



Getting It On Online: Heterosexual Men's and Women's Cybersex Experiences

Jessyca Lalumiere and Krystelle Shaughnessy, PhD
University of Ottawa, School of Psychology

Introduction

- Cybersex** is a subset of online sexual activities that involve a real-time interaction between two people using an online device.¹
- A **script** is a sequence of behaviours that people learn is acceptable to perform in a specific social context.
- Sexual scripts** are scripts that are applied to sexual behaviours. These scripts include aspects of cultural expectations regarding appropriate behaviours for men and women in sexual situations, people's internal desires, and the actual sexual activities that occur.²
 - Sexual script theory suggests that during sexual activities men are assertive and make the first move, while women pleasure the men.³
- There is little research examining sexual scripts online and no studies have examined the role that men and women take in specific cybersex activities.
- The purpose of this study was to examine whether heterosexual men and women reported similar or different specific cybersex activities across the following three partner types:
 - Primary Partner (PP)** is a person who is a primary romantic partner at the time of the activity.
 - Known Non-partner (KNP)** is someone known but who is not a primary partner at the time of the cybersex activity. This includes a friend, colleague/classmate, ex-partner, or partner outside of a primary relationship.
 - Stranger (S)** is someone not known at all and has never been met.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1: More men than women will report specific cybersex activities that involve receiving sexual stimuli.

H2: More women than men will report specific cybersex activities that involve enacting or sending sexual stimuli.

RQ: Do the differences between men and women for specific cybersex activities depend upon who the person has cybersex with?



Methods

We recruited 412 participants online to complete an online survey about their cybersex experiences.

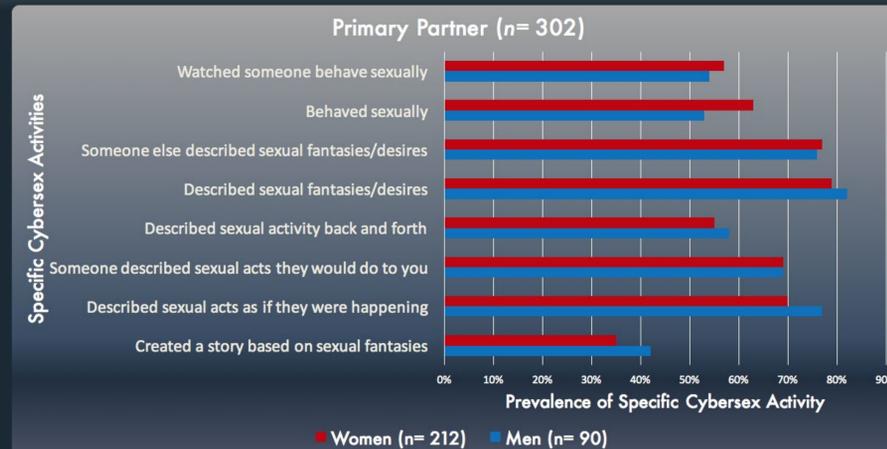
Measures

- Background Measures and Demographics**
 - Assessed demographic characteristics, relationship status, sexual orientation and internet usage.
- Lifetime Cybersex Experience Questionnaire (LCEQ):** an 8-item measure that asks participants about the specific cybersex activities they have ever engaged in.
 - Participants were asked about their cybersex experiences within three relationship types: primary partner, known non-partner, stranger.

Participants

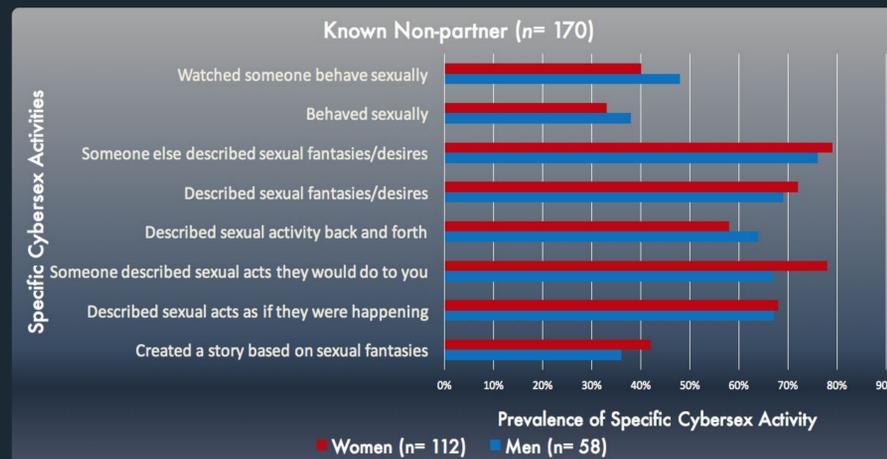
- Gender:** 119 heterosexual men (29%) and 293 heterosexual women (71%)
- Age:** range 18 to 72, $M = 28$, $SD = 9.03$
- Ethnicity:** 71% Caucasian, 1% Aboriginal, 1% African American, 3% Asian, 4% Canadian, 3% multi-racial, 5% other
- Location:** 78% Canadian, 24% USA, 6% Other
- Language:** 89% English, 4% French, 1% Spanish, 6% Other
- Relationship status:** 40% married/cohabiting, 33% committed relationship, 12% dating but not committed, 14% not dating but married
- Average Internet use:** 5-6 hours/day on weekdays ($SD = 3.14$), 3-4 hours/day on weekends ($SD = 5.11$)

Results



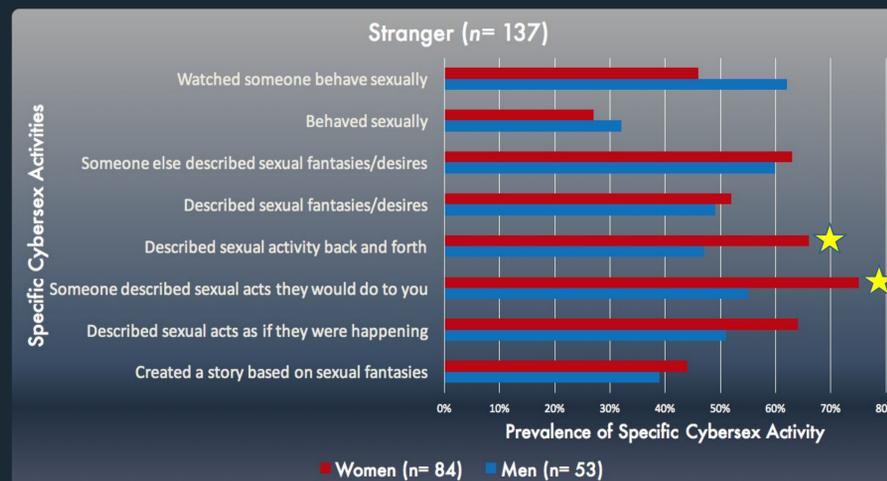
Summary:

- Chi-square contingency tests yielded no significant gender differences in the specific cybersex activities for primary partner relationships.
- There was a trend towards more men than women reporting the activity: *describe sexual acts as if they were happening* and *create a story based on sexual fantasies*.
- There was trend towards more women than men reporting the activity: *behave sexually for another person*.



Summary:

- Chi-square contingency tests yielded no significant gender differences in the specific cybersex activities for known non-partner relationships.
- There was trend towards more men than women reporting the activity: *watch someone behave sexually*, *behave sexually*, and *describe sexual activity back and forth*.
- There was trend towards more women than men reporting the activity: *someone else describe sexual acts to them* and *create a story based on sexual fantasies*.



Summary:

- Chi-square contingency tests yielded a significant gender difference in the specific cybersex activities for the stranger partner type.
- Significantly more women than men reported they *had someone describe sexual acts* performing this activity more frequently than men, $p = .01$, $\eta = 0.21$.
- Significantly more women than men reported the activity: *described sexual activity back and forth*, $p = .03$, $\eta = .81$.
- There was a trend towards more men reporting the activity: *watch someone behave sexually*, $p = .051$, $\eta = .154$.
- There was a trend towards more women reporting the activity: *describe sexual acts as if they were happening*, $p = .09$, $\eta = .132$.

Discussion

Gender Differences Hypotheses

- The two hypotheses proposed are not supported by the results in this study.
- There were no significant differences between men and women in specific cybersex activities with either enacting or receiving behaviours.

Partner Type Research Question

- We qualitatively compared the results between each of the partner types to explore the research question.
 - The stranger context was the only partner type with significant differences between men's and women's specific cybersex activities.

General Discussion

- We found more similarities than differences between men's and women's reported cybersex activities, which suggests that gendered sexual scripts may not be common online.
 - This supports the gender similarities hypothesis, which proposes that we place too much emphasis on finding psychological gender differences, when in fact men and women are "similar on most, but not all, psychological variables."⁴
- We found that who people have cybersex with seems to impact the resulting specific cybersex activities – that is, the type of partner matters.
 - It is possible that more women than men reported two specific cybersex activities with a stranger because the anonymity in having cybersex allows them to feel more comfortable or more willing to perform these specific cybersex activities.
 - This adds to Shaughnessy and Byers' (2014) study, which found that the level of anonymity in partner type can influence the amount and the desired frequency of cybersex engagement.⁵

Future Studies

- Discover the extent to which anonymity affects women's participation in specific cybersex activities.
- Further explore whether gender sexual scripts exist in the stranger context.
- Examine whether or not the observed trends of gender differences, and possible gendered sexual scripts, in specific cybersex activities can be replicated in other samples.



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