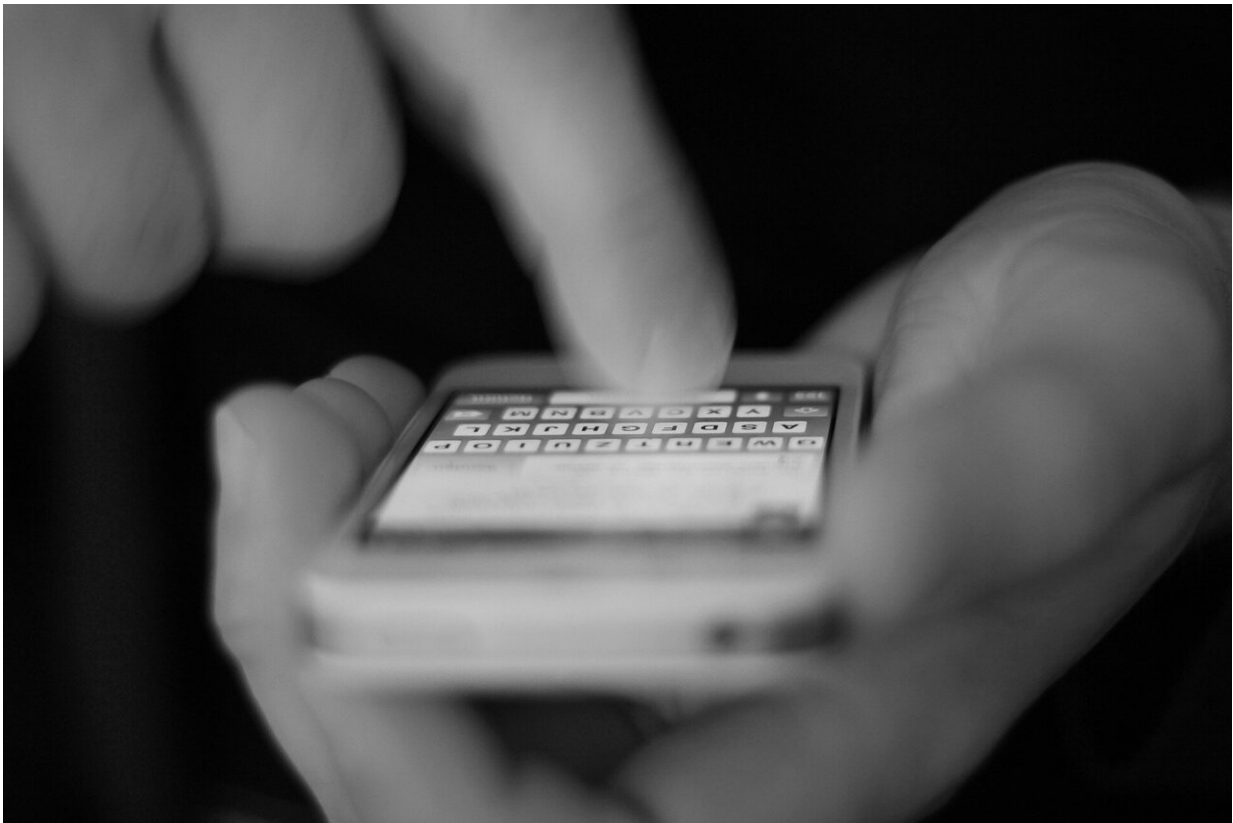


New insights into young men's sexting practices in youth sexting culture

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Drawing on findings from a qualitative study published by the Journal of Youth Studies, new research from Dr. Emily Setty explores young men's sexting practices and how they position themselves within youth sexting

culture in terms of masculine heterosexuality.

Young people who engage in [sexting](#)—the digital exchange of personal sexual messages and images—are considered at risk of potentially irreparable psychological, social and reputational harm, particularly if their images are "leaked" and made public. Discussion surrounding youth sexting is shaped by gendered assumptions about the nature of young people's practices. It is often suggested that young women are most at risk, with hormonal, sex-driven young men coercing vulnerable young women into sexting, and later sharing the images around their [peer group](#).

Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Surrey, Dr. Setty conducted interviews with 41 young people aged 14 to 18 to understand their perspectives on risk and harm in sexting; how young men construct a masculine heterosexual identity; and how this shapes young people's practices and perceptions.

The study found that young men do extract value from sexting as "heroes" and "lads" by obtaining and distributing images of young women, and sexual pursuit, objectification of women, control and accomplishment characterized young men's sexting practices. However, while these young men took pleasure in viewing their peer's photos of young women's bodies, they avoided the risky pursuit of "lad points," choosing not to actively participate in sexting themselves.

The findings challenge the notion that harmful sexting practices only arise from unequal gender dynamics that affect young women. Young men's position within youth sexting culture is precarious, as they are subjected to expectations surrounding masculinity in terms of their appearance and their actions. Furthermore, the normalization of male social shaming as "banter" and the emphasis on young men to show resilience is likely to obscure the true extent of the difficulties they face.

Dr. Setty said: "Risk and shame discourses affect the social landscape for young men as well as young women. While sex was positioned as legitimate for young men, expressing masculinity through sexting was more precarious.

"These findings have implications for greater understanding of adolescent masculinity and challenge the perception of young men as solely seeking value in youth sexting culture. However, persistent narratives of risk and shame may mean that while young men distance themselves from sexting, gendered assumptions and inequalities regarding bodily and sexual expression—affecting both young men and [women](#)—continue to characterize [youth](#) sexting culture."

More information: Emily Setty. 'Confident' and 'hot' or 'desperate' and 'cowardly'? Meanings of young men's sexting practices in youth sexting culture, *Journal of Youth Studies* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2019.1635681](#)

Provided by University of Surrey

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