To send or not to send nudes:

New Zealand girls critically discuss the contradictory gendered pressures of teenage sexting.

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Abstract

Drawing on principles of participatory action research, we conducted workshop interviews with New Zealand secondary school girls about the dynamics of sexting between girls and boys. We worked with seven small groups of girls (28 in total) aged 16 and 17 (each participating in a series of three workshops). Talk about the pressures associated with sexting was a key theme in the discussions. Girls identified pressures both to send nudes and to not send nudes. They described these pressures as operating on interpersonal as well as wider sociocultural levels, marked by the complicated intersection of traditional discourses of heterosexuality with permissive and postfeminist discourses of empowered female sexuality. The dynamic participatory methodology we used allowed us to move beyond simply capturing a snapshot of the gendered dynamics of pressure. It provided a space in which girls also shared reflexive critical observations of the gendered inequalities associated with this practice.

Like many elements of socio-sexual culture, the practice of taking and sharing intimate digital images has been hailed as an avenue for enjoyable sexual expression and social bonding on the one hand, and scrutinized as a vehicle for potential coercion and abuse on the other. While "sexting" or "sending nudes" can clearly be animated by both pleasure and risk, its potential to go wrong is heightened by the very nature of digital technology, which makes the distribution of images that were intended to be private, effortless, instantaneous and potentially far-reaching. Given such nude or sexual images attract pejorative judgement, shaming and stigma when they are exposed beyond the private realm, their wider exposure can be very harmful to the person whose image is shared (e.g., Bates, 2017 in relation to "revenge pornography"; McGlynn et al., 2019, in relation to image-base sexual abuse). Increasingly scholars have situated the nonconsensual creation of intimate (nude, semi-nude, sexual, or sexualized) images and their nonconsensual distribution beyond their intended audience (including those that are consensually shared in the first place) under a rubric of "image-based sexual abuse" (e.g., McGlynn & Rackley, 2017; Flynn & Henry, 2019). While image-based sexual abuse is a broad umbrella, referring to diverse practices driven by different motivations, it includes both deliberate acts to intentionally cause harm as well as some acts that might be more carelessly woven into mundane peer interactions.

Public and professional concern about the risks and harms for young people of nonconsensual distribution has led to primary prevention efforts focussed on promoting caution around sharing intimate images of oneself, if not advocating complete abstinence. Abstinence approaches have been widely criticized by feminists for the way they can reinforce traditional victim-blaming, as well as for being out of touch with emerging cultural norms around image exchange more generally, and hence likely to be ineffective (e.g., Albury et al,. 2013; Albury, Hasinoff & Senft, 2017; Dobson & Ringrose 2016; Powell & Henry, 2014; Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013; see also Albury & Crawford, 2012). By putting

only the potential sender in the spotlight, they have frequently failed to address the cultural norms and behavioural ethics of those who receive and then show, share and distribute another person's intimate image. In New Zealand, for instance, Netsafe's[1] key message to concerned parents centred, until recently, on preventing young people from sexting in the first place.

A further limitation of prevention-via-abstinence approaches is that they are sorely inattentive to the complex cultural and interpersonal pressures that produce competing desires and/or concerns for people, and thereby constrain individuals' capacities to choose the "safe" path. Their messages thus proffer advice that is misleading in its apparent simplicity. For instance, qualitative research findings accumulated from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, and the United States build a convincing picture of the complex nature of sexting as it is shaped by broader sociocultural norms, discourses, and systems of gendered power – with young people's stories suggesting a sexual double standard still pervades contemporary digitally mediated culture (e.g., Albury, Crawford, Byron, & Mathews, 2013; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Handyside & Ringrose, 2017; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Johansen et al., 2019; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone, & Harvey, 2012; Salter, 2016; Thomas, 2018; Walker, Sanci, & Temple-Smith, 2013). This affects both the meanings of everyday (consensual) sexting as well as the gendered ramifications of image-based sexual abuse. As McGlynn and Rackley (2017, p. 6) remind us, "the boundaries between consensually and nonconsensually created sexual images are porous" (see also Henry & Powell, 2015). In terms of the gendered nature of everyday meanings, the young people in Albury et al.'s (2013, p. 10) focus group study, for instance, referred to a double standard in how self-representations were judged. Participants in one group suggested a young woman sharing a semi-nude image would be

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[1] Netsafe is the organization tasked by the government to promote internet safety.

judged for "'trying to look provocative and sexy and stuff'", yet "no one cared" in a case of a young man they knew who posted his own nudes on Facebook. As one young woman said, that's because "if a guy does it it's hilarious and it's so funny". Young Australians in Salter's (2016) focus group study were similarly quick to point out the different gendered meanings of public nudity. While a nude male image can mean "'whatever'", according to one participant, the public display of "female nudity means 'slut'" (p. 2728). As these accounts suggest, a gendered double standard appears to be a characteristic feature of sexting, wherein girls' involvement comes under critical scrutiny, while boys (generally) do not experience the same monitoring and negative judgement (see also Johansen et al., 2019).

Within girl-boy interactions, the likelihood of "nudes" being shared or distributed beyond their intended audience without consent is also highly patterned according to gender – in ways that are more likely to adversely affect girls (Ringrose et al., 2012). Not only do boys appear exempt from the same level of judgement for sending their own nudes, but some studies have suggested that "young men's involvement in sexting", such as through requesting and showing other boys intimate images of girls, can be regarded as "successfully masculine" (Walker et al., 2013, p. 699; see also Ringrose & Harvey, 2015), displaying masculine "symbolic capital" (Johansen et al., 2019; see also Salter, 2016) and contributing positively to their "sexual social status" (Renold & Ringrose, 2017, p. 1070). Ringrose et al. (2013), for example, heard accounts of boys gaining popularity among their peers by collecting, trading, and showing each other pictures of girls' bodies.

In addition to nonconsensual sharing and distribution of another person's intimate images, scholars have also drawn attention to the coercive aspects of some sexting, in which girls may feel pressured by boys to produce and send images (Burén & Lunde, 2018; Englander, 2012; Ringrose et al., 2012; Thomas, 2018; Van Ouytsel, Walrave & Ponnet, 2018; Walker et al., 2013). This is particularly evident in the context of socially significant,

intimate or desired relationships (Thomas, 2018; Walrave, Heirman & Hallam, 2014). Walker et al. (2013, p. 700) heard some stories of boys sending images of their penises to girls as a way to "get the girl to warm up to it a little more", as one participant put it, and encourage them to send an image in return. Thomas (2018, p. 193) reported that many of the young women represented in her study of online posts said that they had sent images when they didn't want to, in response to "persistent requests, threats and anger" from young men. She suggested these young women's digital exchanges mirror the problematic sexual interactions that women also often encounter in-person (see Gavey & Senn, 2014). Despite growing evidence that girls are sometimes pressured by boys to send nudes, and that this coercion is to some extent normalized, prevention messages have been slow to recognize this. Netsafe's online resource, "*So you got naked online: A resource for children, young people, their families & whanau*", for instance, included minimal discussion about pressure and suggested "most sexting is intentional" and "usually sexting occurs because a choice has been made to send an image or video" (Netsafe, 2016b, p.4). For the most part, information and advice provided by Netsafe in 2016 focused on the harms that may occur after a nude has been sent and then shown or distributed to others, without attending to dynamics of pressure and coercion that may occur *before* a photo has even been taken.

Previous research that has examined the pressure on girls to send nudes has implied or directly stated that the young participants in these studies largely took such pressures for granted as 'just the way things are', and held girls responsible for their part in sending an image in the first place. Walker et al. (2013, p. 699), for instance, found that the young Australians they interviewed tended to regard a girl who sent images "as responsible for the potential fallout that proceeds", even if she had been coerced to do so. Some said she would be an "idiot", "asking for it", "too slutty to care". While Dobson and Ringrose (2016, p. 17) found some cases where the young people in their Australian and UK studies questioned the

fairness of the sexual double standard, "noting the unfairness of girls being labelled 'sluts' for sexual behaviour that boys are rewarded for" (p. 18), they found overall "a strong discourse of girls' responsibility for their own harassment" (p. 17). Burkett's (2015) study of young people's "perceptions and experiences of sexualised culture" (p. 835) did not focus on nonconsensual sexting, but one of the young women she interviewed said that her boyfriend had shown his friend an image of her, when they were at high school. Although it was "so humiliating because people were talking about it and about me" she blamed herself for her "'silly' choices" and did not appear to regard her boyfriend and his friends' behaviour as "particularly problematic or unethical" (p. 849). This tendency for young people to generally not question the ethics of a boy's behaviour in pressuring a girl for nudes, or showing or distributing them without her consent, has been noted across these studies (e.g., Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Thomas, 2018; see also Salter, 2016).

In this article, we explore how girls from a New Zealand secondary school talked about the unequal gendered dynamics that produce competing pressures for girls to both send, and not send nudes. The project originated in conversation with a staff member at a [CITY] secondary school who identified sexting as an issue they were concerned about. Some girls from the school had recently had adverse experiences related to boys' inappropriate use of shared images. As we set out to examine the dynamics of sexting between girls and boys within this local context, we used a dynamic participatory methodology that would simultaneously foster space for girls' critical reflection on these dynamics.

Methodology

Drawing on elements of a critical participatory action research framework (see Cahill, 2007), we worked alongside the feminist group and key staff members at an [CITY]

secondary school to design and implement this study. We collaborated closely to frame the scope of the study, relevant questions, and a practical methodology. We then refined this methodology through an initial series of three workshop interviews with the feminist group (which were subsequently conducted with other groups of girls in the school). In this overall process, the girls in the feminist group were both research collaborators and research participants.

This early collaboration benefited the project by giving us a more grounded understanding of how the practice of sexting was situated within wider digitally mediated social relations between girls and boys. This local cultural knowledge guided us when refining our research questions and helped us to develop interview questions that were more likely to be relevant and meaningful to the participants. For example, girls in the feminist group recommended we use the term "sending nudes" rather than "sexting" as language more likely to make sense to members of the school community.

We used repeated workshop interviews rather than one-off focus groups, to allow for more in-depth discussions that could develop over time. Thus, as well as inviting girls to share and discuss their knowledge relating to sexting, we were able to provide them with a context for unpacking and critically reflecting on their knowledge and observations. To foster their critical engagement with the issues, we introduced conceptual resources, such as theoretical ideas from feminist social psychology and snippets of relevant research findings. This "dynamic sociocultural" approach draws on Freire's (1972) principles of critical pedagogy and Foucauldian ideas about the importance of discourse, knowledge and normative ways of understanding for enabling or constraining different ways of being and acting in the world (Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2019). In practical terms, we adopted a non-didactic Freirean "problem-posing" style within the workshops, to pose "commonsense assumptions, meaning categories and explanations of the world not as 'truth' but as problems

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to be investigated" (Calder-Dawe, 2014, p. 11). For example, if a girl was to draw on biologically essentialist discourses to explain gendered differences related to sending nudes ("boys will be boys"), our problem-posing style of facilitation would encourage pausing to observe such common sense assumptions in a way that signalled they may not be the only way of making sense of the issue. Most often this would simply translate into creating space for discussion and interaction among participants, leading to ideas and claims being unpacked, more broadly contextualised, and/or potentially refuted. At other times, we would directly pose questions that invited girls to further reflect and elaborate. In this sense the facilitation style is more active than may be usual in focus group or interview-based research that presumes a more static state of participants' knowledge and views; as it builds in a form of questioning that goes beyond seeking more detail and clarity. At the same time, we were careful to be non-didactic: our aim was to foster this problem-posing process in an open-ended way. While signalling that a particular claim or common sense assumption might be open to interpretation or contestation, our response would be styled to encourage girls to further reflect on and unpack an idea; never refuting their points or telling them what to think instead. This problem-posing method was chosen as a way to both map the contemporary discursive context of sexting (whereby participants were cultural informants), as well as foster and support critical insights into that context.

Participants

Twenty-eight girls participated, in groups ranging from 3 to 5. They were aged 16 (24 students) or 17 years old (4 students). On an open-ended questionnaire 27 participants identified their gender as female, and one as fluid. They identified their sexuality as: heterosexual/straight (18), bisexual (4), pansexual/maybe pansexual (2), and four participants provided no response to this question. Girls described their ethnicities as: British (1), Chinese (2), Indian (1), Iranian / Japanese (1), Māori / Pākeha (New Zealand European) (1), Māori /

Pasifika / Pākeha (New Zealand European) (1), Pākeha (New Zealand European) / Asian (1), Pākeha (New Zealand European) (12), PNG (1), Samoan (1), Samoan / Māori (1), and Taiwanese (1). The ethnicity of four girls was difficult to categorise (identified on an open-ended questionnaire as "New Zealander" [3] and "mixed" [1]).

We recruited the girls through daily school notices, inviting students who were interested in discussing "girls' perspectives on the topic of 'intimate online communication' – including the culture of 'sending nudes'". Students were invited to sign up within existing friendship groups (a feminist group recommendation, to make participants more comfortable), however, they also had the opportunity to sign up individually. The notice was withdrawn after two days when we had filled the spaces for six groups (girls in the feminist group formed a seventh group).

Workshop Interviews

Each of the seven groups participated in a series of three workshop interviews that were led by one facilitator from the research team (XX, YY and ZZ, who were all first year postgraduate students, and AA). In the first workshop session we focused on the broader social context, such as how girls talk with guys, and gendered stereotypes, introducing ideas from broad feminist sociocultural analyses, such as Hollway's (1989) dominant discourses of heterosexuality (see also Gavey, 2019), the sexual double standard, and so on. Towards the end of the first workshop we introduced the topic of sending nudes more specifically, and followed this up in the second workshop.

In the second workshop session, we invited girls to discuss a variety of questions around the practice, such as: How would you define sending nudes? How common is it? Who sends nudes, and who asks for them? And, in what situations? What are the motivations for sending nudes? What are the pressures around sending / not sending / having nudes? How is sending nudes different for girls and guys? Does sending nudes "go wrong" and in what

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ways? We had given girls an optional research assignment after the first workshop session, to talk with two or three other people their own age, who they trusted, about these questions. In some groups, girls' reports back from those conversations also fed into the discussions. Within the second session, we also provided participants with two handouts as prompts for discussion. One was information for parents on sexting and young people, from the Netsafe (2016a) website. The other was a one page summary of key findings from an Australian study exploring young people's views on the "nature and origins" of sexting (Walker et al., 2013). Our summary of these findings highlighted that "sexting is gendered and there's pressure on both young men and young women to be involved in it". As such, these resources introduced participants both to the gist of dominant local institutional formulations of risk and harm reduction (the Netsafe material) and to a feminist sociocultural analysis and the gist of research findings that highlight gendered dynamics around sexting. We asked how sending nudes was portrayed, spoken about and understood in different contexts and by different people.

The third workshop session focused on discussing the extent to which there are problems associated with sending nudes, how and why these problems function, and how they might be best addressed. We planned the workshops with structured activities and questions to focus the discussions, and implemented this somewhat flexibly to allow room for girls to discuss the issues in ways that were relevant and interesting to them. We were mindful of not restricting the discussions in ways that were presumptively heterosexual, however this heteronormative framing was a deliberate starting point, given the gendered nature of problematic issues that had been faced by the school within an educational context that is prominently gendered.

Workshop interviews were each approximately 45-60 minutes long, and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. We assigned participants pseudonyms, and used codes to

identify which group and workshop the quoted extracts come from. For example, Group 1 Workshop 1 is displayed as G1-W1.

The study was conceived and conducted in 2016, with approval from […] Ethics Committee.

The role of pressure featured strongly in Walker et al.'s (2013) findings, which we shared in the workshops, along with several other resources, as springboards for discussion. This theme of pressure was consistently taken up by the girls in our study, across different groups and sessions, and became the pivotal focus of this analysis. Through repeated readings of the transcripts, the first author began by collating extracts into loose topic areas, then honing a more in-depth analytic framework focussing on key elements of the discursive field surrounding the complex and contradictory ways in which the participants described the pressures facing girls. The analysis took shape within the broader collaborative context of the research team where ideas and observations were shared throughout the project. Finally, we employed an independent research assistant, who had not been involved in the research, to read through all the transcripts alongside our provisional analyses. We asked her to check that our claims they provided a fairly represented representation of the ways girls talked about sending nudes, and that we hadn't inadvertently papered over contrary comments and views.

Findings and Analysis

After first briefly discussing how girls described "nudes", we examine how girls made sense of and navigated contradictory pressures: firstly, the pressure to send nudes, and secondly, the pressure to not send nudes.

Making sense of a nude

To gain a more concrete understanding of what a nude image is, we asked participants to describe the kinds of photos that might fall into this category. Their responses suggest an

image may be perceived as a nude if it involves at least some degree of semi-nakedness and could be interpreted as sexually suggestive. It does not necessarily require full or explicit nudity. As Sabrina explained: "girls wearing like underpants and a bra [who have] taken a photo in a mirror […] that is classified as a nude" (G5-W1). Participants also suggested that girls' nudes could include the visibility of breasts, cleavage, underwear, buttocks, the top half of the torso, a naked body, or a partially naked body. The "most extreme" kind of nude a girl could send was described as a photo "without the undies" (Chloe, G2-W2). In contrast, participants suggested the typical nude received from a guy was "always quite blatant" (Poppy, G4-W3) and often spoke about 'dick pics'. However, boys could also send photos "with their shirt off" (Jane, G2-W2), showing their "stomach" (Bianca, G2-W2), "muscles", and "abs" (Madison, G2-W2). Several groups came to a speculative conclusion that the defining feature of a nude might centre around the implied intentions of the sender and broader contextual factors, rather than content alone. For instance, the girls talked about how another image that shows the same amount of skin (e.g. a girl wearing a bikini at the beach) is not considered a nude, and interpretations rely on "how [the image was] intended, like if it was like for a sexual purpose" (Renee, G5-W1). Overall, understandings of nudes appeared to be broad and flexible where explicit nudity is not always a feature.

The participants emphasised that sending nudes is not restricted to the context of a committed romantic relationship; it can also occur between young people within the same social circles, or people who are not closely familiar with each other. Across groups, participants suggested that "Snapchat's like the place where sending nudes happens" (Miranda, G3-W1), as the app only allows an image to be viewed once for a short period of time. Despite this feature, participants were aware of the technical limitations of this promise, often noting that "nothing is ever deleted [online]" (Jade, G5-W1).

The pressure to send nudes

All groups discussed the pressure to send nudes as an issue of concern, and they suggested it is more demanding on girls than guys. Bianca observed that "there is a higher chance of girls being pressured from boys [to send nudes]" (G2-W3), and Anne similarly noted that "It could be both ways, but from my personal experience what I've seen it's mostly the girls that have been pressured" (G1-W2). As we discuss below, these pressures manifested in a range of ways, from direct requests and interpersonal coercion by boys, to the more subtle effects of discourses of heterosexuality and gendered norms.

In line with young participants in previous studies (e.g., Burén & Lunde, 2018; Choi, Van Ouytsel & Temple, 2016; Englander, 2012; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Thomas, 2018; Walker et al., 2013), during our workshops girls described the act of asking someone else for nudes as gendered, saying that it was not unusual for a boy to ask a girl for nudes, yet "girls wouldn't ask guys" (Helen, G3-W1). Jen said, "I don't really know of a lot of incidents though where girls have asked guys for nudes because like in my experience it's normally a guy asking," (G5-W2). Consistent with experiences young women have reported on online platforms (Thomas, 2018), participants in our study also emphasised the pushy and assertive nature of some requests: "If you say like no they keep begging you and say please, please or they send you more things" (Bianca, G2-W1). They typically described these types of persistent messages as annoying, and at times difficult to escape. As a consequence, Mia suggested this may lead to unwanted sharing in some cases: "there is also a like proportion where girls don't want to but […] the guy pressures, like multiple texts and like images and things and like oh please, please, please" (G7-W2).

As well as verbal requests for nudes, several participants suggested guys may send one first to try and encourage the girl to send one back. The girls described an "I've sent you one, you have to send me one" (Jade, G5-W2) logic, leveraging the social expectation for reciprocity. As Clare said, "usually when the guys send I immediately think they want

something back like that is usually the main reason that they send" (G3-W3). Likewise, Penelope suggested, "Even if they don't directly say, hey send me a nude picture of yourself. Like, if they've sent you one first, it's just like- they're expecting it" (G7-W3). If girls do not send a nude in return, some participants said this might lead to a socially "awkward" situation, further implying an exchange that is often loaded with expectation: "I've felt it myself- like someone sends you a nude, you just kind of have to send one back. Like, there's like- it'd just be awkward if you didn't" (Penelope, G7-W3).

Several participants also offered stories about girls specifically receiving dick pics from boys and highlighted how these were usually sent out of the blue, unexpected and unwanted. For instance, Jade described how "you could be having a normal conversation and then they send you like a dick pic or something and you are like whoa, okay, where did that come from?" (G5-W1). She elaborated on a personal experience:

> I got sent one last night. I did not like want it. I wasn't even talking to the person who like sent it to me. I was like half asleep. He was just like yo and I was like oh hi. He's like oh you want to trade nudes and he sent me a dick pic and I was like mmm okay, thanks, awesome [sarcastic] (Jade, G5-W1).

Overall, dick pics were spoken about as images that were not wanted, requested or appreciated by girls: "No I didn't ask for it [a dick pic], he just sent it to me" (Anne, G1-W1), and "[…] no one wants to start a conversation with a dick pic. Like maybe it's going to help him with his popularity with his male friends, but girls generally don't appreciate that" (Chloe, G2-W3).

It has been argued that unsolicited dick pics are a form of online sexual harassment, yet the normalisation of men's sexual intrusions may mean they are not always framed as such (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Salter, 2016; Thorburn, 2018). Although several participants described persistent requests for nudes and unsolicited sexual images as

unwanted and annoying, they did not often speak about these interactions in a way that made strong links to sexual harassment and gendered abuse. Salter (2016) heard similar accounts about dick pics in his focus groups with young Australians and suggested, "this hints at the taken-for-granted public dimensions of masculinity, including a qualified acceptance of public male sexual self-display and expressions of desire" (p. 2734).

Furthermore, to explain the unwanted sending and sharing of nudes, the young people in Salter's (2016) study drew on essentialist notions about hegemonic differences between men and women that "associated male sexuality with uncontrollable drives, visual erotic stimulation and a specifically genital fixation" (p. 2733). A few participants in our study drew on similar discursive resources to make sense of young men's sexuality. For example, during a discussion in which some girls had commented on the traditional objectification of women, Kim, noted "there's a biological aspect as well" (Kim, G3-W1). Although for at least some girls this kind of explanation was treated with critical distance. As Miranda said, immediately following Kim, "yeah there's- like there's excuses like well it's [being sexual] you know it's to have offspring so (laughs) you know whatever I do is fine". Girls also suggested "at a certain age [guys] always like I don't know I think it's from like 14 to like 16-17 they're always into like (Madison: porn) (all laugh) and sex like driven stuff" (Bianca, G2-W1). Whether the girls bought into the biological explanation or not, these accounts map closely onto one of the dominant discourses of heterosexuality: the male sexual drive discourse (Hollway, 1989; see also Gavey, 2019). Within the terms of the male sexual drive discourse, men are assumed to have an inherent and overwhelming need for sex. Thus, men's unwanted sexual advances can be imagined as natural or inevitable, and persistent and intrusive sexual advances from boys can be seen as par for the course. Consequently, girls are then left to manage any pressure, coercion, and sexual harassment they experience (although

this might be shifting with new discursive conditions of possibility being generated by the MeToo movement, which postdates our workshops).

Within the workshops, the participants discussed different tactics a girl might use to deflect persistent requests for nudes and unsolicited images. These included changing the conversation topic "as fast as you can" (Madison, G2-W1) or ignoring the requester for a period of time. Yet the girls also highlighted how refusing to send a return nude is not always a simple and straightforward communicative act of assertion or silence. According to Chloe, it would be unusual for girls to respond in a way that assertively rejects a dick pic, because they are "too polite to say that" (G2-W3). She suggested, "[girls] don't say [...] oh my God I don't want to see your dick thank you, you just say um okay, would just like smile because we're polite" (Chloe, G2-W1). This dynamic echoes what Kitzinger and Frith (1999) have described in the context of unwanted heterosexual advances more generally. In their study, young women often communicated their refusal to unwanted sexual interactions in a way that did not explicitly link it to a lack of their own desire. For example, their refusals commonly drew on excuses such as having a headache, or having their period (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999, p. 304), or softening a refusal to avoid hurting the man's feelings. For example, "look, you're a really nice guy and I do like you, but…" (p. 305). Stereotypical traditional ideals of femininity (such as gentleness, submissiveness, or responsiveness) may shape heterosexual interactions in ways that make assertive refusals difficult for women to enact (Gavey, 2019; Gavey & McPhillips, 1999; Murnen, Perot, & Byrne, 1989). Therefore, girls may also be required to undertake a considerable amount of emotional and communicative work to carefully execute a refusal that does not breach social etiquette and norms of femininity.

Several participants highlighted the potentially high stakes involved for a girl negotiating a request for nudes: by refusing to send them she may face the risk of exclusion, rejection, insults and abuse:

| Chloe: | It's kind of hard to say no because when a girl says no a guy usually gets offended. He's like oh you aren't that cute anyway, you weren't worth it and the girl gets kind of hurt. |
| Madison: | Like shamed. (G2-W3) |

Similarly, Sabrina noted how "all of a sudden if you don't send a nude, you're all of a sudden ugly and they don't want to see you" (G5-W3). Renee also added: "They're like 'oh go kill yourself like you're not needed here' like that sort of thing." (G5-W3). Some participants also noted that sending nudes may be the only way for girls to gain or maintain a relationship with a boy. As Mia said, if a girl does not "give in", then "it's not going to go anywhere" (G7-W3). Similarly, another girl suggested that within the context of a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship, the girl "feels obligated to [send nudes] because they are dating" (Kathy, G1-W2).

Overall, in making sense of why girls send nudes to boys, one recurring interpretation was underpinned by the idea that girls are trying to "please the guy" (Rose, G3-W3). While speaking about sending nudes, and heterosexual intimacy more generally, Angela suggested that "[Girls] think about the guy's, the guy's needs before they think about their [own] feelings" (G1-W1). This narrative, which juxtaposes a "guy's needs" with a girl's "feelings", also maps onto a second dominant discourse of heterosexuality: the have-hold discourse (Hollway, 1989; see also Gavey, 2019). Operating alongside the male sexual drive discourse, the have-hold discourse positions women as responsive and compliant with male sexual advances in order to secure or retain a relationship with a man (Gavey, 2019). The girls' accounts highlight the pressures and coercive nature of this dynamic, where sending nude images may be seen as a requirement instead of an option within heterosexual romantic relationships. This way of framing the pressure on girls is reminiscent of consensual but unwanted (hetero)sex, which has been documented by several researchers (e.g. Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; see Gavey & Senn, 2014), and is a pattern also reported in other studies

on sending nudes (Drouin & Tobin, 2014; Thomas, 2018). Indeed, Drouin and Tobin (2014, p. 412) suggest more than half of the young women in their study engaged in what they referred to as "unwanted, but consensual" sexting, most commonly as a result of a desire to please a partner, achieve a sense of intimacy with a partner, avoid social loneliness or avoid an argument.

Above, we have discussed how the practice of sending nudes is shaped by, and reproduces, the gendered power dynamics and social pressures underpinned by traditional dominant discourses of heterosexuality. Intersecting and entangled with these more traditional influences, girls also drew on permissive (Hollway, 1989) and postfeminist discourses that contribute to and complicate wider social pressures that girls may experience to send nudes. Since the 1960s, traditional Western notions of women's (hetero)sexuality as relatively passive and receptive have been awkwardly joined by idealised notions of women's 'liberated', agentic, and pleasure seeking sexuality (Gavey, 2019). Gill (2007, 2008) has traced the specific ways this has developed as part of what she calls a postfeminist sensibility that has infused mediated culture, changing representations of femininity in significant ways. Whereas more traditional mediated images of idealised femininity were associated with motherhood and nurturing, Gill (2008) suggests that in contemporary media the "possession of a 'sexy body'" has become "presented as women's key source of identity" (p. 42). Additionally, instead of being portrayed primarily as an object to please men, within the new forms of mediated culture (Gill focussed on advertising in particular), women were being encouraged to take up the role of autonomous, desiring and empowered sexual subjects (Gill, 2008). As alluded to by the girls in our workshops, however, this invitation can be felt as an obligation, with pressure on women to produce, perform and display a kind of "always 'up for it'" (Gill, 2008, p. 41) and "out there" sexuality (Powell, 2010, p. 2; see also Bay-Cheng, 2015).

Some of the girls' talk mapped closely onto postfeminist discourses with sending nudes described as a way for a girl to signify that she is "confident with [her] body" and to "show it off" (Natalie, G7-W3). Lucy highlighted how sending nudes can be tied to markers of social status:

I think the motives for sending nudes is mostly to impress people and make them like you even more and you are wanting to fit in and feel like you're part of like the cool teenagers that have sex, you know like um- and it kind of loses its sexual purpose. It's more about impressing people. (G7-W2)

As Lucy suggested, sexual (or even romantic) desires are not necessarily the motivation behind sending nudes (see also Burkett, 2015). Instead, the practice can be a way for girls to perform the active and confident sexuality that is culturally expected of them. Mia further explained how,

you can definitely see that there is like pressure on girls and like if they don't [send nudes] she is a prude or she is- like he will not be interested. She's not interesting anymore. (G7-W2)

These kinds of accounts suggest girls risk being portrayed as killjoys, and as unworthy of engaging with if they do not marshal their presumed sexual liberation for his satisfaction. Such dynamics eerily remind us of the double edged way women's ostensive sexual freedom was relegated to men's interests in the early days of 'sexual liberation' in the mid twentieth century – when, as Beatrix Campbell (1980, p. 2) argued "the very affirmation of sexuality was a celebration of *masculine* sexuality". Although women were at that time recruited into "*active* participation in heterosexuality" instead of an earlier "fetishistic reticence" (Campbell, 1980, p. 3), there was no discourse that embodied the specificities of female desire, especially for girls (Fine, 1988). At the same time, paradoxically, when a woman's

interest in heterosex faltered, it was constructed as a problem that needed fixing; a dynamic similar to what girls described in our workshops.

As some of the girls we worked with noticed, sexual empowerment and choice can be more complicated than it sounds. In the exchange below, Abbey and Eliza highlight the confusing discursive space girls operate in. They need to hold on to rhetoric about the importance of individual choice and empowerment and the right to have control over their own bodies. Yet at the same time, they realize the limits of these promises:

Abbey: Because um you hear people say oh it's your choice [to send nudes], you know, it's your body, it's [….] empowering and all that.

Eliza: And it is but...

Abbey: But in the world we live in it's just not the reality [….]

Eliza: [….] of course you should be able to do what you want and it's really crap that any negative consequences would come from something that is so personal. But just realistically in the world we live in there is a high risk and you do need to be aware of that before sending anything out. (G4-W2).

In grappling with the 'reality of risk', Eliza ends up walking a cautious tightrope on which aspirational views about what girls "should be able to do" are calibrated with a "need to be aware" of potential consequences (see also Dobson and Ringrose, 2016). While such logic can easily tip over into responsibilising and even blaming a victim of nonconsensual image distribution, these girls' talk shows the difficult and delicate tensions girls face, and the limits of the dominant narratives available to them for recognizing both agency *and* vulnerability (see McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011).

Some other participants also offered critical and nuanced accounts around the complexity of free choice and social pressure. Lucy (G7-W2) spoke of "different levels of like pressuring" and said, "I think there is always an aspect of pressure". She elaborated on this point:

I'm going to send them because I want to send them but I feel like unconsciously

there still is that pressure for you to send it, but you don't realise it. I don't think they

are two separate things. I think they both are connected. (Lucy, G7-W2)

Lucy seems to suggest that it is possible for both desire and pressure to co-exist; or she is perhaps recognizing that her agency and desire take shape, at least in some ways, in response to real or imagined heterosexual masculine desires. Clare also described the pressure to send nudes as "very subtle", and "not a lot of people could pick it up" (G3-W3). Overall, the accounts illustrate how pressure on girls to send nudes may not always surface as a direct, verbal request from boys; it also operates within subtle, yet powerful webs of social expectations and embedded gendered norms.

Pressure to not send nudes

So far, we have discussed how girls might experience pressure to send nudes, and below we will explore the co-existence of pressures to *not* send nudes. These pressures also manifested in a range of ways, from attributions of individual irresponsibility, lack of self-respect and associated personal failings to cultural influences like 'slut shaming' and social policing.

When discussing what might happen if a person sends nudes, the participants often depicted different gender-based outcomes that were "worse" (Rose, G3-W3) for a girl than a guy. If other people found out about the nudes, participants said a girl would be "judged and embarrassed" (Helen, G3-W1), yet for a guy it "wouldn't affect their reputation" (Miranda, G3-W1). In this sense, several participants named a "double standard" (Miranda, G3-W1) applying, whereby it is "more shameful if a girl sends nudes than if a guy sends nudes" (Kathy, G1-W2). As feminist scholars have noted, "the sexual double standard is regulated through the tool of sexual reputation", (Jackson and Cram, 2003, p. 114); see also Johansen et al. 2019 about how this works specifically with nudes operating as visual gossip). Echoing

this point, girls specifically spoke of 'slut-shaming', and noted how "guys don't really have that issue to deal with" (Abbey, G4-W3). Across groups, 'slut-shaming' was portrayed as both a "big deal" (Abbey, G4-W1) and "very common" (Poppy, G4-W1) for girls who send nudes.

Some participants made sense of slut-shaming by drawing on traditional discourses of heterosexuality, where women are expected to be sexually reserved. For example, one girl noted, "There is this whole you have to keep yourself pure thing that is still going around even though it's like ancient mentality, you know like a virgin until marriage or whatever" (Kathy, G1-W2). However, in complicating this narrative, some of the girls' talk resonated with Bay-Cheng's (2015) argument about the shifting ways in which women's sexuality is policed within a neoliberal context. Rather than being based upon transgressions of a traditional ideal of feminine sexual moral purity, Bay-Cheng (2015, p. 282) suggested slut-shaming has come to be used against women who are judged to lack agency and be "sexually out of control". In other words, the slur may not be directed at women who are sexually active per se, but be used instead to stigmatise sexual behaviours and experiences that are seen to result from personal "weakness, ineptitude, and/or irresponsibility" (Bay-Cheng, 2015, p. 282). This distinction was illustrated in an earlier New Zealand study that found young women were supportive of a hypothetical girl who "went out, she looked for it [heterosex], she got what she wanted" but disapproved of "girls [who] just go crazy and say yeah to everything" (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 118, p. 120).

In our workshops, some of the girls' similarly implied sending nudes is linked with slut-shaming because it is associated with being irresponsible and attention seeking (see also Johansen et.al 2019). For example, in the exchange below, the participants suggested other people think girls who send nudes lack self-respect:

Abbey:	I reckon for girls it's like a lack of self-respect that is considered. You know like oh you don't have any respect for your body or whatever, you know, I reckon that's what it is as well.
Eliza:	Yeah.
Abbey:	Or just like slutty.
Poppy:	Yeah, I think sending nudes as well is seen, can often be almost seen as something um where these girls kind of lack confidence and are looking for validation from other people (G4-W3).

Similarly, when asked "what do you mean by slut shaming?", one girl said: "Like as soon as you um hear that they have like sent a nude it's automatically like 'oh you know they have no respect for themselves'" (Kathy, G1-W2).

Sometimes girls contrasted concerns and judgements over sending nudes with those about having sex, and drew specific attention to the digitally-mediated nature of risk. Kim suggested sending nudes has a higher reputational risk because of the possibility other people could see the photos:

> If you have sex no one is really going to, like if you break up you are not going to say oh we had sex because it's kind of what some relationships have anyway. But with sexting it's kind of there is more of a risk of it getting out there and people seeing it (Kim, G3-W2).

Perhaps for this reason, Mia thought her "parents would be more concerned with like sending nudes than a physical relationship" (G7-W2).

The potential for a boy to breach a girl's trust makes sending nudes risky for girls, yet, as the participants discussed, this unethical behaviour often avoids criticism (see also Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Thomas, 2018). Instead, girls can still be 'slut-shamed' even if their photos have been "leaked" (Miranda, G3-W1) by someone else:

> It's always sort of the girl's fault. Yeah they're never like 'oh who asked you to send that' and then they hate on that guy, it's always like (Helen: hate on the girl) why did you send that, you know, you're a slut (Miranda, G3-W1).

Some participants were critical of how it is "the girl's responsibility to think about the consequences" (Penelope, G7-W2) and the amount of pressure this amounts to. As Mia and Anne explained:

> I find like when nudes have been shared, all the pressure is on the woman, it's like, it doesn't, the base of the problem is the woman for sending it, not the guy who mostly likely is pressuring her as well because that's like how it is most times. So like it's a lot on the girls (Mia, G7-W1)
>
> As in like um if someone builds a reputation for example for sending nudes, like to people they are generally like slut-shamed and then there is like a huge pressure to oh you know don't become like that person (Kathy, G1-W2)

Thus, although workshop participants identified interpersonal and social pressures that girls may experience to send nudes, they suggested other people generally regard a girl's sexting arising from her own bad decision-making. These dominant narratives that position young women who send nudes as irresponsible further perpetuate victim-blaming discourses. They place a considerable amount of pressure on young women to not send nudes (despite the opposing pressures to send them) in order to protect themselves from the possibility of nonconsensual sharing and subsequent shaming.

Complex competing pressures – at the crossroads of traditional and permissive postfeminist ideals of feminine sexuality

Numerous studies have shown that girls face judgement for their sexting behaviour, regardless of whether they send nudes or do not send nudes. As Lippman and Campbell (2014) put it "damned if you do, damned if you don't … if you're a girl" (p. 379). Similarly, Thomas (2017 p. 203) described young women being "trapped between social expectations they 'shouldn't' send photographs and pressures to adhere to male desire" (see also Walker et al., 2013; see also Johansen et al., 2019). Not only did the girls in our study describe these

kinds of competing pressures, and illuminate the challenges for girls in navigating them, but many girls also reflected upon and critiqued this state of affairs. Chloe, for instance, identified the complex intersection of traditional discourses of heterosexuality and permissive/postfeminist discourses that expect girls to be "a lot of like things that, I don't know, don't correspond well with each other" (G2-W3). Under these conditions, one girl highlighted that girls are disadvantaged regardless of whether they send nudes or not:

> It's kind of like she has the responsibility for whether or not she sends nudes like if she doesn't send nudes then she's a prude though if she does send nudes then you know she's a slut and either way it's her it's her fault (Kathy, G1-W3)

In a similar way, Natalie explained how these gendered dynamics always place girls in a losing position where "there is no in-between so it's like you're either one or the other" (G7-W2). In discussing the norms surroundings young women's heterosexuality, Livingston, Bay-Cheng, Hequembourg, Testa, and Downs (2013) also pointed out that:

> the conventional notion of a 'double bind' might be too simplistic a description of young women's entanglement within a complex knot of multiple, seemingly opposed normative injunctions: to abstain, to resist, to comply, to seduce, to express, to arouse, and to perform (p. 39).

In addition to highlighting the conflicting situations girls may face, several participants emphasised that problems associated with sending nudes are not simply isolated to the digital practice itself. As Penelope said:

> [Sending nudes is] part of a much bigger problem in the whole of society. It's not just about the image, it's like just representing and reinforcing the […] completely different power dynamics of girls and boys and that's what needs to be addressed (G7-W3).

Furthermore, in the second workshops, some girls critically challenged and questioned the validity of the male sexual drive discourse which naturalises a driven version of boys' sexual behaviour. Instead, they suggested guys may send and ask for nudes because "when you are a teenage boy there is some kind of expectation that you are super sexual" (Miranda, G3-W2). Penelope criticised the notion that boys "can't help feeling, I don't know, sexually aroused [sarcastic]" and went on to suggest that "blame is placed on [women]

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because it's easier than changing what an entire society is built on" (Penelope, G7-W2). These accounts illustrate how some girls were ready and able to critique gendered stereotypes and the way they function to create a context that may pressure both girls and boys to perform certain heteronormative gender roles. Ringrose et al. (2013) suggested that any moral panic over youth sexting may be misdirected. Instead, they argued the point that the young critics we worked with would likely agree with: "what is most problematic for young people are the pernicious and persistent discourses of gender inequity and sexual double standards" (p. 319). While technological developments have changed the way people interact and communicate with each other, these digital interactions take place within a cultural context that remains shaped by longer-standing cultural patterns and social dynamics.

Our discussions with girls illustrate how a sexual double standard persists within digital spaces, where girls' sexualities are still highly regulated, and gender norms work to not only tolerate but promote behaviour that is disproportionately detrimental to girls. In the workshops, girls elaborated on and critiqued pressures that arose directly from individual boys' coercive behaviour as well as through social pressures to adhere to broader normative expectations. In doing so, they illuminated the tensions and contradictions that flourish at the crossroads between traditional dominant discourses of heterosexuality and permissive and postfeminist discourses of agentic feminine sexuality. The former script girls' sexuality as relatively passive, responsive and subordinate to boys and men; the latter endorses active female sexuality but is blind to the sociocultural forces that constrain and punish it in practice. It is important to emphasise that the girls we talked to did not give the impression that all girls are directly pressured into sending or not sending nudes, or that girls have no capacity for agency. And we recognise that despite our deliberate efforts to promote an open and non-didactic space for girls to share their views and reflections, some girls may have perceived our framing of the issues and the structure and content of the workshops in ways

that left some views and experiences less 'speakable' than others. Nevertheless, the picture the girls overall painted of heteronormative socio-sexual culture suggests that all girls must navigate a context in which their "space for action" (Lundgren, 1998, cited in Kelly, 2003) related to sexuality is more constrained than it is for (most) boys – where they are not as free to do what they like without potentially harmful consequences. This underscores the importance of shifting our attention for harm prevention to the gendered ethics associated with intimate image sharing. The biggest challenge lies in broader facets of socio-sexual culture that still stigmatise and shame women and girls for forms of sexual expression or performance that heterosexual men and boys are relatively immune to judgement for.

As a starting point we must turn a critical spotlight onto the norms of gendered socio-sexual culture that normalise heterosexual coercion of girls and normalise and tolerate boys' nonconsensual showing, sharing and distribution of girls' intimate images. Further research exploring boys' understandings of the gendered norms related to such behaviour, and the ways they navigate the ethics of seeking and using girl's nudes will be an important part of this process for informing wider change (see authors, in process).

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