Coercive sexting and revenge porn: New vehicles for domestic and teen dating violence

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“You don’t know about nudes?”

- indignant 8th grader
Overview

• Revolution in communication technology

• The arrival of the “sext”

• New forms of coercive control

• Impact on survivors
Data Revolution

“90% of the world’s data has been created in the past two years.”

- IBM (2013)
How can we actually produce that amount of data?

Not just how, but what.

• Individual production/distribution capabilities

• Citizen journalism

• Documentation of daily life
Merriam Webster: New Words in 2012

Craft beer
E-reader
F-bomb
Sexting
Sexting

My working definition:

“A sexually explicit message, photo or video sent electronically from one person to another.”
Legal concerns

• Many states consider sexting by minors as distribution of child pornography

• Receipt of a minor’s sext message may be construed as possession of child pornography

• Instances of teens being charge with possession for pictures of themselves
Police investigate sexting at Iowa high school

Investigation involves photo storage app disguised as a calculator

By David Nelson
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Police say students are storing the photos on smartphone apps disguised to look like calculators.
(Google Play)
Prosecutor Wants to Charge 14-Year-Old Girl with Sexual Exploitation for Taking PG-13 Pictures of Herself

When her parents found out she had sexted, they were horrified. When they saw the actual pictures, they were confused.

A 14-year-old Iowa girl, "Nancy Doe," is facing sexual exploitation charges for taking two sexy pictures of a minor and texting them to a boy at school.

The minor in question is Doe, which means the Marion County prosecutor has essentially threatened to brand her a sex offender for taking and sending pictures of her own body.

Making matters significantly worse, the pictures in question can hardly be described as child pornography, Doe's family argues in its lawsuit against Marion County Attorney Ed Bull. In one photo, she was wearing boy shorts and a sports bra. In the other, she had removed the bra but her hair was fully covering her breasts.
Sexting prevalence

• Sexting is increasingly common

• 50%-70% of youth ages 17-24 have sexted in their lifetime

• In a sample of 1171 adults ages 18 to 73, 65% reported both sending and receiving sext messages. (Currin et al., 2016)
Sexting onset

New vehicles for the perpetration of domestic or teen dating violence

DID YOU SAY 39 OR 93?
Coercive Sexting
The Drouin et al. Study

- 480 college students

- 83% white; 5% Hispanic; 4% Black; 4% Asian

- Measured sexting coercion, sexual coercion and intimate partner violence
Types of sexting coercion

• Resource manipulation or withholding

• Commitment manipulation

• Defection threat
Results

• 25% experienced sexting coercion

• No significant gender differences

• Sexting coercion strongly correlated with other forms of sexual coercion and IPV tactic use

• Negative mental health impacts from being coerced to sext for both men and women

• Impact of sexting coercion was reportedly greater than the impact of sexual coercion or IPV
On-line, offline and over the line: Coercive sexting among adolescent dating partners

Youth & Society

Scope of the study

• **Aim 1**: Determine rates of coercive sexting perpetration and victimization

• **Aim 2**: Assess for differences based on age and gender

• **Aim 3**: Examine the correlates including associations with other forms of sexual coercion by a dating partner
Sample

• 1236 adolescents surveyed across six school districts

• 837 adolescents reported a dating or sexual partner in the past 12 months

• Reported outcome data available for 589 adolescents
Measures

• Coercive sexting: pressured a partner to send sexual messages or texts or pressuring a partner to send nude or sexy photos

• Sexual coercion: pressuring a dating partner to have sex without a condom, insisting on sex when a partner did not want to, and/or using threats to pressure a partner into having sex
Results
Who was mostly likely to perpetrate?

• Boys

• 9th graders

• Those who had perpetrated other forms of sexual coercion
Who was more likely to be victimized?

• Girls

• 9th graders

• Those who had experienced other forms of sexual coercion
Revenge Porn*

*I don’t like this term.
Revenge Porn

My working definition:

“The non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit images or video of a current or past romantic partner, generally with the intent to humiliate or punish, but always for self-serving motives.”
Famous cases

• Tyler Clementi

• Kappa Delta Rho at Penn State University

• Erin Andrews
Domestic violence tactic

• Threat of distribution

• Will not remove post unless...

• Distribution with intent to punish
Impact

- Qualitative study of 18 survivors

- Current or ex-partners had distributed nude/semi-nude photos or videos without consent

- Most photos or videos obtained through prior consensual sexting

Karla

“Her ex-boyfriend was a photographer and took nude portraits of her before they began dating. After they dated and broke up, he discovered her new boyfriend was a professor at the university she attended. He then sent nude portraits of her to the professors in the department she was studying in and to professors in her boyfriend’s department.”
Karla

“My nerves are still really jumpy, far more so than I ever was before...and so after [the revenge porn] happened I felt like it really contributed to how I deal with things that I worry about now, because I get much more panicky and feel like “oh my god, the consequences of this are gonna be earth-shattering,” whereas I never really felt like that before...”

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Nikki

“She was absolutely shocked when she discovered he was secretly filming her. After the relationship ended, he created a website and several social media pages using unflattering and nude photos of her from the footage. He also made several threats against her and her family, including death threats.”
Nikki

“Nikki discussed how her anxiety was tied to her concerns about her physical well-being. Along with the revenge porn, fake social media pages and online stalking and harassment, her ex-boyfriend also made several physical threats against her family, including death threats. She mentioned how her ex-boyfriend’s actions caused her to become “very stressed,” and that she often was either unable to sleep or slept for days.”

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Summary

• New tactics, same objectives

• Co-occurrence with other tactics

• Traumatic impact on survivors
Questions and Comments

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