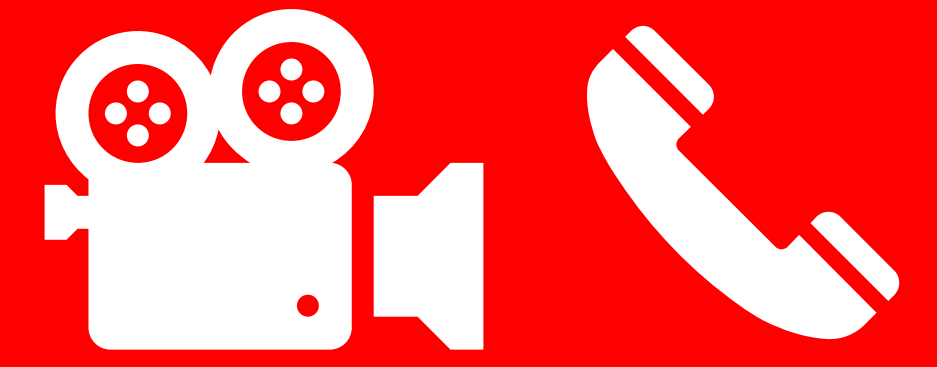




When Sexting Becomes “Sexteen”: Exploring Parental Representations and Regulations of Adolescent Sexting



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Introduction

Sexting = electronic sending of self-made explicit sexual or intimate content (Walrave et al., 2018)

Sexting and adolescents:

- **1 in 7 sends sexts**, while 1 in 4 receives them (Madigan et al., 2018)
- **Developmental aspects:** Risky behavior **VS** Sexual exploration (e.g., Graham Holmes et al., 2021)
- **Gender stereotypes?** “Slut-shaming”, “victim-blaming” (Lipmann & Cambel, 2014)

Adolescent sexting and parenting:

- **Parents’ definitions of sexting more negative** than adolescents’ definitions (i.e., links with pornography) (Barrense-Dias et al., 2019)
- Developing **media interest** for youth sexting as a new form of “**moral panic**” (e.g., Friedersdorf, 2015)
→ Parental “responsibility”? Monitoring **VS** mediation (Draper, 2012)
- **Parental representations of this new trend?** → Push parents to adopt **different practices?**

Results

Themes Sexting as Surrogate Love

Personally, I find it **sad**, in fact. Especially since, for me, a **sexual relationship** may be **based primarily on the sense of smell**, ok? And of course, on the Internet, that's something we haven't been able to reproduce. Or **touch**, of course. Touching the other person. Here again, **on the Internet** so far, it's **not possible**.

Simon, father of an 18-year-old boy ✓✓

Gender and Sexting: An Ambivalence

Different (Social) Consequences for Girls →

So yes, the **consequences (for boys)** are perhaps **less serious** in a patriarchal society because, men...for them it's...There's a lot more that's allowed, and if there is a **depiction of their intimacy** in the public space, we're going to find a way to cherish it, whereas it's **going to be a disgrace for a woman...**

Mia, mother of a 16-year-old boy ✓✓

Same Parental Attitude Regardless of Gender →

But then I would have to remember that **it doesn't matter whether it's a boy or a girl**. It's the sensibility of that human being that's at stake. And I'll do the same work as a human being.. And I'll ask the same questions and **do the same work**, absolutely.

Jade, mother of a 17-year-old girl ✓✓

The Role of an Adolescent’s Parent

They're **not that naive...** They're suspicious by nature, perhaps even more so than I am....So, at the same time, **what reassures me** is that... **they were born into it** (technology, virtuality).

Bernard, father of a 17-year-old boy ✓✓

So, let's say that I want to start from the principle that I'm not going to control, I don't want to control and so it's more a question of **giving them the means to properly evaluate**. Lena, mother of a 17-year-old girl ✓✓

I just **want to be there**, as a **counsellor** and that's what I want to be, because I didn't have that with my own mom and I missed that a lot, a lot.

Anna, mother of a 17-year-old girl ✓✓

← **Trusting the Youth**

← **Offering the Tools**

← **Advising the Youth**

RESEARCH GOALS

Explore in depth parents’ representations and regulations of adolescent sexting

-10 interviews with Belgian parents of adolescents (age 16-18)



Method

- Semi-structured guide and vignette

- **Reflexive thematic analysis** (Braun and Clarke, 2019)

- Themes actively produced by the researcher at the “**intersection of data, analytic process and subjectivity**” (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

- Codes and themes discussed between coders to reach consensus

Discussion



Sexting as a form of “non-genuine” intimacy
→ **Generational gap?**

Adolescents as experts → **Developmental dimensions?**

Offering the tools → **Autonomy supportive parenting**

Advising the youth → **Structure**

Gender and sexting: **Role of parental gender attitudes?**

NEXT STEP: Experimental study, 3 conditions, role of media on parenting, moderators