**Self-reports and Sexting**

Self-reports are especially useful for probing new behaviors that do not appear in police data or other official records. One major new topic receiving attention is **sexting**. Lounsbury, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (2011) note that sexting includes an array of behaviors. At the most basic level, sexting involves the transmission of sexual images across an electronic medium. The typical assumption is that this is by a cellphone, although it can be by email, social networks, online postings, faxing, or any electronic means. What makes it explicitly problematic is when it is done by or involves juveniles. Döring (2014) defines sexting as “the interpersonal exchange of aelf-produces sexualized texts and above all images (photos, videos) via cell phone or the internet.” Sexting can also be by email, social networks, online postings, or faxing.

Estimates of the extent of sexting are typically based on surveys of youths and young adults. These surveys may explore reports of being involved in sexting or victimization surveys where respondents are asked if they have been the target of sexting. Based on self-report survey data, one study reports that almost 4 out of 10 youths claim to have sent sexually suggestive messages, while almost 20% had been involved in transmitting sexually oriented pictures (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2009). Other surveys place the behavior as high as 50% and more by sexually active teens (Lee et al., 2015). Reports on receipt of sexual images reveal that roughly seven out of ten 16–18 year olds have received sexts (Lee et al., 2015). Females more often send sexts while males receive sexts more often than females (Klittke et al., 2014).

The problem of sexting is multifaceted. The first concern is the blatant transmission of pornographic images, especially those involving children. The fact that it is being done by children and that they see no problem with this activity is a major concern. A second related concern is the use of such transmissions as a form of bullying between youths. The accompanying shame and embarrassment, along with the bullying, has led to suicide, attempted suicide, and assaultive reactions. These topics have been the focus of several national media reports. A third concern is that sexting has been tied to a range of other risk behaviors, such as heightened sexual activity and alcohol use, and emotional problems (Ševčíková, 2016). A fourth concern is the fact that sexting is not easy for parents, teachers, and the juvenile justice system to see. It is an action that is easily hidden and, therefore, difficult to identify and address. In many jurisdictions, there is no clear legal definition of sexting, which makes it difficult to address except under laws defining pornography (Jolicoeur and Zedlewski 2010). The juvenile justice system must therefore use options not initially devised for this type of behavior between youths.

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