## Federal Definition of Abstinence Until Marriage

- has as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
- teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity;



# Defining “Abstinence” – Federal

- teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;
- teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances, and
- teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.



# Defining “Abstinence” – Teens

- Almost one-third of boys and girls believe they are being abstinent if they give or receive oral sex<sup>1</sup>.
- Girls more likely than boys to view members of either sex as practicing abstinence if they engage in oral sex<sup>1</sup>.
- Teens who pledge to remain virgins until marriage have the same rates of STDs as those who do not<sup>2</sup>.
- Teens who take virginity pledges are more likely to engage in oral and anal sex<sup>2</sup>.

*1: Bersamin, et al, 2006; 2: Bearman, 2005*



# Challenge your assumptions

- What does it mean when you ask “are you sexually active?”
  - Vaginal intercourse
  - Sexual/gender orientation
  - Status of relationship
- What sort of sex education/information do you believe your patient already has?
  - School-based
  - Internet



# References

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