

Chapter 11

Cybersex

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ABSTRACT

Cybersex is often used as a collective term for all sorts of sexually related entertainment, information, and personal contact offers available in computer networks respective “in cyberspace.” It is also understood to be a computer-mediated interpersonal interaction in which the participants are sexually motivated, meaning they are seeking sexual arousal and satisfaction. Types are virtual-reality-based cybersex, video-based cybersex, and text-based cybersex. From a technical perspective, two sub-forms of text-based cybersex are differentiated: tinysex and erotic chat. This chapter focuses on various forms of cybersex from commercialization to self-exhibitionism and voyeurism has been explained in terms of commercial and personal cybersex aided by MUD. The chapter concludes with an evaluative view that despite being considered advantageous in a recreative and imaginative alternative for sexual satisfaction, cybersex increases problems an individual goes through along with the family, friends, and other relationships simultaneously elevating infidelity component in stable relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Introduced in the early 1980s and becoming widely popular in 1990s, the internet is powerful – so much so that its existence breaks the binary norms of “good” and “bad”. It is impressively diverse – it harbors copious amounts of information on a range of topics including, but not restricted to, the internet itself. Curious as humans are, we wondered if we could find sex over the internet. Turns out, there is plenty of it. And what do they call it? There are various popular terms: netsex, computer sex, Internet sex, cybering, Internet sex, Net-sleazing, modem sex (Döring, 2000).

The *Triple A Engine* was introduced by Cooper et al. (1999a; 1999b) and identifies three characteristics of online environments that support cybersex and sexuality:

1. **Accessibility:** There are millions of easily accessible web pages and large numbers huge numbers of people on social networking sites, in chat rooms, and on private messaging systems, who are available for communicating about sexual matters.

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2. **Affordability:** Pornography and sexual communication online are cheap, as one only needs a computer and Internet connection to access them.
3. **Anonymity:** Online it is possible to be as anonymous as one chooses to be and people perceive online sexual communication to be anonymous as well (Subrahmanyam, & Šmahel, 2011).

A particularly challenging question to answer is, what is cybersex? In a broad sense of purpose, cybersex is sexually focused communication over the internet. Most often involving two (or more) individuals, connected via a computer or wireless network, cybersex or cybering is exchanging sexually explicit messages with the aim of bonding temporarily in a way that is emotionally and physically gratifying (Hahn, & Harley, 1996).

Cybersex is an umbrella term for describing sexual behaviors which are computer based (Delmonico, David, Griffin, Elizabeth, Moriarity, & Joseph, 2001).

They fall into three general categories:

1. Accessing online pornography, audio, video and text stories.
2. Real time with a fantasy partner.
3. Multimedia software.

Delmonico, Griffin, and Moriarity (2001) suggest that the internet has six attributes – a CyberHex – which make the internet unique among all other media. A combination of these attributes (Intoxicating, Isolating, Integral, Inexpensive, Imposing, Interactive) shapes the internet enormously alluring for someone seeking sexual arousal and satisfaction. It is reported by the individuals that they slip in the “hex” while engaging in cybersex, and these attributes make the internet much more seductive than any other media (Delmonico, David, Griffin, Elizabeth, Moriarity, & Joseph, 2001)

Cybersex is often used as a collective term for all sorts of sexually-related entertainment, information and personal contact offers available in computer Networks respective “in cyberspace”. This broad term “cybersex” covers so many different activities and contents that it is of practically no use for the social scientific discourse as long as individual phenomena are not differentiated from one another. In a narrow sense, cybersex is understood to be a computer-mediated interpersonal interaction in which the participants are sexually motivated, meaning they are seeking sexual arousal and satisfaction. Cybersex is not a human-machine interaction and therefore clearly differs from solo sex in that it is a social happening: solitary fantasizing and/or use of erotica do not have to include an active partner, but within the course of cybersexual interactions the participants must continually adapt to one another, they experience consent, rapport and enthusiasm as well as rejection, misunderstanding or violation of personal boundaries. They do not just participate in a shared production of text but also let each other know about their sexual motivation, arousal and perhaps even both masturbate at their computers at the same time. Cybersex is therefore not a conversation about sex, but is a form of sexual encounter in itself (Döring, 2000).

Technical Conditions

A per Döring (2000) Technology driven interpersonal interaction can take place by means of virtual reality technology. These can be primarily attained by online video conferences or digital text exchange. Accordingly, based on the technical conditions under which it takes place, three forms of cybersex can be distinguished, which allow (or does not allow) for specific ways of expressing desires that the partners

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