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Cover Page Footnote

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PARTICIPATION IN AND MOTIVATIONS FOR SEXTING: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES, MASCULINITY, AND FEMININITY

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Abstract

Sexting, the exchange of sexually explicit messages, images, and videos through mobile phones, has in recent years become an increasingly publicized and common occurrence in our technologically advanced society (Strassberg, Rullo, & Mackaronis, 2014). The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of gender, gender role attitudes, and self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity on participation in and motivations for sexting. Using a cross-sectional design, a self-administered questionnaire was given to 222 Butler students during the early part of the spring 2016 academic semester. This questionnaire included items regarding demographics, the activity of sexting, personal participation in sexting, self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and gender role attitudes. While there was no gender difference in the frequency of sending sext messages, study results showed a significant relationship between gender and pressures to sext. Females are more likely to feel constrained by social norms when it comes to sexual behavior, whereas males have more freedom in this area. In addition, those with egalitarian gender role attitudes are more likely to accept sexting as a form of intimacy, indicating this technology has been integrated into sexual relationships.

Sexting, the exchange of sexually explicit messages, images, and videos through mobile phones, has in recent years become an increasingly common behavior and widely publicized issue in our society (Strassberg, Rullo, & Mackaronis, 2014). This relatively new form of sexual behavior has attracted considerable legal, public, and media attention, with the majority of research on the topic focusing on the participation of juveniles and those under 18. These studies concentrate on the prevalence of behaviors associated with sexting in teenagers and adolescents, as well as the relationship between sexting and cyberbullying (Conn, 2011). Another focus in the research literature is the legal consequences of sexting, including the laws and legislation sur-

rounding the activity and the classification of underage sexting as child pornography (Chalfen, 2009).

While there is an abundance of research on sexting among adolescents, research on sexting among college-aged young adults is relatively lacking, especially in relation to gender differences. Most studies about sexting among college students focus on the population of college students as a whole. Perkins, Becker, Tehee, and Mackelprang (2013) found that the majority of college-aged participants had not engaged in sexting within the past six months and those who did engage did so at a low rate, typically in the context of romantic relationships. Similarly, Reyns, Burek, Henson, and Fisher (2013) found that just 38% of the college students sampled admitted to participating in sexting. Some studies, however, have found a much higher rate of participation, finding sexting behavior to be prevalent in students' lives, but engaging in the behavior occasionally or rarely (Dir, Coskunpinar, Steiner, & Cyders, 2013). Although some college students admit to engaging in sexting, this topic is relatively sensitive and private and some individuals may not feel comfortable disclosing their sexting behavior (Woolard, 2011).

In regards to differences in sexting based on gender, Winkelman et al. (2014) found little difference between men and women when it comes to general sexting behavior. However, Reyns, Henson, and Fisher (2014) determined that women were more likely to send sext messages, whereas men were more likely to receive sext messages. In terms of attitudes and expectancies about sexting, Dir et al. (2013) concluded single individuals and females tend to have more negative experiences and expectations. This is consistent with Perkins et al. (2013) who found that male reactions to receiving unrequested sext messages are much more positive than females, who tend to be less pleased and more embarrassed or upset. Perkins et al. (2013) also found that men who engage in sexting tend to endorse more hostile or negative beliefs about women. One study reported that men endorse the beliefs that men are sex-focused and women are sex objects more than women (Jewell & Brown, 2013), which could lead to the assumption that women could feel pressured into sending sexually explicit messages to men. This assumption was confirmed by Walker, Sanci, and Temple-Smith (2011), who found a link between gendered sexual violence against women and sexting. This link results in young women being coerced or pressured into sending sexually explicit text messages or images.

While attitudes and beliefs about sexting have been studied, the focus of this research is typically on general attitudes and not gender differences. Winkelman et al. (2014) reported that 65% of participants in their study had

a positive attitude toward receiving sext messages and photos, while only 20% reported having a negative attitude. Dir et al. (2013) concluded that sexting expectancies influence the decision to engage in sexting, with positive attitudes leading to increased participation and negative attitudes leading to decreased participation. This was confirmed in a later study by Hudson and Fetro (2015) who found that individuals' attitudes toward sexting is one of the main predictors of college students' sexting behaviors. There are many reasons for negative expectancies regarding sexting. These include the fear of disappointing family, potential embarrassment, and concern for reputation (Winkelman et al., 2014). Conversely, there are many reasons why individuals choose to engage in sexting and have positive expectancies concerning this behavior. Woolard (2011) found that over half of the study participants believed that sexting boosts confidence and an even larger percentage (64%) found it entertaining. In addition, Parker, Blackburn, Perry, and Hawks (2013) concluded that sexting can be a way to enhance both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction among couples. Other reasons for engaging in this behavior include consensual sexual reasons such as to begin or maintain a relationship, the desire to feel sexy, and just because the individual wanted to (Perkins et al., 2013).

There has been some previous research about sexting among college students and young adults in terms of participation, gender, and motivations. However, none of these studies explored the effect of gender role attitudes or self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity on sexting, which is the main purpose of this study. Individuals' understanding of masculinity and femininity and how individuals self-identify are likely to have an impact on motivations and participation in sexting. This is due to the double standard often present for men and women regarding sexual behavior and societal beliefs about appropriate sexual behavior based on gender identity (Flood, 2013). Because of the societal belief that sexual behavior is essential to a man's masculinity, it can be predicted that this will influence men's participation in sexting and potentially give them motivation to engage in this behavior. Since masculinity is tied to being in charge and being the initiator in sexual relationships (Seccombe, 2015), it can also be expected that men will be the initiators in sexting and be more likely to send sext messages. On the other hand, the societal belief that women are supposed to be more timid and emotional rather than sexual and dominant like men leads to the prediction that women will be more likely to receive sext messages and not initiate this behavior. The pressures to achieve the perfect standard of femininity may also impact motivations for women because sexting may be a way to validate their attractiveness. However, some women may choose not to sext or to keep this

behavior a secret due to the negative and demeaning labels that women often acquire when others find out about their participation in certain sexual behaviors (Flood, 2013).

Method

PARTICIPANTS

The data for this study were collected using a cross-sectional survey. Participants remained completely anonymous, as they were asked not to disclose their name on their survey. The questionnaire was approved by the Butler University Institutional Review Board and administered to individuals in a classroom setting at Butler University during regularly scheduled class periods. Surveys were collected after each participant finished. Professors were contacted based on personal connections and referrals from departmental administrative specialists, either in-person or via email, to encourage participation in the study from students of all class levels and from a range of academic majors. The study population for this study was young adults ages 18 to 24, the age group most likely to partake in sexting (Winkelman et al., 2014). The sample size was 222 students (63.5% female and 36.5% male).

MEASURES

The survey completed by the participants included questions regarding student demographics, the activity of sexting, and personal participation in and attitudes toward sexting. Two scales were used in this questionnaire.

Demographics. The survey included questions measuring students' gender, relationship status, Greek membership, and class standing. The independent variable in this study is gender.

Participation in and attitudes toward sexting. One of the dependent variables in this study is participation in sexting. Sexting was defined for participants as the exchange of sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos through mobile phones. By giving this definition to participants at the beginning of the survey, all participants had the same definition of the broad concept of sexting. Participants were asked whether or not they had ever sent or received a sext (as well as within the past 6 months), as well as the frequency of their participation in sexting. They were also asked with whom this sexting occurs, their motivations for sexting (Parker et al., 2013), and reasons for not sexting

(Winkelman et al., 2014). In addition, students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements designed to measure their general beliefs about sexting and whether they felt pressure to engage in this behavior.

Self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity. One of the independent variables in this study was self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity. This was measured using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). “The BSRI contains 60 items presenting characteristics assumed to represent cultural definitions of traits considered to be masculine (self-reliant, forceful, etc.), feminine (jealous, sympathetic, etc.), and gender-neutral” (Lin & Billingham, 2014, p. 258). Respondents evaluated how well each trait describes them based on a seven-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Based on their total score, participants were categorized into one of four gender role types – masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated (Lin & Billingham, 2014).

Gender role attitudes. This variable was measured using a commonly used gender-role attitudes scale consisting of four items (Wright & Bae, 2014). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following four items.

“It is better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.”

“Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women.”

“A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.”

“A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.”

Participant responses to these four items were summed to create a composite index, with lower scores indicating more gendered attitudes toward women in this study.

Results

DESCRIPTIVE DATA AND SAMPLE

Descriptive statistics for the key variables in this study are presented in **Table 1**. The sample’s gender distribution (63.5% female & 36.5% male) was consistent with that of Butler students as a whole. However, students in-

volved in Greek life (sample 53.6% vs. Butler 30-40%) were overrepresented in this sample. In addition, while students from all class standings are represented, first year students (40.1%) were overrepresented and juniors (18.5%) and seniors (15.8%) were slightly underrepresented.

In regards to general sexting behavior, nearly half of the sample – 47.3% – had ever sent a sext message. However, this behavior was shown to be less frequent when taking into account the time elapsed since the last sext message was sent. Of all respondents who admitted to ever sending a sext message, 58.1% had sent a sext in the past six months. However, the majority of respondents (78%) reported that they had had not sent a sext message within the past two weeks. An overwhelming majority of respondents who had ever sent a sext (86.3%) stated that the most frequent recipient for these messages is a significant other. As shown in **Table 1**, respondents were more likely to have ever received a sext message (65.8%) than to have ever sent a sext message (47.3%). Of all respondents who had ever received a sext message, 73.5% reported that they most frequently receive sext messages from a significant other. Similar to the frequency of sending sext messages, receiving sext messages became less frequent as the time span decreased. The percentage of respondents who had received a sext message in the past six months – 63% – was almost the same as the percentage of those who had ever received one. This became less frequent when the time frame decreased, with 75.2% reporting they had not received a sext message within the past two weeks.

Also presented in **Table 1** are the descriptive statistics for the two scales used in the questionnaire, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) which measures masculinity and femininity, and the gender role attitudes scale. The distribution of respondents across the four categorizations of the Bem Sex Role Inventory was fairly even. After totaling up scores on the BSRI, 26.6% of respondents were categorized as feminine, 26.1% as masculine, 25.2% as androgynous (partially both), and 22.1% as undifferentiated (neither one nor the other). In regards to gender role attitudes, the range of scores was 7-20, with lower scores indicating more gendered attitudes toward women. Overall, gender role attitudes were shown to be largely egalitarian, with a mean of 15.86 for all respondents and a standard deviation of 3.072.

SEXTING ATTITUDES AND GENDER

Table 2 presents data regarding gender and sexting attitudes. Gender differences in responses for these questions were tested for significance using the

Gender	Male	36.5%	
	Female	63.5%	
Class Standing	First Year Student	40.1%	
	Sophomore	25.2%	
	Junior	18.5%	
	Senior	15.8%	
	Fifth Year or Above	0.5%	
Relationship Status	Single	57.7%	
	In a Committed Relationship	41.0%	
	In an Open Relationship	1.4%	
Currently Have a Greek Membership?	Yes	53.6%	
	No	46.4%	
Have You Ever Sent a Sext Message?	Yes	47.3%	
	No	52.7%	
Have You Ever Received a Sext Message?	Yes	65.8%	
	No	34.2%	
Bem Sex Role Inventory Categorizations	Feminine	26.6%	
	Masculine	26.1%	
	Androgynous	25.2%	
	Undifferentiated	22.1%	
Gender Role Attitudes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
	15.86	3.072	7-20

N = 222.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

chi-square test. The chi-square test is used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between two categorical variables and the likelihood that this distribution is due to chance. Focusing on the first two items in Table 2, there is strong evidence of a relationship between gender and pressure to send sext messages. For the first item, females were more likely than males to feel pressured by someone else to send sext messages, $X^2(3, N = 222) = 30.09, p = .000$. Conversely, for the second item, males were more likely than females to have pressured someone else to send sext messages, $X^2(3, N = 222) = 36.28, p = .000$. There was also a statistically significant gender

	SA	A	D	SD**
I have felt pressured by someone else to send a sext*				
Male (N = 81)	2.5%	13.6%	40.7%	43.2%
Female (N = 141)	17.0%	31.9%	15.6%	35.5%
All Respondents (N = 222)	11.7%	25.2%	24.8%	38.3%
I have pressured someone else to send me a sext*				
Male (N = 81)	2.5%	18.5%	35.8%	43.2%
Female (N = 141)	0.0%	3.5%	15.6%	80.9%
All Respondents (N = 222)	0.9%	9.0%	23.0%	67.1%
Sexting is common among college students				
Male (N = 81)	11.1%	67.9%	18.5%	2.5%
Female (N = 141)	14.3%	59.3%	25.7%	0.7%
All Respondents (N = 222)	13.1%	62.4%	23.1%	1.4%
Males are more likely than females to engage in sexting*				
Male (N = 81)	3.7%	29.6%	61.7%	4.9%
Female (N = 141)	12.8%	39.0%	46.1%	2.1%
All Respondents (N = 222)	9.5%	35.6%	51.8%	3.2%
Females are more likely than males to engage in sexting				
Male (N = 81)	3.7%	22.2%	69.1%	4.9%
Female (N = 141)	2.8%	27.0%	67.4%	2.8%
All Respondents (N = 222)	3.2%	25.2%	68.0%	3.6%

* Statistically significant

** Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree

Table 2. Sexting Attitudes and Gender.

difference in the fourth item, as shown in **Table 2**. Females were more likely than males to hold the belief that males are more likely than females to engage in sexting, $X^2(3, N = 222) = 9.45, p = .024$.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SEXTING BEHAVIOR

Gender differences in sexting behavior are presented in **Table 3**. Contrary to the hypothesis that males are more likely to send sext messages, there was no evidence of a significant relationship between gender and the act of or frequency of sending sext messages. However, there was evidence of a relationship between gender and certain reasons for sending sext messages. As illustrated in Table 3, males were more likely than females to say hedonism (feels good or satisfies sexual needs) is a reason they send sexts, $X^2(1, N = 105) =$

	Male	Female	All Respondents
Reasons for Sending Sexts	(N = 44)	(N = 61)	(N = 105)
Affirmation	14 (31.8%)	20 (32.8%)	34 (32.4%)
Intimacy	33 (75.0%)	45 (73.8%)	78 (74.3%)
Hedonism*	20 (45.5%)	11 (18.0%)	31 (29.5%)
Peer Influence	1 (2.3%)	4 (6.6%)	5 (4.8%)
Insecurity*	2 (4.5%)	11 (18.0%)	13 (12.4%)
Coping	4 (9.1%)	6 (9.8%)	10 (9.5%)
Other	2 (4.5%)	3 (4.9%)	5 (4.8%)
Reasons for Not Sending Sexts (N = 37)		(N = 80)	(N = 117)
I would be afraid of disappointing my family	8 (21.6%)	32 (40.0%)	40 (34.2%)
I would regret it later	25 (67.6%)	59 (73.8%)	84 (71.8%)
It would hurt my reputation*	13 (35.1%)	46 (57.5%)	59 (50.4%)
I would be embarrassed if anyone found out*	17 (45.9%)	55 (68.8%)	72 (61.5%)
I would be afraid that it would affect my future if leaked (e.g. school, future employment)*	19 (51.4%)	61 (76.3%)	80 (68.4%)
Other	8 (21.6%)	21 (26.3%)	29 (24.0%)
Have You Ever Received a Sext? (N = 81)		(N = 141)	(N = 222)
Yes	62 (76.5%)	84 (59.6%)	146 (65.8%)
No	19 (23.5%)	57 (40.4%)	76 (34.2%)
Bern Sex Role Inventory Categories			
Feminine*	9 (11.1%)	50 (35.5%)	59 (26.6%)
Masculine*	32 (39.5%)	26 (18.4%)	58 (26.1%)
Gender Role Attitudes*			
Mean	14.38	16.70	15.86
Std. Deviation	3.212	2.650	3.072

* Statistically significant

Table 3. Gender Differences in Sexting Behavior.

9.24, $p = .002$. In contrast, females were more likely than males to say that insecurity (worry partner won't want you or won't love you if you don't) is a reason that they send sext messages, $X^2(1, N = 105) = 4.29, p = .038$.

There was also evidence of a relationship between gender and certain reasons for not sending sext messages, as shown in **Table 3**. There were three reasons for not sending sext messages that proved to be significantly related to gender. The first was "It would hurt my reputation," $X^2(1, N = 117) = 5.06, p = .024$. The second reason was "I would be embarrassed if anyone found out," $X^2(1, N = 117) = 5.56, p = .018$. The third reason was "I would be afraid that it would affect my future if leaked," $X^2(1, N = 117) = 7.25, p = .007$. Females were more likely than males to say that these three statements are reasons they do not send sext messages. As hypothesized, some females may choose not to sext because of the negative or demeaning labels that may be given to them as a result of engaging in this behavior. Additionally, **Table 3** demonstrates evidence of a relationship between gender and ever receiving a sext message $X^2(1, N = 222) = 6.58, p = .010$. Contrary to the hypothesis that females are more likely to receive sext messages, males were actually more likely than females to have ever received a sext.

Gender differences can also be observed in both the Bem Sex Role Inventory categories and in the gender role attitudes scale. As shown in **Table 3**, females were more likely to be categorized as feminine and males were more likely to be categorized as masculine on the BSRI, $X^2(3, N = 222) = 20.79, p = .000$. As shown in **Table 1**, the range for the gender role attitudes scale is 7-20, with lower scores indicating more gendered attitudes toward women. It is demonstrated in **Table 3** that females tended to have more egalitarian attitudes than males, $X^2(13, N = 222) = 37.56, p = .000$. However, both male and female means skewed more on the egalitarian end, with means of 14.38 and 16.70 respectively.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY, FEMININITY, AND GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AND SEXTING BEHAVIOR

Relationships between the BSRI scale and Gender Role Attitude scale and key variables were also examined using a bivariate correlation test. A bivariate correlation test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between two variables. It also indicates the strength and direction of this relationship. Contrary to what was hypothesized, there was no evidence of a relationship between ranking as masculine or feminine on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the act or frequency of sending or receiving

sex messages. However, there was evidence of a relationship between ranking as feminine on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and insecurity (worry partner won't want you or love you if you don't) as a reason for sending sext messages, $r(103) = .31, p = .001$. Those who were feminine were more likely than those who were masculine to say insecurity is a reason they send sext messages. There is also evidence of a relationship between gender role attitudes and ever receiving a sext message, $r(220) = -.15, p = .027$. Those with more gendered attitudes toward women were more likely to have ever received a sext message. In addition, a relationship was found between gender role attitudes and intimacy (to express love or make an emotional connection) as a reason to send sext messages, $r(103) = .25, p = .009$. Those who had less gendered and more egalitarian attitudes toward women were more likely to say that intimacy is a reason they send sext messages.

Discussion

Sexting behavior was relatively common in this sample of college students. Nearly half of students reported ever sending a sext message and an even higher number, about 3/5, reported ever receiving a sext message. This general participation rate is higher than what has been found in previous sexting studies (Reyns et al., 2013). This study also found a higher rate of engagement within the past six months than previous studies (Perkins et al., 2013), with both sending and receiving sexts averaging around 60 percent among this study's participants. Perkins et al. (2013) found that the majority of college-aged participants did not engage in sexting within the past six months, which does not align with this study's findings. However, results of this study in terms of the context of sexting behavior were consistent with the research conducted by Perkins et al. (2013). The majority of respondents reported they most frequently send and receive messages in the context of a romantic relationship, either to or from a significant other.

A relationship between gender and pressure to send sext messages was uncovered in this study. Females were more likely to report that they have felt pressured by someone else to send a sext message, whereas males were more likely to have pressured someone else to send a sext message. These findings were consistent with previous research on this issue and could be due to the idea that men who engage in sexting tend to endorse more hostile or negative beliefs about women (Perkins et al., 2013). In fact, Jewell and Brown (2013) reported that men endorse the beliefs that men are sex-focused and women are sex objects more than women do. This could lead to the as-

sumption that women oftentimes feel pressured or coerced into sending sext messages, which can also be linked to gendered sexual violence against women (Walker et al., 2011). The present finding that females were more likely to have felt pressured by someone else to send a sext message can be connected to the finding that females endorse the belief that males are more likely than females to engage in sexting. The females in this study could hold this belief as a result of their experiences with sexting in terms of feeling pressured to engage in this activity.

Consistent with a study by Winkelman et al. (2014), no gender difference was found in the act or frequency of sending sext messages. However, there was a gender difference found in receiving sext messages. Similar to findings from Reyns et al. (2014), males were more likely than females to have ever received a sext. A reason for this could be that males tend to have more positive reactions to unrequested sext messages than females (Perkins et al. 2013). In addition, it could be due to the fact that males are more likely than females to pressure others into sending sext messages, as found in the present research. Therefore, one way males may be receiving sext messages is through coercion or pressure.

There were gender differences in both reasons for sending sext messages and reasons for not sending sext messages. Males were more likely to say that hedonism (feels good or satisfies sexual needs) is a reason they send sext messages. Females were more likely to say that insecurity (worry partner won't want you or won't love you if you don't) is a reason they send sext messages. These findings are consistent with the previously mentioned study conducted by Jewell and Brown (2013) which found that men tend to endorse the beliefs that men are sex-focused and women are sex objects more than women do. Therefore, the relationship between males and hedonism could occur because males participate in sexting behavior as a way to satisfy their own sexual needs. If males believe they are more sex-focused than females, they will be more concerned with their own needs and desires than those of their partner or the recipient of the sext. The relationship between females and insecurity, on the other hand, could occur because females are more likely to participate in sexting behavior to please their partner or the recipient of the sext. If males are more likely to hold the belief that men are sex-focused and women are sex-objects, females may feel pressured into sending sext messages to males because they may feel it is expected of them, or may be coerced into it.

In regards to reasons for not sending sext messages, females were more likely than males to say that they do not send sext messages for the following

reasons: “It would hurt my reputation,” “I would be embarrassed if anyone found out,” and “I would be afraid that it would affect my future if leaked.” This could be attributed to societal beliefs about what is appropriate for men and women and the double standard that is often present regarding sexual behavior. Women are more likely than men to receive negative or demeaning labels for participating in sexual behavior. Therefore, sexting can be viewed as breaking the norms set for women and females may not participate in sexting because of these external, societal factors.

No relationship was found between ranking as masculine or feminine on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the act or frequency of sending or receiving sext messages. However, there was a relationship uncovered between ranking feminine on the BSRI and insecurity (worry partner won’t want you or love you if you don’t) as a reason for sending sext messages. Those who were categorized as feminine on the BSRI were more likely than those categorized as masculine to identify insecurity is a reason they send sexts. This can likely be attributed to findings from the same research used to explain the connection between being a female and insecurity as a reason for sending sexts (Jewell & Brown, 2013). If men endorse the beliefs that men are sex-focused and dominant (traditional traits of masculinity) and that women are sex-objects and submissive (traditional traits of femininity), then those who are feminine are likely to send sext messages to please their partner. They would, therefore, subconsciously take on that submissive role, or submit to possible pressures put on them to send sext messages.

It was found in the present research that those with more gendered attitudes toward women on the gender role attitudes scale were more likely to have ever received a sext message. However, when this relationship was examined separately for males and females, it was no longer statistically significant. This suggests that a gender difference could be seen with a larger sample size. The relationship between gender role attitudes and ever receiving a sext was close to being significant for females when the chi-square test was used, so it can be expected that this relationship is largely female-driven. That is, if a female has more egalitarian and less gendered attitudes toward women, they are less likely to receive sext messages. A reason for this could be that the sender of a sext message may know about the female’s egalitarian attitudes and may be less likely to send a sext message to them because of the knowledge of their gender role beliefs.

Those who have less gendered and more egalitarian attitudes toward women were more likely to say that intimacy is a reason they send sext messages. This could be due to a shift in norms and what is appropriate behavior

in the context of sexual relationships. Parker et al. (2013) concluded that sexting can be a way to enhance relationship and sexual satisfaction in couples, which reconfirms this change in norms. It can be presumed that sexting is becoming more accepted as a new form of sexual behavior, especially among those who have egalitarian gender attitudes. As society changes and men and women are seen as more equal, we are also seeing the incorporation of social media and technology into relationships, as exemplified by sexting as a way to express intimacy.

The results of the present study show that there is a significant relationship between gender and pressures to sext. Females are more likely to feel constrained by societal norms when it comes to sexual behavior, whereas males have more freedom in this realm. Those with egalitarian gender role attitudes are more likely to accept sexting as a form of intimacy, which incorporates technology into sexual relationships.

However, the findings of this study must be considered based on its limitations. This research was conducted using a sample from a small, private university in the Midwest so findings may not be generalizable to larger, public universities or to young adults who do not attend college. There could be some issues with measurement validity and reliability because of the sensitivity of the topic. Although the survey was completely anonymous, some students may have felt uncomfortable giving honest answers and taking the survey in general. There is also a limitation in the reasons offered in the survey question "Why do you not send sext messages?" Many respondents who wrote in an answer in the "other" category mentioned moral, personal, or other internal reasons for not sending sext messages. The other options offered in the questionnaire were mainly external and did not touch on internal factors. When these "other" answers were separated and tested for significance during data analysis, no gender relationship was found. However, if these answers were present in a category included on the survey, more respondents may have checked them.

The inclusion of the aforementioned internal factors as reasons for not sexting should be explored in future research examining the relationship between gender and sexting behavior. In addition, adding a question asking participants about their sexual orientation may be beneficial. During the data collection period, one respondent disclosed their sexual orientation on their questionnaire and stated that this was something that affected their responses. Future research exploring participation in and motivations for sexting may want to take the sexual orientation of individuals into account in order to more fully understand sexting behavior among college students.

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