

Texting too tempting for college students even when inappropriate

April 1 2015, by A'ndrea Elyse Messer

College students may realize that texting in the shower or at a funeral is inappropriate, but many do it anyway, according to Penn State psychologists.

"We have looked at inappropriate texting behavior—texting while driving, for instance—before, but what we wanted to find out is whether the people who are engaging in these forms of behavior even know whether or not it is the right thing to do," said Marissa Harrison, associate professor of psychology, Penn State Harrisburg.

The researchers suggest that [college students](#) are not necessarily trying to create new norms in texting behaviors, but that breaking with these norms is just too tempting for them in most cases. When they receive texts, the temptation to check their texts and send messages back is much greater than the urge to pay attention to their present situation.

In a survey, college students admitted to texting during funerals, in the shower, during sex and while using the toilet, according to Harrison, who worked with Jessica M. Salley, a graduate student, and Christine E. Bealing, an undergraduate student, both in psychology.

While most participants said they considered texting while taking a shower to be socially unacceptable, more than 34 percent said they did it anyway. Most agreed that texting during a religious service or while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance was wrong, but more than 22 percent texted during services and about 11 percent said they texted during the

pledge. Approximately 7.4 percent texted while having sex, even though most admitted that it was wrong.

Some behaviors—such as texting in the bathroom, or while eating—are becoming more acceptable for college students.

"Whereas some people may deem this odd, most college students agree that eating and toilet texts are the new normal," the researchers said.

Trained as an evolutionary psychologist, Harrison suggests that the forces of natural selection may play a part in creating this behavior. The buzzes and flashing lights of texting devices may signal opportunities or threats that cause people to pay less attention to their present environment and consider the future.

"We are all programmed to notice movement and change, so maybe those buzzes and bells of texting, just like certain sounds that used to indicate the charging of a predator, for example, reinforce the need to find out what is going on," said Harrison.

The researchers, who released their findings in a recent issue of the *Social Science Journal*, asked 152 college age students to fill out a 70-question survey on their attitudes toward texting in various situations and their general texting habits.

Many of the college students in the survey frequently communicate with texting. A little more than 34 percent of the participants said they sent and received 100 or more text messages each day. Harrison said that future research will look at how other age groups—such as high school students—handle the temptation to text when it is inappropriate.

"College students tend to be heavy text users, so it might be interesting to see if this holds up across other groups that may or may not use [texting](#)

as often," Harrison said.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: Texting too tempting for college students even when inappropriate (2015, April 1)
retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-04-texting-college-students-inappropriate.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--