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Acceptability of Sexting in Same-Sex Relationships

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ABSTRACT

For individuals who identify as part of the LGB community, the Internet can be seen as a tool to take control of their lives, may promote self-esteem, and foster a sense of belonging. The purpose of the study was to learn about sexting practices on college campuses. It builds on the existing body of knowledge by attending specifically to sexting rather than the previous literature about engagement in sexual behavior online (see, for example, Daneback, Cooper, & Månsson, 2005). Findings indicated that sexting is viewed as more acceptable in same sex relationships as compared to heterosexual relationships.

BACKGROUND

The increase in the development of various technologies in recent decades has led to an increase in using such technologies for communication. Devices such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops enable users of these devices to reach others in more ways than they previously could not, leading to the formation and maintenance of relationships, both geographically proximal and distant. The Internet allows for the expansion of intimacy outside the traditional constructs of family and the home (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Valentine, 2009). The Internet and other media may be used for partners and family members to maintain their relational obligations. For example, technologies make it possible to shop, send e-cards, and otherwise communicate love and support within an ever-expanding network of social and familial relationships.

There have also been increases in the types of messages that are sent and received between individuals. Sexting is a behavior that is common in adults ages 18-24 (Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, & Grodzinski, 2012). This may be attributed to the technological advancement that has happened in this particular cohort. Between the years of 2010-2011, there was a growth in the amount of images that were sent (Gordon-Messer, et al, 2012). In addition, the used of applications for romantic development has become more common. These sites allow for a chance to meet others in a way that may be more useful than offline alternatives due to the advertisement nature of these sites (Valentine, 2006). The Internet also provides a perceived sense of safety for individuals of a minority group to engage with other's within their group that they otherwise would not be able to connect with (Valentine, 2006). Individuals who identify within a minority group may not have the opportunity to seek out a relationship in typical public places, or the venues to do this may not be existent or may be very limited.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to identify whether marginalized populations (specifically the LGB population) view sexting as a more acceptable behavior than the heterosexual population.

METHODS

- Participants
 - Participants were 18 years or older and recruited from lower division and upper division undergraduate courses at UNLV.
- Procedures
 - The survey distributed to participants consisted of 62 items assessing a wide range of behaviors and perceptions regarding sexual behavior, mobile phone use, and use of the Internet as well as basic demographic information. For the purposes of this poster, however, the findings are limited to an analysis of those who responded to items from the LGBIS.
 - SPSS (Version 20) was utilized to select a random sample of participants identifying as heterosexual (n = 27). The heterosexual sample was then analyzed against an equal sample of participants identifying as bisexual (n=27) and same-sex (n=26).

RESULTS

To what degree is sexting acceptable...	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
In the college community	2	5.172	5.869	.004
In the Las Vegas Community	2	3.064	3.637	.031
In the southwest	2	4.598	5.241	.007
Outside the U.S.	2	.957	1.059	.352
In your peer group	2	.734	.606	.548

RESULTS (cont...)

To what degree is sexting acceptable...	With which group do you identify?	Mean Differ.	Std. Error	Sig.
In the college community	Hetero * Bisex	-.852	.255	.001
	Hetero * Same sex	-.603	.2579	.022
	Bi * Same Sex	.249	.2579	.337
In the Las Vegas Community	Hetero * Bisex	-.667	.2522	.009
	Hetero * Same sex	-.419	.2498	.101
	Bi * Same Sex	.248	.2522	.329
In the southwest	Hetero * Bisex	-.778	.2549	.003
	Hetero * Same sex	-.631	.2574	.016
	Bi * Same Sex	.147	.2574	.570

In short, there are differences between the groups with regard to acceptability of sexting within the college community ($F = 5.869$, $df = 2$, $p = .004$), local community ($F = 3.637$, $df = 2$, $p = .031$) and southwest region ($F = 5.241$, $df = 2$, $p = .007$). The post hoc tests indicated that the bisexual and same-sex sample reported similarly in terms of acceptability that this group significantly differed at the $p < .05$ level from the heterosexual population among the three variables.

DISCUSSION and IMPLICATIONS

Our findings indicated that there are times in which the acceptability of sexting in same sex relationships is more acceptable as compared to heterosexual relationships. One piece of scholarly thought that might explain this finding is the concept of invisibility management (Blumer & Green, 2012). Invisibility management is the concept that people who identify as lesbian or gay have to manage with whom they come out and to what groups. There are a certain proportion of members of the LG community who are not out. In this way, because some of the applications are online and hidden from the eyes of the larger community, it may be the case that this is something that the LG community would favor in terms of connecting with others, as it would not compromise one's level of outness. In other words, it would protect the identity of those who identify as LG internally but are not out. More research is needed to determine whether invisibility management specifically contributes to using technology in relationship initiation in non-heterosexual relationships.