

**Digital youth of Aotearoa: perceptions of cyberbullying, sexting,
gender and the intersections with technology-facilitated sexual
violence**

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Abstract

The involvement of young people in cyberbullying and sexting practices typically provokes apprehension in adults. This may explain why ‘cyberbullying’ is presented in public discourse as unrelated to gender and sexuality, and ‘sexting’ is presented as hyper-sexualised stupidity. The reality is that young people are experimenting with gender and sexuality online through these practices, and the use of these simple terms to define both consensual and non-consensual acts often means that the nuances of digital sexual harm and violence that are perpetuated and experienced are overlooked. In this study, I privileged the voices of young people to explore their understandings of gender and sexuality, peer-to-peer cyberbullying, consensual and non-consensual sexting (image-based sexual abuse) and unsolicited dick pics (image-based sexual harassment) under the broad scope of technology-facilitated sexual violence. To achieve this, I applied feminist participatory praxis methods in a three-stage process incorporating consultation and thematic co-construction analysis. The first stage involved consultation with students at an alternative education provider. Building on the suggestions made by these students, friendship-group interviews were held in the second stage with students aged between 13 and 17 attending three coeducational schools. In the final stage, I co-constructed the thematic analysis with these students. I applied a Bourdieusian lens to theorise the data, drawing on the concept of the habitus as digital, embodied capital as gendered and fields as integrated offline–online spaces. The themes illuminate (i) the existence of peer-to-peer networked economies for the purchase and storage of the nude images of girls, and reasons young people participate in these economies; (ii) gendered experiences associated with the receiving and sending of unwanted dick pics – for girls, the routine and persistent exposure from peers and strangers, and for some of the boys, experiences of being falsely accused of sending an unwanted dick pic; (iii) institutional educational pedagogies of avoidance and

abstinence which inhibit the timely discussion with young people about digital sexualities, consent and non-consent in digital sexual cultures. This thesis contributes to developing knowledge of the digital gendered sexual subjectivities of young people in relation to their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Dedication

In loving memory of Georgina Vernita Flemming Pemberton

of Brick Kiln, Nevis

Granny

1931–2008

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1 Chapter One – Broadening the scope on cyberbullying and sexting

1.1 Positionality

To contextualise the origin of this thesis, I provide a summary of my pathway to this project. My intention in doing this is to detail the rationale for this research, and the reasons why I engaged in the ethics of feminist praxis drawing on Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology as central to this project. To work within a feminist paradigm, it was necessary that I be able to reflect on and situate my social, cultural and political influences and, in turn, acknowledge how my positionality shaped the ontological assumptions that accompanied my dive into a PhD project of a sensitive nature.

Briefly, let me start by stating I am a 48-year-old cisgender woman of mixed British Caribbean heritage. I was raised in the culturally rich post-industrial city of Manchester, in the United Kingdom. I am the eldest of four daughters who were raised in a working-class family. I left my family home and school at sixteen without any qualifications and moved in with my teenage boyfriend. I thus found myself working my way through a variety of jobs. At this time of my youth, I was deemed a marginalised young beneficiary. I encountered many government-led youth ‘support’ organisations to keep me on track – whatever ‘on track’ is supposed to look like.

My first experience of tertiary education came at the age of twenty-eight, when I trained as a probation officer. My involvement in adult education created what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (whose conceptual toolkit I use to theorise this research) might term as ‘discordance of my habitus’: I was a ‘fish out of water’ as my dispositions shifted from unknowing to knowing. At this turning point, I became acutely aware of the staggering scope and routinely accepted nature of sexual and domestic violence perpetrated against girls and women. I also

realised to the degree which I had normalised this ‘social fact’ for myself, despite being a victim-survivor of sexual violence. In many ways, recognising my acceptance of such violence was the starting point of my feminist education. At this stage, I also began to connect my autoethnography with the fields I had encountered and to understand how, as a young woman, the intersections of my gender, race, sexuality and socioeconomic status had, to that point, shaped my social practice. For example, I was able to recognise how my schooling had discouraged my uptake of education and how I had normalised the inevitability of sexual violence as a gendered experience not necessarily to be reported to any persons or authorities. As I moved into employment as a case manager in the youth justice sector, teenage girls often shared with me accounts of peer-to-peer sexual violence which they had not reported to the authorities. My reflections upon my first-hand experiences as well as upon what I learned from others motivated me to take on specialist work with young people to design and roll out education programmes to prevent sexual and domestic abuse/violence.

In 2012, I emigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand with my pākehā partner, and I now live what I consider to be a middle-class lifestyle (field) with working/middle-class values (habitus). I am the parent of a tween and a teen, both of whom are digitally competent. I recognise the ways in which my own experience of parenting in a ‘digital society’ (Lupton, 2015) influences both the epistemology of this research project as well as my interactions with the young people in this study.

My epistemological decisions in this study are underpinned by having been a young woman whose opinion was considered of little value and by having worked with young people as a practitioner. I acknowledge that, as a Westernised adult who did not go through the stages of childhood or youth with access to the online digital world, I hold an etic perspective, meaning that I am an outsider, looking in on the current experiences of young people with very little experiential comparison in terms of access to technology. Yet, thanks to my work supporting

young people, through which I have been privy to shared confidential information (with safeguarding limitations), I hold an emic perspective, meaning I am also an insider. As a parent to an eleven-year-old and a thirteen-year-old, I am experiencing their offline–online world as this hybrid of insider/outsider. The combination of my curiosity, my work as a youth practitioner, my exploration as a parent and my evolving feminist ethics set in motion the idea to map out a co-constructed research project that attempts to centre the voice of young people in a study of their online experiences of digital sexual violence.

1.2 Thesis origin

In my previous role as an educator in the family and sexual violence prevention sector, I delivered a range of lessons, workshops and campaigns across schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. I worked closely with young people to raise awareness of forms of violence and of relevant legislation, safety planning, help-seeking and bystander or upstander strategies. We would discuss different forms of physical and non-physical violence and abuse. I noticed that, if given the space to talk freely about their experiences or those of their friends, young people would often raise the issue of what they perceived and defined as cyberbullying. Cathartically, young people voiced their narratives, and we would unravel their stories of cyberbullying, which typically did not feature faceless victimisers behind screens but often known peers. I found that once we started unravelling the nature of cyberbullying, the acts often included the sexualised and gendered non-consensual sharing of images, the embarrassing reception of unwanted penis images or feelings of being pressured to produce a nude image.

Young people expressed uncertainty about to whom to turn in order to talk about these experiences. I often found them to be unaware of the significance of gendered power imbalances and how these imbalances, in relation to developing ideas of gender, played out as culturally prescribed gendered scripts. Their stories, to my mind, did not fit definitions of

‘cyberbullying’ and instead exemplified what I originally conceptualised as cyber sexual violence. According to both the young people I worked with and findings in policy and practice literature, this violence disproportionately affects girls and young women (UN Broadband Commission, 2015; Amnesty International, 2017; Plan International, 2020). However, because these young people I worked with had no language to conceptualise these incidents as sexual abuse or violence, they relied on the ubiquitous, gender-neutral, non-sexualised term ‘cyberbullying’ to make sense of these experiences. I also noticed that parents, teachers, practitioners and researchers involved with children and young people tended to misinterpret digital social sexual practices that are understood more widely as ‘digital sexual cultures’ (Handyside & Ringrose, 2017). Typically, adults either minimised the cyberbullying experiences of young people as peer-to-peer, gender-neutral and non-sexualised, despite gender clearly being a factor in the specific acts, or they problematised these experiences as ‘sexting’, in which gender was sexually essentialised. The violence children and young people encountered was often framed outside of any language that would situate these practices as potentially sexually harmful.

The technology that enables young people to engage in digital sexual cultures, cyberbullying and sexting is unlikely to ever be rendered completely harmless. To equip young people to engage safely in the digital world, it is critical to develop gendered knowledge of online practices and gender-responsive policy that is informed by their views and by the complexities they experience.

1.3 Definitions of childhood and youth

In this thesis, I position societal understandings of childhood and adolescence as socially constructed. I offer a more in-depth perspective on this positioning in Chapters Two and Four. Because a complete cultural analysis of the ages and stages of youth and childhood is outside

the realms of this discussion, I refer broadly to ‘children’ as being under the age of 18, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, Article 1 (see Ministry of Social Development, 2018). For the purpose of this study, I consider children between the ages of 13 and 18 to be ‘young people’, although outside of this study I might extend this range. I acknowledge that these labels of ‘child’ and ‘young person’ make no reference to emotional or social maturity. However, for this thesis, in which the term ‘participant’ refers to the aforementioned age range ascribed to ‘young people’, this terminology is largely suitable. In addition to the terms ‘youth’, ‘young person’ and ‘young people’, I interchangeably use the terms ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ and ‘young women’ and ‘young men’, although I do acknowledge these gender pronouns are problematically binary. For any participant who does not identify with cisgender terms, I have used their chosen pronouns.

1.4 Evolving conceptualisation and definitions of digital sexual violence

Popular and academic discourse has at times rationalised the peer-to-peer harm resulting from cyberbullying as gender-neutral or sexting as hypersexual stupidity, for reasons I detail in Chapter Two. As a result of such adult rationalisations, the experiences young people have had online, both as victims and as perpetrators, have been individualised and displaced outside discussions of sexual violence. To shed light on the reality of technology-facilitated sexual violence, Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry, scholars in the field of feminist criminology, have drawn upon the works of feminist scholar Liz Kelly (1987). Kelly places the nuanced interplay of physical and non-physical violence on a continuum that includes pressure, force and coercion as part of the scope of sexual violence. Powell and Henry integrate into this continuum a range of sexually exploitative and aggressive interconnected offline–online practices (Henry & Powell, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b; Powell & Henry 2014, 2016, 2017; Powell, 2022).

According to these authors, technology-facilitated sexual violence is defined as:

a range of behaviours where digital technologies are used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms. Such behaviours include online sexual harassment, gender and sexuality-based harassment, cyber-stalking, image-based sexual exploitation and the use of a carriage service to coerce a victim into an unwanted sexual act. (Henry & Powell, 2016b, p. 1)

As part of the introduction to this subject, it is important to review other terms found in the literature which come under the rubric of technology-facilitated sexual violence. For example, to reposition the counterproductive media moniker of ‘revenge pornography’ away from wide victim blaming rhetoric, feminist legal scholars Claire McGlynn and Erika Rackley (2016) instigated the term ‘image-based sexual abuse’. These authors define the non-consensual creation of, and/or distribution of, and/or threat to distribute nude or sexual images – including fake nudes – as sexualised non-consenting gendered practices. In addition, Claire McGlynn and Kelly Johnson (2021a, 2021b) lobbied for the recognition of the term ‘cyberflashing’ to refer to incidences of male perpetrators intentionally digitally exposing themselves, for instance by airdropping a photo of their penis, colloquially termed as an unsolicited dick pic, shared to induce harm or fear to girls and women. However, when working with young people, Ringrose et al., (2022a, 2022b) note the importance of deconstructing the context of an unwanted dick pic, as there can be varying motivations beyond that of exhibitionism (see Oswald et al., 2020). The context and intention of unsolicited dick pics can vary for young people (Salter, 2016; Oswald et al., 2020). In this research, it became clear that whether the image is sent by a peer or by a stranger has different implications for young people. Cyberflashing is not a term that the young people in this study showed any awareness of (nor should they have known of this term), as young people primarily use using the terms ‘dick pics’, ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘nudes’ when referring to unwanted dick pics. Unwanted dick pics

in the context of working with young people are also termed by Ringrose et al. (2022a) as ‘image-based sexual harassment’, and by Meehan (2022e) as ‘image-based sexual abuse’.

The above terms are constructive for this thesis. However, following on from my initial review of the literature, I discovered that I required a broader frame of reference for my fieldwork that would capture the range of practices that young people reported to me under the terms of ‘cyberbullying’ and/or ‘sexting’. I have chosen the above-stated overriding term ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’ conceptualised by Henry and Powell (Henry & Powell, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b; Powell & Henry 2014, 2016, 2017; Powell, 2022) to serve this purpose. This definition not only encompasses image-based sexual abuse and image-based sexual harassment but also includes a wider range of harms. Champion et al. (2022) suggests that the definition of technology-facilitated sexual violence is too broad, and that consequently this may reduce emphasis on harms as mainly attributable to technology. Powell (2022), recently revisiting the use of the term ten years after its inception, acknowledges the broad applicability of the term but argues that it remains a consolidating concept for sexual violence across offline–online spaces, and I agree.

1.5 The experience of sexual harm among young people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Statistics from the *New Zealand Crime & Victims Survey*, (Ministry of Justice, 2020, 2022), reveal that New Zealand has a high prevalence of sexual violence in the general population: estimated to be 29%, this figure does not account for underreporting. According to this survey, young people aged 15 to 19 experience a higher rate of sexual violence in comparison to the general population, a rate which increases among people in this age group of diverse sexualities and among females (Ministry of Justice, 2022). Notably, a limitation of the *New Zealand Crime & Victims Survey* is that no crime and victim data are collected in Aotearoa New Zealand from young people under the age of 15. In reference to sexual violence perpetrated on school sites,

the Ministry of Education does not collect data or report on sexually harmful behaviour in schools (see Ministry of Education, 2018; see Harris, 2022). Schools themselves collect data on stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions associated with sexual harassment and sexual misconduct and are required to refer case on to an appropriate agency such as the police (ibid). For some insights about the experience of sexual harm among young people, we can refer to findings from a survey by the Adolescent Health Research Group. This surveyed young people aged between 12 and 17 and in school years 9 to 13. The findings showed that one in four females and almost one in ten males had experienced sexual harm (Youth 19, 2021). Without context, it is difficult to use these data sets to gain a full picture of such incidents or to determine whether they were perceived as cyberbullying and/or sexting by an adult or young person. None of the aforementioned surveys state whether the harms experienced occurred offline, online or a combination of both.

1.6 The extent of the problem: Media cases of ‘sexting’ in Aotearoa New Zealand

In my early interest of this subject, I was also aware that a lot of media attention was being given to the issues of sexting and cyberbullying, as exemplified by ‘the roast busters’ case that emerged in November 2013 (see Gavey, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, see Powell & Henry, 2014). News stories reported that a group of young males, referring to themselves as the roast busters, had established a social media group page in 2011 to organise the sexual grooming and sexual assault of female peers. At the time of the reports, approximately 100 female victim-survivors, some under the age of 16, had been assaulted by the roast busters. It was made known that the group of young males had initiated social media forums to recruit other members, including the creation of a hashtag: ‘#roastbustertakeover’. While national and global coverage condemned the actions of this group as reprehensible, reports revealed that a number of victims and their parents had lodged complaints about members of the roast busters in 2011, two years before the story broke. As reported by an Independent Police Conduct Authority (2015), these

complaints had been belittled, resulting in inadequate police responses at that time to take action against the group.

According to Gavey (2013, 2014a) the failure of the police over the several years of complaints to consider the behaviour of the roast busters as misogynistic sexual violence arguably exemplified a culture of sexist collusion. Instead of taking the accounts of the victim-survivors seriously, the police positioned the actions of the roast busters as outside their scope: the young men's actions were essentially normalised and thus minimised as being considered examples of problematic youth masculinities on social media (see Gavey, 2013, 2014a). The 'boys will be boys' discourse compounded existing institutionalised gendered blaming of the victim-survivors.

This normalisation of traditional forms of masculinity, as it was being demonstrated in new spaces online, functioned as a social cultural institutional barrier. Feminist social psychologist Nicola Gavey (2005/2018) has identified the underpinning normalisations preventing such incidents from being viewed as collective forms of sexual violence or as a part of an endemic rape culture that is culturally scaffolded. In 2021, ten years after the roast busters had established their online presence on social media, charges were finally laid against them. We are yet to hear the outcome of these proceedings. The non-consensual sexual abuse allegedly perpetrated by these young men has been attributed by some media platforms as having expedited legislative reform through the Harmful Digital Communications Act in 2015 (see Vance, 2016). This case has since been followed by reports of a wide range of similar incidents in the press in Aotearoa New Zealand:

- In 2014, a case similar to that of the roast busters came to the public's attention. The local media reported discovery of a 'Rack Appreciation Society'. Once again, the networked affordances of a Facebook group were enabled and approximately 2,000

male subscribers were invited, without any platform restrictions, to participate in viewing the non-consensual distribution of explicit images of young women studying at Otago University (see Gavey, 2014a; Hume, 2014).

- In 2015, at Auckland Boys Grammar, a group of students were suspended and excluded from the school for producing and distributing sexualised images using Facebook. The school recognised these actions as sexual harassment yet reasoned that technology and the immaturity of boys were at the core of the issue (see Tait, 2015).
- In 2017, a group from Wellington Boys College used Facebook as a misogynistic ‘classroom’ for communicative interaction. In their private social media groups, rape culture was overtly approved with ‘like’ responses to comments such as: ‘Drunk girls deserve it’; ‘All boys do this’; or, as a reply to one comment stated, ‘If you don’t take advantage of a drunk girl, you are not a true WC [Wellington College] boy’ (see Williams, 2017).
- In 2021, allegations of sexual harassment offline and online led to tensions culminating in a physical protest standoff between Christchurch Girls and Christchurch Boys Schools (see McCallum, 2021). The Principal of Christchurch Girls School commissioned researcher Liz Gordon to conduct a survey to determine the prevalence of sexual harassment (Gordon, 2021). Sadly, yet unsurprisingly, the girls reported having experienced high levels of sexual harassment from peers and strangers (91%) across offline and online spaces. Over half of the 725 young women who participated in the survey reported being victims of sexual harassment, with a quarter reporting they had been harassed in more than ten episodes. Over 20 students disclosed having been raped. Relevant to this study, most of the participants indicated that they had neither reported the abuse nor accessed support services, for fear of institutionalised victim blaming (Christchurch High Girls School, 2021; see Gordon, 2021).

- Building on Gordon's (2021) survey, in October 2022, two other collocated Christchurch high schools, Avonside Girls and Shirley Boys, participated in a similar survey. Paralleling the results of the Christchurch Girls survey, sexual harassment was found to have taken place across multiple offline–online settings. The most routine harassment, experienced by 40% of respondents, took place online and via images which were also connected to offline sexual harassment, including rape. Findings revealed that boys (39%) and men (36%) were reported by participants to be the predominant harassers. A high proportion of harassment happened across schools, online, in a peer-to-peer context (see Boswell, 2022; Gordon, 2022a, 2022b¹)

The findings of the two aforementioned surveys could be compared with those reported in a rapid review of sexual abuse and harassment in schools in England conducted by the non-ministerial government Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in the United Kingdom (see Ofsted, 2021). This inspection was triggered by the deluge of testimonials recorded on the Everyone's Invited website campaign instigated by Soma Sara in 2020 as part of an anti-rape movement (see BBC, 2021). The inspection interviewed 900 children and young people with findings that revealed widespread peer-to-peer sexually harmful behaviours, disproportionately impacting girls, that often went unreported or unaddressed by schools. The fact that the aforementioned surveys undertaken in Christchurch had been independently commissioned is acknowledged, yet their results have little governance impact in comparison to those collected by Ofsted, given that the Ministry of Education does

¹ The author of this thesis has a hard copy of this source material [Gordon, L. (2022b, October). Survey of sexual harassment. Shirley Boys' High School Ngā Tama o Ōruapaeroa]. However, since initial publication of these findings in 2022, this document is no longer available online for retrieval. I received confirmation from Dr Liz Gordon in April 2023 that Shirley Boys' High School have not permitted any right to anyone to publicly publish the report.

not collect data on sexual misconduct in schools (Ministry of Education, 2018; see Harris, 2022).

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education does not provide evidential data, it is possible to deduce from media reports and the findings generated in Christchurch that young people in Aotearoa New Zealand – particularly girls – experience sexual harassment both offline and online. Indeed, the prevalent use of the terms ‘cyberbullying’ and/or ‘sexting’ in public, media and scholarly discourse indicates that sexual harassment and violence are constructed and defined by adults and young people as actions that commonly occur online (see Bailey, 2014; see Krieger, 2017; see Adorjan, 2019). As I discuss throughout, the dominant conceptualisations of cyberbullying and sexting serve to misdirect and obscure the critical contemplation of technology-facilitated sexual violence, which might be more apt for exploring what is happening in the lives of young people.

1.7 Situating digital evolution and digital trends for children and young people

Innovations by military computer scientists in the 1960s pioneered a computing sharing network² that has evolved to transform the ways people communicate and interact. As these technologies advanced in the 1980s, innovations in networking created what became known as a ‘cyber’ space³. Futurists and cyberfeminists envisioned cyberspace as a non-territorial space which enabled free speech, liberation from structural governance and sovereign disembodiment with post-biohuman possibilities (see Haraway, 1985/2016; see Barlow, 1996). Global aspirations of an ‘information technology revolution’ (Castells, 1996/2009, p. 6) further characterised the online cyberspace as the computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee launched Web

² Advanced Research Project Agency Network – ARPANET (see Castells, 1996/2010).

³ Science fiction author William Gibson is credited with initiating the term ‘cyberspace’ in his science fiction novel, *Neuromancer*.

1.0 Internet in 1993. In this era, a few elite proficiently coded static content for subscribed users. Web 2.0 quickly followed and transformed the original platform into a globally accessible and interactive superstructure (Stratton et al., 2017).

When I started this research project in 2017, it was estimated that 47% of the world's population was online (United Nation Broadband Commission, 2016). The latest figures show that the percentage has risen to 66% of the global population, with 5.3 billion people using the internet (Statista, 2023). Globally, young people aged 15 to 24 are reportedly the most connected users, accounting for 70% of the total online users; when we narrow down to those countries with stable economies, this percentage increases to 94% (Livingstone et al., 2015; International Telecommunication Union, 2022). This younger cohort of online users, which is growing to include children as young as seven, relies particularly heavily on social media platforms for communication and entertainment. For instance, in a 2021 United States Ipsos survey, parents reported that 49% of 10- to 12-year-olds and 32% of 7- to 9-year-olds routinely subscribed to social media applications (Mott Poll, 2021). It has long been reported that age restrictions limiting access of children and young people to such platforms are largely ineffective (Livingstone et al., 2011). In the United States, social media platforms YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat (in this order) are reported by the Pew research to be the most popular (Vogels et al., 2022).

1.8 Digital trends for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Findings from Datareportal indicate that 95% of the population of Aotearoa New Zealand uses the internet (Kemp, 2023). Furthermore, according to findings from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation & Development, teens from Aotearoa New Zealand rank high internationally as internet users (Gerritsen, 2021). The majority of Aotearoa New Zealanders aged 6 to 14 years old use the internet daily and primarily navigate the internet alone (NZ on

Air Irirangi Te Motu, 2020, p. 25). As expected, increases in internet use align with a rise in smartphone ownership and, while possessing one is dependent on economic circumstances, smartphones are now considered less a luxury and increasingly a necessity. Figures indicate that a growing number of children from the age of eight upwards own smartphones, with 64% possessing their own mobile phone by the age of eleven and 90% to 98% of high schoolers owning one (Collins, 2019b; Census at School, 2019). From the age of ten, interactive social media content is reportedly entrenched in the everyday lives of children and young people, and a stark increase in the number of social media applications that emphasise sharing content is a likely consequence of this (NZ on Air Irirangi Te Motu, 2020). According to a report on Children's Media Use (ibid), the most popular social media applications with the highest daily reach for 6- to 14-year-olds in Aotearoa New Zealand are, in order of reach: TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. In 2018, Netsafe (2018a) estimated that 40% of our children and young people subscribe to at least five social media platforms, with one-third of young people spending at least 4 hours per day online. For many of the participants in this study, four hours was a conservative estimate, and given the time elapsed since the data was collected, it is likely this figure has increased. That said, it seems arbitrary to rely on time spent online as a sole measure of understanding the digital lives of young people.

Turning to the subject of cyberbullying, estimates have calculated the economic impact of this phenomenon in Aotearoa New Zealand at approximately \$444 million (Netsafe, 2018c). Given this staggering figure, there is a strong fiscal impetus on the government to prevent and address cyberbullying through the application of legislation and education. Results from a global Ipsos study (Ipsos, 2018), which collected data from adults (omitting the perspectives of young people), identified the prevalence of cyberbullying in Aotearoa New Zealand as the third highest in an index of twenty-nine countries. This ranking and parallel reports that cyberbullying is being prioritised as an increasing public concern in Aotearoa New Zealand

(Netsafe, 2018c, 2020). One of the major problems of the quantitative studies that are used to both illuminate and address cyberbullying concerns is that all forms of online harm for those aged under 16 seem to be collapsed into the category of ‘cyberbullying’, which then overlooks the gendered and sexualised nuances young people experience when they are bullying or being bullied.

1.9 Digital harm legislation and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

Rapid digital assimilation has provoked theoretical, legislative, policing, governance, policy and regulatory challenges (Powell & Henry, 2017). The Aotearoa New Zealand government manages the increased risk of cybercrime and cyberharm through a key piece of legislation called the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015). This act was enacted to address the wide range of online harms reported by New Zealanders across civil and criminal districts. Speculative media reports at the time the act was introduced cited the political and social repercussions of the roast busters case as instrumental in its shaping and enactment (see Vance, 2016). Netsafe, as a non-governmental organization, is tasked as the watchdog administering the act, which lays down ten principles that, if breached, could result in civil mediation or consideration by a district court. In its infancy, the act was largely impotent, due to high bias thresholds requiring the victim-survivor to prove the intention of the perpetrator to cause harm. These bias thresholds and high police costs, in many cases, prevented comprehensive investigations. There were difficulties prosecuting the act, as it also failed to attend to the gendered scope of victim experiences (Vaughan, 2021).

Despite the weaknesses in the legislation, it is reported that from 2017 to 2020, one-third of warnings or prosecutions under the act involved young people, mainly males aged between 10 and 19 (see McCaull, 2022), many of the cases were referred to Netsafe for mediation. Following lobbying, the act was amended in March 2022 to lower the high harm thresholds

which had previously worked against victims. The amended act addresses the non-consensual sharing of images and enables victims to directly approach the police to instigate criminal proceedings. While these changes in the legislation have been welcomed, flaws in the application of the act remain. Despite the fact that the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015) has administered warnings to and prosecuted young people who have used the internet to harm others, this act has been criticised for its inadequate consideration of the digital sexual cultures of young people. Indeed, qualitative research tells us that there is limited understanding of young people in many existing legal frameworks (Meehan, 2021c; see McCaull, 2022; Henry et al., 2022). In particular, there is little clarity in the act in relation to the unwanted reception of stranger and peer-to-peer unwanted dick pics/cyberflashing, which has been found to be widely experienced by girls when they start out on social media and to be a gendered issue with disproportional impact (see Ankel, 2018; Gallagher, 2021; also see McGlynn & Johnstone, 2021a, 2021b). In addition, according to wider legislation, anyone under the age of 18 cannot consent to share a visual image to be digitally posted. However, the act would do well to follow the example set in the United Kingdom⁴ and acknowledge that images can be produced under truly consensual circumstances with no intention to be shared. When such images are brought to the attention of authorities (say, sexual images sent between two 15-year-olds in a relationship), a softer legislative approach could be taken. The preference under the act is that incidents between young people are dealt with through school sanctions and mediation with the advice of Netsafe. On the surface, this may seem to be a constructive approach. However, as reported in Chapter Five, it is very difficult to identify whether ‘consent’ as been given: young people under the age of 16 – mainly girls – are consenting and/or being coerced into consenting to their images being shared between peers for material

⁴ In the United Kingdom, the police determine teen consensual sexting as an Outcome 21, which does not require further investigation.

purposes. For young people, should formal and informal responses to the sharing of sexual images take a punitive avenue? What will this hope to achieve? Alternatively, should interventions invest in positive digital sexual ethics education which openly addresses gender norms and young people's participation with consent in digital sexual cultures (see Albury et al., 2017; Horeck et al., 2021; Setty et al., 2022).

The application of the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015) faces two other key challenges. One is the growing use of artificial intelligence to create falsified, high resolution, sexualised digital images referred to as 'deepfakes'. It is not yet clear how the legislation can be applied to the production and sharing of such images (see Hogan, 2022). Another concern can be raised with respect to whether those who administer the act, such as the Police and Netsafe, are sufficiently trained to apply a gendered lens to a given complaint, in order to understand the nuances between ethical consensual situations and those in which power and control are being deployed.

In July 2022, Netsafe and NZTech launched a Code of Practice for Online Safety and Harms⁵ in collaboration with a range of social media companies to reduce and mitigate the risk of online harms. This move has been criticised as an alignment with big tech firms such as Meta, who have the funds and the power to avoid being subject to state regulatory government reforms (see Dalder, 2022). Two prominent global cases that involved teen girls – the Wall Street Journal exposé from whistleblower Frances Haugen (see Wells et al., 2021) and the United Kingdom Court ruling in the Molly Russell case allege that social media platforms deliberately exploit the safety of young people, particularly of girls, for profit (see Milmo,

⁵ See <https://nztech.org.nz/>

2022). How effectively can a ‘code of practice’ hold social media platforms to account for the dangers they expose children and young people to?

1.10 The research gap in Aotearoa New Zealand

In 2017, during my initial review of the literature on the subject, I found that global research on the subjects of cyberbullying and sexting came predominantly from North America, Australia and the United Kingdom, with a few studies undertaken in European countries. When I geographically limited this search to Aotearoa New Zealand, I found a small number of studies about cyberbullying developed in this country and even fewer on sexting. Despite the ethnic and racial diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand, to the best of my knowledge at that time, none of the studies on these subjects had used a feminist intersectional sociological lens. There was also little evidence of the use of participatory methods that involve young people in the consultation, design or dissemination of the research. This baffled me, as young people are currently the cohort who are most socialised with the internet. Furthermore, as is reflected in Westernised discourse, public discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand reported in these studies mainly focused on the perspectives of adults rather than on those of young people (see McGovern et al., 2016). Most of the studies adopted quantitative methods under positivist paradigms of psychology and criminology. In Chapter Two, I present and examine the relevant research available at the time of this study and discuss in detail the researcher’s assumptions that shaped epistemological foundations.

While the existing studies I reviewed proved useful as a starting platform for my research, my closer experience with young people illustrated to me that creative methods such as participatory action research should be more routinely considered when designing and undertaking research into their experiences. I reflected that creative approaches might be better matched to the contemporary socio-sexual-digital experiences of young people, and that

participatory methods might be best suited to analyse the nuances of their lived experiences. There is a shortage of co-constructed research with young people aged 13 to 17 from Aotearoa New Zealand, so this is one key contribution that this thesis makes to the evolving literature. In this project, I have applied a methodology that captured qualitative rich data by embedding a youth participatory research approach. Critically, the voices of young people were central to the project throughout all stages of the research: young people were engaged as co-consultants in the research design and co-constructors of the resulting themes. The use of such methods might go some way to examine the complexities of the use of power by young people, the strategies that they develop to experience empowerment and safety and the ways in which they experience power relate to ideas about gender. While the nuances of gendered relations seemed to have been underemphasised in the existing literature, at the time of my review, my conversations with young people illuminated gender, in their experiences of cyberbullying and sexting, as an action, a practice and a performance.

1.11 The research problem

As I will show, much of the research undertaken concerning the use of digital technologies and the internet by young people has focused on cyberbullying. This focus is arguably too narrow and the research has often been underpinned with a generic approach. Instead, research on this subject should unravel young people's perceptions of cultural gender scripts, explore how they use the term 'cyberbullying' and illuminate the ways in which cyberbullying might overlap with non-consensual sexting practices. The use of the term 'technology-facilitated sexual violence' might better frame young people's concepts of cyberbullying and/or non-consensual sexting practices. Nuances of perception, language and the interconnection of concepts can often be missed, misinterpreted or minimised by positivist paradigms.

What became clear early into my research was that a different approach might provide better insights into the technosocial developments that have been prompted by the availability of new forms of social media. This thesis then set out to investigate alternative ways of understanding the non-consensual sharing of sexualised images and the reception of unwanted male genitalia images.

As I detail in Chapter Four, involving young people in this type of research is challenging, and this difficulty goes some way to explaining their invisibility in research processes. Concerns about the willingness of the young people to take part and the challenge of getting ethics approval may restrict researchers from engaging them in these areas of research. Even when traditional forms of research that rely on surveys and interviews can be used with young people, the target groups for such studies are rarely included as consultants and co-constructors for research design; neither are they involved in setting the questions or reviewing and shaping the themes. Excluding young people from the design of research methods and the co-construction of themes can lead adult researchers to misinterpret their experiences.

As I outline in Chapters Two and Three, in ‘making sense’ of the experiences of young people, I draw upon Bourdieusian theories to explore the concept of integrated offline–online social fields. I examine the nature of peer-to-peer harm across their social fields, the contextual interplay of young people’s developing perceptions of gender identity and power relations in their digital habitus. I look at the ways this interplay shapes perceptions of technology-facilitated sexual violence that young people interpret as cyberbullying/sexting. Using a broad feminist lens, I hope to make a cross-disciplinary contribution to this subject across youth studies, sociology and criminology.

1.12 Research aims and objectives

Throughout the process of my research, I sought to gain a deeper exploratory knowledge of:

- Young people's understanding of peer-to-peer technology-facilitated sexual violence (through the generic terms 'cyberbullying'/'sexting').
- How the experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence among young people connect to their use of digital devices across integrated offline–online environments.
- The ways in which young people perceive these experiences and relate them to developing views of gender.

To achieve these aims, I set five key objectives.

Objective 1. Examine the meanings and understandings young people have, as victims and victimisers, of peer-to-peer technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Objective 2. Explore the perceptions young people have of the convergence between their offline–online activities and how the environments in which they occur may relate to their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Objective 3. Analyse the ways in which gendered perceptions and experiences influence conceptions of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Objective 4. Explore young people's perceptions of harm caused by their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Objective 5. Assess and explore the strategies that young people use to promote safety in offline–online spaces.

1.13 Outline of chapters

To fulfil the aims and objectives of this thesis, Chapters One, Two, Three and Four set out the context of the research approach and its findings. Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the thematic findings, co-constructed with young people, and offer a window into the digital socio-sexual lives and cultures of young people. Chapter Eight concludes the thesis.

In Chapter Two, I trace back the broad intertwined social construction of Western childhood and adolescence. I consider gender, sexuality and the underpinning patriarchal concerns of cultural sexualisation, all of which purposefully influence the social and institutional policing of girls. I progress the discussion by examining contradictory implications and provocations in adult perceptions of online safety, harm and risk. This scene-setting narrows to a review of the epistemologies of cyberbullying and sexting, in which I explore the onset and overlap of these literatures and the postfeminist girl panics that have emerged in parallel. I argue that the context of these discourses obscured recognition and understanding of technology-facilitated sexual violence and explain why young people do not categorise cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting or the receiving of unwanted dick pics as forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

In Chapter Three, I integrate a broad feminist lens with Pierre Bourdieu's social theory of practice. I contend that Bourdieu's conceptual toolkit of capital (power), fields (integrated social spaces and social gendered power relations) and habitus (an implicit sense of how to act) is suited to exploring digitally gendered embodiment of young people and their gendered power relations across offline–online social fields. I explain how the individual and collective habitus interprets and accomplishes cultural gender scripts via gendered digital performativity that relies on the use of images in digital sexual cultures. The application of Bourdieusian principles shifts the focus from the individualisation of cyberbullying and sexting towards an analysis of young people's power and how such power can seem to operate legitimately within the harmful digital practices of a young person.

Chapter Four describes the methodological framework chosen for this study. I explain my rationale for undertaking a qualitative approach and justify my feminist orientation towards youth participatory research. I explain the use of cultural protocols and why the research project, named #useyourvoice, was designed (before the emergence of COVID-19) over a

three-stage process. I discuss each stage in detail, from the initial consultation with young people at an alternative educational setting, through to the second and third stages with students in mainstream settings. I describe the ‘pre-code’ analysis (Saldana, 2016, p. 20) which followed the data collection in the second stage and provided thematic insights, captured in four graphic illustrations, for the third stage of thematic co-construction. The illustrations, used as tools, are presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five examines specifically the exchange of nudes in the networked economies of young people, based upon participant narratives of what they referred to as the ‘wank bank’. I argue that the postfeminist context normalises postfeminist values, beliefs and understandings and that these and the concurrent commodification of girls’ bodies have influenced young people to view the sharing of such images as acts of cyberbullying and sexting rather than as acts of sexualised or gendered violence.

Chapter Six is titled ‘Some things just can’t be unseen’. In this chapter, I take a detailed look at the ways in which the participants of the #useyourvoice project comprehended the sending and receiving of unwanted dick pics. I argue that unwanted dick pics, under the scope of technology-facilitated sexual violence, are expressions of image-based sexual harassment perpetrated against girls, the impacts of which are obscured and minimised by terms such as ‘cyberbullying’, and ‘nudes’. I consider the gendered digital habitus pre-conscious embodiments of ‘safety work’ (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020) that girls undertake across offline–online spaces. Nuancing the discussion, I also discuss the implications for boys of peer-to-peer distribution and of being falsely accused of sending an unwanted dick pic.

Chapter Seven considers the narratives of the young people participating in this research, who contended that the education they receive about gendered and sexualised harassment is out of touch with their socio-digital realities, at least in part because the adults are not comfortable

discussing digital sexual cultures. I conceptualise this adult discomfort as a formed pedagogy of avoidance that instils heteronormative abstinence messages in relationship and sexuality education and in cybersafety/digital citizenship programmes. Findings reveal that these underlying messages prevented young people both from critically discussing consent and non-consent in digital sexual cultures and from deconstructing the sexism and gender inequality imbedded in these cultures. Indeed, most media literacy and digital citizenship programmes seem to address cyberbullying through a neutral lens and sexting through a risk lens; neither lens truly reflects the gendered and sexualised experiences young people have as they seek information online (Setty, 2022c).

Chapter 8 concludes this thesis. I discuss the limitations of the study and summarise my research findings. In my closing argument, I conclude that, instead of avoiding the digital sexualities of young people, we should lean into conversations with them about the realities of their socio-sexual lives. To hold these conversations, we must change how we work with young people and elevate their perspectives – rather than adult misperceptions – of their practices in digital sexual cultures. To do this, we must unravel the context and realities of the supposed sexting and supposed cyberbullying. If we do not delineate what constitutes or does not constitute technology-facilitated sexual violence, these forms of gender-based violence will remain unaccounted for and continue to disproportionately affect girls and young women.

2 Chapter Two – Digital, gendered, sexual: beings and becomings

2.1 Introduction

The explorations of young people within digital sexual cultures unsurprisingly provoke adult apprehensions. Seemingly, for adults, young people's cultures within digital spaces are unfamiliar, non-surveyable territory that engender a sense of limited adult control. When unpacked, this disquiet perpetuates historical moral concerns centred on sex, sexuality, and 'uncontrollable' youth. This broad backdrop sets the scene for this chapter, which addresses the literature on the subject across four sections.

The first section sets the foundations: I concentrate on the patriarchal values underpinning the social construction of childhood-to-youth. I will show how connected historical and moral concerns about gender and sexuality overlay the construction of protectionist and risky youth discourses and illustrate the ways in which fears about the 'cultural sexualisation' of girls are folded into sexting and cyberbullying panics. The second section outlines the evolution of the digital world, young people's participation in it and generational divisions. In the third section, I draw attention to a taken-for-granted gender-neutral lens in the cyberbullying epistemology and how this epistemology has been informed by the postfeminist agenda. The fourth section addresses the way that the epistemology of sexting has obscured recognition of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Across sections three and four, I highlight the epistemological consequences of defining cyberbullying and sexting in ways that have worked to shelter adults and youth from assessing the extent to which sexist cultures may underpin these practices. This chapter intends to provide a basis for contemplating the ways in which facets of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting could (and should) be framed as technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Scoping the literature on cyberbullying and sexting, I intended to focus on studies involving young people of a similar age group to my participants. However, as you will see, this was not always possible. It is worth noting that, while I make use of the broadly understood terminologies ‘sexting’ and ‘cyberbullying’, I do so with conceptual reservations.

2.2 Section One – The social construction of childhood

The Westernised social construction of childhood as a developmental stage was conceived from white, post-Victorian, middle-class, able-bodied representations (Renold, 2005). This construction of the life stages of childhood-to-youth is a constitution of ideologies that are shared, shaped and embodied within patriarchal systems (see Walby, 1989). These ideologies have proven to be remarkably fluid and able to produce and reproduce discourses over time to remain predominant in the West, responding to global, domestic, social, political, economic, and cultural stressors. These discourses are embodied in the habitus (Bourdieu, 2001) as formal and informal knowledge and symbolism. The process of producing and reproducing these discourses has perpetuated meaning and constructed and entrenched social idealisations about childhood and youth (France et al., 2020a). David Buckingham (2000), a key social analyst of the construction of childhood, youth and technology, tells us of a doubling within discourse which performs a powerful function. First, there is discourse for adults produced by adults; second, there is discourse produced by adults to regulate children and young people. The overlapping of both serves to construct generalised idealisations, expectations of conformity and consensus on what happens within the child-to-youth stages of a person’s life.

Sociocultural political conditions created by these processes and shaped mainly by the power interests of dominant adults and outside of consultation with young people influence the enactment of legislation, policy and practice. With this power to, in a sense, govern youth behaviour, adult constructionism situates child-to-youthhood using age as an arbitrary cultural

developmental marker (Best, 2007). Developmentalism shapes perceptions of ‘appropriate’ physiological, psychological and emotional status for people of a given age and creates a ‘them’ and ‘us’ distance that privileges the adult lens (Best, 2007).

2.2.1 The construction of gender and sexuality within childhood

Sanctified by adults, the natural innocence of ‘childhood’ is defended on the basis that children are vulnerable to and need protection from the ‘unnaturalness’ of classed and raced sexuality (Foucault, 1978; Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; Renold, 2005; Egan & Hawke, 2012). Increasing contemporary protectionist discourses on the subject of childhood have centred on the visibility of cultural sexualisation, a discussion concentrated, in the main, on girls. Cultural sexualisation is considered an unavoidable immoral contaminant that affects children, especially girls (Egan & Hawkes, 2012). These perspectives, emphasised by the feminist sex wars from the 1980s onwards, have patriarchally justified the institutional, educational and family monitoring and regulation of the sexual behaviour of girls. In particular with this social policing of ‘girlhood innocence’ (Ringrose, 2012, p. 117), these are discussions which often bypass agency and pleasure (Renold & Ringrose, 2011; also see Gavey, 2012).

Critical gender writers have highlighted the ways in which protectionist discourse reflects patriarchal moral values (Coy & Garner, 2012). According to these values, the ‘good’ child (in the heterosexual discourse, usually a girl) is infantilised and in need of protection, the ‘bad’ child is adultified as a threat to childhood and heteronormative social order (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). A recent representation illustrating this good/bad, asexual/sexual dichotomy was touched on in Chapter One, with the roast busters case (see Gavey, 2014b). In this example, the girls (victim-survivors) were ill-treated in the police handling of this case, likely due to systemic perceptions of them having breached idealised perceptions of childhood femininity (see Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; see Egan & Hawkes, 2009, 2012).

Despite the pervasive idea in the West that children/pre-teens, as a homogenous category, are or should be asexual beings, research conducted by Carrie Paetcher (2003, 2007) and Emma Renold (2004, 2005, 2013) demonstrates that children and pre-teens are motivated by power within gender and sexual relations; this is revealed in the ways in which they conduct their social interactions. Moreover, it is almost impossible for young people to avoid sex as a subject, as today's children/pre-teens/teens, against a backdrop of sexist popular culture, have to performatively negotiate sexual and gendered messages and identities across social relationships and environments (Butler, 1988; Coy & Garner, 2012). (I discuss this in theoretical detail in Chapter Three). Heteronormative sexual and gendered performativity is normatively reinforced by adult and peer responses (Butler, 1988). However, instead of seeing prescribed gender roles as culturally scripted, dominant social norms essentialise binary cultural scripts as biological modes, whereby gender and sexuality are considered innate to biology (Butler, 1988; Renold, 2005, 2013).

2.2.2 The gendering of cultural sexualisation child-to-youth

As I touched on earlier, a significant area of discussion interrogates to what extent the media culturally sexualises the child-to-youth age group. Egan and Hawkes (2012) tell us of reoccurring generalised moral concerns expressed in the media about children's sexuality, which, as the child ages, places a spotlight on girlhood and on fears of premature female promiscuity. We see these concerns echoed by the intensified scrutiny of girls and their sexual becomings in debates in wider society, including in the media (see Renold & Ringrose, 2011, see Renold & Ringrose, 2015; Dobson, 2015; Meehan, 2022b). Noticeably, the media does not place the same scrutiny on boys, arguably because patriarchal sexist cultures make normative the male gaze and tolerate demonstrations of masculinity as innately sexual (Bragg, 2015; Harvey & Ringrose, 2015). Characteristically, gendering discourse positions boys as

biologically essentialised, (hetero)sexually driven, with a capacity for violence and sexually predatory by nature (Ringrose, 2012).

Anxieties about the cultural sexualisation of children have often been at the forefront of feminist sex wars of the 1970s and 80s between sex-positive and anti-porn factions (see Egan & Hawkes 2012; Gill, 2012; Dines, 2017). Sex-positive feminists emphasised the choice women should be able to make to engage with pornography as a sexual liberation whereas anti-porn feminist conceptualised pornography as a symbol of violent patriarchal oppression. These heightened discussions continue under contemporary concerns of cultural sexualisation and pornification. In general terms, 'pornification' refers to the process of the social mainstreaming of heterosexual visibilised sexualised imagery accessible in most public online domains (Mulholland, 2011). Numerous arguments centre child protection anxieties about children and tweens as arising from their passive sexualisation via the normalisation of pornography (see Coy & Garner, 2012; see Dines, 2017). Aotearoa New Zealand research suggests pornography is an accessible source that some youth draw on for education about sex and non-heteronormative sex (see Classification Office, 2018, 2019, 2020; Henry & Talbot 2019). These arguments tend to hold a common view of young people as passive recipients lacking the capacity to critique sexualised media (see Mulholland, 2015).

Cultural conversations that could openly examine how the constellations of oppression, sexism, racism, ableism and classism in which children and young people experience sexualities and sexual agency in a peer-to-peer context are generally avoided due to adult discomfort (Egan & Hawkes, 2009; Gill, 2012). The gendered construction of sexuality for young people that pervades Western thinking (re)produces gendered and sexual double standards. Such gendered constructions and double standards expound the childhood purity discourse in which girls who are non-passive are stigmatised for their expressions of authentic agency in terms of sexual exploration. The authentic desire for sexual exploration is treated as a transgression of feminine

passivity that, in turn, reifies notions of undesirable femininities (Renold & Ringrose, 2011; Dobson, 2015; Harris & Dobson &, 2015; Meehan, 2022d).

2.2.3 Youthhood and sexuality

Juxtaposed against the valorised social construction of childhood as a stage of asexual purity is the construction of ‘youthhood’ as a liminal stage between childhood and emerging adulthood (Lesko, 1996). As I have stated, as with childhood, what it means to be a young person is time and context-specific; the markers of adolescence or youthhood are both shaped by preceding historical generational contexts and shape contemporary contexts (France, 2007, France et al., 2020a). Founding works on adolescence by the psychologist Stanley Hall (1904) marked this biological period as psychologically overshadowed by storm and stress. Hall believed this time of adolescence could lead to either deviance or, with supportive regulation, enlightenment (Lesko, 1996; see France et al., 2020a). Hall’s insights have endured to shape psychological discourses, such that youth are broadly depicted as irrationally hormonal – the modern conception of storm and stress. Indeed, Nancy Lesko’s (1996) deconstruction of the constructivism of ‘adolescence’ demonstrated the pervasive discourse of bio-essentialism. Whilst Hall’s perspectives are valuable, they abstract ‘storm and stress’ outside of the sociocultural conditions in which youth is experienced.

Bio-essentialist discourse justifies increasing (and unnecessary) moral concern and attempts to control the ‘desire’ of young people. The conceptualisation of ‘thick desire’ (Fine & McClelland, 2006; McClelland & Fine, 2013) wraps together how explicitly the classed, racialised and politicised fears and moral concerns held by society centre on sex, sexuality and teens. The impending sexual potential of teenagers is thought to be ‘uncontrollable’; this notion of unbridled reproductivity justifies schooling young people in abstinence and validates the surveillance of teens. In particular, policies are subject to Eurocentric bias policies that are

based on constructions of adolescents and youth as sexually risky and designed to target populations of youth who have been structurally marginalised due to race, class, sexuality and gender (Fine & McClelland, 2006).

2.2.4 Postfeminism reckonings

Entangled with the discussions around individualism, popular sexualisation and pornification is, as Gill (2007) argues, the ‘object’ of postfeminism and its centring on new femininities, sexual subjectivities and supposed ‘girl power’ (also see Dobson, 2015; Harris & Dobson, 2015). The turn from structuralism and second-wave feminism in the 70s and 80s paved the way for third-wave concepts of postfeminism in the 90s. ‘Postfeminism’, an arguable term, was conceptualised as a gendered and sexual organising framework spanning and shaping social, cultural, media and political discourse (see Gill, 2003; Dobson, 2012; Ringrose, 2012; Gill & Toms, 2019). The term originated from the hypothesis in the media that the political second-wave movement of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s had been renounced and had reached its end (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). At this time, the expanding media visibility of women as individualised, unconstrained by the domestic sphere and economically enfranchised activated claims of emancipation that some argue were superficial (Riley et al., 2017). In reality, individualised ‘new femininities’ (Gill & Scharff, 2011) that were associated with confidence, empowerment and sexual subjectivities were wrapped in neoliberal economic policies of the 80s and 90s that mutually and widely shaped superficial postfeminist ideologies, especially with respect to the schooling of girls (Banet-Weiser et al., 2019; see Ringrose, 2012). Indeed, Blackett (2016) argues colonial neoliberalism informed the postfeminist educational climate in Aotearoa New Zealand. This renouncement of feminism as a political movement, paradoxically, made the corporatisation of feminism, termed ‘neoliberal feminism’, more visible. The extent of this shift attributed the superficial ‘success’ of feminism to the sphere of populism, visibilised by privileged celebrity icons (Banet-Weiser et al., 2019). All-

encompassing and normalised, the internalisation of neoliberalist entrepreneurial ideologies symbolised the embodiment of new femininities in which sexual subjectification, ‘individualism’ and ‘choice’ reigned. These choices held the body as a site and a source of marketable profit, superficially detached from what might have, pre-postfeminism, been termed as sexual objectification (Gill, 2003).

Sometime between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, gender equality was assumed to have been achieved and misogyny to have been minimised: sexism was essentially deemed obsolete. As a result, traditional feminist discourses were repudiated (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2008; Pomerantz et al., 2013; Banet-Weiser et al., 2019). Critical academic writers such as Rosalind Gill (2007) and Angela McRobbie (2008) troubled this liberatory rhetoric of a ‘post’ ‘feminist’ time. Unravelling claims that culture had moved beyond feminism, Gill (2007) conceptualised a ‘postfeminist sensibility’ that revealed the intensification of the heterosexual ideas, images and meanings in the media that were, at this time, shaping the lives of young people. Ushering in the opening of a World Wide Web that was broadly perceived as operating without bias and as a gender ‘neutral’ territory, the 1990s were a turning point at which the sexual subjectivities of girlhood were now to be found online (Kanai, 2015). Societal fears of cultural sexualisation were provoked by perceptions that prematurely girls were actively ‘choosing’ to be (hetero)sexual subjects. Girls were now ‘too’ empowered, ‘too’ sexualised. They were also seen to be achieving, educationally, at the expense of boys, and this purportedly caused a crisis of masculinity (see Ringrose, 2012). The effects of postfeminist rhetoric have made it difficult to identify and challenge sexism, as the internalisation of ‘strong girl power’ disallows claims of victimhood (Pomerantz et al., 2013; Dobson, 2015; Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016). In relation to this study, for example, online gendered and sexualised harassment might be consciously categorised as ‘cyberbullying’ by victims to avoid stigma or minimise the

experience of such harassment as a form of violence. To understand these conditions, I now consider young people's participation in the digital world

2.3 Section Two – Young people's participation in the social shaping of the digital context

As digital technologies have become integrated with our social lives, scholars have debated the theory of technological determinism, debating to what degree technological developments autonomously steer political, social, economic and cultural changes in society (see MacKenzie & Wacjman, 1999; Castells, 1996/2009). In terms of young people and digital sexualities, this theory, aligned with risk youth discourses, simplistically reduces young people into passive actors seduced by an array of assumed neutral technological affordances which encourage deviant and sexualised activities (Draper, 2012; see Döring, 2014). This theory does little to account for the extent that human (gendered) bias is embedded in the design of technologies (see Faulkner, 2001; Broad, 2018).

Indeed, public discourse often argues that the deterministic aspects of technology both erode the 'innocence' of childhood and intensify the 'deviance' of young people (Buckingham, 2000, 2008). Evocatively, we see this captured in headlines like '*Have smartphones destroyed a generation?*' (see Twenge, 2017). In such commentary, the emphasis is on the social force of technology as the problem, rather than on any underpinning sociocultural context (Buckingham, 2000, 2008; see Livingstone, 2018a). However, as Buckingham (2000) has argued, a singular adult-centric conceptualisation of technological determinism neither acknowledges nor explains the influence that young people have on technological developments. 'Interpretive flexibility' (Pinch & Bijker, 1984) is a term used to describe the various ways different groups, such as young people, interpret and adopt technologies and the

ways in which this influences how they use social technologies to meet their needs, including for sexual practices (De Ridder, 2017, 2019). According to MacKenzie and Wacjman (1999), it is social processes that influence the development of technologies; therefore, it is humans that steer social change, not technology in and of itself.

These social and cultural shaping processes of change emanate from global, domestic, regional and local ontologies that shape understandings and meanings of technological-social, or ‘technosocial’, practices (see Brown, 2006). This shaping creates technosocial affordances for youth social practice. These ontological perspectives can be used to interpret, for instance, young people’s use of digital media technologies and to consider the ways in which young people also shape the design of the technologies that they use for social practice (Livingstone, 2008). When young people use technological tools to make social connections, build relationships, advocate for their rights, livestream their hobbies and activities, gather information from non-mainstream sources and take selfies (boyd & Marwick, 2011; boyd, 2014; Chayko, 2014; Senft & Baym, 2015; Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Albury, 2017; Charteris et al., 2018;), the companies that provide the tools notice and respond. Indeed, it is the social, educational, sexual and gendered needs, desires and participation of children and young people as users and consumers that drive and steer digital developments.

In the participatory culture of the internet, young people are key ‘prosumers’ (a hybrid of the words ‘producer’ and ‘consumer’) (Jenkins, 2009; Hine, 2015; France et al., 2020a). At the vanguard of rapid changes in the digital context, they are perceived to be the most active and networked users of the internet, especially regarding social media practices (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010; boyd & Marwick, 2011; Haddon & Livingstone, 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017). We now recognise that the upbringing of young people born from 2000 onwards, popularly homogenised as Gen Z, is enmeshed with offline–online digital artefacts. The technosocial networked affordances of converged communication spaces are configured with the ‘Internet

of Things' (Wellman, 2004; Livingstone, 2008). Smartphones, smartwatches, tablet devices, software applications and algorithmic socio-digital installations (this list is not exhaustive) are both used by and influenced by adults and children alike.

2.3.1 Generational difference and division

With respect to technologies, those born before the 1980s are referred to as 'digital immigrants', in contrast to young people from Generations Y (born from 1981 onwards) and Z, who are homogenised as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Thomas, 2011). Whether these popularised monikers, in fact, apply to the people from these generations, these terms capture generational differences in technological and social experience (see boyd, 2014). Previous generations experienced limited access to social technologies, and, relevant to this study, their exposure to accessible, visible sexual imagery was limited to top shelves or tabloid papers. This is just one aspect of the adult-child-youth generational divide that exists with respect to the internet (Buckingham & Bragg, 2004; France et al., 2020a).

In retrospect, we comprehend that, in terms of design considerations for safety, risk and harm, the internet was initially designed as an adult sphere for adult activities (Livingstone et al., 2015). The extent to which young people would socially shape these technologies was not predicted during the initial design, so young people have been viewed as secondary internet users. This perspective has recently changed, as can be seen in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2021), which was amended in 2021 to include General Comment 25 to extend to children's rights in the digital world.

2.3.2 Protectionist discourse in the digital world: Online safety, risk and harm

Before the assimilation of digital social technologies, the passive and active gendered and sexualised experiences of children and young people would have been constructed and then emerged in offline physical spaces (McQuillan & d'Haenens, 2009; Third et al., 2019). Now,

disconcertingly for many parents, carers, educators and policymakers, gendered and sexualised experimentation straddles and merges offline and online spaces. There is less opportunity for adults to monitor children's behaviour and experiences, as technology blurs what were previously more distinct surveillance boundaries (Albury, 2016a). Addressing generational differences, researchers such as Sonia Livingstone (2016) encourage researchers, policymakers and parents to push past generational circumscriptions which polarise and thus often obscure nuancing our understandings of young people and their experiences.

Unsurprisingly, discourses of risk and protection have resulted in different interpretations of online harm, many of which conflate risk with harm (Haddon & Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone & Görzig, 2014; Third et al., 2019). As with many adult-dominated discussions, the extreme consequences of risk that are identified by adult-centric protectionist discourse leave little room for consideration of a dialogue around risk and resilience. However, identifying the benefits associated with risk-taking can support young people to critically analyse their responses to both online and offline risks, including their perceptions and experiences of harm concerning gender and sexuality (Stoilova et al., 2016, p. 2; Third et al., 2019). Sonia Livingstone (2015) reminds us that risk and harm should not be conflated, as risk does not necessarily equal harm. Livingstone and colleagues (2017b) suggest that harm and risk are distinguishable and constantly adapting. Exposure to 'risky opportunities' (Livingstone, 2008) in certain digital contexts can contribute towards the development of agency and critical resilience for future decision-making (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009; Stoilova et al., 2016). Nonetheless, in the digital world, young people are doubly constructed and assessed by adults as posing a risk and being at risk (Third et al., 2019).

With safety, risk and harm in mind, the mass media expresses public concern about online sexual behaviour that promotes overly protectionist discourses. The need for the use of parental

controls, some argue, are exacerbated and exaggerated when contextualised within the discourse on sexuality and the wellbeing of children (Crofts et al., 2015). Protectionist discourse justifies the use of controls and intensifies fears of ‘stranger danger’, particularly when it comes to perceptions of the cultural sexualisation of girls (Egan & Hawkes, 2012; Dobson, 2015). However, on the other hand, assertions have also been made that online risk is addressed with less seriousness by adults than offline risk (see Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2017), contentions supported by research that has found a broader acceptance of hate, harassment or bullying in cyberspace (Citron, 2014). This is likely due to what Powell and Henry (2017, p. 50) define as ‘conceptual blockage’: when harm perpetrated in the online world is imagined as disconnected and disembodied from the physical embodiment, and therefore believed as having lesser emotionally harmful consequences.

Fixating on either side of these arguments about the consequences of risk can often mean we lose sight of how young people define peer-to-peer (sexual) threats, harm, distress, pressure and coercion (Ringrose et al., 2012). While discourses have evolved, and it is now more widely accepted that harmful online experiences are comparable to offline ones (Haddon & Livingstone, 2014), the definitions and understandings of phenomena such as cyberbullying and sexting still vary. As a review by Livingstone et al. (2017b) established, there is a knowledge gap to be unpacked with young people by our side in this process, as we explore cyberbullying and the interaction of sexting and sexual harassment. The existence of this gap has made the identification, measurement and analysis of these phenomena complex for adults and, more significantly, for young people. Indeed, there are forms of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting, which, if acknowledged as gendered and sexualised, could be categorised as technology-facilitated sexual violence. I now move on to examine this in the next section.

2.4 Section Three – Cyberbullying: Definitions and epistemological consequences

As I touched on in Chapter One, my examination of the literature confirms that the key concepts in this field are continually being defined or redefined. It is essential at this early stage of the thesis that some of the problematic foundations of core concepts are identified, especially in terms of cyberbullying, sexting and sexual violence and abuse. In the following sections, I take some of these key concepts and explain their existing limitations and usefulness for this research.

2.4.1 Epistemology: Gendered construction of bullying-to-cyberbullying

As a term to be defined, Cyberbullying is a popular portmanteau that combines the words ‘cyber’ (to represent the online space) and ‘bullying’. Some young people have indicated this term is adult-constructed and outdated (Fisk, 2016). The epistemology of cyberbullying has its origins in developmental psychology, premised on Dan Olweus’s (1978) seminal research into the bullying practices of boys (Beran & Li, 2007; Tokunaga, 2010; Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012; Kofoed & Staksrud, 2019). At the time this term was coined, research on sex/gender and masculinities was nascent and likely still fixed to biological explanations for the perpetration of bullying. The addition of poststructuralist gender perspectives has nuanced these explanations by illustrating, for example, how children and pre-teens, in preparation for their teenage years, perform and aspire to prescriptive cultural scripts to consolidate normative gender binaries in physical education settings (Renold, 2005, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2011). This logic, I argue in Chapter Three, is transferable to online spaces. Given that offline–online boundaries are often indistinct for young people, such poststructuralist gender perspectives can be applied to the analysis of the practices of cyberbullying and sexting (Powell & Henry, 2014).

2.4.2 Cyberbullying: a problem with definition

Cross-disciplinary conceptualisations of cyberbullying and varying perceptions of harm found in a rising number of quantitative studies undertaken around the world have complicated how cyberbullying is defined (Kowalski & Giumetti, 2017). One problem with initial psychological and criminological conceptualisations of cyberbullying is that these have given the term a stable meaning across age ranges. However, the experience and meaning of cyberbullying, according to a seven- or eight-year-old, is likely to be different to that of a teenager experiencing sexualised cyberbullying. The challenge presented by a stable definition is that, if it is overlearned by children and young people, it can become embodied, such that differences in cyberbullying experiences are unlikely to be adequately captured by the term (Kofoed & Staksrud, 2019).

Generic interventions arise from the fact that environmental and individualised reasonings are used to explain cyberbullying. Early psychological considerations of cyberbullying were based on technological determinism that perceived cyberbullying as motivated by the disinhibiting effects of anonymity that online platforms provide (Kowalski et al., 2012) and as premised on a victim-bully divide (Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012). Primarily based on quantitative research, this body of knowledge has formed discourses on developmental and individualised factors that characterise victims as highly sensitive, weak and lacking confidence, characterisations that contribute to victim blaming (see Kowalski et al., 2014). Such individualised factors are abstracted from the complexity and interconnectedness of other factors that influence the behaviour of young people, including friendships, sexuality, race, ethnicity, gender scripts and sexist cultures (see Gill, 2012).

The disciplines, that have undertaken studies of cyberbullying building epistemology has privileged two hegemonic social categories: 'boy and girl' or 'male and female'. In many cases,

sex and gender have been conflated. Unsurprisingly, this has led to a lack of consensus on perpetration and victimisation of cyberbullying. While some literature suggests there is no sex/gender consensus as to who perpetrates or experiences victimisation (see Beran & Li, 2007; Tokunaga, 2010), the popularised ‘relational aggression’ thesis tells us that it is predominantly girls who are both victims and perpetrators in the online space (see Ringrose, 2012). This gendering narrative emerged alongside psychological developmentalism and the postfeminist panic of the 1990s. Claims have been made that girls are losing their ‘nurturing’ aspects of femininity and thriving on ‘drama’ (Riccardelli & Adorjan, 2019). The media and popular culture ‘mean girl’ discourse of the late 90s and early millennium pathologised girls as more likely to cyberbully because, as lesser physical beings, they had to resign themselves to being ‘mean’ online (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Ringrose, 2012; Crook, 2016; Ging, O’Higgins, & Norman, 2016). Postfeminist introspection by Ringrose (2012) led to the observation that the cyberbullying literature of the time situated findings in normative constructions. According to such gender normative scripts, girls were viewed as needing regulatory controls such as psycho-social-education (Ringrose, 2012).

Overlapping with positivist psychological discourse, early cyberbullying studies also appeared under the nascent subdiscipline of cybercriminology, which evaluated cyberbullying through the eyes of ethnocentric male perspectives (Powell & Henry, 2017). Building on the epistemological contributions and relationship between psychology and criminology, cyberbullying scholars Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin, early leaders in this emerging field of study, initially defined cyberbullying as ‘wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text’ (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, p. 152). In 2012, they expanded the definition in response to rapid technological changes to include a broader range of digital devices through which cyberbullying could take place (see Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). As found in psychological epistemology, some criminological definitions also centred on the

environmental characteristics of the cybersphere, individualised victim risk and culpability theories (see Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; see Marcum et al., 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012, see Marcum et al., 2012; Holt & Bossler, 2015). For instance, in their book about cyberbullying and sexting, titled *Preventing cyberbullying and sexting one classroom at a time*, Hinduja and Patchin (2012) position increasing technological competency (determinism) as the primary cause for the emergence of cyberbullying. While their argument is valid, it may reflect an ethnocentric perspective that prevented a mode of inquiry (Gill, 2007) capable of considering the zeitgeist of postfeminism as intersecting with ‘cyberbullying’ and how this term should or could be defined. Early cyberbullying epistemology seemed inattentive to the extent to which sexist cultures and cultural gender scripts might operate in the digital lives of young people and in their cyberbullying actions.

Research has found that, often, cyberbullying has been educationally managed and policed according to heteronormative power relations, without consideration of dynamics of gender, sexualities, class or race (Ringrose, 2012). In response to postfeminist thought, girls are problematically situated as subjects who operate in conditions of gender equity, as if patriarchal, misogynistic and sexist cultures no longer exist. It has been argued that proposed cyberbullying solutions reflect no consideration of the imposition of sexism and gender inequality and instead promote generic interventions such as trainings around e-safety, cybersafety, digital citizenship and digital literacy (Dobson, 2019; see Henry et al., 2021). Such initiatives are often conceptualised on the premise of the preferred non-sexual student (Allen, 2005a, 2007), which neglects the reality that young people experience gendered and sexual power relations, misogyny, sexism and sexual harassment and often lack adequate support at home. These educational media resources that purport to educate also typically fail to include discussion of sexual ethics and blame victims. Indeed, as Gill (2012) argues, the emphasis on generic literacy initiatives abstracts young people, particularly girls, from the wider settings in

which they operate and further individualises them as responsible for educating themselves as their primary defence against cyberbullying. The ignorance of the structural experiences of sexist cultures can actually reproduce institutional symbolic violence; as Gill warns, media literacy is not a ‘panacea’ (Gill, 2012, p. 737; Albury et al., 2013; see Krieger, 2017; Dobson, 2019; Zauner, 2021). As I found in this project, young people are well schooled as ‘good’, media-literate digital citizens, who, due to the comprehensibility of cyberbullying discourse, have been trained by adults to categorise and to report the bullying or violence they experience online as such. To this extent, educational policy sanitises the experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence and in doing so denies the extent to which rape culture is a part of school environments.

2.4.3 Obscuring gendered and sexualised violence

Contemplating the expansive scope of cyberbullying definitions, cyberfeminist legal scholar Jane Bailey (2014) vehemently argues that public discourse utilises the rubric of cyberbullying as a simplistic catch-all which conceals systemic determinants of gender-based sexualised cyberviolence. As Bailey asserts, sexist, racist, homophobic, exploitative and harassing actions taken online are all indiscriminately referred to as acts of cyberbullying. The catch-all nature of the word means that the seriousness of the sexualised abuse and violence that occurs online can go unrecognised, be normalised or be ignored (Bailey, 2014; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Adorjan et al., 2019). Van Ouytsel et al. (2021) also observed that coercion to produce and send sexual images to be a teen practice within intimate relationships. Indeed, in some intimate teen relationships, gender-based violence is experienced across offline–online spaces, and the victims have categorised such violence as cyberbullying. These experiences have therefore been addressed within cyberbullying policy, such that the depth of the gendered abuse and violence has gone unacknowledged (see Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships, 2015).

Tragically, sexual violence – tactlessly framed as cyberbullying by mass media public discourse – has been correlated with high-profile media cases of girls committing suicide that have made little reference to the male perpetration of online sexual harassment. Media coverage of the suicides of teenagers Jessica Logan in 2009 (see Davis, 2009), Amanda Todd in 2012 and Raetaeh Parsons in 2013 (see Setty, 2018a), all of whom had experienced sexting and cyberbullying, as well as the 2016 Netflix documentary *Audrie & Daisy* featuring the stories of Audrie Potts & Daisy Coleman, have raised public concerns about sexting and cyberbullying.

2.4.4 Exclusion of marginalised voices in cyberbullying/sexting epistemology

In my review of cyberbullying/sexting literature, I found few studies that include the voices of students outside of mainstream education. In Chapter Four, you will see that I provide methodological reasons for including the voices of these students to address this gap in the existing literature. Relevant to this thesis is Lloyd's (2020) study across mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units,⁶ This study illustrates the extent to which image sharing can be a threshold for school exclusion, in addition to the ways in which staff school cultures implicitly sanction sexist cultures within schools.

2.4.5 Cyberbullying research in Aotearoa New Zealand

In this section, I localise my review to cyberbullying studies in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. I narrow in on key cyberbullying studies that feature similar age groups to understand whether and how gender has been contextualised in our local literature. Before I do this, I want to acknowledge that research in Aotearoa New Zealand shows that Indigenous young people are at increased risk of online harm (ActionStation, 2019). McClintock et al. (2016) assert in

⁶ In Aotearoa New Zealand, the equivalent of a Pupil Referral Unit is an Alternative Education Provision.

their critical review *Cybersafety for an Indigenous youth population* that the monocultural insights and solutions found in Northern theory (Connell, 2007) are limited to pākehā perspectives. Given the disparate statistics for the victimisation of young people of colour online, there is a strong argument for intersectional and Kaupapa Māori cultural and Indigenous perspectives to be privileged when exploring perceptions of cyberbullying (see France et al., 2020b). Unfortunately, as I explain in Chapter Four, this was beyond my scope.

The earliest research into the incidences of ‘cyberbullying’ in Aotearoa New Zealand can be found in a policy/practice sector study conducted by Netsafe in 2005⁷. Despite the fact that this study preceded the 2008 onwards global sexting panic, its findings expressed concern about gendered practices of sending pornographic, abusive and threatening text messages. Other Aotearoa New Zealand studies identified are quantitative and offer a psycho-educational focus. Mostly investigations of text bullying, these studies have examined the connection between relational and verbal behaviours to guide educational intervention to reduce text-based relational aggression between girls. Other studies have also compared girls in Aotearoa New Zealand with their counterparts in the United States to explore online risks (Berson & Berson, 2005; Raskauskas et al., 2005, Raskauskas, 2009). The timing of these studies, which emphasised the ‘dysfunctional’ use of technologies by middle-class girls, closely coincided with the postfeminist pathologising of ‘meanness’ (Ringrose, 2008, 2012). The similar focus and timing of these studies indicate that the level of scrutiny on the activities of girls reflected moral concerns of the innocence/sexualisation discourse highlighted in the first section of this chapter. Postfeminist rhetoric postulated that girls who had early online/phone access were too aggressive, too competitive or too empowered (Ringrose, 2012). This focus on collecting data to establish the prevalence of this phenomenon seems to symbolise institutional ‘operations of

⁷ The Internet Safety Group was founded in 1998 and then rebranded as Netsafe in 2008.

power' (Allen, 2005b, p. 492), whereby the interests of heteronormative institutions shape and set research agendas. As a self-fulfilling consequence, this early research could be seen to justify the heteronormative management of 'troubled' girls.

However, later research in Aotearoa New Zealand illuminates the extent to which victimisation rates are gendered. For example, John Fenaughty's (2010) mixed method research on cyberbullying and electronic harassment highlighted that the girls/young women in his study experienced much higher rates of phone/online harassment. Furthermore, Steiner-Fox et al. (2016) found that it was predominantly young women who were on the receiving end of cyberbullying. While participants in this study were over 18 years of age, many reported that they had experienced cyberbullying when they were younger. It would be challenging for a young person to assess the gendered nature and perceptions of 'cyberbullying', as the embodiment of postfeminist 'new femininities' influences their perceptions of victimisation (Dobson, 2016, p. 2). Indeed, was there safe scope within these studies for the young participants to utter, speak of or record perceptions of experiences beyond those included within the gender-neutral frame of cyberbullying?

To summarise, early studies of cyberbullying both in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad seem to have emerged in the context of populist postfeminist discourse, but do not refer to this context as influential. For young people, their experiences may have actually involved non-consensual 'sexting', but such communication appears to have been classified as 'cyberbullying'. Early criminological and psychological research into cyberbullying focused on quantitative data and did little to draw out young people's experiences of gender, sexism, sexuality, sexual agency, sexual victimisation and sexual perpetration in a peer-to-peer context. Until sexting emerged as a phenomenon, young people were viewed as asexual, in both offline and online spaces. This perspective seemingly limited opportunities to examine or identify offline-online sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence under the rubric of

cyberbullying. Indeed, some of these experiences might now match the definition of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Powell & Henry, 2014, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b). Retaining the term ‘cyberbullying’ without undertaking any deeper feminist analysis may mean that gender-based violence, abuse and harassment that occur online go unacknowledged or under-reported. This is where my approach to the discourse on cyberbullying and sexting makes a contribution. As I argue, there should be an emphasis on unravelling cyberbullying/sexting according to the accounts young people provide.

2.5 Section Four – Sexting: Definitions and epistemological consequences

Like the term ‘cyberbullying’, ‘sexting’ is a popular portmanteau of the two words ‘sex’ and ‘texting’, and the definition and prevalence estimates of this activity vary across research, policy and practice. This variation has arisen from the application of differing discipline frameworks, varying clusters of sexting practices and dominant adult framing (Barran-Dias et al., 2017; Madigan et al., 2018; Kosenko et al., 2017; Meehan & Wickes, 2020; Doyle et al., 2021). Sexting can involve the sending, exchange, distribution, snapshotting, livestreaming and presentation of sexually suggestive images, videos or words via a mobile phone, computer or social media/networking site. Research shows that young people often reject the term ‘sexting’ in preference for more specific terms, including ‘selfies’, ‘dick pics’, ‘noodies’ and ‘nudes’ (Albury et al., 2013; Netsafe, 2017).

Across the Global North, the early phase of the sexting phenomenon gained widespread cultural traction following the turn of the millennium (Crofts et al., 2015; Hasinoff, 2015; Englander, 2019). Public discourse at this time framed sexting activity between young people as overlapping with cyberbullying (Powell & Henry, 2017), as part of a deviant ‘youth issue’ (Angelides, 2013; Döring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2015; Krieger, 2017). Adult public perceptions of youth activities seem to situate ‘cyberbullying’ as sanitised from sex/sexuality, in contrast to

‘sexting’, which is morally situated, ‘hypersexual’ and perverted (Hasinoff, 2015). To add to the confusion around the definition of ‘sexting’, the popularised term ‘revenge pornography’ has, unhelpfully, been adopted to describe adult experiences of non-consensual sexting; this term now covers a range of practices (see McGlynn & Rackley, 2016, 2017; McGlynn et al., 2021). Young people in this study were aware of this expression but did not ascribe to using it. In my conversations with young people, I found that they also tended to use the term ‘cyberbullying’ to describe a range of consensual and non-consensual sexting and that their perceptions of these practices overlapped. As discussed in Chapter One, there has been increasing recognition in the literature of the need to distinguish underpinning motives in the shaping of more precise definitions of these terms. Indeed, over the last decade, feminist researchers in particular have lobbied for improved definitions.

2.5.1 Defining motives, consent and non-consent

In North America, findings presented in the Pew Report (Lenhart, 2009) revealed the main drivers for sexting were romance or the pursuit of romance. As with much discourse on youth and sex, reactivity has obscured discussions of the role peer-to-peer pressure, consent and coercion play in sexting (Powell, 2010a). Like other early explorations, the Pew study (Lenhart, 2009) did not examine the distinction between consensual and non-consensual sexting practices. Noticing the need for distinction, legal scholar Calvert (2009) suggested a typology whereby ‘primary sexting’ referred to the production of images for consensual use, and ‘secondary sexting’ encompassed non-consensual sharing. To make a further distinction, Wolak and Finkelhor (2011) strongly suggested that the context of ‘youth’ sexting be categorised as ‘aggravated’ or ‘experimental’. Whilst these revisions added sophistication to definitions of sexting, by making distinct the context of these practices and identifying where they fit across a spectrum of coercion, consent, or non-consent, these typologies were established to guide criminal justice responses. This is problematic, given that legislation based

on such definitions is likely to be employed in ways that discriminate by race and class (see Hasinoff, 2015). Coercive and non-coercive 'digital flirtation' was emphasised in a 2012 study (Ringrose et al., 2013, p. 312) and Englander (2015) suggested that the definition of sexting should recognise the role of pressure. Supporting these findings, Drouin and Tobin (2014) found sexting was normalised as consensual but had coercive components. In terms of intimate relationships, Wood et al. (2015) found that the non-consensual sharing of images, underpinned by gender pressures, was a factor in teen relationship violence. These researchers contended that the young people in their study did not view this sharing of images as gender-based abuse because of the influence of heteronormative gender scripts and expectations.

2.5.2 Prevalence: Should we be concerned?

Symbolic of wide postfeminist adult fears about girls' expressions of sexual desire and the potential consequences of classed, racialised, uncontrolled reproduction (see Fine & McClelland, 2006; see McClelland & Fine, 2013), the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy funded a Cosmo Girl survey (2008). In this survey sexting was falsely connected with not only increases in teen pregnancies but also child sexual exploitation material (pornography) and sex offending by young people (see Angelides, 2013; see Lee et al., 2013; see Hasinoff, 2015). Despite the existence of research that has suggested that digital images shared without consent are unlikely to be displayed on a public website (Albury et al., 2017), the focus of the reporting of this survey was on the 'irreversible' consequences of the stigma of sexting, such as damage to future prospects and criminalisation. Any contextual distinctions that could be made between pleasurable sexual exploration in non-harmful power-parity consensual circumstances and non-consensual sexting were compounded with a risk narrative, adding to the stigma associated with sexting and the drive to regulate this behaviour.

Some prevalence studies indicate a correlation between sexting behaviours and age, with older teenagers more likely to engage in the practice (Lenhart, 2009; Livingstone & Mason, 2015; Netsafe, 2017). There are researchers who have suggested that sexting is neither as pervasive nor as harmful as outcomes suggested in public discourse (Salter et al., 2013). At the same time, other research illustrates the adverse consequences of peer normalisation of sexual stigma (De Ridder, 2019). In terms of prevalence, a large-scale Australian survey of 15- to 29-year-olds suggests that 13% of participants reported having experienced the non-consensual sharing of images (Douglass et al., 2020). In a Netsafe 2017 dataset, young people aged between 14 and 17 reported a high perception of sexting as ubiquitous but a low prevalence rate, with only one in 20 having shared sexual content. Given the time that has elapsed since this project, it is likely that a similar survey would reveal a higher incidence of sexting among young people today.

2.5.3 Legal and social responses to teen sexuality

The nexus of teens, technology, sex, surveillance, morality and the instilling of disproportionate social, legal and educational controls was highly publicised in the ‘Tunkhannock sexting case’ in Pennsylvania 2008 (see Angelides, 2013; see Hasinoff, 2015). In the account of this case, educators found alleged self-taken ‘sexually explicit’ photos of two teenage girls (one wearing a bath towel, one wearing a bra). The state attempted to press charges against the girls, arguing that the images were evidence of their obscene participation in child sexual exploitation material. The courts ordered a punitive youth ‘re-education’ programme for those participating in the sexting. However, challenging this arbitrary sentence, some parents advocated on behalf of their daughters, countering the State argument that their sexts be framed as child sexual exploitation material. This case emphasised the ways in which sexting as a cover for moral conservatism could be applied to the prosecution of young people who produced or exchanged nudes or semi-nudes as engaging in child pornography (Richards

& Calvert, 2009; Hasinoff, 2015). The media visibility of this case posed the threat of the potential for future sexual regulation of young people, in particular to control the sexual behaviour of teenage girls (Karaian, 2012).

2.5.4 Gender, sexting and pornification

Whilst some research connects 'sexting' practices with the viewing of both pornography and music videos, a causative relationship is yet to be established (see Van Ouytsel et al., 2014). Research by the Classification office in New Zealand Aotearoa provides us with ideas about the gendered configurations of young people's intentional and unintentional exposure to pornography, alongside their reasons for watching pornography (see Te Mana Whakaatu Classification Office, 2018, 2019, 2020; Henry & Talbot, 2019; Martellozzo et al., 2020; Meehan, 2020). Currently, apprehensions run high about the exposure of young people to sexualised imagery and these raise concerns about whether or to what extent such exposure contributes to sexualised entitlement and objectification within 'everyday expressions of rape culture' (Henry & Powell, 2014, p. 6; see Gavey, 2005/2018). In 2019, the Ministry of Education released data revealing that, over one month, 300,000 attempts to access pornography on school sites had been blocked (see Meehan 2019a). Increasingly, concerns about the potential desensitisation of young people to pornography as a result of sexting activities have been folded into societal cultural anxieties. Ultimately, however, I concur with Hasinoff (2015) that we need to be careful not to conflate autonomous digital sexual expression with harmful content.

Research has revealed the existence of considerable pressures on young people to perform to rigid gendered expectations of masculinity and femininity when engaging in sexting (Ringrose et al., 2012; Ringrose et al., 2013). Gendered differentiation in peer-to-peer cultures shows that it is boys who typically request and coerce girls for images, and girls who tend to self-generate

images for which they are often victim blamed (De Ridder, 2019; Dobson, 2019; Setty, 2020a). While we should not discount that boys can also be victims of sexting, the consequences for girls are disproportionate and stigmatising, due in part to the prevalence of a gendered ‘digital empathy gap’ (Netsafe, 2017; Project deShame, 2017, p. 36; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2020; Meehan, 2021a; Setty et al., 2022). Indeed, De Ridder (2017) contends that, despite perceptions that social media has opened the scope for sexual freedom, young people are using these spaces to justify hierarchical gender orders. Setty (2020b) suggests that some boys, due to personal ethics, choose to draw on ‘alternative masculinities’ (p.573). These boys distance themselves from heterosexual homo-social bonding practices in sexting cultures. Setty’s (2020b) application of this notion draws from the contested theory of inclusive masculinities proposed by Anderson (2009) and Anderson & McCormack (2018). Critiqued for its theoretical disconnection from patriarchal postfeminist politics (see O’Neill, 2015), inclusive masculinities theory argues that we are seeing a shift away from ‘traditional’ masculine cultural scripts. This theory proposes that a new generation of boys shun the objectification of women such as that seen in sexting cultures. Ultimately, however, in the main, boys are able to cement masculine homosocial bonds by sharing the sexual images of girls, for which they are rewarded with status (see Flood, 2008; Ringrose et al., 2021a, 2021b). When young people draw on dominant hegemonic scripts to explain sexting, this minimises their understanding of the ways in which privacy, consent and ethics in digital sexual cultures shape new sexual social norms (Setty, 2018a, 2018b; Setty et al., 2022).

2.5.5 Feminist discourse *with* young people about digital sexual cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand, sexting has been framed by the media as a drug addiction that besmirches children upwards of age 11 (see Hunt, 2016). Such framing illuminates the

concerns expressed within discourses of child/youthhood innocence and sexualisation. Adding a more recent domestic analysis, the overview of New Zealand media citations from 2008 to 2017 by Meehan and Wicks (2020) found an abundance of citations about sexting, but rarely any content that featured consultation with young people. Thanks to the collaborative works of feminist criminologists and feminist social psychologists, the early assumptions of generic cyberbullying/sexting have evolved to consider critical youth-based feminist discursive epistemology (see Powell & Henry, 2017; also see Gavey et al., 2021; also see Meehan, 2021c, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022e; also see Thorburn, 2021 – this list is not exhaustive). Meehan (2022c) illustrates how, pressured by boys and girls to preserve friendships, girls show and non-consensually share the images of other girls, as an attempt to subvert heteronormative powerlessness through actions theorised as horizontal hostility. By acting out this horizontal hostility, the girls enabled themselves to see and ‘other’ girls who had, in their opinion, breached the prescriptive ideals of passive femininity. These peer actions also tested the boundaries of female sexual permissibility, interestingly, there is a power spectrum to these practices. Setty’s (2022b) neologism of ‘frecting’, a portmanteau of the words ‘friends’ and ‘sexting’, also illustrates how, in alternative circumstances, the girl-to-girl sharing of intimate images can also be a strategy for girls to check in with one another for supportive perspectives as a means of disrupting the male gaze.

In her research with young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, Meehan (2022b) draws on Fine and McClelland’s (2006) discussion of the extent to which desire is missing from sexuality education. Meehan’s (2022b) findings illustrate the absence and/or vilification of the ‘potentiality’ for pleasure alongside the disproportionate harmful fallout of image sharing. As identified in her interviews of young men and women, the ‘male gaze’ is naturalised and the competitiveness of boys is celebrated, whereas girls are associated with sexual stigma, as we have already established (De Ridder, 2019; Setty, 2019). Such research demonstrates that

gendered double standards for sexual expression operate among young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, alongside other regions in the Global North. Girls walk a tightrope underlined by postfeminist heteronormative neoliberalism, negotiating being hetero-sexy without being too slutty. Meehan (2022a) offers the term ‘sexual consent’ to acknowledge the complexities of understanding consent in digital sexual cultures; her works demonstrate that there are evolving norms interrelating conceptions of public–privacy with notions of consent for young people. As I have discussed, school systems seem to rely upon the perception that ‘generic’ digital literacy education improves young people’s understanding of the risks of cyberbullying and sexting. Ultimately, however, Meehan contends, neoliberal logic and gendered power imbalances place expectations on girls to take greater responsibility for their digital behaviour (citizenship). Thankfully, the qualitative studies described in this section bring forward the much-needed perspectives of a younger cohort aged between 12 and 16. Working with pre-teen groups is critical to providing insights into the formation of non-consensual socio-sexual sharing norms (see Phippen, 2012; see Gavey et al., 2021; Ringrose et al., 2021b).

I argue in the methods chapter of this thesis that it is essential to engage participatory action methods when exploring youth-centred ontologies. The value of such methods is demonstrated in two studies undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand. In one, Thorburn et al. (2021) conducted workshops with high school feminist groups with members aged 16 to 18 in order to critically explore the pressures to send or not to send nude images. Deliberating the tensions of traditional and permissive femininity in line with postfeminist logic, these young women expressed that they felt pressure to identify as sexually empowered and to display an ‘up for it’ sexiness. Their predicaments illustrate the continuing extent of ‘technologies of sexiness’ described by Evans et al. (2010) as resexualised agency whereby young women embody, construct, negotiate and regulate an active sexual identity grounded in postfeminism and neoliberalist sensibilities (Gill, 2007). The findings of the Thorburn et al. study illustrate the ways in which the ‘technologies

of sexiness' described by Evans et al. (2010) still operate. The participatory methods in this study enabled the young women a space for cognitive reflexivity to contemplate the ways in which gendered pressures in sexting cultures encompass wider gender inequalities.

Another local project that exemplifies the value of participatory action research, *Shifting the Line* (2021), is a conscientisation change project that refocuses discussion away from cultural sexualisation and girls to include the much-needed perspectives of young men aged 15 to 19. Centring the voices of young men, *Shifting the Line* draws on Foucault's conceptualisation of 'pouvoir-savoir' (Gavey et al., 2021, p. 15) – power-knowledge – to make sense of the ways in which sociocultural meanings shape and police masculinities in digital sexual cultures. Rather than situating young men as 'the problem', the researchers applied problem-posing liberation methodologies inspired by the educationalist Paulo Freire. The use of these methodologies in this case created the latitude for the young men to explore without judgment their experiences of gendered and sexual dilemmas (Gavey et al., 2021). Young men shared the challenges they face in terms of their developing masculinities, and in doing so, generated their own solutions. The young men's expressions, as reported by this project, initially seemed to be influenced by the postfeminist positioning of gender equality as having been achieved, but when their 'common sense' responses were unpicked, previously unobserved gendered power dynamics were revealed. The findings illustrate how boys wrestle with rigid definitions of masculinities, having had limited opportunities to discuss sexual and gender ethics regarding the sharing and not sharing of nudes. Taking a participatory action approach in the *Shifting the Line* project enabled paradoxical complexities to be explored, such as the ways that belonging in peer groups both brings about challenges associated with dominant masculine social norms and creates a powerful space for change through 'peer-pedagogies' (p. 75).

2.5.6 Unwanted dick pics: moving beyond the concepts of cyberbullying or sexting

The reception of unwanted dick pics, until recently, received little attention as a form of sexual violence. While, reductively, public discourse considers the dick pic phenomenon humorous, the feminist reshaping of sexting/cyberbullying discourse has identified this phenomenon of sending/receiving photos of penises as a further issue of non-consent. Influenced by conceptualisations of harassment and safety work presented by Fiona Vera-Gray and Liz Kelly (2020), Meehan (2022e) firmly places the sending and receiving of unwanted dick pics as a form of intrusive digital marking of territory. Meehan's research, confirmed by my findings, reveals the extent to which that this form of image-based sexual abuse affects girls, who are normalised as being inherently responsible for managing the intrusion of such images.

International evidence indicates that there are nuances to this phenomenon, which can be both a consensual practice (Salter, 2016; Paasonen, et al., 2019; Oswald et al., 2020) and a form of non-consenting sexual harassment motivated by power (Gohr, 2018; Amundsen, 2020; Mandau, 2020; Meehan, 2022e). The sending/receiving of dick pics routinely affects girls well before the age of 18 and, as such, has arguably been normalised (Smith, 2018; McGlynn & Johnson, 2021a; Mishna et al., 2021; Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2022). Gohr (2018) argues the concept of phallocentrism explains the act of sending dick pics as symbolising male privilege and entitlement and illuminates why boys are less likely to be on the receiving end of any stigma or punishment around such acts (also see Ringrose, 2022b). This act conditions girls to the notion that a penis image is harmless and playful and thus downplays the territorial power threat associated with such an image. Academics have argued that framing this form of sexual harassment as an unthinking and a problematic masculine action to be tolerated normalises technology-facilitated sexual violence (Gohr, 2018; Ringrose et al., 2022a; 2022b). In terms of prevalence of victimisation, research in the UK indicates that 75.8% of girls aged 12 to 18 have received unwanted dick pics (Ringrose, 2020; Ringrose et al., 2021; Ringrose et

al., 2022a; Ringrose et al., 2022b). However, outside of the research context, the disclosures by girls of having received unwanted dick pics have rarely been taken seriously or have been silenced (see Ankel, 2018).

2.6 Conclusion Reframing cyberbullying and sexting as technology-facilitated sexual violence

For today's young people, sexual exploration, victimisation and perpetration straddle offline–online spheres. Broad definitions and varying measurements have hampered the ability of young people to clearly identify the overlapping phenomena of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting. The terms 'cyberbullying' and 'sexting' are unlikely to disappear, as they have a strong currency with the public (Albury et al., 2013). However, it is my hope that this feminist review of the gendered dimensions of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting strengthens the arguments for these practices to be reconceptualised as technology-facilitated sexual violence. Powell's (2022) reflections on and review of this term shows its continuing relevance, as does the work with young people undertaken by Ringrose et al. (2022a). If we can at least present young people with language that allows them to consider their experiences of non-consensual digital sexual practices as part of the technological continuum of sexual violence, this might improve understanding and contribute to the emerging areas of response, prevention and perpetration (Powell 2022). To achieve this, it is critical that we *collaborate with* young people.

My initial review of the literature led me to question why it is that noticeable, obvious sexual violence of a gendered nature is minimised when it is experienced by young people in online spaces. To explore this question, the first section of this chapter examined the ways in which the social construction of childhood and youth actively produces discourses that privilege adult hierarchical dynamics. This arrangement, underpinned by patriarchal values, diminishes the capacity of children to be viewed as competent beings. As children age into teenagers and are

essentialised as irrational hormonal beings, their diminishment continues. The implicit heteronormative values of these positionings regulate discourses of innocence/sexuality, masculinity/femininity and good/bad. These discourses are the pillars that uphold the disparate regulation of the sexualities of girls as 'passive' and those of boys as 'active'. Implicitly, this regulation works to gender the sexist sexualisation of culture. The aversion with which protectionist/risk discourses consider young people as gendered and sexual beings has privileged adult agendas that frame young people as deviant and morally vilified. The literature has shown that adults, who tend to avoid facing youth sexual subjectivities as a result of this framing, are reluctant to admit to the existence of old and new offline–online forms of sexual violence.

Section Two of this chapter showed how young people are shaped by the masculine infrastructure of the digital world and actively contribute to the social and sexual shaping of this world. Their participation in the digital world has provoked ambivalence and generational division. In Section Three, I argued that non-feminist research paradigms have shaped cyberbullying as a gender-neutral epistemology. Gender is referred to in definitions of cyberbullying but only deconstructed in limited ways, due to the foundations of bio-gender normativity and the implicit postfeminist regulation of girls' centres on the 'relational aggression' theses to explain girls cyberbullying practices. While feminist poststructuralist perspectives have worked to unpack normative discourses, postfeminist claims that gender equality has been achieved have worked to obscure and minimise experiences of sexism and sexual violence. I argued in Section Three that gender-neutral digital citizenship or cybersafety initiatives fail to account for the sexist structure in which young people operate both offline and online. In ongoing postfeminist conditions, agency for young people – particularly girls – is complex in online spaces and the terrain is complicated. The true natures of sexualised

cyberbullying and consensual and non-consensual sexting can be imperceptible and/or unspeakable (see Setty, 2021a).

In Section Four, I traced the evolution of sexting, the risky-youth deviance discourse (see Döring, 2014) and the ways in which definitions of this term overlap with conceptualisations of cyberbullying. Early discourse had overlooked non-consensual practices, coercion, pressure and unwanted dick pics as components of both cyberbullying and sexting. Framing digital sexual cultures as deviant is a barrier that silences and deprioritises sexual ethics, harm reduction and safety strategies, all of which are needed to prompt a shift in culture (Albury, 2017a; Scott, 2020; Ringrose et al., 2022a; Ringrose et al., 2022b). In the next chapter, I argue that Pierre Bourdieu's toolkit of habitus as digital and gendered (Powell & Henry, 2017) is utilised to sense, interpret and accomplish cultural gender scripts as capital across offline–online fields.

3 Chapter Three – Gendered digital embodiments across offline-online social fields

3.1 Introduction

In the first section of this chapter, I set the foundations for my theoretical approach to this thesis. I work forwards from poststructuralism, explaining the turn toward subjectivity as the foundation for thinking about the postfeminist context. I also briefly present the arguments of feminist scholars who have previously applied Bourdieu's conceptual toolkit, consisting of the habitus, capital, and the field, to support my application of Bourdieu's social theory of constructivist structuralism with a broad feminist lens.

The second section is substantive: it details my theoretical thinking, I give thought to the empirical patterns I observed (Sutton & Shaw, 1995). I discuss how critical it is to consider how and where young people's perceptions of gender develop within and across the spaces in which they are situated, and I present a framework that illustrates the performative interconnections. Had I theorised an individual, the peer group, the community, the school or the family as spaces and relations detached from one another, or had I detached these social fields, preventing them from forming integrated offline–online social spaces, this analysis would be insufficient. I argue that the understandings of the gendered digital habitus of digitally idealised postfeminist femininities and masculinities organise the gendered power relations between young people in digital sexual cultures. I also address the ways in which young people participate in these cultures to attain or maintain sociocultural capital that operates across offline–online fields with disproportionate gendered effects.

3.2 The cultural turn: poststructuralism to constructivist structuralism with a feminist lens

From the late 1960s into the early 1970s, feminist, gender and queer theorists interrogated the validity of conventional sociological epistemology. This radical critical inquiry ushered a shift

away from pre-eminent theorisations which had prioritised social structures as mainly determining agency. Accepted sociological patriarchal definitions and approaches had gone largely unquestioned until this time. As such, there was limited exploration of difference, such as the fluidity of individuality, subject, selfhood and resistance within agency (McNay, 2016). Until this point of change, sociological/feminist research typically contemplated the oppressions of adult, white, cisgender women, inquiries that simplistically centred on sex differences and produced mono-cultural, binary, gendered archetypes (Gavey, 1989; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Gannon & Davies, 2012; Leavy & Harris, 2019). Epistemologies had largely ignored the ways in which gender intersected with race, ethnicity and sexualities (Leavy & Harris, 2019). This move towards examining culture and subjectivity in sociology has been called 'the cultural turn'. Writers such as Judith Butler built on Michel Foucault's cultural work by deconstructing the grand narratives of 'expert' pieces of knowledge in discourse. Poststructuralist works disentangling the embodiment of power illustrated how knowledge, as technologies of discipline and self-governance, was internalised by docile 'subjects' (Foucault, 1979, p. 142). However, although developmentally pioneering, Foucault's comprehensions were not beyond feminist critique, owing to Foucault's reductiveness of agency (McNay, 1999) in his early works (see Evans et al., 2010). Poststructuralist paradigms inverted analysis away from structures towards the process of subjectification and the individual's capacity/constraints within discourse to exercise agency (Gannon & Davies, 2014). The poststructuralist lens shifted epistemological and ontological conceptions towards how culture shaped 'conditions for being and acting in the world' (Gavey, 2011, p. 185). The emphasis in poststructuralism on the power of discourse, through internalised language systems that carry and shape meanings, knowledge and practice and are embodied with varying force, gave rise to the analysis of the ways in which symbolic implications of language and culture shape social reality (Weedon, 1998).

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990a, 1990b) criticised the poststructuralist paradigm for having an overemphasis on agency, subjectivity and the internalisation of discourse which according to Bourdieu should not take precedence over the internalisation of invisibilised, androcentric, institutionalised power relations (Bourdieu, 2001; see McNay, 2016). Bourdieu proposed an alternative theory: constructivist structuralism.

Bourdieu described his empirical paradigm of constructivist structuralism as:

...within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups. (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 14).

According to this paradigm, agency (gendered habitus) is reflexively informed by the social rules (social constructions and social structures) encountered in differing environments (fields of practice), whilst at the same time these environments (fields of practice/structures/rules) are collectively shaped and constrained by an individual's actions.

In reference to gender, accounts suggest that, at times, Bourdieu condescendingly overlooked the deep constraints of the feminist struggle (see Lane, 2006). Earlier feminist theorists argued that Bourdieu treated gender as a secondary construct to class (Adkins, 2003; Reay, 2004). Some suggested that his book, *Masculine domination* (2001), produced an essentialism that resurrected a biological 'sexual order' of malestream theories (Moi, 1991, p. 1017; Adkins & Skeggs, 2004). This was seen as reinforcing the traditionally gendered binaries of male domination and female subordination which overstated the reproduction of the gender binary, therefore impeding possibilities for transformative social change (McCall, 1992; see Butler, 1999a, 1990b; McRobbie, 2004; McLeod, 2005). The concerns raised by poststructuralist thinkers were legitimate. However, a number of key feminist scholars across academic

disciplines such as Beverley Skeggs, Lisa Adkins, Toril Moi, Terry Lovell and Bridget Fowler, have engaged with Bourdieu's core constructivist structuralist theoretical concepts of capital, fields and symbolic violence to expand on theoretical understandings of the gendered world as I further demonstrate in this chapter.

3.3 Discourse and doxa

Despite differing in ontologies and epistemological approaches, the perspectives of poststructuralism and constructivist structuralism share some synergy, as drawn out by David Eick (1999), who noted that Foucault and Bourdieu agreed that power and knowledge are produced, operated, dispersed and governed via discourse (ibid). However, Bourdieu intermingled discourse with doxa, which, in sociology, signifies falsely naturalised, temporal, 'taken for granted' beliefs. Conceptually, doxa refers to legitimated beliefs which produce and reproduce arbitrary categorisations, norms and values (Threadgold, 2020). Potently, doxa is generated by dispositions of lived experience that 'structures actions from the inside' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 10). The internalised structuring of action both generates and illuminates perception and categorisation. The individual dispositions that emerge further contribute 'to its [doxa] reproduction in social institutions, structures and links as well as in minds and bodies, expectations and behaviour' (Deer, 2008/2014, p. 115). For a relevant example, we could take the way that cyberbullying/sexting, as terms, are often conflated or are defined without attention to the influence of cultural/gendered norms. These categorisations/norms are collectively accepted, perpetuated and internalised as social facts about presumed deviant youth as dominant discourses that come to be accepted as 'natural', 'normal' or the 'way things are' (Powell, 2008, p. 173). As a consequence, agents misrecognise, even to their own detriment, the violence caused by dominant categorisations/norms, or view any harms produced/caused by legitimated beliefs/norms, as less-than forms of physical violence (Schubert, 2008/2014). With powerful effect, doxa justifies the misperception of violence and

enables the reproduction of dominant gendered norms preventing radical social change (Bourdieu, 2001).

3.3.1 Symbolic violence, gender norms, postfeminism

Bourdieu conceptualises the internalised acceptance of doxa (by the habitus) as perpetuating the misrecognition of symbolic violence because of deep-rooted misperceptions which reinforce notions of violence as causing harm through merely physical force (Schubert, 2007/2014). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992/2007) define symbolic violence as ‘violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’ (p. 167). Collectively, individuals are complicit in the reproduction of symbolically dominating norms and values, further shaping and concretising societal systems and categorisations (Deer, 2008/2014; Maton, 2008/2014). In contrast, Foucault’s notion of discourse is that it is a product of internalised self-governance. As such, discourse can influence ontology without explicit consideration of the power of taken for granted systems and categorisations (Eick, 1999) *across* spaces, such as offline–online.

Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ is a ‘way of doing and being ... not a matter of conscious learning, or ideological imposition, but is acquired through practice ... on account of lived practice’ (Lovell, 2000, p. 27). Habitus is both unique to individuals and shared across different groups; it is embodied dispositions of power relations and/or a sense of individual or shared mastery or technique (Moore, 2008/2014, p. 99). This generation of dispositions based on discourse and doxa shapes gendered bodily norms of the habitus, while the habitus corresponds to discourse/doxa within gendered structures (McNay, 2004; Powell, 2008; McNay, 2016). When the gendered habitus embodies and complicity participates in ‘the strategies and practices via which agents temporalise themselves and make the time of the world’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 139), gendered norms, such as those shaped by postfeminist social norms, are reproduced. Media scholar Rosalind Gill (2007) argued that, theoretically, postfeminist gendered and sexed discourses configured the female disposition as characterised by

‘sensitivity’ with ‘affective qualities’ (Riley et al., 2017, p. 3). Bourdieu would likely conceptualise affective qualities as dispositions which are gendered.

Symbolically, the creation and labelling of broad female dispositions serve to individualise the superficial empowerment of girls and young women who are said to carry a perceived ‘girl power’ as a form of ‘new femininity’ (Dobson, 2015; Banet-Weiser et al., 2019). In postfeminist times, the emergence and acceptance of new femininities shape an ‘empowered’ self-surveillant subjectivity. These dispositions, once internalised, converge with young people’s sentient understandings of the body as an economic site of capital through which a neoliberal rationale of ‘free choice’ is embodied and operates. Relevant to this study, young people’s valuations of their own sexed and gendered bodies and the bodies of others are determined by fluctuations in the internalised lived experiences informed by society’s valuation of other aspects of the ‘new femininity’ normative porno-chic aesthetics and the visibilised commodification seen in social media influencer cultures (McRobbie, 2008, p. 28; Ringrose & Barajas, 2011, p. 123). Cumulatively, perceptions of commodified systems complicate the shaping of postfeminist dispositions, perceptions and expectations associated with gender, sex and sexuality for all young people. The contemporary engagement of young people with postfeminist popularisations reveals the internalisation, expression and reinforcement of a growing sentiment purported on the superficial belief that gender equality has been achieved (see Ringrose, 2012; see Dobson, 2015). Accompanying these sentiments are the renunciation in popular, post and neoliberal feminist rhetoric of the powerful ubiquity of patriarchy. Sexism is minimised, denied and rejected or dispelled by young men and young women and seen as proportional to the experience of sexism among males (McRobbie, 2008; Pomerantz et al., 2013; Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016; Banet-Weiser et al., 2019). Further complicating young people’s perception that sexism is seen as proportional is the widely held view that the online

space is neutral or egalitarian. In this context, the true picture of girls' experiences of sexual violation, harassment, abuse and violence offline and online is distorted.

3.3.2 Social change

Irrefutably, feminist critiques add rich dimensions to the interpretation of Bourdieu's vast body of work. However, Schubert, (2008/2014), explains that, while Bourdieu's conceptions of habitus and doxa may seem deterministic, the cultural adherence of the habitus is not mechanistic in nature. Schubert implies that there is indeed scope within such conceptions for social change, because, as Bourdieu posited, the habitus 'is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subject to experiences and therefore constantly affected by them ...it is durable but not eternal' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133). In other words, for example, if the fields of media governance, social media, education, family and peer relations produce circumstances or discord, 'when it [habitus] encounters new social interactions or crisis for which it has little or no past experience there is potential for new creative, practical dispositions to emerge' (Powell, 2008, p. 172). This suggests that there is the possibility for the resulting embodied dispositions to engender curiosity. This curious capacity for reflexivity (practice) can question, if motivated, implicit social rules, doxa and the discourse of, for example, symbolic violence, which guides (through structure and action) gendered cultural scripts and accompanying social norms. For example, dominant scripts and norms which normalise the pressuring of girls by boys for nudes, or girls 'consenting' to produce images when pressured/coerced, or girls normalising unwanted images achieve this because these are the accepted gendered rules in the fields of practice. Accordingly, there is – albeit constrained – some scope for liberation, given that, while the habitus may have dominant systematised strategies to manage practices perceived to be 'fixed', it also has creativity that can generate new practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 18). Therefore, how we 'practice' is never entirely determined (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Complicity in symbolic violence can be recognised and resisted by the habitus if it is triggered: a crisis or an encounter, such as a change in policies, legislation or education that raises ethical consciousness can shift individual and collective perceptions, attitudes and values (Bourdieu, 1990a; 2001). For young people, the trigger could be their exposure to consciousness-raising education that challenges the prescriptive gender ideologies that had become naturalised (Powell, 2010a). This thesis explores the extent to which such education could enable young people in this project to call out non-consensual sexting/cyberbullying as a form of gender-based abuse/harassment or violence, to identify the sexist nature of these practices, or to identify how their practices are shaped by broader external forces online, such as social media. I saw a constrained scope for freedom implied above by Schubert; this appeared in the ways in which young people exercised curiosity about gender and sexualities as they engaged with the study as consultants and in the co-construction of the themes, as you will read in Chapter Four. As dispositions are being shaped, opportunities to be curious and explore gender structures and relations concerning everyday digital-social practices such as cyberbullying and/or sexting empower individuals to agitate, generate and revise social norms that were previously considered fixed (see McCall, 1992).

3.4 Bridging feminist structural constructivism with the digital world of young people

Fields are ‘leaky containers of social action that germinate shared expectations, common sense norms, classification systems’ (Threadgold, 2020, p. 64). According to Maxwell and Aggleton (2014), field theory can capture the interconnective communicative complexities of young peoples’ (gendered) power relations *across* interconnected spaces, such as offline–online. Feminist theory has advocated that a broader lens be used across gender-based violence and sexual violence sectors when working with young people, in order to prevent and unsettle potentially harmful social-cultural constructed ideologies of gender which shape practice

across fields (see McNay, 1999; see Powell, 2008). The experience of adult-imposed power inequities can limit the status and positionality of young people, and, as we know, the habitus is creative and inventive in new spaces (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The integration of offline–online fields provide young people with a space to shape, practice and perform the embodiment of gender and sexuality (via digital images) (see Maxwell & Aggleton, 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017) across fields and test the bidirectional nature of capital between offline and online spaces (see Calderón Gómez, 2021). In terms of digital spaces and digital embodiments, contemporary works, such as those by Ignatow and Robinson (2017), Costa and Murphy (2015a, 2015b) and Levina and Arriaga (2014), promote Bourdieu’s contributions to the expansion of the field of digital sociology. These scholars apply the conceptualisation of the ‘online habitus’ (Costa & Murphy, 2015a, 2015b) to illustrate how social capital can be stretched across integrated offline–online fields (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017) when motivated by social media activities (Levina & Arriaga, 2014).

3.5 Young people’s gendered embodiment of unspoken rules

Another key work that takes a Bourdieusian approach to theorising youth social practice is Anastasia Powell’s *Sex, power and consent: The unwritten rules* (2010a). In this text, a Bourdieusian approach is taken to overcome the predominant limitations of structure/agency. Analysing the implicit understandings among young people/young adults of behavioural cues and gendered norms underpinning sexual consent and coercion within relational sexual practices, Powell demonstrates the extent to which symbolic violence had been normalised among her participants. Powell’s research found that the participants accepted sexual pressure and coercion within the expectations of presumed and prescribed gendered practices. The generativity of symbolic violence contributed to the gendered habitus ambiguity across the sexual practices of young people and determined what constituted pressured and coercive practices.

Bourdieu did not live to see the transformative evolution of the online space as its own field with its own transfigured structures, but his vast body of conceptual work on constructivist structuralism remains highly compatible with exploring the digital spaces and digital embodiments (see Costa & Murphy, 2015b). While subjectivity and discourse are critical to understanding empirical patterns, Bourdieu and others would argue that if we attend to subjectivity and discourse alone for the theorisation of young people's socio-digital ontologies, we could leave ourselves unable to locate a historical sociocultural view of the symbolic power of those who have shaped gendered power relations in online fields. The utility of the habitus is that, in it, 'past, present and future interpenetrate' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 22): structure, agents and the field do not need to be divided or detached (ibid).

As I demonstrate, for thinking theoretically about how young people construct and perform gender and sexuality in integrated offline–online spaces, Bourdieu's theories have contemporary applications which transcend structure/agency, culture/structure, object/subject, offline/online divides. As I build my theoretical case, I argue that the sending and receiving of nude and semi-nude digital images (termed colloquially by young people as 'selfies/nudes/nudies/dick pics') in the digital realm are corporeally performative. Thus, they serve to both symbolise and produce the corporeal and digital effects of gender. In this way, they reinforce the hegemonic binaries of masculinity and femininity across integrated offline–online spaces against background discourses of cyberbullying (gender-neutral) or sexting (postfeminist), discourses which minimise the true scope and prevalence of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

3.6 Theoretical conceptualisation – Bourdieu's constructivist structuralism

The constructivist structuralism paradigm is conceptually organised within an operational formula that is used in Bourdieu's thinking toolkit, used to analyse the power structures that, in a specific social interaction, create meaning:

$$[(\text{Habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

(Bourdieu, 1977)

As illustrated in Figure 1, I broaden these concepts to demonstrate the practicalities of Bourdieu's toolkit for conceptualising young people (with respect to their gendered digital habitus) in the evolution of integrated offline–online spaces (fields) and their gendered power relations (logic, unspoken rules which guide the pursuit of capital for practice) across these spaces, starting with the habitus. Building on Bourdieu's toolkit, Carlene Firmin (2015) developed a conceptualisation model to illustrate the interconnection of young people's social fields. I have broadened on her conceptualisation to illustrate the surrounding of the online field, as I will explain.

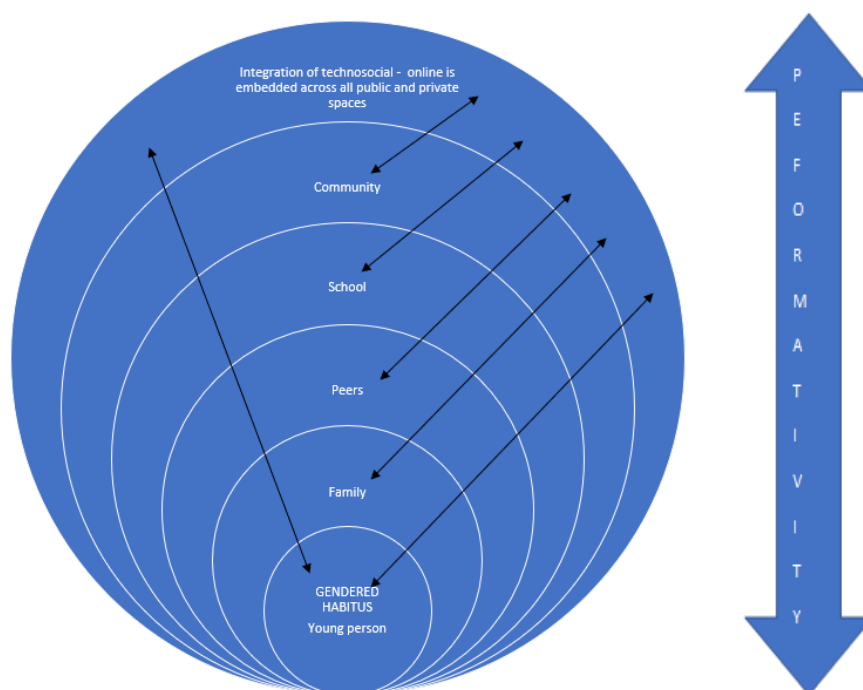


Figure 1: Formation of the gendered digital habitus with the addition of an online field

Source: Author's own, building on Firmin's model (2015, p. 83)

3.6.1 Performative gendered digital habitus

As I have earlier touched on, the habitus is equipped with a sense of how entitled or, indeed, how non-entitled an individual/collective is to move around spaces, physically and symbolically. Dispositions are both generated by and within the habitus through social experiences with varying force and imprint (Reay, 2004). Social experiences, schematically embodied within the habitus, are moulded by routine actors, such as teachers, parents, families, carers and peers across offline–online spaces. As young people spend increased time online using devices, the influence of their experiences within this space grows. The ‘gendered digital habitus’ is the inherited embodiment of historical ‘pre-web’ structures lived in the present time of the digital ‘social web’ (Stratton et al., 2017). Selfhood within any gendered digital habitus is understood as defined, in part, by existing within and being subject to a generational collective, such as ‘Gen Z’. This concept of the gendered digital habitus acknowledges how, in practice, individuals share formative ecological experiences, such as the embedding of devices across personal and shared social fields like homes, neighbourhoods, community spaces and schools. People of all ages in most countries of the world exist in ecosystems in which macro governance structures promote digital access and participation, and socio-digital interconnections are increasingly common and important. This ecosystem influences the way that young people make meaning of their common actions, interactions, relations and levels of mastery, all of which are relatable to their past and present social (digital online) world. Applying the concept of the habitus, socio-digital practice is co-situated in agency and structure (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; France, 2007; Moore 2008/2014).

It is important to note that, while the networks and cultures that young people operate within in the online field are externally and forcefully constructed by technocrats, young people’s colloquial practices are also building these networks and cultures. This has been illustrated in the discussion in Chapter Two of the ‘social shaping of technology’ (MacKenzie & Wajcman,

1999). The gendered digital habitus is reflexive, shaped by a blending of acceptance and resistance to the symbolism of binary expressions of sex and gender (McCall, 1992, p. 838). Dispositions are culturally calibrated, learned, practised and reinforced through gender performativity (Butler, 1988; 1999b). Through networks and cultures that shape and entrench what is understood to be normal, the digital habitus experiences the negotiation of, investment in and consolidation of gendered expressions. Dependent upon their individual environment, some young people will experience a great deal of pressure to perform dominant gender roles in both the offline fields and the emerging unsupervised online spaces available to them, such as social media platforms (see Paetcher, 2007; Herring & Kapidzic 2015) the performance of these roles then reproduces them.

Due to doxa, gendered dispositions in offline fields/spaces are generally perceived by actors as natural, as the habitus senses its function is to perform gender. Actions performed through gendered dispositions within the habitus (see McCall, 1992; see McLeod, 2005) have now transfigured to emerging online spaces. Because of doxa and symbolic violence, dispositions bring gender as a practice into being at the same time. Gender is also obscured by androcentrism; this is especially evident in technological cultures (Bourdieu, 2001; Faulkner, 2001). Intentionally, the gendered habitus upholds the ideological and operational functions of patriarchal heteronormative systems (offline and online), which, Bourdieu argues in *Masculine domination* (2001), are evidently manifest but are deniable or justifiable due to biology and thus go unseen.

In the shifting context of andro-technological structures, the sexed body is mapped onto gender through performative digital images (semi-nude/nudes), as the gendered habitus must contemporise according to the times in which it exists. The need to calibrate and stabilise gender digitally in new spaces reveals the true instability of heteronormative social construction, which requires performativity (the taking and sharing of nude images) to

naturalise gender and heterosexuality whilst concurrently reproducing patriarchal social structures in emergent spaces (Butler, 1988). For young people, their gendered digital habitus is a ‘fish in water’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992/2007, p. 7), swimming across offline–online spaces. Therefore, young people sense how to restyle idealised gender in normative modes of digital performativity, via request and share cultures, as the habitus experiences gendered power relations across technological devices, social media and sharing economies.

3.6.2 Offline–online spaces as ‘fields of practice’

The participation of the gendered digital habitus in digital sexual cultures cannot be detached from external global and local forces and pressures. The strength of Bourdieu’s toolkit is that it situates micro-social practice with macro process (Moi, 1991; Reay, 2004). This approach marries symbolic powers and has the influence to determine and shape the norms, attitudes, perceptions and the value of capital in traditional offline and emerging online fields (Hardy 2008/2014). Bourdieu (1998) and Adkins (2003) describe fields as uneven arenas of gender relations and practice that produce and reproduce structural and cultural conventions and inequalities. Fields can be micro-sites, like the family, meso-sites, such as schools, or macro-sites, like the education system or media and technology systems that comprise the online digital world (see Bourdieu, 2005). As a metaphor, the field can be imagined as a space where hierarchical gendered power relations and conceptual struggles take place on all levels to acquire or sustain territory, symbolically and corporeally (Bourdieu, 1998; Threadgold, 2020). The fields within which the habitus operates can shape positive-pro-social norms by explicitly responding to harmful cultures. Alternatively, if harmful behaviour and cultures are ignored or minimised in a given field, the harm can be normalised.

Changes in technology have complicated the notion of the field. The conceptualisation by Marwick and boyd (2011) and boyd (2013) of ‘context collapse’ across offline–online spaces highlights the blurring of the boundaries between the territorial social fields young people

managed in ‘pre-web’ times and those they deal with in ‘social web’ times (Stratton et al., 2017). Gendered rules leak from offline to online and coalesce. Across the offline–online fields that young people currently operate within, there is a merging of formal and informal relations. For example, the school classroom now often extends to an online WhatsApp class group. These integrated fields often find young people in spaces that are less supervised by adults, where they perform prescribed gender scripts. In such spaces, producing or exchanging images is a contemporary gendered enactment.

3.6.3 The history of the logic underpinning the ‘fields of practice’

According to Skeggs (1997), Bourdieu’s ‘fields’ are patriarchally generated by those who hold symbolic power and who covertly and overtly maintain masculine dominance over power, knowledge and resources across all the spaces that people operate within. These fields define and sustain gender norms and traditions which, in turn, uphold the dominance of those who set the conditions of the field. Fields can also generate subfields that legitimise colloquial practices such as the use of social media platforms and applications which have the potential to facilitate intimate personal groups, open and anonymous subcultural groups, and openly misogynist social media forums, such as the ‘manosphere’ (Ging, 2017, pp. 5–6).

As previously discussed, the gendered digital habitus actively engages with the rules of the fields, such that young people operate with unconscious and conscious complicity in symbolic violence due to naturalised norms and traditions in the field that are based on unseen male dominance (Bourdieu, 2001). Social subjects strategise to shape and maintain the rules of the fields, which generate physical and nonphysical violence in the battle for symbolic masculine domination. Symbolic violence is ubiquitous, invisibilised in language, culture and categorisations and therefore naturalised, accepted by complicit agents. Largely unquestioned, the logic of patriarchal values, dominant gender norms and the dominance of masculine cultures in technology (see Connell, 1995/2005; see Faulkner, 2001) have ‘naturally’

modernised to the online field including social media. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) contended that within most fields, the ‘male order is so deeply grounded as to need no justification’ (p. 171). In the online field, the retraditionalisation of patriarchal androcentric domination, heterosexuality, homosociality, misogyny and sexism are dominant yet generally unobserved (see Adkins, 2003). The fields set the unspoken rules that normalise the male gaze and the commodification of girls’ bodies, as Bourdieu argues in his discussion about the permanence and change of masculine domination:

The social world functions (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the field) as a market in symbolic goods, dominated by the masculine vision: for women as has been noted, to be perceived, and perceived by the male eye or by an eye informed by masculine categories – those that one implements, without being able to state them explicitly. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 99).

Indeed, the ‘collective male gaze’ (Flood, 2008, p. 348) on which social media and digital sexual cultures are premised is perceived as neutral. Moreover, sharing norms in the online field (see Kennedy, 2018) also uphold a homosocial cohesive function seen in the operations of digital sexual cultures which stabilises heteronormative power relations and systems (Butler, 1988) via normative digital performativity.

Using our understanding of postfeminist discourse, doxa, dispositions and symbolic violence helps us to comprehend why young people are less likely to label experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence as ‘sexual violence’ and more likely to designate non-consensual or coercive experiences of digital sexual cultures as ‘cyberbullying’ or ‘sexting silliness’ (Ricciardelli, & Adorjan, 2019). For power within gender relations, young people are unwittingly and complicitly reproducing symbolic violence, as are the adults, institutions and policies (fields) in which they are immersed by reproducing these categorisations.

3.6.4 Young people, gender and capital

I conceptualise this thesis with social and cultural capital in mind, as these forms of capital are most suited to thinking about young people's performativity and their gendered embodiment of power, in particular relation to 'gendered norms in bodily practice' (Powell, 2010, p. 73). The habitus, interacting with the conditions of the field, is motivated by capital and has a sense of what type of local or informal capital has value. Because normalised adult-imposed power imbalances (see Lesko, 1996) place young people in a deficit position, they are arguably incentivised to pursue and maximise 'capital' from accessible localised social relations/sources (Barry, 2006). Bourdieu (1986) identified social, economic, and cultural resources that are considered capitals. Once compounded and culturally legitimised (Skeggs, 1997), the attainment of these capitals symbolises influence and power that can be conceived as 'symbolic capital'. In global and local – 'glocal' – networks, symbolic capital generates popularity, status and reputation and can be recognised by others across a range of fields. Social media influencers and celebrities have the symbolic capital that garners them followers, often as a result of their performativity of gender.

'Social capital' is earned through networks, peers, relationships, influences – who you know, who is worth knowing, who is worth impressing and what rewards these relations might bring about. Symbolically, collectivised social affinities shape local economies of commodity value and exchange (Threadgold, 2020). Embodied 'cultural capital' reflects implicit social and bodily understandings of popular and informal cultures; for example, the gendered digital habitus who has cultural capital feels, like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992/2007, p. 7) because it senses and understands the meaning of digital sexual image sharing cultures (even if not participating/resisting). Social capital, arguably inseparable from cultural capital, is often referred to as 'sociocultural capital' (France & Roberts, 2017). Tacitly understood sociocultural knowledge is embodied as 'knowing' perceptions, thoughts, and actions

(Bourdieu, 1989) that reflect awareness of how to deploy sociocultural capital in cultural settings and fields. Notably, the logic shaping the value of sociocultural capital can derive from existing spaces (offline) and emerging spaces (online). Therefore, a young person who has earned status, popularity, entitlement and reputation in offline settings they may be motivated to transfer these capital markers to online settings by enacting their cultural knowledge to appropriate the online space. As Bourdieu (1999) explains, ‘individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that the space tacitly requires of the occupants. This may be the possession of a certain cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 128).

Gendered sociocultural capital can be embodied, inherited and amassed via cultural exchanges, but it is inequitably distributed (Bourdieu, 1986; Skeggs, 1997, 2004b; see Mears, 2015): those with lesser power based on youth peer-to-peer perceptions of gendered power relations are at a disadvantage (France et al., 2012). Young people earn sociocultural capital through gender and intensified or hegemonic performances. For example, when boys display through their appearance, interaction and actions idealised masculinity which is viewed as ‘natural’ in their culture, they are socially rewarded by peers (and adults). Image-based sexual abuse and/or harassment might be ‘reasonably’ explained, minimised or ignored if it falls within the expectations of male behaviour. Symbolically, the potential to earn power/capital further incentivises participation in digital sexual cultures. Pressure or coercive tactics used to acquire, send or share sexual images across fields can be essentialised and therefore overlooked as normative masculinity. However, in the context of typical idealised femininities, when girls consensually participate in digital sexual cultures, they are often derided for transgressing respectable femininity and sexuality (Skeggs, 1997, 2004b). Even girls who are victims/survivors of non-consensual practices can be judged for not sufficiently managing the risks of digital sexual cultures. In these circumstances, the symbolic power/capital available to boys is inverted for girls (see Skeggs, 2004b). In the context of image-sharing in digital sexual

cultures, asymmetrically, girls who cannot attain symbolic power are subject to punitive responses from adults and their peers. For young women, access to sociocultural capital is limited and precarious in localised offline–online peer networks: despite wide claims of postfeminist empowerment, if they do not display normative heterosexual feminine behaviours premised on the denial of sexual pleasure, resistance/gatekeeping, and symbolic of morality and virtue, they can not attain significant capital. Any ‘respectable femininity’ capital earned by performative acts that display normative behaviours (Skeggs, 1997) are unlikely to be converted into symbolic capital; the exception to this may be seen in the symbolic capital held by a celebrity/social media influencer, however, it is doubtful that they would disrupt gendered structures (Skeggs, 2004b; see Mears, 2015).

While, of course, not all boys are absolute in their belief in masculine hegemonic idealisations, most face a pervasive pressure to align with these heterosexual idealisations, as ambiguity is risky for boys. Even when it is not explicitly expressed, there is a valuing of masculine status, competition, reputation and popularity that motivates boys to show their ‘mastery’ by being able to acquire a digital image of a female body to their male peers. The sociocultural capital that can be gained from such a display can be converted to symbolic capital, particularly among boys who have pre-existing popularity. Additionally, this organises hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 2004): popular boys can enhance their social and cultural capital across the offline–online fields by openly participating in digital sexual cultures, while boys deemed unpopular are restricted in their ability to attain masculine sociocultural capital. The young men with the sociocultural capital to participate performatively in digital sexual cultures solidified the cohesion of their homosocial bonds through their participation (see Flood, 2008). In other words, some boys can maintain or increase their masculine sociocultural capital by boasting (performing offline) that they participated in the request of images and through the non-consensual distribution of images online.

3.7 Conclusion

I started this chapter by tracing the cultural turn towards poststructuralism and constructivist structuralism with a feminist lens. Drawing on the analyses of Bourdieusian theorists, I addressed the tensions of relying on an absolute subjective lens that limits the recognition of the context of structures that shape gendered power relations *across* fields. I showed how constructivist structuralism is especially relevant to the study of young people in a postfeminist digital context within which their agency is enacted. This is also illustrated by other scholars who have utilised Bourdieu's concepts in their research of young people and in the studies of online embodiments. I argued that, for the theoretical development of young people's practices within digital sexual cultures, binaries of structure/culture, subject/object need to be overridden. Therefore, the application of Bourdieu's constructivist structuralism with a feminist lens is suited to a project of this nature to unite these perspectives (Moi, 1991; see Reay, 2004).

I also discussed how significant the concept of symbolic violence is to our understanding of the complicity of young people (and institutions) in the (re)production of systems and categorisations (discourse/doxa) that (re)produce notions of 'gender neutrality', which (re)produce inequitable gender power relations across offline–online fields. The concept of symbolic violence is seen in the normalisation of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting in the postfeminist discourse/doxa upheld by young people, adults and institutions that sets these practices apart from gender-based violence or sexual harassment. This discourse makes the practices seem as though cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting are a natural part of adolescence; as a result, the systems and policies designed to address such harmful activities make no reference to gender or sexual harassment or violence. Juxtaposed against this tendency to normalise and minimise these activities is the generational potential of dispositions, which, when confronted with a consciousness of the sociocultural construction of gender binary scripts

and normative gender ideology, can provoke opportunities for social change, should the field(s) provide these opportunities.

To further support the theoretical framework selected for my study, I reworked Bourdieu's conceptual toolkit to explain digitally gendered embodiment (Figure 1). I argued that Bourdieu's theory of practice broadens the analysis of how young people, due to their marginalisation by adults, may negotiate and reinforce power associated with the embodied performance of gendered social rules as a source of sociocultural capital. This supported me to conceptualise how dominant binary idealisations of gender and sexuality, which were historically expressed and performed in offline settings, are now also repeatedly performed in online settings to stabilise heteronormativity across offline and online fields. Now integrated, these fields have generated new logic. Digital sexual cultures reflect and reinforce gendered social rules and performative actions that are established through gender-disparate sharing norms: boys and girls, in their pursuit of capital as part of the navigation of digital sexual cultures, act in the online space according to idealised gendered embodied and performative expressions.

It is now widely accepted that integrated offline–online fields are significantly formative spaces for young people to construct a gendered identity building on the schematics of gendered dispositions (Marwick, 2013; Herring, & Kapidzic, 2015). However, the capital that can be gained in these fields is disparately premised on normative and restrictive gendered idealisations and power relations that are underpinned by naturalised androcentric offline-online fields. Applying and reworking Bourdieu's conceptual toolkit to serve this research project enabled me to theoretically interconnect the social practices of young people with their peer group, in their community, with school relationships, and with their family relationships by thinking about their gendered relations across these fields – particularly the online space. In

the next chapter, I link this theorisation to the methodological framework, rationalising the choices I made in the research design.

4 Chapter Four – Engaging young people in co-constructed research.

4.1 Introduction

From birth, this current generation of young people has had an unprecedented experience and rich knowledge of blending the digital and social. Nevertheless, as I established in Chapter Two, there is a shortage of co-constructed research that has been undertaken with young people in Aotearoa New Zealand and developed from their perspectives (Meehan & Wicks, 2020). Methodologies used in previous studies have produced epistemology which are developed from Western-centred perspectives, are primarily studied through a quantitative paradigm and discuss young people through either a gender-neutral lens for cyberbullying or a hyper-sexual lens for sexting. Previous research conducted on the explorations of young people within digital sexual cultures has often been based on heteronormative frameworks (see Ringrose & Harvey, 2015) and conceptualised as emerging within diverging social spaces instead of converging ones. I have turned to feminist praxis, which encourages the exploration of creative methodologies to collaborate with young people in research (Couch et al., 2014). To appeal to and encourage young people to speak out about their experiences, this research project was named ‘#useyourvoice’. In response to the epistemological gaps I have outlined in Chapter Two and to meet the research objectives, I prioritised the use of methodological approaches that involve consultation and collaboration with young people that could be expected to provide youth-centred insights.

This research is intended to contribute to the literature by providing a conceptual framework that extends our understanding of the ways in which young people’s perceptions of gender contribute to their understanding of cyberbullying and sexting in relation to technology-facilitated sexual violence. The first section of this chapter outlines the rationale for the

methodological approach. The second section illustrates how I applied these methods and describes the challenges I encountered throughout the process.

4.2 Research aims and objectives

As outlined in the introduction, my key aims and objectives were as follows.

I aimed to grasp a deeper exploratory insight into:

- Young people's conception of peer-to-peer technology-facilitated sexual violence (through the generic terms 'cyberbullying' and 'sexting').
- The ways in which these experiences are connected to the use of digital devices across integrated offline-online environments.
- How young people perceived these experiences and related them to developing views of gender.

To achieve these aims, I had five key objectives:

1. Explore young people's accounts of the convergence between their offline–online activities and the ways in which these environments may relate to their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.
2. Analyse how gendered perceptions and experiences influence conceptions of technology-facilitated sexual violence.
3. Explore young people's descriptions of harm (or lack thereof) caused by their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.
4. Assess and explore the strategies young people are aware of and/or use to promote safety in online and offline spaces.

4.3 Outline of research stages

The #useyourvoice project was designed over three stages (see Table 1) to ensure youth voice was aligned with and centred in the aims and objectives. This approach ensured that young people were consulted with during the design stages, had a part to play in the pilot study and were also involved in the co-construction of knowledge. This approach will be addressed in depth within this chapter.

Stage	Purpose
1 - Background February–March 2018 Pilot Focus groups (n=8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for ethics for Stage One, to be conducted in alternative education centre. • Identify youth participants who are not usually included in the research process for consultation and pilot. Approach secondary-aged students at Alternative Education Provision (Deakin School). • Consult with youth participants at Alternative Education Provision to ask: Who should include and what methods should I use? • Conduct pilot sessions with consultant participants. • Develop design, integrating feedback from participants.
2 - Initial fieldwork February–October 2019 Focus groups (n=20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for ethics for Stage Two, to be conducted in mainstream schools. • Negotiate access to three mainstream secondary schools (Acacia, Birch, Cedar Schools). • Conduct two focus friendship groups, one week apart, with each single-sex friendship group, as advised by participants in Stage 1. • Offer semi-structured individual interviews for any participants who prefer a one-to-one setting.
3 - Co-constructed fieldwork October–November 2019 Review (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students from the three mainstream schools can opt in to participate in a student expert review group/thematic workshop. • Students review Stage Two data (anonymised) in visual illustration format. • Student feedback informs further coding and analysis of data collected in Stage Two and thematic findings. • Emma to present findings and feedback to schools.

Table 1: Outline of research stages

4.4 Conceptual approach: qualitative paradigm

In contrast to positivist quantitative methods which produce hard statistical data, qualitative approaches generate results that, with critical analysis, illuminate positionality, reflexivity, process and deep experiential meanings. Analysis of qualitative data in the social context of which the data is generated can be complex, messy and contradictory producing rich meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2013). While it is customary for qualitative methods to engage small sample

sizes of the population to be studied, there are no concrete rules that define the ideal sample size that would be expected to generate useful qualitative data. Importantly, however, to realise the aims of a research project and identify patterns, consideration must be given to involving a suitable number of participants, based on the researcher's level of expertise. I estimated that a small, manageable consultation group of approximately four to six students, aged between 13 and 16 would be sufficient for the first background stage of the research. For the subsequent stages, I estimated that a sample size of 40 participants across the different sites, participating in friendship groups of four to six people, would produce observable patterns and differences (Barbour, 2007).

Feminist research praxis has an ethical orientation toward sharing power to enable the 'voices' of those who are typically structurally marginalised or excluded from research, such as young people (Cahill et al., 2010). Throughout my vocation, I have worked with young people in various roles which have equipped me with the skills to observe and recognise hierarchical discourses that homogenise, regulate and 'study down' young people through the interpretive adult construction of adolescence (Lesko, 1996; Cahill et al., 2010; Langhout & Thomas, 2010). From the outset, I questioned the fixed methodological frameworks which often privilege the perspectives of adults whilst diminishing the status of young people. Hence, I opted for a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach. My use of a qualitative framework enabled young people to discuss what is meaningful to them. I further engaged an inductive analysis of the data, in which I was open to the uncertainty of what was generated.

4.5 Intersectional lens

To aid in my conceptualisation of feminist praxis, I also draw on Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) conceptualisation of intersectionality. The intersectional paradigm originated as a response to

criticisms that the feminist movement was one-dimensional: the predominant materialist white cisgender focus meant that influences of race, ethnicity and age in terms of ‘youth’ were overlooked, and non-binary gender was a marker of marginalisation and discrimination. Intersectionality is conceptualised as a tool that contemplates how the matrix of gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, religion and disabilities intersect, shaping experiences of oppression and entitlement (Ringrose et al., 2021b). In this study, intersectionality is not employed as an overarching methodology or theory but as a lens of critical inquiry (see Cho et al., 2013). Using intersectionality in this way enabled me to explore the identity and positionality of young people as regulated through the constructs of masculinity and femininity without excluding, separating or minimising how young people experience sexuality, race, ethnicity or class as an intersection (Carabello et al., 2017). More specifically, the intersectional lens allowed me to consider the multi-axis positionality of the young people involved in the #useyourvoice project and recognise the impact of their being brought up in the diasporic city of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, where 40% of residents were born outside of New Zealand. It also enabled consideration of the racial and ethnic stereotyping young people experience that they may draw on to contextualise gendered and sexualised cyberbullying within the more neutral and lesser stigmatised context of ‘cyberbullying’. Using this lens, I was also able to consider how my own experiences, as shaped by my race and ethnicity, relate to and differ from the experiences of the study participants.

4.6 The rationale for youth participatory action research

Concerning young people’s use of the internet, it is now generally understood that, in retrospect, the widespread lack of adult consultation with children and young people in the design and implementation of digital platforms has put those undertaking research and developing policy in a reactive position instead of a responsive position. A range of child and youth media advocates and experts, such as Sonia Livingstone, lobbied for progression on

children's rights to extend to the digital world. This led to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (2021) expansion of its constitutional remit in response to growing concerns about the ungoverned exploitative affordances of the digital world (also see Livingstone, 2021).

Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) noted the special considerations to be made when engaging children in participatory research, such as safeguarding, developmental appropriateness, competency, training, power differentials and remuneration. Understandably, the complexities associated with addressing these considerations can limit the involvement of young people in research processes. That said, it is worthwhile to attempt to navigate these challenges in order to reveal the knowledge and experience of digital sexual cultures among young people. Young people's involvement in participatory action research means that the research problem that they identify, based on their expertise, is much more likely to be of authentic value to them in contrast to any identified that are based on the assumptions of the adult researcher. Additionally, undertaking participatory research within peer group friendships can open a space for peers to engage in dialogue and analyse and learn together. It has been argued that ideally, the integrity of research examining the experiences of young people is more strongly upheld when young people are integrated into the design, analysis and dissemination of a study (Holland, et al., 2010).

4.7 Methodological rigour and ethical considerations

The scientific benchmarks for rigour, such as reliability, validity, generalisability and transferability, may be applied in clinical settings but are more difficult to set out and measure in the context of a study of this nature. In fact, co-construction methods 'encourage a critical broadening of conventional conceptions of "rigour"' (Carabello et al., 2017, p. 323). To address

research rigour, this study was guided by criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1986, p. 73) for enquiry in naturalistic real-world settings:

- (i) Trustworthiness – credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.
- (ii) Authenticity – fairness, negotiation with stakeholders.

Authenticity can be demonstrated in several ways. For example:

- *Ontological authentication* refers to my reflexivity as outlined in my positionality (Chapter One) and conceptual approach.
- *Educative authentication* is demonstrated when the gatekeepers are kept informed through feedback and education (see discussion below).
- *Catalytic authentication* is shown through the feedback processes offered to the stakeholders (young people and educators). This was embedded in the Stage Three thematic review.
- *Tactical authentication* can be seen when young people experience a stake in the research and express feeling empowered in the possibility of using their voice for social change. The following quotes from the fieldwork illustrate this:

Preeti (14): I want to be part of mitigating this stuff – it's really important for the future.

Lakshmi (14): I did it because I feel like this is a kinda sensitive subject – it can be really useful to become more aware in the future. You get a rough idea how to help someone.

Owen (14): It was interesting seeing the posters. Like, after the groups, I thought about it [digital sexual cultures] sometimes, but the posters help you picture it.

Andrew (14): I do think having a discussion and trying to find solutions has been a productive thing, and it has had a positive outcome.

- Robert (14): Usually, when they do it [research], they wouldn't show us the outcomes!
- Martha (14): This is a topic not seriously talked about. It helps to talk about our experiences.
- Nishal (14): I think it's good to know what young people think so adults get a better understanding.
- Jay (14): It made me think more about the girls – we usually only think about one side, we never think from the other side – so now we can be more open minded.
- Ricky (14): To see our ideas got shown in pictures and words, I felt they had a use.

4.7.1 Sample criteria and informed consent

Participation in #useyourvoice project was agreed on an informal, voluntary first-come-first-served basis. The inclusion criteria required students to be aged 13 to 16, but there was, however, one participant who, in between the recruitment and the rollout of the friendship groups, turned 17. Students excluded from participation were those who did not meet the age range (apart from the aforementioned exception), did not have parental consent or were identified by pastoral staff as not being suitable due to personal or safety reasons. Anyone outside of the outlined criteria could not take part in the study. This proved to be limiting for one young woman who expressed interest but was not allowed by her parents to participate, for Christian faith reasons.

Interestingly, across the field of adolescent health research, the Gillick Competence (1985) threshold is considered the legal criterion for informed consent. This threshold certifies the capacity of a young person, with respect to their understanding and social intelligence, to make informed choices to consent to healthcare and/or health research. However, sociology research is a distinctly different context, in which minimal research or guidance is available on the understanding of assent/consent within the decision-making process of parents and young

people (Morrow & Richard, 1996). According to the terms of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, as applied to this study, the age of the participants required me to seek informed consent from the school principal and a parent/caregiver, as well as assent from the young person. Assent is the process required when legal age prohibits a young person from consenting. Securing consent from the adult parties illustrates institutional ‘operations of power’ (Allen, 2005b) of the adult gatekeeper role, which I later discuss (Chapter Seven) in more detail. It is worth mentioning that, for the young people involved in this study, ‘assent’ was an unfamiliar word. The word ‘consent’, on the other hand, was recognised, perhaps because reference to consent education has increasingly become more commonplace in conversation in education. It was left to the school principals to decide if they wanted to also gain consent from their Board of Trustees. To the best of my knowledge, one school discussed the project with their Board and secured the chairperson’s consent on behalf of the group. The remaining three schools did not seek Board consent.

To fulfil expectations around ‘educative authentication’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 82), I arranged several information sessions for educators and any interested pastoral staff. Once the schools had given consent for their students to participate, I supplied the school with a detailed information letter⁸ and the recruitment posters⁹ that could be sent home with the young people to discuss the project with their parents/caregivers. Once information letters had been sent to the parents of any young people who had shown interest, I offered to hold information sessions for parents. None of these sessions were requested. I ensured that teachers, parents and students had access to mine and my supervisors’ university email addresses so that we could be contacted for any queries. When one parent contacted the ethics board to enquire about the

⁸ See Appendix B & C

⁹ See Appendix I & J

project, I called the parent, as directed by my principal supervisor, to discuss their concerns. The parent was reassured following our discussion. Ultimately, for the most part, I had to rely on the assumption that a thorough and informed conversation had taken place between the parent, the young person and their school.

Following the provision of informed consent and informed assent from all parties, an ongoing discussion of assent was held with all students at each session that emphasised the following rights of participants (Alderson & Morrow, 2011):

- to say yes or no without question;
- to have the time to choose/decide how to respond to questions;
- to have no pressure placed upon them while the young person chooses/decides;
- to be able to ask questions at any stage;
- to be able to talk to a friend, teacher or parent to make their choice/decision; and
- to drop out at any time (right to withdraw).

Throughout my involvement, I maintained communication with the designated gatekeepers at each school with respect to recruitment processes, poster designs, information, assent, study design and video resources. The gatekeepers ensured all the resources were deemed age-appropriate and responsive to the requirements of their schools.

One of the most critical factors for me to consider whilst planning an ethical approach to the research and making initial contact with participants was how I would approach and adapt my communication with teachers, parents/caregivers and students. I used ‘culturally sensitive’ (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p. 114) verbal and body language, as well as expression which was jargon-free and age-appropriate. For example, instead of using the term ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’, I used lay terminology such as ‘cyberbullying’, ‘sexting’, and ‘nudes’. When

appropriate, these terms were also replaced in conversation with the more legalistic terms ‘image-based abuse’ or ‘harmful digital communications’.

Alderson and Morrow (2011) emphasise that it is the researcher’s responsibility to interrogate the ethics, necessity and value of research with young people. In order to maintain an ethical approach, it was critical that I protect participants by actively minimising potential distress (addressing their welfare) whilst also creating a safe, non-triggering, dialogical space for candid discussion (preserving their rights), which was central to this praxis. The rationale underpinning the project was to bring to light subtle and complex ontologies in the hope that the participants who were directly involved in the study could also influence the cultures of their schools. I was mindful that, once the study had ended, the findings may not have the beneficial influence I hoped to achieve. Therefore, it is critical to weigh up the costs and the benefits to children/youth participating in such research. In the case of my research, I reasoned that the involvement of young people in the participatory design of the study would express directly that their opinions are valued. Furthermore, students confirmed to me in Stage One, consultation and pilot, and Stage Three, co-construction of thematic workshops, that the lack of adult consultation with young people about socio-digital realities was one of the biggest motivating factors that drove them to participate in the project. My expectations of the combined potential benefits to the school and to the students themselves led me to surmise that the rationale of the study had value.

I was mindful that some young people might, at the time of the study, be actively participating in sensitive image-sharing practices that breached the communication principles of the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015. The strategy that I used to dissuade self-incrimination was to encourage young people to discuss general, overarching peer practices and peer cultures rather than describe their own activities in this area.

4.7.2 Cultural safety

Colonisation has oppressively constructed overt and covert deficit discourses of falsely negative sexualised narratives which stereotype Indigenous peoples as ‘at risk’ (Le Grice & Braun, 2018). Recent research shows that rangatahi Māori and other young people of colour (more markedly, girls) report having experienced distressing experiences of online hate and harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand (ActionStation, 2019). Although, as I have stated, this project did not set out with a focus on researching rangatahi Māori, an intersectional lens informed my praxis.¹⁰ My actions undertaken with young people of various backgrounds were informed by Te Tiriti and Māori culture. Out of respect, I endeavoured to be ethically cognisant of the key principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – protection, participation and partnership – throughout the research process. The shared approach of this research valued the equal distribution of power within the research process. It also allowed the space for all young people including rangatahi Māori to safely explore their own cultural and gender narratives. I am cognisant as a researcher and within this project of the importance of understanding the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and how these have affected Māori rangatahi from a socio-political perspective. Prior to Stage One, I consulted with a University of Auckland Māori advisor for cultural guidance to ensure cultural concepts were upheld and safeguarded engagement with rangatahi Māori in education settings. Following on from this consultation, I was able to reflect on how I could honour the rangatahi Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi within a co-design project.

¹⁰ Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document signed by the Māori Chiefs and the British Crown in 1840 which set out to establish partnership and shape relations between the Crown and Māori. The integrity of the document is contested due to the British interpretation, which acted to diminish the sovereignty of Māori tangata whenua. <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/>

I put to practice the suggestions put forward by the University of Auckland cultural advisor. At Deakin School, this included participating in the daily school karakia,¹¹ which opened and closed each school day. It was also agreed with the institutional gatekeepers and young people that it was culturally appropriate for me to give them a koha for their participation¹². Interestingly, some viewpoints suggest that remuneration can impede the right of the participants' free choice to withdraw without explanation (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). However, in the cultural context of Aotearoa, giving koha as a means of gracing reciprocity is a valued and accepted custom. Furthermore, I wanted to personally demonstrate my appreciation of the valuable knowledge that the young people shared and the personal time they sacrificed to participate in the study. Each young person received a double movie pass, which was funded through a Netsafe grant. The double movie pass was not contingent on their participating in the study through to the end; as not to impede their right to withdraw, they would still receive the double pass if they chose to leave.

4.7.3 Sensitive research and harm minimisation with young people

Whether a researcher can access young people and their inherent knowledge is largely dependent upon the values of school principal(s) and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the young people. Whilst Raby confirms that 'young people are the experts and remain gatekeepers of their own cultures' (2007, p. 43), it is adult gatekeepers who possess the power and influence to permit research access to young people (Guba & Lincoln, 1986). Indeed, Allen (2005b, 2007) emphasises the exertion of institutionalised operational power by adults to govern, regulate and control the sexuality of young people. As such, institutionalised power can work to prevent the involvement of young people in research viewed as 'sensitive', particularly

¹¹ In Māori cultural custom, a karakia is a shared blessing or prayer used in any setting. <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

¹² In Māori cultural custom, a koha is a gifted contribution/donation. <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

should any findings result in damage to the school's reputation. For instance, one school that showed initial interest in having its students participate later withdrew, due to a non-disclosed incident which was explained to me in loose terms as being related to the topic; because the study was deemed likely to provoke anxiety in the community, the research was viewed as too risky. This withdrawal from the study signified the potential concerns of gatekeepers, including what the consequences for students, parents, community and the school would be, should there have been any unexpected sensitive outcomes from the research. Gatekeepers take on a 'protectionist stance' as a consequence of managing 'risky youth' discourses of late modernity (Leonard, 2007, p. 137). Understandably, these discourses govern the cost-benefit analysis by the gatekeepers of the involvement of young people in research. Given the entrenched hierarchal power structures within conventional Westernised education and families, it is realistic to accept that, at the early stage in the process of negotiating access to sites and participants, young people might be considered voiceless non-actors (Leonard, 2007). At that early stage, I attended pre-research meetings with principals and pastoral staff, rather than the young people themselves, and sought to appease any adult/gatekeeper concerns by explaining the research and my background as a practitioner.

As I have stated, the study did not expect young people to divulge highly personal information or experiences in which they had been traumatised, nor to unknowingly implicate themselves in criminal behaviour. To protect the participants, I limited the discussion to only cyberbullying and the sexting narratives presented in the digital vignettes (which featured image-based abuse). The vignette resources were supplied to the gatekeepers prior to the study to inform their decision, on behalf of the young people and the schools themselves, to participate in the study. The participants were encouraged to discuss cyberbullying/image-based abuse through a proxy account referring to the experiences of people they knew rather than any personalised sensitive information. I then trusted in their responses as 'informant protagonists' (Lolichen,

2006, p. 25) to lead, inform and expand the discussion. That said, based on my contact with other young people prior to undertaking the study, I considered it likely that some participants might disclose sensitive information, and in these instances I was prepared to redirect these conversations so that neither safety nor self-incrimination were compromised.

To develop a rapport and reduce power differentials with the participants, I shared some personal details: at each initial group session, I had a one-slide presentation that introduced my family, my much-loved miniature schnauzer and my involvement in recreation activities. Having told the participants a bit about myself, I could transition to explain and discuss issues around confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information. I responded to participant questions, such as:

Madison (14):	If I take part, can I swear?
Emma:	Yes, you can swear. You don't have to swear – the group is a space to talk freely, how you would usually chat with friends, so use words in the conversations that feel natural for you to use.

Drawing on my previous expertise, I referenced the three H's when setting the scene for the participants: harm to self, harm to other(s) and harm from other(s). This provided an explicit frame to explain circumstances in which I would be duty bound to share information shared by participants with the gatekeepers. For any issues that were not discussed in the project but may have left the participants feeling as though they wanted to explore extra support, I provided and talked through a number of leaflets and websites such as Netsafe, Rainbow Youth, Barnardos What's Up, Just the Facts, Flo Talanoa, Waka Horuha, Shakti Youth and Youthline¹³. Across all school sites, I met with the assigned counsellors, and we agreed on the

¹³ See Appendix S

provision of an open-door session time with the counsellor which would follow each friendship group session, should any young person require support. This meant that if any caretaking was required in response to a session, a counsellor would be immediately available. In every session, I structured time towards the end to debrief. I then closed each group by discussing weekend plans and involvement in recreation activities. These strategies were also put in place for the two students who had opted to participate through one-to-one interviews.

4.8 Introducing the schools and the demographics of the participants

The pseudomised research sites, Acacia School, Birch School, Cedar School, and Deakin School, are located in the metropolitan city of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. This city, with its rapidly expanding population of approximately 1.7 million people, is the most populated in Aotearoa New Zealand. Its boundaries span approximately 600 kilometres and comprise rural, semi-rural and urbanised areas. The participating schools were in densely populated urban areas and, as I have highlighted, it is important to contextualise that Tāmaki Makaurau, which is the Indigenous name for Auckland, has a rapidly expanding ethnic population. For example, the fastest-growing ethnic group of people of Asian descent makes up 28.2% of the population. People from Pacific Island nations make up 16% and tangata whenua Māori, the ancestral custodians of Tāmaki Makaurau and Aotearoa, comprise 13% of the population of the metropolitan area. Across Tāmaki Makaurau, there are 19 Māori iwi (tribes) recognised by Auckland Council. The largest ethnic group in the city by far are Pākehā¹⁴, who represent 53.5% of the population. One-third of all the children and young people in Aotearoa reside in Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau (Stats NZ 2018; Research and Evaluation Unit, n.d.)

¹⁴ In te reo Māori, Pākehā can mean ‘New Zealand European’ or ‘foreigner’. See <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

In the next section, I provide a brief context of each school. This information is not provided for comparative purposes, but to provide the reader with the local context of the young people in the study. For reference, while I tried to broaden the study by recruiting schools from the South Island and involving a wider range of decile measures¹⁵ schools from these locations did not take up the invitation. Table 2, below, provides demographic information about the research participants (using pseudonyms chosen by each young person) that reflects the diversity of the city.

¹⁵ Before January 2023 funding for schools was allocated on a decile socioeconomic measure of the families living within the area. This system has since been replaced with the Equity Index Assessment.

Table 2: Participant demographics

n=	Name	Age	School	Ethnicity	Gender	n=	Name	Age	School	Ethnicity	Gender
1	Arabella	14	Acacia	German	F	28	Eruera	14	Birch	NZ/Māori, Samoan	M
2	Ariana	14	Acacia	Spanish New Zealand	F	29	George	14	Birch	NZE	M
3	Martha	14	Acacia	English	F	30	Kaden	14	Birch	American/Māori	M
4	Piper	14	Acacia	New Zealand European (NZE)	F	31	Kauri	14	Birch	NZ/Māori/Malay	M
5	Ashley	13	Acacia	NZE	F	32	Simon	14	Birch	NZE	M
6	Livvy	13	Acacia	NZE	F	33	Jordan	15	Cedar	NZE	M
7	Talia	13	Acacia	Māori/Scottish	F	34	Seth	17	Cedar	South African	M
8	Andrew	14	Acacia	European	M	35	Tama	13	Cedar	Māori Cook Island	M
9	Elijah	14	Acacia	n/d (no data)	M	36	Alex	13	Cedar	NZE	F
10	Jacob	15	Acacia	Asian	M	37	Leigh	13	Cedar	NZE Māori	n/d
11	Robert	15	Acacia	NZE	M	38	Stevie	13	Cedar	NZE	NB
12	Kyle	16	Acacia	European	M	39	Ziggy	13	Cedar	NZE	NB
13	Kelly	14	Acacia	n/d -no data	n/d	40	Jay	14	Cedar	Chinese	M
14	Brianna	14	Birch	Russian	F	41	Nishal	14	Cedar	n/d	M
15	Lauren	14	Birch	n/d	F	42	Vinnie	14	Cedar	Indian/Asian	M
16	Millie	14	Birch	Russian/German NZ	F	43	Lakshmi	14	Cedar	Indian	F
17	Trudy	14	Birch	N/Z Chinese	F	44	Lata	14	Cedar	Indian	F
18	Amber	14	Birch	NZE	F	45	Preeti	n/d	Cedar	n/d	F
19	Jorja	14	Birch	NZE	F	46	Sudha	14	Cedar	Indian	F
20	Morgan	14	Birch	Cook Island/NZ	F	47	Bailey	14	Deakin	n/d	F
21	Paige	14	Birch	NZ	F	48	Desiree	14	Deakin	n/d	F
22	Zadie	14	Birch	NZ	F	49	Junior	14	Deakin	n/d	M

n=	Name	Age	School	Ethnicity	Gender	n=	Name	Age	School	Ethnicity	Gender
23	Brandon	14	Birch	NZE	M	50	Levi	14	Deakin	n/d	M
24	Kane	14	Birch	Chinese	M	51	Madison	14	Deakin	n/d	F
25	Owen	14	Birch	NZE	M	52	Wade	14	Deakin	n/d	M
26	Sam	14	Birch	Russian NZ	M	53	Vidal	14	Deakin	n/d	M
27	Sean	14	Birch	NZE	M	54	Tyla	14	Deakin	n/d	F

4.8.1 Stage One – Deakin School

Deakin School was chosen to fill a key gap in the literature. So much of the existing knowledge about cyberbullying and sexting has been produced through research involving young people in mainstream education. In my previous roles, I had often worked with young people who were outside of mainstream education; when these young people were involved in research, they were often studied and essentialised from a deficit perspective. Indeed, my literature review confirmed this gap. Deakin School is an Alternative Education Provider which, at the time of the study, operated under the legislative framework of the Education Act 1989¹⁶ as a small centre with approximately 15 young people on roll at any one time. One principal, one educator and an on-site counsellor taught and supported the students, who could be attending for a range of reasons which have prevented them from being taught in mainstream education, including behavioural difficulties, trauma, school anxiety and learning challenges. A young person's inclusion in alternative education may be short term or long term, depending on their individual circumstances. As I illustrated in Chapter Two, young people who are educated outside of a mainstream setting are often perceived by default as difficult or harder to engage. Due to such deficit assumptions, these students are typically excluded by the research community from participation in technological research (Cranmer, 2010, 2013). Ironically, however, these are students who might be considered more socially vulnerable in offline fields than their mainstream-schooled counterparts. Vulnerability is viewed as a factor that exacerbates integrated offline–online risk (Haddon & Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone 2015). To the best of my knowledge, at the time of the study, there was no digital harm and safety research in Aotearoa working with these groups of young people.

¹⁶ This Act has since been replaced with the Education and Training Act 2020.

Based on the scope of the aims and objectives, co-designing and piloting the study with a group of young people outside of traditional educational settings was expected to provide unique insights into the shaping of the study. Following discussion with my supervisors, a purposive self-selected convenience sample (Braun & Clarke, 2013) of four to six students as the consultation group for co-design was deemed sufficient. Twelve months before my PhD student enrolment, I had worked closely with Deakin School as a violence prevention educator. I contacted the principal of this unit as the initial gatekeeper with whom to negotiate access. He showed considerable interest in the project and, following a meeting and on provision of a successful ethics application, the principal agreed that the school could be involved, given the parents and students demonstrated their willingness to consent/assent. As part of the University of Auckland ethics process (see Table 1), I completed the ethics paperwork and created engaging information posters. As I highlighted in a previous section on cultural protocols, the principal suggested I participate in the daily whakawhanaungatanga¹⁷ by sharing my social background and history and joining the group in a karakia,¹⁸ which is a shared prayer made to open up a space/meeting/discussion. At that time, I held an informal question and answer session with the students before we shared the kai (food) I had brought with me.

The model of participatory research put forward by Mallan et al. (2010) advocates for researcher transparency and commitment to a partnership characterised by respectfulness and receptivity to school cultures. I sought to work across all four sites within the schedules and activities of the school and to minimise any potential disruption to the school setting as a result

¹⁷ Whakawhanaungatanga is a relational practice that aims to establish authentic meaningful connections between people.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

¹⁸ Karakia can be religious and non-religious, according to the purpose and/or the setting of a given meeting.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

of the research activities. Attending to all these subtleties was intended to build trust, so that the young people in the study would feel supported, respected and valued. Whilst it remains unlikely that trust can ever be fully realised with subaltern groups, it was crucial for me to initiate a trusting relationship with the participants by developing a rapport which could be built on. I hoped that my pre-project occasion to practice whakawhanaungatanga and respond to student questions outside the formalities of the project would reduce the power differentials associated with my outsider adult status.

During this pre-project gathering, I responded openly and transparently to questions about my background and about what had underpinned my desire to select the topic of cyberbullying and sexting. While none of the students knew me from my previous work at the centre, they were aware of my previous work roles and of course could perceive my adult status. I was uncertain that I would be able to overcome their socialised ideas about the hierarchal status of adults by simply introducing myself and letting them ask questions, but I hoped that my transparency might go some way toward reducing the power dynamics. We discussed the project purpose and the research design. Eight students aged between 13 and 15 showed interest in the project and, as I had not worked with any of these students in any previous capacity, there were limited concerns about role conflict.

4.8.2 Consulting with the students at Deakin

For the first structured research session, I returned to Deakin and consulted with the young people about the ideas and aims I had for the research design. I asked what the young people thought I should change. I then returned and conducted pilot focus groups with three mixed-sex focus groups concentrating on designing the study for Stage Two. During these pilot focus groups, the design of the research was amended according to the participant's feedback. The students in the pilot identified that, for Stage Two, dividing participants into single-sex

friendship groups was more likely to produce uninhibited data, owing to shared friendship history and familiarity among participants. This suggestion affirms findings by Braun and Clarke (2013). These pilot focus group participants were also in favour of using the media clips I had presented to them to illustrate cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting. As a result, I repeated this stimulus for Stage Two.



Figure 2: Speech bubble questions used to guide friendship group discussions

I gave the project the hashtag name #useyourvoice. In doing this, I hoped to authentically demonstrate to the participants that the project was contemporary and accepting of the evolving construct of youth language. The project acknowledged that youth had marginalized voices throughout society, including within research processes. In trying to express this within the project name, I hoped

that #useyourvoice would encourage and support the participants to develop a non-verbal rapport which would facilitate the building of trust as the research process progressed. Regardless of approach, the reality and validation of trust between the (dominant) researcher and the (marginalised) participant(s) are often not completely achievable, especially in the context of sensitive participatory processes (Couch et al., 2014). Indeed, whilst trust cannot be truly measured or validated, by embedding and engaging feminist praxis principles, I aimed to continually and consistently demonstrate trust and use culturally appropriate terminology as an ongoing commitment to the process (Leavy & Harris, 2019).

Following the design of the research activities, as informed by the participants in the focus groups, interactive workshops with single-sex friendship groups were held. At the beginning of each session, we watched a short educational media clip that featured a vignette of technology-facilitated sexual violence that was framed as cyberbullying and/or sexting. We then discussed the context. The young people shared their perceptions of how real they considered the educational media clips to be and whether the education they received on the subject of each video was relevant to their experiences.¹⁹ As I go on to discuss, the findings generated by the pilot and the main study on the subject of the requesting and sharing of non-consensual sexualised imagery and normalised unwanted dick pics indicates that most such activities were considered under the umbrella terminology of ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘nudes’.

Unfortunately, in 2019 Deakin School ceased operations. Therefore it was not possible to revisit educators or students who attended Deakin to show them the poster illustration of their themes that was generated from their contribution (shown at the end of this section).

¹⁹ I highlight the ways in which these resources are problematic in Chapters Five and Seven. For a description of the resources, see Appendix G.

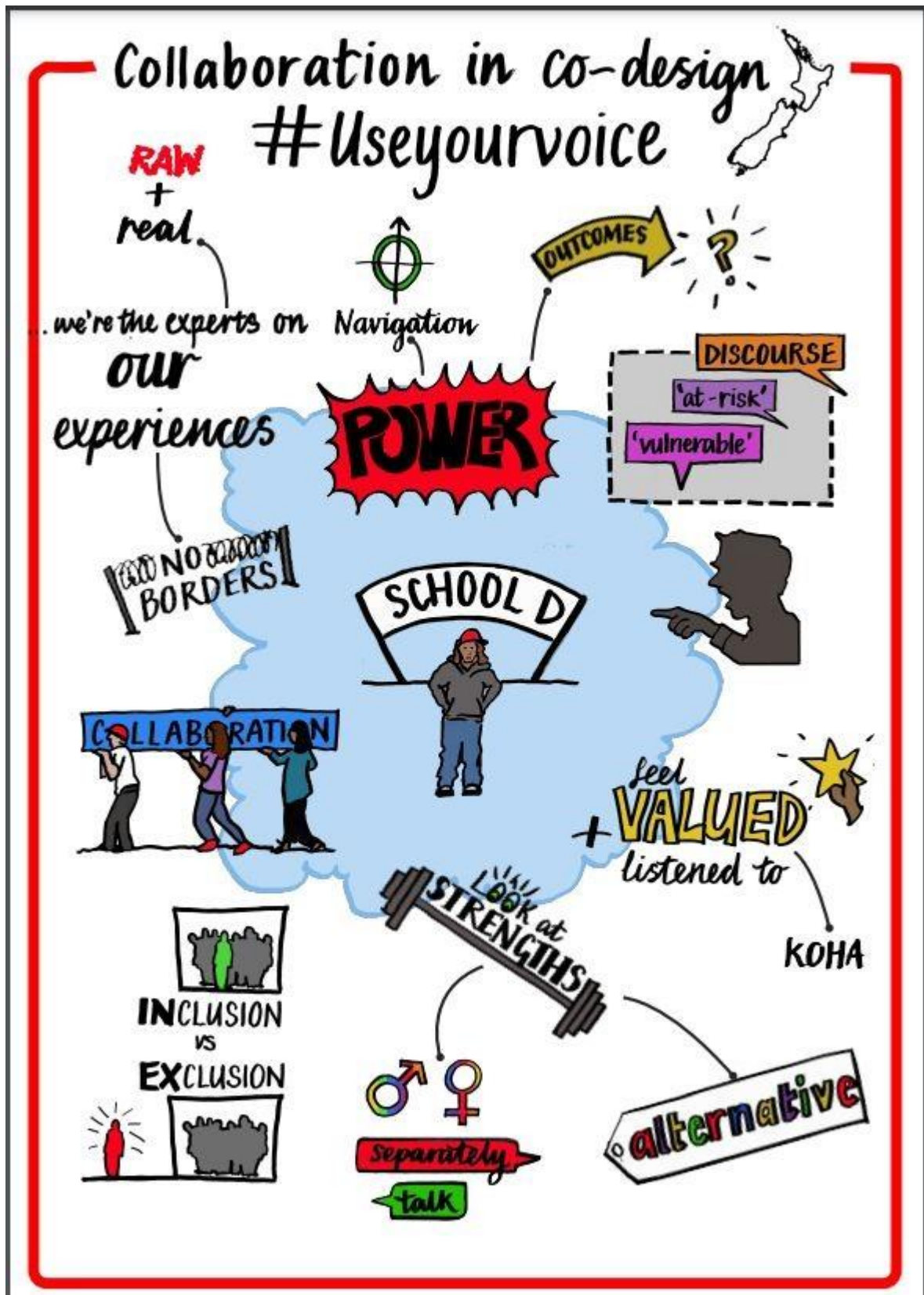


Figure 3: Deakin School thematic poster

4.8.3 Stage Two – Acacia, Birch, Cedar Schools

Co-educational schools have their own individual cultures but may share cultural commonalities due to the mixed population. For this project, the interactions that boys, girls and gender diverse students have with each other, internal and external to the school setting, were key to exploring their physical and digital interactions. This justified my decision to approach co-educational settings as research sites. Working with a diverse population would contribute to my understanding of the ‘pluralities of gender’ (Renold, 2005, p. 3) and the ways in which, according to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, gender is embodied in practices that reveal the subtle influences and pressure on young people to perform and conform to cultural gender scripts (Powell, 2008) across offline–online environments, and how these practices adapt outside of the school setting.

The New Zealand decile system²⁰ was a funding criterion used during the time of this study that allocated funds according to the socioeconomic status of the families living within the surrounding area of the school. Ideally, I hoped to negotiate access to a sample of willing students aged 13 to 16 from one mid/low decile school and one mid/high decile school. I anticipated that identifying potential schools according to their decile ranking would provide access to a wide range of diverse backgrounds, cultures, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic status that would allow me to explore similarities and/or differences in experiences of cyberbullying/sexting across different groupings of young people.

To negotiate access, 15 schools were contacted by written letter and email.²¹ I had no previous relationship with these schools and, as a result, I anticipated that schools could take an objective perspective to my proposed research. Initially, four schools wanted to engage with the project.

²⁰See Footnote 15

²¹ See Appendix H.

However, two of these schools later withdrew. Unfortunately, one of them had received some adverse media publicity regarding an unrelated issue; as such, undertaking a sensitive research project was considered too risky. The second school expressed time and resource constraints. The remaining two schools interested in the project (prior to the third school agreeing to be involved) had decile 10 status, indicating that, proportionally, not many of their students come from low-socioeconomic communities. Conducting research in two schools with the same socioeconomic context was workable but not ideal because I had hoped to involve a multiplicity of students from divergent backgrounds.

As previously mentioned, Deakin students had advised that participants work in friendship groups as a method for data collection. As a result, with the steering of the gatekeepers, I planned to initially gather a purposive sample of approximately 40 participants, young people between the ages of 13 and 16, which I anticipated would snowball to friendship pyramiding (Braun & Clarke, 2013). To manage the study thoroughly and efficiently, I had calculated that the sample number would be sufficiently informative and able to supply authentic and trustworthy data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) whilst being a manageable quantity which matched my ability, the timing of the study and any funding constraints. I was aware that this number was on the high side for a qualitative project, however, because there are such wide-ranging perceptions of the stand-alone terms ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘sexting’, and the purpose of the project was to deconstruct the meaning of these terms, a higher sample number was needed to provide enough meaningful data across a range of perspectives. Secondly, this number accounted for the inability of some participants to attend due to unexpected school and family commitments.

Once the first two schools had signed up for the project, a third school expressed strong interest. I was apprehensive about my capacity to manage an additional school, as doing so could make a larger sample size difficult to manage. Moreover, the coordination of planning around three

schools and school terms with final stage inclusion of thematic review would extend the timing of the project by approximately three months and would require me to apply for further funding. (This was successful.) However, the third school had decile 6 status, and, as previously noted, the two schools I had initially recruited were both decile 10 schools. Whilst these schools both had diverse ethnic populations, I decided it would be of value to the study to include a school with a different decile rating. Weighing up my concerns and following discussion with my supervisors, it was determined that the value of recruiting the third school, which was situated in a multicultural area, would enhance the analysis, as the combined representation of the three schools would yield much richer knowledge. Fortunately, because I had overestimated the sample size, this accounted for a number of participants who showed initial interest but then dropped out or forgot to attend. The overall Stage Two sample number across the three research sites ultimately amounted to a manageable 46 students.

Once I had formal access to the schools, I used a range of recruitment methods. Acacia School asked me to talk about the project at informal community student sessions. I also met with the Head of Counselling at Acacia, Sarah (pseudonym), who facilitated a weekly LGBTQTI+ rainbow group. She asked that I attend a session to discuss the project. Sarah explained that some students had not publicly disclosed their sexuality, so this information session was not openly advertised through school notices. Instead, students were invited discreetly by Sarah. Following both recruitment pathways, students opted into the project by contacting the gatekeeper.

At Birch School, the gatekeeper chose to discuss the project in a whole school assembly. Students who expressed interest put their names forward, and this snowballed into friendship groups as arranged by the gatekeeper. I conducted a lunchtime information session with groups of students, and then the students decided whether they wanted to return for the friendship

groups. I also met with the head of pastoral care, so that the student support service staff could talk with students about the project.

At Cedar School, the principal delegated the gatekeeper duties to the Head of Counselling. I then met with the pastoral team to discuss the project. This meeting was followed by my attendance at and recruitment presentations in year group assemblies, where I encouraged friendship groups to request further information from the Head of Counselling.²² Across all schools, recruitment posters were displayed.

4.8.4 Acacia School

Acacia is a co-educational state secondary school in a rapidly growing suburb of Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau. Acacia has decile ten status, caters for years 9 to 13 students and has smaller than average roll numbers. The demographic composition of the school is 47% European/Pākehā, 17% Asian, 13% Māori, 10% other European, 9% other ethnic groups and 4% Pasifika. The leadership at Acacia prides themselves on positioning the ethos of the school as progressive and inclusive. Because Acacia champions reduced hierarchical teacher-student relations and actively embeds student voice in co-construct pedagogy, the school was particularly interested in the co-construct methodology of the #useyourvoice project. Acacia also has an LGBTQTI+ peer support group that is led by the pastoral team.

4.8.5 Birch School

Birch is a co-educational decile ten state school that draws its students from a high socio-economic suburb of predominantly European residents. The demographic composition is European/Pākehā 57%, Chinese, 11%, other Asian 13%, Māori 7%, African 6%, Other 3% .

²² See Appendix I and J.

The school encompasses years 9 to 13 and its students have achieved academic performance higher than the national average. While there was a strong pastoral support team at the school, I was unaware of any specific LGBTQTI+ support groups.

4.8.6 Cedar School

Cedar is a decile six co-educational school teaching years 9 to 13 in a well-established, predominantly Asian community. Cedar has a roll population which amounts to Indian, 27%, Pākehā, 21%, other ethnic groups, 15%, Pacifica, 13%, Chinese, 12%. Māori students make up 8% and Southeast Asian students 4% of the population. There is well-established pastoral support with LGBTQTI+ peer support groups.

4.9 Data collection and analysis

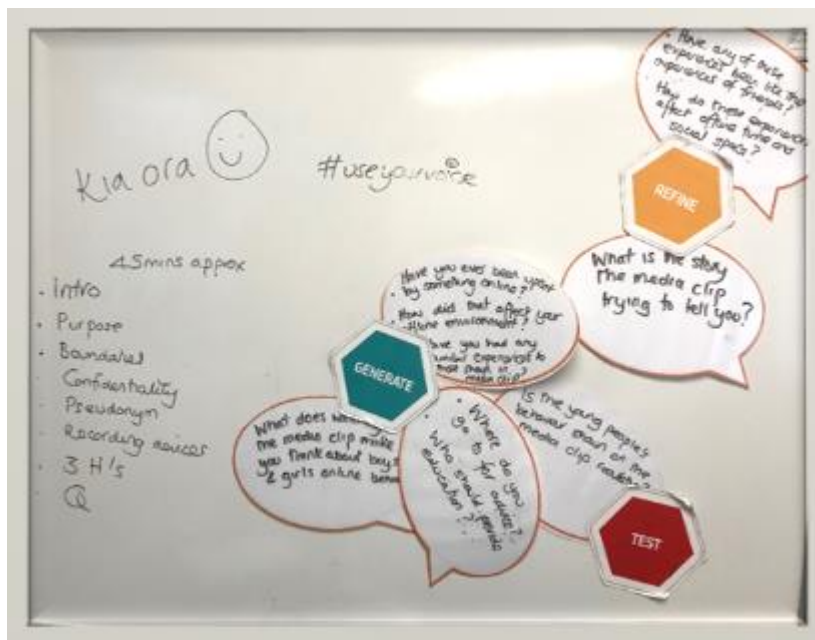


Figure 4: Speech bubbles session outline for students

I opted to collect data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews, and both methods generated rich data. Two students from an LGBTQTI+ group opted to participate in semi-structured interviews as an alternative to a friendship group. For these students,

this may have been a safer setting to discuss their opinions, and these sessions produced more narrative accounts of the data. The majority of the data came out of the sessions with the friendship groups, organised per the suggestion of the Deakin School students in Stage One. I had opted for focus groups because such groups can reveal insights through consensus and

disagreement. Individual opinions contained within collective conversations can also be accessed in the safety of the group setting. (Barbour, 2007; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). A Bourdiesian analysis of focus groups is provided by Callaghan (2005) to illustrate how collective and individual agency can all be explored through a focus group setting to elicit ‘shared knowledges which embodies the habitus of the wider community’ (6.11). The friendship groups were loaded with interactive dialogue, with moments of shifting conflict and solidarity. When the physical environment of the setting for the focus group is informal, non-threatening and comfortable, focus groups can be an ideal method for the social study of young people, allowing the researcher to capture natural and flowing conversations between friends. Frith (2000) advocates for exploratory research and the use of focus groups as suitable strategy and method to ‘learn the language and vocabulary’ and collect ‘detailed knowledge’ from the subjects (p. 277). Conducting friendship-based focus groups in this study both enabled the reflexive learning and understanding of the language young people use colloquially to describe their digital cultures and prioritised the views of young people (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

Some academics have raised questions about whether focus groups are suitable for the discussion of sensitive topics, especially among ‘hard-to-reach’ groups. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) advise against the use of focus groups for sensitive subjects, whereas Barbour (2007) highlights to the subjectivity of any assessment of the suitability of this method for a particular subject, based on the researcher, group and setting. Had I been a researcher with limited experience of young people and of the social challenges and stigmas they encounter, the use of focus groups might not have been appropriate for my exploration of sensitive subjects with the participants. However, given my previous experience as a practitioner and my position, as outlined in the ethical process, I considered myself competent to discuss and steer, if necessary, potentially sensitive issues.

In a focus group or peer group interview environment, it is challenging to maintain confidentiality between participants. In a school setting, peer friendship group participants are known to each other and therefore the confidentiality of their identity cannot be guaranteed as stated in the assent form that they had signed. To address this, I referred back to the assent form they had signed, and I explained the importance of confidentiality in youth-friendly language both at the beginning and at the end of each session.

The focus groups, interviews and thematic workshops were all audio recorded. Time constraints led to the audio being sent to an approved external transcriber, who signed a University of Auckland confidentiality agreement. The transcripts from the focus groups and interviews were returned and uploaded to NVivo²³ with pseudonym codes, in preparation for primary analysis for the thematic review workshops with the students and for secondary analysis for my thesis write-up. The interpretation and representation of the transcript as text was part of a reflexive process.

As discussed in the opening section of Chapter One about positionality, in the thematic workshops, I endeavoured to weave together my outsider perspective with my insider perspective as well as the perspectives provided by the student expert group (Green et al., 1997). As referenced in my positionality in Chapter One, my previously outlined sensibilities, values and assumptions also flowed into this process, and I was mindful of how these influenced my interpretation of the transcript for the coding process. Due to the time constraints between the thematic workshops, the first analysis was not a deep dive but more an inductive semantic pre-coding process (Saldana, 2016) in which I assessed the data for descriptive codable moments which might eventuate at a later date as potentially latent themes. For this

²³ NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software programme.

stage, I combined the active reading and rereading of the transcripts with active listening and relistening to the audios and mind-mapped the pre-codes that were generated in the data. To scope and construct potential codes, I code charted as suggested by Saldana (2016). I considered major reoccurring patterns, similarities and differences in youth linguistic markers. I related these to social conditions, the interaction between the students and the strategies and social practices they were using to deal with cyberbullying and sexting. The code chart formed the basis of visual illustration posters which were produced for each school by a visual illustrator to be discussed with the student expert reference group in the thematic workshops. The posters are coded as School A = Acacia (Figure 5), School B = Birch (Figure 6), School C = Cedar (Figure 7).

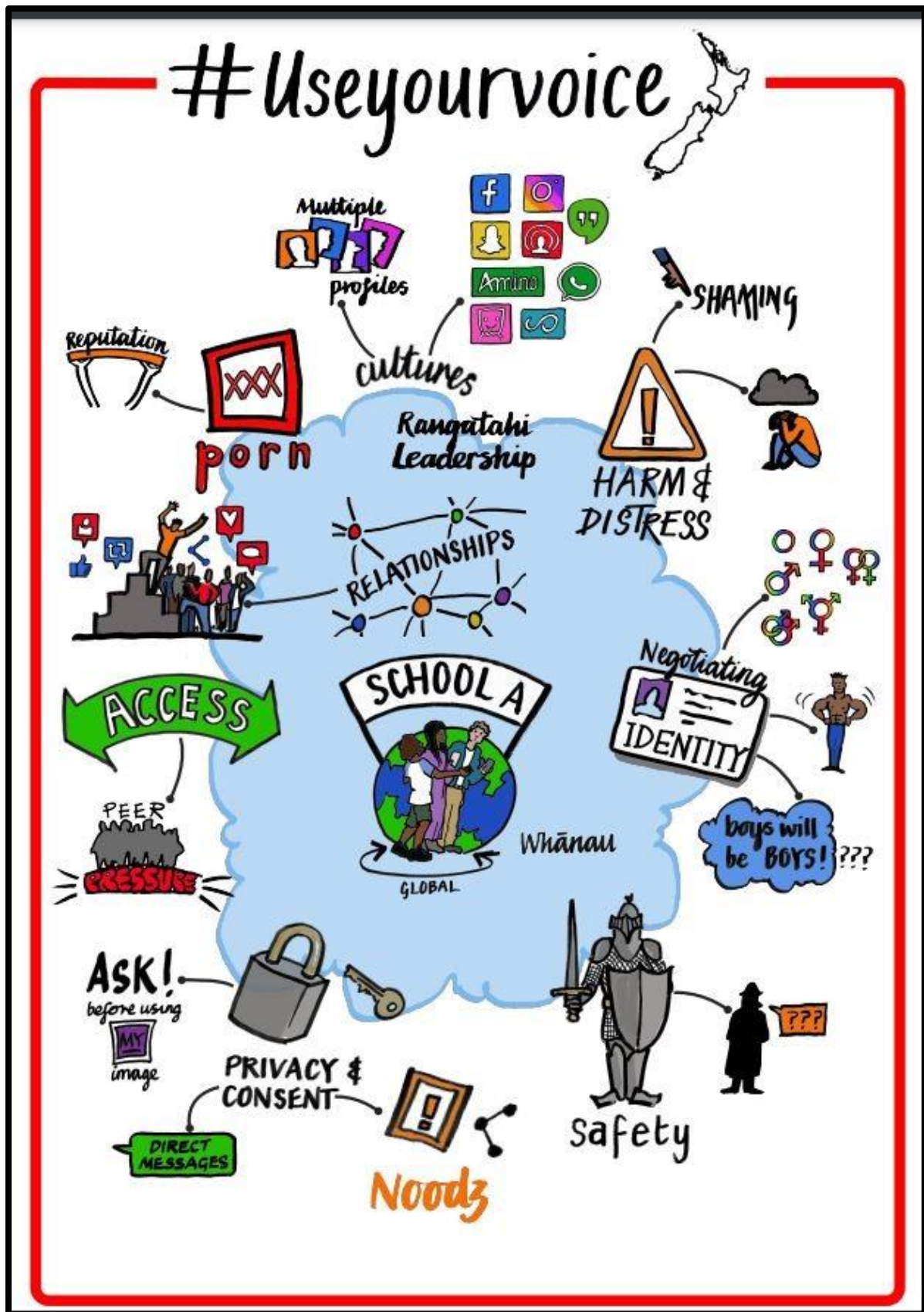


Figure 5: Acacia School thematic poster

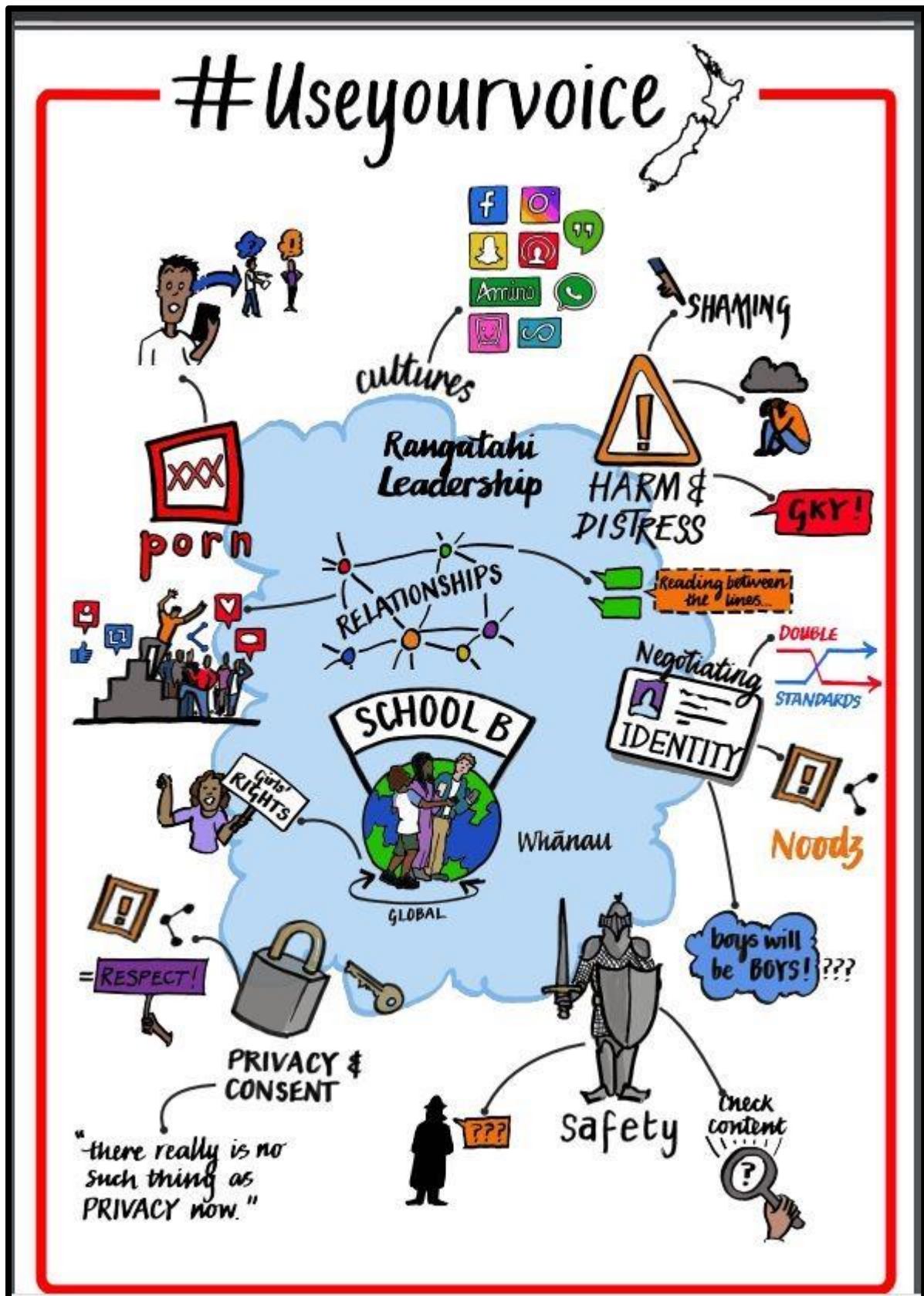


Figure 6: Birch School thematic poster

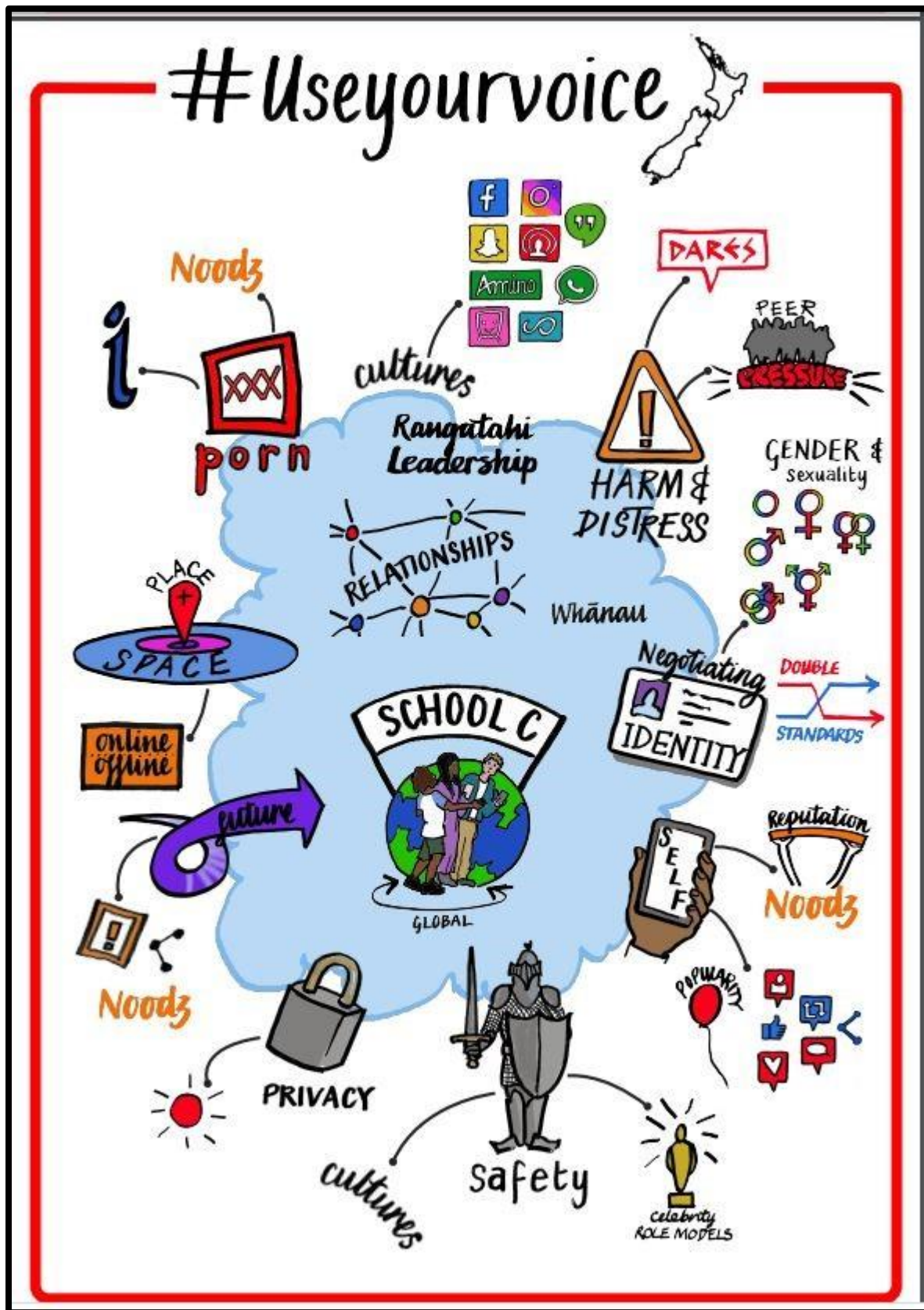


Figure 7: Cedar School thematic poster

Once completed, all the posters were taken to Acacia, Birch and Cedar Schools. The students reported back on my analytical codes, noticing, for example, where I had missed a potential code or theme. This shared process of coding fits with Lincoln & Guba's (1986) description of and advocacy for catalytic and tactical authentication. Some of the collaborative coding processes appeared to initiate deep reflection for the future and the involvement young people may have in social change (Saldana, 2016). Indeed, as Braun & Clarke (2019) reflect and quotes from the fieldwork illustrate, there are immense possibilities in feminist research to connect to the real world and for the researcher to use their own privilege to support participants to bring their stories to light.

Millie (14): It [seeing the visual illustration posters from other schools] has made us see we are not alone, and that there are other communities coming together to fight this stuff.

Preeti (14): I have always had this perspective, but I feel like it has strengthened more.

Andrew (14): Getting the results, it has given me an incentive to be part of research more.

Following on from the Stage Three initial analysis of the student review groups and guided by reflexive thematic analysis, I revisited the data on NVivo and engaged with the ideas presented on a deeper level. For this stage of analysis, the core of my ontological sensibilities stemmed from a relativist position whereby 'reality depends on the ways we come to know it'. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 26). The data analysis was informed by a reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019) underpinned by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Informing my approach I was critical of cyberbullying and sexting epistemology and informed by curiosity and a willingness to explore and adventure with the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Steered by the research aims, units of data were identified and categorised according first to semantic followed by latent codes, a coding process which

can overlap (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Initial semantic codes were based on the words that young people used to describe sexting and cyberbullying. For example, the code (or node) verbalised as ‘sexting and cyberbullying are the same’. These semantic codes invoked the latent codes, with the latent codes I applied my theoretical conceptualisation, for instance, of the definition of ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’. The implicit meaning of the initial semantic code was analysed alongside the latent code and this process generated the themes. There is some disagreement in the qualitative field regarding the use of computer-assisted analytic memos, nodes and sub-coding, but given the quantity of data, I employed such technology as a pragmatic option. In addition to listening to and reading what had been said, I paid attention to what had been omitted or hinted at as unspeakable. This was critical, as some subjects were not explicitly stated, such as experiences of cyberflashing and receiving unwanted dick pics, experiences that emerged through allusion and subsequently generated the central theme of Chapter Six.

4.9.1 Data protection

All recordings were stored on a password-protected device, uploaded to a computer and stored in a password-protected folder. The transcripts generated from the recordings were stored in a password-protected folder at the University of Auckland. On NVivo, participants’ names were assigned pseudonyms and kept in a separate file. Personal data remains stored in accordance with the Human Participants Ethics Committee of the University of Auckland.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the rationale underpinning my preference for using a qualitative feminist lens for my research. This approach is valued for producing rich data. I explained my three-stage methodological approach for participatory research *with* young people that included young people in the design consultation and the co-construction of themes. To enrich these

perspectives, the research design included the voice of young people outside of mainstream school spaces, whose voices are often excluded from research processes. I argued that feminist praxis provides the scope for more creative and novel ways to engage young people in research and can reveal a phenomenon in much greater depth than numbers can, whilst also being a catalyst for consciousness-raising among young people (Clarke & Braun, 2013). After having presented the rationale underpinning the qualitative and ethical paradigm, I described the pragmatics of this project and presented demographic and cultural information about each school.

This chapter presented the posters designed to visually illustrate the themes that emerged from initial focus group sessions in each school. The first poster figure 3 illustrates the Stage 1 themes raised by young people in alternative education (Deakin School) with regard to being collaborated with on the research design process. The following three posters, figures 5,6 and 7 depicted the themes raised across Acacia, Birch, and Cedar Schools with regard to the topics of sexting and cyberbullying. These illustrations were central to the data analysis and the co-constructive review with the rangatahi in a process that encouraged young people to explore their socio-digital ontologies. This exploration, combined with my adherence to engaging in a co-constructive process with young people, set the context for presentation and analysis of the emergent data themes in the following three chapters.

5 Chapter Five – Nudes in networked economies: ‘Our bodies are worth more than an iPhone charger to be traded’

5.1 Introduction

In my discussions with the participants, I was interested in exploring their understandings of cyberbullying and sexting, to examine how their interpretations lined up with the definition of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Conversations revealed the extent to which their practices, perceptions and normalisations are distanced from sexism and sexualised gendered harassment. Findings identified ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘sexting’ to be terminological barriers that worked to reduce young people’s understanding of consenting and non-consenting practices in digital sexual cultures. Significantly, in addition, conversations with the participants also showed the ways in which their conceptualisations were guided by the normalising influences of sexist social media cultures.

For context, at the time of this study, resources on the topics of cyberbullying and sexting for young people were limited. The cybersafety/digital citizenship educational resources used were, in the main, designed by adults and served to reproduce pedagogies of heteronormative abstinence responsiblising girls for sexting/cyberbullying (see Dobson, 2016; see Zauner, 2021). As part of the ‘#useyourvoice’ research project, all the participants watched the educational videos I referred to in Chapter Four.²⁴ These videos were used as a springboard for our group conversations, rather than for education.

These resources feature vignettes that could be described as hegemonic gendered tropes in which young women (actors) are subjected to various situations intended to reflect technology-facilitated sexual violence framed as ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘sexting’. Situations included acts of

²⁴ See Appendix G for descriptions of and hyperlinks to the video resources.

image-based sexual abuse, offline–online sexual harassment, subtle pressure to produce and provide nudes for young men (actors), slut shaming and victim blaming. It was generally implied that the young men in these videos were peers, friends or intimate friends to the girls who produced images.

The videos prompted revealing discussions around the sharing of nude images as a kind of economy and the pressures associated with participating in digital sexual cultures.

5.2 The wank bank

When describing their own experiences in response to viewing the video's overarching themes of cyberbullying and sexting, participants from three of the four schools referred to the existence of a peer-to-peer organised digitally networked economy for the purchase and storage of girls' nude images, known as 'the wank bank'. The operations of this system included (i) the requesting and sharing of girls' nude and semi-nude images, (ii) the widespread organisation of image storage exchange systems (iii) and, in some cases, the rehearsal of emotionally manipulative strategies to persuade girls to share images.

The subsections below present findings on the subject of the exchange of nudes from students.

5.2.1 The sexist inner structures of transactional image trading economies

For all the #useyourvoice friendship group sessions at Acacia school, I am always stationed in a small but bright room which is typically used for 'breakout' discussions. This room overlooks the school field and has many modern amenities: a large moveable smart TV, brightly coloured switch tables of different shapes and colours with matching ergonomic chairs. The room is positioned in the corner of a wider learning common, so although we have a private separate space, it feels as though we are a part of a bigger space within the school. Faintly in the background, the group and I can hear the voices of other students and teachers. As becomes

the norm when I visit Acacia, I hear one of the school administrators speaking in a friendly tone across the piped overhead speaker. The administrator reminds the students where they should be for any curricular activities that they are expected to attend but may have forgotten. In this next passage, I am in a session with Livvy, Martha, Ashley, Ariana, Piper and Arabella. We are reviewing the themes of sexting and cyberbullying in connection with the four graphic illustration posters shown in Chapter Four. The girls observe the similarities of image-sharing cultures in their own school with other schools, framing digital sexual cultures as a ‘Gen Z’ phenomenon. This leads to their discussion about the interconnectedness of schools and how image-sharing cultures leak across offline–online social fields.

In the upcoming extract, we first hear from Livvy, who had informed me in a previous session that she knew of girls in her wider peer networks who were routinely refusing requests to share images online. These requests were received from male peers and strangers who were asking the girls for images they could masturbate on, colloquially termed as a ‘nut on’ request. In addition to this form of image-based sexual harassment, strangers were asking Livvy and her friends to sell personal foot pictures, a phenomenon related to scamming reports made to Netsafe in 2016 (see Roy, 2016). I inferred from their previous comments that these online sexualised encounters on social media platforms created a landscape that has both shaped young people’s normalisations of their own gendered bodily objectification and commodification and highlighted the expectation that females serve a masturbatory function for males (Ringrose, 2012). Such a landscape arguably supports the emergence and development of a youth wank bank economy.

In this passage, Livvy, Martha and Ashley, who are the younger girls in the group, all giggle together at Livvy’s revelations about the wank bank whilst the rest of the young women listen on.

- Livvy: I was talking with a friend at the weekend. She says some of the boys at her school have a ‘wank bank’, as they call it. They trade for all these nudes that girls send them. Like, one guy asked – he said – “Yeah, just trade me two photos.” He looked through all the photos and he choose two to keep, just for earpods.
- Emma: Ok walk me through this – what happens?
- Livvy: OK – if a girl sends a guy a nude, she will screenshot it and put it into, like, a private folder or something, and all the guys will trade them for things.
- Ariana: I knew guys were horny but ... I think it’s the fact that this generation is one of the first generations growing up with boys going into puberty with this online access. So they don’t know really what to do, or how to control themselves.
- Piper: Hormones are out of control!
- Arabella: It’s not like girls don’t do it, it’s just not as common, and boys are more comfortable talking about it.
- Emma: How old are the young people taking part?
- Livvy: From Year 8. The photos range from Year 8 to Year 13.
- Ariana: GIRLS! Year 8! (explosively outraged).
- Piper: It depends if you are hanging out with stereotypical boys
- Ariana: I feel like our bodies, even if girls do it, I feel like our bodies are worth a lot more than an iPhone charger to be traded. They’re doing it as if it’s a game, like monopoly money’.
- Livvy: One of them traded an artboard for a bag of chips, and they also trade nudes for other nudes (giggling).

Livvy (F),13, Martha (F),13, Ashley (F),13, Ariana (F),14, Piper (F),14, Arabella (F),14
Acacia

In this extract, it is not clear from Livvy’s account whether girls are using their own nudes for the trade exchange, or if some girls are using stock photos of unknown girls for trading. We can hear division in the group response, as they listen and react with discordance. Livvy, Martha and Ashley, the younger of the group, reacted with humour, whereas Piper, Ariana and Arabella express outrage that 12- and 13-year-olds might be participating in the peer-to-peer nude trading economies. We hear Ariana and Piper draw on discourses centred on their legitimate fears of the premature cultural sexualisation of girls (see Renold & Ringrose, 2013). Although Ariana and Piper do not express complicity with the actions of any girls participating in nudes in networked economies, they do, however, unknowingly legitimise heteronormative stereotypical masculinity as the reason the boys participate. They align their perceptions in that

unfettered access to technologies drives boys to participate. In doing so, they couple technological determinism with bio-essentialist masculinity discourses. All these factors, they suggest, reflect boys being boys with an uncontrollable pursuant sex drive which, before online times, may have been contained to offline fields such as school and community spaces.

Livvy's description of the wank bank first tells us much about the gendered disparity of the sexist inner structures of transactional image trading economies between young people. The term 'wank bank' suggests the normalisation of a system underpinned by male heterosexual gratification. The wank bank seems to be engineered around an expectation that girls will compete to demonstrate a heterosexual sexual agency through the presentation of their bodies (Gill, 2012; Ringrose, 2012). In the wank bank, the commodification and transaction of personal bodily capital, in the form of a digital self-image to be shared, represents value for profit. Decisions about whether or not to participate in this economy are influenced by changing contextual perceptions of what is public and what is private and by popular postfeminist representations of models who exchange their own bodily capital for profit. In the context of a global social media network, decisions to participate can make sense to some (see Mears, 2015; Setty, 2018a). On the surface, the participation of some young women appears to subvert constrained traditional norms of heterosexual respectable passive femininity (Skeggs, 1997). Indeed, some of the girls that Livvy tells us about in the excerpt seemed to have embodied what could be described as postfeminist liberatory norms when deciding to share their images (McRobbie, 2008). Perceived as an enactment of individualised agency, participation in the wank bank is an act of conscious (or possibly unconscious) resistance, which could be conceptualised as a new femininity capable of engendering feelings of neoliberal empowerment in girls (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Gavey, 2012; Dobson, 2015).

On a macro level, the underpinning patriarchal sexist logic within social media cultures, married with the neoliberal demands of the sexualised attention economy, privileges the

gendered social order of male desire, female sexual objectification and the male gaze (Dobson 2015; 2019). The girls that Livvy's friend refers to who are involved in the wank bank may view their choices to share their images to be in social proximity to similar choices made by popular celebrities and social media influencers. A number of girls from the Acacia friend group suggested that the wank bank mimicked popular social media platforms like OnlyFans and Instagram. Micro-celebrity social media influencers and popular feminist celebrities (see Banet-Weiser, 2018), such as Disney actress Bella Thorne, who amplified her celebrity profile when she joined the OnlyFans social media platform, was named across the girls' groups. Bella Thorne was admired for her reach, public visibility and success. Micro- and popular celebrities who have publicly exhibited postfeminist characteristics of neoliberal empowerment were viewed by the girls in the groups as striking their own terms on social media and, in doing so, profiting from the visual digital attention economy.

Despite the admiration some influencers and celebrities receive, the exhibition of sexuality, sexual agency and empowerment may, in fact, expose girls to a gendered sexual stigma that disproportionately affects them. Girls participating in the wank bank have little control over the wider structural conditions that influence the meanings ascribed by others to their actions (see Gavey, 2012; see De Ridder, 2019; see Meehan, 2021a). Postfeminism, entangled with the realities of the male gaze, objectification and sexual subjectification, complicates the choices girls are supposedly empowered to make (Gill, 2003; Evans et al., 2010; McClelland & Fine, 2013). Should, say, a girl's choice to willingly participate in the wank bank result in any unforeseen harms perpetrated against them or lead to explicit non-consensual circumstances, or if the images were shared more widely, that girl would likely be held to gendered and sexualised double standards and be implicated as morally culpable and deserving of blame. For boys involved in such harms or circumstances, gendered and sexualised assumptions would

explain their participation in the wank bank as natural practice, therefore minimising their accountability for the perpetration of image-based sexual abuse.

A further tension layered into these conflicting perceptions of acceptable gendered and sexualised behaviour is the assumption that the girls who choose to opt in to the wank bank consent to the operations of the system (as listed in 5.2) outside of any context of sexualised gendered pressure, and that consent is ongoing. In practice, the heteronormative gendered rules of heterosexual encounters have been found to preclude assertive sexual refusal (Powell, 2008). This means that, when it comes to girls negotiating or refusing to supply nude images, the gendered embodiments of active pursuant masculinity can overcome any resistance. In the main, for girls, the gendering of their habitus has made passivity the norm, despite the contradictions of postfeminist empowerment. Expectations of passivity may make it challenging for girls to fully articulate their refusals in response to requests for images. Livvy (and the rest of the girls in the group) express their understanding that the images stored in the wank bank were willingly produced and supplied for distribution, which may well be the case. However, nuancing this view, it is understood that young women disproportionately experience sexual coercion to send sexualised images (Ringrose et al., 2013; Drouin et al., 2014). The pressures to produce and send an image to an intimate peer is a type of harassment that is widely experienced by girls (Van Ouytsel, 2021). Despite this, the participants from Acacia placed the responsibility on girls to exercise self-vigilance and resistance in response to such requests, symbolising a gendered and internalised disposition.

The girls that Livvy tells the group and me about, who share nudes, are unlikely to disrupt the sexist conditions of the wank bank through their actions or to shift the dominant gendered power relations between young people. In the discussions I had with young people at Acacia and the other schools, there seemed to be a postfeminist doxa shaping dispositional perceptions of empowerment and choice(s). This could mean that the girls and boys are making sense of

these choices through shaped perceptions of themselves as gender-neutral digital citizens (as discussed in Chapter Seven) who are abstracted from inequitable gendered sexualised power relations (see Henry et al., 2021). Yet, as Gavey (2012) asks in her critique of the distinction between *being* and *feeling* empowered within a neoliberal postfeminist sexual landscape, and as I question: what are the true possibilities for girls in nude networked economies, as they wrangle with their decision making in digital sexual conditions which routinely glorify and rationalise self-commodification (see Gill, 2007; see McRobbie, 2008; see Gavey, 2012) Indeed, towards the end of the dialogue, Ariana draws on two powerful metaphors to describe sexual objectification as the devaluation of girls' bodies in an economy that would trade them for an iPhone charger or use them like Monopoly money.

Although we do not hear directly from boys in the previous passage, across the study, boys referred to the heightened visibility of sexualised social media influencer cultures to rationalise their coordination of and participation in the wank bank. In addition, comments from the boys demonstrated the perpetuation of doxa as they formed taken for granted knowledge that it is common for girls to be objectified and harassed online, such that the girls' experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence (a term the boys did not use) were minimised as unfortunate but mundane and harmless. Many of the boys viewed girls as, by priori, sexualised via objectification by strangers on social media. Therefore, the peer-to-peer context of the wank bank was, by many of the boys, perceived as less harmful than images being viewed by strangers. I would argue that and will later discuss how the embodiment of this doxic knowledge as a sense of unspoken rules minimised any individual and collective role in organised image transactional systems.

5.2.2 Navigating ambiguities: postfeminist digital sexual cultures

Deakin School has a large informal classroom with several computers positioned to the side of the room. It can take some time for students to settle in for the morning sessions due to the late arrival of other students. The square room is fitted with a tired blue sofa, beanbags, tables and chairs. I arrange support organisation literature and a platter of fruit and snacks on the tables so that students can graze on the food throughout the sessions, which they do.

Deakin School is the starting point of the ‘#useyourvoice’ project, and I met with this group to design and run pilot sessions. At Deakin School, the initial group sessions were mixed until the final session. The decision was made to hold single-sex groups because, following discussion, all the participants had agreed they could speak more openly in a single-sex environment. This was especially true for the girls, who expressed a wish to be able to speak freely without judgment from their male peers about sexting and cyberbullying.

Like her counterparts at Acacia School, one Deakin student, Madison, explains that, in her online world, nudes are exchanged for cash deposits. Her description of the process reflects the theme that emerged from discussion of the wank bank at Acacia School: that the habitus embodiment of postfeminist neoliberal influences shapes girls’ choices about the use of self-images for bodily capital transactions.

Madison: Nowadays guys will offer money for nudes and stuff, and say, ‘I’ll put money in your bank account’, or whatever. Then, girls will think about it. Adults do it, but I know that there’s girls that do that, too. People can also show photos to people in person in a mass group text. I’ve seen all of it go on – like, with some of my mates – I know photos like that, and now people think it’s just normal. It either can be a feminist thing, where girls are like, ‘Wow, it’s alright because I’m a girl, and I don’t care’, but then again, it really, really can ruin some people’s self-esteem.

Madison (F), 14
Deakin

By describing the exchange as ‘normal’ and ‘a feminist thing’, Madison frames the choices teen girls make to monetise nude images as sexually normative and potentially empowering. Initially, Madison’s reflections indicate her supposition that her female peers are feeling empowered as feminist subjects. Madison’s comment suggests that, for some girls, peer digital sexual cultures provide the socio-cultural context for them to make intent their sexual expression (agency) and allow them to rebel against traditional femininity through the decision to monetise their bodily images (see Ringrose, 2012). However, as Gavey (2012) has noted in reference to girls’ sexuality and their perceptions of choice, and as Madison herself acknowledges, in sexist image-sharing cultures, feeling empowered is not equivalent to feeling free or nurturing positive self-esteem.

Madison’s comment suggests that some of her peers may be materially enticed by the prospect of marketing and monetising self-produced nude images. This insight speaks to a reconfigured transactional neoliberal rationale described by Ringrose (2012) whereby girls view their bodily images as means to increase their economic capital. As previously stated, the successes of popular celebrity social media influencers are likely to have swayed girls ‘to display the self in line with celebrity norms of idealised femininity’ (Ringrose, 2012, p. 121). Requests for images were viewed as a financial opportunity and enterprise mimicking social media platforms. Indeed, Martellozzo & Bradbury (2021) contend that young women are not surprised by the trading of cash for kink digital images, especially given the way that social sharing platforms like OnlyFans have normalised the sharing of nude images (see Titheradge & Croxford, 2021).

Madison’s comments are multi-faceted: she places the politics of postfeminist choice side-by-side with the draw of financial incentivisation. Her words reflect a negotiation of the juxtaposition of active subjectivity (Gill, 2003; Powell, 2010). She concludes by highlighting a paradox of choice whereby enacting agency by drawing on bodily capital for material gains can have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing. Her observation is supported by research

by Mandau (2021) of teen girls' experiences of image-based sexual abuse. Mandau's findings identified internalised effects on mental health. Although Madison does not express this directly, it is necessary to acknowledge that the choices made by young people are structured by their social positioning according to gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, race, ethnicity and class. The extent to which a young person can choose to exchange a nude may vary according to the constraints of individual positionality. Girls who experience imposed socio-economic deprivations because of situated social positioning may need to, rather than choose to, participate in this digital sexual economy.

As part of the conversation, Madison expressed concerns about the practice of mass face-to-face group viewing of nudes via screenshotting, also known as 'screen munching'. Similar apprehensions were raised in groups at the other schools. Indeed, some of the boys in the study reported that they purposefully did not share nude images via online networks but instead chose to show nude images face-to-face with a peer without gaining consent from the producer to show the image. This was done in order to avoid detection by adults or law enforcement, and research in the United Kingdom has identified similar practices (see Setty et al., 2022). In response to Madison's concerns about screenshotting/screen munching, her friend Bailey astutely connects Madison's previous comments on the 'politics of choice' (Powell, 2010, p. 76) as related to the ubiquitous cultural reproduction of the popular sexualisation of girls and young women.

Bailey: I think the issue is so much bigger than just this, and I don't know if it could be fixed because it's just the way that society is at the moment. Like, girls are extremely sexualised and things, people are all doing it – that's just what people think is normal.

Bailey (F), 14
Deakin

The reflections Madison and Bailey share seem to express some despondency about the omnipresence of cultural sexualisation and the normalisation of sexist cultures. We hear them both resignedly internalise the principles of commodified digital sexual cultures as doxa as they accept ‘the way things are’ (Deer, 2008/2014, p. 115). We also perceive the tensions this has generated for young women. Neither Bailey nor Madison, nor any other girls in the study, said that they viewed the exchange of the nude images of girls, for reasons of peer relations, intimate relationships and/or money, as truly empowering or as a sexual expression of authentic desire. Their comments align with insights from Gavey (2012), who encouraged feminist scholars to question who this ‘imaginary empowered girl’ is (p. 721): could she be a caricature that does not truly reflect the complex conditions that real girls encounter in their digital sexual lives? This is not to say that it is impossible to establish conditions of discourse that enable desire and pleasure that are free of sexual exploitation, but rather to recognise that none of the girls acknowledged the existence of such conditions, (See Fine & McClelland, 2006; see McClelland & Fine, 2013).

5.2.3 There is a sort of given rule to share the joy

At Birch School, the boys’ sessions are stationed in a busily decorated language classroom. The walls are colourfully decorated with bunting of the flags of the world. The desks in the room are always laid out in front-facing rows, so the first few minutes of each session is spent with the students rearranging the desks around so that we have an informal arrangement.

The boys’ friendship groups from Birch School gave me a male peer perspective on the wank bank or nudes in networked economies. The fact that this group, from a different school to the girl groups at Acacia and Deakin, seem to also refer to the wank bank but not by name as they describes a similar localised image-sharing network indicates cross-localised knowledge and sharing norms and reflects the interconnectedness of digital sexual cultures.

- Brandon: There are banks of people storing up other people's nudes because they're shared everywhere. I guarantee there's a few kids in school with hundreds. All that stuff gets out everywhere because everyone likes it, and no-one wants to corrupt it [the network]. And I think because it is so interconnected, even if it got spread between 100 boys, it's likely not one of those boys will go to a parent or a teacher. Any boy saying anything will corrupt the whole platform.
- Sean: If you get it [a nude image] from someone, and then send it to your mate, you would then get a lot of respect. Your mates are all talking about it, and there's a sort of a given rule to share the joy – it's kind of become part of our culture, if that makes sense, that guys will ask for pictures or ask for nudes. That statement doesn't necessarily reflect everyone, but it does, I would say, reflect a majority of guys.
- Simon: With the boys it's, like, 'Oh, yeah – girls' nudes; what a champ. Like, you've done well. It's bad, obviously, but the friends would see it as solid.
- Brandon: Boys[images]don't get leaked [non-consensual sharing], but it definitely happens to girls, and that happens a lot. So I think it's probably more a culture of sharing girls rather than boys, and I think that does come down to the boys wanting to share them more, and the reputation between boys of sharing – it's more about self. I think it's a sign of respect to your friends and because you see, like, huge sexualisation on girls' Insta pages, and I think that's probably a big part of it. I think that's even more desensitising because it's even more personal.
- Sean: Nothing's distressing any more. I'm so desensitised to any violence or sexual activity, anything.
- All: Yeah.

Sam (M), Owen (M), Brandon (M), Kane (M), Sean (M), Simon (M), all 14
Birch

In the initial part of this discussion, the boys emphasise how important it is that the production of nudes is ongoing and not be subject to any disruption or any open discussion that could be detected by adults. It seems that some boys organise and participate whilst other young people are complicit, maintaining secrecy about the system; this seems to strengthen collective perceptions of the network as a regularising gendered sexualised peer norm (Lippman & Campbell, 2014). This discussion, which describes ways in which the boys protect and reinforce global and localised norms that shape the value of circulating the bodily images of girls, presents an example of hegemonic neoliberal masculinities (Harvey et al., 2013; see Ringrose et al., 2022b).

For this cohort at Birch School, homosocial bonds could be described as being seated as a disposition in the gendered digital habitus; this sociosexual organisation works to preserve a culture of silence that prevents any reporting of harmful digital sexual cultures by any young people (see Flood, 2008; see Allnock & Atkinson, 2019). Researchers contend that the evolving norms associated with passing on/sharing of privileged information reinforce perceptions that a digital image can be considered a gift or trophy (see Hunehäll Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2021). The sharing of nudes arguably has the potential to convert, cement and increase bonds and masculine sociocultural capital in a way that is not proportionally available to girls (Salter, 2016; Kennedy, 2018; Setty, 2018a). Involvement in the wank bank or the networking of nudes sustains masculine sociocultural capital; keeping the wank bank in play across contemporary offline-online fields to maintain contemporary hegemonic masculinity stabilises the heterosexual matrix across spheres (Butler, 1999a; 2004). In heterosexualised nude networks, the male gaze implicitly focuses on the objectification of the bodily images of girls, and this is the only market. There is no market to profit from the exchange of the nude or semi-nude images (dick pics) of boys. The homosocial cementing of this covert operation, which depends on the boys not 'saying anything', mitigates the probability of adult detection, which could result in lost or reduced masculine sociocultural capital for the organisers and boys who are, in fact, engaging in image-based sexual harassment.

While it might be the case that hegemonic idealisations of masculinity need only to be actively practised by a minority of boys those who request and store images, all other young people are positioned in relation to this contemporary idealisation and the accompanying actions to 'share the joy'. Collectively, the preservation of this network is achieved through and reinforces heterosexual homosocial bonding (Sedgwick, 1985/2016; Flood, 2008). The hybrid organisation of hegemonic masculinity reflected in the creation and maintenance of the wank bank further bolsters cisgendered non-sexualised socio-sexual relations of boys and men

(Ringrose et al., 2022b). The performance of male-to-male relations through a phenomenon like the wank bank, in front of an audience of male peers, has been found to bond masculinities in their opposition to femininities (see Connell, 1995/2005; see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

It is worth noting the way in which the discussion draws attention to how symbolic capital is readily available to boys but inaccessible to girls. Interestingly, Brandon cites how influential social media platforms such as Instagram are to the normalisation of the peer-to-peer cataloguing and non-consensual sharing of the nude images. Like the previous group of girls, Brandon indirectly acknowledges the sexist structural affordances of social media that contribute to the doxic shaping of the cultural sexualisation of girls. Brandon's comment indicates the way in which, as doxa, the cultural exposure to sexualised images through social media platforms collectively shapes boys' dispositions of desensitisation which are being developed in networked masculine communities of practice (see Paetcher, 2007). As a result of this exposure, any harm that is perpetrated in peer-to-peer networks can be nonchalantly disembodied from the girls themselves (victims/survivors), who, in fact, are experiencing technology-facilitated sexual violence. Unsurprisingly, under the scope of boyish naivety, boys can playfully frame their actions as sexting silliness or cyberbullying (Henry & Powell, 2015; Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019).

5.2.4 Overall perspectives of nudes in networked economies

It is illuminating to consider the girls' and the boys' views of nudes in networked economies side by side. Livvy, Madison and Bailey suggest that girls voluntarily use their bodily capital to offer their images to the wank bank as currency for material gain. The boys articulate the wank bank exchange system as a product of male entitlement that is networked, hierarchical, relational, operational and collective. They describe the way that exchange of girls' sexualised

images as a currency through the wank bank is strategically covertly maintained by boys. Note that that banks only feature female images, as Brandon tells us there is no ‘market’ for boys to be leaked (dick pics).

Literature on the subject supports the view expressed by both girl and boy participants in this study that this system is configured by the boys for the phallogocentric benefit of boys (see Ringrose et al., 2013; see Harvey & Ringrose, 2015; see Hunehall Berndtsson, & Odenbring) and is based solely on the exchange of the bodily capital of girls (see Mears, 2015). Researchers would argue that the boys’ commitment to upholding the network bolsters gendered social order, kinship and patriarchal social bonds (Sedgwick, 1985; Flood, 2008; Roberts et al., 2021). The appropriation and exchange of girls’ images described by the groups could be described as a taken for granted logic of the gendered digital habitus to generate symbolic capital for the boys. This symbolic capital, which works across offline–online fields, has been observed to purposefully stabilise the heterosexual matrix and unequal gendered power relations, without being noticed as such (Butler, 1999a, 2004; Bourdieu, 2001; see Ringrose et al., 2013). The boys’ comments reflect perceptions of how digital gendered masculine practice ‘should’ work: if they opt out the wank bank, any negative consequences could disrupt peer homosocial bonding. Participation in these systems is underpinned by an array of complicated and contradictory postfeminist doxa, shaping the dispositions for the whole of the cohort.

5.3 Experiencing and managing pressure in digital sexual cultures

5.3.1 Management strategies

In this next reading, Morgan describes the active bystander/upstander role she has taken on behalf of her friend who is being harassed, to challenge the male peer who is perpetrating the sexual harassment. We hear how Morgan, who is mixed Cook Island Pākehā, tactically draws on her dispositions of raced and classed coded characteristics to communicate, using verbal and bodily language, a performance of idealised physical masculinity. Morgan uses these

strategies so that she is perceived as credible in her attempt to intimidate the requestor, in the hope that he will take her threats seriously.

- Morgan: My friend got asked for nudes, and she said no. She came to me – she was like, ‘This guy asked me for nudes. What do I do about it?’ He was in our group – he asked her, and she was like, ‘I said no, but what else do I do because he’s continuing asking?’ They [Morgan’s group of friends] were like, ‘We’ll sort it out.’ I just walked up to him and said in front of all his friends, ‘Stop asking her for nudes, or we’re going to do something about it.’ And me being a rugby player – he knew that – and I kind of have – [pause to explain] – when people first meet me, I get called intimidating. I kind of sound, like, hori.
- Emma: What’s hori?
- Morgan: The stereotypical Māori way of speaking, ‘Oh joy Gee’ [vocally illustrates] stuff like that. So that’s how me and my friends act, and I get called ‘intimidating’. He knew that about me, so he was like, ‘Okay, I’ll stop.’ He got really scared because he thought I was going to fight him, but I wasn’t going to do that.

Morgan (F), 14
Birch

As Morgan explains, her friend’s repeated rejection of the requests of her male peer to produce a nude do not seem to work. She approaches Morgan for support, because, as Morgan tells us, as a female rugby player who speaks in a stereotypical male Māori way (‘hori’ is based on the loan word in te reo Māori for the name ‘George’), she has a reputation for being intimidating. Morgan then describes how effective this strategy is at getting the boy to stop. Indeed, Walker’s (2020) study of harmful sexual behaviour in schools has demonstrated that girls draw on ‘tough girl’ (p. 549) performances of idealised masculinities as a safety strategy to minimise any potential sexual and gendered risks from male peers.

As a one-off strategy to ward off the pressure to share a nude image, the taking on of male behaviour may work. However, such a strategy is unlikely to subvert the collective gendered practices of the pursuit of images within digital sexual cultures (Walker, 2020). On this occasion, Morgan was able to support her friend by intervening as a bystander, which is an approach to bullying that is promoted through education at schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nevertheless, to accept that girls should take such action, which could have negative consequences, without tackling the institutional minimisation of peer-to-peer sexual harassment burdens girls with individual responsibility for their victimisation.

5.3.2 Girls as gatekeepers

In this next extract, I am at Deakin with Madison, whose comments confirm the gendering of the requests for nudes and the social pressure girls experience. Whilst Madison sympathises with girls who experience these gendered pressures, she also tasks girls with being the gatekeepers of their own sexualised images. Inadvertently sharing her thoughts with the group, she is socially reinforcing and policing gendered double standards that hold girls who produce images as disproportionately culpable when these images are non-consensually shared. As you will hear, Madison, positions girls as both sexual agents and sexual victims (see Dobson, 2015).

Madison: We all know that it's boys that ask girls than girls ask boys. If somebody's felt pressured and know that they've sent this photo and it hasn't been leaked or anything, but the person's got it and they feel upset about it and regret doing it or they were pressured to do it, then I guess that's bad. That's still bad but that's sort of their fault for sending that. I know my whole life I would never send a nude because it's stupid – because it just could get leaked and there's always that possibility. So, it's just – if you know that, then you won't do it.

Madison (F), 14
Deakin

Bailey, present and listening to Madison's comments, questions Madison's statement by offering an alternative perspective. Bailey raises the issue of the prevalence and normalisation of the non-consensual taking of nude photos and videos of girls in digital sexual cultures.

Bailey: What about if, like, a girl doesn't want to send a photo – like, someone took a photo of her anyway? [Bailey is asking this question in reference to sexting/cyberbullying]. Because that's happening so much. And then people take photos of them when they're passed out. I've just seen so many videos of girls, like, of my mates.

Madison (F), Bailey (F), both 14

Like the example of the roast buster case highlighted in Chapter One, Bailey's reference to photos and videos being taken 'when [girls] are passed out' gave me some indication that such violations are being practised in harmful peer-to-peer digital sexual cultures. These practices are, in fact, a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Bailey's question in the group discussion implied to me that she was unsure how to interpret these actions. She said that she could not tell whether these actions were cyberbullying and/or were illegal, nor did she know who she could approach to discuss her concerns. Bailey is describing a non-consensual incident. However, as I have argued in Chapter Two, the linguistic limitations of the terms 'cyberbullying', 'sexting' and 'nudes', in relation to consenting and non-consenting practices, coupled with a lack of information, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, do little to provide a framework for young people to be able to describe and classify such non-consensual incidents as technology-facilitated sexual violence.

5.3.3 Feminist impositions and double standards

The next conversation starts with Morgan, Amber and Jorja sharing with me that, preceding our meeting, when they were all together, they were unexpectedly shown a sex video by a male peer on his mobile phone, a viewing they had not consented to. This was a recording of a male and female teenager from a different school. The group were irritated by their male friend's assumption that they would want to see this and the imposition he made by not first asking the girls if they would want to be privy to viewing this shared content. The girls were cognisant that the teenage couple in the video had not consented to the video being shared (or maybe even being filmed). None of the girls had consented to watching the little reel that they had been exposed to. Nonetheless, they expressed little sympathy for the couple featured in that video or for the fact that it had been non-consensually shared and was being shown en masse

at their school. The unauthorised distribution of this intimate content was not considered by the group in any way at all as a harmful digital communication.

Their recall of this incident served as a springboard for our further discussion about privacy and the right to not have intimate content shared. In terms of the dynamics of this group, bear in mind that the girls, in their conversation, are likely a testing within the social norms of female sexual permissibility (see Miller, 2016). Expressing shared indignation and victim blaming has been found to collectively bond and perpetuate the norms of feminine respectability among those who outwardly distance themselves from digital sexual cultures (Skeggs, 1997; Meehan, 2022c; also see Setty, 2022a).

- Jorja: They're both to blame if it was her who sent them.
 Morgan: There's been so many cases of people sending nudes [of themselves] and they're going somewhere other than the right person. Make sure YOU know the consequences [firmly].
 Amber: What people need to realise is DMs – direct messages – they may seem private, but they're not.
 Amber: If somebody wants to send a picture of themselves nude, they should be told they are at fault. They should know. They've been brought up with knowing this could happen – although this should not be 100% 'This is all your fault...', because the person they sent it to should know as well.

Morgan (F), Amber (F), Jorja (F), all 14
 Birch

This group slip into the presumption of the girl as the producer and the boy as the receiver who non-consensually shared her images. This gendered arrangement shapes the rest of their dialogue, as they attempt to make sense of what they see as gendered roles and responsibilities. In previous quotes, we have heard that girls are expected to be sexual gatekeepers and, as a consequence, they are victim blamed when images are shared non-consensually. This group seems to narrow in on resistance – informed by an expectation that one should know better, because girls are 'brought up with knowing this could happen' – as a method of mitigating culpability, risk and reputation, a strategy illuminated in existing literature (Hasinoff, 2015; Dobson, 2016). We hear from the girls a strong belief that their cohort of Gen Z digital natives

have been amply informed, as digital citizens, to understand the likelihood of risk and privacy violations and their consequences. As such, the group imply that fault, blame and shame are warranted for both parties in cases of the unauthorised distribution of an intimate nude image. Their framing of risk and abstinence serves to prevent them from making any distinction between consenting and non-consenting practices, especially with respect to the perpetration of harm. Instead of the non-consensual sharing being understood as sexual violation, they view this as a breach of privacy issue (see Meehan, 2021a). Limitations to a risk scope also prevents their contemplations of nudes in the context of desire, pleasure and power-balanced experiences of what might otherwise be considered age-appropriate consensual sharing (Döring, 2014; Dobson, 2019).

The victim blaming responses shared by the participants in the #useyourvoice project are not dissimilar to the views of other young people reported in sexting research (see Project deShame, 2017). Indeed, research shows that girls are caught in a gendered 'lose-lose' situation (Lippman & Campbell, 2014, p. 382), whereby they are judged as sluts if they send nudes and judged as frigid if they do not. Such judgements can perpetuate a self-blame discourse among girls, say if, for instance, they are duped into entrusting shared images as an act of intimacy in an intimate relationship (Amundsen, 2020; Hunehall Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2021).

Certainly over the last decade or so, we have witnessed the upskilling of a presumed rational digital citizen subject, assumed to be a non-sexual young person who is abstracted from sexist gendered pressures to respond to requests or to self-produce sexualised images (see Gill, 2012; see Henry et al., 2021). Beres et al. (2020) note that school responses to prevent cyberbullying (and, to a lesser extent, sexting) encourage peers to engage as active bystanders. This approach is both institutionally advocated in educational policy and on the ground as part of teaching students to manage their digital activities appropriately. However, research tells us that digital citizenship bystander practices for 'cyberbullying' and 'sexting' are mainly undertaken by girls

and young women. Underlying sexist structures shape the responses of adults and young people to cyberbullying and sexting that place unjust responsibility on young women, individually, to take action both to prevent and address it (see Setty, 2019; see Wang & Kim, 2021). Digital citizenship and bystander approaches that carry unacknowledged victim-blaming sentiments situate the breach of privacy inherent in the non-consensual sharing of nudes as a gendered consequence for which girls are culpable. If bystander approaches were to be informed by a gendered lens and in turn challenge the socio-cultural context of sexist cultures and harm, then such strategies would be of great value.

Continued discussion of the pressure that girls are under to produce and share nudes illuminates the extent to which the group is willing to absolve their male peers of the blame for making such requests and for their non-consensual sharing of images.

- Jorja: With this rise of feminism and female power, they come for the guy.
Amber: And destroy the guy.
Jorja: He's shared nudes, or whatever! So he's definitely not innocent, because he's been asking. But they straight away start attacking him, and that makes him the victim. But the problem is that's not good for anybody, because now it makes the girls feel bad and makes the guy now the victim. I feel – coming together and supporting everybody – that's great, but I don't think you should then be coming for the person [who makes the request], because then it makes you, now, also not innocent.
Morgan: There are some guys like that. They will ask, and if they don't get what they want: 'Sorry, won't ask again. Sorry if I made you uncomfortable.' Then, they just don't ask because they don't want the same reaction.

Morgan (F), Amber (F), Jorja (F), all 14
Birch

Instead of viewing feminism as an advancement that promotes equity, these girls describe feminism as a confusing presence – an unnamed 'they' – forcing itself upon young people. Their gendered digital habitus expresses postfeminist internalisations in which young men are

viewed as the victims of derailed privileges. The group repudiate feminism for complicating the gendered power relations in peer-to-peer digital sexual cultures, a notion that has emerged in existing literature (see McRobbie, 2008). While they express agreement that boys are not wholly blameless, Morgan, Amber and Jorja articulate a male-as-a-victim ‘meninism’ discourse (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 172) to explain why it is unfair to blame boys alone. Digital sexual ethics seemed often viewed as too confusing for boys to unravel and, as a result, they can be excused for sexual misconduct in digital sexual cultures. Symbolic violence emanates from doxa emphasising that digital sexual ethics are viewed as too confusing for boys to unravel. While the same logic is not applicable to girls, this means that boys can be excused for sexual misconduct in digital sexual cultures.

Scott (2020), in reference to image-based sexual abuse, talks of the competing tensions of postfeminist cultural norms whereby positive sexual autonomy is perceived to minimise sexual ethics and rights to consent, which further reproduce gender inequality in the digital space.

The discussion around requests for nudes continues and illuminates the influence of cultural pornification as a social norm (Barajas & Ringrose, 2011).

- Jorja: The problem with some guys is they genuinely think that’s good behaviour [asking for nudes], and they don’t think it’s bad, and when they ask, and the girl’s like, ‘No, no,’ I guarantee they’ll feel real horrible.
- Emma: The guys will feel horrible?
- Morgan: Yeah, and they’ll be like, ‘OMG, I’m sorry. I didn’t realise that you wouldn’t be okay with this.’
- Jorja: It’s normal with the guys.
- Morgan: I feel like a lot of guys get put under the category of being a sexual predator when, actually, they just don’t know.
- Jorja: They [boys] don’t know what’s right from wrong and – correct me if I’m wrong – but I think it’s mostly guys of our age that watch pornography, and that’s why you mostly see males asking for nudes rather than the females. But there’s definitely going to be females that are asking for nudes, but it’s more guys because there’s a lot more pressure to watch pornography and to be into that kind of stuff. Growing up, there’s this forced idea of what sexual behaviour is, and

they [boys] have this false idea of how you should get people to like you. You're getting this false idea about sex from these porn videos – unrealistic expectations from these videos. They're like, 'That's how I get a girl to like me,' and then they're like, "Hey, send me nudes." Because that's been brainwashed into their minds of what a good healthy relationship is.

Morgan (F), Amber (F), Jorja (F), all 14
Birch

Jorja draws on discourses of cultural pornification as an explanation for shaping the gender and sexual norms of boys and girls. These views are correlated with gendered practices in digital sexual cultures that expect girls to initially resist, boys to apply pressure as they make repeated requests, girls to acquiesce, and then boys to distribute (Barajas & Ringrose, 2011; Mulholland, 2015; Dobson, 2016). Indeed, in Aotearoa New Zealand, reports demonstrate that that the barriers to viewing pornography have reduced as online access has increased. One in four young people in this country have reportedly viewed pornography by the age of 12; among young people aged 14 to 17, 75% of boys and 58% of girls have viewed pornography, and 72% of young people had witnessed non-consensual activity (Office of Film and Classification, 2018). Content analyses by the Office of Film and Classification (2019) in Aotearoa New Zealand have shown that 35% of mainstream pornography content representations normalise gendered sexual pressure and coercion.

It is critical to acknowledge that young people are not passive actors: they are able to exercise their capacity to understand that pornographic representations are fictional (Keen et al., 2020). Whilst we cannot establish that the viewing of pornography by young people contributes to specific aspects of digital sexual cultures, it is nevertheless relevant to consider how encounters viewed as fictional and/or non-fictional may shape sexual and gendered scripts (see Vera-Gray et al., 2021). In Section 5.2.3, Brandon and Sean share that they felt desensitised by the soft pornography they see on social media platforms. We can draw correlations from such perspectives but not simply assume that pornography alone is the cause for boys feeling

pressure to make requests for nudes. These possible connections need to be considered within a wider socio-cultural lens that accounts for gender inequality, sexism and sexual ethics (Meehan, 2021b).

5.3.4 Consent can not be given under pressure or coercion

As a key aim of this participatory research project, I wanted to explore how young people understood consent and non-consent in relation to image-based sexual abuse. The interconnection of schools and peers across offline and online spaces has been found to provide critical sites to stabilise heterosexual masculinity (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Connell, 1995/2004). Certainly, peer culture is a powerful space of reinforcement in which individual perceptions of informal collective gendered rules shape normative ideas and meanings of abuse, consent and non-consent in digital sexual cultures (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Firmin, 2018; Meehan, 2021a; Setty et al., 2022). As you will read in the following conversation between myself and the boys at Birch, there is a lack of concern given to the ethics of consent with respect to the storage and sharing of the sexualised images of girls. Evidently, the gendered social norms within digital sexual cultures allow discussions of consent to be bypassed (see Scott, 2020; Setty et al., 2022).

Emma: Does gaining consent to exchange these images matter?
 Sean: You mean if I ask the other person, ‘Can I send it?’ [Incredulously]
 Emma: Yeah.
 Sean: No, that will never happen. [Said with determination]
 Owen: You’re not hiding it [the fact that you’re sharing the image] from them – you’re just not telling them. [Said to me in explanation]
 Sam: Look, if you do it without consent and then later she will find out ... it’s better to get consent.

Sean, (M) Owen (M), Sam, (M) all 14
 Birch

In reference to the interactions between this all-boy group, there appeared to be a hierarchy of masculinities. Sam presented as non-dominant member who resisted the dominant narratives of complicit masculinities expressed by his male peers (Connell, 1995/2004; Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005). At the risk of being marginalised by his peers, Sam expresses honest disagreement with them about the acceptability of the covert nature of non-consensual practices. In this interaction, Sam's dissenting views go unnoticed or are possibly deliberately ignored by his peers. However, as you will read in the continuing conversation below, Sam moves to align his perspectives with those of his peers. Sam's shift, from opposing non-consensual sharing to justifying heterosexual pursuance driven by perceived male heterosexual desire, is an example of homosocial bonding.

- Brandon: But people aren't thinking about that [asking permission to share images]; they're just doing it.
- Sean: You don't go, 'Well, can I send this?' You know what they're going to say. You have to make them feel like they want to do it [produce an image], and not you just want it.
- Emma: So, almost persuasive?
- Sean: You want to see it [a nude image], but from people you know in your life.
- Sam: I don't know if this is genetics, but – attentionally – boys are more sexual. They want to see more of it [nude images].
- Emma: Do you consider sharing nudes in any way exploitation or harassment?
- Brandon: It is harassment and abuse. But you don't really think about that at all, because you're not caring about the person you're really seeing – they're a toy, they're not a person. You're seeing their image. It's part of the online thing, it's not full emotion.

Sam (M), Owen (M), Brandon (M), Kane (M), Sean (M), Simon (M), all 14
 Birch

Unpacking the group's dialogue in the latter extract, I interpret Brandon's and Sean's comments as examples of the ways in which gendered rules which guide techniques of emotional manipulation, coercion and disembodiment are activated towards sexual objectification, a conclusion that aligns with findings reported by Hunchäll Berndtsson and Odenbring (2021). These techniques, used to steer girls to produce nude images, have also been observed within girls' schools in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Thorburn et al., 2021). For the boys from Birch, one could say that their habitus senses the pressure on boys to perform competitive heterosexual masculinity, such that the dominant boys pressure and pursue girls

for nudes and then non-consensually share the images they acquire. As Bourdieu (2001) might argue, all of this serves to sustain symbolic masculine domination across offline and online spaces.

Sean suggests that he and his peers prefer to see images of girls they know and indicates that such images are gained by leveraging a sense of power over girls to ‘make them feel like they want to do it’. It has been discussed, in reference to homosocial bonding, that the ability to publicly display sexually manipulative skills to a male peer audience is central to the stabilisation of masculinities (Butler, 1988). Moving or working a girl towards a pressured or coerced agreement (see Sanday, 1999; see Drouin et al., 2014; see Van Ouytsel, 2021) to produce and share an image using methods that are not overtly harassing or violent is a masculine competency that bonds and stabilises male relationships (Sanday, 1999).

The majority of boys in the group viewed the non-consensual sharing of images as neither a valid breach of privacy nor a harmless act. Other studies have found that some males do not feel they are violating personal, social or sexual ethics through the process of acquiring and sharing nudes (Setty, 2018a, 2018b; Setty et al., 2022). In the main, the boys from Birch rationalised their actions as a replication of sexist social media cultures. Their comments indicated that they were cognisant of gendered double standards, knowing that their reputations benefited from the exchange of nudes while those of the girls who shared their images were diminished.

Whilst digital sexual ethics of consent were not a consideration for the boys, the same could not be said for the girls. For example, Martha expresses her fears about the non-consensual use of images and the infinitude of time that an image can exist and the infinitude of public visibility. The following extract exemplifies dana boyd’s (2014) conceptualisation of the

networked public affordances of social media – persistency, visibility, spreadability and searchability – that can eternalise technology-facilitated sexual violence.

- Martha: Somebody’s putting your body out there without your consent, and who knows how long it’s going to be out there for, and what people are going to do with it.
I don’t think anyone wants their nude picture to be out for the world to see, and the thing with the internet is that it can be out there forever. You can take it down in one place, but someone else probably has it.
- Emma: So, consent for sharing of nudes is important?
- Ariana: [Forcefully] I think it’s very important because they don’t own you! They don’t own the photos of you! You have to give permission: ‘I give permission about me, NOT you’!
- Piper: It’s like, if you do photography, take a picture, or make an edit – if someone takes it, it’s plagiarism.
- Emma: Okay, we started by talking about this as cyberbullying, but would you consider it related to sexual violence?
- All: Yeah. [Firmly]
- Ariana: Because it’s hurting you mentally. Violence doesn’t necessarily have to be a physical thing.

Ariana (F), Piper (F), Martha (F), Arabella (F), all 14,
Acacia

In contrast to the group of boys, who disembodied girls from their nudes, this group expresses what they see as potential embodied harms that could arise as consequences of the perpetration of non-consensual sharing. Martha envisages the persistency, the threatening sense of infinitude of the online space, wondering how long an image will be ‘out for the world to see’. She expresses anxiety about the visibility, spreadability, and possible use of nude images. While the girls do not directly refer to ‘searchability’ – the ease with which someone can find personal sexual content – Martha emphasises that ‘the world can see’ the image that is shared.

Martha, Ariana and Piper imagine how they would feel if they were to have image-based sexual abuse perpetrated against them: Martha articulates the effect of ongoing violation due to loss of control over bodily autonomy (see Henry et al., 2022); Piper describes image-based sexual abuse as the plagiarising of the body, a metaphor that corporealises how the non-consensual sharing of a nude image is a violation which generates the feeling that something intimately

personal has been physically stolen; Ariana calls the mental harm associated with having one's nude image shared 'violence'.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed themes that emerged from conversations with young people on the subjects of cyberbullying, sexting and the influence of social media cultures. The practices that emerged from behind these labels and within these cultures— specifically, the wank bank and the pressures on girls to participate in it – were rationalised by young people as a mimic of the entrenched, naturalised, pornified 'male gaze' characterised by social media platforms. As such, the wank bank was seen as a legitimate localised image-sharing marketplace. Girls reported that they perceived their female counterparts who shared images in this site of exchange as empowered digital citizens who made choices to participate for material profit. Some of the girls expressed their belief that a choice to contribute an image to the wank bank was an act of subversion of the gendered power structure. Some boys indicated that they naturally profited from these economies by being involved in the organisation of or by simply making use of the system as a reinforcement of (hetero)sexual, masculine sociocultural capital. The contradictory tensions that young people expressed in their attempts to make sense of gendered relations as they are practiced in digital sexual cultures seemed to be underpinned by postfeminist interpretations of agency and choice. As a compelling finding, the operation of the wank bank blurred young people's ideas about submission, resistance, consent, non-consent and pressure. In part, these blurred tensions were attributed – with hostility – to the idea of feminism being forced upon young people. Feminism was deemed as unnecessary and, ironically, as disadvantaging and confusing gendered power relations.

As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992/2007) write, 'being born into a social world, we accept a whole range of postulates, axioms, which go without saying' (p. 168). Bourdieu's theoretical

insights to social practice might support an argument that the choices girls made to participate in the wank bank reflect an internalised unknowing complicity in an online social world which is underpinned and shaped by dominant gendered social norms demonstrating symbolic violence. Grounded in a phallogentric dominant gender order, these norms exist across offline–online fields but are rendered invisible (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992/2007; Bourdieu & Nice, 2001). This illustration of symbolic violence seems to merge postfeminist binaries of the ‘politics of choice’ (Powell, 2010, p. 76), such as empowered/exploited, oppressed/liberated. The complicity of young people in the wank bank economy is complex and complicated.

As we have heard from the young people themselves, networked nude economies are organised and driven by boys, also caught up in the postfeminist norms, who draw on techniques of manipulation and disembodiment to detach themselves from any harm they may cause. The fact that there is no comparable exchange system for the images of boys further illustrates the gendered double standards implicit in these practices. These networked economies function to cement the homosocial bonds of cisgender neoliberal masculinities.

We see how postfeminist doxa/discourse, embodied as disposition in the habitus of young people, means that, as digital citizens, they are operating outside of gendered power relations. This means they interpret their digital-social-sexual practices under the premise of feminism as complicating gendered power relations. As a consequence, gendered victim blaming is normalised. It is worth noting that, throughout the conversations with young people, the importance of consent was not factored in to their participation in harmful practices in digital sexual cultures. Problematically, there was an assumption that initial consent for an image to be exchanged is assumed to provide ongoing consent to the sharing of it. The fact that the young people in this study label the non-consensual sharing of nudes in networked economies as ‘cyberbullying/sexting/ nudes’ indicates that that do not recognise the true nature of the

gendered structures of the wank bank system or the way this system – and the internet more broadly – both operates in and reinforces a landscape of sexist social exchanges.

All of these discussions originated from our initial topics of cyberbullying and sexting, as portrayed in the video resources. The conversations among the different friendship groups all evolved to centre on the non-consensual production and distribution of the images of girls. However, girls are not the sole producers of nude images in this digital culture. In Chapter Six, I analyse a range of experiences shared by the participants with respect to the phenomena of unsolicited dick pics.

6 Chapter Six – Navigating the context of unwanted dick pics: ‘Some things just can’t be unseen’

6.1 Introduction

Analysing the audio and the transcriptions, I noticed another recurrent theme across the girl groups. Generally, when asked to give examples of ‘nudes’ and ‘cyberbullying’, the girls addressed not only their ‘wank bank’ experiences and the pressures girls were under to provide images of themselves, but also incidents in which they and their friends had received unwanted sexualised images from strangers and peers. Therefore, when the girls discussed nudes, I needed to disentangle what they meant by the term and what their use of it could signify. It seemed they were sometimes referring to unsolicited dick pics from strangers and at other times referring to unsolicited dick pics from male peers. In context, the distinction between strangers and peers was relevant, as girls perceived the sending of an unwanted dick pic by these different parties as underpinned by different motivations (see Oswald et al., 2020; see Waling & Pym, 2019).

In this chapter, I position the receipt of unwanted dick pics from peers as ‘image-based sexual harassment’ and the receipt of unwanted dick pics from strangers as ‘cyberflashing’ (see McGlynn & Johnson, 2021a, 2021b; see Ringrose et al., 2021a, 2022b; Ringrose et al., 2022a). In my reading of the data, if a male peer sent the unsolicited dick pic, girls were more likely to switch between the terms ‘nudes’ and ‘cyberbullying’, whereas images sent by strangers were referred to as ‘dick pics’. In this chapter, I argue that unwanted penis images received from peers are digital sexual violations that become subsumed into a discourse of cyberbullying and nudes that serves to obscure, minimise and silence this form of gender-based violence and harassment (see Adorjan et al., 2019).

This chapter centres on three themes. The first section navigates the peer-to-peer context of image-based sexual harassment. I explore how girls categorise and respond to receiving unsolicited dick pics and the safety implications with regard to the management of their gendered peer relations. In Section Two, I consider the boys' accounts of the non-consensual sending of dick pics, exploring their experiences of false accusations, their considerations of the comparatively low value of dick pics in the digital sexual economy, and the ways in which perceptions of popularity influence social and institutional responses to this act. Finally, in Section Three, I illustrate how the embodiment of postfeminist dispositions attunes girls to normalise and responsibilise themselves such that the threats and consequences of image-based sexual harassment from peers and cyberflashing from strangers are de-escalated. Like Claire Meehan (2022e) does in her work with young people focusing on humour and unwanted images, I conceptualise the gendered strategies my participants use to manage digital sexual violations as a form of embodied safety work (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020) across offline–online fields.

Before I attend to the data, I should explain that, for ethical purposes, I purposefully did not ask the young participants any direct questions about dick pics. I did this in part to ensure I did not introduce any new/unknown potentially harmful sexual content to them. Furthermore, because the basis of this study was to tease out youth-centred meanings and understanding of cyberbullying and consensual and non-consensual sexting, it was critical that I withhold as far as possible my adult-centric assumptions regarding what acts could be considered under these categories. This is a theme generated by the participants. Throughout this chapter, I interchangeably use the terms 'unwanted dick pics', 'unsolicited dick pics' and 'image-based sexual harassment'.

6.2 Section One – Navigating the peer-to-peer context of image-based sexual harassment

6.2.1 Normalisations, annoyance, and fear of reprisals

Universally in the study, girls used the terms ‘nudes’ and ‘cyberbullying’ to describe digital sexual acts/experiences; however, when we unpacked these words, they made a contextual distinction. Once they had raised the phenomenon of the unwanted dick pic, they bifurcated the reception of unwanted images into two categories. Images were either sent by strangers – perpetrators informally described as ‘old perverts’ – or by male peers. The designation of ‘peer’ was harder to define, as it was dependent upon both the receiver’s relationship with the sender and sender’s local social status (sociocultural capital).

Similar to findings in existing research (see Mishna et al., 2021; see Ringrose et al., 2021a, 2022b; Ringrose et al., 2022a), the girls in this study reported that unwanted dick pics from peers and strangers were ubiquitous. Livvy, Ashley and Talia, who initially hesitate to say the term ‘dick pic’ aloud, indicate that the normalisation of dick pics is a part of contemporary girlhood.

Emma: It’s okay to say it [dick pics]. Because I didn’t want to say it [dick pics], just in case you’ve not heard of it. But you have heard of it.
All: Yes. [Loudly, in unison.]
Livvy: Too much!
Emma: Too much, okay. Is that something that’s normal, that gets...
Ashley: It gets talked about.
All: Yes.
Livvy: Yes, Unfortunately.
Emma: What happens? Is it between friends or...?
Talia: I’ve never seen one [a penis] in like, real life but...
Livvy: I haven’t seen one in real life [a penis], but I’ve been sent them.

Ashley (F), Talia (F), Livvy (F), all 13
Acacia

Livvy, Ashley and Talia confirm that the subject of seeing a penis via digital affordances is widely discussed and that routine exposure to unwanted dick pics is unfortunate but normalised. Our discussion revealed that these girls' first experience of seeing a penis was through a screen. What struck me with this conversation is that the girls did want to openly discuss these experiences, despite their hesitations. Unfortunately, however, as they explained during the session, they felt unable to do so due to a culture of silence from adults. In effect, the girls apparently conceal their experiences with dick pics to avoid judgment or victim blaming: this amounts to a form of social silencing. There are limited institutional reporting systems or social support systems in place for them, and their experiences of such image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing are overlooked. Research has shown that cultures of silence which disallow or discourage girls from discussing such violations perpetuate both a broader acceptance of online sexism and the victimisation of girls (Ortiz, 2023). As we will see in this chapter, the girls in this group were not the only ones who implicitly understood that it was better to stay silent on the subject of image-based sexual harassment.

The passage that follows was recorded after the formal group interview with the girls had concluded; I had turned off the recording device, and as I was packing things up, I could hear the girls chatting in the background. Arabella, Ariana, Piper and Martha were complaining about 'F-boys'. The 'F' is their abbreviation of the word 'fuck', and colloquially describes a gendered trope of a boy who performatively exhibits heterosexual cisgendered idealised masculinity. Typical attributes of such masculinity include physical prowess, sexual confidence, and competitiveness, the display of which structures sexual and gendered peer relations, strengthens homosocial sharing norms and reinforces dominant gendered power relations (Butler, 1988; Bourdieu, 2001/2007; Flood, 2008; Kennedy, 2018).

Hearing this background chatter from the girls about F-boys, I ask the group if I can turn the recording device back on to capture their thoughts on this subject. Recognising the way the subject related to the research aims, the girls consent cheerily. I specifically wanted to learn more about the ways in which the F-boy trope applied to digital sexual cultures.

- Emma: Could you be an F-boy online?
All: Yeah.
Ariana: They send dick picks of themselves.
Martha: I have this story. There was this guy, and you know how you get stories, like, on Instagram?
Emma: Yep.
Martha: So, I'm, like, DMing [direct messaging] because I'm bored, and I want to talk to someone, and he was like, 'Hi.' I was like, 'Hi.' And then he just sent me his dick pic, and I was like, 'I did not ask for this!'

Arabella (F), 14, Ariana (F), 15, Piper (F), 14, Martha (F), 14
Acacia

As the narrative continues, it becomes evident that once Martha receives the unsolicited dick pic from her male peer, she messages her friend, Piper, to inform her about the image-based sexual harassment. On receiving Martha's direct message about the unsolicited image, Piper is angry and takes on the role of an active bystander to support Martha. Piper challenges the sender of the unwanted image, who the girls knew when he previously attended their school, by sending him a direct message. (The boy had since moved to a different school).

- Piper: I texted him. I got really salty [irritated] – and he was like, 'You're a lot calmer than your friends.' I'm like, 'What?!'
Martha: Yeah, and I know that person has done it [sent dick pics] to so many of my friends as well, and no one needs it. If you [the receiver] didn't ask for it, you [the sender] shouldn't be sending that.
Piper: I was like, 'STOP sending stuff to my friends...'
Emma: What happened then – you said earlier that he moved schools, why did he move – because of this?

- Martha: No, he sent them [the dick pics] while he was over there, but when he was here [before moving schools], he was always, like, kind of inappropriate.
- Emma: Does that get reported to somebody at school?
- Martha: I don't know, because I, like, I know him. So it'll be awkward if I see him, and it's like, 'You reported me, I'm going to get my boys on you.'
- Emma: Do you think his actions relate to sexual violence?
- Martha: Yeah, it's just there, like... [pause] you can't... [trails off]. If you see him in public, then it could...

Arabella (F), 14, Ariana (F), 15, Piper (F), 14, Martha (F), 14
Acacia

Here, Martha pauses again and Piper interjects. Piper goes on to describe her continuing message interaction with the peer who had sent the unwanted dick pic to Martha. Piper relays the messages that she sent to the sender:

- Piper: People [signifying girls] say they don't want to see your nudes [dick pics], but you send them anyways.
- Sender: [Verbalised by Piper] Is that true? I don't give a crap.
- Piper: Don't send pee-pee to my friends.

Piper then returns to the current conversation with me and the rest of the group:

- Piper: We say 'pee-pee' – it sounds a more nicer way of... [Trails off, indicating she does not want to use the word 'penis']
- Ariana: I don't understand why guys send it, like, what do they think, like, girls are going to react? Do you think girls are going to like that? Do you think girls are going to be like, 'Oh yeah, I totally want to get with you now'? What is going on? [Angry]
- Archer: Girls probably don't get as much pleasure.
- Piper: They're not even attractive. [Penises/dick pics]
- Martha: And if you just straight up send it, like without even getting to know that person, like not having a conversation, obviously, they're not going be happy about it, they're going to be like, 'That's a bit weird'.
- Emma: Do you think boys feel under pressure to send images?
- Ariana: Well, clearly not! They're sending it multiple times to girls when they just want to say hi. You would think about it twice, wouldn't you?

Arabella (F), 14, Ariana (F), 15, Piper (F), 14, Martha (F), 14
Acacia

It was clear that the girls were frustrated at the intrusion caused by a boy sending an unsolicited dick pic; as we hear them state, they viewed the peer's actions and his images as repugnant. Ariana guessed that the sender's motivation might have been a method of online flirtation, and research suggests that, for boys, sending a photo of themselves can sometimes be a prerequisite to making a request for a girl's nude image (see Ringrose et al., 2021a, 2022b). The way that Piper describes the sender and his unwillingness to apologise for sending the image seems to express a sense of entitlement in the boy. Despite Piper, as a third party to the conflict, urging him to desist from sending unwanted images, the sender does not seem to connect his actions to image-based sexual harassment or to non-consensual action that violates the recipient.

The girls' conversation makes clear that this male peer, who had sent dick pics on multiple occasions, was known to the friendship group. However, Martha does not (and neither should she be expected to) elaborate on the nature of this peer relationship to identify whether her friendship with him was intimate or not. During the general discussion, the girls framed this encounter as an example of boyish belligerence and indicated through their unwillingness to report it that the consequences of doing so would be more worrying to the girls than any consequences associated with cyberflashing from strangers. Martha articulates the unease she would feel if she were to confront the victimiser or to report the unwanted images to school authorities. She indicates that taking such actions could potentially result in digital sexual violation online that could leak to terrestrial spaces. For Martha, corporeal encounters in terrestrial spaces present a fear of physical threat and/or harm.

This fear may be due to the dispositions seated in the gendered habitus, which naturalises, for girls, the inevitability of impending male sexual violence. This conditioned sense of inevitability means that girls pre-consciously adapt to threats in their personalised and public environments (offline–

online fields) without necessarily being cognisant of the adaptations that they are making (see Powell, 2010). For example, as a consequence of experiencing image-based sexual harassment, Martha might modify her regular local walking routes or sit in a different place on a school bus to avoid a peer, or she may try to avoid a person of threat at school. Online, she may withdraw from a social media platform or from group messages (see Vera-Gray, 2018). Early on, the gendering of the habitus attunes girls to embody these types of safety work, so it is logical that Martha, because of the likely and complex consequences to her physical and online peer relations and the threat to her own safety, would be reluctant to report the sender of the unwanted dick pics (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020; see Ringrose et al., 2021a).

The sending of unwanted dick pics is an example of non-consensual digital sexual violation that is forced upon girls. Should we think back to the discussion of social construction in Chapter Two regarding discourses of the innocent/sexualised and good/bad girl, reluctance to report image-based sexual harassment illustrates how these discourses can be pre-consciously embodied by girls. We can understand how, for girls, it is risky to report image-based sexual harassment to adults who may form negative gendered responses on the basis of such discourses. Martha and her friends shared that they de-escalate such situations by ignoring the unwanted dick pics and the messages in the hope that doing so will keep them safe from physical reprisal (even though this may not necessarily prevent online retaliation). Ironically, not reporting might backfire, as, if the acts are eventually discovered, adults might question (victim blame) why it is that Martha did not or would not report the peer's perpetration of image-based sexual harassment. Parents or guardians might also respond to the complaint by restricting Martha's access to social media platforms. It makes sense for Martha and her peers to de-escalate such situations by ignoring or staying silent about image-based sexual harassment, not only to avoid a potential threat from the male peer(s),

but also to reduce the likelihood of any device restrictions placed upon them or excessive surveillance by concerned adults.

At the point in the conversation in which she trails off and avoids describing what could happen, Martha expresses a ‘geography of fear and limitation’ (Vera-Gray, 2018, p. 89). Recent local reports tell us her fears are warranted. In one case in which image-based sexual harassment was found to leak to offline terrestrial spaces, a 13-year-old Auckland girl, after having received and reported unsolicited sexualised images from a group of boys, reportedly had threats made against her by the boys on public transport and in public spaces. The harassment of this 13-year-old occurred over twelve months and, despite complaints made to the police and school that the boys attended, resulted in no formal consequences for the boys (see Harris, 2021).

6.3 Section Two – It happens to boys, too

In Section Two, I consider the boys’ accounts of the non-consensual sending of dick pics, exploring their experiences of false accusations, their considerations of the comparatively low value of dick pics in the digital sexual economy, and the ways in which perceptions of popularity influence social and institutional responses to this act.

6.3.1 Gendered double standards and attempts to subvert them

In this following account from a discussion in a mixed group setting, Madison conceptualises the extent to which sexual and gendered double standards impact the reputations of girls in digital sexual cultures (see Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021).

Madison: Like, Luke [pseudonym] got kicked out of school for sending heaps of photos. He sent heaps of nudes. He got like a real bad reputation. He was sending all these chicks at this school dick pics. Like, the girls get the bad reputation with other girls and other boys [when their nudes are shared],

but, like, if boys go around sending nudes to girls – like, if boys send photos like that to girls, and he's, like, a popular boy – like, sometimes it just goes unnoticed for those boys.

Madison (F), 14
Deakin

Madison suggests that there is a masculine double standard for boys which seems to depend on the possession of popularity (sociocultural capital) within localised school hierarchies. It seems from Madison's account that capital, in the form of popularity, can be a shielding factor for boys that prevents the wider detection and punishment of acts of image-based sexual harassment. As the conversation continued, Madison indicated that peers might less frequently report incidents of image-based sexual harassment perpetrated by popular boys, and that the institutional consequences of such harassment are also lower for popular boys. Conversely, boys perceived to have less status (less sociocultural capital), such as those who may not fit an idealised masculine mould, may face increased risk of being reported for sending dick pics. It is important to recognise that peer groups and institutions that overlook image-based sexual harassment on the basis of popularity are in effect socially sanctioning such harassment.

Martha's description of Luke having been 'kicked out of school for sending heaps of photos' pathologises him as sexually deviant rather than boisterously masculine. In a context in which the harmful actions of popular boys go 'unnoticed', the fact that Luke was expelled indicates that he was also not popular. Luke can be seen as an example of how being less masculine and less popular made his actions somehow more threatening, risky and punishable in the eyes of his peers and the school.

Talia also refers to gendered double standards when she tells us that the boys who do not need to be concerned about the sharing of their dick pics are those whose digital images represent a large

penis size. Like her peers, Talia is embarrassed to talk explicitly about dick pics, despite the fact that she is routinely exposed to them.

- Talia: Guys kind of, they don't care if their nudes get leaked, as long as it's...
[reluctant to finish her sentence]
Emma: So, you think for boys, it doesn't bother them as much?
Talia: It depends... I kinda don't want to say it, but if they have...
Emma: It's okay to say it.
Talia: A big one. [Nervous giggles]

Talia (F), 13
Acacia

Talia was not the only young person to mention the representation of penis sizes in images. In the upcoming extract, George also implies that the size of a penis shown in a dick pic, an aspect of idealised masculinity which can diminish or enhance male reputation, is entangled with popularity status. The boys' conversation resonates with analysis by Gohr (2018), who contends that representations of penises and penis size are symbols of male fragility. Gohr attributes the cultural (uninvited) dissemination of dick pics to a pre-conscious sense among boys and men of a impending (feminine) threat to patriarchal stability.

- Emma: Does the boy get a negative reputation for sending dick pics?
Dylan: It all depends on how popular they are.
George: It depends – and this is going to sound really weird, but – on how big it is.
Simon: I don't know; it's kind of a tough one. I've never seen like someone send a dick pic, and it [the sharing of sexual images] gets really out of hand. It's usually, like, the [images of] girls, because I don't think a girl will spread it [a dick pic].
Simon: Yeah, a girl wouldn't spread it.

Dylan (M), Simon (M), George (M), all 14
Birch

Simon corroborates what research indicates: that dick pics have limited viral potential or currency value in comparison to the nude images of girls in gendered digital sexual cultures. The boys

seemed safe in the knowledge that if they did send an unwanted dick pic, the image would be unlikely to be non-consensually shared by girls and would therefore be less likely to be detected. Indeed, research has shown that girls are more likely to delete than share an unwanted dick pic (Ringrose et al., 2022a). The points raised by this group illustrate the gendered construction of discriminatory offline–online networks and spaces in which the shared image of a girl is deemed networked collective property, and an unwanted dick pic is not (see Salter, 2016). Because there are reduced risks of detection for the popular boys, or for boys in general, whose photos are less likely to be shared, the boys can feel safe to send dick pics. The odd photo that comes to light can be written off as a prank, an act of silliness or a type of cyberbullying, rather than be positioned as a gendered practice of image-based sexual harassment (see Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019).

Taking the complexities of the peer-to-peer context of sharing or sending unwanted images in a different direction, Desiree does not describe the sending of dick pics as disproportionate and gendered or as an example of cyberbullying or image-based sexual harassment. Instead, she explains how the dick pic phenomenon can be used by girls against boys, even those who have not produced or sent images. Desiree opens this conversation and Bailey contributes context to Desiree’s viewpoints.

- Desiree: It happens to boys, too.
 Emma: In terms of ‘it happening to boys’, what do you mean?
 Bailey: They [boys] don’t even have pictures [they have not taken/shared dick pics], so girls will be like, ‘Oh, I have a picture of your dick,’ and they don’t actually have it, but it’s just to scare them or something.
 Emma: Right. Okay, so a girl might ask for a dick pic and then a boy...
 Bailey: No, it isn’t usually them [girls] asking for it. It’s like a threat.
 Madison: Yeah, it’s like a threat, and you can use it as a threat. You can say that. You can be like, ‘I have your dick pic, so don’t do this, otherwise, I’ll do this.’ Girls can do that to boys.
 Emma: Okay. So, let me get this straight. A girl could threaten a boy by saying, ‘I have your dick pic,’ even if she doesn’t have it.
 All: Yeah.

In contrast to reported practices whereby girls ignore or delete unwanted dick pics for fear of reprisals or stigma, these girls imply a gendered pushback which attempts to subvert male-dominant gender power relations. In this practice, disputes with male peers incite girls to threaten to share a non-existent dick pic with networked peers under the false pretence that it belongs to the male peer with whom they have been in dispute. This prospect of girls taking back power through falsely and publicly digitally shaming boys goes against the idea that all boys are unafraid of being accused of having shared a wanted or unwanted dick pic. Such acts of ‘girl-power’ may have an impact on individual male peers, but, like the participation of girls in the wank bank (as noted in Chapter Five), such attempts by girls to disrupt male-dominant power relations by shifting the gendered gaze onto males seems unlikely to challenge the deep structures of the collective male gaze and sexist patriarchal cultures.

6.3.2 False accusations, accidental outings, and homophobia

Situations in which images can be used as a type of blackmail are not always as straightforward as they seem, as you will discover next in Seth’s account. This 17-year-old substantiates the disclosure Bailey, Madison and Desiree share about girls making false accusations.

- Seth: Basically, in Year 10, I basically had quite a big fight with one of my female friends. And she took it badly, and then she [and her friends] decided, ‘Hey I’m gonna go and tell everyone: ‘Oh look, this person is sending me nudes [dick pics]’. It was exactly like that. Then, my other friends came to my defence. They were like, ‘He would never send you nudes [dick pics] because he’s gay.’ While the intention was good, they kind of outed me at the same time. They were basically like, ‘Ooh no, he would never send nudes to a girl.’
- Emma: So, indirectly, because your friends were supporting you by saying you had not sent a dick pic to a girl, your friends talked about your sexuality to defend you?

Seth: Yeah, my friends automatically went: here's his reason – (a) it proved that it wasn't me doing that and that she was lying, (b) but also kind of outed me at the same time.

Seth (M), 17
Cedar

Seth's peers appears to have drawn on the assumption that the sending of unsolicited dick pics is primarily a cisgender heterosexual practice (see Ringrose et al., 2022a, 2022b). I did not confirm with Seth whether the female friend he had argued with was aware of his sexuality, but, from my interpretation of this conversation, I presume not. In this incident, some of Seth's other friends, who were aware of his sexuality, stepped in as active bystanders so that they could clear Seth's name. Unfortunately, in doing so, they unintentionally and without malice revealed Seth's sexuality. Seth recalled the double distress of, first, being the target of a false accusation, and then being outed, which left him feeling forced to be open about his sexuality.

Because the sending of unwanted dick pics is generally reported as a cisgender heterosexual masculine practice, there is limited research that explores young people's experiences of sharing intimate images (consensual and non-consensual) in rainbow communities (see Scott, 2020). One study indicates that young people in these communities engage in consensual sexting, including the consensual sharing of dick pics (see Marcotte et al., 2021). In the passage below, Ziggy, a non-binary 13-year-old provided some deeper insights into the exchange of dick pics in same-sex relationships. They recalled a gay acquaintance who was tricked by a new partner into believing that they were in a same-sex exploratory intimate relationship before being cruelly outed. As Ziggy recalls, the acquaintance thought he was engaging in consensual practices of exchanging dick pics, which then turned to homophobic image-based sexual abuse.

Ziggy: Yeah, it's mainly heterosexual from what I've seen, but it does affect same-sex stuff. I know a homosexual couple – they were sending nudes [dick pics] back and forth, and then one day there was, like, the other guy in the relationship who was actually heterosexual and started sharing around the photos of the actual gay person's dick.

Ziggy (NB), 13
Cedar

Ziggy's anecdote illuminates how the sharing of sexualised images can increase the risk of homophobic abuse targeting young people in the rainbow community. Positive sexual explorations through the sharing of images online between young people who are discovering themselves and are curious or uncertain about their sexuality can unexpectedly and unfairly pivot to non-consensual sharing and potentially result in the unsafe outing of an individual's sexuality. Research confirms that there is a higher rate of victimisation in the rainbow community as targets of online abuse and harassment, including non-consensual image sharing (Lenhart et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2020b; Scott, 2020). Ziggy offered this anecdote as an example of cyberbullying. Under circumstances in which young people from rainbow communities feel vulnerable, it is understanding that one might, as a protective strategy, label being the victim of the public sharing of images that were originally intended for one intimate partner as 'cyberbullying'. A young person seeking support might complain of being cyberbullied to reduce the likelihood that they would be judged for their own explorations of their sexuality.

In a different set of circumstances, which did not involve malicious homophobic abuse or accidental outings, Sam had also experienced false accusations of having sent unwanted dick pics.

Sam: Okay, so, this person – Jonah [pseudonym] – like, sent a pic of his something. He sent it to... I really don't want to say it. [Embarrassed tone]
Emma: That's okay. You mean a dick pic?
Sam: [Nodding] He sent it to Maya [pseudonym]. After all that, people misunderstood and, kind of, the blame went on me. And then it's like,

‘Why did you send stuff?’ I was like, ‘I did nothing.’ After about two days, they found out it wasn’t me.

Sam (M), 14
Birch

Sam expressed feelings of distress caused by this false accusation. Compared to most boys across the study, Sam seemed to hold a minority view, as he did acknowledge the negative impacts of image-based sexual harassment on girls. It is critical to highlight that, regardless of their stance on the sending of the images of girls, there are boys who do not send unwanted dick pics and who disagree with this practice. Owen stated the reasons why he would not send a dick pic:

Owen: It’s like walking up to someone and getting naked to them. So, they didn’t really want it, but they still got it.

Owen (M), 14
Birch

Because boys have a role to play as part of the solution to addressing technology-facilitated sexual violence, exploring the opinions and actions of those boys who do not prescribe to dominant views is crucial to the contemplation of prevention strategies (Powell, 2022). By paying attention to the boys who are countering these practices as well as to those who perpetrate image-based sexual harassment, we can explore how their ‘peer pedagogies’ can provide critical insights (see Gavey et al., 2021).

In Section Two of this chapter, I have considered the boys’ accounts of this phenomenon, by exploring some of the boys experiences of false accusations and how perceptions of popularity might influence social and institutional responses to this act. None of the boys openly admitted to the consensual or non-consensual sending of dick pics. Their concealment of any involvement in any image-based sexual harassment could be due to various factors, for instance, including peer perceptions within the group setting, my position as an older female researcher and/or concerns

about the legalities. However, the boys did provide some anecdotes about the lower value of the nude images of boys to those of girls and the lesser chances that boys' images would be widely distributed due to gendered double standards. They also raised the issue of false accusations in digital sexual cultures.

6.4 Section Three – Safety work: ignore, engage, unfollow, block, report, repeat.

Feminist scholars Fiona Vera-Gray and Liz Kelly have advanced epistemology about the nuances of sexual violence, including how girls and women address male intrusions by undertaking embodied safety work in physical public spaces. Imagining beyond public terrestrial spaces, I transfer Vera-Gray's and Kelly's logic of embodied safety work to integrated offline–online spaces (Kelly, 1987; Vera-Gray, 2017, 2018; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

A recurrent theme that I have touched upon previously when discussing my findings and that I address in detail in this section is the underreporting of image-based sexual harassment. Compared to their male counterparts, young women in Aotearoa New Zealand are higher users of social media and, specifically, more frequent users of Instagram and Snapchat (Netsafe, 2018a). This emphasis on these two central social media platforms is meaningful, because they are key sites on which cyberflashing and the sending of unwanted dick pics are perpetrated. Findings from a study in the United Kingdom determined that nearly 76% of girls aged 12 to 18 reported having received unwanted dick pics on these platforms (Ringrose, 2020, June; Ringrose et al., 2021a, 2021b). Research has also shown that when girls take action to report cyberflashing and image-based sexual harassment perpetrated through the affordances of social media platforms, the operators of these platforms are often unresponsive to the girls' disclosures. For girls, this can confirm the awareness of the gendered habitus that boys and men dominate and control offline–online spaces

in the same way they do physical public spaces. The lack of any response by the social media platforms to complaints makes it clear to girls that those in charge have little intention of addressing the affordances that enable cyberflashing and image-based sexual harassment. Throughout girlhood, one's gendered habitus takes on the gendered duties of safety work that is both invisible and integral to the embodiment of being a girl or young woman (Vera-Gray, 2018; Childnet, 2019; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Because social media platforms do not police the male intrusion inherent in the unwanted receipt of dick pics, females are tasked with doing their own safety work associated with responding to the sender of dick pics and de-escalating the intrusion.

6.4.1 Cultural pressures and 'safety work'

The strategies that the girls in this study embodied to deal with daily intrusions, which often occurred on social media platforms, followed a logic of ignore, unfollow, block, report, and repeat. Feminist scholars exploring digital sexual cultures build on the fundamental contributions of black feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and foreground an intersectional lens. In the exploration of digital sexual cultures, the use of an intersectional lens can provide nuanced insights about the risks facing different groups of young people, particularly girls (Project deSHAME, 2017; see Ringrose et al., 2021b). Applying this lens, we can contemplate the convergence of cultural context with identity, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity and disability (this list is not exhaustive). To think beyond Eurocentric understandings of digital sexual cultures and be mindful to not privilege a dominant secular lens or fetishise the experiences of ethnic communities (see Allen, 2018), I attempt to present the nuances of some of the cultural pressures experienced by young women concerning image-based sexual harassment.

In the subsequent passages, Lakshmi, Preeti, Sudha and Lata, girls of Indian backgrounds, explain to me how, for some ethnic and faith-based communities, photographic images, as artefacts of cultural symbolism, can take on meanings that are different to a Westernised understanding of such images. This group explained to me how the act of taking a selfie (non-sexualised) was considered by some members of the orthodox Muslim community, including their own family members, as a breach of the Qur'an (see Thornhill, 2015; see Bengani, 2017; see Caidi et al., 2018). None of these young women subscribed to these orthodox beliefs; however, their insights opened a conversation about the layering of cultural pressures and taboos that might be experienced when one is participating in digital sexual cultures or experiencing non-consensual digital sexual violations. These cultural influences, for some communities of young people, might add barriers to the reporting of sexual violence that has happened across offline–online spaces (see Rahmanipour et al., 2019). In this exchange, Sudha apprehensively refers to the experiences of one female friend who had received an unwanted dick pic from a male friend.

- Sudha: One of my friends – someone sent her a photo, but she just blocked him.
Emma: Was that by somebody that your friend knew?
Sudha: Yeah, at school.
Emma: Was it something to do with nudity?
Sudha: Yeah.
Emma: Was it a dick pic?
Sudha: Yeah. [All the girls giggle nervously.]
Emma: It's okay, dick pics have been previously mentioned in other groups. Did these friends know each other?
Sudha: Yeah.
Emma: What kind of relationship did they have?
Sudha: Friends, I think, just, like, talking.
Emma: Do you know what happened in that situation?
Sudha: He called her, like, not mature for blocking.
Emma: So, he sent the pic and then, because she blocked him, he said she was immature?
Sudha: Yeah.
Emma: Is that cyberbullying? [Our wider discussion up to this point has been about cyberbullying]
All: Yeah.

Emma: Do you know what happened?
Sudha: I don't think it got reported. She just blocked him.
Emma: Is it distressing to receive these images?
Sudha: Kind of, it is.
Lakshmi: I think, because, it's like, once you see it, you can't un-see it.
Emma: How would you feel if that happened to you?
Lakshmi: Like, ashamed.
Sudha: Grossed out.
Preeti: Traumatized, ashamed.
Lata: Awkward.
Sudha: Because they're showing, like, content that's offensive.
Emma: What about reporting unwanted nudes?
Sudha: Some people would be scared that their parents would find out.
Preeti: Or it could be they're blackmailed or something, and if they did report they're going to get in more trouble.
Lakshmi: People who follow religion or culture, they would be more scared to report because they might fear that they'd be abandoned by their family.

Lakshmi (F), Preeti (F), Sudha (F), Lata (F), all 14
Cedar

In this conversation, Sudha explains that her friend, who has been subjected to image-based sexual harassment by a peer, takes action by blocking the perpetrator – her friend – from her social media contacts. The male friend who had sent the unwanted dick pic responds by gaslighting Sudha's friend: he minimises his perpetration of image-based sexual harassment and repositions her response as an 'immature' overreaction.

Across the study, girls described blocking – rather than reporting – as a common form of safety work. This act is a sensible one: blocking immediately removed the risk of that particular person sending more unwanted images from the account they had used in that instance. The girls shared perceptions that reporting, on the other hand, even if done confidentially, could increase the risk of confrontation if the peer-sender lost access to his account as a consequence and therefore suspected who had made the complaint.

The internalisation of postfeminist dispositions to be a strong girl and reject victim status could leave girls such as those in this group questioning whether their experience would be considered by society to be as harmful as it felt – especially if they were being gaslighted by the perpetrator (Pomerantz et al., 2013; Dobson, 2015). Existing patriarchal dominant gendered power relations may also cause girls to second-guess whether they had indeed experienced sexually harassing violations as harmful rather than as normal male behaviour (Vera-Gray, 2018). This process of recognising and embodying a violation but justifying such experiences of male domination as ‘the way things are’ (which Bourdieu would term as doxa), further explains why such encounters are deemed to be not worth reporting. This fortification of the status quo in which there is an accepted power differential between males and females exemplifies Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001/2007).

I have already referred to the dichotomy of the innocent/sexualised, good/bad child discourses that influence many cultures and the silencing impact Westernised discourses may have on girls who experience image-based sexual harassment. Being ‘good’ and learning to practise silence are important strategies girls may use to prevent the risk of sexual stigma (Vera-Gray, 2018). Indeed, Preeti and Lakshmi suggest that, for girls raised in some ethnic communities, there may be amplified cultural and gendered pressures to assess before taking any informal or formal action in response to having experienced technology-facilitated sexual violence. The girls hinted at familial responses in which the consequences of being subjected to an unwanted dick pick from a peer might also result in the girl being victim-blamed and, in worst-case scenarios, ‘abandoned’ by family and support networks.

The dialogue between the girls suggested that the community policing of female sexuality takes precedence over the reporting of experiences of victimisation. Other explorations with women in

ethnic minority communities in Aotearoa New Zealand have shown that, following an experience of sexual violence, it can be risky for the victim to disclose the experience or reach out for support. The group's concerns substantiate these observations and help to explain the underreporting of incidents of sexual violence by young women in these communities (Rahmanipur et al., 2018). When I reminded the girls that we were discussing the topic of 'cyberbullying' by asking whether they would place experiences of receiving an unsolicited dick pic into this category, they all confirmed that they would. Certainly, in these circumstances, categorising any form of technology-facilitated sexual violence as 'cyberbullying' makes good sense. I contend that, in doing this, the girls reduce the broader risks associated with sexual stigma and gendered sexual double standards that arise from being exposed to these unwanted images.

6.4.2 Cyberflashing: We started messing with him

Some of the girls in the study reported purposefully engaging with cyberflashers as a perceived attempt to take back some control over the intrusion by toying with the perpetrators. For example, as Talia explains:

Talia: The dick pics I've seen was when me and my friends were joking around with that guy on Snapchat.

Talia (F), 13
Acacia

Talia was not the only girl to actively engage with cyberflashers in this way. In the following passage, I am with Kelly, who attended a rainbow group information session and opted to

participate in a semi-structured interview²⁵. Kelly nonchalantly recalls being cyberflashed by a stranger and explains the ways in which she and her friend engaged with him.

- Kelly: I actually recently got one.
Emma: What did you do?
Kelly: My friend took my phone, and we started messing with him. We didn't send anything, photos or anything, but we were like, 'Ha, funny...'
Emma: Is there anywhere to report those type of pictures?
Kelly: Yeah, but I don't think Instagram does anything about it. There's a report button and it says: 'What did you not like? Was it inappropriate? Was it spam?' You put it in, but I don't think anything happens. I think accounts have to get three reports until they get it [the image/or the account] taken down.

Kelly (F), 14
Acacia

Here Kelly explains how she and her friend, like Talia, resignify the digital sexual intrusion as an amusement. Similar to women's use of humour to belittle the senders of dick pics, as described in research by Amundsen (2020) and Meehan (2022e), the girls in this study indicated that they use humour as a 'distancing tool' (p. 8). On the surface, the use of humour as a strategy to respond to digital sexual intrusions could raise the question of how harmful this encounter genuinely is. Researchers would contend that the response by Kelly and her friends to push back by messaging the cyberflasher likely serves as their gendered strategy to redefine an uncomfortable situation as a playful encounter (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020; Meehan, 2022e).

In reference to street harassment in terrestrial public spaces, Vera-Gray & Kelly (2020) conceptualise the ways females respond to violations as part of the invisibilised social conditioning of girls and women. Girls learn through repetition to normalise prevention and avoidance,

²⁵ Kelly gave no reason for her preference for an interview.

ultimately learning to dismiss harassing experiences such as the receiving of unwanted dick pics and cyberflashing as ordinary. Eventually, these responses are embodied in the gendered habitus as common sense (see Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). According to Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, this process of gendered embodiment captures doxa and symbolic violence.

Bourdieu would frame the ways in which girls and women pre-consciously embody the doing of safety work as arising from the gendering of the habitus. The spaces in which females now have to do safety work have expanded into the digital realm. On the surface, it appears that by joking around with the intentions of the cyberflasher, Kelly and her friends are demonstrating agency, because they do not explicitly describe themselves as passive or victimised. This serves as a further example and a powerful reminder of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of symbolic violence. Unknowingly complicit in an act of digital sexual violation, Kelly and her friends perceive their engagement with the cyberflasher as a practice motivated by free choice (Bourdieu, 1990).

Kelly's story reveals her familiarity with Instagram's self-regulated three-strikes reporting process – and its ineffectiveness. The fact that the community standards of social media platforms consider it acceptable for girls to have to endure a first and a second exposure to a violation of their safety before they can make a report is incomprehensible, given that the phenomenon is so widespread: more than 75% of girls in the United Kingdom have experienced receiving unsolicited dick pics (Ringrose, 2020; Ringrose et al., 2021a; 2021b). Kelly's recognition of the futility of reporting to social media platforms is well substantiated. As the evidence presented by Ringrose et al. (2021b) demonstrates, dominant gender norms and sexual scripts coupled with social media affordances create opportunities for the perpetration of image-based sexual harassment. The encounters, which seemingly have no consequences, contribute to gendered and sexual doxa that perpetuates gender order and gender inequality by affirming to young women that cyberflashing and image-based

sexual abuse have become legitimised as accepted and acceptable practices of male dominance in digital spaces. Doxic norms confirm and support the interpretation of digital sexual violence as natural and male intrusiveness as normal (Vera-Gray, 2017). Girls are limited to terms like ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘nudes’ in any discussion of digital sexual violations (Adorjan et al., 2019; Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019).

Kelly expresses a distrust in the ability of social media platforms to prioritise her safety. This wariness is warranted, and she is not alone in her scepticism of the capacity of social media platforms to address online misogyny and sexual harassment (Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2022). Studies in the United Kingdom show that only 10% of children and young people understand how to report distinct categories of harmful online content, and only 43% of 8- to 17-year-olds believe that reporting harmful content would result in any action being taken (Safer Internet, 2021). Because social media platforms do not demonstrate a readiness to protect them, logically, some girls choose to take charge of the intrusions by turning the situations around for their own amusement. The gendered habitus has a feel for the game, so to speak, and therefore makes decisions based on the expectation that nothing will be achieved by reporting to social media platforms. The gendered habitus senses this because, as Bourdieu argues, it is conditioned to expect the outcomes based on past experience and outcomes (Maton, 2007/2014). As such, the gendered habitus guides the girls’ logic that considers playing with a cyberflasher as a demonstration of agency. As Harris and Dobson (2015) contend, in ‘postgirlpower times’, it is critical to unpack the context and logic of enactments of determination by girls and acknowledge that girls are most likely acting, not as agents or victims, but as ‘suffering actors’ (p. 46) attempting to disrupt gendered power imbalances in the cultural digital sexual landscape within which they are operating.

The participants' knowledge that their reports to social media are unlikely to receive a response to complaints of sexual harassment not only justifies their emerging distrust of the inept reporting systems of social media but also has much broader implications for the (under) reporting of sexual violence. Findings from the Safer Internet Centre in the United Kingdom indicated that 44% of children and young people used platform-blocking mechanisms (Safer Internet Centre, 2021). Such mechanisms provide some young people with a perceived amount of control over their exposure to online harms and digital sexual violations. Although blocking may be a helpful strategy (despite the fact that it can only occur after sexualised harassment has been perpetrated), participants indicated their reliance on blocking meant they were unlikely to make a full report of their experience. As a result, reported rates of image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing are likely to be highly inaccurate. At present, the emphasis social media platforms place on end-to-end encryption and free speech seems to trump their need to address online misogyny and technology-facilitated sexual violence. While leaders of these platforms have claimed that safeguarding technology is unworkable for social media cultures, female web designer Kelsey Bressler, motivated by her personal experiences of cyberflashing, designed artificial intelligence that can detect and prevent exposure to unsolicited penis images. The software was developed swiftly with comparatively limited resources and arguably demonstrates that – despite claims made by representatives of social media platforms that online harms are too difficult to manage – with a will, there is a way (see Matei, 2019; Sjoberg, 2020).

6.4.3 Maybe I should unfollow him

Across the study, girls described not only being confronted by snapshots in person and on social media messaging apps, but also affronted by the live streaming of dick pic videos from male peers. In the following discussion, the group explains how the default setting for following a friend on

Instagram, Instagram Reels, makes the viewing of their friend’s real-time footage automatic. Under this setting, it is difficult to avoid exposure to an Instagram contact livestreaming a video of his penis. As previously noted, in the context of postfeminist dispositions, it is common for the gendered habitus of girls to internalise the responsibility for doing their own safety work. If image-based sexual harassment cannot be prevented, then it is up to the girl to avoid the peer or ignore the image/video (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). However, when the context of space and time are collapsed (see boyd, 2013), as they can be in offline–online contexts through online livestreaming, it can be impossible to prevent the viewing of unwanted digital sexual images.

Contradicting their initial minimisations in previous conversations of the effect of being exposed to dick pics, Lauren, Millie, Trudy and Brianna recount how, amid their routine daily activities, this disturbance is experienced as an enduring mental invasion for them and other networked spectators (Powell & Henry, 2017). The girls explain that their response strategies are to unfollow or block the peer to prevent future encounters and describe the complications of friendship networks. They acknowledge that the incident is harassment, but not particularly of themselves. By focusing their expressions of concern on others, they shift consideration of this encounter as a form of their own victimisation (see Dobson, 2015).

- Lauren: I’ve seen somebody who I followed – he had a livestream of him taking off his pants and showing a dick pic.
 Emma: Is that somebody who’s a teenager?
 Lauren: Yes.
 Emma: Is that somebody who is known to you?
 Lauren: Yes.
 Emma: When he did that livestreaming, what do you do in that type of situation?
 Lauren: I go and unfollow them.
 Millie: Yeah, I block them.
 Brianna: Yeah, I just unfollowed him, blocked him.
 Emma: For livestreaming, would you also consider that to be sexual harassment?
 Millie: Kind of, because it was his [mouths the word penis] – him putting it up there, and it’s like...

- Brianna: And you might not want to see it.
Millie: And he put it up there. I mean, it is kind of harassment for the other people who clicked on it, because they're like, 'He's my friend', and then they're like, 'Oh, it's his... [penis]' It's a bit of shock because I don't want to see that – that's mentally scarring.
Brianna: Some things just can't be unseen. [Girls from Cedar School also said this.]
All: Yeah, definitely.

Lauren (F), Millie (F), Trudy (F), Brianna (F), all 14
Birch

As far as we can surmise in the above description, the live streaming of the dick pic is not targeted at any particular individual but shared in the context of a networked peer audience (boyd, 2014). However, as we have heard in an earlier account, boys understand there are unlikely to be any consequences for this digital exhibitionism. Bourdieu (1989, 1990a, 2001/2007) would tell us that this absence of penalty is due to the symbolic force of androcentrism that results in domination either going unseen or being naturalised. The influence of symbolic violence could be used to explain the fact that the girls do not express views that such experiences of digital exhibitionism are explicitly dominant sexist, gendered or violent actions. Instead, as you will hear, they privilege the rights of their male peer to choose to livestream his penis, despite it being likely that this will force some viewers into a digital sexual encounter. It is worth noting that, in the following extract, they do classify the live streaming as age-inappropriate content.

- Emma: Did you find it distressing when you clicked on it?
Brianna: I was like, well, this is his choice, I guess – maybe I should unfollow him.
Millie: He should have put a warning up.
Brianna: Warning: sexual content. R18.
Millie: It's his choice to put it up there. Or did he just, like, pop it up?
Brianna: He had, like, a computer...
Millie: Well, if it was him putting it up there with his own 'I want to put that up there', then that's totally okay for him, but he should have let everyone know that clicked on: 'Hey, guys. I'm about to show my...[penis] If you don't want to see it, then bye.'

Brianna (F), Millie (F), both 14

By indicating that their male peer has a right to exploit the affordances of social media for the purposes of showing sexual images of himself, the girls appear to accept the fleetingness of oversharing as a norm on social media platforms (see Charteris et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2018). Despite the fact that the act results in the digital penetration of their personal space, the girls uphold their male friend's prerogative to livestream his penis.

In this following dialogue, Talia explains that her solution to receiving a dick pic is to decline message requests. Again, this strategy can only be employed after the viewing of a digital sexual image, so declining message requests cannot help girls from being forced, without the choice of consent, to view unwanted and unexpected images of penises. Talia and Livvy reason that, because declining message requests from the sender of an image results in the image being permanently deleted, declining is a sufficient intervention. However, this strategy does not prevent the girls from receiving unwanted dick pics from other people in the future.

- Livvy: Yeah, it's in your message ... Because my accounts are private, so it comes up with one message request, and then you click on it, and then: dick pic.
- All: Yeah.
- Emma: When you see those, do you consider that to be part of cyberbullying or harmful in a sexual way? [Our wider discussion up to this point has been about cyberbullying]
- Talia: Kind of, but you can easily decline it.
- Livvy: Yeah, you can decline it, and it's gone forever.
- Emma: What about if you've never seen that, and then it just happens for your first time, and you've got no idea.
- Ashley: Well, that's scary.
- Talia: First of all, report them, second of all block them. Yeah, and then do something. And then tell a trusted adult. Make sure you don't say anything back, or else sometimes it could lead to them finding your location because you replied or something.
- Livvy: Yeah, and then also it could lead to other things happening with that person. If you replied, like went, 'Oh, nice' , or something like that, you get end up getting at fault.

Talia (F), Livvy (F), Ashley (F), all 13
Acacia

There is a ceaselessness to these encounters that can, for some girls, be traumatising; as Ashley acknowledges, the first exposure can be scary. Digital citizenship programmes, relationships and/or sex and sexuality education do not prepare girls for these encounters. The embedding of postfeminist dispositions positions the girls to believe themselves to be empowered to take on individualised appropriate action; unjustly, they view themselves as naturally obligated to take on this work (see Gill, 2012; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020; McGlynn & Johnson, 2021a). Across the study, Talia was the only girl to suggest she would approach an adult. Talia, Livvy and Ashley are the youngest in the study, which may explain their willingness to approach an adult as well as their more trusting view of reporting processes. Nevertheless, even these solutions do not prevent Talia from expressing her anxieties about location services which would enable the sender of the image to track communications to find her home. Continuing the conversation, Livvy signals her concerns about how the girls can be held culpable if they reply to the sender of the unsolicited image. As we have seen, for some girls, replying can give them a sense that they are taking back power and control from the perpetrators. Ultimately, as seen in other studies, instead of expressing anger about the actions of perpetrator, the girls in this study address the culpability they feel they have in the encounter and the likelihood that the female victim will be blamed for any actions they might take, reflecting the girls' sense of gendered responsabilisation (see Mandau, 2020).

6.5 Conclusion

Existing research about dick pics has tended to focus on the victim-survivor experiences of adults (Ringrose et al., 2022a; Mishna et al., 2021). In my explorations of the experiences of young people, I have observed that the broad categories of 'cyberbullying' and 'nudes' have obscured

awareness of the extent to which young people experience the gender-based violence practices of image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing (see Waling & Pym, 2019). Over three sections, this chapter has explored the experiences of young people from various perspectives.

According to Bourdieu's toolkit, the gendered habitus is likely to have an implicit sense of how sexual gendered double standards operate for girls and boys. Double standards normalise pursuance and the use of offline–online spaces by boys and men for sexual harassment; the males know they are unlikely to be detected, reported or punished for producing and non-consensually sharing images of their penises, whilst females are socially penalised for producing and non-consensually sharing their nude images. The young people in the study understood that dick pics did not have a similar transactional value as that attached to the images of girls and, arguably, this has shaped gendered judgments and social responses to the sharing of dick pics (Ricciardelli & Adorjan, 2019; Meehan, 2022e).

In Section One, the girls navigating the peer-to-peer context of image-based sexual harassment told us of the additional gendered relational complications between peers and the leakiness of these encounters across offline-online social fields. It seemed to me that embedded postfeminist dispositions in the gendered digital habitus embodied girls pre-consciously with strong-girl responses that both prepared them to undertake safety work and led them to not think of themselves as victimised. In practice, enacting these dispositions meant they used a range of responses, such as joking with the perpetrator, downplaying the effects of receiving unwanted dick pics or categorising unwanted dick pics as 'cyberbullying' to avoid potential sexual stigma. I contend that the force of symbolic violence, a product of cultural phallocentrism and masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001/2007; Gohr, 2018), naturalised these digital sexual intrusions such that the girls downplayed, detached themselves from or took for granted that they would have to manage these

digital sexual encounters. Nonetheless, as they stated on more than one occasion, the sexual violations they experience through the receipt of an unwanted dick pic ‘can’t be unseen’, and for some this translated to girls verbalising or implying that they felt violated or/and unsafe.

Gendered double sexual standards mean that boys are less fearful than girls that their images will be leaked, as dick pics do not hold the same transactional value as images of girls, even when being used against a boy. Despite the reports that a minority of girls might use the threat of sharing a dick pic to stop unwanted behaviour, this does little to subvert dominant gender power relations. That said, Section Two presented accounts of the difficulties boys had with dick pics in a peer-to-peer context. Having sociocultural capital in the form of popularity and status excuses some boys who perpetrate image-based sexual harassment; those who did not have strong sociocultural capital were more likely to be detected or to face consequences. Accidental outings of sexuality, false accusations and homophobia associated with the sharing of dick pics were distressing experiences for the boys. In such cases, boys can also be victims of image-based sexual abuse and harassment, and their experiences need to be taken into consideration, as they also have a stake in being able to prevent or report the receipt or sharing of digital sexual images.

The final section of this chapter made clear that girls felt there is little point in reporting unwanted dick pics to social media platforms. It should not go unacknowledged that the most popular platforms among girls, operated by men in masculine cultures of technology (see Faulkner, 2001), actively create opportunities for image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing through developments such as Instagram Reels (Ringrose et al., 2021b). Girls expressed their frustration with social media platforms that do little to address their reported experiences; at the same time, this inaction from the platforms reinforces the naturalisation of male dominance and the normalisation of image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing.

Overall, young people indicated that they would like to be able to discuss digital sexual cultures, but they are unsure who they can turn to, and they are concerned about what the consequences would be if they sought help. This leads to the next chapter, which focuses on the theme of education and who and how young people talk about digital sexual cultures with adults.

7 Chapter Seven – Pedagogies for digital, sexual, gendered beings

7.1 Introduction

The chapter is structured in three sections. For context, the first section briefly addresses the evolution of sexuality education in Aotearoa New Zealand, which is relevant to situating the topic of the digital sexualities of young people in this country. Two interconnected themes are addressed in the subsequent sections. Section Two introduces the first theme, which centres on educational institutional pedagogies of avoidance that implicitly promote abstinence-only approaches with young people. The participants reported that adults avoided engaging in full discussions with young people about requesting, producing and sharing images in digital sexual cultures. As established in Chapter Six, when conversations did take place, they were often held after young people had been exposed to digital sexual content and involved the use by adults of didactic teaching methods experienced by young people as controlled cognitive drillings advising abstinence. Ultimately, the messages conveyed by adults were perceived as anti-sex, anti-sext and anti-sexuality. Addressed in Section Three, the second theme of this chapter is strongly interconnected with the first and discusses the everyday implications of avoidance and abstinence pedagogies. The young people voiced their sense of adults' apprehension to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with them about digital sexual cultures. In limited ways, some adults would and did try to engage in discussions with young people, but these did not necessarily meet the needs of these young people or address the realities of their digital sexualities. As you will read in the extracts, the approaches taken by the adults who were expected to help them navigate experiences of cyberbullying, sexting and digital sexual cultures often left young people in an information deficit and/or fearful of incrimination of themselves and/or their peers.

7.2 Section One – Context in Aotearoa: from Sex Education to Sexuality Education

In this section, I trace the historical context of relationships and sexuality education in Aotearoa New Zealand to situate the current-day provision of teaching on the subject of digital sexualities, an area that Allen (2020) contends is not adequately addressed by existing pedagogy.

7.2.1 Sexuality Education: origins and revisions

In this country, traditionally, sex education originated from a colonial, religious, medicalised model which epitomised racialised, classed, socio-political concerns and targeted the control of youth²⁶ (Allen & Elliot, 2008; see Le Grice & Braun, 2018). Sex education officially entered school classrooms in 1985, based on a curriculum of instruction that offered heteronormative information to regulate morality, reduce family reproductivity and promote sex hygiene to prevent venereal diseases (Allen & Elliot, 2008). Following this initial programme of learning, in 1999, the Ministry of Education, acknowledging societal changes and the limitations of the existing moralistic biological model, revised the curriculum to provide ‘sexuality education’. To an extent, the revisions introduced a more comprehensive approach to the subject that embedded the social aspects of relationships within sexuality education and aligned with a human rights framework²⁷ (ibid; see Ministry of Education, 2020).

Subsequent sexuality education guidelines released in 2002 were updated in 2015 and later reviewed in 2018 by the Education Review Office.²⁸ The outcomes of the 2018 review raised a key criticism around the inconsistency of school/educator practices, including gaps in the

²⁶ An analysis of the impact of colonial sexuality education is beyond the scope of this review. For a review, see Le Grice & Braun, 2018.

²⁷ The Ministry of Education (2020, p. 9) align Relationships and Sexuality Education with the Human Rights Act (1993).

²⁸ See *Promoting Wellbeing through Sexuality Education*, <https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/promoting-wellbeing-through-sexuality-education>

provision of information covering digital sexualities and sexual violence.²⁹ Consequently, the guidelines and resources were revised in 2020 and again in 2022. The ongoing need to review and revise guidelines and resources strongly indicates that the education sector is outpaced by the evolving needs of young people, particularly as their expressions of genders and sexualities are increasingly manifested in digital spaces using digital devices. Indeed, young people can now turn to social media and pornography websites for what they may perceive as non-judgmental sources of relationship and sexuality information (see Meehan, 2019a; see Setty, 2022c).

7.2.2 Beyond biology? The current curriculum

Under the current guidelines, sexuality education is taught under the broad framework curriculum of Health and Physical Education. Relationships and sexuality education is compulsory until Year Ten,³⁰ at which time students are typically aged 14 to 15, and involves a minimum of 12 to 15 classroom instruction hours per year. This time mandate aggregated against the time that young people now spend online³¹ and the widening scope of digital sexualities seems to be a fraction of what would ideally be an annual sum. The Ministry of Education revisions could be described, arguably, as progression (not progressive). While state efforts may claim that the current sexuality curriculum goes beyond biology in order to meet the diverse needs of contemporary young people, it is uncertain whether the delivery of learning goes beyond basic sex education to establish a framework of positive non-dominant heteronormative sex rights that recognises sexual autonomy in both terrestrial and digital spaces. If curriculum remains grounded in implicit and explicit abstinence-only approaches and

²⁹ At the time of this study, the legislative framework for education was the 1989 Education Act. This Act has since been replaced with the Education and Safety Training Act 2020.

³⁰ Developmentally appropriate content from Year 1–10. This thesis refers to Relationships and Sexuality education provided in Years 9–13.

³¹ Young people in Aotearoa New Zealand spend an average of four hours per day online (Netsafe, 2019).

continues to be shaped without widespread consultation with young people, any efforts of addressing diverse expressions of sexuality will be tokenistic.³²

In their efforts to support students experiencing cyberbullying and sexting, adults within schools address these topics through a kind of partnership between digital citizenship education and relationships and sexuality education. However, this partnership has not managed to keep up to speed with the expression of digital sexualities among young people (Allen, 2020). Digital citizenship education, with its focus on technological/digital ‘literacies’ (see Netsafe 2018e), has not served to enable students to address the online issues that they deal with in their relationships and sexuality. Neither has relationships and sexuality education helped students develop digital sexual literacy. My findings indicate that current teaching methods are inadequate to help young people unpack cyberbullying, sexting, gendered power relations in relation to sexism and the impacts of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Certainly, sexuality education is a controversial and politicised topic, particularly among the adults whose often-conflicting agendas shape and govern the pedagogical purpose of such instruction. Adult stakeholders include parents, teachers, trustees and government representatives, whose motives, as already discussed in Chapter Two, are steered, overtly and covertly, by alarmist, risk, danger/pleasure and protectionist perspectives. Adult stakeholder perspectives and the discourses that they shape have served to inhibit young people’s authentic expression of their sexual subjectivities (Allen, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2020). Researchers have argued that adult unwillingness to see young people as legitimate sexual beings has functioned to limit their right to easily access information about sex, sexuality, sexual ethics and, more recently, digital sexual ethics (Allen & Elliot, 2008; Albury, 2017; Setty, 2019).

³² Relationships and Sexuality Education is optional for students in Years 11–13.

7.3 Section Two – Pedagogies of avoidance in educational institutions

The voices of the participants express the extent to which their schools avoid the subject of digital sexual practices. In this upcoming passage, I am with a mixed group of fourteen-year-olds at Deakin. As always, we are placed in an informal classroom setting. Some of the students are sitting on the worn but comfortable blue couch, and some are sitting on beanbags on the floor. The group have just finished watching an educational video on sexting; they had not previously viewed any other similar educational resources. Madison takes the initiative to respond to my question with her perspectives, which are candid and insightful. She shares her opinions, and her peers signal their agreement.

- Emma: Do you think that adults might think that young people watching educational videos about cyberbullying, nudes and sexting could influence them [young people] to do it?
- Madison: I dunno. It's [cyberbullying/nudes/sexting] sort of already all out there anyways.
- Emma: What do you mean?
- Madison: You see it or hear about it in different places.
- Emma: What type of places?
- Madison: Everywhere! Well, when you go to school, you know about all that stuff and, usually, it [nudes/sexting] starts at intermediate cause that's when everyone gets more mature. Year 7 is definitely the age that we should learn about it because that's where it starts. At intermediate school, that's where it all [nudes/sexting] starts. That's where you, like, experience most of it [sexting/nudes]. You have dumbed-down versions of little relationships. Everyone had them in intermediate. When I was in intermediate school, there was, like, a popular group of kids that were sexting at that age, but then there's a group of kids that have no idea at all.
- Levi: Yeah, at intermediate because then you're a young adult!
- Junior: Yeah!
- Madison: Yeah. I feel this way, okay? So, I feel like the adults, like, fucked up with our generation.
- Emma: How do you think they messed up?
- Madison: I think that they messed up because they kinda skipped us out.
- Emma: Are you talking about your generation?
- Madison: Yeah, I just feel like they messed up with us. I think that they just kind of skipped us out. Because in intermediate they didn't talk to us about any of this [nudes], and then, like, for most of us, that's what went on. I've seen all of it go on, like, with my mates. I know nudes like that, and now young people think it's normal. It's, like, getting younger and

- younger now, that's what's happening. They already do that stuff. So, I feel they should be educated ASAP.
- Levi: What do you mean?
- Madison: The younger year kids are, like, WAY more fucked up! They are trying to be way more older [by sharing nudes], and they haven't been educated on this stuff. Everything you see is online; heaps of kids copy what they see online, so that's the main root cause. When Bailey and I were in intermediate, there were millions of boys that were copying everything off the internet. Like, my siblings have come home saying that boys are grabbing girls' bums and stuff at primary school!

Madison (F), Levi (M), Junior (M), all 14
Deakin

Madison's initial comment indicates her uncertainty about whether watching educational resources about sexting encourages or discourages young people from participating in sexting practices.³³ She makes some key points about the absence of timely, age-appropriate education on the subject of sexting cultures and sexual ethics relevant to the experiences that some young people may be having. She also addresses the pervasiveness with which sexism in social media cultures are directed at children and young people and, in turn, embodied. Finally, she touches on the ways in which the reproduction of dominant harmful masculine norms correlates with the perpetration of sexual harassment against girls ('grabbing girls' bums') in school spaces. We know from international³⁴ and recent research in Aotearoa New Zealand schools that such harassment is occurring there (see Ringrose, 2013; see BBC 2021; see Gordon, 2021; 2022a).

Madison expresses her frustration outwardly as she argues that broadened exposure to the digital world and social media cultures, without an (educational) framework of guidance to

³³ Heteronormative resources which reinforce victim blaming have been deployed in many countries: Canada (*I Shared a Photo*); the UK (*Exposed*); and Australia (*Megan's Story*, which was also featured as a Netsafe resource until its removal). It is evident from research into educational resources on the subject of sexting that their application is problematically heteronormative (see Dobson, 2019; see Zauner 2021).

³⁴ See <https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/>

navigate sexting and digital sexual ethics, has normalised youth cultures of sexual image-sharing cultures. Madison also describes feeling that her generation has been abandoned. She argues that an absence of dialogue from educators, particularly at a critical time of social development, contributes to the perception that it is normal for teens to participate in sexting cultures. She suggests that gender pressures intensify at intermediate school³⁵, as young people are experimenting and practising sexuality and gendered relations at this time, including through online flirtation (see Ringrose et al., 2013).

In terms of the prevention of sexual harassment, while Madison indicates that it is critical to open channels of communication on the subject of digital sexual cultures with young people between the ages of 10 to 13, as we also hear her recall, sexual harassment in school spaces actually starts well before this age, ‘in primary school’. The group agreed with Madison, pinpointing intermediate school as the most suitable site and stage at which education about digital sexual cultures should be provided. Livingstone and Mason (2015) indicate that an ideal time to open discussions with young people about online sexual content, sexting and digital sexualities is when they are between 9 and 12 years old. Albury et al. (2017) suggest that schools in Australia should proactively acknowledge young people as media producers from around Year Five, when students are aged 9 and 10 . Such researchers contend that young people at these ages are developmentally ready to engage in such conversations, which they suggest begin by addressing the difference between public and private spaces and the examples presented in celebrity selfies and then move to clarify boundaries around non-sexual and sexual selfies and consenting and non-consenting practices. Undertaking such instructive discussions with pre-teens can also encourage the identification and deconstruction of harmful gendered

³⁵Intermediate Schools encompass Year Seven and Year Eight education, students are approximately 11–13 years old.

and sexualised norms, standards and pressures. Researchers have suggested the pre-teen and teenage years as optimal ages for taking a harm-reduction approach to the exploration of digital media that can shape dispositions (see Reay, 2004) and possibly prevent the occurrence of digital sexual violence (Livingstone & Görzig, 2014; Livingstone & Mason, 2015; Albury et al., 2017; Scott, 2020; also see Ringrose et al., 2021b). Madison highlights that her cohort (and younger) have already been widely exposed to sexualised media, so it would be counter-intuitive to avoid or abstain from dialogue with this age group about sexting and wider digital sexual cultures. While young people may be reticent to initiate discussions to explore the topic of sexting with adults, fearing how they may respond (Phippen, 2012), Madison indicates that peers also often avoid having such conversations, so adults are likely to provide the most useful coaching in such situations:

- Emma: Where can young people go to get good advice about when nudes get shared?
- Madison: The best advice you can get in that situation is from someone that's your age, but you don't necessarily actually get that advice cause no one actually even speaks up on it, really, so an adult is probably the best person.

Findings from Jørgensen et al. (2019) confirm that young people want to be able to discuss the motivations, practicalities and good and bad experiences of sexting with adults. In the excerpt above, we hear from Madison about the complexities of seeking out advice and support. While some young people prefer to reach out to peers in preference to adults (see Phippen, 2012), doing so can result in judgment and stigma that can affect one's reputation (see De Ridder, 2019). In light of the above, it is critical for educators to cultivate with young people safe spaces in which discussions about digital sexual ethics can take place.

Another dialogue, this time with boys Jay and Vinnie, reveals the inconsistency with which the topics of cyberbullying and sexting are addressed at school:

- Jay: Yeah, we have, like, a bit about cyberbullying and nudes in sex education.
- Vinnie: It's like two periods – it's really short.
- Jay: Yep, we don't have very much.
- Emma: Is that over the whole year?
- All: Yeah.
- Vinnie: For health, every teacher has a different way of teaching it. Last year [cyberbullying and sexting] was a full topic, and this year we had a video, and then we had one worksheet and an assignment, and that was it!

Jay (M) and Vinnie (M), 14
Cedar

Jay and Vinnie imply that their teachers have differing capacities to approach, engage with and deliver content on this topic. Jay and Vinnie do not go as far to express a preference for more in-depth content, nor do they make explicit any desire to spend any more time talking about cyberbullying/sexting. However, they did highlight that the time spent discussing these topics in health class was brief, which could be seen to suggest that it was inadequate. From their accounts, it is apparent that some educators address the topic of digital sexual cultures within an allotted time slot then push the topic to one side.

On a practical level, for schools, unpacking the sexual ethics of digital sexual cultures within a crammed health and physical education curriculum may present challenges including timetabling constraints, the need to gain faculty support and the existence of conservative school policies (see Allen, 2020). Furthermore, individual teachers who have limited comparable experiences might feel less confident about and comfortable with exploring these topics fully with students. As other researchers have demonstrated, limits to time (timetables) and inadequate supplies of resources can diminish opportunities to build in critically teachable moments (see Dixon et al., 2022), particularly should the educator experience personal discomfort (Allen, 2020; Meehan, 2021a; Setty, 2021a; Setty & Dobson, 2023). Given these constraints, it is logical that Vinnie and Jay describe their experience of lessons based around

videos and worksheets that supply ‘official knowledge’ (Allen, 2001, p. 11) through didactic and likely heteronormative approaches in which the teacher is the expert. A worksheet that students work through to discover the right (and wrong) answers, may serve only to reinforce behaviours that are deemed appropriate rather than offer young people any new insights or colloquial knowledge about digital sexualities and youth intimacies that could be shared safely.

As Setty (2021a) advises, young people may be able to recount the basics of conveyed official knowledge if called to question. Nevertheless, if the cultural relatability of official knowledge is less than comprehensive, it is reasonable to question the ways in which the official knowledge conveyed to young people meets their realities (Setty, 2021a; 2021b). Moreover, official knowledge which is abstracted from the digital sexual contexts in which young people operate fails to fully explore with them dominant gendered norms and power relations, digital sexual violence and harassment, sexism, sexual ethics and sexual subjectivities. Certainly, in the context of the expression of gender, sex and sexuality across offline–online spaces, these types of socio-political agendas determine to what extent consensual sexting and sex-positive desire are allowable or deemed immoral (see McClelland & Fine, 2013). This is where it is critical for young people to hear explicitly from informed understanding adults on the distinction between consensual, pleasurable, ethical explorations and non-consensual practices in digital sexual cultures that are not covered under the scope of general cyberbullying.

As noted in Chapter Two and the first section of this chapter, dominant stakeholders in the education field have an interest in the preservation of conservative knowledge. This has a significant influence on shaping instruction such that it either disregards or aims to control the sexualities of students (Allen, 2008). Thinking of fields such as education, Bourdieu makes use of the metaphor of ‘struggle’ to illustrate the ways in which dominant (conservative adult) and dominated (student) stakeholder relations wrangle for position to shape evolving norms and values (see Thomson, 2008/2014). In the case of sexuality education, struggles between these

stakeholders are underpinned by the attempts of the adult to control and regulate the sexual morality and impending sexual promiscuity of the students. This struggle maintains a particular focus on girls and is underpinned by patriarchal values. Risky youth discourses serve to justify pedagogies of avoidance which implicitly promote abstinence. The aims that underpin these approaches (controls), even if not directly addressed, suit the interests of adults, who position themselves as lay gatekeepers on youth digital sexualities. As dominantly vested stakeholders, adults officiate the nature of content delivered, how much content can be delivered and the timing at which adults perceive young people to be ready to receive nuanced sexuality knowledge³⁶ (Allen, 2005b; 2008). By limiting pedagogical content in sex and sexuality education, adults control and regulate what teachers can say to young people about digital sexualities beyond recommending abstinence.

Albury (2017) argues that content which is mismatched with the evolving participation of young people in digital sexual cultures is therefore viewed by them as irrelevant. For Albury, the provision of such education sends a message that young people have ‘negative sexual rights’ as it diminishes their ‘positive right to access sexual information and a right to self-representation’ (p. 714; also see Allen, 2008). In contrast, the delivery of guided, intersectional, non-judgmental instruction – contextualised with safeguarding in mind – that allows for the exploration of relevant and accessible information within a frame that sees young people as

³⁶ Guidance from the NZ Ministry of Education on sexuality education allows for schools to decide in consultation with their community the type of content to be delivered to young people. Problematically, this two-yearly consultation with community stakeholders (adults/parents) is inconsistent in process (Dixon et al., 2022). Whilst community approaches can serve to meet the needs of specific cultural communities, these needs are typically interpreted/defined by the school Board of Trustees which can include one elected student representative. (see: <https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/getting-involved-in-your-childs-school/your-school-board/>).

having sex-positive rights acknowledges them as sexually autonomous beings (Ringrose et al., 2021b).

As revealed in the next excerpt, Jay and Vinnie were not the only students who talked about the lack of interactive classroom dialogue about sexting cultures. Kelly, who, as noted in Chapter Six, is a student from the LGBTQTI+ group at Acacia, also expresses a need to access content she views as necessary for herself and her peers.

Emma: Are nudes ever talked about in class?
Kelly: Not in my class, and it should be. In sex education, they should teach that sort of thing.

Kelly (F), 14
Acacia

Despite the Ministry of Education having positioned sexuality education as a human right for young people, Kelly indicates that it is difficult to access relevant content at school. Again, this illustrates the existence of a negative sexual rights framework (Albury, 2017) underpinning sex and sexuality education, as relevant and current issues are omitted or excluded from the curriculum. I would argue that the fact that teachers avoid talking about sexting activities and wider digital sexual cultures speaks to a pedagogy of abstinence. Students have told us that it is now culturally normal for students from intermediate ages upwards to produce/send/receive nudes; to help them respond to this phenomenon, students should arguably be able to access classroom education about sexting cultures from the age of 14 (or earlier). However, because institutions implicitly or explicitly attempt to dissuade youth expression of digital sexualities, they refrain from dialoguing with young people on this subject.

An absence of dialogue is particularly unjust for girls, given the disproportionate pressures placed upon them and their experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence (see Ringrose et al., 2021a and 2021b). When they do not provide students with useful information on digital

sexual practices, educators lose the prospects for preventing perpetration, proactively reducing harm and/or engaging any shared dialogue with young people that could hope to explore concepts of harmful digital sexual cultures and inspire conversations about digital sexual ethics (Albury et al., 2017; Setty, 2021a). For institutions to recognise young people as capable of digital sexual ethics, they must actively displace the entrenched positioning of teens as lacking in maturity and as stereotypically uncontrollable (see Lesko, 1996; Allen, 2007). To explore ethical sexual entitlement and desire in digital spaces with young people, educators must acknowledge the range of digital sexual experiences they engage in and differentiate between consenting and non-consenting practices. The conversations that could result from acknowledging these things may help young people to distinguish the differences between authentic sexual empowerment, generic cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting (digital sexual violence).

7.3.1 Gendered and sexualised double standards in risk-focused approaches

The participants in this study addressed the ways in which institutional discourses of abstinence entrench and reproduce gendered and sexualised double standards. In the following excerpt, Bailey, from the mixed group, shares her experience of how schools, as sites of heteronormative reproduction ‘operate to offer particular meanings about gender and sexuality’ that are impressed upon all young people (Allen, 2005, p. 492; also see Haste, 2013). Bailey indicates that messages from schools to young people focus on the actions of girls rather than the actions of boys. In her insightful account, Bailey pinpoints the field of education as a space which accommodates the maintenance and reproduction of rigid gender scripts that perpetuate notions of societal gendered and sexual norms of female passivity and male active sexuality (Hasinoff, 2015):

Bailey: The school system teaches girls to not do things [abstain], or to cover up, or to hide themselves, whereas the boys are actually the ones doing

- this stuff [requesting and sharing nudes]. I sort of think, like, this isn't just one thing – it's a whole lot of things in society that schools teach. Basically, in an extreme sense, they [schools] teach girls not to get raped, rather than teach boys not to rape.
- Emma: That's really insightful. Do you think by schools saying, 'Don't do it [produce/share nudes]', that's an effective way to deal with it?
- All: No.
- Emma: Tell me more?
- Levi: It's not a good way! It's not a good way!
- Tyla: It's not going to stop anyone from sharing nudes!
- Bailey: I don't think there's anything you could say to stop anyone. Most young people are aware.
- Levi: You have to give them more reasons.
- Emma: So, for adults to say, 'Don't do it', is pointless?
- Levi: Tell us what to do if it [sexting] goes wrong.

Levi (M), Tyla (F), Bailey (F), Desiree (F), all 14
Deakin

Schools should be sites of support for young people, but instead we hear they are sites which reproduce harm (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016). As Bailey tells us, it is taken for granted (doxa) that girls should act as sexual gatekeepers by modifying their actions to prevent sexual violence. Teaching this message implicitly and/or explicitly symbolises an 'operation of power' (Allen, 2005b, p. 493) which sanctions, regulates and reinforces dominant meanings and restrictive frameworks about cisgender heteronormative gender and sexuality. These discursive frameworks normalise the victimisation of girls and reproduce assertions that it is a natural, aggressive, competitive masculinity (see Haste, 2013) that contributes to the perpetration of sexual violence by boys.

Bailey's reference to the cultural scaffolding of rape (see Gavey, 2005/2018) when she says that schools 'teach girls not to get raped, rather than teach boys not to rape' indicates that it is these normalised attitudes that make girls responsible for preventing sexual violence. One can infer from her comment that she is capable of recognising non-consensual sexting as a product

of gendered sexual scripts, male entitlement, sexism and sexual violence, all of which reside within youth digital sexual practices.

This group emphatically agrees that discourses of abstinence do little to prevent young people being active in sexting cultures. As Levi clearly indicates, young people need a better understanding of the concerns and dangers of sexting and to be equipped to cope when their digital explorations go wrong. Their comments indicate that a harm reduction approach which considers the gendered pressures and motivations that drive participation in sexting, addresses the experiences young people have already had with this phenomenon and provides information about digital sexual ethics would be more constructive for young people.

According to some participants, when educators did address the participation of young people in digital sexual cultures, the messaging they used focused on risk and instilled feelings of fear-based foreboding. In the following discussion, Ashley and Talia describe the effects of pedagogies of abstinence:

- Emma: Who educates you on sexting and cyberbullying?
Ashley: They [educators] drilled it – don't do it [sexting/cyberbullying] – into us, and every single term we go over all that stuff, over and over and over again [eyes rolling].
Emma: Every term?
Talia: I think because they tell you what can happen, and you just get scared, and then you don't do it.

Livvy (F), Ashley (F), Talia (F), all aged 13
Acacia

In contrast to previous participants who said they had not received any education about sexting, in this passage above, the girls indicate that this topic is not avoided at their school and, rather, conversations about it are frequently revisited. The lectures they receive feature abstinence-only messaging. Similar to the avoidance approach, abstinence-only messaging has been said

to perpetuate a negative sexual rights framework (Albury, 2017). McClelland and Fine (2013) argue that, from the perspectives of institutions, the embodied sexual potential of young people represents sexual and reproductive danger. Institutions typically manage this perception of youth risk through the development and implementation of heteronormative curriculum policies that quieten young people's questions and explorations (Fine & McClelland, 2006; McClelland & Fine, 2013). Being told 'don't do it [engage in sexting or cyberbullying]', young people are given little scope for the ethical exploration of harmful and/or positive digital sexualities. There is also limited scope for them to question the difference between cyberbullying and sexting. Arguably, because their true experiences may be considered too risky to discuss within the scope of the curriculum, young people are implicitly being taught to stay silent. By simply telling Livvy, Ashley and Talia 'don't do it', their teachers are, in essence, denying them the right to information that allows them to make informed decisions about safety in digital sexual cultures (Allen, 2007; Setty 2021a).

It is worth highlighting the prevailing assumption among educators who advocate abstinence that students are empowered with the social resources they need to resist sexting by simply uttering the word 'no'. However, as my findings in Chapter Five have shown, digital sexual cultures place a great deal of gender pressure on both sides. Boys perceive as normal that they should make requests for and apply pressure on girls to produce nudes. Girls perceive as normal postfeminist pressures and contradictions to be heterosexually empowered alongside resisting such pressures. Advising abstinence does little to address these pressures and can, in fact, further entrench the double standards which responsiblise girls as abstinence gatekeepers in digital sexual cultures (Ringrose et al., 2013; Setty, 2019; Hunehall Berndtsson & Odenbring, 2021). What is more, abstinence approaches can make it more difficult for young people to get the help they need (see Meehan, 2021a). If, for instance, a student is the victim or the perpetrator of technology-facilitated sexual violence, they may be less likely to come forward

to seek support for, discuss or report such incidents because they fear victim blaming, judgment or shame.

7.3.2 Digital citizenship and the absence of a feminist lens

Livvy, Ashley and Talia tell me that these instructional abstinence lessons are delivered as part of digital citizenship programmes.³⁷ In my experience, schools seem to be fixated on preventing participation in sexting practices and promoting abstinence by setting expectations through digital citizenship programmes that moralise the online behaviour of young people (see Ricciardelli, & Adorjan, 2019). Such programmes idealise students as media-literate digital citizens who are critically cognizant of social relations in pressured sexist cultures (see Gill, 2013) such that, for example, girls furnished with digital citizenship knowledge will be equipped to abstain from sexting. Upskilling students to focus on the rights and responsibilities of digital citizenship, how to be cybersafe and how to act as a digital bystander may help to address the needs of young people caught up in sexting. However, some have argued that digital citizenship education is built on a set of neo-liberalistic assumptions around technological capabilities and gender-neutrality whereby young people are abstracted from their hierarchical gendered and sexualised power relations. For example, Henry et al. (2021) argue that notions of digital citizenship and its use in education should be informed by a feminist lens.

This next group of girls talk about being drilled by their teachers to abstain from participating in the production and exchange of nude images.

Jorja: Yeah, nudes are such a known issue that we are all told: ‘Don’t do this’. We’ve been told so many times: ‘Don’t do it!’
Amber: This modern generation – we’ve been taught and kind of been brainwashed to know that nudes is a bad thing.

³⁷ See Netsafe *Digital citizenship and digital literacy*: <https://netsafe.org.nz/digital-citizenship-and-digital-literacy/>

- Morgan: There's certain boys at our school, and they all have connection and then it [nudes] just gets sent through a triangle of images [could be referring here to the wank bank system] that end up getting leaked because someone is sick-minded and would record it or just screen shot it.
- Amber: But now I think of it, I think the school, like, the education is a bit biased.
- Morgan: Yeah, most people say it's a bad thing to do [producing/sending/sharing nudes], but it doesn't really stop it from happening.

Morgan (F), Amber (F), Jorja (F), all 14
Birch

Jorja, Amber and Morgan distance themselves from sexting cultures by taking on a moral stance that positions nude images as 'bad' and the on-sharing of images as inevitable (see Meehan, 2021d). In Chapter Five, Morgan describes stepping in as an active bystander based on her perceptions of the production and sharing of nudes as both bad and inevitable. In this passage, Morgan tells of a sharing network motivated by what she refers to as 'sick-minded' boys. Positioned as a sickness, non-consensual sharing is essentialised as both immoral and as an example of boys lacking impulse control (see Setty, 2022, np), which stands to reason as this is how sexting is portrayed in cybersafety and digital citizenship educational resources that reinforce, for many young people, normative gender and sexuality scripts (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Dobson, 2019; Zauner, 2021). Morgan expresses her idea that the boys who share nudes are sick-minded, a characterisation which serves to limit the extent to which boys could be considered fully responsible for their actions.

Both Amber and Morgan express ambiguity and doubt about the efficacy of abstinence approaches to prevent or reduce participation in digital sexual cultures and the extent to which the education they receive reflects adult bias. I would have liked to explore this with them further, but the conversation quickly rolled onto another topic.

Neither avoidance nor abstinence pedagogies address the realities of the pressures and pleasures that young people experience as sexual beings immersed in complex digital sexual cultures. Overall, the participants reasoned that the adults around them consider them too ‘young’ to be discussing sexting, so, instead, adults narrow in on and conflate sexting with generic cyberbullying discourses. The participants made clear that they had needed nuanced information about the range of sexting practices at an earlier stage: by the time they had reached Years 9 and 10, ages 13 to 15, and had been deemed ready to receive such information, they had already been confronted with experiences of consensual and non-consensual sexting and received unsolicited dick pics. It seems from the participants’ accounts that the adults around them provided both sexuality (health) and cyberbullying education that brushed over the pressure and coercion young people were experiencing and, the gendered experiences they were having with sexting. The instruction provided made it difficult for young people to make distinctions between consensual and non-consensual digital sexual practices or to develop and exercise sexual autonomy.

7.4 Section Three – Everyday implications of avoidance and abstinence pedagogies

7.4.1 The barriers to talking about digital sexual cultures with adults

I have underlined the lack of trust young people expressed in the capacities of adults to create spaces for non-judgmental discussion of digital sexual experiences. In this next section, I consider the ways in which participants reported experiencing difficulties talking about sexting/cyberbullying/nudes with teachers, counsellors and, in some cases, the police who delivered sexting/cybersafety/digital citizenship content. For the most part, young people recounted examples of having received mixed responses from the adults they approached for support or advice. At times, their experiences of non-consensual sexting were minimised, and,

in some schools, students were encouraged to collude in the covering-up of incidents, perpetuating a culture of stigma and silence.

7.4.2 Silencing the voices of young people

According to participants, sexting was rarely addressed by educators proactively or in discussions of positive sexual autonomy. Rather, the subject typically came up in response to reports of non-consensual incidents. During the following conversation, Vinnie, Jay and Nishal reveal that, in the context of one such incident, they were encouraged to collude by keeping quiet.

- Vinnie: I know the school tried hard to keep kids quiet about nudes when this happens.
Emma: What do you mean that schools try hard to keep kids quiet?
Vinnie: Something happened with some of my friends, and they wanted us [the peer group] to keep quiet about it.
Emma: What happened?
Jay: The school usually likes to keep it... [trails off and Vinnie intervenes]
Vinnie: ... Quiet. [All murmur in agreement] Yeah, the school doesn't like changing – it's their reputation because it's [the school has] been open for many years. A lot of things like this [sexting] happens now, and when I think about it there was that other ... [trails off]
Nishal: [Intervenes] Don't talk about that one [indicating another case].

Vinnie (M), Jay (M) and Nishal (M), all 14
Cedar

This group believed that the school's covert encouragement to stem any open talk about sexting cultures was motivated by a desire to uphold its institutional prestige. It may be that the covert actions of the school have a dual purpose: to protect the school reputation and to regulate student sexuality. The silencing of such incidents serves to deny students as outwardly sexual beings participating in digital sexual cultures (Allen, 2007). The group were hesitant to reveal to me the ways in which they were encouraged to stay silent, and Nishal quickly intervened to prevent Jay or Vinnie from sharing any more details. As Setty (2020b) demonstrated, some

young men position themselves away from digital sexual cultures for a range of reasons, one being to mitigate any personal risk. This group may have been distrustful of both my status as an adult female researcher and my relationship with the school. They seemed anxious to ensure they did not incriminate any friends, and this further demonstrated to me the apprehension young people have around discussing digital sexual cultures with both internal and external facilitators.

Schools, as institutions of power, police and regulate processes and structures serving to reproducing symbolic cultural meanings of gender and sexuality (Allen 2005b; Haste 2013). They are expected to both manage youth sexual risks and mediate the interests of a range of stakeholders, particularly those of adults (Allen, 2007). The institutional motives to cover up this sexting incident are not clear. While Vinnie suggests that the school wanted to preserve their reputation, they may have had ethical motives to protect the anonymity of a victim, for the sake of the victim and/or their parents. That said, schools are motivated to manage and mitigate issues of gender and sexuality that might impact on institutional reputation, as they seek to please boards, parents and communities. In attempts to activate operations of power to mediate reputational risks, when schools ask a student or students to collude in the cover-up of non-consensual incidents, this can take on symbolic meaning in youth cultures designating harmful sexting incidents as gendered drama (see Marwick & boyd, 2014). Collectively, school responses to such incidents could normalise expectations that harmful incidents will confer a sexual stigma on the victim (s), prevent future disclosures and overlooks the consequences for victimisers (Firmin, et al., 2019; Scott, 2020). I would call the above practice by the school institutional educational collusion: a practice in which secrecy and silence are formal acts taken by the school in response to a non-consensual incident, but problematically these acts are perceived by students as inaction (see Firmin et al., 2019).

In this next excerpt, Brandon, Sean, Sam, Kane and Owen express how difficult it is for them to talk honestly about sexting with teachers. They also highlight their concerns around privacy in such discussions.

- Brandon: It's [talking about sexting/nudes] kind of discouraged, but the teacher kind of already seems like they have their kind of viewpoint on it, and you don't really want to ...
- Sean: [Interjecting] ... push past that.
- All: Yeah. [Strong agreement]
- Sean: Yeah, there's already a thing that's correct in their eyes, and they are not going to go against that.
- All: Yeah. [Strong agreement]
- Emma: Does this prevent you talking about sexting?
- Sean: It really limits what you can say.
- Brandon: Kids are talking about it [sexting] all the time and getting their own kind of understanding of it. I feel like all the time – especially in class, or personally – I really don't care what the teacher's going to say. And I don't believe them – I think they are just saying what they want you to say [teachers want students to repeat back official knowledge]. And I wouldn't want to incriminate myself.
- Emma: Who can you talk to about these situations?
- Sean: I wouldn't go to anyone. Anyone.
- Emma: Are you ok to talk about this in mixed groups?
- Brandon: I think single sex.
- Sam: Mixed.
- Sean: I think single, but I wouldn't talk about it unless it was disclosed. Well, whatever the word is?
- Emma: Do you mean 'confidential'?
- Sean: Yeah. Confidential, yeah.

Brandon (M), Sean (M), Sam (M), all 14
Birch

This group articulates a range of interconnected points. First, they perceive themselves as being dissuaded by teachers from openly discussing sexting cultures in ways that might not align with teachers' preconceptions. Brandon expresses a mistrust of the moral motives and perspectives of his teachers, a mistrust that has lead him to disregard what they might have to say on the subject. Indeed, research shows that moral campaigns put forward by teachers tend to disengage young people (Allen, 2008, 2021). Perceptions of teachers as closed-minded

create no openings for dispositions to be shaped by progressive messages about digital sexual ethics; instead, the habitus of the student who deems teacher interactions as pointless generates a practice of disengagement. As Brandon explains, localised understandings of sharing norms and digital sexual cultures are shaped between young peers imparting ‘their own kind of understanding of it’, outside of any constructive guidance (see Allen, 2007, 2008, 2021; see Kennedy, 2018). The conversation suggests that teachers, tied to their own notions about and approaches to sexting, are missing the opportunity to help young people deconstruct the extent to which investment in sexual scripts and gender norms shapes individual and collective participation in digital sexual cultures. Indeed, research by Haste (2013) illuminates the ways in which boys are forejudged and characterised by teachers as problematic when it comes to conversations about sex, sexuality and relationships. The gendered assumptions that lead teachers to label boys as ‘problems’ serves to perpetuate the performativity of normative masculinities, as boys consciously perform to culturally scripted masculine expectations and behave, in these learning situations, in ways that they believe teachers assume they will.

You may recall from Chapter Five that this is the group of boys who disclosed to me the existence of the systemised image sharing network – possibly the wank bank. I contend that the unwillingness of these boys to discuss sexting with their teachers renders relationships and sexuality education unable to unravel the broader causes of harmful digital sexual cultures or to facilitate engagement in critical gendered analysis of digital sexual cultures and the interrelated facets of consent, gender justice and sexual violence prevention (Keddie, 2020; Setty, 2022b). As a consequence, young people do not make the connections between non-consensual sexting, sexism and sexual harassment, and they end up conflating technology-facilitated sexual violence with generic cyberbullying. If teachers do not engage in open discussions about the real lived experiences their students have with sex and sexuality online, the nuances of their socio-digital sexual realities may be lost (see Setty, 2021b).

While Vinnie, Jay and Nishal, above, express a reluctance to share sexting scenarios that invites interpretation, Brandon and Sean make it quite clear that concerns around incrimination and broken confidentiality limit their willingness to discuss their participation in digital sexual cultures in peer settings. These concerns are reflected in their preference that digital sexual cultures be talked about in single-sex, cisgender settings. The majority of participants across this study expressed awareness of the sexual and gendered sensitivities and judgments that can be raised in explorations of digital sexual cultures and indicated that would be better to discuss sexting in single-sex settings. Such attitudes have been illustrated in similar research (see Jørgensen et al., 2019). However, a number of girls and boys also expressed a critical awareness of the benefits of mixed-group discussion and said that they were open to learning from and being challenged by their peers (see Crabbe & Flood, 2021).

The school gatekeepers that I liaised with to set up this project informed me that their motivation for participation was to inform their digital citizenship programmes. In one school, the police were invited in as educators for such programmes. In this extract, Jay, Nishal and Vinnie discuss how education about nudes delivered by the police in a digital citizenship lesson addresses the subject as an issue of cybersafety:

- Jay: The police did come one time and talked about nudes in digital citizenship. They talked about it and then we had a discussion as a class. Remember? We were taken to the library, there was a police officer there – he explained stuff.
- Vinnie: There was a police officer who showed us a video [about sexting].
- Nishal: He talked about cybersafety.

Jay (M), Vinnie (M), Nishal (M), all 14
Cedar

On the one hand, it was encouraging to hear from these boys that schools were taking positive steps to connect students and community policing in their digital citizenship programmes. As we have heard from the participants, while several clearly expressed the desire to talk with an

adult about such things, they feel, for a range of legitimate reasons, uncomfortable with discussing digital sexual cultures with their teachers. A police officer could theoretically offer clarity around definitions of consent and outline the legal ramifications of non-consensual digital sexual behaviour. On the other hand, given how some participants had expressed fears of incrimination, engaging with a police officer on the subject of sexting could be challenging, even more so for those who have experiences of being marginalised or targeted by police (see Hasinoff, 2015; Phippen & Street, 2022). The group did not offer any details about the lesson with the police officer and did not address whether there had been any deconstruction of subjects like gendered and sexualised power relations, victim blaming, coercion, consent and digital sexual ethics. It is unclear whether the instruction moved beyond typical gender-neutral generic notions of cyberbullying considered under the basis of digital citizenship (see Dobson, 2019; Henry et al., 2021). However, based on their research with young people in the United Kingdom, Jørgensen et al. (2019) reported that the sexting/cybersafety education provided by the police for young people affirmed implicit gendered victim blaming.

Neither Jay, Vinnie nor Nishal appeared to explicitly question the role of the police in delivering these programmes. It has been argued that the kind of inter-institutional collaboration reflected in the partnership between the boys' school and the police illustrates how fields, under the auspices of sexuality education, merge to demonstrate surveillance and, in turn, regulate sexualities and desires as illicit (see McClelland & Fine, 2013). I contend that correlating the sexual digital intimacies of young people with law enforcement illuminates the way in which educational institutions view sexting activities, even when non-harmful, as underpinned by risk discourses.

7.4.3 Who can young people approach to discuss digital sexual cultures?

It is tricky for young people to know who it is they should be able to approach for information about digital sexual cultures. In this extract, Amber reports that if she or her peers approach educators with questions or concerns about sexting, they are likely to be turned away and told to find an alternative source of guidance information instead.

Amber: It [sexting/cyberbullying/nudes] happens too much – there is too much happening. The teachers have more important stuff to do. They always say, ‘Go see your parents’ or, ‘Sort it out yourself’ or, ‘Ignore them’. The school has probably more important issues to face – although I don’t know what these are [laughs in a way that indicates uncertainty].

Amber (F), 14
Birch

Research shows that girls are more likely to experience coercive victimisation, be involved in non-consensual sexting and receive unwanted dick pics (Van Ouytsel et al., 2021; Ringrose et al., 2022a). Amber explains that girls are advised by an educator to self-manage, ignore or find their own solutions to these experiences (such as bystander interventions). Such advice arguably makes girls responsible for managing their own victimisation or that of their peers.

It is worth noting that, according to Amber, her teacher does not suggest she go to the school counsellor. Some studies have indicated there is an argument to justify the commission of specialist external providers of relationships and sexual education who may be more suited to working with young people using youth-centred critical pedagogies (Allen, 2005a; Jørgensen, et al., 2019; Setty, 2022). At all the schools in the study, students had access to onsite pastoral supports such as on-site trained counsellors. Given the non-judgmental remit of this role, I had expected that the participants would be comfortable with at least the thought of broaching sexting issues with their school counsellors. However, participant comments indicated that they viewed the school counsellors as institutional representatives whose roles were ‘implemented

in the exercise of school power’ (Allen, 2005, p. 493). As Seth indicates in the passage below, while he was comfortable taking concerns to his counsellors, his peers did not widely consider them to be the best-placed adults to understand or discuss experiences of digital sexual cultures:

Seth: Whenever I have a problem like this stuff, I would talk to the school guidance counsellor. But then, I’ve heard other people who have gone, ‘Oh, well, I’ve tried to go talk to the counsellor about nudes, and they just didn’t help’.

Seth (M), 17
Cedar

Seth is an older student, and his age might explain his confidence to discuss digital sexual cultures with a school counsellor.

Whilst I was at one of the schools, one of the counsellors asked to meet with me after a group session. In the meeting, they showed me several screenshots of a WhatsApp message thread for a whole class group. The messages in this thread featured abusive, sexualised, gendered, racialised threats. The counsellor expressed their own frustrations at their uncertainty about how to respond to the situation, beyond asking me for suggestions. While an assessment of the experience/skills/abilities of school counsellors was outside the scope of this study, if this discussion reflected the overall competencies of school counsellors to respond to harmful digital cultures, it might explain why young people may consider it pointless to approach them for guidance.

Other participants in this study simply expressed a general dislike or distrust of this group of adults:

Emma: Who can you talk about sexting and nude stuff with at school?
Simon: I know the right answer, but I wouldn’t do it. You go to a counsellor, but I wouldn’t do that.
Kaden: I don’t like counsellors.
Eruera: I don’t think anyone would go to the counsellor about nudes.

Kaden: I don't know what they're like at this school, so I probably wouldn't go.

Simon (M), Eruera (M), Kaden (M), all 14
Birch

Based on the boys' answers, we can see that young people are reluctant to approach the school guidance counsellors, despite the fact that they know that providing advice is part of the counselling role. As I have stated, this reluctance seems to be an issue of mistrust, likely due to hierarchical power relations: the counsellor is not independent from the school but, like a teacher, is an institutional representative.

7.5 Conclusion – Pedagogies to match the digital sexual lives of young people.

Research over the past twenty years has demonstrated the existence of a gap between pedagogical approaches to relationships and sexuality education and the sexual experiences of the young people, a gap that seems to have widened with the advent of digital-social-sexual practices (Allen 2001; Döring, 2009; Setty 2021b). The sexualities of young people are more visible with the amalgamation of sex, sexuality, and digital technology; bodies are crossing spatial boundaries (Albury 2016a). Both this visibility and the prevalence of digital sexual violence have increased the burden of care on schools and educators and, for some, lowered teachers' confidence to hold conversations about relationships and sex with young people (Albury, 2016a; see Dixon et al., 2022).

The young people in this study indicated that the content aimed at addressing relationships and sexuality that is currently being delivered to them at school did not match the ontology of their digital sexual lives. It seems clear that the relationships and sexuality education they receive chiefly reflects the perspectives of adult stakeholders, who research has found typically focus on risky-youth discourse which, intentionally or not, imposes and reproduces regulatory cisgender, heteronormative, deficit, sex-negative agendas and policies (Allen 2005a, 2005b,

2008, 2020). Schools have a significant amount of discretion to determine, often in partnership with their communities, the ideology and ethics underpinning the sexual education content they deliver, particularly on the subject of digital sexual cultures (see Ministry of Education, 2020). A case can be made that socio-political agendas determine to what extent sex-positive desire and consensual sexting, in the context of the expression of gender, sex and sexuality across offline–online spaces, are deemed allowable or immoral by schools and their communities (see McClelland & Fine, 2013).

Participants in this study described approaches to the subject of digital sexual cultures as inconsistent and indicated that non-consensual aspects go undiscussed or categorised as cyberbullying. According to them, young people are not learning from informed adults the distinction between consensual, pleasurable, ethical explorations and non-consensual practices of sex and sexuality. The approaches taken by schools served as a barrier to anyone legitimately considering participating in digital sexual cultures, or to those who may have been seeking support or guidance for experiences of the non-consensual distributions of images. Furthermore, the promotion by teachers of avoidance and abstinence closed down opportunities for dialogue with young people in which they would be able to scope out digital sexual ethics, their rights to consent and sexual bodily autonomy (see Scott, 2020; also see Meehan, 2021a).

According to participants, teachers avoided the subject of digital sexual cultures, promoted abstinence or were teaching too little information that was delivered too late. These young people indicated that they want youth-centred pedagogies to address the subject of digital sexualities. The institutional disinclination to involve young people in conversations about digital-social-sexual practices or to learn with and from them signals a social disconnect from the digital sexual realities of students' lives (Setty 2021a). This unwillingness to engage demonstrates that schools and staff within schools both (knowingly or not) regulate and are regulated by cultural scripts of gendered and sexualised power relations; adults shape gender

sexuality curriculum according to what they view as pertinent, not what young people view as pertinent (Allen, 2005). Bourdieu argued that the field of education was a primary force in the reproduction of gender inequality (see Thomson, 2008/2014). However, he also argued – as does Powell (2008) – that the education field holds the potential to open opportunities for discordance of heteronormative ideologies. This means that pedagogies can shift young people, through education, towards sexual ethics and transformation of inequitable gendered norms in the prevention of (digital) sexual violence (Carmody 2014; Maxwell & Aggleton 2014). However, at present, the result is sexuality education that is focused on cybersafety and digital citizenship and does not fully deconstruct sexualised gendered power relations. The instruction young people receive gives them little opportunity to critically explore and decode the meanings and nuances of positive and negative experiences of digital sexual cultures. Being an informed cybersafe digital citizen trained to abstain from digital sexual practices does not mean a young person is equipped to recognise when they are experiencing/perpetrating technology-facilitated sexual violence or enable them to understand the root causes underpinning such violence.

8 Chapter Eight – Conclusion

This thesis opened with an explanation of how my personal background and my feminist ethics created the pathway into my study of the online sexual experiences of young people, research in which their voices are at the centre. I contended that, at the time of the study, there was an absence of dialogue with children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand about their gendered and sexualised experiences of peer-to-peer cyberbullying/sexting, or what young people colloquially term as ‘nudes’ (Albury et al., 2013). As I explained, in my practitioner work with young people, I had heard stories regarding cyberbullying and sexting (nudes) that seemed more complex than the surface assumptions in public discourse in which these terms are used. Indeed, it seemed that if the experiences in digital sexual cultures that the young people were talking about were to be analysed with more depth, they might be deemed to sit within the continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1987) that conceptually underpins the definition by Henry and Powell (2016b) of technology-facilitated sexual violence. In light of this observation, I decided to question, first, what young people’s understandings of the popularised terms ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘sexting’ are. I then wanted to know if, when they used these terms, they were implicitly and/or explicitly associated with their own or their peers’ experiences of digital sexual violence.

An initial review of the literature in 2017 revealed that a limited number of scholarly studies about cyberbullying and sexting had been undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand, and, to the best of my knowledge, that none had used a feminist intersectional sociological lens or participatory methods that involved young people in all aspects of the research. In response to this research gap, aims and objectives were set out to guide my exploration of the ways in which the use by young people of the terms ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘sexting’ could be mapped against the definition of ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’ (Henry & Powell, 2016b, p. 1). To situate these explorations, Chapter One provided the wider context of sexual harm for

young people, the legal context and a media summary of domestic cases related to technology-facilitated sexual violence. To establish the socio-digital context, the chapter presented trends in the use of digital technologies by young people and key statistics relevant to their use of the Internet and social media. This chapter also clarified key definitions. This context and inquiry set out in Chapter One structured the following chapter.

Chapter Two unpacked the historical social construction of gender and sexuality within the periods of childhood and youth and revealed the ways in which hierarchal patriarchal discourses undermine the status and rights of children and young people as authentic gendered and sexual beings. This discussion demonstrated how regulatory discourses centred on characterisations of the good/bad and innocent/sexualised child facilitate the othering of and the cultural sexualisation of girls' discourses, underpinned by patriarchal sexism. Feminist approaches and youth participatory action research took shape to illustrate the way in which cyberbullying, within a postfeminist context, was initially aligned with the masculine epistemologies of psychology and cybercriminology. The thesis argued that these epistemologies may have overshadowed conversations about gender and sexuality in the context of cyberbullying until the emergence of sexting discourse, which hyper-framed sexuality and negligently collapsed all digital sexual practices, be they consensual or non-consensual, into risky youth discourses (Döring, 2014). This scene-setting chapter showed that these discourses have had a continuing impact, later demonstrated by the young people in this study, who expressed that they are unable to discuss harmful/non-harmful, consensual/non-consensual experiences of digital sexual cultures for fear of stigma, judgment and criminalisation. Thankfully, feminist approaches and youth participatory action research have nuanced these perspectives.

In Chapter Three, to theorise this convergence of offline–online digital sexual activities, Pierre Bourdieu's social theory of constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu, 1989) was blended with a

feminist lens and Bourdieu's theory of *masculine domination* (2001). This blend of theories and perspectives supported the conceptualisation that online space, rather than existing separate from the offline space, is actually embedded within the offline space, and that this convergence constitutes for young people a socialisation of their gendered digital habitus in offline–online fields. Across offline–online fields, prescriptive gendered and sexual social norms – gendered rules – are underpinned by technological cultures of masculinity (Faulkner, 2001) entrenched with androcentric patriarchal logic. These dominant patriarchal logics leak across fields (Bourdieu, 2001; Threadgold, 2020) to reconcile heteronormativity across offline–online spaces. The transference of gendered social norms from one space to the other makes it challenging for young people to question such norms, because these norms are positioned as natural. Consequently, young people experience a contemporary retraditionalisation of gendered embodiments and gendered power relations. To operate in digital spaces, young people draw on sociocultural capital of prescriptive masculinity and femininity, but in differing gendered ways. Across offline–online spaces, the digital gendered habitus is guided by gendered doxa, the localised unspoken rules of digital sexual cultures, which set gendered and sexual expectations of masculinities and femininities. To embody dominant masculinities both offline and online, it is considered as normative for boys to ask, pressure and coerce girls to produce nude images as part performing active sexuality; to embody dominant femininities, girls are expected to resist the requests to produce images and/or police the sexualities of girls who do produce images.

Chapter Four justified the application of a qualitative paradigm and a three-stage method for youth participation in the consultation and co-construction of knowledge. The use of youth participatory research methods reflect an authentic attempt to flatten adult/young person power differentials and knowledge hierarchies between the researcher and the participants. This chapter provided a description of each stage of the project and why the project was designed

in such a way to generate rich data from the perspectives of young people. This chapter demonstrated, in their words, how engaging this approach was for young people, who shared their sentiments that their opinions were respected and valued; the reflections reported in this chapter demonstrate the benefits of youth participatory research methods for developing epistemology. This chapter also showed the benefits of working in creative ways with young people, for example, by using visual illustrations to capture their ontologies and stimulate continued reflection.

The ways in which some of the activities in digital sexual cultures take place, according to the lived experience of young people, were presented in Chapter Five. The descriptions of these activities emerged from discussions on the specific topics of cyberbullying and sexting. In such conversations across multiple schools, young people disclosed the existence of a networked nude exchange system, embedded with the male gaze and based on homosocial bonds, called the ‘wank bank’. Originally, I had hypothesised that the terms/categorisations of ‘sexting’ and ‘cyberbullying’ blocked young people from recognising the dimensions of pressure, coercion, harassment and exploitation within digital sexual cultures. Whilst the findings reported in Chapters Five and Six showed these terms do constrain young people’s perceptions and understandings of what could be more accurately described as ‘technology-facilitated sexual violence’, they also revealed that my original hypothesis was too simplistic. As well as demonstrating the limitations associated with categorising their experiences as cyberbullying and sexting, the data provided by young people also made it clear that their participation in peer-to-peer digital sexual cultures was profoundly shaped by sexist content in social media cultures which also framed their (mis)understandings of consent and non-consent. Ultimately, I found that the terms ‘sexting’ and ‘cyberbullying’ alone were not responsible for minimising and obscuring young people’s understandings of technology-facilitated sexual violence, consent and non-consent. The meanings of these concepts were also heavily influenced by the

social media cultures in which they participate. This participatory youth research has identified that the overuse of the terms ‘cyberbullying’/‘sexting’ alongside the influence of social media cultures is what influences gendered understandings of (digital) consent (Setty et al., 2022).

The accounts from young people in Chapter Five also revealed the dominance of postfeminist discourses and the gendered ways in which girls and boys embody postfeminist discourse which has become taken for granted as doxa. The participation of young people in the exchange of nudes was sometimes posed as empowering: girls did not necessarily see themselves as victims, as the trading of nudes was framed as a material choice. In their narratives, we could hear how the postfeminist landscape complicated the subjectivity and agency of girls, as their choices to participate (or not) for material gain were influenced by the wider media and social media landscape (Gill, 2003; Ringrose, 2012; Dobson, 2015; Dobson & Harris, 2015). Girls had to make sense of common beliefs (doxa) that, on one hand, affirmed that they allegedly live in sexually empowered egalitarian times and, on the other hand, placed them in the position of having to negotiate sexual passivity and sexual violence without being able to explicitly relate their experiences to sexual violence. Because the postfeminist context reinforces notions that feminism is an angry, unwanted and outdated force and that gender equality has been achieved, sexism and sexualised harm are downplayed by young people (see Ringrose & Barajas, 2011; see Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016). The data suggest that this postfeminist context, in which social media platforms expose young people to sexualised images and connect them to networked communities like the ‘wank bank’, desensitises boys such that they do not view their actions, particularly those taken within peer-to-peer networks, as harmful. On this basis, the actions of some of the boys displayed masculine techniques of disembodiment: obtaining a nude image was more important to their masculine reputation than humanising girls.

In Chapter Six, we heard from the girls the ways in which cyberflashing was perpetrated by strangers and peers through the sending of unwanted dick pics. This was described as a routine form of image-based sexual harassment for girls that could happen at any time in everyday contexts. Girls endured image-based sexual harassment and cyberflashing without adult support; they overwhelmingly reported that they had no one, apart from each other, who they could approach to talk to about this sexual harassment. This silenced them and normalised their experiences. Conversations illustrated the tensions the girls/young women experience as – resourcefully – they draw on embodied postfeminist dispositions to manage discomfort and safety in response to the unexpected viewing of penis images which leak across integrated online–offline social fields. This chapter concluded that such normalisations illustrate symbolic violence, as the girls’ postfeminist dispositions attune them to rationalise image-based sexual harassment as the naturalised masculine actions of boys and men. Because the sharing of dick pics by boys and men ‘makes sense’ as a masculine practice to the girls/young women, they tend to avoid reporting their experiences of receiving dick pics – experiences of image-based sexual harassment – to an adult. Doing so could increase the risk of harm through peer-perpetrator confrontation in offline fields and/or potentially result in loss of access to social media or devices. Furthermore, the data demonstrated that, for some girls from non-Westernised backgrounds, the use of the term ‘cyberbullying’, whilst obscuring, can also be used as a protective strategy that allows them to address being exposed to digital sexual images without experiencing potential community stigma. This chapter also explored the strategies girls are aware of and/or use to promote safety in online and offline spaces and conceptualised these strategies as embodied safety work (see Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

Chapter Seven shared the opinions of young people regarding sexuality education provided in schools. One point they raised was that the timing of the sexuality instruction did not coincide with their exposure to/participation in digital sexual cultures. Many participants advocated for

the intermediate years as an appropriate time for teachers to facilitate discussions about digital sexual culture; some even argued that these could be beneficial for students at an earlier stage of development. In Chapter Seven, this mismatch between relevant information and student need was conceptualised as characteristic of educational institutional pedagogies of avoidance. In educational settings, teachers and pastoral staff were generally perceived by the participants as uncomfortable with holding full discussions with young people; this explained why abstinence-only messages predominated the instruction. Participants noted that cyberbullying and sexting were often categorised under one umbrella by schools. I argued ‘cyberbullying’ represented a sanitised term for young people’s digital sexual experiences whereas ‘sexting’ hypersexualised these experiences. In education, neither framing seemed to be a useful concept in the absence of a comprehensive deconstruction of the terms with young people. The idea that some young people’s experiences of cyberbullying and sexting could be described as sexual violence did not appear to be part of any educational discussions (see Krieger, 2017). I contended that having the police deliver cybersafety sexting education implicitly formed a message that all digital sexual practices, even those that may have been consensual, are deviant and possibly criminal.

To illuminate these issues, Chapter Seven traced back the history of sexuality education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This retrospective lens showed the implicit biases in the responses by educational institutions to digital sexualities, most of which seemed to emphasise a negative sex rights model instead of building upon a positive sexual rights framework (Albury 2017; Setty, 2018b, 2019, 2021b). Offering instruction based on a negative sex framework obstructed young people’s access to information about digital sexual ethics, including information about technology-facilitated sexual violence. The reasons for pedagogies of avoidance seemed to rest on historical discourses fearful of youth sexualities (Allen & Elliot, 2008). Informed by such discourses, the intent of sexuality education is to prevent latent youth sexuality rather than to

respond to the realities of developing youth sexual subjectivities, especially in lesser-controllable spaces such as digital platforms, where young people are viewed as especially unruly (Albury, 2016a, 2016b). The participants' descriptions of the way sexuality education overlaps with digital citizenship programmes reveal the influence and implications of avoidance pedagogies. In practice, integrating digital sexual ethics with relationships and sexuality education is a useful approach to addressing digital sexual cultures. However, this approach requires a more radical agenda to match the digital sexual subjectivities of young people (see Horeck et al., 2021).

To meet the needs of young people as expressed by the participants in this study, these integrated programmes must be delivered with content and methods that acknowledge gender inequality, sexism, power imbalances, sexual violence and the omnipresence of rape culture. Digital citizenship programmes, as they are currently run, reflect a concerted effort by schools to upskill a presumed rational, non-sexual digital citizen subject, a young person who is abstracted from sexist gendered pressures to fulfil requests for or to self-produce digital sexual images. In such programmes, the good digital citizen, skilled in the art of confronting cyberbullying, is represented by the concept and practice of being an active bystander, an approach that is disproportionately and unjustly reliant on young women (individualised, as we saw) taking on responsive forms of action (Setty, 2019; Wang & Kim, 2021). Unacknowledged victim-blaming sentiments within digital citizenship programmes and the bystander approaches they recommend undermine their ability to support young people confronting the non-consensual sharing of nudes. The value of bystander strategies should not be discounted, but the practice of such strategies needs to be explicitly informed with a gendered lens.

With reference to the key aims and objectives, the study highlights, for this cohort of young people, the ways in which peer-to-peer sexting and sexualised gendered cyberbullying are normalised and also collapsed into the category of 'nudes'. The participants expressed a limited

understanding of consent and non-consent in digital sexual cultures; as a consequence, they do not associate the range of harmful digital sexual activities that they are involved in and exposed to with the concepts of sexual harm and violence. The contributions of the participants in this study make clear that, in their world, non-consent in digital sexual cultures is normalised, sanctioned, generally disembodied from harm (although not in all cases) and, for those who participate by requesting, producing and sharing nudes, harm from non-consensual sharing is considered as either non-existent or deserved. In their world, non-consent is not recognised as abuse. There is limited empathy for victims, and victimisers do not view themselves as causing any harm. Despite the fact that they live in a so-called postfeminist world, young people seem bound to normative hierarchical gendered positions of masculinity and femininity in digital sexual cultures. In reality, in the contemporary postfeminist social context, while hierarchical gender norms are in flux, overarching Western sensibilities influence notions that boys can participate in digital sexual cultures with relatively little risk and can potentially build homosocial bonds or gain status by doing so. In this same context, girls are tasked with negotiating postfeminist gender dynamics and relations which complicate their sexual agency. As one example of this, in contrast to girls, boys rarely have to consider undertaking safety strategies in response to digital sexual practices, such as intervening as active bystanders.

8.1 Limitations and future directions

As with any study, this project was subject to several limitations. As I have acknowledged, while Netsafe funded the fieldwork, the study was managed within a tight budget which limited the geographical reach, such that the sample of participants is not representative of the diversity of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. While their perspectives draw out the meanings and experiences of digital sexual cultures and practices among young people, the limited sample restricts the generalisability of the findings. As I stated in Chapter Four, ideally, I would have accessed a wider representative sample of schools outside of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

and worked with young people across the North and South Island, including those from rural and semi-rural areas. Involving a wider representation of young people may have revealed further insights that would have added to the stories that participants shared with me. In addition, there were some young people who had wanted to participate in the study but were unable to do so due to the faith-based perspectives of their parents. I illustrated the rapid extent to which the youth population of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is growing in diversity and the omission of diverse voices and perspectives so contemplating ways in which to include young people from faith-based backgrounds would add invaluable insights. In terms of youth participation and inclusivity, this type of research should be looking to include the perspectives of a greater number of young people who are outside of mainstream education.

It is worth noting that some of the school principals I approached indicated a reluctance to be involved in studies of this kind, due to institutional and community concerns about risk to the school's reputation. This point serves to highlight the extent of societal discomfort that can be provoked by the topics of youth, sex and youth digital sexual subjectivities. Despite the inherent caution or conservatism found in many educational institutions, in terms of accessing pools of young people for research projects, schools seem to be optimal sites. However, young people might not share this view. In schools, adult/youth, teacher/student hierarchies are imposed. Arguably, there are several good reasons for undertaking co-constructed, youth-oriented research in settings that do not explicitly symbolise an 'operation of power' (Allen, 2005b, p. 492). Informal recreational youth clubs could provide alternative settings.

Of course, the relationship between researcher and researched can also be seen as embodying a power imbalance. Chapter Five reported that some of the participants seemed to express a distrust of the ways in which my researcher status influenced my relationship with the school, which may have restricted them from expressing their full thoughts and opinions. When undertaking this type of research with young people, ideally, researchers would be in a position

to build trusting relationships with participants over a longer period of time, and this may serve to overcome any participant mistrust.

Some might argue that the inclusion of parents and educators in the study would have provided a more complete picture of their views about young people's involvement in digital sexual cultures. Ultimately, the decision to focus on collaborating with youth to amplify their voices, as an approach, was made to centre the voices of young people rather than risk their opinions getting lost in the viewpoints and agendas of adults.

I acknowledged in Chapter Four that the video resources that I used were also a limitation to the study. These resources were heteronormative and reinforced prescriptive gendered scripts and sexual double standards. One young person (Seth, 17) commented on the heteronormativity of the resources. This is an area for future research that could inform the future development of non-heteronormative resources.

It was disappointing to find that the Ministry of Education had defunded the Alternative Education Provision (Deakin), not least because the closure of the school meant that I could not follow up with the young participants. Despite having made several attempts to contact the gatekeeper, unfortunately, I was unable to arrange a return visit to review the themes with the groups of young people from this school. Furthermore, in this first stage of this research at Deakin, I had failed to capture some demographic data that I was not able to retrieve after the fact. I attribute this omission to my limited research experience.

In terms of the wider dissemination of this research to the participants, schools and parents, I had arranged with the school gatekeepers to provide feedback about this project in 2020. Some schools had indicated they would use the findings to inform thinking about their future steps, processes and policies around cyberbullying and sexting. Unfortunately, the COVID 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns meant that visiting the schools to provide feedback was

not possible. Contact has been made with the schools since COVID 19 restrictions were relaxed in Aotearoa New Zealand, but the momentum to incorporate the data into any professional development workshops seems to have been lost.

Thinking about procedural limitations, I note that the University of Auckland Ethics Committee Participant Information templates (see Appendices A–Q) are based on adult vocabulary. The language used in these documents was not youth-friendly, and there was little scope to repurpose these documents to be better suited to young people. Excellent youth vocabulary toolkits devised by the Global Kids Online project headed by Sonia Livingstone are available for research projects such as this one. It is a pity that there is limited scope to adapt ethics documentation to youth-friendly language.

8.2 Contributions, implications and recommendations for research and education policy/practice

These findings contribute valuable insights for developing youth-centred research, educational practices and policies. This research has shown the importance and value of creating non-judgmental spaces for young people to be included in discussions on and research into the subject of their offline–online experiences of consensual and non-consensual digital sexual practices, rather than have their wants and needs defined by adult expectations. With respect to how youth-centred research is conducted, my experiences with participants in this study identified ways to create partnerships that enabled young people to guide the research. For example, participants illuminated advantages and disadvantages to working in single and mixed sex/gender groups. Engaging in co-constructed research, I acted on the feedback from students at Deakin School about the grouping of students for this project; I implemented changes to their final session that in turn shaped how subsequent sessions were structured at mainstream schools. In my view, there is scope for future research to develop a mixed model which can provide the space for girls and boys to discuss topics as separate groups and then

progress these sessions towards mixed group discussions to share and co-create knowledge and understandings. Such a model could be used for conducting and extending research on the subject of the sexual experiences of young people, a subject that this study and others have illuminated as worthy of further investigation.

For example, Researcher Liz Gordon's studies of Christchurch High Schools strongly indicate that sexual harm and violence are prevalent among young people – if such studies were to be taken wider, what would the results be? Would they effect change? The research at Christchurch High Schools was initiated due to the pro-active goodwill of the participating schools, but this should not only be the case. This thesis demonstrates that the Education Review Office should drive and support wider investigations and the Ministry of Education should expand on its collecting of sexually harmful incidents.

The findings of this research support recommendations to changes in the delivery and content of relationships and sexuality education in Aotearoa New Zealand. First, to enable young people's understanding of technology-facilitated sexual violence, relevant courses should employ trained youth professionals/educators to facilitate conversations and use resources that discuss positive consensual sexting. In this and other research, young people have expressed a preference to have these conversations with external providers (Jørgensen et al., 2019). Whoever it is that facilitates these discussions should present positive consensual experiences as explicitly identifiable for young people, such that they learn the difference between these and non-consensual and harmful practices and that they have the voice and recognise their right to report such experiences, as directed, within a positive sexual rights framework (Albury, 2017; Setty, 2019). Resources used for discussions about digital sexual cultures and technology-facilitated sexual violence should, as recommended by young participants in this study from rainbow groups, reflect gender diversity and sexual minorities and show a range of relationships to open up a wider non-heteronormative discussion on this subject.

School policies can support this evolution in relationships and sexuality education by developing and using understandable definitions of sexual violence and harm that are discussed and developed in consultation with young people. As a start, education policy, curricula and media should make a decisive shift towards mainstreaming the terms ‘image-based sexual abuse’ (McGlynn & Rackley, 2016) and ‘image-based sexual harassment’ (McGlynn & Johnson 2021a, 2021b; Ringrose et al., 2022a, 2022b). Education on the definition of relevant terms should be clearly related to the principles of the Harmful Digital Communication Act (2015) and the rights and responsibilities young people have under the act. The terms would be used in school, clearly explained, and they would be incorporated into reporting processes that give young people the language they need to identify and then confidentially report sexual harm with confident and comfortable trained professionals who understand digital sexualities and the impact of victim blaming (Jørgensen et al., 2019; Ringrose et al., 2021b).

It is evident from this study that education systems need to work harder at listening to, supporting and empowering young people by unpacking with them what they mean when they use the terms ‘cyberbullying’, ‘sexting’ and ‘nudes’ and how these terms are related to technology-facilitated sexual violence. Doing this is critical to challenging rape culture. This must be done within a broader framework that also brings attention to harmful sexual practices (Firmin, 2019). For a whole-school approach to address harmful digital sexual cultures, it must be developed from a power-sharing approach (in reference to relations between adults and young people) with a range of stakeholders, students, teachers, parents, communities and senior leaders. This approach must be informed by a gender-responsive lens that deconstructs the influences of sexism, harmful norms and power relations on pedagogy and can inform school policy and practice (see Ringrose et al., 2021b). Ultimately, schools should have in place explicit processes for students which clarify the difference between generic cyberbullying and sexualised incidents and encourage them to report sexist and harmful sexual behaviour. Schools

should not avoid exploring with young people social experiences of misogyny, gendered and sexualised double standards and victim blaming; it is critical that schools create conscientisation spaces for all young people to take part in this discussion (see Gavey et al., 2021; see Thorburn et al., 2021). Those who deliver education about harmful digital communications need much better training and understanding of image-based sexual abuse, image-based sexual harassment and harmful digital communications and the ways in which these connect with sexism and sexual violence. It was clear from my conversations with young people that they also had a limited understanding of harmful digital communications legislation; this would likely prove true among a wider sample and should also be explicitly addressed in education on this subject.

I acknowledge that, in the face of the power of social media platforms, it will be difficult for the changes recommended above to make any impact. Platforms currently make little effort to respond to technology-facilitated sexual violence. In fact, it has been argued that ‘non-consensuality is built into social media platforms’ (Setty et al., 2022, p. 56). Schools alone should not shoulder the work of advocating for change within social media companies. It is key that governments and non-governmental organisations and individuals such as Netsafe, feminist organisations, researchers and journalists continue to apply pressure on social media companies to take reports of technology-facilitated sexual violence seriously and make these technosocial affordances safer.

A decade has elapsed since the roast buster case first came to the attention of the public in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. This case put a spotlight on misogyny, sexism and sexual violence enacted between school-aged young people and made evident to the public the ways in which rape culture could be visibly facilitated by technosocial affordances of digital social media (Gavey, 2005/2018, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). At that time, the public condemnation of the

perpetrators seemed to indicate some public momentum behind the disparagement of misogynistic sexual violence. Yet, fast-forward to the present-day digital landscape, and we see that misogyny seems to be even more widely popularised through the increasingly common (and accessible) sexually violent messages perpetuated against girls and women by misogynistic social media influencers. Worryingly, some boys and young men seem to be drawn to these ideals, so I question the distance we have travelled over this decade and wonder if any progress has been made since the roast busters case first came to light. I acknowledge these issues are multidimensional and widespread. It is the aim of this thesis to value, gather and share the perspectives of young people with the intention to inform wider discussion about gender and developing digital sexualities as well as consensual and non-consensual experiences within digital sexual cultures. Alongside this intent, this project aspires to offer a template of methods that can activate and compel a move towards research, education policy and practice which centres the voices of youth in consultation and co-construction of a positive sexual rights framework.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A



ARTS

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**The University of
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Head Teacher)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation. #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

Project description and invitation



Kia ora

My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I am currently researching young people's online experiences of abuse and harassment. The first stage of the project is to find a group young people who would be willing to be involved in co-designing the study with me. I think it is important to involve young people in the design of study, so the research connects with the reality of young people's lives, and their online experiences instead of reflecting adult assumptions of young people's lives. Approximately twelve months ago I worked with Youthline Alternative Education as a youth educator, from Shine in School, and I still as work part-time as a Shine educator; however, this research is not related to that role in anyway.

Project Procedures

To do this I will:

Hold a 1-hour workshop, each week, for three weeks, in term 1 in a classroom at your school. I will show a short media clip of young people sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which have been designed for young people. Following this I want to get young people's views on what they think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if they think the media clips are realistic. I will give them some questions before I show the media clip and then they will have an idea of what we discuss.

Your school's participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to take part, I will require your consent as well as parental consent and student assent. The workshops will be audio recorded for analysis. If young people are not willing to be audio recorded, they cannot be part of the workshop. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who is bound by confidentiality, and/or my two supervisors Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification so that your individual responses cannot be identified. Consent forms and any other identifying information will be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

Students can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons.

Confidentiality

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a workshop confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting. Information given as part of the research will be used to design the second stage of the study, however you or the school will not be identified. If you agree to take part, I will discuss what confidentiality means at the beginning and end of the sessions.

The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. To minimise the risk of workshop participants being identified. All identifying details will be removed from any future publications or presentations that discusses this data.

Based upon the student's recommendations I will use the information I have discussed with them to design the 2nd stage of the research project. No one will be identifiable at this stage either.

What if a child/young person feels upset or distressed following on from the workshops?

I have informed the students and parents that you, and a Youthline counsellor will be made aware of the workshops. Students have been advised that they can approach a teacher. They could also talk to a Youthline counsellor who is available in the building. If students don't feel comfortable doing this I will ensure that I provide a range of youth organisation brochures with free services which are available for young people. The brochures I will supply are from: Rainbow Youth; Youthline; Netsafe; Lifeline; Shakti Youth; Wakahourua; FLO Talanoa; Justthefacts website; WhatsUp – A Young persons' call line.

If you have any questions you can contact me or my supervisors:

- Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz Ph: [09 923 4507](tel:09_923_4507)
- Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz Ph: [09 923 9636](tel:09_923_9636)

Before students participate in the workshop, we will discuss the project in more details to make certain they understand the study, and I will ask you to sign a consent form at this stage. Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON [13th December 2017](#) for (3) years, Reference Number [020447](#)

9.2 Appendix B



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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Parents)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation. #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

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Project description and invitation



Kia ora

My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I am currently researching young people's online experiences of abuse and harassment. The first stage of the project is to find a group of young people who would be willing to be involved in co-designing the study with me. I think it is important to involve young people in the design of study, so the research connects with the reality of young people's lives, and their online experiences instead of reflecting adult assumptions of young people's lives.

Approximately 12 months ago I worked with Youthline Alternative Education, as a part time educator for Shine in school, and I continue to work for Shine in School. However, this position is independent to the co-design and research I am currently undertaking with young people.

Project Procedures

To do this I will:

Hold a 1-hour workshop, each week, across three weeks, in term 1, in a classroom at your child's school. I will show a short media clip of young people sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which have been designed for young people. Following this I want to get their views on what they think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if they think the media clips are realistic. I will give them some questions before I show the media clip and then they will have an idea of what we discuss.

Project Procedures

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to them taking part, I will require your consent as well as their assent. The workshops will be audio recorded for analysis. If your child is not willing to be audio recorded, they cannot be part of the workshop. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who is bound by confidentiality, and/or my two supervisors, Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification, so that your child's responses cannot be identified. Consent and assent forms and any other identifying information will be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

- Your child can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons.
- The Headteacher, X, has given an assurance that your child's participation or non-participation will not affect their grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Confidentiality

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a workshop confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting. Information given as part of the research will be used to design the second stage of the study, however your child or the school will not be identified. If you agree to your child taking part, I will discuss what confidentiality means at the beginning and end of the sessions.

The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. To minimise the risk of workshop participants being identified, all data will be anonymised with their name and any other identifying details removed from any future publications or presentations that discusses this data.

Based upon the student's recommendations in the workshop I will use the information we have discussed to design the 2nd stage of the research project. No one will be identifiable at this stage either.

What if my child feels upset or distressed following on from the workshops?

All the workshops have been discussed with the Headteacher, I will also ensure that the Youthline counsellors are aware of the workshops. Your child can approach a teacher. They can talk to a Youthline counsellor who is available in the building; or if they don't feel comfortable doing this they can refer to one of the brochures that I will supply detailing free services for young people. The brochures I will supply are from: Rainbow Youth; Youthline; Netsafe; Lifeline; Shakti Youth; Wakahourua; FLO Talanoa; Justthefacts website; WhatsUp – A Young persons' call line.

If you have any further questions you can contact me or my supervisors:

Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz

Ph: [09 923 4507](tel:09_923_4507)

Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz

Ph: [09 923 96](tel:09_923_96)

9.3 Appendix C



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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Students)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

Project description and invitation



Kia ora

My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I am studying how young people are using the internet in New Zealand.

I want to find out what kinds of negative experiences young people have when they are online, and what they do to make themselves feel safer. To do this I want to consult with a group of young people who can help co-design a research study. I am a doctoral researcher who has worked with lots of children and young people in different settings. Approximately 12 months ago I worked with X, as a part time educator for Shine in School. I still as work part-time a Shine in School educator; however, this research is not related to that role in any way.

Over the time I have worked with young people, I have become very interested in the connection between peer-to peer abuse online, and how this connects to offline experiences. To find out more detailed information about these experiences, I am hoping to do something different by asking young people to be involved in designing a research project. I think this approach will ensure that youth perspectives are included instead of being designed from adult perspectives.

Project Procedures

To do this I will:

Hold a 1-hour workshop, each week, across three weeks, in term 1 in your classroom at school. I will show a short media clip of young people sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which has been designed for young people. Following on from this I want to get your views on what you think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if you think the media clips are a realistic portrayal of girls' and boys' actions. I will give you some questions before I show the media clip and then you will have an idea of what we will discuss.

What will the workshops be like?

There will be around 4-6 students watching a media clip in the classroom at school with me, Emma Barker-Clarke. I have some questions we will discuss following the media clip. The discussion will last approximately 1 hour. I will supply some morning or afternoon tea with a short break in the middle. I will audio-record the discussion. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to take part, I will require your consent as well as consent from a parent or caregiver. The workshops will be audio-recorded for analysis. If you are not willing to be audio recorded, you cannot be part of the workshop. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who is bound by confidentiality, and/ or my two supervisors Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password-protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification so that your individual responses cannot be identified. Consent forms and any other identifying information will be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Can I change my mind about taking part or answering?

- Yes, of course. You can change your mind or leave the room anytime you want to. You can also skip any questions you don't want to answer. If you do decide to leave, I won't be able to take your voice off the audio recording. You can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons and without any negative consequences.
- Your headteacher, X, has given an assurance that your participation or non-participation will not affect your grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Is it confidential?

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a workshop confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting. Information given as part of the research will be used to design the second stage of the study, however, you or the school will not be identified. If you agree to take part, I will discuss what confidentiality means at the beginning and end of the sessions. A professional transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.

The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. I will give you a different name and change the name of your school, so that no one reading about the project knows who you really are.

What will happen afterwards?

I will listen to the recording from your discussions, and this will help me to decide on the 2nd stage of the research project. I will also write about the experiences of young people with the internet (e.g., in a report).

The results of this project will be discussed with people who try to make the internet more enjoyable and safer for young people. Your contribution and opinion will help towards this.

What if I feel upset or distressed following on from the workshops?

If you do feel upset, you can approach a teacher. You could also talk to an onsite counsellor or if you don't feel comfortable doing this, you can refer to one of the brochures that I will supply. These will have information about free services for young people.

If you have any further questions you can contact me or my supervisors:

- Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz Ph. [09 923 4507](tel:09 923 4507)
- Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz Ph. [09 923 9636](tel:09 923 9636)

Before you participate in the workshop, we will discuss the project in more detail to make certain you understand the study, and I will ask you to sign an assent form at this stage. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 13th December for (3) years, Reference Number [020447](#)

9.4 Appendix D



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CONSENT FORM

(Head Teacher)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation. #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why students at X have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that students' participation is voluntary.

- I understand that this research will involve a group of students participating in 3 group workshops that could last approximately 60 minutes for each workshop.
- I understand that it is student's choice to participate or not participate in this study.
- I give assurance that student participation or non-participation in this study will not influence their academic progression or relationship with myself and the school.
- I acknowledge that the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- I understand that students are free to withdraw participation at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that consent forms and data will be kept for 6 years on a password protected University of Auckland computer, and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I understand the students can approach the headteacher, if they are concerned, or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I understand the students can approach the Headteacher, a teacher, or a X counsellor if they experience any distress.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need information in relation to X participating in this project.
- The students have been informed who to talk to if they need support in relation to participating in this project.
- I understand that students will not be identified in any publications or presentations.
- I wish to receive a summary of the findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

9.5 Appendix E



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New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

(Parents)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation. #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research, and why my child has been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary.

- I understand that this research will involve my child participating in 3 workshops that could last approximately 60 minutes for each workshop.
- I understand that it is my child's choice to participate or not participate in this study.
- I acknowledge that my child's interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- I understand that my child is free to withdraw participation at any time.
- I understand that consent forms and data will be kept for 6 years on a password-protected University of Auckland computer, and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.

- My child knows who to speak to if they are concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need support in relation to my child's participation in this project.
- My child has been informed who to talk to if they need support in relation to participating in this project.
- I understand the headteacher has given my child an assurance that their participation or non-participation will not affect his/ her grades or relationships with teachers at school.
- I understand my child will not be identified in any publications or presentations.
- I wish to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

9.6 Appendix F



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ASSENT FORM

(Students)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: The indistinct boundaries of online and offline harm – a youth narrative of the strategies young people use to perpetrate harm, cultivate safety and manage their experiences of victimisation. #usemyvoice

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

- I understand that this research will involve me participating in 3 workshops that could last approximately 60 minutes.
- I understand that it is my choice to participate or not participate in this study
- I understand that my parent also needs to sign a consent form for me to be able to participate in this study as I am under 16 years old
- I acknowledge that the workshop audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time.
- I understand that if I do withdraw, I cannot withdraw anything I have said up to that point

- I understand that consent and assent forms and data will be kept for 6 years and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need support in relation to participating in this project
- I understand that X has given an assurance that my participation or non-participation will not affect my grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 13th December 2017 for (3) years, Reference Number 020447

9.7 Appendix G

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

The following guide outlines the main topics that will be covered and provides an indicative list of questions. It is unlikely that all of these questions will be asked and answered in a 60-minute workshop discussion.

Guiding themes and questions for students to consider:

- What is the story the media clip trying to tell?
- What does watching this media clip make you think about boys' online behaviour and girls' online behaviour?
- What age is the good age to ask questions about online experiences? At what age do you think children and young people should receive education about sexting?
- Is the young people's behaviour shown on the media clips realistic? How can I find out more about this from other young people?
- What do you think is the best approach to finding out more viewpoints from other young people about? For example, questionnaires/focus groups/workshops?
- How should I phrase the questions that I ask other young people?
- If you or others you know wanted to find out good advice or information about online situations involving peers/friends that are making you or others you know feel uncomfortable what would you do? Who would you ask? - how can I phrase these questions to find out more viewpoints about this from other young people?
- If I want to find out whether other young people feel pressured to send, share, make selfies how should I phrase/ask these questions to other young people?
- **Links and description and brief analysis of resources used for focus groups.**
- **Title: Just send it**
- United Kingdom media clip
- <http://www.childnet.com/resources/pshetoolkit/sexting/just-send-it>
- **Childnet Description:** 'Just Send It' begins with the main female protagonist, Abi, who is white, approximately between the ages of 14-16 year. We first meet her in her bedroom where she is enjoying socializing with her friends in a messenger chat group with her friends who are a mixture of boys and girls. Abi has bought a necklace and takes pictures to share with friends including the male protagonist Josh. This story portrayed a heterosexual scenario where a young man, approximately 14/15 years old had applied subtle pressure applied to his girlfriend of a similar age to send a sexualized image to him. After receiving the image, the young man shows the image to a friend who then shares onto with wider networks. The message centres on the shame experienced by the girl and the criminal consequences for the boy.
- **Title: Would you send this to your gran?**
- New Zealand media clip
- <http://wakahourua.co.nz/news/techtikanga>
- Description - Would you send it to your gran?

- In, “Would you send it to your gran’ this story also centred on a heterosexual relationship. In this video, the male makes repeated requests, sends his own torso shot to his girlfriend to encourage her to reply with her own nude image. This video does not address non-consensual wider distribution, instead, this clip introduces the idea that if granny saw this image, she might be ashamed of the granddaughter sending her nude, therefore don’t send an image you would not send to your gran.

-

Title: Jarrod’s story #rewriteyourstory

- Australia media clip
- <https://esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/rewrite-your-story/stories/jarrod>
- Description - Jarrod’s story - The third resource, Jarrod’s Story, is produced by the eSafety commission. Like the other resources, this video also relied on heterosexual relationships. However, in this portrayal, we view the story through the lens of the bystander who witnesses his friend pressure his girlfriend to send a nude, a request she rejects. In retaliation, the requestor resorts to spreading false sexting rumours. In this clip, the dilemma posed is, if the bystander, the friend of the requestor, has the opportunity to intervene, should he?

9.8 Appendix H



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Tēnā koe

My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I am a PhD researcher at the University of Auckland and a part-time healthy relationships educator. I am currently conducting research which explores young people's use of technology. This research will focus on young people's experiences of digital harm and safety, and how these experiences connect with their views of gender. A unique aspect of this project is the central role of young people as digital experts. The first stage of this project involved co-designing with a group of students, age 13-16, at an alternative education provision. This part of the project was successfully completed.

I would like to invite you to take part in this second stage of the project as a research site. The name of your school and the identity of any students involved in the research will be protected throughout the project. The school would be a research base for this study where, with consent from a parent, yourself, and assent from the students I could recruit young people to participate in the project as participants and as digital reference experts.

In New Zealand, there is a shortage of research which considers young people experiences of digital harm and how they develop strategies for safety. Because digital harm can often involve the production or/and distribution of images, this research will also discuss image-based abuse. It is critical that research in this area understands more about the issues young people are facing in relation to their use of technology so that educational interventions match the reality of their experiences, for the present and for the future. Due to the nature of this research Netsafe is funding this project.

As an educator, I have an extensive history of working with a wide range of young people. I will ensure that all topic discussions are age-appropriate, match the maturity of the student, and are led by the student's conversational knowledge. With your permission, I will hold two 60-minute focus groups, one week apart, in term 1 or 2, in a suitable room at your school. That is two focus groups in total. However, if students decide they would like to be a part of the research process, as a 'expert reference

group', they can opt-in to be part of a third focus group who will review and discuss the themes that other young people have reported from the other school involved in the study.

There will also be the opportunity for students who do not wish to discuss this topic in a group setting, or who identify non-binary gender to participate in semi-structured interviews.

Due to my previous experience of working in schools, I understand the importance of minimizing any potential disruption for students learning. I can assure you that as a researcher I will be respectful and receptive to the culture of a school whilst conducting the project. I will cooperate with key staff alongside ensuring I am aware of and follow school policies and procedures.

I have attached a participant information which outlines the project in more detail and a consent form for you to read through. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries. I am happy to meet up with you, your staff and any parents should they wish to discuss the project in more detail.

I look forward to your response.

Emma Barker-Clarke

PhD student

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804.

9.9 Appendix I



WHO: Hi my name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I am a doctoral research student at the University of Auckland. I am also an experienced youth educator who works across schools in Auckland.

WHAT: I want to find out more about NZ young people's experiences of online abuse and harassment. To do this I need a group of young people who are willing to participate in this research project by giving their views about digital harm and safety.

WHERE: The school has given permission for these groups and interviews to take place in a room at school. All sessions will be age appropriate and educational.

WHY: I think it's really important that research finds out the REALITY of young people's experiences when using social media.

WHEN: I will run 2-3 focus groups in Term 1 or 2, or if preferred individual interviews. Each workshop or interview will be 60 minutes. Each workshop will be one week apart.

HOW: We will watch a short media clip which is designed for young people. Each media clip shows three different cases of cyberbullying/sexting, all the media clips have been designed for young people. All the clips are produced by reputable government and non-government organisations. I can also run a short Q & A session for parents and show you the video clips or I could email them out to you.

THE IMPORTANT STUFF: All participation is voluntary, you will need to give consent and so will your teenager; young people can leave the session at any time.

How is this project funded: This research project is funded by Netsafe.
Email: ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz

If YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE DETAILS YOU CAN CONTACT ME: EMAIL: ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz, or ask a teacher or the principal and they will contact me for you.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August for three years, Reference Number 021804.

9.10 Appendix J

#USEYOURVOICE

CONTACT [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@STUDENT
SUPPORT OR EMAIL
[REDACTED]
ALTERNATIVELY CONTACT THE
RESEARCHER, EMMA, DIRECTLY ON
EBAR178@AUCKLANDUNI.AC.NZ
FOR MORE DEETS



WHO AM I? KIA ORA, MY NAME IS EMMA BARKER-CLARKE. I AM A RESEARCH STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND. WHAT AM I DOING? I WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE ABUSE AND HARASSMENT. TO DO THIS, I NEED TO FIND APPROXIMATELY 20 STUDENTS, AGED 13-17, GIRLS, BOYS AND GENDER DIVERSE, WHO ARE WILLING TO BE INVOLVED IN A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OR AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW ABOUT THIS TOPIC.

WHERE WILL THIS HAPPEN? IN A ROOM AT YOUR SCHOOL.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT RESEARCH FINDS OUT YOUR REALITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE ABUSE/HARASSMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, MOST RESEARCH IS DESIGNED FROM A PERSPECTIVE WHERE THE ADULT IS CONSIDERED THE EXPERT. THIS RESEARCH DOES NOT WANT TO DO THAT; YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED THE EXPERT. WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN? I WILL RUN 1-3 GROUP DISCUSSIONS; EACH DISCUSSION WILL BE 60 MINUTES OR AN INDIVIDUAL 45-MINUTE INTERVIEW

OVER TERM 1 AND TERM 2 ON WEDNESDAYS 9.30-10.30 [REDACTED]

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE? WE WILL WATCH A SHORT MEDIA CLIP WHICH FEATURES CYBERBULLYING.

THE IMPORTANT STUFF: YOUR OPINION IS VALUED, ALL PARTICIPATION

IS VOLUNTARY, YOU WILL NEED TO GIVE CONSENT AND SO WILL A PARENT OR CARER, YOU CAN LEAVE THE SESSION AT ANY TIME - FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED!

EMAIL: EBAR178@AUCKLANDUNI.AC.NZ, OR EMAIL/SPEAK TO [REDACTED]

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 24TH AUGUST 2018 FOR THREE YEARS, REFERENCE NUMBER 021804

9.11 Appendix K



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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Parents)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

Project description and invitation



About me: Kia ora My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I have an extensive history of working with young people across a range of settings. I am currently employed as a part-time educator for the Shine in School programme. However, this position is independent of the research I am currently undertaking with young people.

This project: I am currently researching young people's online experiences of abuse and harassment and how this relates to being a girl, boy or gender diverse. This stage of the project is to find 20 young

people, at your child's school, who would be willing to be involved in 2-3 focus group discussions. This research process will also take place at a second school where I will recruit a further 20 students.

Project Procedures

To do this I will:

Hold two-three, 60-minute focus groups of approximately 4-5 students, one week apart in term 1 or 2 in a classroom at your child's school. I will show a short media clip of young people cyberbullying/sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which has been designed for young people. Following this I want to get their views on what they think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if they think the media clips are realistic. I will give them some questions before I show the media clip and then they will have an idea of what we discuss. If students decide they would like to be a part of the research process, as an 'expert reference group', they can opt-in to be part of the third focus group where they will review and discuss the themes that other young people have reported from the other schools (all names and schools protected) involved in the study. All groups will be single-sex groups or if your child prefers an individual setting they can opt to be interviewed.

Project Procedures

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to them taking part, I will require your consent as well as their assent. The focus groups/interviews will be audio-recorded for analysis. If your child is not willing to be audio recorded, they cannot be part of the focus group. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who is bound by confidentiality, and/or my two supervisors, Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password-protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification so that your child's responses cannot be identified. Consent and assent forms and any other identifying information will be stored separately in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

Your child can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons. However, your child will not be able to withdraw their data because of other focus group members' information on the recording.

The principal has given an assurance that your child's participation or non-participation will not affect their grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Confidentiality

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a focus group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting. The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. To minimize the risk of focus group participants being identified, pseudonyms will be used for all the data. The school's name and any other identifying details will be removed from any future publications or presentations that discuss this data.

What if my child feels upset or distressed following on from the focus groups/interviews?

All the focus groups and interviews have been discussed with the principal and counsellor. Your child can approach a teacher or a counsellor following on from the discussion. If your child does not feel

comfortable doing this, they can refer to one of the brochures that I will supply detailing free services for young people.

The brochures I will supply are from: Rainbow Youth; Youthline; Netsafe; Lifeline; Shakti Youth; Wakahourua; FLO Talanoa; Justthefacts website; 0800WhatsUp call-line.

What if I want to discuss the project with you? I am happy to talk with you and answer any questions or concerns, by email and/or in person. I will liaise with your child's school and arrange an open session time for parents to drop in for a chat. I will also be available before groups and after groups.

Before your child participates in the focus groups/interviews we will discuss the project in more detail to make certain they understand the study and I will ask your child to sign an assent form at this stage. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

How is this project funded: This research project is funded by Netsafe.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me, my supervisors or the Head of the Social Science School:

- Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz
- Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz
- Professor Simon Holdaway - sj.holdaway@auckland.ac.nz

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August for three years, Reference Number 021804

9.12 Appendix L



ARTS

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Parents)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

Project description and invitation



About me: Kia ora My name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I have an extensive history of working with young people across a range of settings. I am currently employed as a part-time educator for the Shine in School programme. However, this position is independent of the research I am currently undertaking with young people.

This project: I am currently researching young people's online experiences of abuse and harassment and how this relates to being a girl, boy or gender diverse. This stage of the project is to find 20 young people, at your child's school, who would be willing to be involved in 2-3 focus group discussions. This research process will also take place at a second school where I will recruit a further 20 students.

Project Procedures

To do this I will:

Hold two-three, 60-minute focus groups of approximately 4-5 students, one week apart in term 1 or 2 in a classroom at your child's school. I will show a short media clip of young people cyberbullying/sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which has been designed for young people. Following this I want to get their views on what they think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if they think the media clips are realistic. I will give them some questions before I show the media clip and then they will have an idea of what we discuss. If students decide they would like to be a part of the research process, as an 'expert reference group', they can opt-in to be part of the third focus group where they will review and discuss the themes that other young people have reported from the other schools (all names and schools protected) involved in the study. All groups will be single-sex groups or if your child prefers an individual setting they can opt to be interviewed.

Project Procedures

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to them taking part, I will require your consent as well as their assent. The focus groups/interviews will be audio-recorded for analysis. If your child is not willing to be audio recorded, they cannot be part of the focus group. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who is bound by confidentiality, and/or my two supervisors, Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password-protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification so that your child's responses cannot be identified. Consent and assent forms and any other identifying information will be stored separately in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

Your child can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons. However, your child will not be able to withdraw their data because of other focus group members' information on the recording.

The principal has given an assurance that your child's participation or non-participation will not affect their grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Confidentiality

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a focus group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting. The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. To minimize the risk of focus group participants being identified, pseudonyms will be used for all the data. The school's name and any other identifying details will be removed from any future publications or presentations that discuss this data.

What if my child feels upset or distressed following on from the focus groups/interviews?

All the focus groups and interviews have been discussed with the principal and counsellor. Your child can approach a teacher or a counsellor flowing on from the discussion. If your child does not feel comfortable doing this, they can refer to one of the brochures that I will supply detailing free services for young people. The brochures I will supply are from: Rainbow Youth; Youthline; Netsafe; Lifeline; Shakti Youth; Wakahourua; FLO Talanoa; Justthefacts website; 0800WhatsUp call-line.

What if I want to discuss the project with you? I am happy to talk with you and answer any questions or concerns, by email and/or in person. I will liaise with your child's school and arrange an open session time for parents to drop in for a chat. I will also be available before groups and after groups.

Before your child participates in the focus groups/interviews we will discuss the project in more detail to make certain they understand the study and I will ask your child to sign an assent form at this stage. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

How is this project funded: This research project is funded by Netsafe.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me, my supervisors or the Head of the Social Science School:

- Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz
- Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz
- Professor Simon Holdaway - sj.holdaway@auckland.ac.nz

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August for three years, Reference Number 021804

9.13 Appendix M



ARTS

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Students)

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying.

Name of PhD candidate: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

Project description and invitation



About me: Kia ora, my name is Emma Barker-Clarke. I have worked with young people for over 10 years. I am currently employed as a part-time educator for the Shine in School programme. However, this position is independent of the research.

This project: I am currently researching young people's online experiences of abuse and harassment and how this relates to being a girl, boy or gender diverse. The first stage of this project consulted with

a group of young people who have co-designed the second stage of the project. For the second stage, I would like to find 20 young people at your school who would be willing to be involved in 2-3, 60-minute single-gender focus groups of 4-5 people, or if you prefer, a 60-minute individual interview. This research process will also take place at a second school where I will recruit a further 20 students.

Project Procedures

I will:

Hold two 60-minute focus group, two weeks apart, in term 1 or 2, in a room at school. That is two focus groups in total. However, if you decide that you would like to be part of the research process as a student expert you will opt to be part of a 3rd focus group, where we will review and discuss what other young people have reported at different schools.

In the group discussions: I will show a short media clip of young people cyberbullying/sexting (there's nothing rude or nude on them) which have been designed for young people. Following on from this I want to get your views on what you think about the actions of the characters in the media clips, and if you think the media clips are a realistic portrayal of girls' and boys' actions. I will give you some questions before I show the media clip and then you will have an idea of what we will discuss.

What will be involved in the focus groups?

There will be around 4-5 students watching a media clip in the room at school with me. I have some questions we will discuss following the media clip. The discussion will last approximately 1 hour, I will supply some morning or afternoon tea. I will audio record the discussion. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you agree to take part, I will require your consent as well as consent from a parent or caregiver. The discussion will be audio recorded for analysis. If you are not willing to be audio recorded, you cannot be part of the focus group. No one else will listen to the recordings aside from Emma Barker-Clarke, a transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement and/ or my two supervisors Alan and/or Claire.

Data storage

The audio recording will be kept on the researcher's password protected University of Auckland computer, backed up by a server. Handwritten notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Auckland. Any data from the research will be given codes for identification so that your individual responses cannot be identified. Consent forms and any other identifying information will be stored in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept for a period of six years and only accessible by the researchers before being destroyed in line with the University of Auckland's data storage.

Can I change my mind about taking part or answering?

Yes, of course. You can change your mind or leave the room anytime you want to without giving any reason. You can also skip any questions you don't want to answer or remain silent. If you do decide to leave, I won't be able to take your voice off the audio recording. You can withdraw from any of the sessions at any time, without giving any reasons and without any negative consequences.

Your principal has given an assurance that your participation or non-participation will not affect your grades or relationships with teachers at school.

Is it confidential?

The discussion we have will be treated with the strictest of confidence. However, because this is a group discussion confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in this group setting, however, your identity will be protected in all documents. Information given as part of the research will be used in my thesis

and at conferences however you or the school will not be identified. If you agree to take part, I will discuss what confidentiality means at the beginning and end of the sessions.

The research will be written up with the intention of publishing my thesis. You can choose a different name (pseudonym) or I can give you a different name. I will also change the name of your school so that no one reading about the project knows who you really are or the name of the school where the research has taken place.

What will happen afterward?

I will listen to the recording from your discussions, and I will also write about the experiences of young people on the internet (e.g., in a report). A professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings. The results of this project will be discussed with people who try to make the internet more enjoyable and safer for young people. Your contribution and opinion will help towards this.

What if I feel upset or distressed following on from the focus groups or interviews?

The teachers and counsellors will be made aware of the focus groups/interviews. So, if you do feel upset you can approach a teacher. Or if you don't feel comfortable doing this, you can refer to one of the brochures that I will supply. These will have information about free services for young people.

How is this project funded: This research project is funded by Netsafe.

If you have any further questions you can contact me, my supervisors, or the Head of the Social Science School:

- Emma Barker-Clarke - ebar178@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- Professor Alan France - a.france@auckland.ac.nz
- Dr Claire Meehan - c.meehan@auckland.ac.nz
- Professor Simon Holdaway - sj.holdaway@auckland.ac.nz

Before you participate in the focus group/interview we will discuss the project in more detail to make certain you understand the study, and I will ask you to sign an assent form at this stage. Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804.

9.14 Appendix N



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CONSENT FORM

(Principal)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying.

Name of PhD researcher: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why the students have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that student participation is voluntary.

- I understand that this research will either involve a group of students participating in 2-3 group focus groups that could last approximately 60 minutes for each focus group, or a student participating in a 60 minutes semi-structured interview.
- I understand that the focus groups and interviews will take place in the school setting in a room designated by myself or a key staff member.
- I understand that it is the student's choice to participate or not participate in this study.
- I give assurance that student participation or non-participation in this study will not influence their academic progression or relationship with myself and the school.
- I acknowledge that the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.

- I understand students are free to withdraw participation at any time without giving a reason. However, students' will not be able to withdraw their data because of other focus group members' information on the recording.
- I understand that consent forms and data will be kept for 6 years on a password protected University of Auckland computer, and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I understand the students can approach the headteacher, if they are concerned, or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I understand the students can approach the principal, a teacher, or a counsellor if they experience any distress.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need information in relation to participating in this project.
- The students have been informed who to talk to if they need support in relation to participating in this project.
- I understand that students will not be identified in any publications or presentations.
- I wish to receive a summary of the findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804

9.15 Appendix O



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CONSENT FORM

(Parents)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying.

Name of PhD researcher: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research, and why my child has been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary.

- I agree to my child taking part in this research.
- I understand that this research will involve my child participating in 1-3 focus groups that could last approximately 60 minutes for each focus group.
- I understand that it is my child's choice to participate or not participate in this study.
- I acknowledge that my child's interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- I understand that my child is free to withdraw participation at any time without giving a reason. However, your child will not be able to withdraw their data because of other focus group members' information on the recording.
- I understand that consent forms and data will be kept for 6 years on a password protected University of Auckland computer, and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- My child knows who to speak to if they are concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need support in relation to my child's participation in this project.
- My child has been informed who to talk to if they need support in relation to participating in this project.
- I understand the principal has given my child an assurance that their participation or non-participation will not affect his/ her grades or relationships with teachers at school.
- I understand my child will not be identified in any publications or presentations.
- I wish to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

Name _____

Child's name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804

9.16 Appendix P



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ASSENT FORM

(Students)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying.

Name of PhD researcher: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that it is my choice to participate or not participate in this study
- I understand that my parent also needs to sign a consent form for me to be able to participate in this study as I am under 16 years old
- I understand that this research will involve me participating in 1-3 focus groups or an interview that could last approximately 60 minutes.
- I acknowledge that the focus group or interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

- I understand that a professional transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time without giving a reason
- I understand that if I do withdraw, I cannot withdraw anything I have said up to that point because of other focus group members' information on the recording.
- I understand that consent and assent forms and data will be kept for 6 years and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- I know who to speak to if I am concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- I have been informed who to talk to if I need support in relation to participating in this project.
- I understand that the Principal has given an assurance that my participation or non-participation will not affect my grades or relationships with teachers at school.
- I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the focus group.

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email: _____

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland, Research office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804.

9.17 Appendix Q



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CONSENT FORM

Board of Trustees [BoT]

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Digital Youth of Aotearoa: Interconnected on/offline harm, perceptions of gender and the intersections with cyberbullying.

Name of PhD researcher: Emma Barker-Clarke

Name of supervisors: Prof Alan France and Dr Claire Meehan

The BoT have read the Participant Information Sheet. The BoT understands the nature of the research and why the students have been selected. The BoT has had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. The BoT understands that student participation is voluntary.

The BoT understand that this research will either involve a group of students participating in 2-3 group focus groups/interviews that could last approximately 60 minutes for each focus group, or a student participating in a 60-minute semi-structured interview.

- The BoT understand that the focus groups and interviews will take place in a school setting in a room designated by myself or a key staff member.
- The BoT understand that it is student’s choice to participate or not participate in this study.
- The BoT give assurance that student participation or non-participation in this study will not influence their academic progression or relationship with myself and the school.
- The BoT acknowledge that the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- The BoT understand that a professional transcriber who has signed the confidentiality agreement may transcribe the audio recordings.
- The BoT understands students are free to withdraw participation at any time without giving a reason. However, students will not be able to withdraw their data because of other focus group members’ information on the recording.
- The BoT understand that consent forms and data will be kept for 6 years on a password-protected University of Auckland computer, and only accessible to the researchers, after which they will be destroyed.
- The BoT know who to speak to if concerned or would like to ask questions about this study.
- The BoT understands the students can approach the principal, a teacher, or a counsellor if they experience any distress.
- The BoT have been informed who to talk to if I need information in relation to participating in this project.
- The BoT understand that students will not be identified in any publications or presentations.
- The BoT wish to receive a summary of the findings, which can be emailed to {} at this email address: _____

Chair Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address: _____

For any concerns regarding ethical issues, you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz. APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON the 24th August 2018 for three years, Reference Number 021804

9.18 Appendix R



Age	
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Ethnicity	
Prefer not to answer	

Gender Identity

Female or Wahine	
Male or Tāne	
Gender Diverse or Ira tāngata kōwhiri kore	
Prefer not to answer	


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Kidsline


0800 54 37 54 

0800 KIDSLINE is New Zealand's original telephone counselling service for all kids up to 18 years of age.

Kidsline is uniquely about kids being there for other kids – we are the only national child helpline in the world where every counsellor is a secondary school student.

Kidsline is available 24/7 however when kids ring between 4pm – 9pm Monday – Friday they will speak to a Kidsline Buddy – a specially trained teenage telephone counsellor.

At Kidsline we listen really carefully to what you've got to say. We'll support and encourage you and help you come up with the best approach to what's happening for you.



SHAKTI YOUTH

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FLO Talanoa

What is FLO Talanoa?

FLO Talanoa is a suicide prevention education programme for Pasifika communities that is evidence informed, culturally safe and designed to be led by the community for the community.

It's a call to action and aligned with the values of love, respect and reciprocity.

There are over 100 trained *FLO Talanoa* facilitators who can deliver a workshop to you for **FREE**. At this stage we can offer workshops in these regions: [Auckland](#), [Hawke's Bay](#), [Wellington](#), [Christchurch](#) and [Dunedin](#).

To find out if there's a *FLO Talanoa* community workshop coming up in your region, follow us on [facebook](#).

How FLO Talanoa works

FLO Talanoa facilitators receive free training from Le Va and reciprocate by delivering free workshops in their communities – in



JTF JUST THE FACTS
about Sexual Health and STIs

SHARE    HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

STIS ▾ DO I HAVE AN STI? ▾ YOUR SEXUAL BODY ▾ GET HELP ▾ NEWS

1 in 5 sexually active people have some form of sexually transmitted infection, do you need to be tested?

Life goes on, it's good to have JUST THE FACTS about STIs

Sexually Transmitted Infections or STIs (sometimes called sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs) are very common and most of us will have at least one STI in our life time. **The good news, most STIs are curable, and all are treatable.**

Find out on this site about [getting an STI test](#), all the [Facts and Myths](#) about STIs and [where to go for help](#).

[FIND MY LOCAL CLINIC](#)

[GET SPECIALISED HELP](#)



0800 WHAT'S UP

is a safe place for you to TALK about ANYTHING at all

Switch to:





Scarleteen
sex ed for the real world

inclusive, comprehensive, supportive
SEXUALITY and **RELATIONSHIPS**
info for teens and emerging adults

GOTO: bodies • gender • sexual identity • relationships
sex & sexuality • sexual health • pregnancy • parenting
abuse • disability • sexual politics • advice • quickies • etc
ask for help: message boards • live chat • sms/text



text-only • [new here?](#)     

[lookie here:](#) Have questions? Need to talk? ✨

10 Bibliography

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