



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on April 20, 2010

Schoolgirls “Sext” Their Nude Photos

“Hard questions” are being asked this week in Montgomery County, Maryland, in the wake of the April 15 discovery that middle-school and high-school girls had transmitted lewd photos and video clips of themselves via cellphone and the Internet to their classmates. Many of the recipients, mostly boys, then turned around and either rented or sold the photos to other students.

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County police and other investigators were called in to get to the, er, bottom of the matter. They needed to find out whether actual laws had been broken in the selling and renting of nude pictures minor-to-minor, and also to ascertain whether any adults, such as teachers or parents, were involved. Journalists got wind of the matter [and interviewed miscellaneous parents, students, teachers, and administrators](#).

The word “morality,” of course, never came up. But “lack of self-respect” and “self-esteem” did. From the vantage point of the pupils, self-esteem didn’t seem to be an issue. Most of the “sexting” girls were proud to display well-developed breasts, and any other “proof” that they were, um, ahead of the curve. As for self-respect, the girls appeared confused as to what that meant, given the situation.

Lascivious text messages by adolescents to their peers (“sexting”), like exhibitionism in general, have been on the rise for some time. Anyone who uses the Internet knows that spam containing self-taken photographs of private parts and sex acts via “webcams” is legend — usually as a come-on for professional “services.” Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project found that only four percent of students between the ages of 12 and 17 admit to sending out nude photos of themselves, a number not so different from what was considered the “fast crowd” in the 1950s and 60s. But, sexually explicit messages and sexual activity, as opposed to actual photos, no doubt would increase that percentage.

What many find surprising in this instance is that parents of pupils at Pyle Middle School and Whitman High School — [touted as two of the best schools in the state](#) — were asking why their girls were doing this. In the course of “serious talks” with their children, many parents seemed [genuinely puzzled](#) in media interviews.

Puzzled?

Most television dramas and sitcoms, aimed predominantly at the 14 to 27-year-old demographic, are



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sex-drenched. Video games, also aimed mainly at youth, are both brutal and sex-filled (the latest, RapeLay, one of many emanating in Japan, allows players to gang-rape women and underage girls; lots of stores, including popular online sites, are selling it: [see here](#)). Coeducational health classes are focused on sex, complete with explicit pictures, films and surveys. Billboards, TV, and magazines carry nonstop ads about erectile dysfunction and “feminine products” (a new ad shows a young woman asking a boyfriend to buy her some tampons. When he begs off, she scoffs, “Can you even say ‘tampon’?”). Nearly every TV show and novel incorporates perversion and noncommittal sex into the story line. Routinely included are scenes of young adults stripping down to their underwear and simulated intercourse.

Add to that increasingly graphic sex scandals covered in the news media, to the point that more urgent topics get short shrift. Then there are the less noticeable changes, such as the term “sexual partner” used as a replacement for “spouse,” “husband,” and “wife.” The clothing marketed to adolescents and pre-adolescents is tacky and immodest at best, “hooker-chic” at worst. Victoria’s Secret commercials in prime time mimic the soft-porn served up in teen magazines, many of which are falsely marketed as “fashion publications.” The advice columns alone are enough to make even free-love Boomers retch.

It used to be “normal” for early-developing girls to be a bit embarrassed by the fact, and that was a good thing because it resulted in restraint later on when everybody started dating. Today, there is no “later on.” “Hooking-up,” as it is called, starts at 11 years of age. The flirting and subtle fashion tricks that were endearing in the 1950s and ‘60s had, by the 1980s, been replaced by in-your-face, blatant sex-frolics perpetrated by ambitious nobodies trying to get noticed — people like “Madonna,” followed by a string of talent-challenged teen icons: the Beastie Boys, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, and now Miley Cyrus.

The girls at Pyle Middle School and Whitman High are busy mimicking the pranks of under-talented child-stars (usually at the urging of their publicity-seeking managers). They mentally justify their behavior by pointing to the “sexploitive” advertising, story lines, and explicit curriculums described above. Today’s kids do not comprehend the appeal of understated sexuality, that subtle mixture of glamour and innocence employed in an earlier era by a young Lauren Bacall, Grace Kelly, Jane Russell, Doris Day, and Katherine Hepburn.

The post-modern girls who go to Pyle Middle School or Whitman High generally have a TV in their bedroom; they “multi-task” homework, video-games, a favorite show, and the raunchy lyrics or noise that passes for music. With every visit to a hair or nail salon comes dozens of magazines that send the same unequivocal message: Sex is about fun, not commitment or love. The only cautionary note relates to sexually transmitted diseases (or STDs). Girls in some neighborhoods actually compete to get pregnant, and they don’t care much about who fathers their child — until they need money.

So, while parents are having that “serious conversation” with their youngsters, they might consider bringing along a pile of teen magazines, turning on the tube, and grabbing a copy of that school sex survey if they expect to speak to what really goes on in front of their children’s noses every day. Only then might Mom or Dad be in a position to address the value of modesty or committed relationship.

The 30-something adult with children barely remembers when “recreational sex” became the norm and marriage-and-family wasn’t looked upon with some degree of disdain. Their middle-school and high-school-aged offspring are looking to find a niche in some career — with or without the requisite paper credentials. Or, they may just want “to see the world,” backpacking and “roughing it” with their pals through rain forests and mountain trails, with the occasional recreational “fling” to keep themselves



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entertained. The emotional fallout from such a lifestyle doesn't occur to them, and "settling down," as we used to call it, equates to "trapped" in most teenage minds — a view once limited to boys who got their girlfriends pregnant.

So, while a young girl's hormones may be raging, and while she may be attracted to one person — or "lover," in adult parlance — from time to time, she has already been brainwashed to accept such feelings as transient: a "significant other" relationship, something destined for extinction at some point, but always with the expectation of physical intimacy.

Thus the necessity to display and post intimate thoughts and body parts. The point is to demonstrate that one is not prudish, moralistic, or narrow-minded — the only real stigmas left in our society.

That's "why they do this." That's why "nice" girls transmit nude pictures of themselves and "sext." That's why song lyrics, like teen dating, strike older adults as strange, being more accustomed to something called romance.

For teens and pre-teens, any thoughts as to the ramifications of "sexting" years from now are on the back burner. Like their grandparent Boomers, who famously announced they wouldn't trust anyone over 30, today's children still think like children: They believe that they will remain the age they presently are forever, and that they will think as they do right now forever, too.

Of course they won't — and, unfortunately, today's adults generally cannot provide the kind of guidance and leadership necessary to impart this fact, much less lay a much-needed, restraining hand on the excesses of their young charges.

Beyond the moral aspect of what happened in Montgomery County, it is impossible to prove that information has been purged from a computerized source, or that there exists no backup copy. When these "sexting" girls are in their 40s and beyond their current obsession with bra sizes; when they are ready to be taken seriously as adults; when they are, in fact, parents themselves: That's when those explicit pictures and messages they sent last week will come back to haunt them — emotionally, financially, and maybe even physically.

Ironically, the ones asking "why" will, in the end, be the girls in the photographs.

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