Sexting and Intimate Partner Relationships among Adults

A Thesis

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Table of Contents

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... vii
Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1. Background and Introduction ........................................................................... 1
  1.1 Themes of Past Research ................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Prevalence and Demographic Factors .......................................................................... 3
  1.3 Attitudes towards and Motivations for Sexting .......................................................... 5
  1.4 State of the Literature ................................................................................................. 6
  1.5 Sexual Health ............................................................................................................... 8
  1.6 Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction ......................................................................... 9
  1.7 Theoretical Underpinnings ....................................................................................... 11

Chapter 2. The Current Study ............................................................................................... 12
  2.1 Rationale ..................................................................................................................... 12
  2.2 Specific Aims and Hypotheses ................................................................................... 13

Chapter 3. Methods ............................................................................................................. 15
  3.1 Mturk.com and Qualtrics ............................................................................................ 15
  3.2 Participants and Recruitment ...................................................................................... 18
  3.3 Measures .................................................................................................................... 21
    3.3.1 Demographics and Relationship Status ................................................................ 22
    3.3.2 Attachment Style ................................................................................................ 22
    3.3.3 Gender Roles ..................................................................................................... 22
    3.3.4 Sexting Behaviors ............................................................................................. 22
    3.3.5 Sexting Motives and Wantedness ..................................................................... 23
    3.3.6 Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction ............................................................... 24
    3.3.7 Sexting Attitudes ................................................................................................ 25
  3.4 Power Analysis ........................................................................................................... 25

Chapter 4. Results ................................................................................................................ 26
  4.1 Demographics ............................................................................................................. 26
  4.2 Sex and Sexting Behavior ............................................................................................ 29
  4.3 Relationship Satisfaction ............................................................................................ 30
  4.4 Sexual Satisfaction ....................................................................................................... 31
  4.5 Hypothesis 1: Sexting and Attachment Style ............................................................ 31
  4.6 Hypothesis 2: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction ................................................ 36
  4.7 Hypothesis 3: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes .............................................................. 38
  4.8 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction—Wantedness .................................. 41
  4.9 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction—Motives ........................................ 42
  4.10 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction—Wantedness .................... 43
  4.11 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction—Motives ............................ 44
    4.11.1 Intimacy Motives ............................................................................................... 44
    4.11.2 Hedonism Motives ......................................................................................... 45
    4.11.3 Self-Affirmation Motives ................................................................................. 47
    4.11.4 Coping Motives ............................................................................................... 47
    4.11.5 Peer Pressure Motives .................................................................................... 48
    4.11.6 Partner Approval Motives .............................................................................. 48
  4.12 Hypothesis 5: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes—Wantedness .................................... 49
  4.13 Hypothesis 5: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes—Motives .......................................... 52
4.13.1 Intimacy Motives ................................................................. 52
4.13.2 Hedonism Motives ............................................................ 52
4.13.3 Self-Affirmation Motives ...................................................... 53
4.13.4 Coping Motives ................................................................. 54
4.13.5 Peer Pressure Motives ......................................................... 55
4.13.6 Partner Approval Motives ..................................................... 55

Chapter 5. Discussion ........................................................................ 56
  5.1 Sexting and Attachment Style ..................................................... 57
  5.2 Sexting and Sexism ................................................................. 58
  5.3 Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction .................................................. 60
    5.3.1 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Unwanted Sexting .................. 60
    5.3.2 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Sexting Motives ..................... 61
    5.3.3 Implications of Sexual Satisfaction Findings ....................... 62
  5.4 Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction ......................................... 62
    5.4.1 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Unwanted Sexting .................. 63
    5.4.2 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Sexting Motives ..................... 64
    5.4.3 Implications for Relationship Satisfaction ......................... 65
  5.5 Sexting and Sexting Attitudes ................................................... 66
  5.6 Sexting and Gender ............................................................... 68
  5.7 Strengths and Limitations ....................................................... 69
  5.8 Clinical Implications and Future Directions ............................... 71

References ......................................................................................... 74

Appendix A: Survey Materials .......................................................... 81

Appendix B: Motives for Consensual but Unwanted Sexting ................. 95
List of Tables
Table 1. Sociodemographics by gender ................................................................. 27
Table 2. Final model regressing attachment styles on sexting behavior ............... 32
Table 3. Final model regressing sexism on sexting behavior ................................. 33
Table 4. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 2 .................................. 35
Table 5. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 2 .................................. 38
Table 6. Univariate comparisons for hypothesis 3 ............................................... 40
Table 7. Pairwise comparisons for main effect of relationship status on relational expectations of sexting ................................................................. 40
Table 8. Individual regression models for lifetime sexting on sexting attitudes scales... 40
Table 9. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 4 .................................... 42
Table 10. Multivariate multiple regression for hypothesis 5 ................................. 50
Table 11. Tests of between-subjects effects for hypothesis 5 ............................... 50
Table 12. Regression model for perceived risk of sexting on sexting behavior and wantedness ................................................................. 51
Table 13. Regression model for fun and carefree attitudes of sexting on sexting behavior and self-affirmation motives ................................................................. 54
List of Figures

Figure 1. Hypothesis 1 .................................................................................................................. 14
Figure 2. Hypotheses 2 and 3 ...................................................................................................... 14
Figure 3. Hypothesis 4 .................................................................................................................. 15
Figure 4. Hypothesis 5 .................................................................................................................. 15
Figure 5. Consort Diagram .......................................................................................................... 21
Figure 6. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Gender and Relationship Commitment .................................................................................................................. 37
Figure 7. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Wantedness and Relationship Commitment .................................................................................................................. 44
Figure 8. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Intimacy and Relationship Commitment .................................................................................................................. 45
Figure 9. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Hedonism and Relationship Commitment .................................................................................................................. 46
Figure 10. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Self-Affirmation Motives and Relationship Commitment ................................................................................................. 47
Figure 11. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Coping Motives and Relationship Commitment ................................................................................................................ 48
Figure 12. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Insecurity Motives and Relationship Commitment ................................................................................................................. 49
Figure 13. Sexting Perceived Risk and Sexting Behavior by Unwanted Sexting .................. 51
Figure 14. Sexting as Fun and Carefree and Sexting Behavior by Self-Affirmation Motives ................................................................................................................................................. 54
Sexting, defined as “sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, images, or photos through electronic means, particularly between cell phones” (Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014), should be viewed within the framework of sexual health promotion which requires the recognition of the value of sexual pleasure and the promotion of sexual relationships that are safe, consensual, honest, and mutually pleasurable (World Health Organization, 2006). Past research has approached sexting as a risky activity (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Drouin, Vogel, Surbey, & Stills, 2013; Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2013; Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Rice et al., 2012). This approach fails to account for the possible positive effects of open sexual communication with a partner. This study attempted to determine whether attitudes towards and motives for sexting moderate the relationship between sexting and relationship and sexual satisfaction among an adult population, in order to determine under what circumstances sexting is a risk factor and under what circumstances might it be a protective factor. Participants \((N = 870)\) were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk and completed measures concerning demographics, relationship status, attachment style, gender roles, sexting behaviors, sexting motives and wantedness, perceived outcomes of sexting, and relationship and sexual satisfaction. Respondents were aged \(18-82\) years \((M = 35.30; SD = 10.02)\), predominantly female \((57.70\%)\), white \((80.6\%)\), and in
Sexting and intimate partner relationships among adults

Results showed that attachment was not significantly related to past sexting behavior. Hostile sexism, but not benevolent sexism, was positively related to past sexting behavior. Sexting was positively related to sexual satisfaction and did not vary by frequency of “unwanted but consensual sexting” or motives for sexting. Sexting was positively related to relationship satisfaction for individuals who did not report being in “very committed relationships” but not for individuals who did. If individuals reported never or rarely engaging in unwanted sexting, higher levels of sexting were related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction; however, for individuals in committed relationships who reported higher frequencies of unwanted sexting, higher levels of sexting were related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Lower levels of intimacy and hedonism were associated with stronger relationships between sexting and relationship satisfaction. For those in very committed relationships, at high levels of these motives, more sexting was related to lower relationship satisfaction. Although individuals in very committed relationships had generally higher levels of relationship satisfaction than those not in very committed relationships, the relationships between sexting and relationship satisfaction did not vary by relationship commitment for self-affirmation, coping, or partner-approval motives. At low levels of any of these motives, sexting and relationship satisfaction are positively related, but at high levels, more sexting is related to lower satisfaction. More sexting behavior was related to higher attitudes of relational expectations regarding sexting and of sexting as “fun and carefree.” Individuals who reported more sexting reported fewer perceived risks of sexting.
Increasing levels of self-affirmation motives for sexting were found to attenuate the positive relationship between sexting behavior and “fun and carefree” attitudes such that individuals with the highest levels of self-affirmation motives exhibited an inverse relationship between the two variables. Strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. Taken together, the data indicate that not all sexting is equal. While sexting appears to be generally good for sexual satisfaction, wantedness of and motives for sexting matter within the context of a relationship. Unwanted sexting is bad for relationship satisfaction. Wanted sexting is good for sexual and relationship satisfaction among heterosexuals. This is an important and novel study with exciting clinical implications.
Chapter 1. Background and Introduction

Sexting is defined as “sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, images, or photos through electronic means, particularly between cell phones” (Klettke et al., 2014). Sexting first gained the attention of the mainstream media due to the potential legal implications of the activity for minors. The creation and sharing of sexually explicit images and photographs of minors can be and has been prosecuted as child pornography (a felony offense), even when the individuals are themselves minors and the communications are within the context of a consensual sexual relationship (Day, 2010; Richards & Calvert, 2009). As such, much of the research on sexting has focused on the legal risks associated with sexting. A growing body of research has examined its relationship with other risk taking behaviors (e.g., unprotected sex, drug use), negative health sequelae (e.g., sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancy), and psychological correlates of sexting (e.g., attachment styles, coercion).

1.1 Themes of Past Research

When approaching sexting as a risky activity, most studies have found positive relationships between sexting and sexual activity, number of sexual partners, unprotected sex, and drug and alcohol use (Bauermeister, Yeagley, Meanley, & Pingel, 2014; Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, & Bull, 2013; Crimmins & Seigfried-Spellar, 2014; Dake, Price, Maziarz, & Ward, 2012; Dir, Cyders, & Coskunpinar, 2013; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Drouin et al., 2013; Ferguson, 2011; Giroux, 2011; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Rice et al., 2012; Temple et al., 2012; NCPTUP, 2008), while some researchers have found no association between sexting and these risky behaviors (Giroux, 2011; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013).
In addition to examining risk behaviors, past research has examined possible psychological correlates of sexting. A significant body of work ties attachment style to both relationship and psychological health. One line of research posits that sexting can function as a reassurance seeking behavior and help alleviate relationship or sexual anxiety among anxiously attached individuals (Drouin & Tobin, 2014). Furthermore, attachment has been linked to subjective motivations for sex and to relationship satisfaction (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004), indicating that it is possible that attachment contributes to the story of sexting in a larger way than simply predicting behavior.

Attitudes about sexting and attachment style have both been found to be associated to sexting behavior. Weisskirch and Delevi (2011) found that among 18-30 year olds, attachment anxiety was related to sending text messages propositioning sexual activity for individuals in relationships. Drouin and Landgraaff (2012) also observed that both anxious and avoidant attachment styles were associated with more frequent sexting than was secure attachment; however, only for women was attachment a predictor for sexting photographs.

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory measures a theory of sexism that incorporates ambivalence towards women by measuring both sexist antipathy or hostile sexism and stereotypically positive views of women or benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Research with this model has shown that ambivalent sexism is linked to polarized views of women into subgroups (e.g., those they place on a “pedestal” and those they place in the “gutter”; Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997; Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Although the relationship between sexism and sexting has not been previously explored, the idea that an individual’s internalized sexism would also be linked to the type of
sexual communication in which they engage is a logical extension of these findings and is in keeping with the tenor of extant literature on sexting.

Feelings of pressure or coercion to sext have also been examined recently. Indeed, a 2012 study of 18-year olds found that coercion (by partners and by friends in general) was the most frequently cited reason for engaging in sexting (England, 2012). Another study found that more than half (57%) of participating teens had been asked to send a sext and the majority of girls reported being at least “a little bothered” by the request (England, 2012). While these studies focused on teens, Drouin and Tobin (2014) explicitly examined “unwanted but consensual sexting” among college students and found that more than half (52.3%) of the sample had consented to sexting with a committed partner when they did not want to do so. The most common reasons for agreeing to participant in unwanted sexting were flirtation, foreplay, to fulfill a partner’s need, or for intimacy. The effects of sexting when one does not want to (or “unwanted but consensual sexting”) have not been explicitly examined, but may be importantly different than the effects of enthusiastically engaging in the behavior.

1.2 Prevalence and Demographic Factors

Data on sexting are limited and much of the research has focused on teens and emerging adults. A recent systematic literature review found that as of August 2013, 19 peer-reviewed articles presented original quantitative empirical data about sexting that included sufficient data to allow the methodology and results to be reviewed (Klettke et al., 2014). While 13 of these studies sampled individuals age 18 years or older, nine studies employed undergraduate student samples. To date, only 9 studies have looked at sexting among adults outside of an undergraduate setting.
According to this literature review, among adults 18 years and older the estimated mean prevalence of having sent either sexually suggestive texts or photo content is 53.31%, 95% CI [49.57 – 57.07] (Klettke et al., 2014). When only considering sexts with photo content, the estimated mean prevalence is somewhat lower, 48.56%, 95% C.I. [46.21 – 50.92]. In this review, the only study employing a representative sample had an even lower prevalence of sending sexts with photo content (33% of participants; MTV). Estimated mean prevalence of receiving sext messages is 56.59%, 95% C.I. [51.28-61.9] and when restricting the definition of receiving sexts to those including photo content this number stayed fairly constant at 56.01%, 95% C.I. [53.2 - 58.82] (Klettke et al., 2014).

Pilot data collected for the current study asked participants to indicate what behaviors they felt were common in three different types of interpersonal relationships: not dating, dating casually, and in a committed relationship. That study found that 18.5% of respondents endorsed sexting as a behavior in which they believed couples commonly participate outside of the confines of a defined dating relationship. The behavior was seen as more normative in casual (46.2%) and committed (63.6%) relationships (Stasko & Geller, 2014). These findings indicate that sexting is viewed as culturally normative independent of inquiries into personal behaviors.

Sexting behavior has been found by some research to vary by demographic factors (e.g., gender, relationship status). Although research has shown that individuals in relationships are more likely to report sexting than individuals not in relationships (Dir, Coskunpınar, Steiner, & Cyders, 2013; Dir, Cyders, et al., 2013; Drouin et al., 2013; Hudson, 2011; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2012), marital status does not appear to be related to sexting prevalence (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012) or explicitness (Parker, Blackburn,
Perry, & Hawks, 2013). One study found that men were more likely than women to engage in sexting behavior in general (Hudson, 2011), two found that women were more likely to send sexts than their male counterparts (Englander, 2012; Wysocki & Childers, 2011) and three studies found that men were more likely than women to receive sexts (Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; MTV).

When age has been examined as a predictor of sexting behavior, research has failed to find a consistent significant association (Benotsch et al., 2013; Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Giroux, 2011; Hudson, 2011). Only one study found a significant association with age as it related to sending sexts with photo content; Wysocki and Childers (2011) found that this behavior decreased in a linear manner across age groups.

As a result of their recent literature review, Klettke et al. (2014) recommended that additional research on the relationship between sexting behavior and psychological well being is needed, especially research that takes into consideration the circumstances surrounding the behavior (e.g., coercion, motivation). They furthermore highlighted the need for research on sexting among middle age and older adults, as these individuals have not been included in previous research.

1.3 Attitudes towards and Motivations for Sexting

Research seems to indicate that there may be different motivations for and attitudes towards sexting that influence its occurrence and outcomes. In a survey of college students, Henderson and Morgan (2011) found that the main reasons given for sending sext messages were “to be sexy” and “to initiate sexual intercourse.” Research has also observed that more positive overall attitudes towards sexting are associated with
more sexting behaviors (Ferguson, 2011; Hudson, 2011; Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaita, & Rullo, 2013; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011).

Other research has explicitly targeted individuals’ perceived outcomes of sexting with mixed results. Weisskirch and Delevi (2011) found that perceptions of risk were not related to past sexting behavior. Henderson and Morgan (2011) found that women were more likely than men to view sexting as serious and having the potential for serious negative consequences. Dir, Coskunpinar, et al. (2013) examined positive and negative expectancies for both sending and receiving sexts and found that expectancies differed by gender. Males reported higher positive expectancies and females reported higher negative expectancies for receiving sexts relative to each other. Additionally, individuals who were single reported stronger negative expectancies when compared with those with other relationship statuses. This study also found that both positive and negative expectancies about sending and receiving sexts were significantly related to sexting behaviors.

1.4 State of the Literature

The sexting literature to date has focused on sexting behavior, motivations and attitudes about sexting, and its relationship to psychological and behavioral risk factors. Although there are important messages to be gleaned from past research, the methodology of the extant literature has some systematic limitations that should be considered in interpreting findings and designing future projects. All research on sexting among adults has been cross sectional in nature, limiting the type of conclusions that can be drawn. For example, it is not possible to determine if experiences with sexting influenced attitudes towards sexting or if positive attitudes made people more amenable
to participating in the activity. Additionally, the majority of studies including a young or emerging adult population have employed regional convenience samples from undergraduate settings (Benotsch et al., 2013; Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; Dir, Cyders, et al., 2013; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Drouin & Tobin, 2014; Englander, 2012; Ferguson, 2011; Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011). Research seems to indicate that prevalence estimates are higher among self-selected samples than among representative or randomly-selected samples (Klettke et al., 2014).

Another significant limitation of past research concerns the lack of consistency in how sexting behavior is defined and measured. Some studies have only included sending or receiving photos via text (Benotsch et al., 2013; Englander, 2012; Ferguson, 2011; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones, & Wolak, 2012). Other studies have examined only the sending of sext messages, while omitting measures for the receipt of messages (Rice et al., 2012), or collapsed sending and receiving into one category (Benotsch et al., 2013). In addition to variance in the operationalization of sexting behavior, there is also a lack of consistency in measures and a lack of validated measures used in the field. Although some scales have been developed, their use has not yet become standard (Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; NCPTUP, 2008). Another difficulty with measurement concerns how content of the sexting behavior is considered. Beyond questions of frequency and type (e.g., text, photo, etc.) of messages exchanged, there are some indications that the explicitness of messages may be related to various outcomes such as attachment style (Klettke et al., 2014).

Sexting literature also lacks information about power analyses for past research. Due to this, when conflicting findings arise, it is not possible to determine whether this is
due to under powered studies, inconsistent measurement tools, or some other factor. These limitations should be weighed when considering the extant findings and were taken into consideration when developing this research.

Finally, the literature to date fails to account for the possible positive effects of open sexual communication with a partner. There is a missing discourse of pleasure when researchers address the topic of sexting—a puzzling omission as pleasure is one of the most basic motivations for sexual behavior.

1.5 Sexual Health

Research into sexting is in keeping with the concept of sexual health promotion as it has been articulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the WHO (2006), sexual health is defined as:

a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence (p. 5).

According to this report, good sexual health requires the need for recognition of the value of sexual pleasure and the promotion of sexual relationships that are safe, consensual, honest, and mutually pleasurable (WHO, 2006). It follows then that understanding the nature, risks and benefits of this new sexual activity is in keeping with this goal to improve sexual health.
1.6 Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction

As most research has focused on predictors of sexting and possible mental, sexual or health risks related to it, little research has been done on the actual effect sexting may have on relationships. The current study proposes using relationship and sexual satisfaction to measure the positive aspects of sexual health. Although only one study to date has directly addressed the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction, it did find that relationship cohesion predicted sexting among adults in long-term relationships (Parker et al., 2013). Despite this dearth of research, some lessons can be drawn from the research on texting. In a study of the effects of technology use on attachment and relationship satisfaction and stability among emerging adults, texting to express affection was associated with higher partner attachment for both men and women (Schade, Sandberg, Bean, Busby, & Coyne, 2013). This study also found that for men texting to hurt their partners was negatively related to partner attachment, relationship satisfaction and stability. Another study examined how various types of media use was related to relationship satisfaction and found that of the different forms of communication examined, texting, but not other forms of communication, helped predict relationship satisfaction (Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011). The relationship between texting and relationship satisfaction was mediated by the content of the texting.

The relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction may have important health implications. Relationship quality has been positively correlated with both physical and mental well-being (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). A robust body of research supports the finding that poor marital or relationship satisfaction is associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms (Røsand, Slinning, Eberhard-Gran, Røysamb, & Tambs, 2012; Tower & Kasl, 1996; Whisman, 1999; Whisman & Bruce, 1999;
Moreover, being single, widowed, separated or divorced carries an increased risk of depressive symptoms compared to being married (Nicolosi, Moreira Jr, Villa, & Glasser, 2004). Additionally, relationship satisfaction has been shown to act as a buffer against stressful life events (Røsand et al., 2012). These findings indicate that by understanding the nature of the relationship between sexting behavior and relationship satisfaction, it may be possible to better leverage this information to influence relationship satisfaction/attachment/intimacy and thereby improve mental and physical health, as well as quality of life.

The same is true of the relationship between sexual satisfaction and sexting. Sexual satisfaction has also been linked to general psychological well-being and general health in women (Davison, Bell, LaChina, Holden, & Davis, 2009; Gallicchio et al., 2007). It should be noted that sexual and relationship satisfaction, although highly correlated, are believed to change concurrently, instead of with one affecting the other (Byers, 2005). The quality of intimate communication has been shown to account for some of this concurrent change among partners in long-term relationships. Sexual satisfaction has been found to compensate for the negative effects of poor communication on marital satisfaction (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). Another study found that women who reported higher levels of sexual dysfunction or distress also reported more incompatibility with their partners than women reporting lower levels of dysfunction and distress (Witting et al., 2008).

Within the sexting literature, Parker et al. (2013) found that pleasure and experience seeking were both significant predictors of sexting for women in committed relationships. Based on these findings, Parker et al. (2013) went on to propose several
ways in which sexting is compatible with and could be integrated into couples or sex therapy. This would be an innovative approach towards improving sexual health. Before such novel interventions are attempted however, more research is needed both on the direct link between sexual satisfaction and sexting and on the factors mediating this relationship.

1.7 Theoretical Underpinnings

The current study aims to introduce a discourse of pleasure into sexting research by proposing that sexting may play both positive and negative roles in sexual relationships. Expectancy Theory Perspective allows for the idea that sexting can be used in adaptive ways by positing that the expectations of the outcome of a behavior influence the likelihood of participating in that behavior (Parker et al., 2013). There is some research to support this perspective. Dir, Coskunpinar and colleagues (2013) found that positive expectations were associated with higher likelihood to sext, whereas negative expectancies were associated with lower likelihood to sext.

By examining the reasons people engage in sexting and the degree to which the behavior is wanted, the current research integrates the concepts of sexual agency and consent. These concepts are core elements within a model of good sexual health and, as such, have been linked to sexual and partner satisfaction. Although research on “unwanted but consensual sexting” is just beginning, investigators have been examining wantedness and ambivalence with regards to sexual intercourse for twenty years (Drouin & Tobin, 2014). This literature may help illuminate the circumstances under which sexting may be detrimental to relationship satisfaction.
In keeping with the gaps in the extant literature and the CDC and WHO focus on sexual health, the current research attempts to expand the extant literature by examining these relationships among the general adult population, instead of among teens and emerging adults. Furthermore, this study will attempt to determine whether attitudes towards and motives for sexting moderate the relationship between sexting and relationship and sexual satisfaction. Under what circumstances is sexting a risk factor and under what circumstances might it be protective as a way of healthy sexual communication?

Chapter 2. The Current Study

2.1 Rationale

The extant literature shows that sexting behavior is common among American adults and that adults seem to partake in this behavior for a variety of reasons. The prevalence of reported consensual but unwanted sexting raises the question of how different types of sexting (e.g., wanted vs. unwanted) might be related to individuals’ perception of the outcomes of sexting and to their sexual and relationship satisfaction. The answers to these questions may help inform how current sexting trends affect sexual health, both positively and negatively. The WHO (2006) acknowledges that sexual health is critically influenced by gender norms, roles, expectations and power dynamics, all of which were addressed by the current research. Additionally, this study addressed many of the methodological limitations of past research by using previously validated measures, a priori power calculations in order to target an appropriately sized sample for planned analyses, and a recruitment method that has been shown to recruit samples that are more representative than general convenience samples.
2.2 Specific Aims and Hypotheses

The current project attempts to examine how the trends observed with teens and undergraduate students apply to a general adult population with two specific aims. First, this study aims to describe the factors related to sexting among adults, such as attachment, ambivalent sexism, and socio-demographic factors. Next, this study explores the factors that influence whether sexting is a positive or negative factor in intimate partner relationships. As findings so far indicate that both sexting behavior and experiences of coercion or pressure to engage in sexting may vary by gender (Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; Englander, 2012; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2012; MTV; Strassberg et al., 2013; Wysocki & Childers, 2011), it is important that this variable be taken into account in all analyses. The ways in which motivations to sext affect relationship and sexual satisfaction may be different in important ways for men and women. Similarly, as research has shown differences in the prevalence of sexting by relationship status, this must be accounted for. To address these aims, five hypotheses were tested.

1. Sexting will be associated with attachment style and ambivalent sexism, when controlling for relationship status. This relationship will vary by gender. See Figure 1.
Figure 1. Hypothesis 1

2. Relationship and sexual satisfaction will be associated with sexting when controlling for relationship status. This relationship will vary by gender. See Figure 2.

3. Sexting attitudes will be associated with sexting when controlling for relationship status. This relationship will vary by gender. See Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexting</th>
<th>Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexting Attitudes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 2. Hypotheses 2 and 3.

4. The relationship between relationship and sexual satisfaction and sexting will be moderated by sexting wantedness and motives for sexting when controlling for relationship status. This relationship will vary by gender. See Figure 3.
5. The relationship between sexting attitudes and sexting will be moderated by sexting wantedness and motives for sexting when controlling for relationship status. This relationship will vary by gender. See Figure 4.

**Figure 3. Hypothesis 4.**

**Figure 4. Hypothesis 5**

**Chapter 3. Methods**

3.1 Mturk.com and Qualtrics

Participants for this research study were recruited from and completed all study materials via the MTurk platform. All MTurk users in the United States had an equal chance of being recruited for the study. MTurk is an Internet marketplace hosted by
Amazon through which entities (“Requesters,” either individuals or organizations) post tasks (Human Intelligence Tasks, or HITs) to be completed for compensation by individuals registered on the service as “Workers” (i.e., crowdsourcing). Research indicates that Workers on MTurk from the United States are more representative of the general population than typical convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2011). The Workers have been found to be relatively representative of the general research population (i.e., overrepresentation of women, positively skewed age range, negatively skewed education level), are intrinsically motivated to complete a variety of tasks, and produce valid and reliable outcomes for psychological research (Berinsky et al., 2011; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010; Rand, 2012). Research recommends embedding meaning into the survey (e.g., thanking the participants and explaining the purpose of the survey) as a way to increase the intrinsic motivation of the workers (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014).

After Workers expressed interest in this study task, they followed an external link to the survey hosted on Qualtrics where they assented to participation and completed all study measures. After completing the survey, participants were provided with a randomly generated Study ID and instructed to enter this Study ID into their individual HIT page on MTurk. MTurk requires manual approval of each Worker’s participation. All surveys that had valid Study IDs and took at least 5 minutes to complete were approved as successful. Compensation for successful participation was $1.00. Research of MTurk samples has found no relationship between pay rates and data quality (Horn, Karim, Behrend, Sharek, & Wiebe, 2013; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014), indicating that although this compensation appears low, as it was in line with other tasks on the site, this
should not affect the reliability of the data. Past research has examined compensation rates of 2¢, 10¢, and 50¢ for tasks between 5 and 30 minutes in length (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Although data quality was not affected by the compensation rate, the participation rate was. Based on this finding and the estimate that this survey would take between 30 and 45 minutes to complete, $1.00 was determined to best fit within the study budget while maximizing recruitment.

During data collection, data were collected and stored online at www.qualtrics.com under a password-protected account. No personal identifiers were requested and all participant responses were completely anonymous. The randomly generated Study ID were used to link study completion to compensation but were not linkable to any personally identifiable information. These records were downloaded onto a secure computer by the researcher when data collection was complete and the online record was deleted. Downloaded data will be kept in an electronic database on a password-protected computer for 3 years following completion of the study. As per Drexel University Institutional Review Board policy, after 3 years following the completion of the study, the electronic database will be destroyed and no paper or electronic records will be kept.

Although all efforts have been made to keep the participants information confidential, whenever information is collected or stored on the Internet, security leaks are possible. No study data was stored on MTurk. This platform was used exclusively for recruitment and compensation of participants. If Amazon were to have a security breach, a third party might discover that an individual had participated in the project, but would still not have access to the content of the materials or the nature of the individual’s
responses. All digital data were collected and stored on Qualtrics.com under a password-protected account. Qualtrics uses Transport Layer Security (TLS) encryption for all data transmission. According to their security statement they employ passwords and HTTP referrer checking to protect surveys and their data is hosted by third party data centers that are SSAE-16 SOC II certified. Data are encrypted at all points and when hard drives must be destroyed U.S. Department of Defense methods are employed and the drives are delivered to a third-party data destruction service (Qualtric Security White Paper: Why should I trust Qualtrics with my sensitive data?, 2011) While nothing is ever certain, all efforts have been made to ensure that all data will be protected to the highest degree possible.

3.2 Participants and Recruitment

This study employed a cross-sectional, self-report survey design. Individuals 18 years of age or older who were able to read and write in English, lived in North America, and who had access to the Internet were be eligible for inclusion in the study. All policies and procedures were approved by the Drexel University Institutional Review Board prior to initiation of data collection. Participants were recruited through MTurk; after seeing an advertisement, individuals who wished to learn more about the study and/or participate followed the link provided to the Qualtrics-hosted survey. They were asked to confirm that they were at least 18 years of age and thus eligible to participate in the study, then shown an electronic consent page describing the study background, purpose and procedures, risks and benefits, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntariness, and compensation. After reviewing the consent page, individuals were given the opportunity to volunteer for participation in the study by continuing to the electronic
survey. Individuals were instructed that by continuing to the electronic survey they were providing their consent ("passive consent") to participate in the study. After agreeing to participate in the research study, participants completed the study measures. No personally identifying information was collected from the surveys and study participation was completely anonymous.

After completion of the initial recruitment effort, a second wave was implemented to specifically target individuals 35 years of age and older. The procedures for this second round of recruitment were identical to the first, except that recruitment postings specified that the survey was for individuals 35+ year of age and individuals were asked to confirm that they were at least 35 years of age before being shown the consent information. If individuals confirmed this statement, but later indicated that they were younger than 35, they were thanked for their time and excluded from participation. Participants from this second wave of recruitment represent 25% of the final sample.

To ensure the quality of the data collected in this research study, all participants who complete the study measures in less than 5 minutes were considered to be paying insufficient attention to the study materials. Participants who did not satisfy the completion time manipulation check, or did not meet the inclusion criteria for the research study were not compensated for their participation and their data were excluded from statistical analysis.

One thousand and seventy-five individuals consented to participation and began the survey. Thirty-seven participants did not complete the survey. They were not compensated for their time, and their data were excluded from the sample. During the second wave of recruitment, 29 individuals who took the survey during the first round
were found to have re-taken the survey. These individuals were compensated for their time, but these duplicate data were excluded from analysis. This resulted in 1009 unique completed surveys. For the purpose of this analysis, only surveys marked as “finished” by Qualtrics were included in the final sample. This excluded individuals who received a confirmation code and met the time check for the survey, but who stopped answering questions and simply clicked through the end of the questionnaire ($n = 34$). As only two individuals selected the “other” category for gender and this variable was examined as a possible moderator for all analyses, these two individuals were also excluded from analysis. The last restriction of the final sample concerned sexual orientation. Normative sexual behaviors often differ between groups. Some research (Bauermeister et al., 2014; Benotsch et al., 2013; Temple et al., 2012) indicates that sexting plays a significantly different role in gay culture than it does in straight culture. Although this is an interesting research question, it is outside of the scope of the current inquiry and it was determined that inclusion of all sexual orientations might complicate the findings of this study. About 10% of the survey ($n = 104$) identified as gay, bisexual, queer or other. This subsample will provide interesting insight into differences in sexting behaviors by sexual orientation, but is not large enough to support such analyses at this time. For these reasons, the sample was restricted to individuals who identified as heterosexual. These exclusions resulted in a final sample of 870 for the current study. See figure 5.
After individuals agreed to participate, they completed the study measures. Surveys were developed using Qualtrics and then linked to MTurk. All questionnaires were completed online in a single assessment session. There were no assessments following completion of the surveys. The study measures collected information about demographics, relationship status, attachment style, views about gender roles, sexting behaviors, sexting motives and wantedness, perceived outcomes of sexting and relationship and sexual satisfaction. All measures were designed to be readable at an 8th grade level. See Appendix A.
3.3.1 Demographics and Relationship Status

A demographic questionnaire obtained information about participants’ age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, location, and sexual orientation. They were also asked if they were currently in school, their highest level of educational attainment, and if they were currently employed. To understand how relationship status and history interact with sexting behaviors, type, number, duration and committedness of current sexual or romantic relationships (including marital status) were also assessed.

3.3.2 Attachment Style

The Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) scale were used to assess adult attachment style. This 36-item Likert-response scale yields dimensional scores for both attachment avoidance and anxiety. Previous sexting research has found good reliability for the measure with Cronbach’s alpha for anxiety (.92) and avoidance (.93; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011).

3.3.3 Gender Roles

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a 22-item scale about men and women and their relationships to society and captures two distinct components Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS). Previous research has found reliability coefficients of .79 for BS and .85 for HS (Hammond & Overall, 2013).

3.3.4 Sexting Behaviors

To better understand and contrast the difference between texting and sexting, participants were provided a scale of different texting content, in order from least sexual to most. This scale was adapted from previous sexting research (Parker et al., 2013) and consisted of: 1) small talk or discussing how the day is going; 2) romantic messages, e.g., “I miss you” or “I want to see u”; 3) insinuating or implying sex, double entendres; 4)
suggestive photos or videos, explicit language about sex acts; 5) nude photos or videos, explicit language about sex acts or intent to meet with person to engage in acts.

Participants were asked to identify the point on the scale at which the communication should be considered sexting. They were then asked to identify the highest rating of any message they had ever sent and of any message they had sent to a current partner. They were asked these same questions for messages they had received.

Participants who reported ever participating in sexting behavior were asked the number of partners with whom they had engaged in sexting, what percent of the time they had initiated sexting communication, and in what types of relationships the sexting had occurred (i.e., committed, casual, cheating). They also completed the Weisskirch and Delevi (2011) measure of frequency of sexting behaviors. In this scale individuals used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate how frequently they had engaged in the following behaviors: sending a sexually suggestive photo via cell phone, sending a photo in underwear or lingerie via cell phone, sending a nude photo using a cell phone, sending a sexually suggestive text message and sending a text message propositioning sexual activity. Participants were then asked how frequently they received each of those types of messages. These items were used to calculate numerical ratings of the frequency and intensity of current and lifetime sexting behavior.

3.3.5 Sexting Motives and Wantedness

Motivations for sexting were assessed using an adapted version of the Sex Motives Measure (SMM; Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998). This scale was developed to measure six sexual motives that are believed to influence why people have sex. The scale contains six subscales: affirmation, intimacy, hedonism, peer influence, insecurity,
and coping. Although it was not expected that peer influence would be a strong predictor for the older adult population, it was retained in the sample due to its possible relevance for the younger age groups. Previous sexting research using this scale found the reliability coefficients to be good, ranging between .84 and .98 (Parker et al., 2013).

Sexting Wantedness (Drouin & Tobin, 2014) were measured by a single item asking on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = never, 6 = very frequently), “how often have you consented to sexting when you actually did not want to sext?” If the respondents answered anything other than “never”, they were then asked to rate each of 10 motivations on the same Likert scale with regards to how often this influenced their decision to consent to unwanted sexting. The items were adapted from Drouin and Tobin (2012) and Impett and Peplau (2002).

3.3.6 Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) was developed using principal component analysis and item response theory on 8 well-validated scales of relationship satisfaction. The resulting 36-item scale has been shown to have greater power for detecting differences in levels of satisfaction and higher precision than the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), two well validated and frequently used tools (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The scale produces a numeric rating of relationship satisfaction between 0 and 161, and has been shown to have excellent reliability (α = .98). Scoring instructions for this measure recommend excluding all surveys with missing or omitted items. This exclusion severely limited the number of individuals for whom the CSI could be calculated. Research has indicated that the CSI(4), a shorter version of the survey consisting of only
items 1, 12, 19, and 22, also exhibits strong psychometric properties. The CSI(4) is scored into a single summary score ranging from 0 to 21. It has been shown to have very strong correlation with the CSI \( r = .97 \) and excellent reliability \( \alpha = .94 \). As a result, the CSI(4) was also scored from this survey and was used in all relevant analyses to allow inclusion of the largest sample.

The *Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction* (GMSEX; Lawrance & Byers, 1998) assesses overall sexual satisfaction asking participants to rate their sex life on five 5-point dimensions: *good–bad, pleasant–unpleasant, positive–negative, satisfying–unsatisfying, valuable–worthless*. An overall numeric score, ranging from 5 to 25 is determined such that higher scores indicate greater sexual satisfaction (Byers, 2005; Lawrance & Byers, 1998).

### 3.3.7 Sexting Attitudes

Perceived outcomes of sexting were measured through The Sexting Attitudes Scale developed by Weisskirch and Delevi (2011). This 19-item measure captures attitudes towards sexting on three subscales: Fun and Carefree, Perceived Risk, and Relational Expectation. Internal validity was found to be good during the scale development with Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale falling between .78 and .89.

### 3.4 Power Analysis

Necessary sample size for this study was determined using the program, G*Power 3.1.7 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Due to the number of hypotheses being examined, the lower significance level of .01 was used for all analyses. For Hypotheses 1, 127 participants were needed to produce a power of .80 to detect a medium effect size \( d = .15 \), Cohen, 1988). Using ANCOVA for
Hypothesis 2, 191 participants were needed to detect a medium effect size \( (d = .25, \) Cohen, 1988) \) with .80 power. Using ANCOVA for Hypotheses 2, 191 participants were required to detect a medium effect size \( (d = .25, \) (Cohen, 1988) \) with .80 power. For Hypothesis 3, in order to produce .80 power using MANOVA to assess differences in sexting attitudes by sexting, 54 participants were needed to detect a medium effect size \( (d = .25, \) (Cohen, 1988)) \). Although power analyses for mediation analyses are difficult to define, a recent review determined that to detect a small effect size \( (d = .14) \) for both the mediation pathways, a sample of 558 participants are needed to produce a power of .80 for all desired analyses with an alpha level of .05 (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). Although we expected to find a medium effect size for these meditatio\( nal \) analyses, the review examined necessary sample sizes for an alpha of .05. In order to account for the reduced alpha level in this study, we used the smaller effect size estimate to ensure adequate power. Thus, a final sample of at least 558 participants was required to produce .80 power and an alpha level of .05 while detecting medium effects, if they existed. The final sample of 870 participants was sufficient to adequately power all planned analyses.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Demographics

The analyzed sample of 870 respondents was predominantly female (57.70%) and ranged in age from 18 to 82 years \( (M = 35.30; SD = 10.02) \). Caucasians made up the largest proportion of participants (80.6%), followed by Blacks (8.7%). The remainder of the participants identified as Asian (7.1%), Hispanic (6.8%), Native American or Alaska
The majority of respondents (74.0%) reported being in a relationship, with the remainder reporting casually dating (10.2%) or being single (15.7%). Individuals who reported casually dating or being in a relationship were asked how committed they would consider these relationships to be and how they would describe the relationship. More than two-thirds (67.2%) described their relationship as “very committed.” The remainder described their relationships as “somewhat committed” (9.4%), “a little committed” (5.4%) or “not at all committed” (2.2%). Most relationships were described as being monogamous (83.9%) or casual (12.4%). Equal percentages of participants (43%) reported never having been married and being currently married. Just over half (50.5%) of participants reported having no children. Additional demographics are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographics by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Women</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Men</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>n = 502</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>n = 368</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>N = 870</em></td>
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<td><strong>Mean Age, years</strong></td>
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<td>34.9 ± 10.1</td>
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<td>35.3 ± 10.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>294 (79.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>701 (80.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>47 (9.4)</td>
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<td>29 (7.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>76 (8.7)</td>
</tr>
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<td>62 (7.1)</td>
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<td>94 (10.8)</td>
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<td>4-year College Degree</td>
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<td>139 (37.9)</td>
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<td>137 (15.7)</td>
<td>89 (10.2)</td>
<td>644 (74.0)</td>
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<td>8.7 (7.3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7 (8.0)</td>
<td>1.2 (2.0)</td>
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<td>1.5 (1.9)</td>
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<td>15 (3.0)</td>
<td>72 (14.3)</td>
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<td>51 (11.5)</td>
<td>380 (85.4)</td>
<td>8 (1.8)</td>
<td>6 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (14.0)</td>
<td>233 (81.5)</td>
<td>8 (2.8)</td>
<td>5 (1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91 (12.4)</td>
<td>613 (83.9)</td>
<td>16 (2.9)</td>
<td>11 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Commitment</th>
<th>Not at all committed</th>
<th>A little committed</th>
<th>Somewhat committed</th>
<th>Very committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 (2.2)</td>
<td>28 (6.3)</td>
<td>46 (10.3)</td>
<td>362 (81.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 (2.4)</td>
<td>19 (5.2)</td>
<td>36 (12.5)</td>
<td>223 (77.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 (2.6)</td>
<td>47 (6.4)</td>
<td>82 (11.2)</td>
<td>585 (79.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>278 (55.5)</td>
<td>223 (44.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>152 (41.5)</td>
<td>215 (58.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>430 (49.5)</td>
<td>438 (50.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Sexual Debut</th>
<th>17.3 ± 3.5</th>
<th>17.9 ± 3.6</th>
<th>17.6 ± 3.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Partners, ever</td>
<td>11.4 ± 321.3</td>
<td>14.2 ± 20.8</td>
<td>12.6 ± 21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Sex and Sexting Behavior

When asked about past sexual activity, 34 participants (3.9%) reported never having had sex. Among participants who reported past sexual activity, the average age of first sex was 17.5 years ($SD = 3.6$). Lifetime number of sexual partners ranged from 1 to 310 ($M = 12.6; SD = 21.2$) and partners in the last six months ranged from 0 to 75 ($M = 1.3; SD = 3.4$).

Results show that sexting behavior is common among American adults; with the majority (87.80%) of the sample reported having sexted in their lifetime and 82.20% reported sexting within the last year. Lifetime sexting partners ranged from 0 to 100 ($M = 3.52; SD = 6.83$). When asked to identify the content level at which communications should be considered sexting, the majority of participants endorsed “insinuating or implying sex, double entendres” ($n = 307; 35.4\%$) or “suggestive photos or videos, explicit language about sex acts “ ($n = 403; 46.4\%$). Items from the Weisskirch and Delevi (2011) measure of frequency of sexting behaviors were used to calculate numerical ratings of the frequency and intensity of current ($M = 17.41; SD = 7.38$) and lifetime ($M = 18.54; SD = 6.96$) sexting behavior on a scale from 8 to 40. The majority of participants endorsed having sexted from a cell or smart phone (95.9%) and in the context of a committed relationship (73.9%); however, casual relationships were frequently selected as the context for sexting (43.0%), and 12.1% of participants reported having sexted in a cheating relationship. Home was the most frequently reported setting for sexting (76.1%), but almost 30% of participants reported work or “out and about” as locations from which they sext.
Responses to items assessing motives for sexting were used to calculate six subscales each of which range from 5 to 25: self-affirmation ($M = 9.66; SD = 5.19$), intimacy ($M = 11.73; SD = 5.80$), hedonism ($M = 13.07; SD = 6.12$), peer influence/peer approval ($M = 6.18; SD = 3.28$), insecurity/partner approval ($M = 5.11; SD = 2.81$), and coping ($M = 7.80; SD = 4.16$). The Sexting Attitudes Scale was used to capture attitudes towards sexting on three subscales: Fun and Carefree ($M = 24.42; SD = 5.90$), Perceived Risk ($M = 17.69; SD = 4.18$), and Relational Expectation ($M = 9.70 SD = 3.94$).

When asked how often they had consented to sexting when they did not actually want to sext, 62.5% said never. The remaining 37.5% endorsed various frequencies of “unwanted but consensual” sexting from very rarely (18.4%) to very frequently (.3%). All participants who reported ever consenting to unwanted sexting were asked how influential different motivations were in making this decision; responses to these questions are reported in Appendix B.

4.3 Relationship Satisfaction

All individuals who reported being in a relationship completed the CSI, a 32-item measure of relationship satisfaction. Scoring instructions for this measure recommend excluding all surveys with missing or omitted items. Using these instructions, it was only possible to calculate CSI scores for 426 participants out of 644 individuals who reported being in a relationship (66.15%; $M = 115.70; SD = 33.58$). The CSI(4) was also scored from this survey and was used in all relevant analyses to allow inclusion of the largest sample ($n = 640; M = 15.38; SD = 4.74$).
4.4 Sexual Satisfaction

All participants, regardless of relationship status, were asked to complete a measure of sexual satisfaction, which was scored into overall numeric score, ranging from 5 to 25, with higher scores indicating greater sexual satisfaction. The modal score on this scale was 25, indicating that 24.7% of respondents rated their sexual satisfaction with the highest score possible ($M = 19.43; SD = 5.16$).

4.5 Hypothesis 1: Sexting and Attachment Style

Average scores for attachment avoidance ($M = 2.78; SD = 1.21$) and anxiety ($M = 2.99; SD = 1.34$) were similar. Although the literature recommends using these dimensional measures of attachment, instructions are given for categorizing individuals into four groups (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011). Using this approach, 38.9% of participants reported secure attachment, 36.0% reported fearful attachment style. Remaining participants were categorized as preoccupied (12.3%) and dismissing (12.9%) attachment styles.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. It was determined that the summary score of lifetime sexting was both positively skewed and somewhat kurtotic. After comparing the tightly clustered mean, median, and mode and performing a visual inspection of the data, it was determined that the large sample size would be sufficient to offset any risks presented by slight violations to normality.

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of two attachment variables to predict lifetime sexting behavior after controlling for the influence of relationship status and gender. Gender and two dummy coded relationship status
variables (in a relationship and casually dating) were entered at Step 1, explaining 2.8% of the variance in sexting behavior. After entry of Attachment Avoidance and Attachment Anxiety at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was only 3.0%, $F(5, 748) = 4.56, p < .01$. The two attachment measures only explained an additional 0.02% of the variance in sexting, after controlling for gender and relationship status. Inclusion of interaction terms for gender and attachment styles did not change the fit of the model and neither interaction term was significant. In the final model, only being in a dating relationship was statistically significant, such that being in a dating relationship was associated with greater levels of sexting, $(b = 4.47, SE_{b} = 1.01, p < .01)$. See Table 2 for results from final model.

Table 2. Final model regressing attachment styles on sexting behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Relationship</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment Anxiety Score</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment Avoidance Score</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious Attachment*Gender Interaction</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant Attachment * Gender Interaction</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1: Sexting and Sexism

Hierarchical multiple regression was also used to assess the relationship between sexism and lifetime sexting behavior after controlling for the influence of relationship status and gender. Again, preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Gender
and two dummy coded relationship status variables (in a relationship and casually dating) were entered at Step 1, explaining 2.8% of the variance in sexting behavior. After entry of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 4.6%, $F(5, 748) = 7.22, p < .01$. The two sexism measures explained an additional 1.8% of the variance in sexting, after controlling for gender and relationship status. In the final model, Benevolent Sexism was not statistically significant while Hostile Sexism was related such that higher levels of reported hostile sexism were related to higher levels of sexting ($b = 1.20, SE_b = .32, p < .01$). Being in a dating relationship was also significant ($b = 4.08, SE_b = 1.00, p < .01$), and with a higher beta value ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) than hostile sexism ($\beta = .13, p < .01$), indicating that the dating relationship variable accounted for more of the variance in the model than did sexism. Inclusion of sexism-gender interaction terms did not change the model and these terms were not significant, indicating that the relationship between sexting and these two types of sexism does not vary by gender. The final model is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>14.181</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Relationship</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Sexism</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent Sexism</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Sexism * Gender Interaction</td>
<td>-0.87</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>-1.72</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent Sexism * Gender Interaction</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 2: Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction**
To explore the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction, an ANCOVA analysis was used to determine whether satisfaction differed by reported lifetime sexting, relationship status, and gender. Before executing this analysis, it was necessary to assess ANCOVA assumptions. Inspection of the scatterplots supported the use of a linear additive model to describe the relationship between these variables. There did not appear to be a specification error in this model. Additionally, the low correlations (.01 ≤ |r| ≤ .15) between relationship status, gender, and sexting behavior indicated that the covariate and independent variables are independent and that multicollinearity is not a problem. Inspection of scatterplots of the standardized residuals for each predictor variable suggests the presence of heteroscedasticity, particularly with regard to relationship status. Consequently, Levene’s test was used to compare residual values from the full model for the lowest and highest quartiles of sexting behavior. This test was not significant, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity; additionally, when the absolute values of the residuals were regressed on lifetime sexting behavior, the model was not significant. Together these findings indicate that although heteroscedasticity may be present, it is not severe. As an interaction term is already included, it is likely that this is driven by the greater number of participants with lower levels of lifetime sexting behavior. There was no reason to expect that error associated with sexual satisfaction was correlated with relationship status, lifetime sexting behavior, or gender in a manner that would affect these results. Levene’s test of equality of error variances indicated that the error variance of sexual satisfaction did not violate this assumption. Additionally, examination of skewness and kurtosis for the standardized residuals of the full model indicated that both
were within acceptable limits. The data were deemed to meet the assumptions necessary to complete an ANCOVA analysis.

The ANCOVA revealed no significant interaction of lifetime sexting behavior (\(M = 18.54; SD = 6.96\)) and gender on sexual satisfaction (\(M = 19.43; SD = 5.16\)), \(F(1, 734) = .05, p = .82, \eta^2_p < .01\) (small). There was a significant main effect observed for relationship status, \(F(2, 734) = 7.18, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .02\) (small) and for lifetime sexting behavior, \(F(1, 734) = 9.79, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .01\) (small). Post-hoc comparisons using the Bonferonni test indicated that mean satisfaction scores for the single group (\(M = 16.24; SD = .47\)) differed significantly from both the casually dating group (\(M = 19.60; SD = .56\)) and the in a relationship group (\(M = 20.42; SD = .21\)). The casually dating and relationship groups did not differ significantly from each other. A post-hoc regression revealed that lifetime sexting and sexual satisfaction were positively related (\(b = .11, p < .01\)). There was no significant main effect for gender on sexual satisfaction, \(F(1, 734) = .14, p = .71, \eta^2_p = .01\) (small). This model explained 10.80% of the variance in scores (\(R^2 = .11\)). See Table 4.

**Table 4. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>(\eta^2_p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sext Score, Lifetime</td>
<td>321.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>321.34</td>
<td>14.58**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>1580.69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>790.34</td>
<td>35.86**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status * Gender</td>
<td>154.55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>77.28</td>
<td>3.51*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Sext Score</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>16175.45</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>22.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05\)
4.6 Hypothesis 2: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction

To assess the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction, the sample was restricted to individuals who reported that they were currently “in a relationship” and who completed sufficient items of the Couples Satisfaction Index to allow the CSI(4) to be calculated ($n = 640$). Due to this inclusion criterion, it was not possible to use relationship status as a covariate; however, the category “in a relationship” included anyone who revealed this category more appropriate than single or casually dating. In order to differentiate between types of possible relationships, a dichotomous measure of relationship committedness, wherein individuals were categorized as in a very committed relationship or not, was included in the model.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Visual inspection of the data, examination of skewness, kurtosis, and the mean, median, and mode indicated that the data were generally normally distributed. It was determined that the large sample size would be sufficient to offset any risks presented by slight violations to normality. To assess the hypothesis that the relationship between sexting behavior with current partner and relationship satisfaction will vary by gender, the gender and sexting with current partner variables were used to create an interaction term. An interaction term was also created for committedness and sexting with current partner.

The Couples Satisfaction Index-4 scores ($M = 15.38; SD = 4.74$) were then regressed on scores of sexting behavior with current partner ($M = 17.41; SD = 7.38$), gender ($M = .42, SD = .49$), relationship commitment ($M = .80; SD = .40$) and the interaction variables simultaneously. Results revealed a significant interaction of sexting
behavior and relationship commitment, \( b = -.19, \ SE_b = .06, \ p < .01 \). Due to the conservative alpha-level employed in this study, the interaction between gender and sexting behavior with current partner on relationship satisfaction was not significant \( b = .11, \ SE_b = .06, \ p = .05 \). Results from this model are presented in Table 5. This interaction indicates that for individuals who are not in a “very committed” relationship, sexting is positively associated with satisfaction; however, for individuals who describe their relationship as being “very committed”, sexting is unrelated to satisfaction. See Figure 6.

![Figure 6. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Gender and Relationship Commitment](image-url)
Table 5. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>η²p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sext Score, Lifetime</td>
<td>321.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>321.34</td>
<td>14.58**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>1580.69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>790.34</td>
<td>35.86**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status * Gender</td>
<td>154.55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>77.28</td>
<td>3.51*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Sext Score</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>16175.45</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>22.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ 0.05

4.7 Hypothesis 3: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes

A multivariate multiple regression was performed to investigate the relationship between sexting behavior and sexting attitudes. Scores for three categories of sexting attitudes were included as dependent variables: Fun and Carefree, Perceived Risk, and Relational Expectations. Lifetime sexting behavior, relationship status, and gender were included as independent variables. The data upheld most assumptions of normality when mean, median, mode and histograms were examined for each dependent variable.

Examination of a scatterplots of sexting attitudes categories indicated that the data did not have significant individual or multivariate outliers and that the dependent variables have a linear relationship. Additionally, the three variables uphold the assumption of a low to moderate correlation, \( r (813) = -.35, p < .01, r (814) = .34, p < .01, \) and \( r (854) = -.15, p < .01. \) Levene’s Test revealed that the data upheld the assumption of homogeneity of variance and Box’s M revealed that the data also upheld the assumption of homogeneity of covariance.

Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between gender and lifetime sexting behavior in their effect on sexting attitudes, \( F (3, 697) = 2.05, p = .11, \) Wilks’ \( \lambda = .99, \)
= .01 (very small ES). As this interaction was not significant, main effects were examined. A statistically significant difference in reported levels of lifetime sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 697) = 51.37, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .82, \eta^2_p = .18$ (large ES). The combined dependent variables did not significantly differ by gender, $F(3, 697) = 1.91, p = .13$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99, \eta^2_p < .01$ (very small ES), but did differ by relationship status, $F(6, 1394) = 4.50, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .96, \eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES).

To explore the factors driving these significant differences, results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008. Several statistically significant main effects but no significant interactions were observed. Summary univariate results are in Table 6. Pairwise comparisons were performed for relationship status groups and relational expectations, as this main effect was significant, $F(1, 698) = 11.24, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .03$ (medium ES). These comparisons revealed that individuals casually dating reported significantly higher relational expectations for sexting than did individuals in relationships. See Table 7 for results summary.

Examination of between-subject effects also revealed that lifetime sexting was significantly related to attitudes of Fun and Carefree, $F(1, 698) = 74.76, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .10$ (large ES), Perceived Risk, $F(1, 698) = 36.30, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .05$ (medium ES), and Relational Expectations, $F(1, 698) = 91.59, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .12$ (large ES). Individual regression models were run to explore these relationships and are presented in Table 8. These models indicate that sexting behavior is positively associated with views of sexting as being fun and carefree and with having higher relational expectations about sexting, but that sexting is inversely related with perceived risk of sexting.
Table 6. Univariate comparisons for hypothesis 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Fun and Carefree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70.29</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational Expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1186.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational Expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational Expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender * Total Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational Expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Pairwise comparisons for main effect of relationship status on relational expectations of sexting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single vs. Casually Dating</td>
<td>-0.97</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single vs. In a Relationship</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating vs. In a Relation</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Individual regression models for lifetime sexting on sexting attitudes scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAS: Fun and Carefree</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-5.89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction—Wantedness

To explore whether sexting wantedness moderates the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction, wantedness and the interaction between wantedness and lifetime sexting were added to the ANCOVA model from Hypothesis 2. This wantedness variable rated individuals participation in consented but unwanted sexting on a six-point Likert scale. As gender was not significant in Hypothesis 2, it was excluded from this model. The ANCOVA revealed no significant interaction of lifetime sexting behavior and sexting wantedness ($M = 1.69; SD = 1.08), F(4, 720) = .60, p = .66, \eta^2_p < .01$ (small). The main effect of sexting wantedness on sexual satisfaction did not meet significance, $F(5, 720) = .92, p = .47, \eta^2_p = .01$ (small). The overall conclusion of this step of analysis was that inclusion of wantedness did not contribute significantly to the relationship between lifetime sexting behavior and sexual satisfaction.
4.9 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction—Motives

To assess if motives for sexting moderate the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction, the six motive variables and the corresponding interaction with lifetime sexting variables were included in the ANCOVA model from Hypothesis 2. As gender and the gender interaction variable were not significant in that analysis, they were excluded from this model. There was no significant interaction for any of the motives for sexting with sexting behavior on sexual satisfaction. As the interactions were not significant, main effects were assessed, however, no main effects for motives for sexting on sexual satisfaction were seen in this model. The full model is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Analysis of covariance summary for hypothesis 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>η²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexting Behavior, lifetime</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>121.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>121.25</td>
<td>5.61*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy Motives</td>
<td>374.16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.69</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism Motives</td>
<td>411.25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Affirmation Motives</td>
<td>143.05</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Motives</td>
<td>411.18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Pressure Motives</td>
<td>209.63</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.97</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Approval Motives</td>
<td>165.88</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>43.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>398.09</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.95</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>367.96</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Affirmation * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>188.83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>426.93</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Pressure * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>216.01</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Approval * Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>180.95</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.45</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>9913.67</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05
4.10 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction—Wantedness

To assess if wantedness moderates the relationship between sexting with current partner and relationship satisfaction, an interaction variable was created for the 6-point Likert scale variable and the score of sexting with current partner. Sexting wantedness and the interaction variable were then included in the final model from Hypothesis 2. As gender and the gender interaction variables were not significant in that analysis, they were excluded from this model. CSI(4) scores were regressed on scores of sexting behavior with current partner, wantedness, relationship commitment and the interaction variables simultaneously. Results revealed a significant interaction of sexting behavior and “unwanted but consensual” sexting behavior on relationship satisfaction ($b = -0.07$, $SE_b = .03$, $p < .01$). This finding indicates that sexting is related to relationship satisfaction in all cases. For individuals not in a very committed relationship, sexting is positively related to relationship satisfaction for all but those individuals who reported the highest level of unwanted sexting (i.e., very frequent). For individuals in a very committed relationship, sexting is positively related to relationship satisfaction for individuals who reported never or very rarely engaging in unwanted sexting. For individuals in committed relationship who reported rare, occasional, frequent or very frequent unwanted sexting, the behavior is negatively related to relationship satisfaction. See Figure 7.
4.11 Hypothesis 4: Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction—Motives

To assess if motives for sexting moderate the relationship between sexting with current partner and relationship satisfaction, interaction variables were created for the 6 motive scores and the score of sexting with current partner. Each motive and its interaction variable were individually added to the final model from Hypothesis 2. As gender and the gender interaction variables were not significant in that analysis, they were excluded from these models.

4.11.1 Intimacy Motives

When CSI(4) was regressed on sexting behavior with current partner, relationship commitment, intimacy motives for sexting ($M = 11.72; SD = 5.80$) and the two interaction variables simultaneously, there was a significant interaction for sexting
behavior and intimacy motives ($b = -.01, \ SE_b < .01, p < .01$). This finding indicates that intimacy motives moderate the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction. Among individuals not in committed relationships, sexting is more strongly related CSI at lower levels of intimacy motivation, although the sexting and relationship satisfaction are positively related at all levels of intimacy. For individuals in committed relationship, higher levels of intimacy motivations for sexting are associated with a negative relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction. See Figure 8.

![Figure 8. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Intimacy and Relationship Commitment.](image)

### 4.11.2 Hedonism Motives

The regression of hedonism motives ($M = 13.07; SD = 6.12$) on CSI(4) revealed a significant interaction of hedonism motives for sexting and sexting with current partner ($b = -.02, \ SE_b < .01, p < .01$). This finding indicates that among individuals not in committed relationships, lower levels of hedonistic motivation are related to a stronger
positive relationship between sexting and satisfaction. For individuals in committed relationships, higher levels of hedonism motivations for sexting are associated with a negative relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction. See Figure 9.

Figure 9. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Hedonism and Relationship Commitment.
4.11.3 Self-Affirmation Motives

The regression of self-affirmation motives ($M = 9.66; SD = 5.19$) on CSI(4) revealed a significant interaction of motives for sexting and sexting with current partner ($b = -0.02, SE_b = .01, p < .01$). This finding indicates regardless of committedness of relationship, at low levels of self-affirmation motives sexting behavior is positively associated with satisfaction whereas at high levels of self-affirmation motives sexting is negatively associated with satisfaction. See Figure 10.

![Figure 10. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Self-Affirmation Motives and Relationship Commitment.](image)

4.11.4 Coping Motives

The regression of coping motives ($M = 7.80; SD = 5.19$) on CSI(4) revealed a significant interaction of motives for sexting and sexting with current partner ($b = -0.02, SE_b = .01, p < .01$). This finding indicates that regardless of committedness of relationship, at low levels of coping motives sexting behavior is positively associated
with satisfaction whereas at high levels of coping motives sexting is negatively associated
with satisfaction. See Figure 11.

Figure 11. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Coping Motives and Relationship Commitment.

4.11.5 Peer Pressure Motives

The regression of peer pressure motives ($M = 6.18; SD = 3.28$) on CSI(4) revealed no significant interaction of peer pressure motives for sexting and sexting with current partner ($b = -.02, SE_b = .01, p = .02$). There was also no main effect of peer pressure motives for sexting on relationship satisfaction in this model ($b = .29, SE_b = .17, p = .09$).

4.11.6 Partner Approval Motives

The regression of partner approval motives ($M = 5.11; SD = 2.81$) on CSI(4) revealed a significant interaction of these insecurity motives for sexting and sexting with current partner ($b = -.02, SE_b = .01, p < .01$). This finding indicates that regardless of committedness of the relationship, at low levels of partner approval motives, sexting
behavior are positively associated with satisfaction whereas at high levels of partner approval motives sexting are negatively associated with satisfaction. See Figure 12.

![Figure 12. Relationship Satisfaction and Sexting Behavior by Insecurity Motives and Relationship Commitment.](image)

4.12 Hypothesis 5: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes—Wantedness

To assess if wantedness moderates the relationship between lifetime sexting and sexting attitudes, sexting wantedness and the interaction variable for sexting and wantedness were included in the multivariate multiple regression model from Hypothesis 3. As gender was not a significant moderator in that model, the interaction term was not included in this model. Analysis revealed an interaction between sexting wantedness and lifetime sexting behavior in their effect on sexting attitudes, \( F(3, 691) = 4.10, p = .01 \), Wilks’ \( \lambda = .98 \), \( \eta^2_p < .02 \) (small ES), indicating that participating in unwanted sexting moderated the relationship between past sexting and endorsement of sexting attitudes.
This relationship was explored further in the post-hoc analysis. As shown in Table 10, no other significant interactions were observed.

Table 10. Multivariate multiple regression for hypothesis 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wilks’ $\lambda$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>19.62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1382</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexting Wantedness</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1907.95</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexting Behavior * Sexting Wantedness</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>34.10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Relationship Status * Sexting Wantedness</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, it was revealed that the significance of the sexting and wantedness interaction was driven by the attitudes of perceived risk, $F(1, 693) = 10.78, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES). Summary univariate results are in Table 11. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and is presented in Table 12. This model indicates that sexting behavior is negatively associated with views of sexting as being risky for individuals who report never or very rarely participating in unwanted sexting, but that for higher rates of unwanted sexting, this relationship switches and sexting is positively related with perceived risk. See Figure 13.

Table 11. Tests of between-subjects effects for hypothesis 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$DF$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>SAS: Fun and Carefree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational Expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>SAS: Fun and Carefree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Perceived Risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAS: Relational</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Regression model for perceived risk of sexting on sexting behavior and wantedness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted Sexting</td>
<td>-2.70</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>-6.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-10.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexting Behavior * Sexting Wantedness</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13. Sexting Perceived Risk and Sexting Behavior by Unwanted Sexting
4.13 Hypothesis 5: Sexting and Sexting Attitudes—Motives

To assess if motives for sexting moderate the relationship between lifetime sexting and sexting attitudes, each motive for sexting and its interaction variable (sexting x motive) was individually added to the final model from Hypothesis 3. As gender was not a significant moderator in Hypothesis 3, this interaction variable was not included in these models.

4.13.1 Intimacy Motives

Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between sexting and intimacy motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 688) = 1.04, p = .38$, Wilks’ $\lambda = 1.00, \eta^2_p < .01$ (very small ES). As this interaction was not significant, the main effect of Intimacy Motives was examined. A statistically significant difference in intimacy motivated sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 688) = 4.37, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .98, \eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant main effect for intimacy motives on Fun and Carefree, $F(1, 697) = 10.64, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and indicated that intimacy motives for sexting are positively associated with views of sexting as being fun and carefree ($b = .42, SE_b = .03, p < .01$).

4.13.2 Hedonism Motives

Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between sexting and hedonism motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 677) = .86, p = .46$, Wilks’ $\lambda = 1.00, \eta^2_p < .01$ (very small ES). As this interaction was not significant, the main effect of Hedonism Motives
was examined. A statistically significant difference in hedonism motivated sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 677) = 8.90, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .96$, $\eta^2_p = .04$ (medium ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant main effect for hedonism motives on Fun and Carefree, $F(1, 686) = 25.20, p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = .04$ (medium ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and indicated that hedonism motives for sexting are positively associated with views of sexting as being fun and carefree ($b = .51, SE_b = .03, p < .01$).

4.13.3 Self-Affirmation Motives

Analyses revealed a significant interaction between sexting and self-affirmation motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 685) = 3.51, p = .02$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99$, $\eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant interaction effect for sexting and self-affirmation motives on Fun and Carefree, $F(1, 694) = 9.73, p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = .01$ (small ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and is presented in Table 13. This model indicated that as reported self-affirmation motives for sexting increase, the positive relationship between lifetime sexting behavior and perceptions of sexting as being fun and carefree is attenuated. Individuals reporting the highest levels of self-affirmation motives (scores of 16 and higher) showed a negative relationship between sexting and perceptions of sexting as fun and carefree. See Figure 14.
Table 13. Regression model for fun and carefree attitudes of sexting on sexting behavior and self-affirmation motives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Affirmation Motives</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime Sexting Behavior</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexting Behavior * Self-Affirmation</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>-8.49</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14. Sexting as Fun and Carefree and Sexting Behavior by Self-Affirmation Motives

4.13.4 Coping Motives

Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between sexting and coping motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 681) = 1.40, p = .24$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99$, $\eta^2_p < .01$ (very small ES). As this interaction was not significant, the main effect of Coping Motives was
examined. A statistically significant difference in coping motivated sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 681) = 4.01, p = .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .98$, $\eta^2_p = .02$ (small ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant main effect for coping motives on Relational Expectations, $F(1, 690) = 7.37, p = .007, \eta^2_p = .01$ (small ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and indicated that coping motives for sexting are positively associated with relational expectations of sexting ($b = .41, SE_b = .03, p < .01$).

4.13.5 Peer Pressure Motives
Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between sexting and peer pressure motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 684) = 2.24, p = .08$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99$, $\eta^2_p = .01$ (small ES). As this interaction was not significant, the main effect of Peer Pressure Motives was examined. A statistically significant difference in peer pressure motivated sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 684) = 7.41, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .97$, $\eta^2_p = .03$ (medium ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant main effect for peer pressure motives on Relational Expectations, $F(1, 693) = 17.42, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .03$ (medium ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and indicated that peer pressure motives for sexting are positively associated with relational expectations of sexting ($b = .54, SE_b = .04, p < .01$).

4.13.6 Partner Approval Motives
Analyses failed to reveal an interaction between sexting and partner approval motives in their effect on sexting attitudes, $F(3, 694) = 1.41, p = .24$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .99$, $\eta^2_p$
< .01 (very small ES). As this interaction was not significant, the main effect of Partner Approval Motives was examined. A statistically significant difference in partner approval motivated sexting on the combined attitude variables was revealed, $F(3, 694) = 6.45, p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda = .97$, $\eta^2 = .03$ (medium ES). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008, a statistically significant main effect for partner approval motives on Relational Expectations, $F(1, 703) = 15.85, p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (small ES) was observed. An individual regression model was run to explore this relationship and indicated that partner approval motives for sexting are positively associated with relational expectations of sexting ($b = .65, SE_b = .04, p < .01$).

**Chapter 5. Discussion**

Ninety-one percent of American adults and 78% of American teens own a cell phone (Duggan, 2013) and almost 30% of American households use cell phones exclusively (Benotsch et al., 2013). This integration of technology into everyday life has also been accompanied by an integration of technology into sexuality. The role of sexting as a normative behavior in adult romantic relationships is a heretofore-unexplored area. This is the first known study to examine sexting behavior among a large sample of adults in the United States. Among the 870 participants that were surveyed, the vast majority of respondents (> 87%) reported sexting with at least one partner, indicating that sexing was highly prevalent. This study endeavored to take a destigmatized approach to sexting by conceptualizing it as a form of sexual communication that can be both good and bad. The following represents an overview of the primary findings from this study.
The results presented below are driven by the study hypotheses and are organized by outcome variable, instead of by hypothesis. For example, findings from Hypotheses 3 and 5 that relate to sexual satisfaction are presented together, but are separated from conclusions about these same hypotheses that relate to relationship satisfaction. Implications for each outcome will be discussed and followed by a broader discussion of study strengths and limitations and future directions.

5.1 Sexting and Attachment Style

Although some previous research has indicated that anxious attachment is associated with greater reported sexting behaviors (Drouin & Tobin, 2014; Impett, Gordon, & Strachman, 2008; Impett & Peplau, 2002; Schachner & Shaver, 2004; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011), this study did not support those findings and was unable to support Hypothesis 1 with regards to attachment. Within this sample, neither anxious nor avoidant attachment style were significantly related to sexting behavior. It is possible that this difference is due to the wider age range employed in this study. Past research has found an inverse relationship between anxious attachment and age (Mickelson, Kessler, & Shaver, 1997). As people get older they may find relationships that allow them to express more secure attachment or move to a more avoidant attachment style, resulting in an attenuation of any existing relationship between anxious attachment and sexting. A post-hoc comparison of respondents under and over 25 years did not reveal any significant differences in levels of avoidant ($t = -.92; p = .36$) or anxious ($t = -1.92; p = .06$) attachment, but when anxious attachment was regressed on age there was a significant relationship ($b = -.01, SE_b = .01, p = .02$) whereby levels of anxious attachment decreased as age increased.
It is also possible that attachment style is only significant for individuals who are participating in psychologically riskier types of sexting, such as “unwanted but consensual” sexting. The act of agreeing to participate in sexting when one does not want to be doing so may be correlated to different attachment characteristics than engaging in the behavior only when one wants to do so. Indeed, past research has found that among women, anxious attachment was significantly related to “unwanted but consensual” sexting, a relationship that was mediated by consenting to avoid an argument (Drouin & Tobin, 2014). Moreover, anxious attachment has been related to engaging in unwanted consensual sex to please one’s partner, maintain partner interest and reduce relationship stress (Impett et al., 2008; Impett & Peplau, 2002; Schachner & Shaver, 2004). The relationship between attachment and sexting may not be observable when all sexting is considered together, but may become apparent when higher-risk subgroups are examined. This is supported by the significant difference in anxiety attachment scores observed for individuals in the current sample who reported never ($M = 2.79; SD = 1.33$) and those who reported ever ($M = 3.31; SD = 1.29$) engaging in unwanted sexting ($t = -5.54; p < .01$). A similar difference was observed in avoidant attachment for never ($M = 2.65; SD = 1.19$) and ever ($M = 3.00; SD = 1.19$) engaging in unwanted sexting ($t = -4.19; p < .01$). Future research should further examine the role of attachment style for individuals engaging in unwanted sexting behaviors.

5.2 Sexting and Sexism

This study partially supported Hypothesis 1 with regards to sexism, finding a small but significant association between hostile, but not benevolent, sexism, and lifetime sexting. This relationship did not vary by gender. Individuals who expressed higher
levels of sexist antipathy towards women also endorsed higher levels of lifetime sexting. Although no previous research has explicitly examined the association between sexism and sexting, previous inquiries have found an association between sexting and traditional values and sex roles. Among a sample of young American men, receiving sexts was related to higher masculine values (Nagel, Cummings, Hansen, & Ott, 2013). Another recent study found that among males, more traditional values were positively associated with sexting (Ogletree, Fancher, & Gill, 2014). It could be that hostile sexism represents a construct closer to traditional gender roles than does benevolent sexism. If this is true, it may suggest an underlying power dynamic in certain relationships related to gender; in this context sexting may represent a form of communication that can be used to impose expected roles and behaviors on one’s partner. High levels of hostile sexism may point to a subgroup of sexters wherein sexting represents an attempt to assert male sexual dominance over one’s female partner, suggesting that there could be important associations between hostile sexism, unwanted sexting and the primary outcome variables from this study.

A comparison of hostile sexism levels among participants who report never ($M = 1.97; SD = 1.09$) and ever ($M = 2.25; SD = 1.02$) engaging in unwanted sexting showed a significant difference ($t = -3.77; p < .01$). This seems to indicate that hostile sexism is more prevalent among individuals who engage in this riskier type of sexting. Use of simple regressions examining the relationship of hostile sexism with each of the primary outcome variables indicates why this relationship may warrant future research. Although hostile sexism is not related to overall sexual satisfaction ($b = -.14, SE_b = .16, p = .41$), it is significantly related to relationship satisfaction ($b = -.41, SE_b = .17, p = .02$) such
that higher levels of sexism are related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, higher levels of hostile sexism are related to higher levels of endorsed relational expectations of sexting ($b = .74, SE_b = .12, p < .01$). As hostile sexism seems to be significantly related to a riskier subgroup of sexting and to worse satisfaction outcomes, future attention should be given to the function of gender roles and sexual power dynamics among individuals participating in unwanted sexting behavior.

5.3 Sexting and Sexual Satisfaction

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study looking at the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction. When assessing Hypothesis 2, this study found that sexting is positively associated with sexual satisfaction and that this association did not vary by gender. Although participants who reported being single had lower levels of sexual satisfaction than those who were dating or in a relationship, higher levels of lifetime sexting behavior were associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction for all individuals. This finding could indicate that individuals who engage in sexting have higher levels of sexual agency and sexual communication skills that are associated with greater sexual satisfaction. The implications of this finding are best viewed in conjunction with the findings from Hypothesis 4 about moderators of this relationship and will be discussed at the end of this section.

5.3.1 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Unwanted Sexting

The assessment of “unwanted but consensual” sexting as a possible moderator of the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction attempted to examine the role of agency. If individuals are engaging in behaviors they do not desire, this might alter the
directionality of the relationship; however, no interaction of wantedness and sexting was observed. Moreover, unwanted sexting behavior was unrelated to sexual satisfaction.

This exploratory analysis should be interpreted with care. Although unwanted sexting was neither a significant moderator nor predictor in the model, future analysis should reexamine this relationship within the highest risk group. More than half of this sample (62.5%) reported never engaging in unwanted sexting. Among those who did partake in this undesired activity, participants reported doing so for a variety of reasons. The most commonly endorsed motives for “unwanted but consensual” sexting included: wanting to satisfy their partner’s needs and feeling obliged because they had previously engaged in sexting with this partner. Motives that might indicate a lack of agency or power within the relationship (e.g., I was worried that my partner would threaten to end our relationship if I didn’t engage in sexting) were less commonly endorsed. In the current analysis unwanted sexting was looked at as a single homogeneous variable, but it is possible that all motives for engaging in “unwanted but consensual” sexting are not the same. By treating all unwanted sexting as equal, it may be that the riskiness of certain motives is washed away by the noise of the overall sample. A future analysis of only those individuals who reported ever participating in “consensual but unwanted” sexting may be able to differentiate between the motives for such behavior that are harmful to sexual satisfaction and those that are not.

5.3.2 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Sexting Motives

Only individuals who reported ever engaging in “unwanted but consensual” sexting were asked about their reasons for participating in that behavior; however, all participants were asked about their overall motives for sexting. Intimacy, hedonism, self-
affirmation, coping, peer-pressure, and partner approval motives were all considered as possible moderators of the relationship between sexting and sexual satisfaction. None of these motives were found to affect the relationship.

5.3.3 Implications of Sexual Satisfaction Findings
The findings for Hypotheses 2 and 4 about sexual satisfaction indicate a significant and robust positive association between sexting and sexual satisfaction. This relationship does not vary by gender and is powerful enough that it does not seem to be affected by motives for participating in the behavior. This may be a result of the very high overall levels of sexual satisfaction for this sample. Almost a quarter of respondents gave themselves the highest possible score for sexual satisfaction. It is possible that the effects of unwanted sexting and different motives for sexting would be more apparent in a less sexually satisfied group. Although contextual variables that influence this relationship should be examined in future research, the factors driving the relationship between this form of sexual communication and overall satisfaction should also be examined.

5.4 Sexting and Relationship Satisfaction
All individuals who reported being in a relationship were included in the analysis of sexting and relationship satisfaction. Parker et al. (2013) have examined the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction, but only within the context of a relationship and looking at satisfaction as a predictor of sexting. Although that study did not find differences in the association by relationship type (married, living together, dating), they did not consider committedness, which may not be adequately captured by relationship type. The results from Hypothesis 2 indicated that for individuals who reported being in anything other than a very committed relationship, greater levels of
sexting were related to higher relationship satisfaction levels, while for those in very committed relationships there was no significant relationship between the two variables. The lack of significance for sexting in a very committed relationship does not mean that there is a negative or even no relationship, but that it might not be additive on top of other variables included under the umbrella of committedness. As with sexual satisfaction, the implications of the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction are best viewed in conjunction with the findings from Hypothesis 4 about moderators of this relationship and will be discussed at the end of this section.

5.4.1 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Unwanted Sexting

Disentangling what is driving the significance may allow better study of those effects in very committed relationships. Examining sexting motives and unwanted sexting as potential moderators for this relationship represented a first step towards this end. Indeed, frequency of engaging in unwanted sexting was seen to moderate the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction. For individuals not in very committed relationships, this moderation only changes the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction for those who report very frequent unwanted sexting. Higher levels of sexting are related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction for this group of participants. Inclusion of unwanted sexting as a moderator revealed a significant relationship between sexting and relationship status for individuals in very committed relationships. If individuals reported never or rarely engaging in unwanted sexting, higher levels of sexting were related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction; however, if individuals reported more frequent unwanted sexting, this relationship was inverted. For individuals in committed relationships who reported higher frequencies of
unwanted sexting, higher levels of sexting were related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

5.4.2 Hypothesis 4: Moderation by Sexting Motives

Peer-pressure motives for sexting were not significant in predicting relationship satisfaction and there was no interaction between peer-pressure and sexting. Although past research has found a relationship between peer-pressure and sexting behavior, those findings employed younger samples (Dake et al., 2012; Klettke et al., 2014). These findings may indicate that among a broader adult sample, the influence of an individual’s peers has less influence over their sexual decision-making.

In general, lower levels of intimacy were associated with a stronger relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction. This relationship was true for all individuals not in a committed relationship. For individuals in a committed relationship, this positive relationship was seen only for those with low intimacy motives. As intimacy motives increase for very committed individuals, the relationship flips and higher levels of sexting are associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction. For individuals who report being highly motivated to sext by a desire to foster intimacy, it is possible that this negative association represents the attempts of individuals with lower relationship satisfaction to use sexting to improve their relationship and not that sexting is causally related to the lower levels of satisfaction.

This same complicated relationship was observed for hedonism motives for sexting. The strength of the positive relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction was attenuated at higher levels of hedonism motives for sexting among individuals not in a very committed relationship. For individuals in very committed relationships, the positive relationship between sexting and satisfaction becomes negative.
as individuals endorse higher motivation by hedonism. Overall, hedonism motives may indicate a lack of concern for one’s partner. If the self, not the relationship, is the primary reason for sexting, it makes sense that this behavior would not be as strongly linked to relationship satisfaction.

Although individuals in very committed relationships had generally higher levels of relationship satisfaction than those not in very committed relationships, the relationships between sexting and relationship satisfaction did not vary by relationship commitment for self-affirmation, coping, or partner-approval motives. At low levels of any of these motives, sexting and relationship satisfaction are positively related, but at high levels, more sexting is related to lower satisfaction.

5.4.3 Implications for Relationship Satisfaction

Motivations for engaging in sexting within the context of a relationship matter. Sexting, when desired by both partners, is related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction; however, when individuals are engaging in this behavior but do not want to be doing so, it is related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. As these data are cross-sectional, the directionality of these relationships cannot be determined, but together the data indicate that desired sexting can be part of a satisfying relationship.

“Unwanted but consensual” sexting is an important factor when considering sexting and relationship satisfaction. The negative impact of unwanted sexting on relationship satisfaction is strong enough to obscure any relationship between sexting and satisfaction when it is not included in the model. If unwanted sexting in relationships is pointing to sexual power dynamics, it is possible that these same factors are also putting individuals at higher risk for other relationship outcomes (e.g., intimate partner violence). Among individuals who are engaging in wanted sexting, it is related to higher levels of
relationship satisfaction for both men and women. This may indicate that couples are feeling more attached and satisfied and the sexting is an expression of those factors, but it is also possible that the sexting itself is a form of communication that helps to foster connectedness and fulfillment between partners. This possibility should be explored further.

The role of various motives for sexting on the relationship between sexting and relationship satisfaction should be interpreted with care. For most motives, increasing levels of endorsement attenuated the positive relationship between sexting and satisfaction to the extent that the highest levels of motives for sexting were often associated with a negative relationship between sexting and satisfaction. This does not necessarily indicate that being highly motivated by intimacy (for example) to engage in sexting will result in lower relationship satisfaction. It is possible that pre-existing low levels of relationship satisfaction have led to use of sexting to improve intimacy. The same argument may be made for each motive for sexting. These relationships are correlational, not causal and should be viewed as such. Now that the relationships have been identified, future research should attempt to unpack the ways in which sexting and motives for sexting impact relationship satisfaction.

5.5 Sexting and Sexting Attitudes

The relationship between sexting and sexting attitudes did not vary by gender; however, individuals’ sexting attitudes were related to both their past sexting behavior and their relationship status. Individuals who were in casually dating relationships expressed stronger relational expectations about sexting than did individuals who reported being in a relationship. This finding is consistent with our finding that sexting is
related to relationship satisfaction for individuals who do not describe their relationship as “very serious” but not for individuals who do.

More sexting behavior was related to higher attitudes of relational expectations regarding sexting and of sexting as “fun and carefree”. Individuals who reported more sexting also reported fewer perceived risks of sexting. These findings make intuitive sense and highlight the correlational nature of these analyses. It is logical that individuals would engage more in behavior that is perceived as enjoyable and low in risk. Additionally, individuals who do not perceive sexting as fun or who perceive it to be highly risky are likely to engage in the behavior less frequently.

Inclusion of wantedness as a moderator of this relationship was only significant with regards to perceived risk attitudes. For individuals who reported rarely or never engaging in unwanted sexting, the inverse relationship between sexting and perceived risk persists; however, at higher levels of unwanted sexting, this relationship switches and greater levels of sexting are associated with greater perceived risk. Again, this research shows the ways in which highlighting “unwanted but consensual” behavior can reveal when sexting represents a healthy behavior and when it constitutes a risk factor.

When motives for sexting were included as possible moderators of the relationship between sexting and sexting attitudes, only self-affirmation was found to significantly affect that relationship. Increasing levels of self-affirmation motives for sexting were found to attenuate the positive relationship between sexting behavior and “fun and carefree” attitudes to the extent that individuals with the highest levels of self-affirmation motives exhibited an inverse relationship between the two variables. Each of the other motives was positively related to a particular sexting attitude. Intimacy and
hedonism motives were both positively associated with views of sexting as fun and
carefree, while coping, peer pressure, and partner approval motives were all positively
related to relational expectations of sexting. It is possible that the motives did not
moderate these relationships because they represented discrete aspects of the attitudes
being measured. If this is the case, self-affirmation stood out as a significant moderator
because it highlighted a construct not otherwise included in the attitudes scale.

5.6 Sexting and Gender

Past findings about gender and sexting have been mixed. When differences by
gender were found, women reported sending more sexts than did men and men reported
receiving more sexts than did women (Dir, Coskunpinar, et al., 2013; Englander, 2012;
Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; MTV; Wysocki & Childers, 2011). Based on these findings,
gender was included as a moderator in each of the main hypotheses of the current study;
however, the relationships between sexting behavior and relationship or sexual
satisfaction or sexting attitudes were not found to differ by gender within this general
adult sample. Moreover, the summary scores for the frequency and intensity of lifetime
sexting behaviors for men \((M = 18.9; SD = 6.8)\) and women \((M = 18.3; SD = 7.1)\) were
not significantly different in this sample \((t = -1.2, p = .23)\). When sending and receiving
sexts were considered separately, there was no significant difference for sending behavior
\((t = 1.7, p = .09)\), but men reported higher intensity and frequency of received sexts \((M =
10.3; SD = 3.9)\) than did women \((M = 9.2; SD = 3.8; t = -3.7; p < .01)\). Together, these
findings indicate that although men may receive somewhat more sexts than do women,
overall engagement in sexting behavior and the outcomes of this behavior do not differ
between men and women. Instead of focusing on gender differences in sexting, future
research should attempt to identify other relationship factors that may influence engagement in the behavior and its outcomes.

5.7 Strengths and Limitations

There are several important limitations to this study that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, this study was cross-sectional in nature. Care should be taken when interpreting all findings, as the directionality of these relationships cannot be determined. Furthermore, as this study employed a convenience sample from the Internet, it is subject to the well-documented biases inherent to this recruitment approach. This sample was predominantly (> 80%) white. While this may indicate that the findings are not generalizable to other races, the distribution of this sample is consistent with past MTurk and Internet research (Berinsky et al., 2011; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014) and with the general US population (Hixson, Hepler, & Kim, 2011). Future research should examine sexting within other racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, this sample was restricted to heterosexuals. There may be important cultural differences for the LGBT community that alter the associations observed in this research. These findings should be examined with that community to determine if they are generalizable to the queer community.

While the internet-based nature of this process meant that participants were unable to ask questions about the consent form, as they would be able to during in-person recruitment, it was clearly articulated that participation was voluntary and individuals who had concerns about the project were free to decline participation. Individuals were reminded that participation could be withdrawn at any time for any reason. Similarly, it was not feasible to confirm inclusion criteria with this type of recruitment. It is possible
that some participants lied in order to gain entry to the study, however we feel that this
risk was minimal and in line with the risks that would be experienced during in-person
recruitment when age verification is not implemented.

Although the survey asked individuals to identify the level of content where they
believe that sexting begins, no definition of the behavior was given when individuals
were asked with how many people they had sexted. These questions were used to
calculate lifetime and past year sexting. Due to the lack of specific definition, it is
possible that people responded differently based on their own definition of the behavior.
Future analyses should examine prevalence rates based on reports of most intense content
sent and received and should examine outcomes based on the individuals’ personal
definitions of sexting. It should be noted that the frequency and intensity of sexting
scales were calculated from responses about engagement in specific behaviors and as
such are not subject to this same interpretive variance.

Despite these limitations, there are several exciting strengths that should also be
noted. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to frame sexting as an aspect
of sexual health that may be both positive and negative depending on the circumstances.
Viewing sexting as a type of sexual communication allows it to be considered in relation
to sexual satisfaction, which has not been done previously. Although this research aimed
to explore heretofore-unexamined aspects of sexting, it was nonetheless theoretically
driven. By drawing from the extant literature, this study is able to strengthen its findings
with support from past research and illustrate how this reframing is the logical
progression of the investigations into sexting among adults.
This study employed a large sample with a broader age range than those usually found in sexting studies. The size of the sample allowed ample power to observe even small effects where they existed. By including a wider age range in this study, it was possible to examine how trends in the extant literature compared to a general adult population. The breadth of the age range in this sample made it possible to examine the role sexting plays in adult relationships. Although the findings presented here do not include age as a covariate or moderator, future analyses should examine the role age plays in these relationships.

5.8 Clinical Implications and Future Directions

Due to the sampling methodology employed for this study, it is possible that the high observed prevalence of sexting reflects an inherent bias of the sample. MTurk workers may be more technologically savvy than the general public and individuals interested in the topic of sexting may have been overrepresented. Although this may indicate that the prevalence rates for this sample may not be representative of the general US population, this is an appropriate group with which to explore the associations of sexting behaviors and psychological sequelae. Moreover, although more than 4 out of 5 individuals reported having sexted, there was some variation in what the sample defined as sexting. Future research should explore whether past sexting behavior and attitudes about sexting varied by individuals’ personal definitions of sexting. Additionally, as the data showed that people report sexting in a variety of relationships, additional work should attempt to parse how the context of the relationship influences the affect of sexting on the relationship outcomes. Future analyses will attempt to unpack these and other distinctions of types of sexting.
Given the correlations between sexting and sexual and relationship satisfaction for heterosexuals, there are interesting clinical implications to be considered. There are many possible applications for the findings of this new line of inquiry, particularly within the field of couples’ therapy, wherein the focus is on increasing relationship satisfaction and functioning. The premise that sexting is a form of sexual communication that is not inherently good or bad opens the door to clinical applications of the behavior. Within couples therapy sexting could be used to help partners articulate their sexual needs and desires, while heightening feelings of wanting. It would be necessary, of course, to ensure that partners were engaging in sexting for the right reasons because unwanted sexting could have deleterious effects. Similarly, if frequent unwanted sexting marks an imbalance in the relationship that is connected to negative outcomes, it could be identified as a point of intervention to begin discussion about the relationship dynamics that result in these patterns of behavior.

Sexting could also play a role in individual therapy for patients presenting with romantic or sexual distress. The robust association between sexting and sexual satisfaction may indicate that regardless of motives for participating in the behavior, the act of sexting is associated with sexual satisfaction. Future research will need to identify the causal pathways for this association, but it seems likely that sexting requires high levels of sexual agency and communication, which are also linked to sexual satisfaction.

Taken together, these data indicate that not all sexting is equal. As with other forms of communication, context and intent matter. While sexting appears to be generally good for sexual satisfaction, wantedness of and motives for sexting matter within the context of a relationship. Unwanted sexting is bad for relationship
satisfaction. Wanted sexting is good for sexual and relationship satisfaction among heterosexuals. This is an important and novel finding with exciting clinical implications. It is novel only because no researcher has previously asked the question “Can sexting be good?” As these data indicate that it can be good, the next step is to ask, “How can sexting help?” Prospective research is needed to answer that question. The current data supporting the role of sexting in a sexual health framework are correlational in nature. It is essential to look at directionality and causality in these relationships. Can sexting be used to promote positive sexual and relationship outcomes or is the sexting a behavioral outcome of individuals who are already secure and satisfied? Future research should examine factors driving these relationships in order to inform exciting and novel clinical applications by capitalizing on sexting as a powerful sexual communication tool.
References


Appendix A: Survey Materials

Demographics

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our survey! We will ask you some questions about your relationships and different activities people sometimes engage in while in romantic or intimate relationships. We would also like to get a little bit of information about you so we know who decided to answer our questions. Thank you again for your time and input!

1. In what state do you live?
2. What gender do you most identify with in the world?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other, please specify:
3. What is your age? ___________
   If under 18 years old, DISCONTINUE.
4. What is your ethnic origin/race (please check all that apply)?
   - African origin/Black
   - Asian origin
   - Caribbean, Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander origin
   - European origin/White/Caucasian
   - Hispanic/Latina
   - American Indian or Alaskan native
   - Other (please identify______________________)
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Did not complete high school
   - High school diploma/GED
   - Technical school/Trade School
   - Some college coursework
   - Two-year college degree
   - Four-year college degree
   - Master's level or higher graduate courses
   - Master's/ Doctoral-level degree
6. Are you currently enrolled in school?
   - No, I am not in school.
7. Are you currently employed?
   - No, I am not employed
   - Yes, I work part-time.
   - Yes, I work full-time.

8. Are you:
   - Heterosexual
   - Homosexual
   - Bisexual
   - Queer
   - Other, please specify:

   Relationship Status and Duration

9. What is your current relationship status?
   - Single, not dating anyone
   - Casually dating
   - In a relationship

10. How committed is your relationship?
    - Not at all committed
    - A little committed
    - Somewhat committed
    - Very committed

11. How would you describe your relationship?
    - Casual
    - Monogamous
    - Open or Polyamorous
    - Other

12. Are you currently or have you ever been married or in a civil union?
    - I have never been married or in a civil union.
    - I am currently separated.
    - I was married or in a civil union, but am no longer.
    - I am currently married or in a civil union.

13. Do you live with your partner?
    - Yes
Depending on response to Q9 the next question will be:

- **If casually dating one or more people:** How long have you been dating? If you are dating more than one person, please answer for the person you have been dating the longest. If you are unsure how long the relationship has been, please estimate. _____ years and _____ months

- **If in a relationship:** How long have you been in this relationship? If you are in more than one relationship, please answer for the longest relationship. If you are married or in a civil union, please consider the entire relationship, not just how long you have been married. If you are unsure how long the relationship has been, please estimate. _____ years and _____ months

14. Do you have any children?
   - Yes, and they live with me full-time.
   - Yes, and they live with me part-time.
   - Yes, but they do not live with me.
   - No, I do not have any children.

15. How old were you the first time you had sex?

16. How many people have you had sex with in your life?

17. How many people have you had sex with in the last 6 months?

18. With which religion you currently identify?
   - Agnostic
   - Atheist
   - Buddhist
   - Catholic
   - Christian (includes all forms of Christianity that do not identify with Catholicism)
   - Hindu
   - Jewish
   - Muslim
   - Not affiliated; however, I am religious or spiritual
   - No religious/spiritual identity
   - Other (please identify____________________)

19. How religious or spiritual do you consider yourself to be?
Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R)
The following statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

1=Strongly Disagree………7=Strong Agree

20. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
21. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
22. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
23. I worry that romantic partners won’t care about me as much as I care about them.
24. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
25. I worry a lot about my relationships.
26. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
27. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
28. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
29. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
30. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
31. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
32. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
33. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
34. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.
35. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.
36. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
37. My partner only seems to notice me when I’m angry.
38. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
39. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
40. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
41. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
42. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
43. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
44. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
45. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
46. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
47. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
48. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
49. I tell my partner just about everything.
50. I talk things over with my partner.
51. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
52. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
53. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
54. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
55. My partner really understands me and my needs.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)
Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

0 = disagree strongly
1 = disagree somewhat
2 = disagree slightly
3 = agree slightly
4 = agree somewhat
5 = agree strongly.

56. No matter how accomplished be is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
57. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
58. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.
59. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
60. Women are too easily offended.
61. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
62. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
63. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
64. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
65. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
66. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
67. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
68. Men are complete without women.
69. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
70. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
71. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
72. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
73. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
74. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.

Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

**Sexting Behavior**

For the next few questions, please consider this scale of different texting content.

1) small talk or discussing how the day is going
2) romantic messages, e.g., “I miss you” or “I want to see you”
3) insinuating or implying sex, double entendres
4) suggestive photos or videos, explicit language about sex acts
5) nude photos or videos, explicit language about sex acts or intent to meet with person to engage in acts.

78. What is the highest level of any message you have ever sent?
79. What is the highest level of any message you have sent to a current sexual partner?
80. What is the highest level of any message you have ever received?
81. What is the highest level of any message you have received from a current sexual partner?

82. Where on this scale do you think the content should be considered sexting?

83. In your life, how many partners have you sexted or received sexts from?

84. How many people have you sexted with in the last year?

85. What percent of the time did you start the sexting?

86. In what types of relationships have you sexted? Please choose all that apply.
   - Committed
   - Casual
   - Cheating
   - Other, please describe.

Please tell us how often (1 =Never to 5 = Frequently) you have ever engaged in the following behaviors using text.

    a) Sent a sexually suggestive photo or video of yourself.
    b) Sent a photo or video of yourself in underwear or in lingerie.
    c) Sent a nude photo or video of yourself.
    d) Sent a sexually suggestive text and a text message propositioning sexual activity

Please tell us how often (1 =Never to 5 = Frequently) you have ever engaged in the following behaviors using text.

    a) received a sexually suggestive photo or video of your partner
    b) received a photo or video of your partner in underwear or in lingerie,
    c) received a nude photo or video of your partner,
    d) received a sexually suggestive text and a text message propositioning sexual activity
Please tell us how often (1 = Never to 5 = Frequently) you have engaged in the following behaviors with any of your current partners using text.

   a) sent a sexually suggestive photo or video of yourself
   b) Sent a photo or video of yourself in underwear or in lingerie,
   c) sent a nude photo or video of yourself,
   d) Sent a sexually suggestive text and a text message propositioning sexual activity

Please tell us how often (1 = Never to 5 = Frequently you have engaged in the following behaviors with any of your current partners using text.

   a) received a sexually suggestive photo or video of your partner
   b) received a photo or video of your partner in underwear or in lingerie,
   c) received a nude photo or video of your partner,
   d) received a sexually suggestive text and a text message propositioning sexual activity

Sexting Motives Measure (SMM)

For the following statements, please select the response which best describes how often you personally sext for each of the following reasons. Remember -- there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you think.

   1 = Almost never/never
   2 = Some of the time
   3 = About half of the time
   4 = Most of the time
   5 = Almost always/always

87. How often do you sext to become more intimate with your partner?
88. How often do you sext to express love for your partner?
89. How often do you sext to make an emotional connection with your partner?
90. How often do you sext to become closer with your partner?
91. How often do you sext to feel emotionally close to your partner?
92. How often do you sext because you feel “horny?”
93. How often do you sext because it feels good?
94. How often do you sext just for the excitement of it?
95. How often do you sext just for the thrill of it?
96. How often do you sext to satisfy your sexual needs?
97. How often do you sext to prove to yourself that your partner thinks you’re attractive?
98. How often do you sext because it makes you feel like you’re a more interesting person?
99. How often do you sext because it makes you feel more self-confident?
100. How often do you sext to reassure yourself that you are sexually desirable?
101. How often do you sext to help you feel better about yourself?
102. How often do you sext to cope with upset feelings?
103. How often do you sext to help you deal with disappointment in your life?
104. How often do you sext because it helps you feel better when you’re lonely?
105. How often do you sext because it helps you feel better when you’re feeling low?
106. How often do you sext to cheer yourself up?
107. How often do you sext because you worry that people will talk about you if you don’t sext?
108. How often do you sext because people will think less of you if you don’t?
109. How often do you sext because others will kid you if you don’t?
110. How often do you sext just because all your friends are sexting?
111. How often do you sext so that others won’t put you down about not sexting?
112. How often do you sext out of fear that your partner won’t love you anymore if you don’t?
113. How often do you sext because you don’t want your partner to be angry with you?
114. How often do you sext you worry that your partner won’t want to be with you if you don’t?
115. How often do you sext because you’re afraid that your partner will leave you if you don’t?

**Sexting Wantedness**

116. How often have you consented to sexting when you actually did not want to sext?
   - Never (SKIP TO CSI)
   - Very Rarely
   - Rarely
   - Occasionally
   - Frequently
   - Very frequently

Thinking of those times when you consented to sexting but did not actually want to sext, how important the reasons listed below in your decision?

1 = Not at all important
2 = Low importance
3 = Slightly important
4 = Neutral
5 = Moderately important
6 = Very important
7 = Extremely Important

117. I wanted to promote intimacy in the relationship.
118. I wanted to satisfy my partner’s needs.
119. I wanted to avoid tension in my relationship.
120. I felt obligated because I had already engaged in sexting with my partner.
121. We had developed a norm or pattern in our relationships to engage in sexting regularly.
122. I was curious.
123. My partner made the first move and I didn’t want him/her to feel rejected.
124. I wanted to gain sexting experience.
125. I was worried that my partner would threaten to end our relationship if I didn’t engage in sexting.
126. I was worried that if I didn’t, my partner wouldn’t be interested in me anymore.
127. It was easier than saying no.
128. I didn’t want to spoil the mood.
129. I was lonely.
130. I was bored.
131. I was drinking.
132. I wanted to avoid an argument.
133. I was taking drugs.

**Couples Satisfaction Index**

Next, we would like to ask about your relationship. If you are in more than one relationship, please answer for what you would consider your primary or most serious relationship.

134. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Extremely Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fairly Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A Little Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extremely Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

135. Amount of time spent together
   5- Always agree
   4- Almost always agree
   3- Occasionally disagree
   2- Frequently disagree
   1- Almost always disagree
   0- Always disagree

136. Making major decisions
   5- Always agree
   4- Almost always agree
   3- Occasionally disagree
   2- Frequently disagree
   1- Almost always disagree
   0- Always disagree
137. Demonstrations of affection
   5- Always agree
   4- Almost always agree
   3- Occasionally disagree
   2- Frequently disagree
   1- Almost always disagree
   0- Always disagree

138. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
   5- All the time
   4- Most of the time
   3- More often than not
   2- Occasionally
   1- Rarely
   0- Never

139. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?
   5- All the time
   4- Most of the time
   3- More often than not
   2- Occasionally
   1- Rarely
   0- Never

140. I still feel a strong connection with my partner.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

141. If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

142. Our relationship is strong.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

143. I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

144. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
145. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

146. I can’t imagine ending my relationship with my partner.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

147. I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

148. I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

149. For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

150. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true

151. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does.
   a. Not at all true
   b. A little true
   c. Somewhat true
   d. Mostly true
   e. Almost completely true
   f. Completely true
152. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. Mostly
   e. Almost completely
   f. Completely

153. How well does your partner meet your needs?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. Mostly
   e. Almost completely
   f. Completely

154. To what extent has your relationship met your initial expectations?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. Mostly
   e. Almost completely
   f. Completely

155. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. Mostly
   e. Almost completely

156. How good is your relationship compared to most?
   0-  Worse than all others (Extremely bad)
   1-  
   2-  
   3-  
   4-  
   5-  Better than all others (Extremely good)

157. Do you enjoy your partner’s company?
   Never
   Less than once a month
   Once or twice a month
   Once or twice a week
   Once a day
   More often

158. How often do you and your partner have fun together?
   Never
   Less than once a month
   Once or twice a month
   Once or twice a week
   Once a day
   More often
For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>159. INTERESTING</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160. BAD</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161. FULL</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162. LONELY</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163. STURDY</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164. DISCOURAGING</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165. ENJOYABLE</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX)**

In general, how would you describe your overall sex life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Very Unpleasant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Very Negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Very Unsatisfying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Worthless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sexting Attitudes Scale**

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1- Strongly Disagree
2- Disagree
3- Neither Agree nor Disagree
4- Agree
5- Strongly Agree

166. Sexting is just part of flirting
167. There is no harm in sexting
168. Sexting is fun
169. Sexting is exciting
170. Sexting is part of being in a relationship
171. Sexting is a regular part of romantic relationships nowadays
172. Sexting is no big deal
173. I think that sexting may cause me problems in the future
174. Sending sexually suggestive texts is risky
175. Sending sexually racy pictures leaves me vulnerable
176. Sending sexually suggestive photos or videos is risky
177. You have to be careful about sexting
178. I share the sexts I receive with my friends
179. I share the sexts I send with my friends
180. My romantic partners expect me to send sexually racy texts
181. My romantic partners expect me to send sexually racy photos or videos
182. Sexting improves my relationship or potential relationship.

183. How did you hear about this study?
   o Mechanical Turk
   o Poster
   o Friend
   o Facebook
   o Craigslist
   o Listserv
   o Other, please describe.

184. Please provide any comments about the survey or survey items (e.g., if there are any topics or questions that you found confusing or unclear). We appreciate any feedback you may have!
Appendix B: Motives for Consensual but Unwanted Sexting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Total n (%)</th>
<th>My partner made the first move and I didn't want him/her to feel rejected n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to promote intimacy in the relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>29 (8.9)</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low importance</td>
<td>26 (8.0)</td>
<td>Low importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>32 (9.8)</td>
<td>Slightly important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29 (8.9)</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>96 (29.5)</td>
<td>Moderately important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>87 (26.8)</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>26 (8.0)</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to satisfy my partner's needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>12 (3.7)</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low importance</td>
<td>3 (.9)</td>
<td>Low importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>35 (10.8)</td>
<td>Slightly important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>30 (9.2)</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>73 (22.5)</td>
<td>Moderately important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>103 (31.7)</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>69 (21.2)</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to avoid tension in my relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>46 (14.2)</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low importance</td>
<td>30 (9.2)</td>
<td>Low importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>39 (12.0)</td>
<td>Slightly important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>56 (17.2)</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>65 (20.0)</td>
<td>Moderately important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>59 (18.2)</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>30 (9.2)</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt obliged because I had already engaged in sexting with my partner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>42 (12.9)</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low importance</td>
<td>35 (10.8)</td>
<td>Low importance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


We had developed a norm or pattern in our relationship to engage in sexting regularly.

It was easier than saying no.

I didn't want to spoil the mood.

I was lonely.

I was bored.

I wanted to avoid an argument.
I was taking drugs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>244 (74.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>6 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>23 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>17 (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>9 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>3 (.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>