

Sexting

From Wikipedia,

Sexting (a portmanteau of sex and texting) is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones.

Sexting was reported as early as 2005 in the Sunday Telegraph Magazine,[1] and has since been described as taking place worldwide.[2] It has been reported in the U.K.,[1] Australia,[3] New Zealand,[2] the U.S.,[4] and Canada.

In a 2008 survey of 1,280 teenagers and young adults of both sexes on Cosmogirl.com sponsored by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 20% of teens (13-19) and 33% of young adults (20-26) had sent nude or semi-nude photographs of themselves electronically. Additionally, 39% of teens and 59% of young adults had sent sexually explicit text messages.[5] A sociologist at Colorado College interviewed 80 children and believes this claim is overblown; she claims "I had them go through their last ten messages, their last ten photos and I never saw it." [6]

A 2009 UK survey of 2,094 teens aged 11 to 18 found that 38% had received an "offensive or distressing" sexual image via text or email.[7]

Sociology

Sexting is a result of advances in technology enabling new forms of social interaction. Messages with sexual content have been exchanged over all forms of historical media. Newer technology allows photographs and videos, which are intrinsically more explicit and have greater impact. A social danger with sexting is that material can be very easily and widely promulgated, over which the originator has no control.[8]

The Institute for Responsible Online and Cell-Phone Communication (I.R.O.C.2) is a New Jersey based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to educating communities about proactively protecting themselves online with digital responsibility through their "Sexting is Stupid" program..

Legal cases

In 2007, 32 Australian teenagers from the state of Victoria were prosecuted as a result of sexting activity.[9] Child pornography charges were brought against six teenagers in Greensburg, Pennsylvania in January 2009 after three girls sent sexually explicit photographs to three male classmates.[10]

In 2008, a Virginia assistant-principal was charged with possession of child pornography and

related crimes after he had been asked to investigate a rumored sexting incident at the high school where he worked. Upon finding a student in possession of a photo on his phone that depicted the torso of a girl wearing only underpants, her arms mostly covering her breasts, the assistant principal showed the image to the principal who instructed him to preserve the photo on his computer as evidence, which he did. The court later ruled that the photo did not constitute child pornography because under Virginia law, nudity alone is not enough to qualify an image as child pornography; the image must be "sexually explicit". Loudoun County prosecutor James Plowman stands by his initial assessment of the photo and says he would not have pursued the case if the assistant principal would have agreed to resign. The assistant principal had to get a second mortgage on his house and spend \$150,000 in attorneys' fees to clear his name.[11][12]

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, a teenage boy was indicted on felony obscenity charges for allegedly sending a photo of his genitals to several female classmates. Another boy was charged with child pornography in a similar case.[13]

Police investigated an incident at Margareta High School in Castalia, Ohio in which a 17-year-old area girl allegedly sent nude pictures of herself to her former boyfriend, and the pictures started circulating around the high school after the two got into a fight.[14] The 17-year-old girl was charged with being an "unruly child" based on her juvenile status.[15]

Two southwest Ohio teenagers were charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, a first-degree misdemeanor, for sending or possessing nude photos on their cell phones of two 15-year-old classmates.[16]

The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania filed a lawsuit against Wyoming County district attorney George Skumanick Jr. on March 25, 2009 for threatening teenage girls who were the subject of allegedly risqué photos with prosecution on child pornography charges if they did not submit to a counseling program. [17] The case is [18] Miller, et al v. Skumanick. On CBS News's The Early Show, Skumanick stated in an interview with Julie Chen that his office decided to make an offer of limiting penalties to probation if they attend a sexual harassment program.[19][20]

Legislative responses

Vermont lawmakers introduced a bill in April 2009 to legalize the consensual exchange of graphic images between two people 13 to 18 years old. Passing along such images to others would remain a crime.[21]

In Ohio, a county prosecutor and two lawmakers proposed a law that would reduce sexting from a felony to a first degree misdemeanor, and eliminate the possibility of a teenage offender being labeled a sex offender for years. The proposal was supported by the parents of Jessie Logan, a Cincinnati 18-year-old who committed suicide after the naked picture of herself which she sexted was forwarded to people in her high school.[22]

Utah lawmakers lessened the penalty for sexting for someone younger than 18 to a misdemeanor

from a felony.[23]

In popular culture

The episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit titled "Crush" featured a case which referenced sexting frequently throughout the episode.[24] In an episode of 90210 titled "To Sext or Not To Sext" Naomi (AnnaLynne McCord) threatens to post a nude photograph of Annie (Shenae Grimes) anonymously as an act of revenge.[25] The episode of Degrassi: The Next Generation titled "Shoot to Thrill" featured Alli sexting Johnny.

See also

- * Moral panic
- * Deviancy amplification spiral
- * Rainbow Party
- * Child pornography

References

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"Sexting" Shockingly Common Among Teens

Jan. 15, 2009

Latest Case Involves Three Teen Girls In Pa. Who Sent Nude Pics To Three Boys

What teens call "sex-ting" is the act of sharing nude or partially nude photos via cell phone text message. As Harry Smith reports, few realize they are breaking the law.

* Actress Vanessa Hudgens learned that inappropriate photos can end up in places you never intended them to.

* Interactive Protecting Children Online

What to say to your child about Web porn and online predators, and how to look for signs of porn on your PC. Plus: warning signs that an adult may be communicating with your child.

(CBS/ AP) While it may be shocking, the practice of "sexting" - sending nude pictures via text message - is not unusual, especially for high schoolers around the country.

This week, three teenage girls who allegedly sent nude or semi-nude cell phone pictures of themselves, and three male classmates in a western Pennsylvania high school who received them, are charged with child pornography.

In October a Texas eighth-grader spent the night in a juvenile detention center after his football coach found a nude picture on his cell phone that a fellow student sent him.

Roughly 20 percent of teens admit to participating in "sexting," according to a nationwide survey (pdf) by the National Campaign to Support Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

"This is a serious felony. They could be facing many years in prison," CBS News legal analyst Lisa Bloom said of the six teens in Pennsylvania.

But, Bloom added, "What are we going to do, lock up 20 percent of America's teens?"

Police in Greensburg, about 30 miles east of Pittsburgh, say the girls are 14 or 15 and the boys charged with receiving the photos are 16 or 17. None are being identified because most criminal cases in Pennsylvania juvenile courts are not public.

Police say they first learned about the pictures in October. They say a student had a phone turned on in class, a violation of school policy, which prompted an administrator to confiscate the phone and subsequently find the pictures, reports CBS station KDKA-TV.

by ERNUrs November 19, 2009 10:05 PM EST

I'm sure that these kids' lawyers will figure it out but there seems to be a clear violation of privacy. While it may be against the rules to have a cell phone turned on in class, it is a much larger violation to go through the child's phone. The kid had a reasonable expectation of privacy regarding the contents of the phone and to go through is clearly an illegal search, which would make everything and anything found in the phone to be fruits from the poisonous tree and inadmissible in court. On top of it all, these are kids. Go after the dirty old men with pornographic child material in their phones.

Reply to this comment

by wjcruz October 3, 2009 2:05 PM EDT

Wow. I don't know what to say about this topic. I have read the posted threads, and agree, to some extent, with some of what was said. I am a mother myself, fortunately with children younger than the sexting age. My daughter does have her own cell phone, and it is very possible that by accident she could receive a picture mail message containing damaging information. When it comes to teenagers and their hormones, yes, I feel this has a play in the sexting era. Children are looking for acceptance and companionship, and if this powerful action is the newest "thing" to do, teens are impressionable and will follow the leader. An adolescent's brain is not capable of understanding the consequences that may follow this action. One's body is sacred, not to be shared as a child, and certainly not to be shared via the world wide web. Once these messages are sent, there is no telling where they could end up, or what the true dangers would be if they ended up in the wrong hands. As parents, it is our job to protect these children, not endorse sexual behavior. I always speak from experience here, as I was a teen mom. When it comes to legal actions, yes, this is a form of child pornography. Do you really think that the only person involved in making the decision to take and send a picture, or write an x-rated text is the person behind the cell phone? Absolutely not. There are 2 or more people involved, and from there, who knows how many. The pressure these children feel is overwhelming and empowering. The consequences need to be legal, or else I'm afraid they could turn deadly. Imagine for a moment that it was your daughter sending this type of message...enough said. And for those of you who believe this only happens due to the actions of young girls and their promiscuous behavior, you are WRONG. These girls have their reasons too, including the forceful nature of young boys on the verge of manhood. It takes 2 to tango, even with sexting.

Reply to this comment

by Blazen2010 October 1, 2009 9:38 PM EDT

Why is it that sexting is such a big deal? I have sent a few sexts myself, but NONE of it was of me or anyone that I knew, all 3 of them were of something funny or gross. Sexting doesn't consist of just child pornography, and I think that its ridiculous that if you send a picture of someone of age that is sexual you still get registered as a sex offender and get jail time/probation/whatever else they do to you. I'm tired of looking up should sexting be decriminalized or not, and only getting things that deal with child pornography, because like I said before, that's not the only kind of sext.

Reply to this comment

by sammylee3 October 1, 2009 6:18 PM EDT

This is absolutely ridiculous. I am a 21 year old who was in high school not so long ago. When i was 17 I remember witnessing a couple having sex on the floor of a school dance...this is something to be worried about! Not a few kids who are sending nude pictures on cell phones. Yes i agree that this was not a smart idea on the students part but what do you expect for highschool kids!? Its a little over the top to charge them with child pornography and the law should be more worried about the REAL sexual predators out there, not a couple of teenagers.

Reply to this comment

by Jeremy1989Rudie August 31, 2009 7:49 AM EDT

To solve the problem... don't let children under 16 or even 18 for that matter own a cellphone. I have seen many young children with cell phones, Infact i seen a 9 year old with one 2 days ago texting like crazy at walmart! Parents need to stop raising children the wrong way and start raising them the right way! I'm 21 and i didn't get a cellphone till i was 18! Parents and cell phone companys with there tv adds are to blame for this.

Reply to this comment

by rastawake August 20, 2009 12:12 AM EDT

"It's not a problem unless you make it a problem." ~ Tommy Chong

Do people really think that kids shouldn't know anything about the other sex until they turn 18?

Reply to this comment

by faulknerl August 14, 2009 3:57 AM EDT

My students on a high school newspaper staff will be working up an article on teens and cell phones. May they contact you for a quote or two?

Reply to this comment

by faulknerl August 14, 2009 3:53 AM EDT

My students on a high school newspaper staff will be working up an article on teens and cell phones. May they contact you for a quote or two?

Reply to this comment

by Superare July 21, 2009 1:34 AM EDT

I just think its kind of funny that this is a problem at all, kids look at porn all the time, and a lot of television is very revealing, but the moment a girl sends her boyfriend a naked picture of herself its "shocking".

Reply to this comment

by Tarasisk July 14, 2009 12:44 AM EDT

taking childrens phones away isn't going to make them stop doing anything they will just actually have sex. sending pictures isn't what gets them in to trouble without their phones they are more likely to actually have sex. so ha

Reply to this comment

by goldentaters July 7, 2009 2:17 PM EDT

ERROR - There is no National Campaign to Support Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. It should be the National Campaign to PREVENT Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Come on!
Reply to this comment

by moonstara July 2, 2009 4:02 AM EDT

i know what sexting is, i have participated in sexting and deeply regret it. the boy who was doing it with me, wasn't a bad kid.. he was just over run by his hormones. the thing is, is i'm not a bad girl either.. i have made a promise i would stay a virgin till i was married, just, the way it made me feel was overwhelmed. i'm not saying, what i did was right or anything, but, have you ever thought that maybe it's not as bad as it could be.. i mean i know that what my mom did was right, i mean having my phone was a privilage.. and i abused it.. and i mean.. well anyway, you should realize that it's not as bad as the real thing is..

Reply to this comment

by mohto June 30, 2009 10:25 PM EDT

this is absolutely outrageous..... charging these kids with child pornography is not only way to harsh of a penalty but also shows little understanding of what are teens are going through. so now the the government is parenting our children about morals via crimmlinal court. This is a matter that should be handled by the parents.I really hope people come to there senses before they destroy other kids lifes.

Reply to this comment

by TheProdigyAaronHelms June 17, 2009 12:30 AM EDT

To start off, No. I am not condoning pre-marital sex or pornography. But, would you rather kids send the pictures to each other, and there be no physical intercourse, only maybe some masturbation. OR would you rather scare kids into thinking phones aren't safe, and have the kids meet in person, then they would take the actions and instead of it being just a exotic flirtatious thing to do, they actually have sex, and potentially impregnate a young teen. Did you know, that 60% of teens who are pregnant under the age of 17, go on to live life's with a income of less then 25k a year? and of those, a large majority do not stay with that person they had the baby with. Ok, so now we have 2 kids who have basically ruined their life's with a child, and have no real chance of education or success. Not only does that hurt them, it hurts their child, and it hurts the rest of America. You ask yourself, why? Because American Tax Payers are now paying to support a large majority of these people, who will benefit off of welfare. All because we cant let them have fun. The fact of the matter is that Americans start pointing fingers at Teenagers with moral situations, like Sex between to minors (A Natural feeling, historically dated back to before Christ), Or "Sexting" and things, yet we continue to let GAY PRIDE parade's pursue through our streets? We point the finger at Teens with moral situations because Teens are the "Evil" of society, and are viewed as cruel, evil, forms of humans from adults, yet Adults continue to Support Abortion?

In the end, you ruin their lifes by putting them in prison, and labeling them as "Sex Offenders". when in the end, they where being responsible about their sex situation.

Anyone who says "They shouldnt have been doing it at all." Well, My question is how is it

ANY different then Parents who would hand their son a playboy, and tell him to use that instead? Even so, The fact that it is a CONSENSUAL thing, Between 2 Minors, with NO adult interference, drives the nail in even harder.

Thoughts, Feelings?

Im just Intrested in how you guys feel.

This is coming from a 15 year old, Kansas.

Reply to this comment

by bubby150 June 16, 2009 4:24 AM EDT

wow.i mean rlly.y r ppl making such a big deal about it.its nt even rlly child porn unless its submitted to the internet on a porn site.if teens r sending nude pics to each other through there fones then let there parents deal with it.its nt the whole worlds problem.nd y r teachers looking through kids fones.they shld be sued.even if they were jus looking at the screen.its none of there business!!

Reply to this comment

by JudeTheLongestWar June 14, 2009 1:55 PM EDT

This week's multi-plex offering, The Taking of Pelham 123, normalizes sexting by a young woman (teen) showing her bra via laptop to the handsome boyfriend who says he loves her while riding a subway train publicly to watch her sexting. His love talk is that he's "got her" and she (like the mythic Echo to Narcissus) echoes the words back to him as her shirt comes off to reveal the bra. The laptop on the highjacked subway train ultimately saves the handsome man's young life, reinforcing what a good thing it is to sext. No two or more girls or women are shown onscreen at any time in any sort of relationship, friendship or otherwise. No mother onscreen has a relationship with a daughter (although a key plot point involves a mother and a son).

To attempt prosecution against teen girls who sext their boyfriends in a mass media world of anti-girl normalized sexual politics is sick. The 180 degrees from sick in the fundamentalist religious world would keep the girls in gender ghetto behind rigid dress codes for girls and bowing to God in man's image.

More at <http://thelongestwar.wordpress.com/> or [here](http://thelongestwar.wordpress.com/)

Where are the voices of freedom on behalf of the girls in all of this? The silence is shocking.

Reply to this comment

by livefree7 June 8, 2009 5:39 AM EDT

I am a nudist & I find it shocking that simply a photo of my lifestyle could land me in jail.

I'm a morally upright person & not a sex offender because of my lifestyle.

There are millions of nudists & we are not out raping kids or anything like that.

It is no surprise America has the world's HIGHEST prison population.

Before Christians arrived in America the native women were topless.
In Africa some tribes have been naked for thousands of years.
My lifestyle is no reason to put me in jail with thieves, rapists, & murderers.
Nudity is not sex!
Reply to this comment

by ItWillBeAlright May 25, 2009 1:00 AM EDT

I believe that this is a situation gone completely out of hand. Child pornography, when presented to the mind, is a thought of a child being sexually abused or just being touched innappropriately, unwillingly of course. Sexting does have a major negative side indeed. It has the risk of the pictures of the teen being distributed throughout cellphones and the internet none the less. I think the most the government should take this situation and every similar situation, shouldnt even involve the government at all. Just maybe a group to discuss and make teens aware of the dangers they might get themselves into just like they do with sex in schools. They teach teenagers all about sex in school. I would know, speaking I am a teenager myself of fourteen years. Infact, having sex is more dangerous then sexting.

For example:

- People can brag about having sex and maybe even sneak pictures of them while having sex and they can be distributed as well as pictures sent through sexting.
- People can over react about sex situations and commit suicide because simply the whole situation and/or mistake has gone out of hand, as well as sexting situations can get out of hand and cause the same result of a teenager taking his/her life into their own hands like that.

What sexting doesnt do that sex does:

- Sex might give you an STD/STI. Sexting doesnt.
- Sex might get you pregnant/make you a father. Sexting wont.

Let me ask you this; how often do you see a teenager,who has had sex with another teenager, introuble with the law like this? Unless it was a minor and a person over the legal age, you never see it!

STOP OVER REACTING!

And for those of you who are thinking 'How could she know anything? Shes just a stupid fourteen year old...', think about what I have said here.

This whole situation has gone completely out of hand and I say we do something about it.
Copy and paste this to other sites if you are with me!

Reply to this comment

by MGBissell May 20, 2009 5:04 PM EDT

Maybe its me or maybe I was raised slightly old fashion, but its come to my attention more and more I look around at the generation that is to carry on my generations torch. I'm 22 years old and I personally have to give credit to the parents out there trying to help raise there kid(s) right.

Whats annoying is the postings after postings of people looking up these surveys or analasist that some "doctor" or professor with some weird ass degree spews out to claim is the cause of these problems. Like really... really this is what people are gonna go with now a days. Kids have no sense of responsibility except for the few out there that have to be responsible either because they've got to work for there dreams or just good parenting. Kids ranging from 8 years old to 14 have cell phone not only cell phones in which you can call someone but they have access to the internet and a variety of other options out there depending on how much the parents want to spend on there kids Cell phone plan. This new generation has no support from the people that need to be giving it to them the most which is the parents. Teenage preganacy has become a problem of its own and has been growing since i was in diapers. fair enough to all the people out there helping those who have had there lives messed up because of poor education from parents or simply because some just don't care but you really have to look at the source of the problems.. PARENTS has been and always will be. Some people will probably look at this and say I'm full of crap and BS. Well I may not have a degree in human psychology or whatever but the problems are clear everywhere to see. School shouldn't be the one responsible to educate kids and young adults about sex maybe the dangers of sex but even still thats up to the parents but i guess overall this is a rant about the lack of a good job parents are doing out there and i understand that someout there are swamped with work and stuff but you still have the choice and options.. kids don't need cell phones there a priviledge not a right. So please Please stop saying this crap is a survey solvable problem or strictor laws need to be in place people just need to step up to the plate adn take responsibility.

Reply to this comment

by jeff_bot May 5, 2009 11:51 AM EDT

This is shocking ... to whom, exactly? It's been going on for as long as teens have had cell phones.

I think it's far more interesting that the behavior is even MORE common among 20-somethings.

<http://www.intotemptation.net/2009/02/11/sexting-hysteria/>

And no one has surveyed the 30-somethings ... or the 40-somethings.

If they can, they will, and they do.

'Sexting' Teens Can Go Too Far

Sending Provocative Images Over Cell Phones Is All the Rage, but It Can Go All Wrong

By GIGI STONE

March 13, 2009

What happened to the time when if you liked a boy at school you'd pass him a note?

Twenty percent of teens admit to engaging in x-rated text messaging.

These days the disturbing new trend in teenage flirting is sending nude or semi-nude photos from cell phone to cell phone: instead of "texting," they call it called "sexting."

While the X-rated offerings are usually intended just for a boyfriend or girlfriend, the photos often wind up being shared.

While 17-year-old Matthew Younger of Maryland says he has never done anything like this himself, he has seen it happen among his peers.

"If a boy meets a girl or has a girlfriend on summer break he comes back and shows all his boys the [naked] pictures he's been sent. No one gives it that much thought really," says Younger.

The dangerous combination of teenagers behaving provocatively and impulsively is not new, but the accessibility to the technology is. With cell phone cameras, they have been handed a tool so easy to use for some it's impossible to pass up.

Study: Many Teens Send Nude Photos, Videos
Why Teens Post Nude Pix of Themselves

And in the transparent culture built around social networking sites, it all spreads like wildfire.

"Somebody might send it to somebody else's phone and that person has Facebook on the their phone and they automatically upload it to their Facebook or MySpace page," explains Somalia Yaborow, 16, of Alexandria, Va.

What teens don't realize is just how serious the consequences can be.

News reports are increasingly documenting legal repercussions after indecent photo appear online. And attorneys say there are many unanswered questions about whether young people who send their own photos could face prosecution for obscenity or child pornography.

This year in Wisconsin, a 17-year-old was charged with possessing child pornography after he posted naked pictures of his 16-year-old ex-girlfriend online.

In Alabama, authorities arrested four middle-school students for exchanging nude photos of themselves. In Rochester, N.Y., a 16-year-old boy is now facing up to seven years in prison for forwarding a nude photo of a 15-year-old girlfriend to his friends.

Don't think that's what was contemplated when the laws were written, says the Rochester teen's attorney, Tom Splain, who has worked on several similar cases this year. "I think it was more for the older pedophile collecting pictures of young children; we're now running into high school students getting swept up in these charges."

A recent survey shows that a third of young adults 20-26 and 20 percent of teens say they've sent or posted naked or semi-naked photos or videos of themselves, mostly to be "fun or flirtatious." (ABC News Photo Illustration)

Director Marisa Nightingale says it's crucial parents talk to their children about potential consequences, because while criminal charges are rare, compromising photos could easily come back to haunt the teens when they go to apply for college or their first job.

"Even if it doesn't result in something official, they can get really humiliated and find something they thought was a joke can become something that haunts them for years," says Nightingale.