

Chapter 8

Unsolicited Dick Pics: Online Sexual Harassment, Gendered Relations and Schooling



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Introduction

Rebecka: Well, there are some people on social media who receive dick pics and things like that.

Cornelia: Emm, one of the boys in our class sends dick pics to girls in the class. It never happened to me though.

Fabian: Really?

Alexander: Yes, there is!

Fabian: Who?

Alexander: I can't tell you right now!

Fabian: Yes, you can!

Alexander: I'll tell you later (Focus group interview with students).

This introductory quote was chosen for its representation of girls' exposure to receiving unsolicited dick pics, but it was also chosen to illustrate how this kind of exposure has an impact on students' everyday life in a particular school setting, which will be focus of the current chapter.

Contemporary research has shown that sharing explicit sexual images, such as the 'dick pic' (DP), has become a growing cultural phenomenon among teens during recent years (Waling & Pym, 2017). DPs are unsolicited nude images usually sent by heterosexual boys/men to girls/women on smartphones or over the Internet (Vitis & Gilmore, 2017). Contemporary research on the phenomenon of DPs has placed them within two distinct framings (Henry & Powell, 2016; Waling & Pym, 2017). The first framing emphasizes and positions DPs as a specific form of online

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sexual harassment. The second framing positions and considers DPs as sexting, i.e., sending, receiving or circulating self-produced nude or semi-nude images or videos over the Internet or on smartphones (Dobson, 2015; Waling & Pym, 2017).

Contemporary research has also shown that sending DPs has become normalized among young people today. One Canadian interview study of 13- to 19-year-old teenagers reveals how, in the teens' responses, boys who send DPs are framed in relation to the axiom 'boys will be boys' (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019). Even though almost all girls in the study had received unwanted DPs (almost at anytime and anywhere) and expressed their displeasure with receiving such pictures, their responses frame DP sending as something some male teens simply do. When discussing the matter with other girls, they dismiss this behaviour through shared laughter. Ricciardelli and Adorjan (2019) discuss how the existing gendered discourses on male teens sending DPs frame the behaviour as random occurrences that are normalized by the teenagers. Empirical studies have also revealed that girls exposed to online sexual harassment express disgust and frustration with these incidents, yet normalization of boys' behaviour also exists (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). This normalization is expressed by some girls who explain and excuse boys' unwanted behaviour as "just mucking around" (Renold & Ringrose, 2011, p. 400). Boys' everyday sexual harassment of girls not only maintains heteronormativity, but also reinforces existing heteronormative conventions (Renold & Ringrose, 2011).

Several studies have demonstrated how teens' sexting behaviour is surrounded by sexual double standards, i.e., different 'rules' for boys and girls (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Ringrose et al., 2013). For boys, sharing and rating digital images they have received from girls could gain them status in the male peer group (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013). Girls, on the other hand, run a greater risk than boys do of being stigmatized for their sexting behaviour (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013; Salter, 2016; Temple et al., 2012). Such behaviour might affect the girls' sexual reputation and increase their risk of being exposed to slut shaming, misogynist and sexist comments and ascriptions of sexual promiscuity (Renold & Ringrose, 2011).

Similarly, contemporary research on young people's use of the media app Snapchat has also revealed gendered judgements of certain behaviours (Handyside & Ringrose, 2017). Girls' posts are more likely to be trivialized, and girls are more likely to be judged as 'showing off' in their posts. Handyside and Ringrose's (2017) study also shows the sexual double standards surrounding girls' and boys' posting of selfies. Girls' posts, irrespective of the image, can easily develop into an alternative narrative and be subject to sexual judgments by (male) audiences. Boys' posts, on the other hand, are not subjected to those kinds of moral judgments. For instance, by posting selfies of himself with different girls, a boy can perform sexual popularity. The findings of Handyside and Ringrose's study indicate that young people's use of the media app Snapchat and the surrounding discussions among young people reinforce normalized gender identities for both girls and boys. Yet their results not only illustrate reproduction of heterosexism. Handyside and Ringrose also discovered that the girls in their study created resistance, using humour as a strategy to deal with the moral judgments and painful experiences they had been subjected to.

Although there has been more research on teens' sexting during recent years, we still know little about how teens' sexting and in particular teens' experiences of receiving DPs influence their everyday lives in school. Given this picture, the current chapter will address how students in a lower secondary school understand and experience the phenomenon of DPs on the social media app Snapchat and how this influences their gendered relations in the investigated school. In line with previous research, the current study draws on the understanding and positioning of DPs as a form of online sexual harassment and sexting (cf. Dobson, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2016; Waling & Pym, 2017). Following the Swedish Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567), sexual harassment is defined as "conduct of a sexual nature that violates someone's dignity" (p. 3).

This chapter draws on interviews with students in year nine conducted in a lower secondary school (year 7–9) located in an affluent area in Sweden. The investigated school, Emerald School, is a small semi-private school enrolling approximately 200 students from preschool class up to year nine. The area can be described as a socially affluent neighbourhood. The average annual income is higher than the national average, as is the overall educational level (Statistics Sweden, 2020). Focus group interviews as well as individual interviews have been conducted. The interviews were conducted by the PhD student working on this research project (author 1) during the period September and October 2018. The data analysis process is collective in nature, in that we have jointly read through the transcripts and analysed the data. To ensure confidentiality, all names of the students and the name of the school are fictive (The Swedish Research Council, 2017). The present work was supported by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (grant number 2017-00071).

Gender, Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexting

Digital images of girls and their bodies are constructed as sexual objects of the male gaze – objects boys should desire – but girls are also subjected to slut shaming and moral judgements. Boys' sexting and digital images, on the other hand, are often the subject of admiration by other boys and constructed as a normalized form of heterosexual masculinity (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Ringrose et al., 2013; Renold & Ringrose, 2011). These prevailing sexual double standards and heteronormative conventions, Renold and Ringrose (2011) argue, are constituted within the *heterosexual matrix*. The concept referred to here connects to Butler's (1990) work; it refers to the heteronormative ideal in society and the ideological power system of a heteronormative understanding of sexuality and gender. The heteronormative ideal and other gendered norms are often normalized, which tends to maintain and reproduce gender inequalities (Connell, 2005, Connell & Pearse, 2014).

In society, certain masculine norms and ideals are given hegemonic status. In line with Connell (2005), *hegemonic masculinity* is a masculine ideal to which all individuals, irrespective of gender, have to relate. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed

in relation to and also occupies a superior position over other masculinities as well as femininities. As a result, the superior position of hegemonic masculinity legitimizes the hierarchical structures of existing gender relations. In the present study, hegemonic masculinity will provide a framework for exploring and understanding teens' gender relations and the social processes of sexting, and how these affect students' everyday life in school.

To protect themselves from misogynist comments, slut shaming and a bad sexual reputation, girls have to find strategies to *maintain respectability*. According to Skeggs (2002), respectable femininity is constructed and performed through social and cultural relations and can be understood as a certain kind of cultural capital. Respectability has long been used as a concept to differentiate the middle and working classes (Skeggs, 2004). Respectable femininity is framed in relation to particular characteristics, where girls and women are expected to be caring and have high moral standards (Hussein, 2017). As a result, girls and women are expected to always try to do what is considered 'right' and to behave in a 'ladylike' manner (Allan, 2009; Hussein, 2017; Skeggs, 2002). Drawing from Skeggs and Bourdieu's works, Hussein (2017) conceptualizes respectable femininity as a form of symbolic capital that highlights the embeddedness of gender and social class. Respectable femininity is symbolic capital women seek in order to gain class status, even within the middle classes, Hussein argues. Hussein (2017) explores the maintenance of middle-class status by examining how women negotiate normative conceptions of middle-class respectable femininity. Affluent middle-class women need to navigate in relation to the normative boundaries of middle-class respectability if they are to maintain their class privilege and status. For middle-class women, respectable femininity can in this respect also be seen as a 'burden' (Hussein, 2017). According to Allan (2009), for upper-middle-class girls, 'girl power' is about being powerful in manners that maintain heteronormative upper-middle-class femininity and the 'lady' discourse. Despite 'modern' societal expectations of femininity, the discourse of respectability featured strongly in the upper-middle-class girls' lives, as they are expected to behave like 'proper ladies'.

Refraining from posting anything that could be labelled 'slutty' has become one way for girls today to maintain their respectability and deal with this issue (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019). This behaviour also resonates with broader societal messages targeting girls: It is the girls who have to be careful and be responsible online if they are to avoid misogynist comments. When boys send unsolicited DPs to girls, the impact this behaviour has on girls' wellbeing and the fact that this is a criminal act are still draped in silence, or even ignored, in many countries around the world. As a result, the existing sexual double standards in teens' sexting underpin and emphasize patriarchal assumptions about gender concerning both boys and girls. As regards the interviews analysed in the current chapter, we will address this further by exploring students' views on the phenomenon of DPs and how these influence their gendered relations in everyday life in school.

Emerald School – A School in an Affluent Neighbourhood

The area where the students live is described as a ‘small’, ‘quiet’ and ‘safe place’, ‘close to the sea’, a place they consider ‘beautiful’, ‘cosy’ and ‘personal’, but at the same time ‘boring’. The catchment area around Emerald School could be described as a rather closed community, both geographically and socially. The area is more like a seaside village, whose central life revolves around a harbour. The students also mention that the families in the area have good financial resources; as one of the boys, Carl, expresses it: “I think everyone is pretty well off here. Of course, there may be exceptions, but I still think the majority are very wealthy!” As for the school environment, the students generally describe it as ‘calm’ and ‘safe’, both inside the school and out in the schoolyard. They talk about the school itself as ‘small’ and ‘cosy’. The attention students get from the teachers is described as considerable:

Emily: It’s a very quiet school! If you look at the number of educators, there are a lot of teachers here. And you get the impression that you’re seen by all teachers. You get a lot of attention from all educators in all subjects. So it’s very nice!

Interviewer: It feels like a very personal school then?

Emily: YES, it is! It is very personal!

The students also emphasize the importance of appearances as well as of how they speak and behave at school. As one of the girls, Louise, points out: “Well you have to act *in this way*, and not *in that way*, because then you’re different and everyone will notice you”. If a person stands out in any respect, he/she is considered deviant and becomes the focus of negative attention. The students’ behaviour at Emerald School could be understood in light of what is considered respectable in the local context of Emerald School. The students are expected to be responsible for both their daily appearance and their future lives. In this regard, nothing seems more important than getting the best marks.

Expectations to perform and assume responsibility for schoolwork are of central importance to students at Emerald School. The students are expected to succeed academically in the future, and the pressure to only get A’s and be the best is also reinforced by the students when they comment on each other’s marks. Students also comment when a fellow student has not performed well orally during lessons. Yet these abusive comments do not typically occur directly between students in the classroom; instead, such discussions take place on the class chat on the Internet, as expressed by Emily: “You didn’t say anything in class today”. /.../ “Why were you so quiet today? You can’t act like that!” They also comment when a student has said something wrong during the lessons. The students talk about being regularly subjected to abuse on social media, and as it turned out, also about being exposed to sexual harassment – more specifically DPs. Sexual harassment in the form of DPs is the main focus of the present chapter and will be discussed in the following sections.

Dick Pics – An Everyday Phenomenon

Violence and harassment at Emerald School rarely occur openly. Bianca describes the school environment by saying: “It’s *very quiet here!* Compared to other schools”. Physical violence hardly occurs at all, and the acts of harassment that do occur take place on the Internet and on social media, where school officials cannot see them. Students’ experiences of sexual harassment in school can take many forms, according to Conroy (2013), who points out that one form is exposure to sexual pictures or photographs. In their study, Ricciardelli and Adorjan (2019) emphasize that sexting, particularly DPs sent non-consensually to female teens, is clearly a normalized practice among youth. In accordance with previous research, the students themselves addressed this specific problem of sexual harassment directly during the focus group interviews. During one of the focus group interviews, the students discussed sexual harassment and receiving unsolicited pictures on Snapchat, more or less on a daily basis.

Charlotte: Well, I have experienced *this a lot!*

Interviewer: Do you mean receiving pictures?

Charlotte: It happens almost every day. I have to spend a lot of time blocking them, because it’s a lot of people! My block list on Snapchat is very long!

Interviewer: What kinds of pictures do they send?

Charlotte: Dick pics! /.../

Charlotte: The first time I received dick pics I was *really shocked* and could not touch my phone for an hour or so. Maybe I’m exaggerating now, but it was really like that. And it was in the year 6, so I didn’t know how to react, you know, shit, this was completely new for me. /.../

Charlotte: Yes, in year 6 and in year 7 it increased. And now it’s super common! Super common! And you can receive them anytime! Morning, evening, in the middle of the school day, you receive them any time during the day!

The unsolicited pictures are reported to appear unexpectedly. Some of the girls received DPs as early as the year 6, and as they got older the problem increased. One common strategy the girls use to handle the unsolicited pictures is to block the person who sent the pictures.

Interviewer: It’s a common phenomenon this thing, receiving dick pics?

Charlotte: Yeah it is. But it’s not for me anymore, because I’ve blocked basically everyone. I only write with people I know on Snapchat. I can write to more people on Instagram, because it never happens there. It’s on Snapchat you receive those pictures. I’ve cleared everything; if I hadn’t done that, it would be very common for me to receive those pictures as well. Daily basically!

The students report that receiving DPs is a very common phenomenon. Receiving DPs is also experienced and described as unpleasant and a very unsettling experience. One of the girls at the school puts it like this:

Charlotte: It's so unnecessary and disgusting! You just have to delete it! I think it's super weird! I don't get it! No, I think it's super strange that someone would do that! I don't understand! I've never ever sent any pictures like that and think it's super weird! And I think it's like very unpleasant you know! /.../ I know that pictures like that are spread on the Internet. /.../ I'm not going to be the person who's done that. Ever! /.../ Because just receiving those pictures is disgusting! And I'm like, DISGUSTING! BLOCK! So, no I think it's super weird!

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence (Gillander Gådin & Stein, 2017). As suggested by Renold and Ringrose (2011), everyday sexual harassment of girls not only maintains heteronormativity, it also reinforces existing heteronormative conventions. Even if girls exposed to sexual harassment express disgust and frustration, as also shown in the present study, normalization of boys' behaviour still exists. As seen in the excerpt above, Charlotte not only describes the unpleasant feeling of receiving unsolicited pictures, but also expresses her awareness that girls take risks when they send and share body images of themselves. This has also been discussed by other researchers. Previous studies have shown not only that girls take greater risks when they share images of their bodies, but also that they are stigmatized to a greater extent and risk damaging their reputation (Salter, 2016; Temple et al., 2012). In relation to this, Charlotte also alludes to the fact that she is a respectable girl, who would never dream of sending nude images to anyone. The same girls also discuss the difficulties of confronting and questioning the person who sent the unsolicited pictures. Most girls would not dare do this and fight for their rights, instead they avoid the conflict.

Charlotte: I think I'm a little bit tougher than most girls. I'd rather take the fight than just let it be! /.../ There are many girls who choose to avoid the conflict and forget all about what has happened. I think it's because they don't have the strength to do it. They maybe tell their closest friends, but avoid the conflict! Many of my friends just avoid it, because they don't have *the strength*, or *want to or dare to* take the fight.

The girls in the present study perceived DPs as an unwanted sexual behaviour forced upon them. The high frequency of unwanted sexual images sent to girls can be seen as a form of systematic oppression girls need to deal with on a daily basis. They primarily describe strategies such as blocking the sender or, on a psychological level, repressing the incident and "forgetting all about what has happened". Avoiding the conflict and confronting the boy or boys who sent the unsolicited pictures could be understood in relation to feelings of shame about the image and expectations concerning a respectable girl's reactions to such pictures. Previous research has highlighted a double standard regarding boys' and girls' sexting behaviours (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Ringrose et al., 2013). These normative perceptions can be understood in relation to how female sexuality is governed by respectability norms. At Emerald School, a girl cannot send sexual pictures without taking the risk of being gossiped about.

Interviewer: Have you heard of girls sending such pictures [refers to nude pictures]?

Josephine: No! No!

Interviewer: That it goes the other way?

Josephine: No! No!

Interviewer: Because that can happen too?

Josephine: I don't know *anyone* who has done it! I haven't heard *anything* about that! There have been no such rumours in the class. Not that anyone would have done it.

Interviewer: No rumours that girls would have sent [nude] pictures to boys?

Josephine: No, it's not something I've heard anyway!

Josephine explicitly rejects the notion that any of the girls would have sent sexual pictures. All of the interviewed girls also emphasized that they would never send such pictures. Whether or not this is true, respectability is used by the girls to avoid slut shaming and maintain their respectable reputation. Most girls do not seem to want to risk violating the boundaries of respectable femininity within the upper middle class by engaging in any kind of sexting. The girls' rejection can be understood in light of an expectation of female sexual propriety within the local context (cf. Allan, 2009).

Girls' Collective Resistance

During the period of data collection at Emerald School, the parents of one of the girls, Charlotte, had recently informed both the school officials and the other parents that their daughter had received unsolicited DPs from one of the boys in the class. The school's principal then informed the entire class about what had happened, saying it was wrong to send DPs, but this was the only action the school took regarding this matter. Louise gives her views on the situation:

Louise: She [refers to Charlotte] was really angry after that [receiving DPs] and thought: "What is this? Why does he send *that* kind of picture?!" And she is very close to her parents, so she talked to her parents and her parents raised this at school. After that he [the student who sent the DPs] was absent from school for three weeks. Then he came back, so now he's back in school again. He said he had been ill, but considering what happened just before, we don't believe he's been ill. He wrote to her saying she had destroyed his life just because she talked about what had happened. And she got really angry then! Why should *she* be blamed when *he* was the one who sent pictures to *her*?!

Louise expresses not only Charlotte's anger and disbelief, but also her own. Louise is extremely angry that the boy thinks the girl he offended is responsible for his actions. She asks rhetorically why the victim of sexual harassment is to blame. After the principal informs the class, the girls start talking to each other about what happened. It then turns out that several of the girls in the class have received unwanted DPs from the same boy.

Josephine: We talked about it, and *none of us* thought it was *okay*. It was very strange, we thought! And then we discovered that different girls had received similar pictures sent by the same person. And then we felt like: “OH MY GOD!”

Interviewer: Sent to several in class?

Josephine: YES!

Interviewer: Really?

Josephine: Yes!

Interviewer: Then the reason cannot be that he is kind of in love with that person?

Josephine: No! No, that’s what’s so strange, we don’t understand *why*! It’s just so weird.

According to Josephine, all girls strongly condemn this situation, which they perceive as sexual harassment within the class. In the interviews, Bianca describes the situation as “disgusting”, Louise sees it as “unpleasant” and as a “sexual assault and abuse”, and according to Sophie it is “shocking”. Timmerman (2003) stresses that a high frequency of unwanted sexual behaviour and harassment increases the risk that those behaviours will be considered normative. At the same time, Timmerman (2003) uses the term normative in the sense that students are aware that it occurs regularly; sexual harassment is still a negative experience for students. Another girl, Sophie, also expresses her anger and frustration about the fact that boys even consider sending unsolicited pictures of a sexual nature to the girls in their class; she says:

Interviewer: How would you describe the peer relations in the class?

Sophie: It’s a bit tense between the boys and the girls, because everyone knows what happened, that someone sent nudes and such. I think it’s a very weird thing to do! I don’t think it’s acceptable to send it to anyone *in the class*! It’s *no wonder* things gets *tense* or that there’s a bad atmosphere in the class when people act like that! So I would say that it’s very much so that the girls are with the girls and the boys are with the boys! /.../ Nobody should send [DPs] to anyone in the class!

Sophie emphasizes that the DP phenomenon is completely unacceptable, especially when someone is violated in this way by a classmate, explaining that such actions naturally negatively affect social relations in the class. The tense atmosphere has divided the class into two gender-segregated groups, and the girls especially have begun to hang out by themselves. According to the students, the boys and girls do not speak openly in the class about the DP situation. During the interviews, however, the boys and girls express different ideas concerning whether or not they think the boy who has become the focus of sending DPs is a perpetrator. The students’ different views can be understood as the reason why the girls are united in their lack of confidence in the entire group of boys, not just in individual boys. One of the boys, Carl, gives his view on the matter:

Interviewer: This situation in your class, how do you talk about it?

Carl: No, we’re *not* talking about it at all!

Interviewer: Not even with each other? Between the boys?

Carl: No! We haven't mentioned it! We teased him a bit, then everything was fine! [Laugh]. Like in the locker room when he said he didn't want to show himself naked, someone replied: "Are *you* afraid of showing yourself *naked*?!" Then he got very angry! It was a bit like that. Otherwise, *no one* thinks this is a big deal! The situation has been embarrassing for him so...

Interviewer: Yes, of course, it was embarrassing...

Carl: Yes, but I mainly think the whole situation is funny! /.../ But, not many of the girls talk to him anymore! I know he's been trying to excuse himself by saying: "I sent it by mistake". But he has done it [sent DPs] many times!

According to Carl, the boys do not talk about the situation at all; they do not think the boy has done anything wrong, nor do they understand the seriousness of this behaviour. Carl is one of the few boys in the class who has noticed that the girls have collectively distanced themselves from the boy who sent DPs to Charlotte by not talking to him; this is confirmed by Sophie, who explains:

Interviewer: Are you talking with each other about this? Do you girls talk about it?

Sophie: Yes! We talk about it a lot and that it's wrong to do this [send DPs]. It's not okay at all! The girls in our class are quite open with each other. So we talk about it quite often! /.../ Regarding the nude pictures [referring to DPs], it has become a bit stiff with that guy, because we don't want to talk to him! And he certainly knows that! /.../

Interviewer: But does it feel like *all girls* are distancing themselves from him now, after this? That you all keep your distance?

Sophie: Yes!

Interviewer: Or point a finger at it, maybe?

Sophie: Yes! I've noticed that!

Interviewer: Have you talked to each other about it, that you want to stress it, or is it just something you do?

Sophie: I don't know! I just know I haven't talked to anyone, and I haven't heard anyone talk to anyone else about it either. I just think everyone thinks this is *not acceptable*!

Interviewer: And is this a reaction to that?

Sophie: Yes, it is; everyone is stressing that this is *not okay*!

Interviewer: Yes, exactly, but it's not something you've agreed on doing?

Sophie: No.

Unlike the boys, the girls talk to each other about what has happened and define it as serious – so serious that they describe themselves as being united in a collective resistance to stress their refutation of these acts of sexual harassment. The girls are usually divided into two groups: one with high social status and one with lower social status. Sophie, in the quotation above, belongs to the group of "popular" girls and does not usually hang out with the victim, Charlotte, who belongs to the group described by the students as "a little geeky". The boy the girls regard as the wrongdoer belongs to the group of students with the highest social status in the class. Despite this, all of the girls show their support for Charlotte. In this case, it is not

social status that determines whom they feel sympathy with, it is gender. This shows that the DP phenomenon should be understood not only as something that occurs online, but also as something that affects students' gender relations in everyday life in school.

The fact that the girls stress their rejection of the behaviour can be seen as a form of power struggle against this kind of sexual harassment. However, the fact that they do this in silence and do not raise their voices can be understood in relation to notions about what kind of resistance actions are possible within a certain respectable femininity. At Emerald School, the girls explicitly talk about the importance of behaving and acting in the right way, so as to be accepted by one's peers. How they are perceived in the classroom not only affects their status as respectable girls, but also how certain social class norms are conformed with. Similarly, Allan's (2009) study addresses how respectable femininity was played out among schoolgirls in primary school: "classed and gendered discourses of respectability featured strongly in the girls' lives, as they were expected to behave like 'proper' upper-middle-class ladies" (p. 145). Upper-middle-class girls are not loud and do not shout in the classroom, on the contrary, they are composed (c.f. Allan, 2009). The fact that the girls are united in a common resistance can be understood as them collectively standing up for each other to maintain female respectability in a sensitive situation.

Facing Sexual Harassment

The students seemed to have little knowledge of the fact that an unsolicited picture of a sexual nature can be classified as sexual harassment and that sending these kinds of pictures is a crime. The students were told a DP is categorized as a sexual act that is forced on someone else against his/her will, yet they gave the following answers when confronted with the legal aspect of the behaviour:

Interviewer: Are you aware that this is a criminal offense and that it is sexual harassment?

Charlotte: No!

William: No!

Carl: No!

Lucas: No!

Rebecca: Yes, I knew.

Carl: I don't understand, *why* it is sexual harassment?!

Although the girls described an unsolicited DP as an unwanted sexual act that gives rise to shock, disbelief and distress, they did not know how to handle the violations other than blocking the sender, which they considered difficult if it was a boy they knew and had a social relationship with in the class. The girls simply did not know what to do or where to turn. Sophie explains:

Sophie: If I had received such pictures [from a classmate], I would've been pretty *shocked!* I wouldn't have known what to do! I don't know if I would have *dared* to go to my teacher and *tell about it!* I might have been able to tell my parents. But I don't think I would have been able to tell *any* of the school officials! Or the principal!

Sophie believes that telling the school officials would be unthinkable given the delicate nature of these violations. The interviews reveal that the school staff never speak to the students about sexual violations on the Internet, even when they know such things occur in the class. Charlotte, whose parents recently informed school officials and the other parents that a classmate had sent DPs to her repeatedly, says:

Charlotte: My mum has seen the pictures he sent to me! The pictures disappear [on Snapchat], but she has been sitting next to me when I received some of them. And this has been going on since before the summer! Mum has seen everything! And she has seen what he has written to me as well. My dad has also seen what he has written. So it's not like they haven't known about it!

Charlotte reveals that her parents have been aware that she has been subjected to sexual harassment by a classmate for an extended period of time. According to Charlotte, her parents have both seen pictures and read messages the boy has sent to her. Since her parents announced these offenses, the boy has also threatened her on several occasions, and it is these threats that have now caused her to consider filing a police report.

Charlotte: Well, I would've just ignored it just like the other girls [receiving DPs]. The only reason I now think that maybe I should report him is because he will accuse *me* of spreading false rumours and destroying his life! Then I think he has *crossed the line!* And in that case, he will have to accept a police report! Because then he has *really* crossed a line! If he can no longer take responsibility for what he has done! I think *that* would be a real low point! And then I intend to report! *If I* am affected!

This quote shows a disturbing pattern among the girls: although the DP phenomenon affects their well-being to a great extent, it is not considered as crossing the line of what they feel they have to endure. It is not until the boy accuses Charlotte of having destroyed his life by telling about the pictures that she thinks he has crossed the line. Charlotte wants to report the boy to the police if his accusations adversely affect her. The problem is that her parents have a different idea about how this might adversely affect her life:

Charlotte: Mum has called the school, because the school has a duty to report, they must report, and Mum called and said that they should not say a word about this to the police! Because if they do, Mum will just say: "Oh sorry, we made a mistake, it was a boy from Stockholm, and it wasn't the guy in the class". Just because a police report would affect me so much! And we want to be able to control the situation, and we can't control it if the school files a report. Not the way we want anyway. *We want* to be able to control things when it happens!

Charlotte's story also reveals that her parents demonstrate power by forcing the school officials not to report the boy. According to Charlotte, they made this claim although they were well aware that the school is obliged to take measures. Actually, according to the Discrimination Act and the Education Act, school officials are obliged to investigate the circumstances and take measures to prevent future sexual harassment (SFS 2008:567, SFS 2010:800). The explanation for why they did this, according to Charlotte, was that they wanted to control the situation and the possibility it would affect their daughter's marks. Academic failure is not an option for these parents, not even when their daughter has been subjected to sexual harassment and describes a background of anxiety disorder and self-harm behaviour during the interview. The parents' high expectations concerning Charlotte's marks and academic prospects affect their attitude to a police report, which connects to the normative expectations linked to their social class. In this case, the overall normative expectations are associated with social class and 'good girl femininity' (cf. Walkerdine et al., 2001). As a result, online sexual harassment is handled and more or less ignored by the adults who are responsible for protecting the young students.

In addition, the students seem to have an ambivalent attitude to how they think the problems with DPs should be handled. Below, Emily refers to when the principal, along with co-workers, informed the class about the problems with DPs at school.

Emily: They told us that it happens that students send dick pics. But in *our* class you already *know that*.

Interviewer: Yes ... that's quite common, I understand, among young people?

Emily: Yes, yes! But after this meeting, she [Charlotte] says that: "I can report this to the police!" *But hey?! Does she really think she should report a 15-year-old guy to the police, instead of talking to him face to face? And say: "Damn, this was stupid of you! But let's drop this now."*

Emily has a hard time accepting that Charlotte is considering reporting her classmate to the police. She does not think the offending boy should be reported to the police considering his age, and as a respectable good girl, Charlotte should rather forgive and forget. Instead, Emily continues by arguing that she thinks the school officials should talk to the boy's parents. Emily's reaction raises adequate positions to consider regarding the age of young offenders and appropriate action to take. It also shows the complex nature of sexual harassment between students who have known each other for many years and have a peer relationship at school.

Digital Sexual Harassment and Respectable Femininity

In this chapter, we have addressed students' views on and experiences of the phenomenon of DPs on the social media app Snapchat and how this influences their gendered relations in everyday life at a lower secondary school in an affluent area in Sweden. The results reveal that the DP phenomenon is common and directed at the

girls at school. The girls describe the sense of shock, distrust and shame they feel when they receive these kinds of unwanted pictures. To avoid receiving more pictures of this nature, the girls block the person from their sender list. In this way, the female teens are heavily pressured to regulate digital sexual harassment on a daily basis. If the perpetrator is a classmate, this situation is extra sensitive and problematic. One of the girls, Charlotte, who had received DPs from one of the boys in the class, got collective support from the rest of the girls in the class when this behaviour became known to everyone. The girls handled this by collectively distancing themselves and literally silently excluding the perpetrator, by ignoring and not talking to him. This collective act against this particular boy could be understood as a form of resistance performed by the girls.

The strategy of blocking the perpetrator could, on the other hand, be seen in light of the local social context and the importance of upholding the right cultural capital. In order to uphold their cultural and social capital, the girls at Emerald School need to negotiate normative notions of respectable femininity, as well as navigate in relation to maintaining respectable femininity and upholding class privileges and status (cf. Allan, 2009; Hussein, 2017). The respectability discourse seems to regulate the students' behaviour such that it is difficult for girls to find strategies to deal with sexual harassment at school. In this respect, respectable femininity can also be seen as a burden (cf. Hussein, 2017).

As suggested in previous research, receiving unsolicited DPs can be experienced as intrusive and disgusting by females (cf. Mandau, 2020). Similar to previous research, the female students in the current study expressed disgust about receiving DPs from male peers. Despite this, most of the students, despite gender, were unaware that sending unsolicited pictures can be considered a criminal act and an act of sexual harassment if the recipient feels violated by the explicit images (cf. SFS 2008:567). Perhaps this lack of knowledge among the students is not surprising, given that even adult women lack the ability to recognize and critically address the broader social structures that enable unsolicited DPs to be understood as acts of sexism (Amundsen, 2020). Discussing these matters with students is therefore crucial. Such discussions have the potential to not only highlighting the impact and consequences of such actions, but also to challenge the existing hegemonic order and hierarchical norms (cf. Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019). Awareness and knowledge of gendered issues are crucial to challenging the production and reproduction of heteronormative ideals among students as well as in society at large, the goal being to achieve gender equality (cf. Butler, 1990).

In the case of the student Charlotte, even though her parents knew about the DPs and had informed the principal as well as the other parents about it, they decided not to file a police report. Although the school is required to file a report when a crime is committed or if they suspect a crime has been committed, they were instructed not to do so by the parents. Instead, the parents' high expectations of their daughter's school performance were prioritized. What we can see here is how their social class, social position and their expectation that their daughter should perform 'good girl femininity' – respectable femininity – and be responsible for dealing with this matter by herself (cf. Hussein, 2017; Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Walkerdine

et al., 2001). As a result, online sexual harassment directed at teens is basically ignored by the adults who are supposed to support and protect them. In this way, the everyday sexual harassment of girls is actually accepted, and existing heteronormative conventions are reinforced (cf. Renold & Ringrose, 2011).

Preventing Sexual Harassment in School

As suggested by Henry and Powell (2015), online sexual harassment has to be viewed and critically discussed across the micro- (individual), meso- (organizational) and macro- (societal) levels. It also has to be considered in light of the #metoo movement, which has been and still is intensively debated in Sweden –not least among secondary school students in their movement #tystiklassen [#silenceinthe-class]. #tystiklassen was Swedish students' reaction and response to the #metoo campaign and highlighted students' experiences of sexual harassment in Swedish lower and upper secondary schools. The students' own initiative to address gender-based violence, through a large number of testimonies about their school experience, strongly demonstrates the need to critically discuss different forms of sexual harassment in school. This should include how the students experience this behaviour – a perspective that is still lacking in educational research.

It is also important to increase school officials' knowledge and awareness of sexual harassment at school as well as to provide them with adequate training and workshops focused on these issues (cf. Edwards et al., 2017). Moreover, there is a need for teacher training programmes to address issues of sexual harassment at school and to study the contemporary research on these issues. The present study has contributed new knowledge about these issues and about students' safety and security in the school setting. We also hope that the results presented here will offer school officials new knowledge and understanding about these issues and help them identify and prevent sexual harassment in the school milieu.

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