

## **Dating abuse via technology:**

**The prevalence and correlates of breaking into a partner's cell phone or email among an emergency department-based sample of youth**

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# Agenda

1. Determine the prevalence of breaking into a dating partner's cell phone or email "tech abuse" among a sample of youth
2. Correlates of "tech abuse"
3. Implications/discussion

Background

## 2011 Teens and Digital Citizenship Survey (N=799; 12-17 year olds)

- 77% of youth have a cell phone
- 75% of teens use phones to text daily
- Teens send an average of 60 texts per day
  - 6% email
  - 26% talk on the phone daily
  - 6% of US teens use location-based services on their cell phones (e.g., Foursquare)

# Prior research on “tech abuse”

- East Carolina University
  - Burke, Wallen, Vail-Smith & Knox (2011)
- 804 undergraduates
- 62% response rate
- large southeastern university
- 18 to 23 ( $M = 19.12$ ) years
- 77% of the sample self identified as White race

Burke, Wallen, Vail-Smith & Knox (2011)	% who reported initiating behavior one or more times		Chi-sq.
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	
Checking call histories	65%	41%	.000
Checking email histories	34%	14%	.000
Monitoring partner's Facebook site	58%	41%	.000
Using partner's passwords to monitor him/her	23%	7%	.000

# Consistent with findings on gender and Obsessive Relationship Intrusion

- “there are few meaningful sex differences in being the target of ORI”
  - Cupach and Spitzberg, 2001
  - Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000
  - Logan et al., 2000
  - McFarlane et al., 2000
  - Spitzberg et al., 1998

# Stalking in general (lifetime)

Study	Male %	Female %
Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998	2%	8%
Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000	4%	12%
Fisher et al., 2000 (college women)	--	13%
NISVS, 2011	5%	16%



# Methods

# Sample

**N=465**

pediatric emergency department patients  
(July 2009--June 2010)

56% female

**SES:**

50% of patients are uninsured / Medicaid

**Age:**

14 and 21 years old

(mean age: 19.2 yrs; 92% were 17-21 yrs)

**Race:**

54% were Black

15% Hispanic

15% White

13% multiracial



		10 or more times	4 to 9 times	1 to 3 times	Never
1	Scratched me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Slapped me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Physically twisted my arm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Slammed me or held me against a wall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Kicked me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Bent my fingers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Bit me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Tried to choke me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Pushed, grabbed or shoved me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	Caused me to get an injury, or to require medical attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	Threw something at me that hit me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	Forced me to have sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	Forced me to do other sexual things that I did not want to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14	Burned me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	Hit me with a fist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16	Hit me with something hard besides a fist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17	Beat me up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18	Assaulted me with a knife or gun	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19	Threatened to kill me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20	Said that they would die, or kill themselves, if we broke up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21	Broke into my email or cell phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22	Spread nasty rumors about me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23	Made me feel afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24	Gave me alcohol or drugs in order to take advantage of me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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1,118 screened

Inclusion criteria:

- Alcohol past month
- 50% TDV perp

454  
ineligible

664 (59%)  
eligible

465 (70%)  
enrolled

270 (58%)  
No tech abuse

Tech abuse  
perp  
24 (5%)

92  
(20%)

Tech abuse  
victim  
79 (17%)

Table 1 Descriptive characteristics of participants (N=465)

Descriptive characteristics	All participants n	Perpetrated technology abuse %(n)	Experienced technology abuse %(n)
Total	465	25 (116)	37 (171)
Sex			
Male	203	22 (45)	37 (74)
Female	262	27 (71)	37 (97)
Education			
High school dropout	66	30 (20)	53 (35) **
High school student	117	21 (25)	31 (36)
High school graduate	253	27 (69)	37 (94)
Parental status			
Has children	85	27 (23)	54 (45) ***
Race			
Black	251	27 (67)	38 (94)
Hispanic	70	26 (18)	36 (71)
White	71	20 (14)	31 (22)
Multiracial	59	78 (45)	44 (26)
Asian	6	50 (3)	0 (0)
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)
Age	19.1 (1.7)	19.2 (1.5)	19.4 (1.5)
Number of partners in past year	3.69 (6.33)	3.75 (3.94)	4.40 (8.42)

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Table 2. Past year technology abuse experiences

Descriptive characteristics	Perpetrated technology abuse %(n) or M(SD)	Experienced technology abuse %(n) or M(SD)
Total	100 (116)	100 (171)
Alcohol*		
Occurred while drunk / partner was drunk	16 (19)	30 (37)
Occurred while high / partner was high on drugs	19 (22)	26 (32)
Occurred while sober	71 (83)	66 (112)
Number of tech abuse experiences (among those with any)		
1 to 3 times	78 (91)	72 (123)
4 to 9 times	11 (13)	15 (25)
10 or more times	10 (12)	13 (23)

\* response options overlap

Table 3. Prevalence of various past year dating abuse perpetration experiences among those who reported perpetrating technology abuse, stratified by gender (N=116)

Type of dating violence	All		Males		Females	
	Tech abuse perpetrator % (n)	PR (95% CI)	Tech abuse perpetrator % (n)	PR (95% CI)	Tech abuse perpetrator % (n)	PR (95% CI)
Total	100 (116)	--	100 (45)	--	100 (71)	--
Physical violence (any)						
Aggressed	73 (75)	1.95 (1.64-2.32)***	62 (28)	2.29 (1.62-3.22)***	80 (57)	1.74 (1.44-2.11)***
Victimized	81 (94)	1.61 (1.40-1.85)***	84 (38)	1.67 (1.37-2.03)***	79 (56)	1.59 (1.32-1.91)***
Minor physical violence						
Aggressed	72 (83)	2.10 (1.75-2.54)***	60 (27)	2.67 (1.83-3.90)***	79 (56)	1.80 (1.47-2.21)***
Victimized	78 (91)	1.74 (1.50-2.02)***	80 (36)	1.78 (1.42-2.24)***	77 (55)	1.92 (1.47-2.52)***
Moderate physical violence						
Aggressed	48 (56)	2.77 (2.06-3.73)***	40 (18)	3.28 (1.89-5.71)***	54 (38)	2.45 (1.74-3.47)***
Victimized	59 (68)	1.92 (1.54-2.40)***	51 (23)	1.85 (1.26-2.72)**	63 (45)	1.92 (1.47-2.52)***
Severe physical violence						
Aggressed	44 (51)	2.80 (2.03-3.86)***	27 (12)	4.16 (1.92-8.99)***	55 (39)	2.35 (1.68-3.28)***
Victimized	49 (57)	2.09 (1.60-2.72)***	49 (22)	2.82 (1.79-4.45)***	49 (35)	1.72 (1.24-2.38)**
Sexual violence						
Aggressed	9 (10)	4.94 (1.84-13.30)**	4 (2)	1.76 (0.33-9.28)	11 (8)	7.17 (1.96-26.29)**
Victimized	22 (26)	2.27 (1.42-3.61)**	18 (8)	1.56 (0.73-3.35)	25 (18)	2.85 (1.56-5.21)***

\* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001



# Results

- 12% of the physically non-violent youth had perpetrated tech abuse
- 14% of the youth who had experienced no physical dating abuse had experienced tech abuse
- 0% of youth had experienced ONLY tech abuse (and not also psychological abuse); 0% perpetrated ONLY tech abuse (and not also psychological abuse)

# Implications

- Breaking into a partner's cell phone and/or email account is a prevalent form of adolescent dating violence behavior
- It is associated with physical and sexual adolescent dating violence perpetration

# Implications

- Youth who are already more vulnerable, that is, have less education, have their own children, or have had more sexual partners, appear to be at increased risk

# Implications

- Youth need to know that this is an illegal behavior
- Youth need to know that this is an abusive behavior
- Youth need to know where to get help
- Practitioners and health care providers need to know how to combat this problem and how to refer youth to helping resources

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