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Management of non-consensually shared youth-produced sexual Images: A Delphi study with adolescents as experts.

This study presents the views of a panel of adolescents as experts in sexting (the interpersonal exchange of self-produced sexualized images via cell phone or the Internet; Döring, 2014) in order to reach consensus about what constitutes an appropriate response when images are shared without consent. While image-creation may be part of developmentally appropriate sexual behavior in young people (Symons, Ponnet, Walgrave, & Heirman, 2018), it can also be exploited by both adults and peers (Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh, & Treitman, 2018). These images pose considerable resource challenges for law enforcement and create ambiguity as to what constitutes proportionate legal, educational and child protection responses to these activities. To date, no consensus exists that informs good practice in response to sexting where attention is paid to the need to protect young people while respecting their agency and the right to assert their sexual identity.

Self-produced digital content captures a sexual "private moment" and potentially turns it into a public one. Sexting coincided with the availability of inexpensive web cameras and camera phones (subsequently smart phones) and the possibility (and encouragement) to create digital content. The at times heated debates that followed reflected what Rollins (2015) called the "vexing issue" for parents, schools, legislation and criminal justice and raised questions as to whether this is a social issue that we should be investing in changing (Strassberg, Cann, & Velarde, 2017). The term sexting became associated both with "self-produced child pornography" (Fovargue & Ost, 2013; Leary, 2010) and an expression of adolescent sexual identity and thus protected by Articles 8 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Gillespie, 2013). A systematic review (Authors names removed, 2016) examined the motivational, lifestyle and personality factors that influenced

adolescent sexting practices and indicated remarkable variation in terms of context, meaning and intention and noted the potential for consensual and non-consensual aspects of this activity (see also Lee & Crofts, 2015). While sexting may be a means of flirting, or enhancing a sexual relationship, it may also highlight potential vulnerabilities to sexual victimization (including dating violence, online solicitations and cyberbullying) or to participation in risky sexual behaviors (Drouin, Ross, & Tobin, 2015; Gámez-Guadix & Mateos-Pérez, 2019; Kernsmith, Victor, & Smith-Darden, 2018; Van Ouytsel, Walrave, Lu, Temple, & Ponnet, 2018). There are also links between sexting and social expectations of gendered sexual behaviors (Burén & Lunde, 2018; Setty, 2018) with females often deriving less pleasure from their experiences and being more likely than males to be seen in a negative way by their peers. Stanley et al (2018) indicated that although youth-produced sexual images were normalized and seen as positive by most young people in their sample, they also had the potential to reproduce sexist features of pornography, such as control and humiliation. In contrast to these findings, Gewirtz-Meydan, Mitchell and Rothman (2018) in a US national sample of 1560 youth Internet users, found that the majority of youth considered sexting to be a crime and not normal activity.

One review highlighted some of the negative assumptions about sexting, but also acknowledged that it reflected practices that could be thought of as existing on a continuum of coercion, from adolescent expectations of it being a normal thing to do, through to aggressive activity by peers or adults (Author names removed). This is seen in the findings of a study by Wolak and Finkelhor (2011) whose typology of sexting from US law-enforcement cases differentiated between experimental and romantic activity between peers and aggravated incidents involving adults, or peers,

with the intention of harming, harassing or embarrassing others through behaviors that included deception, exploitation and abuse. A further study examining the association between sexting and sexual coercion among female adolescents (Choi, van Ouytsel, & Temple, 2016) found that offline sexual coercion was significantly associated with sending and being asked for naked images, as well as receiving a naked image without giving permission. These results suggested that youth-produced images could function as an online dimension of offline sexual coercion and these findings are similar to the results from Stanley et al. (2018) and Morelli, Bianchi, Baiocco, Pezzuti, and Chriumbolo (2016) that adolescents reporting victimization in intimate relationships were more likely to have sent a sext than those who had not.

Krieger's (2017) systematic review examined the extent to which consensual and non-consensual acts were conflated in the legal, educational and psychological literature on sexting and how non-consensual sexting was conceptualized within studies. The results indicated that definitions varied widely with regard to whether they included or excluded non-consensual acts and, particularly within education, non-consensual sharing of images was often framed as bullying, which the author felt may detract from it being experienced as a form of sexual violence. Non-consensual sexting has also been described as sextortion (threats of dissemination of explicit, intimate or embarrassing images of a sexual nature without consent: Patchin & Hinduja, 2018). Wolak et al. (2018) in their online survey of sextortion in 572 minors found that 60% knew their perpetrators in person, often as romantic partners. They concluded that these incidents were serious victimizations which often co-occurred with teen dating violence.

These studies reflect tension as to whether sexts by adolescents should be treated as problematic, or even criminal, or whether they reflect exposure to, and

consumption of sexual media (Bobkowski, Shafer, & Ortiz, 2016; Rhyner, Uhl, & Terrance, 2018) and changing adolescent sexual practices and expectations (Albury, 2018; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone, & Harvey, 2012). Regardless of the intentions and context for these images, the ability to control what happens after images have been shared is limited, and the resulting media may be illegal, even though the sexual activity portrayed may not be (Fovargue & Ost, 2013). So far little is known about how many sexting scenarios involve non-consensual distribution of images. Wolak et al.'s (2018) study purposefully recruited young adults aged 18-25 who self-identified as victims of sextortion while other samples have been representative samples from the general population (e.g., Gámez-Guadix & Mateos-Pérez, 2019). In the US the number of cases that resulted in prosecution appeared relatively low (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2012). In their national sample of police cases (2008 and 2009) 675 involved youth-produced sexual images and an arrest took place in 62% of cases that involved an adult, 36% of the aggravated youth-only cases, and in 18% of the experimental cases (involving only adolescents and with and no aggravating elements). This data is now 10 years old and may not represent the current situation. Holoyda, Landess, Sorrentino and Friedman (2018) in a summary of legal responses in the US to sexting argue that the prosecution of adolescent sexters has resulted in cases that seem frivolous, punitive and ill-considered in terms of their long-term consequences on young people's lives and futures.

Youth-produced sexual Imagery and its management

The management of cases of sexting is largely an unexplored area. Victims are often adolescents who have knowingly taken sexual images, through their web cam or hand-held device, which is a challenge to law enforcement as well as child protection agencies (Englander, 2016). Bulger, Burton, O'Neill and Staksrud (2017) examined

policing responses across the US, South Africa and the European Union to adolescent online behavior that challenges adult conceptions of what is acceptable within existing policy frameworks. They suggested that child protection is dominated by a discourse of childhood innocence and less attention is given to the underlying needs expressed by young people in dealing with peers, developing social and sexual identities online and finding support. A Canadian study by Dodge and Spencer (2018) specifically examined police conceptions of non-consensual image sharing amongst youth. They conducted 70 interviews with members of specialist sex-crime related units and demonstrated that while the charge of child-pornography continues to be used in these cases, police often feel that these laws are ill-suited to non-consensual sharing. Instead police preferred to adopt paternalistic practices along with using fear of the law to ensure that youth do not engage in future non-consensual image sharing. Officers were also described as adopting victim-blaming beliefs and showing more concern about policing female sexuality than teaching boys about the importance of consent. This may potentially discourage victims to disclose online sexual violence and to seek support.

One UK study used focus groups with 59 young people (13-21 years) and 58 educational staff to examine how schools manage sexting cases (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019). Their findings suggested that peer groups set powerful rules that influenced the willingness and ability of adolescents to report sexual harm and that school prioritization of this was low, especially in relation to sexting. Young people sharing sexual images under pressure, or the re-sharing among peer networks, was seen to be normalized and under reported. They identified a culture of "not snitching" which limited the ability of adolescents to disclose. Prevention strategies in relation to sexting have often emphasized abstinence (e.g. initiatives such as *"Respect Yourself"*;

Karaian, 2014). This campaign was seen as exploiting "slut-shaming" in an effort to make female adolescents responsible for preventing harms that may come from sexting for both themselves and their peers. Karaian (2014) concluded that female adolescents are often blamed for their sexual victimization. Educational initiatives on sexting have been criticized for targeting female adolescents and suggesting that they shoulder responsibility for acts such as revenge pornography and sexual predation (Salter, Crofts, & Lee, 2013). Moreno (2018) in her discussion of what parents need to know about sexting advised them to make sure to let their child know that being pressured to send a sext is not okay, nor is it a way to prove their love or show affection.

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety report (UKCCIS, 2016) provided advice about sexting for designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), deputies, head teachers and senior leadership teams in schools. In the same year, the College of Policing in England and Wales published a briefing note to support law enforcement professionals to respond in a proportionate way to reports of children (under 18-year-old) possessing, sharing or generating indecent imagery of themselves or other children (College of Policing, 2016). Both reports expressed a need for proportionality, and a consideration of the potential impact on the young person/s of investigation and prosecution, although the terminology "youth-produced sexual images" and "indecent imagery of themselves" is markedly different. The briefing note concerns the initial response to a report of youth-produced sexual imagery and what might constitute a proportionate response, within the bounds of the law, where producing and sharing the images *does not* involve aggravating factors (such as adult involvement or the presence of violence).

Both reports offer clear advice about the management of cases involving youth-produced sexual images by children, particularly for educators and law

enforcement. What is also reflected is that young people exist within multiple, overlapping social systems that may influence not only the creation and sharing of sexual media but the experience of the child when one or more of these systems becomes overtly involved (Martin & Alaggia, 2013). Clark, Lewis, Bradshaw, and Bradbury-Jones (2018) in their study of public health nurses' responses to sexting suggest that there is a lack of professional confidence in talking to young people about these issues.

Voices of Young People

Many societal processes marginalize children's experiences, treating them as spoken for or dealt with by their parents or child protection agencies, and this has traditionally been the case with, for example, child sexual abuse (Gilligan, 2016). Children are often critical of politics, policy and services, assuming that even if they do speak out, they will not be heard or respected as valid contributors to deliberation or decision-making. Early opportunities to protect (rather than judge or restrict) them may often be missed by parents, teachers and policy makers. Mendelson and Letourneau (2015) provide an overview of current strategies (and their limitations) for reducing child sexual abuse prevalence that may also be relevant to non-consensual sexting. Even when specific efforts are made to include children in matters that concern them these often result in further inequalities, as children from already-advantaged backgrounds tend to take up such opportunities disproportionately while the already-disadvantaged become further marginalized in a vicious cycle of exclusion. Albury (2018) concluded that most research into young people's mediated sexual cultures does not position young people as active co-researchers and asked how young people might participate in sexual health practices as experts, partners, policy-makers and/or researchers rather than as research subjects or target populations. This study is an attempt to include young people in a meaningful way

that gives the opportunity for their views to be heard.

Rational for this study

Very little is known of the views of young people who have engaged in sexting, and their experiences of involvement with professionals, including law enforcement and child protection agencies (García-Gómez, 2017). Lee et al (2018) have called for creative responses to sexting which draws on adults' and children's understandings and views. Jørgensen, Weckesser, Turner and Wade (2019) explored young people's views on sexting education and concluded that we need to give more attention to young people's voices and acknowledge children as experts in their own lives. This is echoed by Walker et al (2011) who highlighted that there was a gap in reliable data from the perspective of young people about sexting. To address the gap this Delphi study identified the opinions and views of young people as experts on what constitutes an appropriate response when dealing with what starts out as non-coercive sexting, but where images are subsequently shared without consent. This study also aimed to identify indicators of distress and ways to facilitate disclosure when the sharing of images causes anxiety or is associated with bullying, harassment or victimization.

Method

Delphi Method

The Delphi method is a technique that involves a group of anonymous experts who are given questionnaires and controlled feedback to obtain consensus on a topic (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Rowe, Wright, & Bolger, 1991; Ziglio, 1996). Delphi is a tool to build knowledge, explore critical ideas and support informed decision-making

grounded on a collective basis (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). It can be a particularly helpful way to identify options, and to solve problems under conditions of uncertainty, and inadequate information (Dalkey, 1969; Hasson, Keeney, & McKenna, 2000). The Delphi method represents a suitable approach for this study.

The Delphi method is a structured technique that consists of several “rounds”. In the first round, participants are tasked to answer a set of open-ended survey questions. The second round is informed by the data from the first round and involves a summary of themes that were most frequently mentioned in the survey. The themes are presented in the form of statements which participants are asked to rank in relation to their importance (Bennouna, Mansourian, & Stark, 2017). Delphi studies often require up to three rounds to reach consensus where participants adjust their initial ratings of statements in relation to responses of other participants where agreement was not reached.

The Delphi method is characterized by four key features: anonymity, controlled feedback, iteration and statistical group response. The use of questionnaires is used to protect the anonymity of panelists and avoids many disadvantages associated with the dynamics of direct face-to-face group interactions (Dalkey, 1969; Turoff & Hiltz, 1996) where participants may feel pressured into agreeing with others. It enables researchers to reach participants that are geographically dispersed in a cost- and time-efficient manner (Becker & Roberts, 2009; Ziglio, 1996). The Delphi method has also been shown to produce sufficient reliability and validity when results are based on both qualitative and quantitative measurement (Hasson & Keeney, 2011). There is no agreement on the required samples for Delphi studies which typically range from 10-100 (Akins, Tolson, & Cole, 2005).

Vignettes

This Delphi study used a vignette approach as in previous studies (e.g., Bromley, Mikesell, & Khodyakov, 2017; Collins, Hanlon, More, Wall, & Duggan, 2009; Evans et al, 2015). Vignettes can be used to explore participants' judgments, beliefs, attitudes and decision-making in relation to everyday scenarios (Bromley et al, 2017). They are carefully-constructed short narrative descriptions of a person or situation and are often used alongside traditional surveys (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). This study's vignettes referred to nude and semi-nude pictures and used the colloquial term "selfies" instead of sexts (noted by Jørgensen et al, 2019 as a term rarely used by adolescents).

Participant Recruitment

Inclusion criteria for participants were that they were aged between 14-18 years and self-identified as having direct experience of taking and distributing nude or nearly nude images of themselves. They were recruited through two methods that protected their anonymity: advertisements through digital and social media, and posters in schools. Participants were offered a £10 gift voucher on completing the second round of the survey. The study was reviewed by a University Research Ethics Committee.

Procedure

Participants were given a web-link to access the survey (Bristol Online Survey Tool) which provided information about the purpose of the study, a consent form, unique identifier and the survey. Anonymity between participants was ensured and participation in this study was anonymous to the extent that only one researcher had access to their email address or mobile phone number (used to contact participants to alert them to Round 2 and deleted once completed). Participants had up to three

weeks to complete each round. Following completion of Round 1, emails and text messages were sent out with a web-link to access and complete Round 2. To assess consensus of responses to the vignettes-based questionnaire in Round 2, a defined average percentage agreement with an 80% cut-off was used (Langlands, Jorm, Kelly, & Kitchener, 2008). This meant that an item was included if at least 80% of participants rated an item as very important, important or moderately important. Excluded items were still considered to provide relevant information.

Round 1 Questionnaire

Round 1 was an open-ended vignette-based questionnaire consisting of a series of eight questions (see Appendix). They were short descriptions based on a heteronormative fictional event portraying a young woman who sent a nude image of herself to her boyfriend resulting in him non-consensually sharing these with his friends. This case example was derived from a previous analysis of 51 interviews with adolescents who had taken and shared nude or nearly nude images (SPIRTO, 2015) and after discussion with three online child-protection officers. The events represented an evolving and escalating situation starting with sharing the image, involvement of parents and teachers, and the final reporting to the police. Additional questions were content-free and allowed participants to add other relevant information. An initial pilot was carried out to assess the clarity of the wording of the vignettes and time frame for completion.

Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to identify relevant themes as meaning units of the responses in Round 1. Content analysis enables the researcher to develop theoretical and conceptual models of a phenomenon by objectively and systematically

describing the manifest content of communication (Krippendorff, 1980). It does this by categorizing words, phrases and paragraphs into units of analysis that convey a similar central meaning or theme (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Robson, 2002). Both a deductive and inductive approach to content analysis was used (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Participants' responses to the open-ended questions varied in length ranging from short phrases (e.g., People looking at her funny) to longer segments that contained several themes (e.g., If he is constantly checking his phone and won't tell you why or if he won't let you look at his phone and gets really aggressive about it). Data were categorized into initial codes, and through further iteration the codes were then grouped into broader concepts and sub-categories. The coding utilized the qualitative software package NVivo10.

Round 2 Questionnaire

The results of the content analysis were used to develop the items for the Round 2 questionnaire which asked about observable behaviors and attitudes relevant to the identification of problems, facilitation of disclosure and involvement of third parties in cases of non-consensual image sharing. These items were presented in the form of declarative statements with prefaced verbs that related to the category heading and followed by verbatim excerpts taken from the Round 1 questionnaire responses – for example, the sub-category "people's indirect comment about nude selfies" was prefaced with the verb "make" and completed with the verbatim example "people making jokes about it around her". Participants were asked to rate their strength of agreement for each item on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "not important" and 5 indicated "very important". Eight open-ended questions provided further comments and supplementary information. Results of statistical results of the Round 2 questionnaire can be seen in Table 1.

Results

Demographics and Response Rate

In total, 124 participants who met the inclusion criteria took part in Round 1. Of these only 45 provided full survey responses, which included the disclosure of a mobile phone number, so they could be contacted for the second round of the survey (this was a dedicated mobile and numbers were deleted post data collection). Of these full responses, 10 were male and 33 were female (two participants did not disclose their gender) with a mean of 16.24 years (range 14-18). All participants identified their geographic location as the United Kingdom. Given the relatively small sample size person-identifiable questions were not asked about ethnicity or which school was attended.

Round 1

A content analysis of the participants' responses to Round 1 questionnaire resulted in 60 sub-categories that were grouped into 8 over-arching categories (examples given are taken verbatim from the content analysis): 1) People doing and saying things that suggest "selfies" (term used for sexts in the vignettes and questions) were shared without permission (e.g., *Sniggering by her boyfriend's friends when she passes them and people making sexual advances or discussions with her would connote that he has shown other people*), 2) Boyfriend doing and saying things that suggest selfies were shared without permission (e.g., *See if her boyfriend is treating her differently and is persisting her to send more pictures*), 3) First steps to seeking help (e.g., *I'd suggest that Shanice tells a teacher not her mum*), 4) Parent or carer doing and saying things that are supportive (e.g., *To have a discussion around the issue of consent and re-assure her she is not in anyway to blame emphasizing she consented to sharing her image with one person, not everyone. Acknowledge the pressures on young women*

and girls to send naked images), 5) Dealing with others (e.g., *Warn everybody that they are bullying Shanice and that if they don't stop serious action will be given*), 6) Professionals doing and saying things that may be supportive (e.g., *Be willing to provide a listening ear and understand it is a stressful situation. Try and understand they sent the photos for a reason and probably realize it is not sensible now*), 7) Teachers doing and saying things that may be supportive (e.g., *I would then tell Shanice to speak to a teacher or parent as these things can damage a person. If she is too scared to, I would offer to do it on her behalf. The teachers would then either speak to the boy then contact the police/ his parents if they suspect anything*), and 8) Police doing and saying things that may be supportive (e.g., *Police could help in getting the pictures removed and also possibly friends, so she feels less alone and isolated*). The items in each category can be seen in Table 1.

[Table 1 near here]

Round 2

Round 2 was completed by 23 (51.11%) individuals. In relation to the open-ended response section of the Round 2 questionnaire, 10 participants provided in total 27 comments. Drawing on Akins et al. (2005), a sample of 23 responses at the final round is deemed sufficient for stability within the framework of a well-defined knowledge area. A total of 48 items were endorsed by the participants (> 80%). The items that reached consensus are listed in one of the eight category headings in Table 1. The table displays the items ranked in descending order from highest to lowest consensus, along with mean scores, median scores, standard deviations, interquartile ranges and percentages.

Others' behavior indicating non-consensual image sharing. More than 80% of participants agreed on five items being indicative of others' behavior and attitudes

that signal nude or semi-nude images have been shared without consent, with two of them *(Spread rumors and gossip* and *Post insulting messages or her nude images on social media*) reaching a consensus of 100%, and with two of the items (*Make direct comments* and *Suddenly behaves differently*) being considered also very important by the vast majority of the panelists (95.65%). Another item (*Make indirect comments about the nude selfie*) was also perceived to be a relevant behavior (89.96%). Although not meeting criteria for consensus, two-thirds of panelists (65.22%) agreed that one item *"Give strange looks when walking by*) was also a sign that images were non-consensually shared with others. Participants' open-ended comments in Round 2 proposed three items that could be indicative of non-consensual image sharing (*Other boys take a greater interest in her*; *Girls inclined to suddenly keep their distance from the victim to engage in gossip*; *Receive others' sympathetic looks or trolling behavior*).

Boyfriend's behavior indicating non-consensual image sharing. Participants reached consensus on four items relevant to the boyfriend's behavior and attitudes signaling that images have been shared without consent. Two items (*Avoids letting her see or use his mobile phone* and *Does not give a clear answer when asked about nude photos*) had an agreement of 100%, and two other items were also perceived to be highly indicative (*Compares her to other girls who he says freely share pictures* and *Behaves distant and avoids her*). Although not meeting criteria for consensus, three items (*Shows his phone to others who start laughing and show great interest*; *Being persistent when she refused to send more photos and steers conversations to nude images; Asks for more nude photos*) were also perceived to be a sign to indicate images were shared without permission (<80%). Participants' comments in Round 2 provided further three items that indicate non-consensual image sharing (*Boyfriend exhibits aggressive and annoying behavior when the victim refuses to provide more*

nude selfies; *Use of password protected picture-storing mobile phone apps*; *Boyfriend experiences anxiety that his friends would disclose to the victim that images have been shared without her consent*).

First steps to seeking help. There was consensus for seven items relevant to behavior that would facilitate first steps to seek help. Four items (*Speaks to police to report that photos were shared without permission*; *Speaks to a person they trust (a friend, youth worker) to seek help*; *Confronts the boyfriend about the situation; Discusses the situation with a parent or carer or another family member*) had an agreement above 90%, and three items (*Speaks to trusted teacher to try and sort out the problem*; *Speaks to ChildLine to seek support*; *Speaks to a trusted person outside of the family*) being highly rated (>80%). Three items were not perceived to be helpful behaviors (*Avoids retaliating with similar behavior; Pretends to others that she's not being hurt or affected; Avoids speaking to the police*) (<80%). Participants' comments in Round 2 provided two items on what constitutes useful help-seeking behavior (*Speaking to another victim who has experienced a similar situation* and *Change of social media settings to private-mode might be helpful actions*).

Parents or carers doing and saying things that are supportive. More than 80% of participants agreed five items representing parents' or carers' supportive attitude and behavior, of which three items (*Supports the young person being reassuring and respecting privacy and offers to resolve the problem together*; *Talks to others about the situation with the young person's permission*; *Is non-judgmental and does not blame the young person*) were rated at 95.65%, one item (*Parent / carer talks to a teacher about the situation to minimize damage and resolve the problem*) reached consensus at 91.30%, and an additional item (*Confronts the boyfriend or approaches his parents about the image*) also being considered important (82.16%). Three items did not reach consensus, (*Contacts the police to report that photos were shared*

without permission; *Advises the young person not to send images again*; *Does not confront boyfriend or approaches boyfriend's parents about image*) (<80%). In Round 2, one participant provided a further item (*Parent or carer should try to come to an agreement with the young person how to proceed in resolving the problem situation*).

Dealing with others' behaviors and attitudes. Consensus was reached for eight items that indicated coping strategies in response to others' negative and disruptive behaviors. One of the eight items (*Does not isolate herself from others*) reached 100% agreement. Four items (*Reports and speaks about others' disrespectful behavior to a trusted person*; *Surrounds herself with supportive friends and focuses on positive activities*; *Accepts and learns from experience; Refuses to feel bad for having made a mistake*) reached agreement above 90%, and three items (*Joins a support group to better deal with the situation; Seeks distance and ignores others who are disrespectful*; *Remains confident, assertive and holds head up high*) had agreement above 80% respectively. One item (*Confronts others about their disrespectful behavior*) did not reach consensus (<80%). In Round 2 participants provided two additional items (*Victim should not retaliate in response to others' bullying behavior* and *Victim should engage in altruistic activities to increase a self-worth*).

Professionals doing and saying things that may be supportive. All of the eleven items reached consensus of which four items (*Informs about procedures, important information and explains what is going to happen next*; *Tries to understand and listens to the young person, and is aware of the social context of photo sharing*; *Avoids making the situation worse*; *Does not to breach privacy by mentioning names to others who do not need to know*) reached 100% agreement, and the other seven items were also perceived to be very important (*Confronts the boyfriend and those*

involved to stop sharing and delete the image from the mobile phone; *Deals with the situation in confidentially, discreetly and sensitively; Is supportive and reassuring, offers help to resolve the problem together*; *Offers a supportive reporting processes*; *Punishes those involved who have shared images without permission; Educates those involved about the consequences and seriousness of sending and sharing nude pictures, and also informs about safe-sexting*; *Avoids judgment, blaming and victimization*).

Participants' comments in Round 2 provided three additional items (*Teachers should try to stop the victim being bullied; Teachers should reduce tension by introducing a seating plan where the victim is not sitting with anyone who has been involved with bullying her; Teachers should raise awareness of the implications of sharing nude selfies and warn pupils not to ostracize or bully any victims*). Two items indicated conflicting views toward school assemblies (*Risks and dangers of sharing nude selfies should be addressed in large school assemblies* and *Large school assemblies, even without mentioning any names, would infringe the victim's privacy and therefore result in further problems, such as bullying and harassment*).

Teachers doing and saying things that may be supportive. Participants agreed that four items represent teachers' supportive behavior, with one item (*Speaks with boyfriend and his parents to discuss the seriousness of the situation*) reaching 100% agreement and three items (*Contacts the police to report non-consensually shared image*; *Does not draw attention to individual affected through preferable treatment; Speaks with other pupils about appropriate behavior and attitudes towards)* also being regarded as very important. Two items did not reach consensus (*Introduction of policies to ban of mobile phones at schools* and *Allows the victim to take time off school*). Participants' comments in Round 2 provided three items with partly conflicting opinions (*Risks of sharing nude images should be discussed and explored*

as a part of a set curriculum to explore solutions to situations of non-consensually shared nude images; *Discussion of these topics as a response to an incident of non-consensual shared images at the school would promote gossip*; *Teachers should also discuss with a group of pupils, including the boyfriend and his friends, the underlying reasons of their bullying of the victim*).

Police doing and saying things that may be supportive. Three items reached consensus to indicate police's supportive behavior (*Reassures that the matter is dealt with appropriately and safely*; *Deals with the situation appropriately, fast and with little repercussion*; *Having access to speak to a female police officer*). One participant provided an additional item (*Police should make the victim feel comfortable and not to surround the young person with too many different people*).

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to explore the opinions and views of young people of what constitute helpful behaviors and attitudes in cases where sexts have been shared without consent and to identify indicators of distress and ways to facilitate disclosure. Importantly, this Delphi study used the opinions and views of young people as experts in relation to a series of vignettes describing an escalating hypothetical scenario of an image that has been shared without consent. As such, this study used two rounds of feedback from the panel to a) identify and devise an inventory of key items, and b) generate a consensus regarding the importance of the suggested behaviors relevant to the identification of problems, help-seeking and appropriate responses to cases. Most participants agreed that important indicators that images were shared without permission were rumors and gossip by peers as well as the use of social media to post insulting messages or her nude images. This points very strongly to expectations about victim-blaming where, in this instance, female

adolescents are subject to social shaming and harassment (Burén & Lunde, 2018; Setty, 2018) and potential re-victimization. Participants expressed preference to discuss others' bullying behavior and disrespectful behavior with a trusted person (e.g., family, teacher, police), and in particular, that teachers should protect the victim from being bullied or harassed by others and discuss with pupils underlying reasons for bullying behavior. Coping strategies focused on seeking support, exercising a non-judgmental attitude towards the self and remaining confident, rather than seeking isolation or directly confronting others about their disrespectful behavior. Indicators from the boyfriend about non-consensually shared images included avoiding the victim seeing or using his mobile phone alongside not giving a clear answer when asked about the nude images. A dichotomy emerged between active behavior by others targeting the person depicted in the images (e.g., spreading rumors or gossip, or making comments), and the boyfriend's behavior characterized by avoidance.

For this panel of experts, what constituted helpful responses differed as to whether the question related to parents or carers, teachers or police. What was an unexpected result was that of the four items that achieved the highest level of agreement, two included speaking to the police to report non-consensual sharing of images and confronting the boyfriend about the situation, suggesting an understanding that the behavior was wrong and illegal and that the young person would be taken seriously. While there are few publications examining police views on sexting activity, Dodge and Spencer's (2018) findings would certainly suggest that police may feel that criminalizing adolescents who engage in sexting is not proportionate in most cases. However, it is also likely that they would apportion at least some of the blame to the victim for having shared the image in the first place.

What constituted helpful responses from parents or carers was being reassuring and respecting privacy, along with offering to work with the young person to resolve the problem together. Parents or carers talking to others about what had happened was seen to be important but only when the young person's permission had been secured. Participants preferred parents to approach a teacher who could then help by speaking to the boyfriend and his parents. The importance of having a shared understanding of sexting is discussed by Lee et al. (2018) in the context of intergenerational co- learning to provide opportunities for children to articulate and reflect on how they negotiate sexual intimacy and for adults to respond creatively. However, as noted by Jørgensen et al (2019) many children report that they would not go to parents for fear of punishment, getting told off or having their phones monitored. One helpful response from teachers that reached full consensus was speaking with the boyfriend and his parents to discuss the seriousness of the situation, although the study by Walker et al (2011) would suggest that teachers and parents alike find these discussions difficult. What was also agreed by the respondents was that teachers do not help the situation by drawing attention to the victim of non-consensual sexting through preferential treatment. Whether this is seen as a breach of peer group rules (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019) is unclear.

Respondents agreed that what they expected from the police was reassurance that the matter would be dealt with appropriately and safely and that this would happen quickly and with few repercussions. Dealing with the problem included stopping image-sharing and enabling their removal from social media (also identified in Jørgensen et al's, 2019 study). Anxieties about the legacy of images once they are non-consensually shared seem to be intensely felt by female adolescents with an assumption that there was a double standard with "leaked nudes" as female adolescents' actions and images are

subject to greater scrutiny and judgment than those of males. Wolak et al (2018) in their study of adolescent sextortion cases found that in spite of the seriousness of the incidents, victims were reluctant to seek help, even from friends. The knowledge that sexual images have been shared may be a source of extreme shame and embarrassment. It was maybe not surprising that there was consensus that all professionals need to keep the young person informed about the procedures to be followed, to share important information and explain what is going to happen next. In addition to this, respondents felt that professionals should listen to the young person, try to understand what has happened and be aware of the social context of photo sharing. This was seen as important in helping the young person cope, reducing shame and increasing the likelihood of disclosure. Participants also expressed preference for parents or caregivers, teachers and law enforcement to show a non-judgmental attitude and avoid blaming the young person.

Overall, the adolescents that took part in this study provided empirical evidence of the importance of maintaining a child-focused approach that is sensitive towards the social, cultural and personal needs of the young person and embraces a range of professionals involved, including parents and caregivers. Lefevre, Hickle, Luckock and Ruch (2017) suggested that trust is at the center of children being able to seek help in relation to sexual exploitation and that children often have cause to feel that professionals around them are not always able to balance their need for protection and guidance with the child’s right to make agentic choices about their own lives. Participants endorsed the need to avoid inappropriate social and cultural stereotypes and help young people develop effective coping strategies to deal with the responses from family, friends and acquaintances after sharing self-produced images becomes public knowledge.

Implications for Research and Practice

To our knowledge, this is the first study to focus on identifying the views of young people who are framed as experts by experience in relation to sexting. Across other areas of service provision for adolescents it has been acknowledged that there is limited evidence of using young people's expertise to evaluate, or to participate in, service developments or design to meet their needs (Edwards et al, 2016). The findings of this study represent an effort to expand the existing, rather limited, evidence base to provide more appropriate ways to manage and respond to coercive and non-coercive youth-produced sexual image- taking. Consistent with the UK Council for Child Internet Safety Report (UKCCIS, 2016), the findings of this study indicated a strong focus on the sharing of images in the school and college context that require resources to confidentially and swiftly respond to a problem so as to ensure safeguarding, support and education of the young people affected. As such the findings provide a potential framework to support and inform effective and appropriate advice for both professionals and carers. Others have argued that schools should tackle awareness and understanding of sexual harm through a whole-school approach (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019) and inclusion of sexting within youth health education and prevention programs (Kernsmith et al, 2018). These conclusions were also shared by participants within the current study.

This study is innovative in the use of vignettes in an online modified-Delphi. The findings provide evidence of anonymously reaching quantitative consensus between participants (e.g., identifying preferred solutions) and qualitative (e.g., identifying common themes that underpin solutions) that could not have been anticipated or identified using a different methodology. Furthermore, the findings can be used to provide the basis of debate and discussion among professionals, including

teachers and law enforcement to identify new opportunities, such as educational strategies and implementation of novel child-focused interventions.

Limitations of Study

The study has several limitations. It is based on a small sample size and a larger expert panel could have could have resulted in slightly different findings. The attrition rate was also high with approximately 51% completing Round 2 of the survey. Sinah, Smyth and Williamson (2011) noted problems of attrition which usually takes place within a Delphi study and we acknowledge the potential challenges that this may mean for an overestimate of the degree of consensus in the final results. A high number of children did not wish to provide contact details to enable participation in the second round of the survey which may indicate anxieties about disclosing sexting. While we sought to explore the views of young people who have engaged in self-produced sexual images, for ethical reasons we did not gather detailed information about participants' experiences. This study cannot be generalized to ethnic or socio-economically diverse groups who are often marginalized in society and future studies would benefit from the inclusion of a more diverse sample. In particular, given LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in sexting, as well as the limited research on the sharing of nude images and sexting in these communities (Hatchel, Subrahmanyam, & Birkett, 2017; Van Ouytsel et al, 2018). Future research should conduct a similar study with LGBTQ youth using a non-heteronormative vignette or questions.

Furthermore, the threshold for percentage agreement was determined a-priori (>80%) of the sample, and it is possible that a different threshold would have resulted in different conclusions. Although the vignettes were carefully worded and adapted to be easily accessible to a young audience, it may not be possible to generalize the

findings (Wainwright, Gallagher, Tompsett, & Atkins, 2010). The combination of a vignette study with a consensus approach, however, could provide useful insights from utilizing a novel research method to identify young people's views on their needs and expectations in cases where self-produced images were non-consensually shared.

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Vignettes

1. Your friend Shanice is seeing a new boyfriend. He's asked her to send him some topless pictures from her mobile and she agreed. Shanice believes that her boyfriend has shown the picture to his friends at school, but she is not sure whether she is just being "paranoid". She is asking you for your advice. What warning signs would you tell Shanice to look out for, which could mean that there is a problem?

2. Shanice is now quite sure that the situation has got out of control, and that her boyfriend has shared her pictures with his friends. She is feeling angry, embarrassed and ashamed. Shanice would like to speak to someone about her problem. She turns

to you for advice. Who would you advise Shanice to talk to about her problem and why? (e.g., police, family, teacher etc.).

3. Shanice told her mother that she has sent topless images to her boyfriend, which he has probably shared with his friends. Her mother asks her what she can do to help without making it more embarrassing and difficult for Shanice. What would you suggest Shanice should say to her mother?

4. Shanice has spoken to her teacher at school. The teacher, Mrs. Smith, realizes that the situation is very difficult for Shanice and wants to help. How do you think Shanice would like the situation to be dealt with? How do you think Shanice would feel at this time?

5. Shanice noticed that a group of female adolescents were whispering and staring at her during break-time. Shanice believes that others know about the pictures. Her concerns are confirmed when her best friend Lesley mentions that "everybody knows". What advice would you give to Shanice to deal with the situation?

6. Because Shanice's problem turned out to be serious, the police got involved. The police officers clearly want to help Shanice. How do you think Shanice would like the situation to be dealt with? How do you think Shanice would feel at this time?

7. What advice would you give to teachers, social workers, police and other professionals who work with teenagers when there are concerns about images being shared without consent?

8. What other helpful advice would you have given to Shanice.