

Gender dualism machines and intensive body parts: Towards a new public pedagogy of youth 'sexting'

Jessica Ringrose

Professor of Sociology of Gender and Education
Institute of Education, University of London

Teen 'sexting' has given rise to widespread public and policy concerns regarding the potential risks digital technology may pose to young people. This paper explores how the media has tended to dramatize extreme incidences of sexting 'gone wrong' through examination of cases like Amanda Todd, where the circulation of the 'topless photo' is said to have directly led to cyber and physical bullying at several schools, severe depression, panic disorder, self-mutilation, drug and alcohol abuse, two attempted suicides and finally death. International news media, anti-sexting campaigns and resources used by schools have tended to echo this media risk discourse, positioning 'sexting' in sexist ways as problem of girls' lacking vigilance in their uses of social media. The paper seeks to intervene into the sensationalist media discourses of teen sexting (what is termed sexting 'public pedagogy') by exploring young people's views on the production, circulation and exchange of images, drawing on two qualitative research studies on youth 'sexting'. The methodology included focus groups, individual interviews, classroom observations and virtual ethnography with 52 teens (aged 13-15) from three London schools. Deleuzo-Guattarian and feminist new materialist theories of affect and the body are developed to conceptualise 'gender dualism machines' at work in social networking practices. Young people's production and negotiations of what are termed 'over-coded' and 'intensive' images of the body (e.g. girls' 'tits' and boys' 'six packs') posted on Blackberry and Facebook are explored in relation to ideas about commodification and value. Methodologically, the paper demonstrates how examining 'intra-acting' co-produced interview *and* naturally occurring online visual data (Barad, 2008, Lenz-Teguchi, 2012) offers insight into the relational and embodied performances of gendered and (hetero)sexual norms in young people's digitally mediated peer cultures. Finally, returning to the state of public pedagogy around sexting, the paper suggests the urgent need for complex school-based discussions about how gendered power, sexual value and morality works in young people's everyday digital sexual communication and image exchange.

BIO: Recent research includes projects on youth 'sexting' (NSPCC, 2011; ATL, 2013); gender and educational equality initiatives (Womankind, 2011) and sexual bullying interventions at school (Teen Boundaries, 2013). Her books include: *Post-Feminist Education? Girls and the sexual politics of schooling* (Routledge, 2012); *Rethinking Gendered Regulations and Resistances in Education*, (Routledge, 2012, edited); and *Deleuze and Research Methodologies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013, co-edited with Rebecca Coleman).

Thursday, October 3, 2013 | 2 - 4 pm | West Mall Annex (WMAX) 110
1933 West Mall V6T 1Z2



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

