

# **Sexting and Sexual Relationships Among Teens and Young Adults**

Lori Henderson: McNair Scholar

Dr. Elizabeth Morgan: Mentor

Psychology



## **Abstract**

*The present study examined young adult participation in sexting: a transmission of nude or semi-nude images or sexually suggestive text of themselves to others through cell phones. An online survey was conducted Spring 2010 at large northwest university. Results revealed that nearly two thirds of participants had sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. Cell phones were reported as the primary medium in transmission of sext messages. Nearly half of those who have participated in sexting had sent them to a boyfriend or girlfriend, while 15% sent them to someone they only knew online. To be sexy or to initiate sexual intercourse was the main reason given for sending sext messages. There were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves and those who have not. The total number of sexual intercourse partners and number of oral sex (performed) partners appear to be higher among those who have sent sext messages. Given the lack of scientific research on this topic, current and future research will allow educators, parents and communities to make choices that are more informed in regards to sexting and to understand the ever-changing advances that technology and evolution has on society.*

## **Introduction**

Teen and young adult sexuality represents an area that is often a topic of interest to parents, educators and researchers (Hamil & Chepko, 2005). Interest is largely due to the potential negative consequences (e.g., unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases) associated with sexual activity in the teen and young adult years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). In addition, research indicates that the prevalence of teens having sexual intercourse increases as they increase in age (Cubbin, Santelli, Braveman, et al., 2005). Similarly, a new topic of interest involves sexting, a new technological communication trend that distributes nude, semi nude or sexually suggestive text messages through electronic messaging (i.e., cell phones) (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Sexuality is a core topic among teens therefore, in an era of technological advancements teens who desire sexual exploration may do so through the convenience of electronic handheld devices (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, et al., 2010; Lenhart, et. al., 2008; Weinstein & Rosen, 1991). In addition, any number of problems can result from posting electronic images including increased risk of cyberbullying, damage to reputation, or criminal charges that require teens and young adults to register as sex offenders (Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor, et al., 2007; Manzo, 2009).

The topic of sexting has become a national issue as American teens and young adults are increasingly engaging in this behavior (Contemporary Sexuality, 2009). In an era of social networking and technological change, the youth of America are faced with severe negative consequences for this new phase of technologically enhanced self-expression, including jail sentencing and suicide (Kotch, 2009; Inbar, 2009). National debates have ensued due to the overwhelming numbers of teens and young adults who are being arrested and charged with possession and distribution of child pornography. Some of the states with documented cases include Idaho, Connecticut, Vermont, Virginia, Ohio, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Utah (Orr, 2009; Contemporary Sexuality, 2009).

Given the interest in relation to the negative consequences of sexting and sexual behaviors, research on this topic is essential. There have been few mass media research studies conducted on sexting. In addition, there is no known scientific research regarding the relationship between the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with sexting and sexual behaviors. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate why teens and young adults participate in this new phase of communication involving the exchange of nude or partially nude photographs and sexually suggestive text messages of themselves, with others (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Understanding the

motivation behind these types of messages may enable parents, the community, and school officials to better understand and provide proper sexuality education to this new generation of technologically driven youth.

## Sexting behaviors

Current mass media research investigates the extent of sexting and the key issues surrounding this rapidly growing technological trend. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) conducted an online survey of 1280 teens and young adults ranging in age from 13-26. Results reported that approximately one-half of all young people surveyed have electronically transmitted nude or semi nude photos. In addition, of those surveyed, 38% of teens and 58% of young adults (a total of 48% combined) have sent sexually suggestive messages through their cell phones via text messaging or other electronic communication means such as MySpace, Facebook, e-mail, or online instant messaging. In contrast, Pew Research Center, 2009 reported 4% of teens between the age of 12 and 17 had sent or posted nude or semi nude images of themselves. The number of teens and young adults who engage in sexting vary among studies, however it appears that sexting is a growing trend which identifies teen and young adult behavior within this realm.

*Medium.* Several mediums have been identified as a means of transmitting nude or semi nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages. Research indicates that cell phone use within the United States has increased remarkably among young people since 2004 (Lenhart, 2009). With the increase in cell phone use there appears to be a rise in the number of sext messages being sent. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) report that 26% of those surveyed had posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves and 48% had sent sexually suggestive text messages on a cell phone. Additionally, other mediums reported in sending nude or semi nude pictures included 27% on the “Net” and 5% on social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Myspace, or a blog). Other mediums reported in sending sexually suggestive text messages include 49% on the “Net” and 14% on social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Myspace, or a blog). Overall, cell phones appear to be the main method of sending sexually suggestive text messages, which coincides with the idea that many cell phones are equipped with immediate access to cameras, video, and internet access; making the transmission of nude or semi-nude photos or sexually suggestive text messages easier and faster than ever (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010).

*Recipients.* Regarding self-exposure related to sexting, teens and young adults typically intend for their messages to be viewed only by those who they were sent to. However, according to a study done by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008), one third (33%) of teen males and one-quarter (25%) of teen females say they have had nude/semi-nude images originally meant to be private, shared with them. Additionally, 50.3% of men and 57.8% of women have sent nude or semi-nude photos to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 23.3% of men and 13.5% of women to someone they wanted to date, 18.7% of men and 16.2% of women to someone they just met. In addition, 71.5% of men and 71.9% of women have sent sexually suggestive text messages to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 40.4% of men and 27.6% of women to someone they wanted to date, 22.3% of men and 14.1% of women to someone they just met (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Moreover, Pew Research (2009) also report the primary exchange of sexually suggestive images has been between romantic partners, partner outside the relationship, and potential relationship in which at least one person hopes to be in.

*Attitudes towards sexting.* Mass media research suggests that attitudes toward sending nude or semi-nude pictures or video broadly differ in opinion (Lenhart, 2009). In addition, gender differences have been noted regarding the attitudes involved with sexting (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Reports show that 47% of teens and 38% of young adults say pressure from males is a reason females send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. In addition, 24% of teens and 20% of young adults say pressure from friends is a reason males send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. This data also shows that 75% of teens and 71% of young adults felt that sexting could have serious negative consequences; however, 19% of females and 26% of males felt that sexting is no big deal (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Therefore, it appears that teens and young adults felt that pressure from males is the primary reason females send sext messages and pressure from friends is a primary reason males send sext messages. The majority of teens and young adults also feel that sexting could have serious negative consequences even though a small amount felt it is no big deal.

## Reasons for sexting

Recent research indicates three main reasons that nude or semi-nude images are sent; to initiate sexual activity between partners (i.e., boyfriend or girlfriend), as an experimental phase of their sexuality prior to ever having sexual intercourse, and as a way to enhance current sexual relationships (Lenhart, 2009). Studies have shown that more than two thirds of teens and young adults have sent nude or partially nude messages to initiate keep or gain a male's/female's attention. Two thirds of female teen and young adults have sent these types of messages as a "sexy" present for a boyfriend, while over half of males sent them to be "fun and flirtatious." In addition, nearly half of females felt pressure from males and nearly one fifth of males felt pressure from females (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Overall, results from prior studies indicate an increase in teen and young adult participation with sexual exploration, using current technology.

## Sexting and sexual behavior

Sexting may be a new technique used to express sexuality; however, it is not a new subject matter. Sexting is just another method in which nude or semi-nude pictures are viewed. Pew Research Center, (2009) reports that sexually suggestive images shared as part of a prelude to sexual activity and may be just one part of a sexual relationship. Adolescents who viewed internet pornography appeared to have a greater acceptance of sexual promiscuity (Lo & Wei, 2005). In addition, much of the content viewed on the internet by adolescents is unmonitored (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout). In 2008, Braun-Courville & Rojas found that exposure to internet pornography is associated with high-risk sexual behaviors and that adolescent exposure to sexually explicit web sites is also associated with these types of sexual behaviors (i.e., anal sex and multiple sexual partners). The internet is an unlimited outlet for pornographic material (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2008). Therefore, nude or semi-nude pictures viewed or sent on cell phones could potentially be endless, which may also increase the acceptance of sexual exploration and behaviors.

## Present study

The purpose of this study was to examine a recent technological trend known as sexting (beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors) in relation to sexual behaviors using empirical research data. As such, the first research goal was to explore the behaviors involved with sexting such as how often sexually suggestive messages are sent, properly understanding the mediums in which they are sent, and to whom they are sent. Next, the attitudes associated with sexting were explored to include questions that would explain the pressures that may be associated with sexting. Finally, the reasons why sexually suggestive messages are sent was explored to investigate if this trend was simply an act of self-expression or a way to initiate sexual activity. Three hypotheses were formulated to explore sexting behaviors. First, it was hypothesized that there are a greater number of teen and young adult females than there are teen and young adult males that initially engage in sexting. Second, it was hypothesized that there are significant differences among females to feel pressure to send sext messages than would their male counterparts. Finally, it was hypothesized that the main reason both males and females send sext messages is to initiate sexual activity.

The second research goal was to examine the relationship among those who send sexually suggestive messages and sexual behaviors, including number of sexual intercourse, oral and anal sex partners. It was hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between sexting and sexual behaviors. In order for a solid view of the relationships between sexting and sexual behaviors to be supported, the act of sexting would need to indicate a transition into increased sexual behaviors. Lastly, prior mass media research has examined sexting attitudes and behaviors however; it has not addressed the relationships between sexting and sexting behaviors.

## Method

### Participants

Participants consisted of Boise State University students who were enrolled in General Psychology classes. The total number of student participants was 468 (235 females, 234 males). Participants ranged in age from 18 – 30 ( $M = 20.59$ ,  $SD = 2.86$ ). The majority of the participants identified as White/Caucasian ( $n = 382$ , 81.7%), Black/African American ( $n = 13$ , 2.8%), Hispanic ( $n = 38$ , 8.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 19$ , 4.1%), Arabic/Middle Easterner

(0.6%  $n = 3$ ), Native American Indian ( $n = 4$ , 0.9%), Other ( $n = 9$ , 1.9%). Nearly all participants ( $n = 452$ , 96.8%) identified as straight/heterosexual.

## Materials

Self-report questionnaires were used to gather information about demographics, sexting behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs; as well as sexual behaviors. Since sexting behavior is a rather new research field no validated measures exist. The sexting questionnaire was designed to measure behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes involved with the act of sexting; to include frequencies, methods sent (how the messages were sent), recipients (to whom the messages are sent), reasons for and attitudes toward sexting behaviors (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). A sexual behaviors questionnaire was used to establish the frequencies of sexual experiences and number of sexual partners.

*Sexting behaviors.* Regarding the medium in which nude or semi nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages were sent, participants were asked, “how many times have you posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of yourself using each of these methods?” and “how many times have you posted/sent sexually suggestive messages about yourself using each of these methods?” Item options included cell phone, e-mail, social networking sites and blogs. These items were placed on a 6-point likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*10 or more times*).

To assess whom nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text were sent, participants were asked, “to whom have you ever sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures (of yourself)?” or “to whom have you ever sent/posted sexually suggestive messages (of yourself)?” were asked to identify to whom these messages were being sent. Items included boyfriend/girlfriend, someone I just met, and someone I only knew online. Participants were allowed to mark all items that applied.

*Attitudes towards sexting.* Regarding attitudes toward sexting, participants were asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?” Survey items included, “Is there pressure among people my age to send/post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves?”, “Females have to worry about privacy of nude or semi-nude pictures being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than males do?”, “Males have to worry about privacy of nude or semi-nude pictures being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than females do?”, “Sending sexually suggestive messages is no big deal.”, and “Sending sexually suggestive messages can have serious negative consequences.” Response options were on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*).

*Reasons for sexting.* Reasons for sending nude or semi-nude or sexually suggestive text messages were assessed using two questions, participants were asked “What do you think are the reasons that males/females send/share nude or semi nude pictures of themselves?” and “What do you think are the reasons that males/females send/share sexually suggestive text messages of themselves?” Item options included, “as a form of self expression?”, “To be sexy or initiate sexual activity?” and “To be fun/flirtatious?” Participants were allowed to mark all items that applied.

*Sexting and sexual behavior.* A six-item sexual experiences questionnaire was used to assess whether or not participants had engaged in the following types of sexual behaviors: sexual intercourse, oral sex, casual sex, and anal sex. Answers to these questions were based on yes or no responses. Sexual experience questions included how many sexual partners have you had, how many oral sex partners have you had, how many casual sex partners have you had, how many anal sex partners have you had.

## Procedure

Introductory psychology students who chose to complete the questionnaire were directed to the survey within the secure “Psychsurveys.org” website. Prior to starting the survey, participants were provided with consent information and asked to verify that they are 18 years of age or older and consent to participate in the study. Once they gave consent, participants completed a series of closed-response questions via the secure website. Participants were allowed to skip any questions they did not want to answer. The questionnaire took approximately 60 minutes to

complete. Students were then thanked for their participation and given information of the credit allocation process. Full IRB approval was obtained prior to implementation.

## Results

### Sexting behaviors

The first analyses explored the rates of sexting and gender differences between the two types of sexting; those who send/post nude or semi-nude photos and those who send sexually suggestive messages. Sixty percent ( $n = 282$ ) of participants had sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. Sixty-nine percent ( $n = 324$ ) have sent/posted sexually suggestive text messages. To assess whether there were gender differences in sexting rates, we conducted independent measures  $t$  test analyses for males and females. There was no significant difference between males ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 5.54$ ) and females ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ) on sending or posting nude or semi-nude photos,  $t(466) = -0.49$ ,  $p = .622$ . There was also no significant differences between males ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 3.84$ ) and females ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 3.17$ ), sending or posting sexually suggestive text messages,  $t(466) = 1.78$ ,  $p = .073$ .

Several types of sexting mediums were measured to show the differences in the way sext messages were distributed. Over half (56.9%) of the participants reported that they posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves on a cell phone, while one fourth (27.5%) have posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves in an e-mail. Similarly, more than half of the participants (58.2%) posted/sent sexually suggestive text messages on a cell phone, one-fourth (25.2%) have posted/sent sexually suggestive text messages through e-mail.

Results from the sexting behaviors questionnaire showed that of the 60% of participants who had sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, 43.5% ( $n = 204$ ) of sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend while 22% ( $n = 103$ ) sent them to someone they dated or hooked up with and 11% ( $n = 49$ ) sent them to someone they only knew online. Fifty-eight percent ( $n = 271$ ) of participants sent/posted sexually suggestive messages of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 31% ( $n = 143$ ) to someone they dated or hooked up with and 15% ( $n = 69$ ) to someone they only knew online.

### Attitudes towards sexting

Table 1 provides a summary of the means, standard deviations, and  $t$  values of sexting attitudes by gender. Results show that females were not significantly more likely to feel pressure among people their own age to send/post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves than were their male counterparts  $t(466) = -1.50$ ,  $p = .133$ . However, females were significantly more likely to feel pressure among people their own age to send/post sexually suggestive text messages of themselves than were their male counterparts  $t(464) = -2.20$ ,  $p < .028$ .

### Reasons for sexting

Table 2 reports the percentages and comparisons by gender for male and female participants' beliefs about why both young men and women sext. Chi-square analyses revealed that males and females had comparable views concerning reasons why nude or semi-nude pictures are sent. To be sexy or initiate sexual activity was the highest percentage given among both genders, whereas self-expression was among the lowest. In addition, gaining attention from a dating partner was the second highest rated reason for sexting among both genders.

### Sexting and sexual behavior

Among the sexual behaviors that were examined, two were found to have a significant relationship between sending nude or semi-nude pictures and number of sexual partners. To assess the relationships between sexting and sexual behavior, we conducted independent measures  $t$  test analyses for males and females. As predicted, there were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 7.54$ ) and those who have not ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 5.91$ ) on number of sexual intercourse partners,  $t(379) = -3.64$ ,  $p < .001$ . There were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves ( $M = 5.54$ ,  $SD = 6.63$ ) and those who have not ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 5.07$ ) on number of oral sex (performed) partners,  $t(368) = -2.86$ ,  $p = .004$ . There were no significant differences found between those who have sent have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 6.96$ ) and those who have not ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 6.78$ ) on number of casual sex partners,  $t(166) = -1.26$ ,  $p = .209$ . There were no significant differences found between

those who have sent have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 3.83$ ) and those who have not ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 8.66$ ) on number of anal sex partners,  $t(126) = 1.31$ ,  $p = .191$ . The number of sexual intercourse and oral sex partners appear to be greater when sexting is involved, whereas no differences were found among sexting and casual sex partners.

## Discussion

Results revealed that transmission of nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages appear to be a frequent behavior among teens and young adults, extending similar findings on mass media research (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). In addition, questionnaire results revealed no considerable differences among the frequency in which females and males are sending or posting nude or semi-nude picture of themselves or sexually suggestive text messages. The majority of these messages were sent in the form of sexually suggestive text. Furthermore, participants revealed that nearly two thirds of these messages were sent through the use of cell phones. Sext messages were primarily posted or sent to enhance current sexual relationships with a boyfriend or girlfriend, by both males and females. However, it is worth noting that approximately one fourth of participants reported sending sext messages to someone they wanted to hook up with or someone they wanted to date and 15% sent sext messages to someone they had just met. Males reported slightly higher percentages in these three categories.

The questionnaire results also provided further findings in regard to attitudes toward sexting. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) reported that females feel more pressure from males to send nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, as well as sexually suggestive text messages. Conversely, the current study suggested that females did not differ significantly in feeling pressure from the opposite sex to send or post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. However, the percentage of females who felt pressured was slightly higher than their male counterparts. In contrast, females felt more pressure than males to send sexually suggestive text messages. Additionally, participants in the current and past studies felt that there were severe negative consequences; however, they also felt that sexting is no big deal.

Furthermore, our study provided information pertaining to the reasons nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages are sent or posted. Regarding the reasons for sexting, questionnaire results revealed the main reason for sexting was to be sexy or initiate sexual activity. The reasons “to gain attention” or “to be fun or flirtatious” were also among the top three reasons for sending or posting sext messages. Females reported slightly higher ratings on all three reasons regarding both nude or semi-nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages.

Results revealed interesting information in regard to sexting and sexual behavior, including a higher number of sexual intercourse and oral sex (performed) partners, among those who have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages. In addition, it is important to note there was also a slightly higher number of oral sex (received) and casual sex partners among those who sext. Previous studies also indicate that sexting was central in sexual exploration among teens and young adults (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008).

While the results of this study provide important information regarding the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards sending or posting nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages, there are some limitations to the study. First, the lack of access to a broader teen population restricts the ability to compare findings from previous mass media research among the ages of those 13 to 17. Due to the lack of scientific research, little is known about the associations between sexting and sexual behaviors. At best, we can only speculate on relationships between sexting behaviors (i.e., frequency) and sexual experience (i.e., number of sexual partners) based on what we know about teens and young adults who participate in sexting and sexual behaviors.

In an attempt to educate teens and young adults about sexuality, focus has veered away from explicit sexual education with the argument that this type of instruction promotes immorality. Without precise sexual awareness, the dangers and consequences of sexual exploration (i.e., sexting), especially among young females, remain a threat to a proper understanding of sex and sexuality issues (Fine, 1988; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). The numbers of teen exploring their sexuality urges has increased dramatically over time (Brown, J., Keller, S., & Stern, S. 2009). With these numbers on the rise, it is important to keep in mind that sexual interaction among teens and young adults may be significantly impacted by the way they perceive the events leading up to intercourse including the act of sexting (Tolman, 2002).

It is vital to gain an understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with sexting and to then provide proper sexuality education to teens and young adults in an attempt to curtail this problem. Where past intervention have not been successful in relaying healthy sexuality messages, future attempts should incorporate

current technology, especially cell phones, as a successful avenue of sexuality education; given that, adolescents have a broader access to cell phones than computers (Keller, & Stern, 2009; Pascoe, 2009).

### Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express thanks to her son Jason for sacrificing “everything” and making her smile when things were tough, her mentor Dr. Elizabeth Morgan for her continued support and invaluable guidance, and Helen Barnes for her devotion and unconditional support throughout this process. She would also like to thank her mother for her continued encouragement and support from afar, her cohort for their continued friendship, and the Boise State University McNair Scholar Program for offering this life changing experience.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Sexting Attitudes

Survey Item	Males		Females		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Nude or semi-nude pictures (sent/posted)					
There is pressure among people my age to send.	2.56	1.47	2.77	1.66	-1.504
Usually end up being seen by more than just those whom they were sent	3.61	1.62	3.56	1.78	.338
Females have to worry about privacy of messages being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than males do.	3.77	1.38	3.82	1.38	-.376
Males have to worry about privacy of messages being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than females do.	2.70	1.29	2.79	1.30	-.750
No big deal	2.63	1.15	2.38	1.37	2.104*
Can cause serious negative consequences	3.89	1.61	4.11	1.20	-1.997*
Sexually Suggestive Text					
There is pressure among people my age to send.	3.05	1.16	3.05	1.25	-2.200*
Usually end up being seen by more than just those whom they were sent	3.62	1.14	3.78	1.08	-1.485
Females have to worry about messages being seen by someone other than the one they intended it for, more than males do.	3.72	1.12	3.72	1.09	.012
Guy’s have to worry about messages being seen by someone other than the one they intended it for, more than girl’s do.	2.90	1.12	3.01	1.13	-1.068
No big deal	2.91	1.14	2.72	1.30	1.745
Can cause serious negative consequences	3.67	1.12	3.93	1.12	-2.524**

Note: Items were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$

Table 2. Tests of Differences Between Reasons for Sexting by Gender

Reasons for Sexting	Male	Female	X <sup>2</sup>
Nude - Male			
To be sexy or initiate sexual activity	195 (83.3%)	201 (85.9%)	.59
To get attention from a dating partner	185 (78.9%)	185 (79.1%)	.00
To be fun and flirtatious	156 (66.7%)	153 (65.4%)	.09
Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner	76 (32.5%)	71 (30.3%)	.25
A form of self expression	70 (29.9%)	66 (28.2%)	.17
Sexually Suggestive Text - Male			
To be sexy or initiate sexual activity	196 (83.8%)	210 (89.7%)	3.64*
To get attention from a dating partner	190 (81.2%)	189 (80.8%)	.01
To be fun and flirtatious	167 (71.4%)	151 (64.5%)	2.51
Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner	72 (30.8%)	76 (32.5%)	.16
A form of self expression	71 (30.3%)	72 (30.8%)	.01
Nude - Female			
To be sexy or initiate sexual activity	220 (83.3%)	217 (85.9%)	.31
To get attention from a dating partner	199 (78.9%)	220 (79.1%)	10.05***
To be fun and flirtatious	209 (66.7%)	198 (65.4%)	2.28
Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner	151 (32.5%)	163 (30.3%)	1.39
A form of self expression	98 (29.9%)	79 (28.2%)	3.28*
Sexually Suggestive Text - Female			
To be sexy or initiate sexual activity	210 (83.8%)	211 (89.7%)	.02
To get attention from a dating partner	208 (81.2%)	218 (80.8%)	2.62
To be fun and flirtatious	203 (71.4%)	201 (64.5%)	.07
Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner	119 (30.8%)	144 (32.5%)	5.43
A form of self expression	91 (30.3%)	70 (30.8%)	4.18*

Note: Reasons for Sexting by gender: Men (N=234): Women; (N=234)

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

## References

- [1] Braun-Courville, D., Rojas, M. (2008). Exposure to sexually explicit web sites and adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 45*(2), 156-162.
- [2] Brown, J., Keller, S., & Stern, S. (2009). Sex, sexuality, sexting, and sexed: adolescents and the media. *Prevention Researcher, 16*(4), 12-16.
- [3] Cubbin, C., Santelli, J., Brindis, C. D., & Braveman, P. (2005). Neighborhood context and sexual behavior among adolescents: Findings from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 37*, 125–134.
- [4] Eaton, D. K., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Shanklin, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., Wechsler, H. (2007). Youth risk behavior surveillance. *CDC surveillance summaries: Division of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. CDC surveillance summaries/Centers for Disease Control, 57*(4), 1-131.
- [5] Fine, M. (1988). Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. *Harvard Educational Review, 58*, 29-53.
- [6] Hamill, S., & Chepko, S. (2005). Defining sex and abstinence: Dialogue is the key. *American Journal of Sexuality Education, 1*, 159-165.
- [7] Inbar, M. (2009). "Sexting" bullying cited in teen's suicide. *Today Show*. Retrieved from <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/34236377>
- [8] Koch, W. (2009, March 12). More teens caught up in "sexting." *USA Today*. Retrieved from [http://www.usatoday.com/tech/wireless/2009-03-11-sexting\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/wireless/2009-03-11-sexting_N.htm)
- [9] Lenhart, A. (2009). Teens and sexting. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/teens-and-sexting.pdf>
- [10] Lenhart, A., Ling, R., Campbell, & Purcell, K. (2010). Teens and mobile phones. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones.aspx>
- [11] Lo, V., Wei R. (2005). Exposure to internet pornography and Taiwanese adolescents' sexual attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 49*(2), 221–37.
- [12] Manzo, K. (2009). Administrators Confront Student 'Sexting'. *Education Digest, 75*(3), 13-16.
- [13] Melby, T. (2009). Sexuality education 2.0. *Contemporary Sexuality, 43*(10), 1-7.
- [14] National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2008). The national campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy and cosmogirl.com reveal results of sex & tech survey: Large percentage of teens posting/sending nude/semi nude images. Retrieved from [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech\\_PressReleaseFIN.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_PressReleaseFIN.pdf)
- [15] Orr, P. (2009). 15-year-old Nampa girl arrested in "sexting" case. *The Idaho Statesman*. Retrieved from <http://www.idahostatesman.com/newsupdates/story/792456.html>
- [16] Pascoe, C.J. (2009). *Encouraging sexual literacy in a digital age: Teens, sexuality and new media*. Presented at Virtual sex ed: Youth, race, sex and new media conference, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- [17] Penhollow, T. M. (2008). Adolescent sexual behavior: Impact of decision making. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 32*(3), 330-331.
- [18] Perry, M., Accordini, M. P., & Hewes, R. L. (2007). An investigation of internet use, sexual and nonsexual sensation seeking, and sexual compulsivity among college students. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 14*(4), 321-335.
- [19] Roberts, D.F., Foehr, U.G., Rideout, V. (2005). Generation m: Media in the lives of 8–18 year olds. *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/Executive-Summary-Generation-M-Media-in-the-Lives-of-8-18-Year-olds.pdf>
- [20] Teen 'sexting' attracts attention of prosecutors. (2009). *Contemporary Sexuality, 43*(5), 8-8.
- [21] Tolman, D. L. (2002). *Dilemmas of desire: Teenage girls talk about sexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [22] The vexing issue of sexting. (2009). *State Legislatures, 35*(7), 12.
- [23] Weinstein, E., & Rosen, E. (1991). The development of adolescent sexual intimacy: Implications for counseling. *Adolescence, 26*, 331–340.
- [24] Ybarra, M. L., Mitchell, K. J., Finkelhor, D., et al. (2007). Internet prevention messages: Targeting the right online behaviors. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 161*, 138-145.