Are Teens Under Pressure to be Sexting?

New research studying the pressures of sexting on adolescents has found that friends and romantic partners are the main source of social pressure, outweighing adolescents' own attitudes.



The paper 'Under pressure to sext? Applying the theory of planned behavior to adolescent sexting', by Michel Walrave, Wannes Heirman & Lara Hallam, published in *Behavior & Information Technology*, studied the beliefs, social pressures, and predictors of sexting in adolescents.

Adolescents revealed that they sext for attention, to lower the chances of catching STDs, and to find a romantic partner. The concepts of receiving a bad reputation, or of being blackmailed, did not appear to influence their motivations. The authors note that "Remarkably, only the behavioral beliefs that expected positive outcomes of sexting were significant in predicting adolescents' willingness to engage in it."

Friends and romantic partners were found to be the only significant social pressures that affect an individual's motivation to sext: "The more positive the perceived social pressure that originates from these two categories of referents -- who mostly belong to the peer group -- the more adolescents will be inclined to engage in sexting." Negative pressures from parents and teachers did not affect motivations.

Adolescents were most likely to sext if they had complete trust in the recipient. Likewise, a lack of trust would have a significantly adverse effect. In addition, the more positive social pressure they had from romantic partners, the more they were inclined to sext.

The study surveyed 498 adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years.

Do Messy Children Learn Better?

Attention, parents: The messier your child gets while playing with food in the high chair, the more he or she is learning.



Researchers at the University of Iowa studied how 16-month-old children learn words for nonsolid objects, from oatmeal to glue. Previous research has shown that toddlers learn more readily about solid objects because they can easily identify them due to their unchanging size and shape.

In a paper published in the journal *Developmental Science*, Larissa Samuelson, associate professor in psychology at the UI and her team at the UI tested their idea by exposing 16-month-olds to 14 nonsolid objects, mostly food and drinks such as applesauce, pudding, juice, and soup. They presented the items and gave them made-up words, such as "dax" or "kiv." A minute later, they asked the children to identify the same food in different sizes or shapes. The task required the youngsters to go beyond relying simply on shape and size and to explore what the substances were made of to make the correct identification and word choice.

Not surprisingly, many children gleefully dove into this task by poking, prodding, touching, feeling, eating -- and yes, throwing -- the nonsolids in order to understand what they were and make the correct association with the hypothetical names.