Sex Roles

Meanings of Bodily and Sexual Expression in Youth Sexting Culture: Young Women's Negotiation of Gendered Risks and Harms --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract

The present paper explores how young people construct gendered social meanings and cultural norms surrounding sexual and bodily expression in youth sexting culture. Previous research suggests youth sexting is a gendered phenomenon in which young men are able to seek social capital through sexting, whereas young women are subject to social shaming and harassment. Drawing upon findings from group and one-to-one interviews with 41 young people aged 14–18, I show how constructs of risk, shame, and responsibility operated along gendered lines. Young people attributed agency and legitimacy to young men's sexual practices, whereas young women were disempowered, denied legitimacy, and tasked with managing gendered risks of harm in youth sexting culture. I discuss how young women negotiated and navigated risk and shame and, in some instances, made space for safe, pleasurable sexting experiences despite and within these narratives. The accounts of two young women, who shared experiences sexting and social shaming, are presented to show some of the ways young women make sense of social meanings and cultural norms on individual and interpersonal levels. I conclude that challenging gendered harm requires a (re)legitimation of feminine sexuality and bodily expression away from narratives of risk and shame.

Keywords: sexting, young people, gender, sexism, shame

Meanings of Bodily and Sexual Expression in Youth Sexting Culture: Young Women's Negotiation of Gendered Risks and Harms

Sexting is defined as the “creation and sharing of personal sexual images or text messages via mobile phones or internet applications, including Facebook, Snapchat, and email” (Hasinoff 2015, p. 1). The phenomenon has attracted particular media attention, public concern, and research and policy focus when practiced by young people, particularly those under the age of 18 for whom the production and exchange of sexual images is criminalised in the United Kingdom and elsewhere under child pornography laws (Moran-Ellis 2012). Discomfort around “youth sexting,” as it is termed, relates not just to its legal status, but also to broader, long-standing social and moral anxieties around youth, sexuality, and digital communication technology (Lee, Crofts, Salter, Milivojevic, & McGovern 2013).

At the centre of the controversy about youth sexting is the “sexting girl,” inappropriately engaging in sexualised self-expression in response to the demands of boys and men (Draper 2012; Hasinoff 2015; Karaian 2012, 2014). Young women are often described as passive victims of a sexualised cultural context that is compelling them to sext (Draper 2012). Rarely are they afforded agency in their practices, nor their bodily and sexual representations interpreted beyond constructions of naivety, risk, and shame (Hasinoff 2014, 2015). Young men, meanwhile, are presented as inherently unable to engage in sexting “ethically” and as likely to pressure and coerce young women to sext and, subsequently, to distribute young women’s images around their peer group for social gain (Herriot and Hiseler 2015). The present article centralises the perspective of young people and examines the role of gender in their practices and perceptions surrounding sexting. I explore the implications of gendered norms and meanings for young women in youth sexting culture, and I discuss how young women navigated gendered

sociocultural constraints on their bodily and sexual expression.

Previous research exploring sexting from the perspective of young people reveals it is a gendered phenomenon. Although young men and women may sext, statistically, at similar rates, there are differing meanings ascribed to their practices (Lippman and Campbell 2014). There is little evidence from previous research that the phenomenon is providing opportunities for more diverse conceptualisations of sexual and bodily expression, at least at the level of peer group practices and perceptions (Albury, Crawford, Byron, & Matthews. 2013; Coy, Kelly, Elvines, & Kanyeredzi 2013; Dobson and Ringrose 2015; Harris, Davidson, Letourneau, Paternite and Miofsky 2012; Lippman and Campbell 2014; Phippen 2012; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone, & Harvey 2012; Walker 2012). Nevertheless, alternative narratives and practices that challenge the assumption that youth sexting is inherently harmful and, by association, the reification of young women as passive victims in sexting dynamics are present among some of those who report engaging in the practice (see Crofts, Lee, McGovern, & Milivojevic 2015).

Perceptions of Young Men and Women Who Sext

Previous research suggests there are gendered double standards present in youth sexting culture. Young women's sexual and bodily self-expression can be met with slut-shaming and abuse, whereas young men are lauded for engaging in sexting and can obtain social capital through the unauthorised distribution of images of young women in their peer group (Albury et al. 2013; Coy et al. 2013; Harris et al. 2013; Phippen 2012; Ringrose et al. 2012; Walker 2012). Among 12–18 year-olds, Lippman and Campbell (2014) found that although sexting was perceived as a normative and expected part of courtship and sexual activity, there were negative judgments on young women who sext as “sluts.”

Risk and harm narratives dominate among young people, in which gender inequalities are

taken-for-granted and underpin the victim-blaming of young women who engage in sexting and have their images distributed without their consent (Bond 2010; Jonsson, Bladh, & Priebe 2015). Dobson and Ringrose (2015) found that there are narratives of young women's responsibility for harassment and breaking of trust by young men is naturalised. They argue that young women seem to have little "[legitimate entitlement] to digitally mediate sexuality or express sexual desire" (p. 11); instead, they are tasked with managing the risk of unauthorised distribution by young men. Young women who sext and encounter harm can, therefore, be viewed as having no one to blame but themselves for not foreseeing and taking steps to avoid harm (Albury et al. 2013; Coy et al. 2013; Walker 2012). Salter (2015) found that these narratives are reproduced by young adult women who sext and experience unauthorised distribution. They attribute their experiences to personal failings and although they may criticise men's behaviour, they see the solution as personal change, in particular abstaining from sexting.

Unwanted and Pressured Sexting

Pressure to sext, particularly on young women by young men, is prevalent according to previous research (Albury et al. 2013; Coy et al. 2013; Crofts et al. 2015; Harris et al. 2013; Lippman and Campbell 2014; McGraw 2013; Phippen 2012; Ringrose et al. 2012; Walker 2012). Research reveals that pressured sexting can be coercive and include blackmail and threats, including toward young women who engage in sexting but later decide that they do not wish to continue doing so (Ringrose et al. 2012; Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh, & Treitman 2018). Young women are, essentially, in a double bind in which they risk being ostracised as frigid by young men if they do not agree to sext but fear slut shaming if exposed as sexters in the peer group (Renold and Ringrose 2011; Ringrose et al. 2012). Young men also, however, come under pressure in youth sexting culture (Walker 2012). The construction of sexting as an

accomplishment for young men can lead to pressure on them to adhere to the demands of compulsory masculine sexuality by obtaining and distributing the images of young women (Bailey and Mouna 2011; Ringrose et al. 2012). Young men who refuse to comply with such demands can experience homophobic bullying (Ringrose and Harvey 2015).

Unwanted sexting through unsolicited image-sharing similarly affects both young men and women, but previous research suggests the meaning and experience of this is gendered. Unsolicited image-sharing is the sharing of sexual and nude/semi-nude images without the consent of the recipient (Salter 2015). Angrove (2015) conceptualises it as a form of sexualised cyber-bullying that damages the self-perceptions of victims, who are most often young women. Salter (2015) found that young adult women tend to conceptualise the practice as “boys being boys” and something they must just ignore. In her study of young adults, Burkett (2015) found that men also experience unsolicited image-sharing, but these men did not construct it as threatening or report experiencing self-doubt or offense as the women did. Bond (2010) found that among teenagers, some young men felt obligated to keep unsolicited images sent to them by young women private, so as to protect their reputations. Rather than seeing themselves as victimised, these young men constructed themselves as adhering to a form of etiquette toward young women by not sharing their images (Bond 2010).

Pleasurable Youth Sexting

Although gender double standards and victim-blaming feature in youth sexting culture, it has been found that sexting encompasses a range of practices, some of which may be pleasurable and positive (Crofts et al. 2015). Young people describe sexting as varying along a continuum ranging from private, consensual image production and exchange to non-consensual, harmful practices such as pressure, coercion, and unauthorised distribution of images (Albury et al. 2013;

Crofts et al. 2015). Surveys reveal that the majority of sexting occurs between young people of a similar age and who are known to one another (e.g., romantic/desired partners, friends and acquaintances; Englander 2012; Ybarra and Mitchell 2014). Surveys and qualitative research with young people suggest they sext for a variety of reasons, including to build and maintain relationships, to demonstrate intimate connection with others and for self-expression, as well as due to boredom and a desire for risk-taking (Albury et al. 2013; Cooper, Quayle, Jonsson, & Svedin 2016; Lenhart, 2009; Walker 2012). Survey respondents describe sexting as hot, exciting, arousing, safer (than physical activity) and fun, but also damaging, harmful, and inappropriate (Associated Press and MTV 2009; Lenhart 2009; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and Cosmogirl.com 2008). Youth sexting is not, therefore, inherently harmful or pleasurable, and, for some, the riskiness of it may give it meaning and shape motivation, for example through expressing trust (Crofts et al. 2015; Karaian and Van Meyl 2015).

Young people are likely navigating and negotiating broader gendered sociocultural contexts in which social meanings and cultural norms are actively and reflexively incorporated into self-concepts and decision-making on individual and interpersonal levels, so sexism and inequality in the peer group may not translate directly into their individual experiences (Crofts et al. 2015). Among 11–18-year-old Finnish young women, Nielsen, Paasonen and Spisak (2015) found that sexting facilitated experimentation and expression, and participants reported pleasurable experiences and feelings. Contrary to discourses of risk and perceptions of harm as widespread and inevitable, the authors suggest their participants' practices "...offer tangible challenges to fear-based sex education discourses that frame girls solely as victims of grooming and harmful conduct online" (Nielsen et al. 2015, p. 480).

Notwithstanding, research suggests that young women hold more negative perceptions of sexting than young men do, although these perceptions may relate as much to meanings surrounding the legitimacy of female sexual expression and the risks of such expression as to experiences of harm (Crofts et al. 2015; Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor 2014; Strassberg, Rullo, & Mackaronis 2014). There is evidence that sexting may represent a form of relationship currency, which is an expected part of youth courtship and dating rituals (Lippman and Campbell 2014). Such expectations may particularly affect women. Burkett (2015) found that young adult women, compared to young adult men, spoke less about sexting being fun, pleasurable, and spontaneous and more about it helping to build, maintain, and demonstrate intimacy and connection in relationship—suggesting women may conceive of sexting as a necessary and expected part of fulfilling intimate relationships. Young women, compared to young men, are also more likely to report having sent an image in response to a request from a partner, because of pressure, to prove commitment to a partner or to get attention (Wood, Barter, Stanley, Aghtaie, & Larkins 2015).

The Present Study

The broad purpose of the present study was to explore how young people understand and experience sexting on individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural levels. Crofts et al. (2015) suggest it is important to distinguish the perceptions held by groups of young people (which may be negative and gendered because they are based on the social meanings and cultural norms circulating with the peer group) from the situated, individual, and interpersonal experiences of sexters, which may challenge, as well as reproduce, individualistic notions of risk management and gendered norms and assumptions surrounding sexual and bodily expression. Due to ethical constraints on hearing from young people directly about their sexting practices, much previous research has concentrated more on group-level perceptions of the phenomenon. Understandings

of how individuals navigate gendered meanings in sexting are based more on studies with young adults rather than teenaged young people (Burkett 2015; Crofts et al. 2015). In the present study, I spoke with young people aged 14–18 years-old about their practices and experiences sexting, as well as the meanings and perceptions they shared as a group. I thus filled a research gap by identifying how young people produced gendered constructions of sexting, the ways in which these gendered constructions shaped their sexting practices, and how young women in particular sought to navigate and negotiate gendered constraints on their sexual and bodily self-expression.

The aim of my research was to explore young people's practices and perceptions surrounding sexting to understand the social meanings and cultural norms underpinning their sexting practices, in particular for the purposes of the present article, with regard to gender and the implications—both harmful and beneficial—for young women. Three questions shaped the research and the analysis that underpins my work: (a) What are young people's practices and perceptions surrounding sexting, particularly regarding ethical digital practices in terms of privacy and consent?; (b) What are the underlying social meanings and cultural norms regarding gender that shape these practices and perceptions?; and (c) How are these meanings and value systems incorporated into young women's self-concepts, practices, and decision-making in sexting?

The primary contribution of my work is to centralise the young women's perspectives, who are often spoken for and about in ways that can be pathologising, delegitimising, and homogenising (Hasinoff 2015; Karaian 2012, 2014). After outlining young people's gendered constructions of youth sexting and how these constructions underpin risk and harm for young women, I discuss how the young women navigated and negotiated gendered logics in their peer group and how their practices and perceptions were shaped by broader meanings and norms,

even while, for some, they were resisting narratives of risk and shame. I end by arguing for a more positive conceptualisation of sexual and bodily expression for young women beyond the restrictive constructs circulating in young people's sociocultural contexts that deconstructs and disentangles notions of gender, risk, shame, and blame.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from two schools and four youth clubs in a county in southeast England. These were straightforward places to access participants and enabled me to explore sexting within young people's situated peer contexts (e.g., Johansson 2012). The schools were in a relatively affluent, semi-rural area, and the participants were confident and communicative. The youth clubs served a more diverse population and gatekeepers described attendees as ranging from mainstream middle-class to those experiencing deprivation, school failure/exclusion, mental health issues, and learning disabilities.

The sample comprised 23 young men, 16 young women, and two young people identifying as gender fluid. All identified as from a White racial background. Fully 29 described themselves as heterosexual, five as gay/lesbian, three as bisexual, two as pansexual, one as bi-romantic asexual, and one did not specify. Most reported not having a disability, although three stated they had a physical disability, six a mental disability, one a learning disability, and one a sensory disability.

The sample was homogenous in terms of ethnicity, which is perhaps unsurprising given the region of the United Kingdom in which I conducted the study. This limits the general applicability of the study and although generalisability is not traditionally an aim of qualitative research, the findings I discuss here should be considered reflective of the perspectives of this

particular group of participants. More young men participated than did young women, which was due to the greater willingness of young men to participate in the youth clubs, perhaps reflecting young men's greater confidence and ownership over these spaces compared to young women (see Lavery 2016). There was, therefore, a slight preponderance of young men's perspectives in the findings. However, the data obtained from the young women was rich, and the one-to-one interviews with young women who had experiences of sexting were insightful, helping to balance the findings.

I was aware that more vocal, compliant, and confident young people can be more likely to participate in research than will others, particularly in school environments (Curtis, Roberts, Copperman, Downie, & Liabo 2004). Nevertheless, I spoke with a range of young people and each group, across the sites, was different and had varying perspectives and ways of discussing the issues. Although not generalisable, my findings represent diverse outlooks and experiences while revealing common themes and meanings.

Measures

The research involved nine semi-structured, qualitative group interviews and seven one-to-one interviews. The group interviews explored participants' use of technology, meanings, and understandings of the ethics of sexting in terms of privacy and consent, and practices and perceptions surrounding sexting (see the group interview guide in the [online supplement](#)). The groups formed at the schools were single-gender (two male groups and two female groups), and in the youth clubs there was one male group and four mixed-gender groups. I had intended to form single-gender groups to create non-censorious environments in which young people could speak freely about their experiences and perspectives (see Curtis et al. 2004). In the youth clubs, however, gatekeepers suggested young people tend to congregate in friendship groups and may

consider it unnatural to be split by gender. Resultantly, some groups were mixed-gender. This arrangement meant I observed co-constructed meaning in single- and mixed-gender settings, providing broader insight into the phenomenon.

The one-to-one interviews were a two-way conversation in which participants shared personal beliefs and experiences sexting. In these interviews, I referred back to the group interview discussions and asked participants whether they had any personal experiences with what had been discussed and the conversation flowed depending upon their perspectives. I had an interview guide with broad questions, but tailored the questioning to the participants (see the one-to-one interview guide in the [online supplement](#)).

Procedure

I conducted the interviews alone in private rooms in the schools and youth clubs. Gatekeepers supported me to recruit participants. In the schools, gatekeepers advertised the research and recruited the participants. I had intended to attend the schools to recruit participants myself, but gatekeepers considered it more efficient, in terms of their time and resources, to recruit participants themselves. Potential participants were given information and contacted the gatekeeper if they were interested. Once a suitable number were recruited, dates were set for the group interviews. I first met the participants at the time of the group interview; those who were content to be interviewed one-to-one informed the gatekeeper after the group interview and a date for the interview was arranged. All participants gave informed consent to participate in the interviews (with gatekeepers assessing their competence to do so).

In the youth clubs, I attended the evening sessions and introduced myself and the study. Interested young people were told to go to the private room in the youth club at the time of the group interview that evening. The youth work leaders were not content for the young people to

be interviewed one-to-one, so I only conducted group interviews in these settings. In different ways, the gatekeepers at the schools and the youth clubs imposed barriers to conducting the research, but overall they were relatively flexible and content for me to explore sexting with participants in an honest and open way.

In the interviews, I introduced sexting to participants in an open and non-presumptuous way. I was mindful of not making any pre-judgments about sexting nor framing it as either a positive or negative activity. I did not use the term sexting, given young people tend not to use the term and consider it a media-produced term used by adults (Albury et al. 2013; Karaian 2012). I informed participants that I was interested in their views and experiences regarding producing and sharing personal sexual messages or images in which a person may appear partly or fully naked, regardless of whether they personally had ever done it themselves. The interviews were audio-recorded and at the start, participants completed demographic forms and chose pseudonyms. The study and methodology received ethical approval from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Surrey.

Reflexivity and Positionality

I was reflexive, considering data generated from research as a joint production of researcher-participant interaction (Huberman and Miles, 2002). I was aware of my position as a White, heterosexual young adult woman. I was particularly mindful about inhibiting the young men and did not want to appear as someone with whom they could not speak honestly and openly. I did not censor their experiences, either as an adult or as a woman. I found they engaged well and seemed to appreciate discussing the issues with a non-judgmental, open-minded, and supportive young adult (see Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman 2002). In general, I sought to reduce social distance and build rapport between the participants and myself (Raby 2007). I wore casual

clothes, chatted casually with participants, and took their perspective as a starting point for the interviews. I treated them as knowledgeable experts and gave them control over the content and direction of the discussion (Burman, Batchelor, & Brown 2001). Reflexivity is, however, more than a statement of positionality or self-tellin' (Skeggs, 2004). Throughout, I reflected upon the implications of the methods, values, biases, and decisions for the accounts and knowledge generated, as well as the potential voices that may have been excluded, misinterpreted or misunderstood (King and Horrocks 2010).

Analysis

I was guided by symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework. Symbolic interactionism holds that individuals act based upon the meanings of objects and actions in the social world produced through interaction with one another and handled in reflexive “interpretative processes” (Blumer 1969, p. 2). Symbolic interactionism enabled me to explore how participants produced meaning in sexting in their local peer contexts and how they reflexively incorporated meaning into their self-concepts, decision-making, and practices. I was interested both in the situated individual and interpersonal experiences of sexting, as well as sexting as a phenomenon in participants’ peer contexts in which sexting actors and bystanders come together to make sexting meaningful in interaction with one another. In line with symbolic interactionism, I conceived of the sociocultural, interpersonal, and individual levels of meaning and experience as mutually shaping and re-shaping one another (Jackson and Scott 2010). This enabled me to explore how participants reproduced systems of meaning to create established norms and standards, as well as how they challenged and reworked meaning in their practices.

The analysis was intended to foreground the participants’ perspectives and experiences (see Charmaz 2014b). I was guided by Charmaz’s (2014a) approach to grounded theory. She

describes it as building a theory from successive stages of analysis in which participants' experiences are understood in abstract terms. Analysis was intended to create thick descriptions of contexts, intentions, and processes of social actors. I engaged in close reading of the transcripts before coding line-by-line. Codes were initially descriptive and later interpretive, in which I explored how participants spoke about different issues and what was being constructed to develop categories and themes. An *a priori* literature review gave me a full picture of young people's social worlds, and I brought in concepts and literature to understand participants' accounts and the implications of the data (Blumer 1969; Charmaz 1990). I was interested in how different concepts explored in the literature were expressed and experienced by participants, not just whether they exist, and I was open to new ideas and contradictions.

Data analysis was a continuous, iterative process. Analysis took place soon after each interview, and each interview was interrogated and informed subsequent data collection. I shaped my approach and questions based upon emerging findings to develop the codes, categories, and themes. I compared between participants and research contexts (group and one-to-one interviews) to explore how participants constructed issues differently. Both types of interview revealed constructed meaning and reflexive interpretive processes. In the groups, I observed how participants used language to designate and co-construct meaning, as well as how they together engaged in reflexive interpretative processes to jointly decide upon courses of action. One-to-one, I observed how participants drew upon wider systems of meaning to construct their self-concepts and shape their decision-making and practices.

Results

The research revealed the presence of a heteronormative gender dynamic in which participants constructed harm as arising from the nature of masculine and feminine sexuality. I

outline the gendered meanings and norms surrounding sexting circulating within participants' peer contexts before discussing how the young women negotiated and navigated these meanings and norms within their perceptions and practices. The findings suggest that youth sexting culture is characterised by risk-aversion, shame, blame, and responsibility, in which gendered meanings underpin harmful practices and shape victim-blaming. I observed young women positioning themselves in terms of these narratives and also challenging assumptions of passivity and victimisation. However, even where their accounts challenged the characterisation of sexting as inherently risky and shameful, broader sociocultural norms and meanings intertwined with their practices and perceptions. More information about the young men and young women quoted here can be found in Table 1; Table 2 summarizes the themes, their description, and prototypical examples.

Perceptions of Young Men's and Young Women's Sexting Practices

In this section, I describe the role of gender in young people's constructions of sexting. Participants' discussions revealed a desire among young men to view and take pleasure in the images of young women. The young men constructed this as a "natural male reaction" (John) and a typical practice within male peer groups. Young women who sext, meanwhile, were described as being seen as sluts and as of low status in the eyes of others. Subsequent sections reveal how these meanings underpinned harmful sexting practices and shaped how young women negotiated youth sexting culture.

Whereas the depiction of youth sexting in public discourse tends to show young women sending images to young men, participants perceived young men to be sexting as frequently, perhaps more so, than young women are. Differences between young men and young women seemed related to the nature of their involvement in sexting and the meaning of their practices

(see Lippman and Campbell 2015). Young women's images were considered inherently more sexual and pornographic, whereas for young men it was about looking confident, attractive, cool, or fit and their images could be read in ways that bolster their status (see Salter 2015). Young women were rarely afforded such status-boosting potentials, with Kevin explaining that "you're just [seen as] a slut." The context of young women's sexual and bodily expression seemed less relevant to participants. The young men, and some of the young women, tended to construct girls who sext as "dodgy," "easy," and "slutty." The slut label was used indiscriminately toward young women who sext, although those considered not conventionally attractive in appearance could attract further criticism. Adam candidly explained:

[attractive young women's pictures are okay] because when you see it, you like it, whereas when it's a girl you don't wanna see, you don't like it. So, it's kind of like you've got more hate toward it. Because it's something you didn't wanna see.

Adam's comments reflect how images of young women were constructed in terms of the pleasures and desires of young men. Attractiveness accrued value in terms of being more pleasing for the viewer, whereas the subject remained a slut. These constructions show how although young men may enjoy getting pictures of young women, they often denigrate those who send them (Lippman and Campbell 2014). This related to how young women were positioned as objects for the pleasure of young men. Although young men may pursue them, Ling explained that once a young woman gives up what is desired, she has little value:

...he... requests and she's the one who is accepting them, the guy has to go out and make these requests, it's the same thing as sending a picture of himself. At some point, he doesn't care, he just feels like a macho character and he can send all these photos around and he doesn't care, but the girl... she is like a gem and everyone is

chasing after that and once she gives that away, it's like she's... lost her value...

It seemed for young women the practice of producing bodily and self-expression was perceived as a worrying indictment of their inner core. As Simon explained: "I don't think it's the body, I think it's the fact they did it. That gets girls." Meanwhile, as Ling's comment suggests, young men tended to be constructed as sexting for their own pleasure and to show and take pride in their bodies. Although some participants interpreted sexting as a sign of arrogance on the part of young men, there was little evidence that it was perceived as an inherently problematic practice for young men. Conversely, there was scant belief that young women sext for pleasure or desire, and their sexting was interpreted in ways that removed their agency and subsumed their desires to those of young men. Participants described young women who sext as lacking self-esteem and self-confidence, wanting to impress, attract and hold onto young men:

John: ...some girls, as I said earlier, they will get –

Tom: So infatuated.

John: So reliant on him, that they are not able to exist on their own.

Ling: And also... the more overarching problem of low self-esteem in general. That they need a guy all the time, to make them feel like they are valued.

John: Yeah.

Ling: They're not able to... live on their own and feel valued. And the threat of losing someone like that would maybe pressure them into sending a photo that they may not want to do, but they consent to do, because they have said yes and sent the image.

John: ...and a girl could do it to get praise off her boyfriend. Oh yeah, you look really good in that photo.

Given young women's lack of legitimate sexuality and participants' perceptions that young men are sexually agentic and have the power to set the agenda regarding sexual dynamics, in this heteronormative construction of sexuality, young men's bodies were not considered particularly worrying:

... say a boy goes topless, it's a lot more of the norm than if a girl walks around in her bra, so and all that happens a lot, boys will post a picture of them like topless on Instagram and no one will bat an eyelid. (John)

These social meanings and cultural norms underpinned the unauthorised distribution of images of young women, both for the purposes of fulfilling male desire to view and bond over the images and to socially shame young women as sluts. Participants' discussions also revealed how restrictive gender constructs shaped other non-consensual practices, including unwanted sexting (unsolicited image-sharing) and pressured and coerced sexting.

Unwanted and Pressured Sexting

In this section I discuss how gendered meanings underpinned non-consensual practices and how the experience of unwanted sexting varied between young men and young women. Participants' discussions revealed how non-consensual sexting was taken-for-granted and operated at interpersonal, social and cultural levels.

Unsolicited image-sharing. Some of the young women spoke of sexting being accepted if it is consensual and not "unsolicited" (Skye-Rose). The practice of unsolicited image-sharing has received relatively scant attention in the media and public discussion about youth sexting. However, the young women recounted numerous experiences of receiving unwanted images from young men. They constructed the practice as harassment, that is, as a form of online, digital "flashing" (Charlie) (see Salter 2015).

When asked how receiving such images makes them feel, the young women described it as shocking, unpleasant, and offensive. They tried to interpret the meaning of such practices from the perspective of senders (see Crofts et al. 2015). They discussed what it implied about them as individuals that a young man would send an unwanted image, why a young man would think they would enjoy such images, and whether they have been singled out or are part of a group of recipients. Given that sex and sexuality was constructed as having negative connotations for young women and, as discussed in the following, young women described having learnt that young men only use them for sexting, they interpreted these practices in ways that question their position and the type of person they are perceived to be:

I: And how does it [unsolicited image-sharing] make you feel...?

Marley: It kind of makes you wonder what they think of, if they think you're gonna appreciate that, you're gonna feel like a bit of –

Rosie: Like how do they see me? And why have they sent it to me? Or have they sent it to everyone? Like, you don't really know on Snapchat, if it's just you or everyone else.

I: And what do you think of guys that do that?

Rosie: You just think, why? Why, you don't respect us?—

Marley: Yeah, like no respect, like they love their body.

Rosie: Yeah, like they're cocky.

Lily: You can tell how arrogant he is.

Marley: Like, you might have self-confidence, but I don't wanna see it.

The senders, meanwhile, were described as arrogant, cocky, over-confident, and in love with their bodies. These discussions reaffirmed how sex and sexuality had negative implications

for young women, whereas young men were attributed more agentic, body-positive meanings. Although negative in tone, the descriptions of young men were not as disempowering as those of young women. As I discuss in the following, being self-conscious, ashamed, and uncertain about the body and sexuality applied more to young women—whether they produced images of their own bodies or received images of other’s bodies. Regardless of whose body it was, sexual expression suggested a lack of respect and was thus shameful for young women.

As an example of the perspective of young men, Bond, an 18-year-old young man, recounted having sent unsolicited images to young women when he was 15-years-old. He constructed himself as “trying his luck” to see if he would get a “reaction.” To him, it was a quick, straightforward way of establishing whether a person was interested and “up for it.” Although his group was critical of non-consensual practices (including Bond, who criticised his younger self), they explained that unsolicited image-sharing could be considered a harmless way of assessing a person’s interest in a desired encounter. Whereas young women may query what being sent an image says about them, young men, somewhat, may not think much at this stage; they are trying their luck and know most will be not be interested. They are taking a chance and seeking out the type of young woman who will respond affirmatively.

Bond: I could send it and that person could want it and it cuts out the all the boring work, if you know what I mean, I mean you can get straight down to the nitty gritty...

James: Cut to the chase.

Bob: Skip to the good bit.

Bond: I mean you don’t have to waste your time, you both know what’s going on and... I can understand why, it does make sense, you’re laying it out on the table:

I want this, are you interested? No, that's fine, I'll go, yes, brilliant, let's go.

Young men who recounted receiving unwanted images from young women (which was perceived as less prevalent than the other way around) did not construct their experiences in terms of shame and uncertainty. Some were concerned about being found with child pornography on their phones, which was not raised by the young women. Others described such images as representing a form of trust and constructed themselves as having an obligation not to betray that trust (Bond 2010).

... I've had two people send me pictures. One was a girl who I don't... talk to anymore, and the other was an ex-girlfriend and we were... partners. Both occasions I didn't ask for it, but it came and I... left it on there. I was like, that's cool. I never screenshot it or anything. So, I just sort of left it there [on his phone], and it was nice that they trusted me to do that, so I feel like I'm kind of obligated not to betray that trust. But there's people like in that situation who'd be like, guys, come check this out. (Bob)

Pressured and coerced sexting. Inherent to unsolicited image-sharing, at least when young men send to young women, was an expectation that the recipient produces and shares an image in return. (Young women were thought to send these images because that was what they feel they have to do to obtain and maintain the interests of young men.) Charlie said she felt that "that's... the aim, like I sent you one... you should feel obliged to send me one back." The young women described being sent requests to produce and share images, sometimes accompanied by an unsolicited image, and refusals can result in aggression, rejection, and ostracism. Requests can also be more subtle and less abusive, in which young men try to convince young women that they are trustworthy:

I: And do guys... hear that when you say no to them?

All: No, no.

Naomi: Some do –

Skye-Rose: It's kind of like respect.

Naomi: Some are like, oh no, come on, just do it.

Riley: Come on baby, just one picture.

Ruby: It's like, it's not gonna go anywhere.

Skye-Rose: You can trust me, and you're like, no.

If such pressure does not work and the young woman refuses to engage in sexting, the young man may just give up on her, as Marley explained:

And I find when they do ask for one, and you say no... they'll get aggressive and stop talking to you, and just not caring about you anymore. Like, oh I got close to her for a reason and she's not giving me that, so I'll just leave her to it.

Pressure occurred on social and cultural, as well as interpersonal, levels. Young women described wanting to achieve or enhance a relationship and avoid the risk of losing the interest of young men, or appearing frigid. Young men's desires were very much there, and fulfilling these was constructed as required for obtaining and maintaining relationships.

I: And how would it [sexting] come about, would they request stuff from you or would you –

Naomi: No, like they would tend to like talk to me first. At first, I was... thinking, oh yeah, they actually like me, they want to have a conversation, but then, I don't know... it'd turn to sexting and everything. And they'd suggest it and I wouldn't feel like I had another option. It was either that or they'd stop talking to me or

something.

Perceptions of an obligation toward young men may underpin pressure to engage in unwanted sexting among young women. Skye-Rose described occasions in which she had sexted with someone but, occasionally, not felt “in the mood.” Sexting despite this seemed about maintaining the interest of young men:

I: Would you say every time you’ve sent a picture you’ve wanted to?

Skye-Rose: No, most of the time, you’re kinda like comfy in your bed... and he’s like, gimme a nude now and... it’s awkward... it’s hard to explain the situation, but yeah, I haven’t really wanted to in some situations.

I: ...what makes you think, oh, but I’ll do it anyway?

Skye-Rose: You’re trying to impress them.

A perception that sexting is the expected, normal thing to do was associated with a belief that a lack of willingness is a problem to be overcome. Charlie constructed her experience of pressure as arising from her reluctance. She described now being happy to sext and this, along with being smart about those with whom she communicates, meant pressure was no longer an issue. She constructed her uncertainty as a problem and a short-term temporary position (see Allen and Ingram 2015). She also attributed her uncertainty to insecurity, which she wanted to overcome.

I: ... have all your experiences with this been... consensual on your part...?

Charlie: Yeah... I’d say so... I mean I have had people try and pressure me, but because I was always... a lot more like self-conscious when I was younger... I think I’ve got a lot more confident, which is why I’m... less... wary about sending things but... when I was a kid, I was like, no, no, no –

I: Right, so, what were you worried about when you were younger?

Charlie: I was really worried that I was gonna send them a picture and they'd be like, "ew."

I: Right.

Charlie: Like, she's fat, she's ugly, like she does not look good. But now I'm like, who gives a shit, they're already with me.

The risk of being ostracised by young men shaped young women's decision to engage in sexting when they were not entirely willing. Likewise, risk shaped refusals. Lily, for example, described "getting" why sexting may be enjoyable but feeling uncomfortable about it because she considered it "slutty." Essentially, as I discuss in the following, both consenting and refusing were shaped by broader constructions of risk and the social meanings of sexual and bodily expression for young women.

"Boys being boys": Resisting harmful sexting. Violations of privacy and consent by young men toward young women were normalised and considered somewhat inevitable by participants, and so it was incumbent upon young women to manage risk effectively (see Neilsen et al. 2015). The disproportionate risks young women face in sexting were constructed in terms of a heteronormative power dynamic in which young men seek social capital through sexting and engage in non-consensual practices to get a girl:

That is a big problem for girls of a young age. Boys, all of their hormones are like, sex, sex, sex... they're up for most things at a younger age and girls are pressured, because they're called like frigid and stuff, so they get pressured into doing so. So, that's where the thing about consent comes in. (John)

The construction of breaches of privacy and consent as boys being boys meant there was little

scope to challenge such practices directly, and participants tended to emphasize the role of potential victims in dealing with harm (see Simpson 2013; Salter 2015). Due to being given little right to a legitimate sexuality of their own, combined with constructions of young men's inherent sexuality, young people tasked young women with managing the risks of sexting and with taking appropriate action in terms of refusing to engage in the practice.

Risk, Sexting and "Trusting to Love"

In some of the groups comprising just young women, participants discussed how sexting may be not always be harmful and negative. They spoke of sexting potentially being enjoyable and fulfilling, contrary to narratives that harmful sexting is an inevitable consequence of gendered power dynamics. This section discusses how young women articulated pleasure and desire within and despite narratives of risk and shame. The findings reveal that although sexting has the potential to be pleasurable for young women, risk of harm meant abstinence was often the preferred course of action.

Young women's accounts of pleasurable sexting. The accounts of young women, shared in group discussions with one another and one-to-one with me, revealed how they made space for potentially pleasurable, positive sexting experiences within narratives of risk and shame around bodily and sexual expression. Their accounts challenge notions of young women as just passive victims in sexting and also suggest that broader social meanings and cultural norms intertwined with their practices and underpinned both motivations to sext and decisions to abstain from sexting, as well as narratives of self-blame and shame regarding their sexting experiences.

The young women's discussions about sexting reflected sociocultural meanings surrounding young women's role in fulfilling young men's sexual desires and pleasures, as well

as, perhaps, a safe way of constructing their perspectives in line with socially approved narratives regarding feminine sexual conduct and expression (see Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson 1998). They did not, however, construct sexting as inherently harmful and discussed pleasurable experiences (see Albury et al. 2013; Crofts et al. 2015; Englander 2012; Harris et al. 2013; Lenhart 2009; Walker 2012). They described sexting as about mutual pleasure and respect, showing attraction, and enjoying trusting and being trusted. Rather than seeing themselves solely as victims, they were aspirational about enjoyable sexting, which, for some, was based on experiences producing and sharing images with others (see Karaian 2012; Nielsen et al. 2015). Situating sexting within relationships and pleasing young men was, however, central to the socially approved narratives they produced.

Non-sexual digital bodily expression by young women tended to be constructed as more legitimate than sexual digital expression. Jessie discussed an example of a friend who revealed her burn scars in a semi-nude photograph that she posted on a social network site. She said that the young woman received “positive feedback” and was considered “brave” for posting the picture. The example suggests that when young women represent their bodies in ways considered non-sexual, thus permitting readings beyond the dynamic of young women offering their bodies to young men, such practices can be interpreted in ways that do not damage, and may enhance, their status. More generally, participants compared images of a young woman in a bikini on a beach to a young woman in a bra. Although the body and exposure had not necessarily changed, participants struggled to identify what made the latter more controversial. Ling concluded that it was because the latter was “sexual.” It was acceptable to show one’s body if there was a non-sexual context to doing so, otherwise young women’s images conveyed a negative status upon the subject.

When discussing sexting, I observed the young women positioning (and thus legitimising) their practices as non-sexual by locating them within monogamous relationship contexts:

I think with boyfriends and girlfriends... they respect each other, each other's bodies and stuff, and if you're like, hey, I think I kind of look nice, it's nice to have someone be like, oh yeah, you do look nice, like give you confidence, not necessarily in... a sexual way. (Rosie)

I caught glimpses of more embodied, affective sexual desire, namely among Charlie, who identified as bisexual, and Skye-Rose, who identified as pan-sexual, who spoke one-to-one about their personal sexting experiences. They described sexting as "fun," "playful," and a way to build intimacy prior to engaging in sexual activity. Charlie felt sexting is "deep," involving enjoyment in the moment but also building connection and intimacy. Their discussions generally related to sexting with young men, and Skye-Rose's comments suggest the sexual pleasure young women gain in these contexts is about pleasing the recipient:

I: What would you say the... purpose of [sexting] is now?

Skye-Rose: Kinda like to still make myself feel better, and also... just to please each other really.

I: And does it please you?

Skye-Rose: Yeah, like what I've shared, it's like, oh my god, that's turned me on so much, and I'm like, go me.

I: Right, so is the pleasure from turning him on and getting the feedback from that?

Skye-Rose: Yeah.

I: Do you get pleasure from like seeing his pictures or—

Skye-Rose: No, it's kinda like there, and I'm like, yeah, this is great.

Skye-Rose contended that young men are “more visual” than young women are, hence she perceived a difference in the extent to which and how young men and women are aroused through sexting. These constructs may create a notion that sexting is something young women do for young men. This notion that sexting is about pleasing young men was reflected in her comments about enjoying “turning on” the recipient and she spoke of “learning” how to sext by establishing with friends what is visually pleasurable for young men.

Sexting, “trusting to love,” and “feeling used.” The risks involved in sexting for young women regarding unauthorised distribution and the emphasis on sexting being about pleasing young men and relationships seemed to create a trusting-to-love context. Here, sexting was a powerful expression of how a young woman feels about a young man, and trusting him with, or gifting him, her privacy, establishes connection and builds intimacy (Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore 1998). As Marley explained:

I think it could go back to the whole, like you've had this talk, don't ever send pictures, things will happen. But if she trusted him enough to just disregard all these talks, yeah, I just want to show you my body...

The positive reinforcement sexting brings, in terms of affirming ties and connections can cause young women to minimise or become less aware of the risks involved, as the trusting-to-love has worked:

It takes away the bad side of it and you're like, oh, I feel good about myself now, so... what's the big deal if I do it... you always think it's not gonna get out and then when it does you're like, oh. (Skye-Rose)

This relationship to privacy was, ultimately, gendered. The predominant narrative was

that young women are at risk regarding unauthorised distribution, and so privacy holds meaning for them. Young women may be less naïve when they sext but may engage in complex, interpersonal decision-making in which sexting because, not despite, of the risk becomes a worthwhile course of action. They were not, perhaps, discarding their privacy in excessive displays of low self-respect but instead deciding when to gift their privacy to another (Crofts et al. 2015; Marwick and boyd 2014).

Young men, meanwhile, discussed sexts more as tokens or souvenirs with which to prove something in the peer group (see Ringrose et al. 2012). Consequently, they did not feel the need to sext in relationships because they have the girl and do not need proof. Given the denigration they showed toward young women who sext, for young men, sexting with a young woman “doesn’t actually mean you like them” (Adam) and young women who sext tended to be constructed as not relationship material. These differences in meaning may explain why some of the young women, although feeling sexting can enhance self-esteem and confidence, later experience diminished feelings of self-worth. The young women discussed sexting perhaps being enjoyable, but later the young man ignores them. They interpreted this as meaning they were used for images:

I: So... you can... talk to people online and they ignore you and... you can send pictures and then they’ll –

Riley: They’ll be like, oh my god, that’s so hot, I love you babe... they love you and then you’ll try to speak to them in real life and they’ll be like, um, who are you? Like what are you doing, why are you speaking to me?

I: And how does that make you feel, like when you’ve shared that with them?

Skye-Rose: It kind of like brings your trust down—

Ruby: Yeah.

Naomi: Yeah, like you're not... good enough for them to actually want to speak to you in real life, you're just like a thing online, you're not like an actual human being.

Due to these experiences and the risks of social shaming, many of the young women insisted upon abstaining from sexting. They spoke about needing to be more aware of what young men are like and better able to resist pressure. Rosie felt that resisting pressure "depends upon how strong-willed the person is, because if they're... quite insecure or something, they often might say, 'yes, it's okay,' and not really want it." Given the naturalising of the gendered social order and the responsibility upon girls to respond appropriately, I observed some young women tying their experiences of sexting to their lack of self-esteem and the approval they seek from young men. Although they expressed disdain for the way things are and felt young men "need to look at their attitudes... and think how people would feel" (Naomi), they tended to internalise responsibility for gendered victimisation rather than attribute it to perpetrators (Salter 2015). Within this narrative, desire and the potential for pleasurable sexting experiences were side-lined.

Reactions to Risk and Shame: Narratives of Self-Blame and Resistance

Discussed in this final section are the accounts of two of the young women shared in one-to-one interviews. They described engaging in sexting and being shamed socially for their practices. Their accounts diverge, however, in terms of how they responded to such shaming and incorporated these processes into their self-concepts and decision-making regarding sexting. Discussed first is Naomi, who decided to abstain from sexting. I then discuss Skye-Rose who decided to continue sexting. What both accounts reveal is that although their choices were

different, they were active agents in their decision-making—decision-making that was shaped by the broader social processes to which they were subject.

Self-blame and regret: Naomi's story. Naomi, a 15-year-old young woman who identified as bisexual, discussed engaging in sexting when she was around age 13. She described not fully wanting to sext but rather wanting to keep a young man's interest and being fearful of losing this interest or of him becoming annoyed and criticising her. She said there was no interpersonal pressure and described her feeling of being compelled to sext as "in her head." Naomi nevertheless described enjoying the interest and compliments she received after sexting. Her ambivalence regarding not wanting to sext but enjoying the outcomes was, however, reconstructed into self-blame and shame as she realised she had been used when the recipient did not acknowledge her publicly or in person but he did want to keep communicating digitally and sexting.

On two occasions Naomi's images were distributed without her consent. Initially, she was shocked and upset, and she presumed others would agree that she had been treated badly and would criticise the young man's actions. However, she experienced bullying from peers who were more interested in the perceived failings of Naomi. This reaction led to her reappraising her experience and constructing it as her "mistake."

I: So, given that was the reaction to it... why did you think people should've thought he was horrible?

Naomi: ...because I kinda thought he was horrible, so I was thinking, why didn't people think the same as me? Because like I appreciate that what he had done was like completely unnecessary, like why can't other people see that?

I: Do you think there's a reason why people couldn't see that and saw it differently

to you?

Naomi: I think they were like too focused on the fact that I sent a photo and like that it was me that had done something bad.

Naomi described herself as having “stooped low” to engage in sexting. She constructed her decision to sext as indicative of her low self-esteem and self-worth. The harms she experienced led to self-blame and shame because she felt she should have realised she was being used and refused to engage in sexting. The peer reaction to her practices was characterised by disdain for her failure to adhere to the approved social standards of femininity in terms of restrained sexual and bodily expression as well as abstention from sexting. She reconstructed her self-perception in terms of how others—be they the young men who ignored her or the peers who criticised her—perceived and treated her. Consequently, Naomi concluded that personal change was the solution to her negative experiences and insisted upon abstaining from sexting.

I: And how do you feel now compared to... at that time...?

Naomi: I think I can just like, like I don't understand why I would've done it to be honest. Just thinking about it, like now I wouldn't even, like I can understand they were obviously just like using me...they didn't like me at all, they were just like interested in like for one thing... I'm just like, I don't know, like ashamed of myself for sort of, not really thinking things over before doing it.

I: So, do you think you're responsible for those choices at the time?

Naomi: Yeah, I think so. Like obviously the person was to blame for asking but also it was a choice I had, ultimately like, I chose to... do the thing I knew wasn't right. Because I think I knew it was wrong, even when I did it. And it just kind of, I thought it was worth it I guess.

The potential for such processes to cause unbearable feelings of self-loathing was, for Naomi, embodied in a particularly extreme case of self-harm, which mirrored the labels that had been applied to her by her peers and had been incorporated into her self-concept.

Resisting social shame: Skye-Rose's story. Skye-Rose, a 16-year-old young woman identifying as pan-sexual, also described having experienced unauthorised distribution but rejected the social shaming she received from others. However, differently to Naomi, she felt that not all sexting is harmful and described continuing to sext, despite, as her comments below suggest, finding it difficult to trust others:

Like for me, it's kind of like, I've lost the trust. I know it sounds like... the whole [boy's name] thing, that was from like 2015, and people are still saying it's last week, like no... the trust barrier, boys still ask and I'm like, no. The trust barrier with boys... even if they want a romantic thing and they do... want to get to know you, I'm still like, we are gonna have to take it like real baby steps, like I'm talking... fetus steps. Because... the trust is... completely gone, from... boys... who weren't worth my time.

Although in the group interview Skye-Rose positioned abstinence as the best way of managing risk, one-to-one she produced a candid account of self-focused sexual pleasure. She spoke of sexting facilitating hookups for physical sexual experiences:

I: Ok, so would you say there's anything... positive sexually you get from taking a picture of yourself?

Skye-Rose: Yeah, like I've hooked up with, God I sound like such a slut, I've hooked up with so many guys from just sending a picture. And they're like okay, meet me this weekend, and I'm like, okay.

I: Okay, so there's something to gain from it, like in terms of like the hook up... process of it?

Skye-Rose: Yeah.

I: And are these guys you know?

Skye-Rose: Yeah, they're guys I know.

I: And how does that work... does that go well?

Skye-Rose: Yeah it does. It depends on whether you're looking for a relationship... I'm not looking for a relationship... I've got my GCSEs [General Certificate of Secondary Education]. But at the same time, I'm still sexually active, like all teenagers are and so... just the old hook-up with someone I know, just... someone to be with without wanting anything more. So, he doesn't want anything more... recently I told someone that I don't want anything more with them apart from friendship because they got... too intimate... in a more than hook-up way and I don't really want to distract myself with that now. So yeah.

Unlike Naomi, Skye-Rose did not construct sexting as inherently shameful and blameworthy. She externalised the shame by constructing others' treatment of and reactions to her as unjust (see Scheff 2003). However, she held herself responsible for establishing trustworthy sexting contexts. Although she recounted experiences of feeling used by young men, she described herself as now a smart sexter, sexting only if she likes the person and feeling able to reject requests from those in whom she is not interested. Sexting in trustworthy, desired contexts was constructed as pleasurable and positive; yet, "as the girl" and knowing what young men "are like," she held herself responsible for assessing the trustworthiness and reliability of potential sexting partners. Risk and the potential to be used seemed ever present, so even among

those resisting shame, experiences can produce feelings of failure and heightened self-consciousness (Scheff 2003). As such, like Naomi, she constructed a need for change or transformation in which she became better at managing risk, namely of exposure, criticism, and rejection (Probyn 2004, 2005). She recognized that she had broken social norms and was not immune to the judgment of others, and she took action to protect herself, with varying levels of success, from the condemnation of others (Lavery 2016).

Discussion

I have outlined how the gendered meanings circulating within participants' peer contexts disavowed and delegitimised sexual expression for young women (see Tolman, Anderson, & Belmonte 2015). Sexting by young women was perceived and interpreted in negative ways, whereas young men were perceived as more agentic and active sexually. Underlying harmful sexting practices was a discounting of young women's rights and experiences, as well as constructions of young men's sexuality and entitlement (Ringrose et al. 2012; Ringrose and Dobson 2015). Some of the young women's accounts showed how they navigated this gendered terrain. Some chose to abstain from sexting due to gendered risks of harm, whereas others resisted the notion that sexting is inherently harmful and attempted to carve out spaces for meaningful, pleasurable sexting within and despite narratives of risk and shame; additionally, many oscillated between these positions. I now discuss my findings in terms of wider literature and theory, describe the contribution the findings make to the literature, outline the implications of the findings, identify the limitations of my study, and make suggestions for further research.

The Assumption of Male Sexuality and the De-Legitimation of Female Sexuality

Previous research has shown how images of young women represent objects in youth sexting culture, accruing value to those who view and distribute them (Ringrose et al. 2012).

Participants' discussions confirmed what previous research suggests: Young men can extract value as a lad from sexting and young women's images, whereas young women traverse a precarious terrain in which involvement in sexting marks them as a slut and diminishes their standing in the eyes of others (Bailey and Mouna 2011; Coy et al. 2013; Ringrose et al. 2012; Walker 2012).

Reflecting notions of female passivity and male action regarding sexuality and sexual expression, young men were attributed more agency than were young women in terms of motivations and contexts of sexting (Bay-Cheng 2003; Egan and Hawkes 2008; Jackson and Scott 2010). Participants perceived young women who sext as lacking agency, not really wanting to sext, and only engaging in the practice to please young men. Young women's bodies were sexualised despite their motivations being desexualised, more so than young men's. The gender dynamic in which young women's bodies were constructed as for the consumption and pleasure of young men meant young women were disempowered on two interconnecting levels. Their sexual expressions were interpreted as being about what young men want, so their decisions and practices were understood in terms of young men's desires, and because their bodies were so desired by young men, they were so loaded with sexuality as to make it untenable for them to express themselves without a furor.

Abstinence and restraint were constructed as ideal positions for young women to adopt (Karaian 2012). Harris and colleagues (2000) argue that young women's sexuality is shaped by expectations regarding control over the boundaries of bodily and sexual encounters in which they are expected to resist male sexual desire. Participants' discussions suggested that young women's value resides in what young men desire, and restricting access to this meant their value is kept safe, with agency for young women being about refusals (Tolman et al. 2015).

That sexuality is more legitimate for men has been noted long before sexting as a phenomenon entered cultural life (e.g., Holland et al. 1998). It has been suggested that sexting is no more than an iteration of previous forms of bodily and sexual expression and documentation, shaped by long-standing meanings and norms (Chalfen 2009). However, the technology, particularly the internet, is new and has made it quicker and easier to produce, transfer, and store personal sexual content (Gillepsie 2013; Rollins 2015). These developments lend themselves to the harmful practices described by participants, and sexting represents a new platform for playing out pre-existing social meanings and cultural norms around gender and sexuality (Bailey and Mouna 2011).

Gendered Harm in Youth Sexting

Unwanted sexting in the form of unsolicited image-sharing and pressure and coercion, was underpinned by gender constructs. As found in previous research, unsolicited image-sharing by young men toward young women affects the self-perceptions of recipients (Angrove 2015). Burkett (2015) found that the effects of unsolicited image-sharing are gendered. Similarly to Burkett's participants, the young men in my study who had received unsolicited images from young women did not share feelings of offense or self-doubt. Although they may have felt inhibited expressing such feelings in the group interviews, perhaps the status of young women as passive victims in sexual matters meant they were not perceived as threatening to the young men—rather more in need of protection (see Bond 2010). That some young men were concerned about being found with child pornography may, similarly, relate to young women's passive, vulnerable, and child-like status sexually. The gendered nature of risk and harm seemed underpinned by the notion of a vulnerable young woman, at risk psychologically, interpersonally and socially from young men, but as simultaneously posing a legal threat to young men (see

Hasinoff 2015).

Pressure and coercion to sext, mainly by young men toward young women, has been revealed in previous research (Albury et al. 2013; Coy et al. 2013; Crofts et al. 2015; Harris et al. 2013; Lippman and Campbell 2014; McGraw 2013; Phippen 2012; Ringrose et al. 2012; Walker 2012). Here, participants' discussions revealed how non-consensual sexting occurs at interpersonal, social, and cultural levels (see Beres 2007). Young women recounted experiencing interpersonal pressure from young men to sext. They also described engaging in sexting due to social and cultural expectations regarding sex and relationships. Reflecting the persistence of long-standing gendered sociocultural constructs of sexuality, young women reported engaging in sexting, in Holland et al.'s (1998, p. 155) words, "because of what they feel to be social pressure, or because of the importance to them of their relationship or potential relationship with a man." Bailey and Mouna (2011) suggest that young women may find it complimentary to be asked for images; it means a young man is interested and a relationship is on the horizon. However, they know sexting risks being shamed and finding out they have been used so that they walk a tightrope between rejection and degradation (Dobson and Ringrose, 2015; Renold and Ringrose 2011).

Young Women's Accounts of Pleasure and Desire

Some of the young women were aspirational about the potential for pleasurable sexting. However, there was a wider context to their narratives (Gavey 2012; Gill 2007). It is possible to both afford young women agency and explore how sexuality is social and made meaningful through cultural values (Holland et al. 1998; Jackson and Scott 2010; McClelland and Fine 2008). The young women's discussions suggested it was not that they were disinterested in or unable to experience pleasure or desire, but rather that situating sexting within relationships and

pleasing men was central to the socially approved narratives they produced (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Holland et al. 1998). It seemed difficult, although there were exceptions, for them to speak about sexting beyond the romantic love complex in which sex and sexual expression go alongside loving relationships and beyond these contexts is problematic (Giddens 1992). There is nothing wrong with agreeing to sexual encounters to please a partner or fulfil a relationship; previous research suggests these are common reasons cited by individuals (O'Sullivan and Allegeier 1998). However, these meanings seemed to restrict young women's narratives about sexting.

The riskiness of sexting for young women shaped their accounts. Some young women cited the potential for sexting to express and build trust as a positive aspect of the practice. Papachrissi and Gibson (2011) argue that privacy is about deciding with whom to share and the more personal the information, the more restricted the sharing becomes. A hierarchy of sharing thus indicates intimacy because "if we share all of ourselves with everyone, that sharing loses all meaning and value" (Papachrissi & Gibson, p. 81). As Crofts et al. (2015) found among young adults, the young woman is trusting the young man to protect her image so not to cause her harm, effectively gifting him her privacy to underscore their intimacy within the relationship. The very fact that privacy is never guaranteed may shape motivation and give meaning to sexting (see Hardin 2006). Regulatory discourses, with the cautionary tales of sexting gone wrong, may therefore emphasise the element of the practice that matters (see Fine and McClelland 2006; Karaian and Van Meyl 2015).

Where young women expressed more affective, embodied desire, this was often positioned in terms of young men's desires, and their sexting experiences were sometimes unwanted. Skye-Rose, for example, described young men as more visual sexually and as taking

more pleasure in sexting, whereas she was more aroused by arousing the male recipient. The idea that the nature of male and female arousal is a biological fact has been subject to critique. Rupp and Wallen (2008) suggest it is difficult to tease out biologically based experiences of sexual arousal from the effects of socialisation and social context, which here was gendered. Skye-Rose also enacted a post-feminist dynamic, in which liberated, empowered femininity takes on a knowing, in-control bent in which young men attending to and meeting the needs of young men is constructed as accruing power, even pleasure, to young women (Gill 2012; Levy 2005).

Young women's desire may not, therefore, be missing (Fine 1988), as suggested by participants' gendered constructions, but at risk of becoming so because "as an organizer of sexual experience... male sexual pleasure... is assumed a constant presence" (McGeeney 2013, p. 259). The elevation of male sexual desire and the riskiness of young men's sexual and bodily expression shaped young women's articulation of pleasurable sexting and the harmful practices perpetrated against them. Although mindful of desexualising and delegitimising young women's motivations and experiences, it is, therefore, necessary to deconstruct the narratives they produced. There was a broader sociocultural context underpinning interpersonal pressure and perceptions on young women that they must respond, regardless of what they want. This context, in which young women make choices characterised by risk—either that they will be considered a slut or rejected as frigid—has implications for consent. Is consent (or refusal) really free when the burden of risk is so weighted on young women in terms of their choice to and not to sext (Beres 2007)?

The Impact of Harmful Sexting and Social Shaming

The incorporation of risk and shame into young women's self-concepts and decision-making were illuminated in Naomi's and Skye-Rose's accounts. Bay-Cheng (2015, p. 285)

suggests that women can attribute their victimisation to “personal shortcomings: not being assertive enough, not being savvy enough, not being in control enough.” Although she contends that self-blame may provide a sense of agency and control for harmed individuals, she cautions that such responses may “shunt... critical consciousness and dialogue” (Bay-Cheng, p. 287). Naomi’s account suggests such processes can be damaging and restricting, while the meanings that underpinned the harms perpetrated against her remained.

Naomi may have felt that sexting was about achieving a desired relationship and unauthorised distribution as wrong but ended up seeing herself as foolish and worthless because such practices were defined, socially, as lowly and needy. Probyn (2004, 2005) conceptualises shame as a feeling of being out of place due to social rejection—a feeling that shows investment and interest in the judgment of others and proposes a sensibility or some form of change or transformation. Shame is, therefore, social—a self-other relationship characterised by stigma in which the self becomes an object to scorn, contempt or ridicule from others and comes to see itself as unworthy, incomplete or inferior (Lunceford 2008; Scheff 2003). Goffman (1963) explains that individuals may internalise the stigma they face by adopting the values, beliefs, and actions of a role. Naomi conceptualised her experiences as her mistake and proceeded to abstain from sexting, as per social expectations of feminine bodily restraint.

Although others may similarly have been subject to shaming due to being exposed as failing to embody appropriate social and cultural standards, Goffman (1963) suggests they may resist stigma and refuse to internalise the shame. Jackson and Scott (2010) argue that we cannot just read off from social meanings and cultural norms as to how individuals will enact and experience their sexuality; rather, there are interpersonal and individual levels in which meaning gets turned into scripts for action. I observed both front- and back-stage elements to Skye-Rose’s

1 constructions (Goffman 1959). Although she positioned abstinence as the best way of managing
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7 risk in the group discussion, one-to-one she described continuing to engage in and take pleasure
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9 from sexting.

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11 The slut label lurked in the background, however, threatening to restrict what she felt she
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13 could, or should, say. Skye-Rose incorporated the designation of women who sext as sluts into
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15 her self-concept. For her, sexting was about casual encounters, and she reconceptualised it into a
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17 meaningful part of her sexual identity, exploration, and connection with others. Her sexual
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19 pleasure, albeit not directly extracted from sexting, was central to her practices. This expression
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21 of agency was, however, located within the social norms and expectations surrounding feminine
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23 sexuality, even while she challenged them with her commitment to hook-up for her own sexual
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25 pleasure. Sexting may, for young women, be about presenting themselves as non-sexual,
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27 managing the desires of young men, and carrying the risk. Backstage, however, there may be
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29 space for interpersonal sexting experiences involving mutual pleasure and reciprocity, albeit with
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31 self-concepts, motivations, and experiences shaped by social factors regarding young men's and
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33 women's sexuality and the pleasure they take in sexting.
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41 **Contextualising Young Women's Accounts Without Pathologising**

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43 There is a tension between centralising and de-pathologising young women's experiences
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45 and analysing and challenging broader power relations. Given the role of wider meanings and
46
47 norms in harmful sexting, young women's perspectives and experiences should be interrogated
48
49 for how they reflect and feed into broader social processes and cultural practices (Gill 2007;
50
51 Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, Schrock, Thompson, & Wolkomir 2000). Interpretation and
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53 contextualising is not about denying, pathologising or delegitimising, but rather searching for
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55 conditions under which equality and justice can be realised (Correa and Petchesky 1994; Lamb
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and Peterson 2012; McClelland and Fine 2008), conditions “embedded in the structural conditions of safety, resources and social norms that make [young women’s sexual development] and well-being possible” (Tolman 2012, p. 750).

Although young women varied in terms of the extent to which they internalised or resisted social meanings and shaming processes, it could be argued that both internalisation and resistance worked to uphold the status quo and the inequalities they face (Bay-Cheng 2015; Scheff 2003). Whether they chose to abstain due to gendered risks, blamed themselves for harmful practices, confined their sexting to private spaces away from the condemnation of others or located sexting within narratives around pleasing young men, the gendered meanings underpinning risk and harm (e.g., around young men’s inherent desire and the need to desexualise or conceal young women’s bodies) remained. I do not hold young women responsible for challenging the status quo nor argue that young women who engage in sexting to please young men are responsible for broader social inequalities around gender (see Schwalbe et al. 2000). Challenging harm and empowering young women involves going beyond interpersonal dynamics and forms of resistance to deconstructing social norms and cultural practices at a wider level, but this necessarily entails interrogating the full range of practices of sexual and bodily self-expression within youth sexting culture.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

My study provided insight into young people’s personal experiences and perspectives on sexting. Further research exploring sexting with a broader range of young people would be of value. This could include conducting interviews with more young women to further understand how social meanings and cultural norms shape their self-concepts and sexting practices. I was not aware of who would come forward to be interviewed or the stories they would share. I did

not explore, for example, how young women make space for sexting in which the very constructs of risk and harm shape pleasure and desire rather than being something to be avoided or managed (as, perhaps, with trusting-with-love in which sexting is about trustworthiness and reducing the risk of privacy violations) (see Karaian and Van Meyl 2015). I claim, therefore, only to have lifted the lid on how young women navigate and negotiate sexting within their peer contexts.

Young people took a predominantly heteronormative orientation to sexting in which risk and harm were constructed in terms of a masculine-feminine dynamic. This includes the LGBT+ participants. Perceptions surrounding harmful sexting were underpinned by the oppositional nature of masculine and feminine sexuality. Participants perceived same-sex sexting as inherently more trustworthy and less exploitative than heterosexual sexting, perhaps explaining why some of the young women recounting harmful practices and social shaming, while not identifying as heterosexual, referred to heterosexual encounters. Future research should explore the experience of sexting in contexts other than heterosexual ones. It is important to explore sexting beyond a binary gender dynamic so as to capture the experiences of LGBT+ young people and to disrupt perceptions of inevitability regarding gendered harm and the reification of young men as perpetrators and young women as victims.

In this vein, future research could explore how young men navigate and negotiate social meanings and cultural norms regarding masculinity in youth sexting culture. Previous research suggests young men experience pressure to sext, in particular to obtain and distribute images of young women (Ringrose and Harvey 2015). The young men in my study did not share feeling this pressure; however, it is important to explore how constructs of masculinity shape young men's sexting practices and produce risk of harm and social shaming.

From a methodological perspective, I was the sole person to conduct the research and the analytical coding process. The analysis would have been strengthened through corroboration with co-researchers. However, the study was conducted as part of doctoral research so although I was responsible for the research, I consulted and discussed the approach, analysis, findings, and conclusions with my doctoral supervisors who made critical contributions and suggestions, thus strengthening the quality of the research.

Practice Implications

Young people's sexting cultures are contextualised by legal prohibition and abstinence-based sex education in which gendered messages of risk and shame are used to encourage young people not to sext (see Albury and Crawford 2012; Crofts et al. 2015; Dobson and Ringrose 2015; Döring 2014). The findings I discuss here suggest there is a need to challenge the gendered social meanings and cultural norms that underpin harmful practices. Doing so necessarily entails a (re)legitimation of young women's sexuality in which they are given "a right to express their sexuality and for these practices to be viewed positively" (Allen and Ingram 2015, p. 143). If young women are given a right to their bodies and sexualities, and these are not automatically problematised or interpreted in terms of the perceived perspectives of young men, then the grounds for violating their consent (e.g., by bombarding them with unwanted explicit images or pressuring them to sext; distributing their images to bond over in male peer groups) would become less tenable (see Dobson and Ringrose 2015; Tolman et al. 2015). This is not about replacing abstinence with an obligation to be sexual or engage in sexting, but about re-articulating rights to bodily expression, integrity, and autonomy.

Young people should, therefore, be empowered to critique harmful practices, restrictive ethical attributions of responsibility, and individualised solutions to harm while acknowledging

their rights to make free and informed choices about the encounters in which they do and do not engage. Bystander intervention—in terms of recognising the role of the audience in providing a facilitating context to harm (Powell 2010) —is imperative to challenging social shaming processes, but only if it reconnects harm to broader social and cultural narratives and inequalities. Proactive pedagogy around youth sexting can be inhibited by reluctance and caution regarding encouraging a practice that is, presently, prohibited for young people under the age of 18 (Albury 2013; Moran-Ellis 2012). Digital technology and sexting could, however, be used as a platform for breaking down social meanings and cultural norms with young people. Albury (2013) suggests that technology is a symbol that brings social processes into the open and makes them material, that is, something to be examined and understood. Young people could be asked to reflect upon the taken-for-granted, gendered meanings that shape their constructions and the links between different meanings and practices (see Renold 2016). Inherent to such work with young people should be a recognition that rights may not necessarily conflict with protection (Livingstone and Third 2017). It is the very denial of rights and delegitimation of young women's sexuality that underpins the harms perpetrated against them and shapes their experiences of youth sexting culture.

Conclusion

My research has revealed how youth sexting culture was shaped by gendered meanings regarding young women's lack of legitimacy and agency in sexual matters, as well as young men's sexuality and agency. Some young women resisted the notion that they are necessarily victims in sexting who take no pleasure from the practice (see Crofts et al. 2015). However, their pleasure tended to be grounded in pleasing young men, obtaining relationships and the accomplishment of arousing the male recipient (see Holland et al. 1998). Some young women

may leverage the designation of sexually expressive young women as sluts and not being relationship material to engage in sexting to facilitate casual hook-ups. More broadly, however, young women were pulled between the potentials sexting offers and pressures to engage in the practice with being ostracised and socially shamed.

A contribution of my research is the exploration of how young people constructed gender in sexting and the implications, both harmful and beneficial, for young women. By speaking with participants about their experiences, as well as their perceptions, of sexting, I uncovered how young women navigate gendered social meanings and cultural norms in youth sexting. Such understandings have, thus far, predominantly been revealed in research with young adults so my research provides a valuable contribution to knowledge about teenaged young people's perspectives and how teenaged young women navigate and negotiate youth sexting culture. I have shown how risk, shame, and blame operate within youth sexting culture to the disadvantage of young women. My findings reveal how broader sociocultural contexts shape young women's interpersonal experiences and individual perspectives, as well as how such contexts can be challenged and reworked. I have provided insights into specific sexting practices (e.g., unsolicited image-sharing) and how young women may articulate pleasurable experiences and potentialities of sexting, both within and despite narratives of risk and shame. Deconstructing these narratives is essential to challenging harmful sexting practices perpetrated toward young women and to provide space for meaningful, pleasurable opportunities for young women to engage in consensual sexual and bodily self-expression.

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Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Sexuality	Age	Group/one-to-one interview
Adam	Male	Heterosexual	15	Group
Bob	Male	Heterosexual	17	Group
Bond	Male	Heterosexual	18	Group
James	Male	Heterosexual	16	Group
John	Male	Heterosexual	17	Group
Kevin	Female	Bisexual	14	Group
Lily	Female	Heterosexual	17	Group and one-to-one
Ling	Male	Heterosexual	16	Group
Marley	Female	Heterosexual	16	Group
Naomi	Female	Bi-sexual	15	Group and one-to-one
Riley	Female	Heterosexual	16	Group
Rosie	Female	Heterosexual	17	Group
Ruby	Female	Heterosexual	16	Group
Simon	Male	Heterosexual	15	Group
Skye-Rose	Female	Pan-sexual	16	Group and one-to-one
Tom	Male	Heterosexual	16	Group

Table 2

Emerging Themes

Theme	Description	Example
Perceptions of young men's and young women's sexting practices	Differences in social meanings surrounding young men and young women's sexting practices, in which young men were positioned as naturally sexual and agentic, while young women lacked legitimate sexuality and those who engage in bodily and sexual self-expression were seen as 'sluts'.	"...he... requests and she's the one who is accepting them, the guy has to go out and make these requests, it's the same thing as sending a picture of himself. At some point, he doesn't care, he just feels like a macho character and he can send all these photos around and he doesn't care, but the girl... she is like a gem and everyone is chasing after that and once she gives that away, it's like she's... lost her value..."
Unwanted and pressured sexting	Non-consensual sexting practices were perceived to arise from a heteronormative power dynamic in which young men are sexually active and desiring, perhaps predatory, and can harass, pressure and coerce young women into sexting and young women may feel 'obligated' to engage in sexting to obtain and maintain the interests of young men.	"And I find when they do ask for one, and you say no... they'll get aggressive and stop talking to you, and just not caring about you anymore. Like, oh I got close to her for a reason and she's not giving me that, so I'll just leave her to it."
"Boys being boys": Resisting harmful sexting	Young women's decision to not engage in sexting due to the positioning of the gendered risks and harms they face as inevitable and incumbent upon them to manage through resisting pressure to sext.	"That is a big problem for girls of a young age. Boys, all of their hormones are like, sex, sex, sex... they're up for most things at a younger age and girls are pressured, because they're called like frigid and stuff, so they get pressured into doing so. So, that's where the thing about consent comes in."
Risk, sexting and "trusting to love"	Young women's location of pleasurable sexting within socially approved narratives of committed relationships, in which the pleasing and arousing young men is central and the practice is a powerful indicator of trust and can be used to build and maintain intimacy in relationships.	"I think with boyfriends and girlfriends... they respect each other, each other's bodies and stuff, and if you're like, hey, I think I kind of look nice, it's nice to have someone be like, oh yeah, you do look nice, like give you confidence, not necessarily in... a sexual way."
Reactions to risk and shame: Narratives of self-blame and resistance	The internalisation of social shaming into narratives of personal responsibility for harm and, subsequently, feelings of shame and self-hatred. Alternatively, the refusal to internalise social shame and externalising the shaming as unjust.	"I think I can just like, like I don't understand why I would've done it to be honest. Just thinking about it, like now I wouldn't even, like I can understand they were obviously just like using me... they didn't like me at all, they were just like interested in like for one thing... I'm just like, I don't know, like ashamed of myself for sort of, not really thinking things over before doing it."

Online supplement for Setty, E. (2018). Meaning of bodily and sexual expression in youth sexting culture: Young women's negotiation of gendered risks and harms. *Sex Roles*. Emily Setty, University of Surrey. Email: e.setty@surrey.ac.uk

Group interview topic guide

Introduction

- Introduce self and project.
- Thank for participation.
- Explain group interview set up and discussion, and nature of questions.
- Emphasise general views and opinions, no obligation to share personal experiences.
- Explain that discussion will be ceased if becomes abusive.
- Explain protection from harm, confidentiality/anonymity etc.
- Distribute demographic form and explain need for pseudonyms.
- Gain permission for recording.
- Check if any questions.

Nature of communication and views/attitudes toward privacy and consent

1. Spider diagram exercise

Speak with person next to you and write down on paper maybe in form of a spider diagram, all the different types of technology you use to communicate with your friends, family and others. Also include the platforms you use e.g. what apps, websites etc.

Pin up on the board and discuss

Follow-up questions:

- Who are you talking to you using this technology?
- What are you communicating about or sharing?
- Why do you use these devices in these ways?
- What are the good and bad aspects?

2. Post-it exercise

On one post it note, write down some words or phrases about what you think privacy means. Just write whatever comes to mind when you hear that word. On the other post it note, do the same for the word consent.

Pin up on the board and discuss

Follow up questions:

- What is the role of privacy/consent when you are using your technological devices to communicate and share with others?
- Is privacy ever breached?
- Is everything that happens over technology consensual or do people ever feel pressured or are forced to do things they do not want over technology?

Sexual content and views about privacy and consent

Let's talk now about a specific type of communication using technology.

3. Have you ever heard of people creating and sharing content, such as messages or images, of a sexual nature via technology, like mobile phones?
 - Follow-up questions:

- What do you know about this?
- Where have you heard about it?
- What does it involve?

4. Vignette

Now I am going to give you a scenario and I would like to know what you think. There are no right or wrong answers here, just give me your reactions to the situation. This situation is totally made up and doesn't involve anyone you might know.

Katie is a 15-year-old girl. One night she sends some pictures of herself partly naked to her boyfriend, James who is also 15. They break up and in anger, James sends these pictures to their friends at school. Katie is then subjected to teasing and bullying by people at school.

- Why would Katie have sent the messages?
 - Why would James have shared the pictures?
 - Why would people at school treat Katie this way?
 - How does something that felt fun at the time then turn into something unpleasant and humiliating?
 - Who do you think is responsible for what happened?
 - Do you think anyone should be punished for what they did?
 - What about if the situation is reversed and James sent pictures to Katie? Would your opinions be the same? What about if the couple were the same gender?
5. What are some of the reasons why people might want to take and/or share pictures of themselves with others? Might people just want to take pictures of themselves and not share them?
 - Is picture sharing always consensual?
 - In what situations may it not be consensual (prompt: obtaining images, producing images, sharing/forwarding images)?
 6. Do you think people who share pictures can expect them to be kept private?
 - Is there more at stake for a girl when their privacy is invaded, compared to a boy?
 - What about for young people who are not heterosexual?
 7. What do you think adults think about how you communicate using technology?
 - Do you agree or disagree with them?
 - What do you think are the problems, if any?
 8. Finally, let's imagine that a friend has taken a picture of themselves and thinks they look 'hot' or 'sexy'. They are thinking of sending it to their partner – what would you advise them?
 - If they did send it to their partner, what would you advise their partner?
 9. What if the picture was passed around at school – is there anything you could do as a friend to help them?
 - What about if it was just an acquaintance, someone you know?
 - Do you think anyone else has a role to play – parents, teachers, police?

End

Thank you, everyone; that is the end of the session. Is there anything anyone would like to add or does anyone have any questions?

One-to-one interview guide

Introduction

- Outline purpose, structure and length of the interview:
- It will last about 30-40 minutes.
- I am interested in following up some of the discussions from the groups, focusing on your personal perspectives and experiences, relating to technology and to the practice of producing and share personal nude or sexual pictures/messages.
- It is up to you what you share with me and I won't push you to talk about anything with which you are not comfortable, although I am absolutely not hear to judge and will not be shocked by anything you say.
- I also promise not to share anything you tell me with anyone else, unless I think you might be in danger.
- Check OK and if there are any questions.
- Confirm OK to record.

Question outline

1. In the groups, we spoke a lot about mobile phones – tell me about your technology, do you have a mobile phone and/or other types of technology? *How often do you use them? What do you use them for?*
2. We spoke about privacy and the role of privacy when using mobile phones – what is your experience of privacy and technology? How do you manage privacy? Is it important to you? In what ways is it important to you?
3. Moving onto sexual or nude images and messages, how do you feel about the practice of producing and sharing this kind of thing? *Is this based on personal experience, or the experience of others (if latter, who?). Producing, sharing, viewing, receiving...? Are all nude images sexual in your eyes? Male/female images? How do you learn what is acceptable in producing/sharing images?*
4. Have you ever had any experiences with this kind of thing that you would describe as good or pleasurable? *Producing/sharing, viewing/receiving? Images or messages? In a relationship or not, on your own/with others? E.g. posting online or sharing with others. Frexting?*
5. Have you ever had any bad experiences with this kind of thing? *Pressure to produce, non-consensual production/distribution, breaches of privacy, pressure to obtain images, unwanted receipt of images/messages.*
6. Trust: we talked about trust and showing you like someone by engaging in sexting – how do you know you can trust someone? What does this mean? Do you take any precautions when you're communicating/sharing and how is this linked to trust?
7. Technology generally: are all experiences on technology consensual? Or are there things that happen that you do not want to happen? Is sexting always consensual? How do you go about negotiating consent? Do you feel you can do this?
8. When did you first become aware of these practices surrounding taking and sharing pictures? Has anything changed as you have grown up? Do you think it's fair or unfair that the age of consent is different for sharing images vs. having sex?

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4 9. What do you think should be done about the issues we have discussed? Would you like
5 any support in understanding and dealing with technology? If so, what/how/who/where
6 do you want it to come from?
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8 End

9 Thank you for your time today and sharing your views and experiences. How did you find the
10 discussion?
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Compliance with ethical standards

This research was funded by a faculty studentship from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Surrey.

Conflict of interest: the author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

The research involved human participants and informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study. This study was reviewed and received a Favourable Ethical Opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

No revision notes