

Recognizing and addressing how gender shapes young people's experiences of image-based sexual harassment and abuse in educational settings

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Abstract

This paper explores findings from a study with 150 young people (aged 12-21) across England, which employed qualitative focus groups and arts-based methods to investigate young people's experiences of digital image-sharing practices. In this paper, we explore how gendered pressures to send nudes experienced by girls is a form of Image-Based Sexual Harassment (IBSH) and how pressures upon boys to secure nudes and prove they have them by sharing them non-consensually is Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA). In addition, we argue boys' sending nudes (dick pics) non-consensually is a form of image based sexual harassment, which can be compounded by harassment of girls to send nudes back. We look at the gendered nature of combined practices of Image-Based Sexual Harassment and Abuse (IBSHA) and how sexual double standards create sexual shaming and victim blaming for girls who experience IBSHA. We also explore young people's perspectives on their digital sex and relationship education and their suggestions for improvement. We conclude by arguing that schooling policies and practices would benefit from adopting the conceptual framework of IBSHA.

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We suggest this would be a good first step in better supporting young people in managing and negotiating digital gendered and sexualized consent, harms, and risks.

INTRODUCTION

In a large gymnasium at a state school in Sussex, lines of wooden chairs are set up for a whole-school assembly. Young people are seated in rows and await the address of the Headmaster. The assembly has been called because, following a 3-year-relationship between two students, the boy posted a sexually explicit video of the girl on a Facebook page. A screen is rolled down to one side of the headmaster's podium. On it, screengrabs of a sex tape of two students are projected for the student body to view. As Sam explains:

A girl basically had a video put on like a sex tape and then the school, they made an assembly on it the following week and they essentially just like took screengrabs from it and censored parts of it out and they were saying like this is not acceptable. That's like horrifying for the student involved obviously as well. But that's just not the way you go about it. (South Eastern University, First Year)

Caroline's story highlights the limitation of moral panic, abstinence, and fear-based educational practices aimed at shaming girls for digital sexual expression as well as for their own victimization when it occurs (Döring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2015). We heard students speak about such victim-blaming and sexual shaming practices again and again over the course of our research. Although this scenario constitutes one of the more extreme examples from our findings, it is a useful starting point for thinking about what constitutes image-based sexual harassment and abuse and what might be appropriate ways to combat this in educational practices.

Over the last 15 years, adolescent "sexting"—defined broadly as the exchange of sexually explicit photos, videos, and texts—has become a major focus of both research and legal attention and educational responses have developed across international contexts (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011; see Van Ouytsel, 2020, for a review). In England, the context for this study, school-based "sexting" guidance and practice or what we have previously called "sext education" (Dobson & Ringrose, 2015) has been significantly critiqued as misinformed by the focus on "sexting" as a vague concept rather than wider digital sexual relationship culture dynamics, largely neglecting the needs and support of young people (Jørgensen et al., 2019). Following these critiques government policy and guidance have changed significantly over the past decade, moving away from the vague and nebulous notion of "sexting" to more recently focus on "nudes and semi-nudes," which starts to focus the issue onto the *image-based practices* involved (Department for Education England, 2020). The Department for Education England has also recently started to take into account the need to foreground when and how images become abusive and have even cited our own research on image-based sexual harassment and abuse in their most recent guidance (Department for Education England, 2020). This is a welcome addition at the policy level, and in this paper, we outline our approach to understanding digital sexual image exchange through a feminist criminological lens of technologically facilitated sexual violence (Powell & Henry, 2017). We outline the combined concepts of image-based sexual harassment and image based sexual

abuse (IBSHA) we have pioneered (see Ringrose et al., 2021) and suggest the joined-up frame of IBSHA is a helpful tool to conceptualize and address the complex interconnected ways that harassment and abuse interplay in youth experiences.

In this paper, we draw upon our research study investigating young people's experiences of digital image sharing, which used focus groups and arts-based research methods to map issues of consent in image exchanges. Arts-based approaches like drawing offer important ways to explore and capture experiences that may be difficult to access through talk alone (Hickey Moody, 2018). These practices can complement traditional social science methodologies and offer different modalities of expression for diverse young people, including those who may be less likely to share in a focus group setting (Renold, 2018).

Utilizing findings from focus group discussions, as well as drawings and mind maps we explore the gendered nature of various types of practices such as pressure to send nudes and pressure to share nudes without consent, which we categorize as IBSHA. We go on to analyze the different gendered consequences of IBSHA for boys and girls because of sexual double standards (Burén et al., 2022; Ringrose et al., 2013) that manifest through a variety of situations with different groups of young people across our diverse educational research sites. In our final section, we explore young people's feelings that the education they are receiving is failing to recognize or address online harassment and abuse, detailing students' own suggestions for improving their digital sex and relationship education. Overall, we argue our findings indicate an urgent need to recognize and address the far-ranging gender inequitable impacts of IBSHA upon young people in order to improve educational practices in this area.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICY BACKGROUND

In this paper we employ two concepts developed from feminist legal and criminological research: (1) *Image-Based Sexual Harassment* (IBSH) (Powell & Henry, 2017) and *Image-Based Sexual Abuse* (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017). Image-based Sexual Harassment (IBSH) is an umbrella term that includes unwanted solicitation (being harassed) for nudes, and unsolicited penis images ("dick pics")—being sent such images without consent. *Image-Based Sexual Abuse* (IBSA), is the term employed to explain non-consensual sexual image creating, showing, and distributing, that is when an image is shared beyond the intended recipient without consent (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017). Throughout this paper, we aim to show the complex and entangled nature of Image based Sexual Harassment and Abuse (IBSHA) and therefore the need to use these terms together. We also argue we need to better understand how IBSHA practices are gendered.

At present neither of these terms IBSH and IBSA nor their combination (IBSHA) have been used in the majority of youth sexting research (Henry & Powell, 2015; Walker & Sleath, 2017). Nor have they been adequately incorporated into UK Government policies on sexting and sex and relationship education although we have seen some recent movement in this direction. The failure to recognize or identify forms of image-based sexual harassment and abuse is the result of a legal context where the production of all underage sexual images are criminalized and so the focus has consistently been on stopping young people "sexting" (Dobson & Ringrose, 2015) rather than on consent, and the practices of when images are taken, shared or shown without consent and identifying these as harmful and abusive (Setty, 2019). For instance, England's Department for Education Relationships and Sex Education guidance for secondary schools' states that students should be taught "not to provide any material to others that they would not want to be shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them" (Department for

Education England, 2019, p.28). This effectively responsabilizes victims who have created images, even if those are shared non-consensually. By prioritizing the instruction to “*NOT SEXT*” over the instruction to not share images without consent, what has been termed an “abstinence” approach to sexting is being promoted (Döring, 2014; Krieger, 2017; Setty, 2019). While England’s guidance does also state that teachers should show young people how to access support should issues arise online, this is followed by reference to child sexual abuse law, stating that “sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offense which carries severe penalties including jail” (Department for Education England, 2019, p.28). Again, this puts the emphasis on the image as illegal and the image producer as creating the illegal content, rather than the practices of consent and lack of consent around producing, showing, or distributing images. To summarize, we lack an understanding of harassing and abusive uses of images and clear ideas of victims and perpetrators in these processes. Unfortunately, this lack of clarity often ends up blaming the victim whose images have been used in abusive ways.

Responding to these problems, the first focus in this paper is on clearly outlining what are practices of image-based sexual harassment by looking at our participant’s experiences. Girls being “solicited” for nude images has been referred to as “pressured sexting” (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Thornburn et al., 2021), “coercive sexting” (Kernsmith et al., 2018) or in the context of relationships, “commitment manipulation” to pressure a partner (Drouin et al., 2014). We identify all these practices as forms of image based sexual harassment. Research has also looked at the pressures *between boys* to secure nudes, and prove they have them by sharing non-consensually, as part of their heteronormative homosocial masculinity status (Ravn et al., 2019; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015), calling this, for instance, the “dark side of sexting” (Clancy et al., 2019). We likewise reframe these practices as forms of image-based sexual abuse. Young people are also increasingly being sent unwanted male nudes (e.g., dick pics), which has been called “cyberflashing” and is becoming a new criminal offence in England (McGlynn & Johnson, 2020). We position unwanted dick pics as another form of image based sexual harassment, but in addition, we look at increasingly common practices of boys and men sending unwanted and unasked for dick pics as part of the solicitation for girls to send them a nude back called a “transactional dick pic” (Mandau, 2019, 2020; Salter, 2016). We discuss transactional dick pics as a type of doubled form of image-based sexual harassment and abuse showing the entangled and gendered nature of IBSHA.

A range of international research has demonstrated how non-consensual image sharing has worse sexual stigma, shaming and victim blaming for girls because of sexual double standards (Burén et al., 2022; Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2020; Ringrose et al., 2013). We classify how lack of consent constitutes practices of harassment and abuse outlining a range of examples from across our diverse school sites that show how these practices are often ignored or even condoned in the educational settings under study. A further area of international research has critiqued how victim blaming but also sexual shaming has been the dominant format of anti-sexting education resources (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Dobson & Ringrose, 2015; Hasinoff, 2015). This body of research also suggests that by focusing on deterring girls from taking and sending images, boys’ masculinity practices have been neglected in educational practices (Oswald et al., 2019; Ravn et al., 2019; Salter, 2016). Jørgensen et al. (2019) argued similarly, digital “sext education” needs to be improved to incorporate contextual issues of power, gender, trust, and communication to better support young people. In our final section, we look at our participants’ call for harassing and abusive practices to be clearly identified and addressed in their sex education provision.

CURRENT STUDY

Methodology

We employed both qualitative and arts-based approaches in order to allow youth voices to be heard (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002) with two forms of data informing this study: (1) focus group transcripts and (2) drawings and mind maps. First, we utilized focus groups, as an approach to understanding youths' experiences (Bragg et al., 2018). Focus groups have been employed to research topics among youth (Bragg et al., 2018; Ringrose et al., 2013) to provide children of similar ages the opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions among their peers.

Our methodology combined the focus group discussion with a drawing and reflection period after the main discussion. In the arts-based part of the workshop, we asked young people to draw some of the experiences they had discussed. We drew on Venema and Lobinger's (2017) use of participatory drawing and relational maps of how participants share images online adapting this to the youth context to explore which platforms they used to share images and how this worked. Arts-based research with young people, including drawing and other techniques, has been shown to offer additional opportunities for sharing experiences than simply relying on talk-based engagement as with conventional interviewing. These methods are particularly relevant in working with sensitive issues like sexual and gender based violence and allowing a range of participation styles in research, for those whom talk may be more difficult (Renold, 2018). Participants were encouraged to creatively respond to any issues raised in discussion or their drawings by suggesting improvements to digital sex education, through mind maps, lists, and diagrams.

Throughout the fieldwork collection process, we closely followed a strict ethical protocol of signed informed consent in all interviewing and anonymization of all data (including school sites, transcriptions, screenshot images, and drawings). We also began by establishing ground rules of respect and confidentiality in all the focus groups at which either a trained practitioner from an educational organization we worked with or a teacher were present along with members of the research team.

Sample

We were interested in diverse youth's complex intersecting identities and the ways this shaped their experiences of image sharing practices and when and how this became forms of IBSHA. The researchers and trained practitioners conducted focus groups in seven highly diverse secondary schools and one university, using group discussion and participatory arts-based methods. The sample included 88 girls and four young women, and 55 boys and two young men, and one gender-fluid young person; in addition, one of the older boys openly identified as gay. The vast majority of our research sample was with aged 15 and under, which may have contributed to the fact that we had only a few participants who openly identified as gay or non-binary. The study was conceived as school-based, and access to schools was negotiated through our charitable partner a sex education organization working in hundreds of schools nationally. A call was put out to their schools network to participate and access was subsequently negotiated with volunteer schools. This combines both convenience and purposeful modes of sampling since we wanted to work with young people in secondary school, (this is years [or grades] 7–13, which means the school participants were aged 12–18 during the summer months that we interviewed them) but we also

worked with those schools that volunteered to take part. However, when we were presented with an opportunity to work with a first year undergraduate group in a university we used the opportunity to discuss these young adult's retrospective views on image exchange when they were in compulsory secondary school settings. Overall, the study offers insights into an interesting and unique age range between 12 and 18 in Secondary School and between 19 and 21 in the university setting.

As can be seen in Table 1, four of the secondary schools were mixed state comprehensives; and three were independent schools ("single sex" boy, girl, and mixed boarding), meaning we had a highly diverse sample spanning both elite educational sites as well as some of the most deprived educational wards in the country. The University was a mid-ranked university in the South East of England. Prior to data collection, we obtained full ethical approval for our project from the University Research Ethics Advisory Group. For all participants 16 years and younger, we obtained parental consent to participate in the research.

Data collection

Focus groups were approximately 2 hours long during double lesson periods. They were carried out in a variety of room settings in the schools depending on space and availability these ranged from classrooms, school offices, and in one setting a corner of the school library. Constraints in the schools also led to differing sized focus groups given timetabling and scarcity of rooms, particularly in the more deprived schools, with some groups being larger than others, but in these cases we had two interviewers to support facilitation of the groups. Following advice from teachers, these focus groups were conducted in either single-gender, or mixed-gender when appropriate and coordinated with young people's friendship groups. With consent, discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure confidentiality, participants used pseudonyms, and transcripts were anonymized as noted.

We began by showing visual prompts, professional images taken from both advertising in public spaces alongside user generated selfie images in order to spark discussion about how young people understood nearly nude images. First, was a picture of a girl in bikini bottom from a London Underground Tube advert, and second, was a similar mirror "belfie" (that is a butt selfie in the bathroom mirror). We also used torso adverts and torso and abs selfies of men. We used the visual prompts to spark discussion of perceptions of sexualized images of women's and men's bodies in public spaces like the beach and the gym, and in private spaces like the bathroom or the bedroom, but also the differences between professional images and user-produced images. From here discussion typically moved swiftly onto young people's experiences of creating, sharing and receiving images and the predominance of social media networks for engaging with images including posting and receiving images, both consensually and non-consensually.

After the focus group discussion, we moved on to a drawing and reflection period. In this arts-based section of the workshops, we provided paper templates that showed a blank display screens to facilitate drawing activities on Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook. We asked young people to draw for us some of the scenarios that had been discussed throughout the session. Arts-based practices have been shown to offer a powerful conduit for young people to express their ideas and views beyond talking, and are particularly suited for sensitive topics such gender and sexual based violence where young people may be reluctant to discuss issues with a wider group (Renold, 2018) (Figure 1).

TABLE 1 Breakdown of participants by school, school type, location, year groups, and genders

School name	School type	Location	Year groups	Genders
			Year 7 (aged 11–12) Year 8 (aged 12–13) Year 9 (aged 13–14) Year 10 (aged 14–15) Year 12/13 (aged 16–18) University Year 1 (aged 19–21)	
South East London Community School—(SELC)	Mixed state secondary	South East London	Year 8 (aged 12–3)	12 Mixed (4 boys, 8 girls)
			Year 10 (aged 14–15)	7 girls
			Year 10	6 boys
North East London Academy—(NELA)	Mixed state secondary	North East London	Year 7 (aged 11–12)	8 girls
			Year 8	2 girls
			Year 9 (aged 13–14)	3 girls
			Year 10	5 Mixed (2 girls, 3 boys)
Central London Mixed Comprehensive One (CLC1)	Mixed state secondary	Central London	Year 7	5 boys
			Year 7	8 girls
			Year 9	6 girls
			Year 9	6 boys
Central London Mixed Comprehensive Two (CLC 2)	Mixed state secondary	Central London	Year 9	4 girls
			Year 9	3 boys
			Year 10	4 girls
			Year 10	2 boys
Swans Independent School for Girls	Girls independent with mixed 6th form	South West England	Year 8	8 girls
			Year 9	8 girls
			Year 10	8 girls
			Year 12/13 (aged 16–18)	8 Mixed (5 girls, 3 boys)
Lords Independent School for Boys	Boys independent	North London	Year 9	3 boys
			Year 9	3 boys
			Year 10	4 boys
			Year 10	3 boys
South East Independent Boarding School (SEI Boarding)	Mixed independent	South East England	Year 8	8 girls
			Year 8	10 boys
South East University	Public research university	South East England	Undergraduate First year (aged 19–21)	6 Mixed (4 women, 2 men)

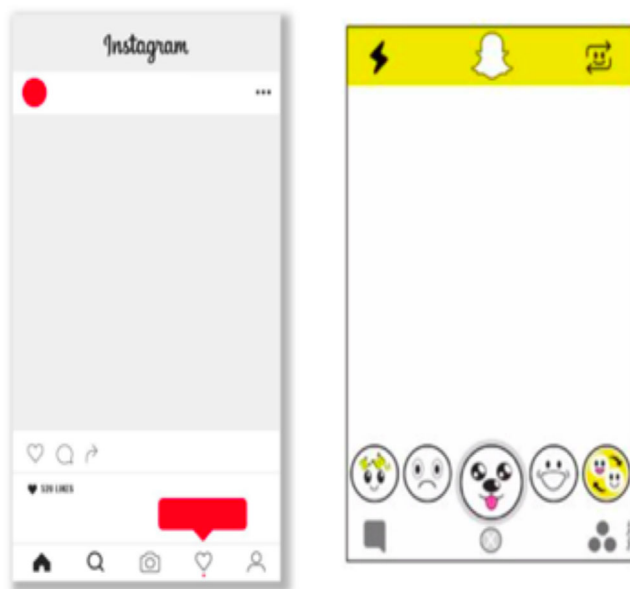


FIGURE 1 Images of Instagram and Snapchat paper templates used in the study [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

We found that the combination of discussion in focus groups and arts-based practices of drawing in a reflection period, opened space for participants to communicate in different ways. The drawing also mitigated some of the concerns about consensus or dominant voices in the focus groups, by offering young people space to individually depict their experiences, concerns and views through their drawings. The drawing methodology enabled us to explore the specificity of content shared and received, particularly important, the drawings enabled them to reproduce disappearing media like Snapchat images, of which there is often no record (Charteris, et al, 2018; Handyside & Ringrose, 2017) (Figure 2).

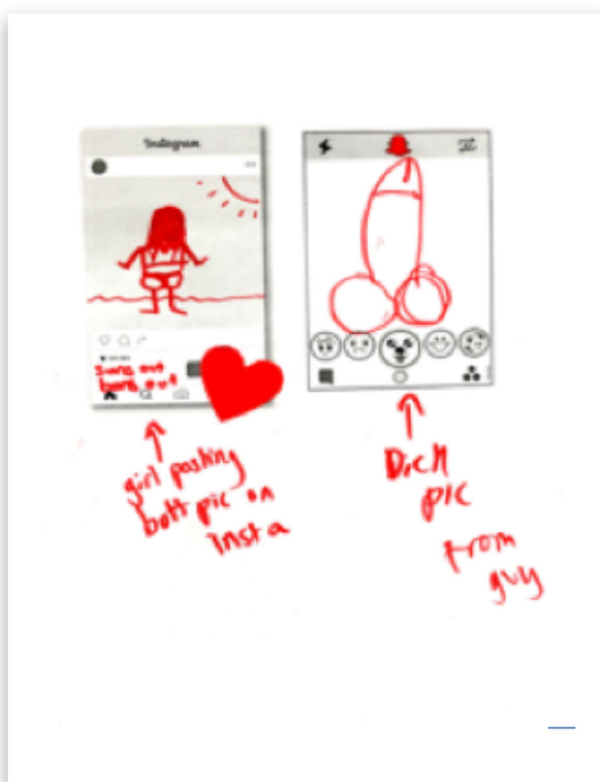
We also asked the younger participants to creatively respond to any issues raised in the discussion or their drawings by presenting top tips for better digital sex education, and they created mind maps, lists and diagrams (see Figures 3–5).

Significantly with the older participants (in year 12- and first-year university) we did not ask them to do drawings, rather we shared some of the (anonymized) drawings from the younger participants and we asked them to discuss what advice they would give around digital relationships to younger children or a younger version of themselves.

Data analysis

We conducted manual thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006), starting with the focus groups data to generate initial codes, organize connected codes, and then how these codes appeared in the drawings. First we analyzed the data by school/university site and then we compared the themes across all sites. We used feminist discourse analysis to examine *gender and power* in the data (Lazar, 2007). In this paper we focus on three themes related to how gender inequitably shapes young people's experiences of nude and nearly nude imagery. We explore how gender creates inequity in: (1) being pressured to send nudes, (2) pressure to non-consensually share nudes, (3) differential consequences of having nudes shared non-consensually. We move from our

FIGURE 2 Images of “belfie” (butt selfie) and an unwanted “dick pic from a guy on Instagram and Snapchat templates drawn by Alice, (Year 8, 13-year-old girl, Swans). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



initial coding/themes to classify these experiences as forms of Image-Based Sexual Harassment and Abuse (IBSHA), which forms the argument of this paper. Finally we look at one further theme from our study which is young people expressing how their digital sex education was lacking a gendered understanding and should change to address the experiences that we outline as IBSHA.

FINDINGS

Pressure for girls to send nudes: Image based sexual harassment

The first element of gendered image based sexual harassment that we want to explore is being pressured to send nudes. This phenomena has been frequently called “pressured sexting” (Van Ouytsel et al., 2021) but we want to reposition this pressure as image based sexual harassment. In our research, the pressure to send an image presented itself in various ways, including girls being called “frigid” if they did not comply with requests. The terms “frigid” and “cold” were employed frequently in the groups to imply that girls were immature or that they needed to “grow up” and engage in (hetero)sexual exchanges and banter. This concurs with Thomas’ findings (2018), which suggest that young women can experience coercion to send nude images and are caught between pressures to please and be desired and gain sexual status and be rewarded for their images and awareness of the considerable risks of having their images shared by the peer group (see also Setty, 2019).

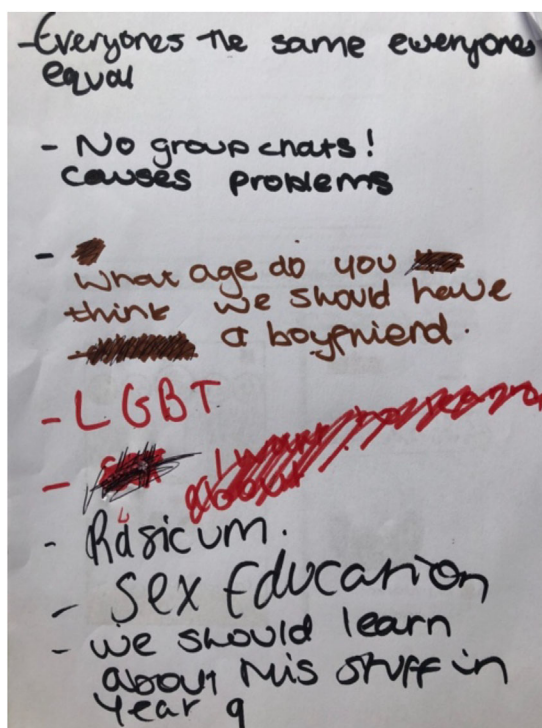


FIGURE 3 Amber's (Year 8, 13-year-old girl, NE LA) list about what she learned and did not learn about in sex education and what she would like to learn more about including "group chats," "LGBT," "racism," and she asks: "what age do you think we should have a boyfriend." [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Girls and boys across the study confirmed girls were pressured to send images by boys:

Rupert: Most girls nowadays they're pressured to send stuff cause they think that boys wouldn't like them if they didn't. Mainly that's why they send stuff to boys just peer pressure or pressure from others because if they want to like a boy they send stuff so that they like them back...

Here we can see boys have a casual acceptance of image based sexual harassment as the norm linked to girls wanting boys to like them. Figure 6 drawn by a 14 year old girl acknowledges the pressure to send nudes, encouraging the viewer "don't feel pressured."

The girls were also acutely aware of the risks in sending images. For instance, at a mixed comprehensive school situated in one of the most deprived wards of North East London, the girls' expressed a resignation at image sharing, acknowledging it was a widely expected practice which they would of course do "when they were older," because it was a "logical" step in relationships. They also, however, expressed that in almost all cases, regardless of the nature of the relationships, and even if an image had been sent consensually, it would eventually get non-consensually shared with others:

Lola: eventually that picture's gonna go out everywhere.

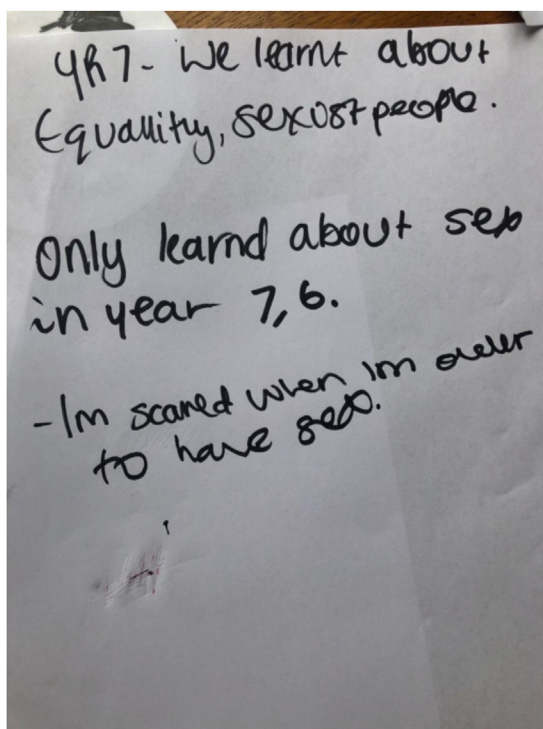


FIGURE 4 Amber's list continued, "I'm scared when I'm older to have sex" [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Destiny: Yeah, it always comes out, and that person will obviously screenshot it or send it to Snapchat, or they might do it privately, they might show people, and the person that take the picture of it, you might not even know.

Lola: You might get bullied for it as well.

Tiana: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, you wouldn't trust to send to a boy because you think that something would happen to that picture.

Tiana: Yeah.

Interviewer: Across the board?

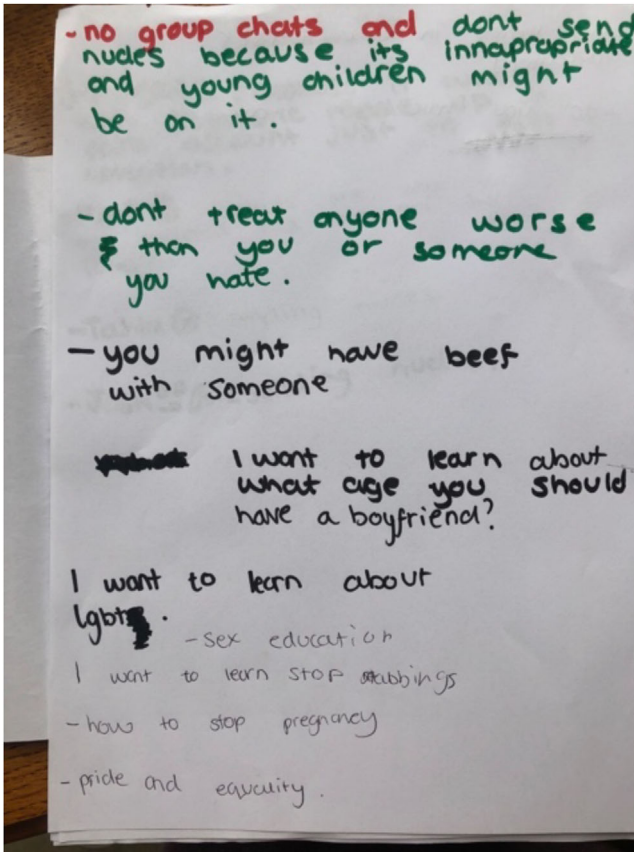


FIGURE 5 Sabina's (Year 8, 13-year-old girl, NELA) list of what she learned and did not learn about in sex education and what she would like to learn more about including "group chats," "nudes," and she asks like Amber: "I want to learn about what age you should have a boyfriend?" [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Lola: Yeah. (NELA, Year 10, Girls)

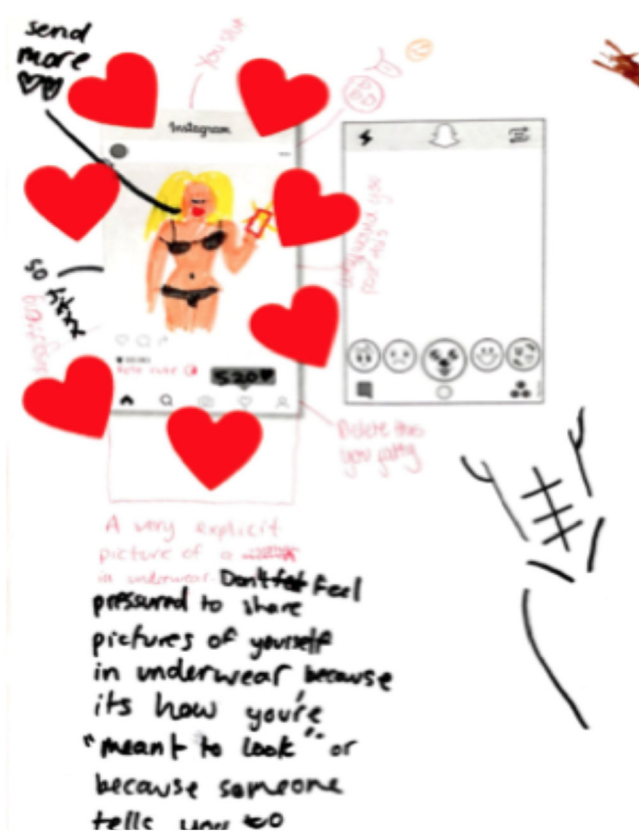
These girls collectively assume that all nudes would be shared with other people and Lola states that if a nude of a person gets shown to others' they "might get bullied for it as well." Here we can see how image based sexual abuse is expected and completely normalized in the peer group, but not only that, victim blaming of those whose images have been shared non-consensually is also the norm, rather than empathy for victims of IBSHA they can be bullied by peers.

Pressures for boys to non-consensually share nudes: Image based sexual abuse

Image based sexual harassment of pressuring girls to send nudes is compounded by pressures among boys to share the images on to prove that they have them and to garner masculinity reward for this practice (Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2020). The below example comes from an "all boys" independent school (that is wealthy and elite context):

Rufus: Yeah, I know a couple of people who would say yeah, I got a nude image from this person they'd be like, ah just let me see. Let me see. They'll just persistently ask. Oh, I just want to see. I just want to see and then they just share.

FIGURE 6 “Send more”—tips for girls: “Don’t feel pressure to share pictures of yourself,” drawings on Instagram and Snapchat paper templates, Danni (Year 9, 14-year-old girl, Swans). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



George: Yeah.

Rufus: But I thought like electronically sending it like probably people would send it to their really close friends but I don't think in general, peer pressure is like. It's just a friend.

George: It all starts with the person that receives it. I mean, no one's gonna know you got sent this or that and you have to mention it.

Freddie: It's quite common as well. Like after people, like at the end of a relationship.

Arlo: They expose it.

Rufus: Yeah, they expose the person like put things in the story of that person, cause like you know obviously there's a bit of bitterness between them.: That's only if you kept the images which is why you shouldn't keep them in the first place.

(Lords, Year 10, Boys Group 2)

Lords was an elite schooling environment on the outskirts of London in an idyllic semi-rural location. On the same plot of land was an adjoining girls' school, which we tongue in cheek gave the pseudonym of "Ladies Independent." The grounds were divided by a stern iron fence to separate interaction with the school's sister school, Ladies, situated across the field. In our discussions nude images from the girls at Ladies Independent school came up repeatedly across the focus groups, indicating the iron fence was irrelevant in a context of digital image exchange:

Dan: I've never actually seen somebody, like send me nudes (digitally) but I've seen somebody on their phone and show it to me.

Fin: that means you still know that they've, you know that they've sent it so they still got that Kudos at least like, you know they don't have it to share with other people.

Sam: I don't think people actually intend to cause harm.

Interviewer: What are the intentions?

Dan: Just to show their friends that they received them.

Sam: Yeah.

Fin: To get gassed.

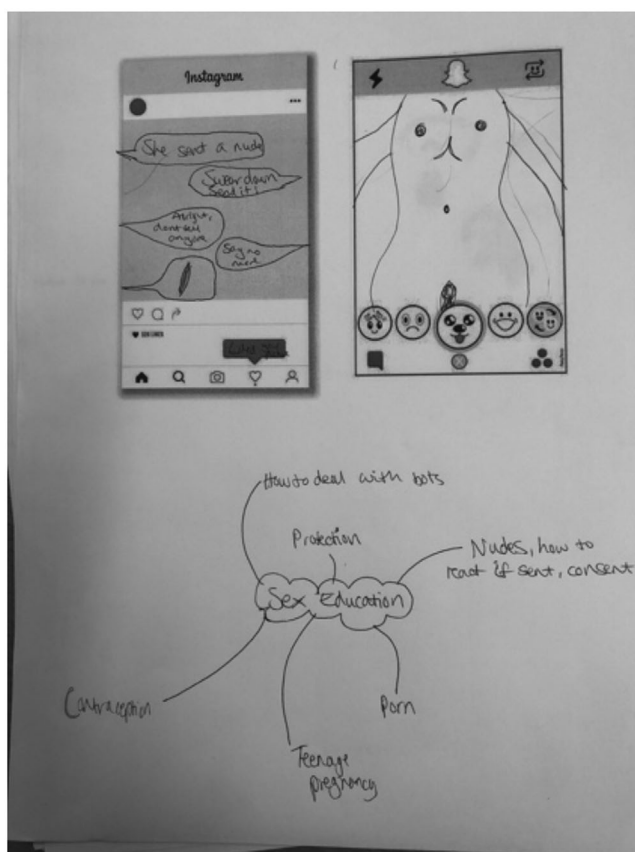
Sam: Yeah. Then I think it's seen almost like other like, well other like sexual acts it's seen like it's similar to receive nudes.

Fin: Just something to be proud of I guess.

(Lords, Year 10, Boys Group 1).

Like Rufus above, Dan explains the practice of needing to show other boys you have an image to prove that the girl has sent one and for the boy to gain "kudos." What is significant is that he describes seeing the image that has been sent to another boys' phone. The boy has avoided the possibility of a digital foot print by showing his friends in person on his screen rather than forwarding it digitally. However, this act of showing others private images must still be classified

FIGURE 7 “She sent a nude. Swear down Send it! All right, don’t tell anyone,” on Instagram and Snapchat templates, dialogue drawn by Sami (Year 9, 14 year old girl CLC1).



as a form of image based sexual abuse, although the boys in this focus group actively work against this idea, claiming that the intentions are to “get gassed” (regard from friends) and “just something to be proud of.” Pressure *between* boys to share images they have received, has been explored as homosocial masculinity pressures to gain recognition from male peers (Harvey & Ringrose 2015; Ravn et al., 2020). Also significant for our arguments is that the boys expressed no awareness of these dynamics of their activity as harmful or illegal despite telling us later that they had received sex education lessons on consent.

In Figure 7, we can see a girl drawing the dynamic between boys that we have been discussing. The message exchange says- “she sent a nude” and then the response requesting to send it to the group right away to “swear down” or prove it to the group of male friends, and the response is “allright—don’t tell anyone.” Then another speech bubble comes in saying “say no mate.” This drawing shows girls are very aware of the types of pressures between boys to send these images, and they would like boys to intervene into these practices, and “say no.” We saw little evidence that boys felt capable of intervening into these practices of image based sexual abuse when they were happening in their peer group.

Gendered IBSHA: Sexual double standards, sexual shaming, and victim blaming of girls

Some research has claimed that girls and boys share images non-consensually at similar rates (Madigan et al., 2018), but our study found that independent of how frequently this happens, the qualitative relations of sharing of images of boys' and girls' bodies are dramatically different because of sexual shaming and stigmatization of girls images in contrast to boys. In this section we will explore how girls have much longer lasting detrimental effects on their social capital and sexual reputations by looking at several episodes of IBSHA (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Ringrose et al., 2013; Thomas, 2018) across our highly diverse school settings. We also show how little is typically done to mitigate IBSHA in school settings.

In contrast to the dynamics around boys being able to use girls' nudes as currency amongst themselves we saw earlier, girls explained that boys' nudes did not hold the same value for them. They explained that dick pics were often sent non-consensually in the first place, changing the exchange dynamic (Harvey et al., 2013), lessening the capacity for girls to be able to use boys' penis images for their own sexual gain.

At Swans, an independent school in a wealthy suburb of south west of London, Grace, an enthusiastic and outgoing girl, stuck "like" heart stickers to her drawings on a large wooden table. She told us that if girls were to share or make visible images they'd been sent the girls would be shamed, in direct contrast to the behavioral norms we saw with the boys above:

Grace: Boys it's like a trophy, for girls it's like shameful to share (dick pics).

Lily: For boys it's kind of like, it heightens them up, they are like oh I got a girl.

Grace: It's normalised with boys to like to behave that way, I think.

(Swans, Year 9, Girls)

Grace succinctly explains how girls' nudes are used as "trophies" of masculinity amongst boys, a form of currency (see also Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2020, p. 6; Dodge, 2020). But what is significant in her point is that girls could not use dick pics as trophies and evidence of their sexual status in the same ways as boys could use images of girls to enhance their own value. We see evidence of a sexual double standard (Burén et al., 2022) built into practices of IBSHA, where evidence of digital sexual activity that is prestigious for boys can be positioned as shameful and lessening the sexual reputation and value of girls. Thus whereas it was common knowledge that boys needed to show images in order to prove the evidence of the images they had received, girls said they rarely share images of dick pics beyond a close friend or confidant.

We also heard numerous stories of dick pics being sent uninvited to girls with an accompanying request to send one back. This form of exchange has been called "transactional dick pics," they were common throughout the study and we had several drawings of dick pics with captions "send one back babes" or "its your turn" (see Figures 8 and 9).

We argue these transactional dick pics are doubled forms of image based sexual harassment since the image is sent without consent and is pressuring girls to send nudes back, another forms

FIGURE 8 “Send one back babes” on Instagram and Snapchat templates, Charli (Year 8, 13-year-old girl CLC1)

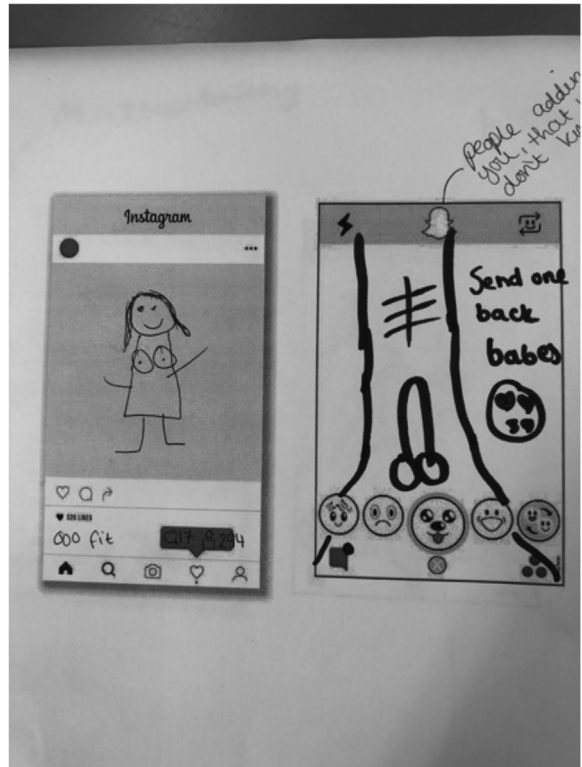
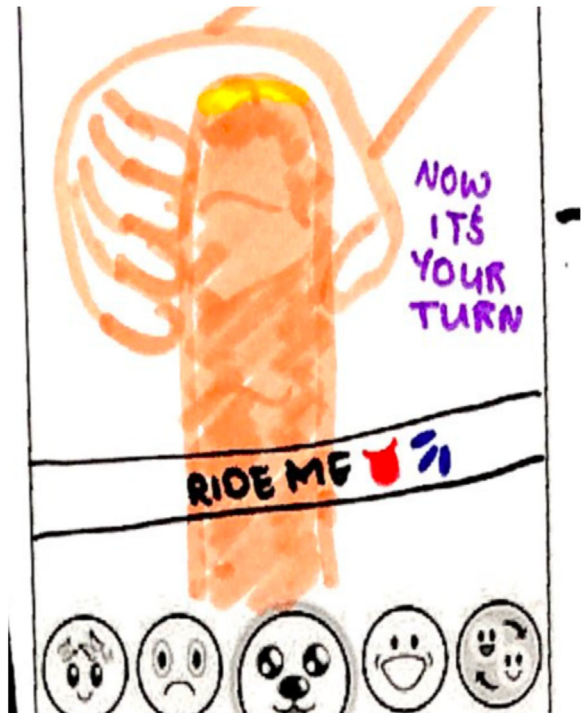


FIGURE 9 “Now its your turn” on Snapchat template, Claire (Year 8, 13-year-old girl, Swans) [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



of harassment. Unfortunately, these dynamics of harassment can often lead to further elements of abuse as we explore below.

One of the girls in the year 8 focus group at Swans Independent School for Girls was extremely reluctant to speak about her experiences receiving dick pics, given how shameful it was.

Interviewer: Do you have something you'd like to share? What do you think?

Pause.

Esme: (slowly) I think its happened to me. I was dating this boy, he said he was thirteen, and then I kind of, I kind of dated him, and then his best friend told me he's turning fifteen, so then, but then he used to send me nudes, and I didn't really like him as well, and he was also, he used to try to force me, but I didn't send, but everyone thought I did send him, and these rumours all spread around. A few people knew.

Interviewer: So what was that, did he like oh here's me, can I have you? Or what happened?

Esme: Yeah.

Interviewer: What was in the picture?

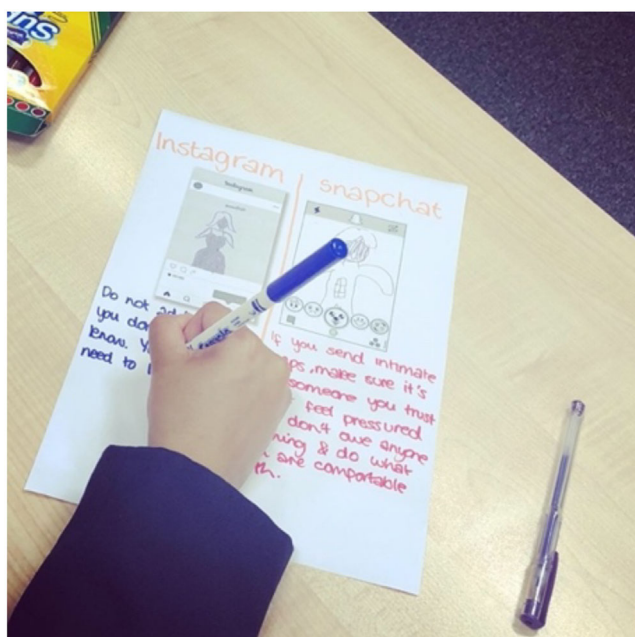
Esme: Dick pic...videos...Everyone told that I sent nudes to him but I never did...Because everyone was thinking like oh if he sent nudes she must have sent something for him to send nudes. And there was this Instagram page where you expose...they put something on you on there.

Interviewer: What did they put?

Esme: This girl is dating this fifteen-year-old and he sends nudes and she sends them back...Because people think that when boys send you nudes you send them back. It's like an exchange thing. And then like...And then, and then if you don't send boys back nudes they'll tell all their friends oh she sent those, because they don't want to be all like...

Claire: A rejected person.

FIGURE 10 Shanaz (Year 9, 14-year-old girl, CLC2) writing “do not” instructions about Instagram and Snapchat [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



(Swans, year 8).

It emerged that this boy in an elite schools network, was the son of a diplomat and used his considerable social power and entitlement to harass Esme. When Esme did not send an image back in response to the dick pick, a further layer of abuse is levied when the boy shares her public details on a local Instagram “expose” page claiming she sends nudes, as a way to shame her because he has been “rejected,” a form of gendered trolling and sexual harassment called “doxing” (Mantilla, 2013). In our fieldnotes we recorded feeling a deep sense of shame from Esme in discussing this with the group, and intonations that she was somehow deserving of this abuse having “kind of dated” this boy. Esme concluded by saying “everyone was thinking ... she must have sent something for him to send nudes.”

Sexual double standards are also strongly shaped by culture, race, and religion (Ringrose et al., 2018). The next example is from a state secondary school, which was not officially a faith school but had a demographic of over 80% English as a second language and 75% Muslim population. The teacher in the school was eager for us to come in and conduct the research project as she noted the school had never had sex education; and would struggle to implement a sex education curriculum which was shortly becoming compulsory.

In our focus groups with year 9 and 10 girls, seven out of the eight girls wore a headscarf and identified as Muslim. The one who did not wear a headscarf identified as Black British and Christian. There has been very little research on Muslim youth and sexting (see Ghorashi for an exception, 2019). We found these girls spoke candidly about images articulating strong rules about what you should and should not do online: See Figure 10.

The year 9 girls animatedly related an episode where a boy and his cousin sent a fake dick pick to a girl in their class.

Fatema: there was this girl who had this crush on a boy in her form group...

Shanaz: ... So she was like kind of staring at him or whatnot and he almost plays her, because he didn't like her..... but he started like speaking to her and...

Fatema: Chatting to her... he was with his cousin at the time. So they just went like oh my God she'll probably do this, let's take advantage of it. ...

Shanaz: apparently he sent a... it was fake, it was fake (penis).

Fatema: And then she sent a picture of her boobs and her vagina basically to him.

Shanaz: He copied and pasted a picture from Google and sent her that.

Interviewer Of his...

Shanaz: Yeah, it was fake though, which obviously like, you know, kind of...

Fatema: I mean I don't know why she didn't see it because you could literally see the search tag in the thing, but she ended up sending pictures of her actual self to him, and gradually it got out and the whole year knew about it and it was just a very big thing because she kept denying it even though she kept her face in the pictures.

In the scenario described here, the girl in question was tricked into believing that she and the boy were in a mutual nude exchange cemented by the sign of desire—the dick pic sent to her asking for her nudes in return. We already start to get the sense from the conversation with the girls that moralizing and blame is projected upon the girl, who is constructed as naïve and in the wrong for not clearly “seeing” that the image was fake from an apparent search tag in the image; and she is also constructed as at fault for her image having “got out” to the whole year group since she sent the image in the first place; the victim blaming logic that has long been discussed as rife in youth digital sexual cultures (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Dobson & Ringrose, 2015; Hasinoff, 2015). The girls continue to discuss how they were shown the image of their ONCE “friend”:

Fatema: ... he showed us a picture, but he covered it, because he wanted to show me that it was her face... And that's when I realised it was her, because she was... Because she'd been lying to me about it.

Shanaz: We didn't believe that she actually sent it.

Fatema: Oh yeah she was best friends with her.



Shorifa: I didn't believe it either.

Interviewer: Yet you asked him to show you?

Shorifa: He showed *everyone*.

Fatema: He sent it to the boys... He took it as a very jokey thing.

In this scenario, the boy showed the group the face of the girl in the image on his phone but covered the naked body. The point of showing her face is to "out" the girl as having sent a nude because she had been denying it to her friends. Another participant uses the past tense to comment on the once "best" friendship of the girl in the photo. The boy is said to have taken the whole situation "as a very jokey thing." The behavior of the boy is viewed through a lens of humor rather than abuse. The implication is he did not intend to harm, which stems from a "boys will be boys" narrative. We also learned that the school did nothing to intervene. The girls explained that the teachers were worried about an extreme reaction from the father:

Interviewer: So her parents were called by the school?

Shanaz: No, not her dad.

Shorifa: I think only her mum knows.

Shanaz: Yeah, only her mum knows.

Fatema: And they didn't even say it was a boy, they said it was one of her friends, because number one...

Shanaz: Yeah. They said it was a girl even though... with her dad I don't know what would have happened to her if they told her dad.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Shanaz: She would probably like get in trouble, like in big trouble like, she probably would have been sent somewhere or... I'm not sure, like that's her family, but...

Fatema: Sent back home or whatever.

Here we can see extreme stigma falling upon a Muslim girl who has been pressured to send a nude through a fake dick pic and her nudes are then shared non-consensually around the school by the boy. It is important that we take into account the intersectional complexities of the young people's social positionings and how culture, race and religion also intersect and shape the sexual double standards in play (Ringrose et al., 2018). There are no implications for the boy and indeed the school makes a decision to keep this incident quiet due to fears about an extreme reaction from the girls' father. While this may be a pragmatic decision, our analytical point is that the girl is subjected to slut shaming and victim blaming in part because the episode is not understood or addressed as one of IBSHA, with long lasting detrimental impacts upon the girl who is ostracized from her peer group.

Our final example returns to an elite educational setting. At Lords "single sex" independent school for boys, year 10 boys explained a situation where images of both a boy at Lords and a girl at the neighboring elite girls' school, Ladies, are leaked to the wider networked peer group of both schools and even wider beyond these school sites:

Sam: There's definitely one instance in our school that I can think of. And it went quite big of this girl. And uh, she sent like quite a few pictures that were really bad to boys... in our year. Um, well two boys... who then kept them and do show other people and then she's had quite a bit of... hate,

Fin: Yeah... there was a boy, um, who's not in our year that sent um, this girl a picture of his, um, like private areas. And then it got, she basically took a picture of it and then distributed between all of the girls' school and then they found out. So it's kind of, there's also, it kind of depends on the person that you send it to if you actually trust them.

Sam: People almost took the mic out of him a bit like ah you did this and it got shared... And especially with the person they did it with...

Fin: Because the girl was known for already doing stuff like that. Constantly. ..There was another case of it... sending pictures of exposed areas to boys, she'd always do that.

Fin: Yeah... she was a bit of um...

Dan: Desperate.

Fin: she's had quite a bit of, not hate, but people don't really want to be friends with her anymore after they found out that it was her.



Rupert: He was quite popular. It didn't have really have an effect on his popularity ... I think it's more about what the girl sent and the boy doesn't really have any repercussions.

(Lords, Year 10, Boys).

In this example nudes of a boy and a girl are both circulated amongst the networked peer group of the two schools in question and wider. However we can see the boys in their discussion of the episode offer dramatically different readings of the implications of the "leaked nudes" for the girl and the boy. The girl receives "hate" and the withdrawal of friends. In addition the girl is constructed as a certain type, known for "doing stuff like that" and therefore "desperate," so her sexual reputation is brought into it and she is shamed. In contrast, the boy is said to have had "the mic taken out of him" (which means some teasing about the episode) but critically they say it did not really have an effect on his popularity or "really any repercussions." This is important since we can see that both young people are victims of non-consensual image sharing and posting (which must be classified as image based sexual abuse) but they have completely different consequences from these experiences in the peer group, at school and beyond.

As we have noted, these types of scenarios came up across all our research sites, where boys had the capacity to laugh off their nudes being non-consensually shared but girls suffered sexual shame and stigma and are blamed for their own victimization. In South East London Comprehensive (SELC) an inner-city mixed comprehensive school, a girl positioned this dynamic in the following way: "I feel like if like, if like a guy, if his nudes get leaked like it doesn't really matter that much, but then for a girl she'll be made to feel like a slut, or like, you know." These examples again clearly highlight the sexual double standards in the youth digital sexual cultures (Burén et al., 2022), where girls are shamed for their sexual images being non-consensually shared, but in contrast boys might even be praised for their dick pics being "flung around" as the girls in South East London Comprehensive put it: "If they've got a decent angle they will just *parade it* (their penis) as much as they want, and they do not care." (SELC, Year 10 girls). These findings align with Ricciardelli and Adorjan's (2018) Canadian research, which also compared the impact of girls and boys' images being shared non-consensually, and whose participants suggested that when boys' nudes leak it does not matter, and its "a way bigger deal" for girls who will be made to feel like a slut (p. 563). Our final section looks at how educational settings need to grapple with these long lasting detrimental effects upon girls' well-being.

IBSHA EDUCATION: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Returning to the research encounter with the university students with which we started this paper, we want to return back to the school assembly in Sussex, as narrated by Caroline, where the headmaster put up blurred screenshots of students engaged in a sexual act that had been non-consensually shared on Facebook by the male student. First, the headmaster showcases an example of IBSHA, without of course identifying it as such. These sorts of typical (in)actions by schools have the potential to perpetuate harm, as the loss of control over personal images can re-traumatize (Regehr et al., 2021) and re-abuse (Biber, 2013) survivors of sexual violence. Along these lines, Caroline reflected on how damaging the assembly was noting it had "scarred her"

proclaiming passionately that schools had to change from getting it so “terribly wrong” in order to protect young people and equip them with “objective” knowledge about sex:

Caroline: It should be taught exactly the same way any other subject is taught. I have a lot of knowledge of geography because I’ve been forced to learn. . . . So, they should teach you about sex, what sex is and then like the different types of sex

Many girls noted similarly that the school needed to shift from a focus on nude images as sexually shameful for girls and that if these images got out they could “damage their careers” (Flora, Year 10 Swans) to an understanding of the nuances of different forms of sexual abuse and harm around how images are treated by others. Likewise as suggested by Monique at an inner city comprehensive in East London:

Monique: sexual assault. . . most teenagers don’t know that, so they don’t do anything about it, and they just leave it. And they’re feeling bad.

Interviewer: That’s really useful and important, have you been taught about sexual assault in your sex education?

Monique I don’t know what every single sexual assault is, I don’t know what you could define it as! (SELC, Year 10 girls)

In this excerpt, Monique is outraged that she’s never been taught about sexual assault and could not even define it. She went on to draw a mind-map (see Figure 11) about how schools need to address online sexual assault in sex education, including discussions of “sending unwanted picture,” “screen shotting your pictures or videos” and images “popping up” (like dick pics). Another mind map from this group by Serena (see Figure 12) outlines how sex education needs to cover “sexual assault,” “body shaming,” “nudes,” “private information,” “influencers” and much more.

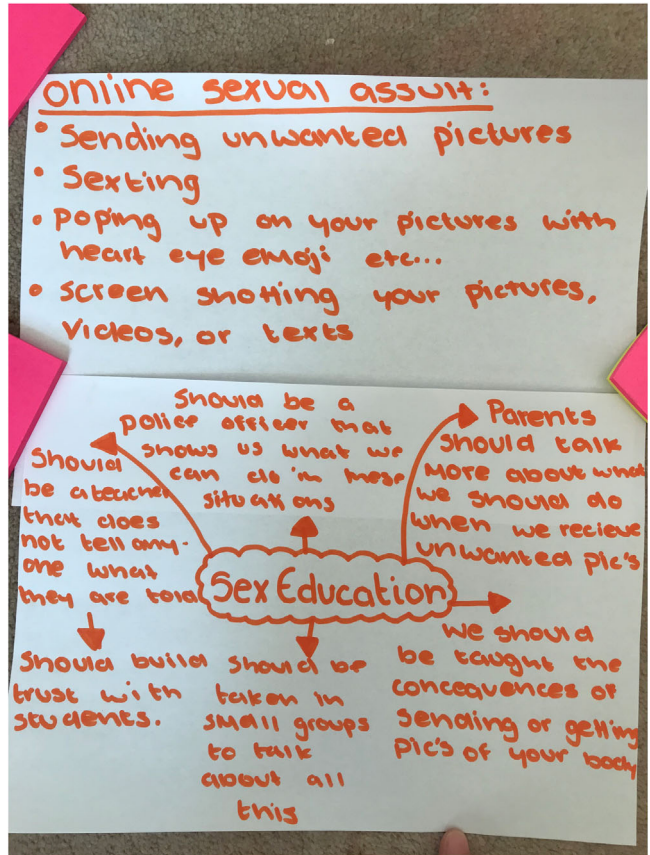
Girls were also adamant that the messages needed to shift from a policing of girls’ bodies to a focus on boys’ attitudes. Indeed, despite getting some sex education and anti-sexting assemblies, most had never been taught anything about receiving dick pics or unwanted images. For example, at Swans, they agreed there was no education focused on boys’ understanding issues of images and consent, connected to basic issues of respect:

Olivia: You need to somehow get across to the boys, before they get this I don’t care attitude, that it is unacceptable to send an unsolicited dick pic to a girl, because it’s just, it’s not, it’s disrespectful.

Grace: Yeah.

Olivia: Not for any oh it will be shared and all of this fearmongering, you need to somehow get them to understand that it’s disrespectful.

FIGURE 11 Monique’s (Year 10, 15-year-old girl, SELC) “Online Sexual Assault” and “Sex Education” mind map [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Grace: Yeah, it’s not right.

Olivia: Morally unacceptable.

Grace: Boys and girls should be taught the same.

Olivia: Yeah.

Grace: Yeah. A hundred percent.

Olivia: Every time they split us...

Grace: So they should have the foundation in them, when they’re younger, they could apply it to sexual relationships and stuff.

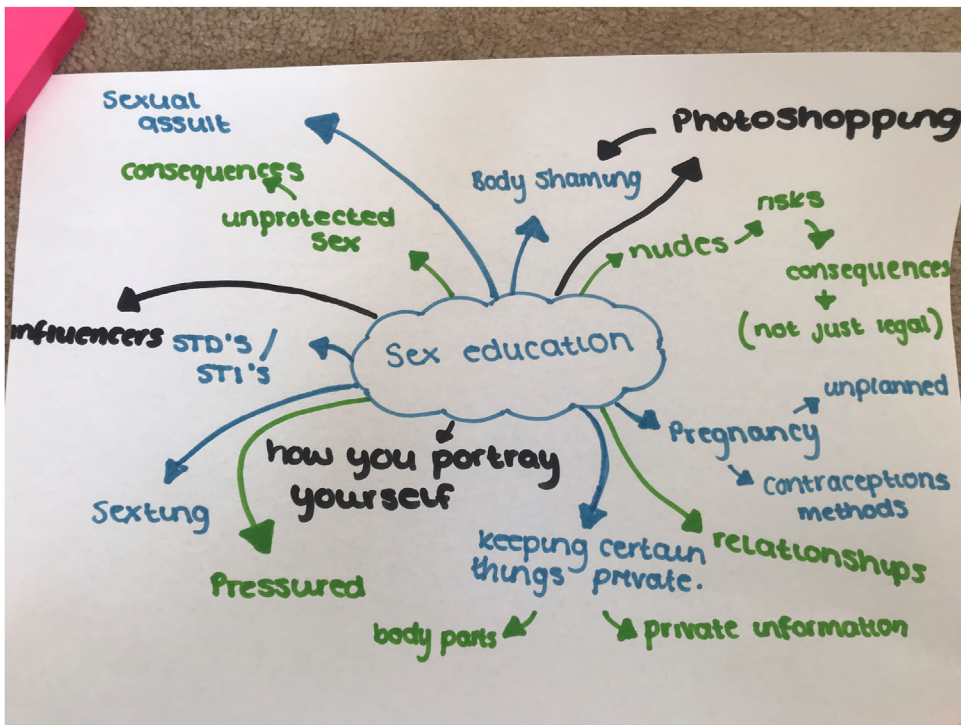


FIGURE 12 Serena's (Year 10, 15-year-old girl) "Sex Education" mind map [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Olivia: Yeah. (Swans year 9 girls)

The girls say again that "fearmongering" from schools about the consequences for girls if their images are leaked is harmful. Rather girls want the focus to be shifted onto discussion of the practices of masculinity and issues of respect and morality.

In Figure 13 the girl outlines a similar message of wanting "people to be taught about asking for pics" and "the effects asking for nudes [has] on a girl" an explicit plea that boys be educated to not "pressure" girls which we have explored as a form of IBSHA. The same message was repeated by another mixed gender group of year 12 students at Swans:

Danny: It's kind of important maybe to tell the boys maybe not to like send them to random girls, if they're gonna go oh like I'm gonna like find this random girl and add her to Snapchat and send her something, maybe tell them not to do that...

(boy, Swans Year 12 mixed group)

Together these excerpts emphasize the need for schools to move away from focusing on victims' behaviors and girls' future selves being blighted by their sexual images and rather shift to refocus the attention on boys' and masculinity practices in either perpetuating or contributing to a culture that normalizes image-based sexual harassment and abuse. Participants discussed the ways

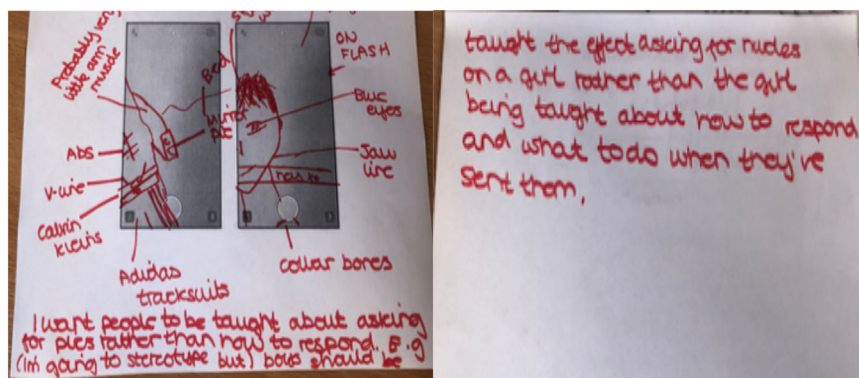


FIGURE 13 Olivia's (Year 9, 14-year-old girl) drawing abs and jawline, and message: "I want people [boys] to be taught about asking for pics rather than [girls] how to respond" [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

educational interventions need to refocus their attention toward eliminating the systemic gender norms that motivate boys to engage in these harmful practices. In these ways, students actively suggest strategies for raising awareness about and therefore reducing the perpetration of image-based sexual harassment and abuse through a shift in education that recognizes and addresses these phenomena.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have drawn from a qualitative, art-based study with 150 young people aged 12–21 to explore image sharing practices, using both the focus group transcripts and drawings young people produced. We have outlined how the various forms of pressure around sending and sharing images needs to be reconceptualized as forms of IBSHA. We have demonstrated how gendered pressures to send nudes experienced by girls is a form of image based harassment, and how pressures upon boys to secure nudes and prove they have them by sharing non-consensually (Van Ouytsel et al, 2021) is image based sexual abuse. In addition, we argue boys' sending nudes (dick pics) non-consensually (Mandau, 2019) is a form of image based sexual harassment, which can be compounded by harassment of girls to send back nudes. We closely examined several examples that conveyed the different gendered consequences of IBSHA, looking at how sexual double standards creates sexual shaming and victim blaming for girls, that are not experienced by boys in our study in the same ways. We also explained how this was also shaped by class, cultural and religious contexts. Finally, we documented how young people, especially girls, were calling out for a comprehensive understanding of digital sexual consent in their school settings. Throughout we used the young people's drawings, lists and mind maps alongside their spoken words to illustrate and bring to life their perspectives.

Responding to the unfairness and sense of injustice experienced by the young people in our study around the treatment of their images, our overall argument in this paper is that we need to be able to recognize and clearly identify IBSHA across diverse educational settings to better support young people. Simply naming the problem constitutes a radical first step toward being able to address these equity issues in schooling. This shift in awareness is beginning to take

place in the British policy context due in part to our own campaigning and partnerships and putting our research documenting young people's experiences of IBSHA into the public sphere (Ringrose et al., 2021). We are part of ongoing feminist struggles around redefining and altering social awareness of youth digital sexual cultures, using the concepts of technologically facilitated sexual violence (Powell & Henry, 2017) that can shine a light on digital harassment and abuse and thereby challenge the sexual double standards that enable sexual shaming and victim-blaming of girls (see also Burén et al., 2022). By moving away from the inadequate legal definitions that criminalize all underage sexual images to an understanding of how and when image sharing is non-consensual and therefore becomes harassing and abusive we shift how we make sense of social phenomena.

We argue that parents, teachers and schools need to grapple with these gendered and sexualized power relations in the online environment, and that IBSHA gives them the conceptual tools to do so. This can help them to recognize and address how online harms also travel offline—saturating experiences in and around schools as we have demonstrated through the experiences and voices from young people shared in our study. We have shown by failing to recognize or address IBSHA educational settings are condoning harm and in some case by providing misguided educational messages they have “scarred” young people for years into adulthood. It is only by acknowledging the degree and severity of IBSHA and how these practices, shaped by longstanding sexual double standards (Burén et al., 2022) and disproportionately impact girls, that schools can begin to tackle these normalized forms of abuse and support young people in navigating the complicated terrain of digital sexual cultures.

What gives us great hope is how some of the young people in our research were fighting this stream of logic, insisting that what is happening is not right or fair as they are questioning and challenging the (lack of) messages they have received and demanding a higher quality education that can offer “objective” knowledge and tools to support them. As scholars, we want to be a part of turning the dial—of shifting the epistemological and material conditions from shaming and blaming the victims of image based sexual harassment and abuse toward enabling conditions of social justice for all.

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