Title

'It's like you're almost being exposed to like a flasher' – unwanted digital sexual attention and gendered vulnerability in a Nordic context

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ABSTRACT

Denmark is known as a country that cherishes values of gender equality and sexual liberal-mindedness and seems to support a public understanding of the persistence of sexual violence against women and girls as unrelated to gendered values, norms and meanings in society. In this paper we explore the gender dynamics and the harms of unwanted digital sexual attention, based on anthropological fieldwork among young people in the Capital Region of Denmark. Using Andrew Sayer's theorization of human dignity, we argue that understanding the harms associated with unwanted digital sexual attention relies on an acknowledgment of the embodied duality of agency and vulnerability as the foundation for our sense of dignity. Firstly, we analyze how girls' experiences with 'dick pics' confronts them with gendered vulnerability that may impact their embodied sense of dignity. Next, we analyze how boys' requests for and manipulation of girls to send 'nudes' show how boys and girls may be confronted with their vulnerability in gendered ways on an interpersonal and social level. Finally, we analyse how unwanted sexual attention that transgresses the digital/face-to-face distinction unmasks how vulnerability is shaped socially by values, norms and meanings related to gender and sexuality.

Keywords: digital sexual harassment; unwanted sexual attention; vulnerability; Nordic

INTRODUCTION

'We're human too. We're not just a vagina.' These are the words of a 19 year-old Danish girl describing how sexual street harassment makes her feel less human. The girl took part in our study for this paper. About a month after she spoke these words, in October 2017, the worldwide #MeToo movement began. Suddenly, women across the globe were praised for speaking out about sexual violence. This was also the case in the Nordic countries that are known for being progressive in relation to welfare, trust, gender equality and sexual liberal-mindedness (Formark, Mulari, and Voipio 2017, Fjær, Pedersen, and Sandberg 2015, Andreasson 2017). However, unlike in Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway, the debate in Denmark seemed also to be marked by a significant voice of resistance. Although studies show that sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence continue to affect women and girls disproportionately (Deen et al. 2018), there seems to be a voice resistance against understanding women's experiences as being related to gender structures (Alm 2017, Måwe 2018). Based on anthropological fieldwork among young people in Denmark, the aim of this paper is to explore *the gender dynamics of unwanted digital sexual attention among young people, how digital and face-to-face unwanted sexual attention may be related and what gendered impact they can have.*

Digital Sexual Harassment – An Emerging Research Field

The Internet was initially imagined as an online social space for democratic participation (Megarry 2014, Gillett 2018). However, early on it was not just the promise of the Internet that caught scholars' attention but also the perils of online sexual harassment experienced by women (McGraw 1995, Herring 1993, Morahan-Martin 2000). Feminist scholars have since noted the implications that online harassment may have in terms of the opportunity for women to participate equally in the online public space and all that this implies with regard to debates, gaming and career advancement as well as the new legal challenges it poses for nation-states (McGraw 1995, Barak 2005, Henry and Powell 2015b, Herring 2000). Considering that online sexual harassment was identified as a problem in the nascent stages of the Internet, it is surprising to find only a limited number of empirical studies. A recent literature review by Nicola Henry and Anastacia Powell (2018) of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV), which is defined as actions where digital technology is used to facilitate virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms, highlights the need for empirical studies, particularly of victims' experiences and the impact of TFSV.

Whilst Henry and Powell's (2018) review demonstrates that TFSV covers a broad range of online violations and abusive acts targeting diverse social groups and both men and women, studies show that women and girls are exposed to specific violations, such as unwanted requests to talk about sex or do something sexual (Baumgartner, Valkenburg, and Peter 2010), unwanted sexting (Drouin and Tobin 2014), peer-to-peer grooming (Ashurst and McAlinden 2015) and misogynist language (Bartlett

et al. 2014, Vera-Gray 2017b, Jane 2014a, Jane 2014b). Moreover, studies point to the dearth of research on the nature and impact of specific forms of unwanted digital sexual attention such as 'dick pics' (Hayes and Dragiewicz 2018, Waling and Pym 2019). This underlines the need to explore the gender dynamics of different forms of digital sexual harassment and how these may be related in order to gain an understanding of the causes (Henry and Powell 2015a). Here, inspiration can be drawn from feminist works on street harassment (see Kelly 1988, Larkin 1991, Vera-Gray 2016b) in order to theorize how unwanted digital sexual attention may be connected to gender meanings, values and norms that exist offline (see Megarry 2014). Rather than seeing online sexual harassment as a new phenomenon, scholars have argued that we need to see the Internet as creating new social contexts for sexual harassment (Ashurst and McAlinden 2015, Henry and Powell 2015b), which may also challenge our perception of the distinction between a public and private space (Salter 2015). With this paper we hope to add to the limited research of the gender dynamics of digital sexual harassment by exploring empirical realities of three forms of unwanted sexual attention that may challenge the analytical dichotomies between online and offline and between public and private.

In an attempt to address the nature of sexual harassment, feminist research has explored the relationship between mundane violations such as street harassment and aberrant violations such as stranger rape (Kelly 1988). With the concept of a 'continuum of sexual violence', Liz Kelly (2002[1987]) has highlighted the importance of understanding how different sexual violations may not be easily conceptually distinguished but passes into one another and become part of the fabric of women's lives in different ways. In her review on abuse on dating apps, Rosalie Gillett (2018) argues that Kelly's continuum may help us to see, *firstly,* how what is considered mundane unwanted digital sexual attention shares commonalities with what are considered illegal violations and *secondly,* how the cumulative impact that mundane violations may have on women may be independent of the acceptance or unacceptance of the actions in society (see also Hayes and Dragiewicz 2018). Understanding the impact of online sexual harassment also calls for a dissolution of the distinction between 'virtual' and 'real' harm, as Henry and Powell (2015b) have argued. With phenomenological approaches to the body as the material ground for experiences, feminist scholars have theorized how violations condition the embodied agency of women (Vera-Gray 2016a, Larkin 1994, Condon, Lieber, and Maillochon 2007, Henry and Powell 2015b), but it appears that little consideration has been given to what it is that enables such actions to have that impact. Considering the scarcity of empirical studies on the impact of online sexual harassment, we seek to contribute in this paper with a theorization of what conditions the embodied impact of unwanted digital sexual attention.

Theorizing The Embodied Impact Of Digital Sexual Harassment

Following in the footsteps of feminist scholars' perspectives on the impact of both digital and face-to-face sexual harassment for women and girls' agency (Vitis and Gilmour 2017, Vera-Gray 2017b), we take as our theoretical starting point the vulnerability of humanity that makes us capable of being harmed. As Andrew Sayer (2011, 139-140, 189) notes, humans are not just agents, capable of doing things; we are 'needy and vulnerable' sentient beings and 'being treated in a way which respects our dignity is crucial to our well-being'. According to Sayer, dignity is both intrinsically related to our agency and vulnerability *and* contingent on the recognition by others of these individual potentials (Sayer 2011, 215). Our fundamental sentient ability to feel hurt, humiliated, proud, respected and so forth means that our sense of dignity is always at risk and makes us vulnerable to how others treat us (Sayer 2011, 189, 202). Our sense of dignity is thus shaped according to how other people act towards us in various relational and situational contexts such as in the street, in a classroom, at a party, on the way home at night and online. Understanding the impact of digital sexual harassment relies on an acknowledgment of the ongoing embodied duality of agency and vulnerability as the foundation for our sense of dignity. In this paper, we want to focus on when and how young people are confronted with their vulnerability, foregrounding the values, norms and meanings that condition what is considered dignified and for whom. The shift in focus away from agency to vulnerability serves to explore the subtle and cumulative embodied impact that sexual harassment may have on young people's sense of dignity irrespective of the moral perception of the actions in society.

METHODS

The empirical material for this paper was produced during anthropological fieldwork conducted from 2015 to 2016 and was supplemented with four additional focus groups in September and October 2017. That said, the empirical material is not influenced by the #MeToo movement, which drew the public's attention to unwanted sexual experiences. The empirical material consists of field notes from 74 days of participant observations and 23 focus group interviews. The fieldwork took place at two youth centres (observations only), an upper secondary school, a commercial upper secondary school, a vocational training school and a production school (focus groups only) in the Capital Region of Denmark. Young people aged between 15 and 27 (the majority of whom were aged between 16 and 19) participated.

Participant observations were an important method used to build rapport with the young people and to observe how sexism and unwanted sexual attention unfolded in everyday life along with conversations about gender and sexual activities (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011 (2002)). For this paper, field notes from the schools regarding observations of sexism and unwanted sexual attention and girls' conversations about these have been included.

Two rounds of gender-segregated focus group interviews were carried out in 2015. In 2017, four additional focus group interviews took place at two of the schools that had participated in 2015 (see table 1). During the *first* round in 2015, young people discussed topics such as sexual expectations, non-consensual 'nude' sharing, negotiations of sexual activity and unwanted sexual experiences on the basis of three fictive vignettes. On the basis of one vignette involving "revenge porn", girls talked about forms of unwanted digital sexual attention. These experiences were explored further in the *second* round of focus groups and again in depth in 2017 with new groups of young people. Conversely, the boys did not disclose harassment experiences in the focus groups but the first author did attempt to probe discussions around the phenomena when appropriate. Some boys shared experiences of 'click bites', which refer to fake friend requests on social media with sexual offers (see also Deen et al. 2018, Powell and Henry 2016).

Table 1. Composition of the two rounds of focus groups in 2015 and 2017

Context	Number of groups	Age range	Total number of girls	Total number of boys
2015				
Vocational training school	3	17 – 27	7	4
Upper secondary school	8	16 – 18	12	6
Commercial secondary school	4	15 – 19	8	10
Production school	4	16 – 23	7	6
2017				
Upper secondary school	1	18 – 19	4	0
Commercial secondary school	3	16 - 19	6	6
Total	23	15 - 27	44	32

Informed consent was obtained from all interviewed informants, who were given a card with the first author's contact details, information about the project and a list of support services for young people. All were assigned a pseudonym and sometimes changes were made in the young people's description of experiences in order to ensure their anonymity.

The analytical process is inspired by principles of abductive analysis aimed at producing new theoretical ideas about research findings (Tavory and Timmermans 2014, 131) and retroductive analysis aimed at exploring the properties that are constitutive of young people' experiences of harm (Danermark, Ekstrom, and Jakobsen 2005). The first step in the analytical process involved a familiarisation with the empirical material by reading through it and organising it in NVivo10, combining directed predetermined codes with a more conventional content analysis focused on naming

themes in the material (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, Tavory and Timmermans 2014, 52ff). The next step involved a defamiliarization process, where the material was read in print with a focus on unwanted sexual attention encountered and described during fieldwork and how the material resisted taken-for-granted notions of sexual liberal-mindedness, gender equality and liberal agency (Danermark, Ekstrom, and Jakobsen 2005, 88, Tavory and Timmermans 2014, 56-57, 131). In this process, empirical excerpts and analytical comments were noted in a Word table divided by school context, gender and whether the unwanted attention was digital or face-to-face. In this process, the focus was on the gendered perceptions, meanings and values that came across in observations and that were articulated in descriptions in focus groups and interviews. Notes were also made regarding the characteristics of the unwanted sexual attention shared across the digital and face-to-face contexts and finally, the impact that the experiences could have. The final step involved revisiting the empirical material with theoretical perspectives from existing research. Whilst parts of the material found explanatory power in existing feminist and Bourdieusian perspectives on structure, other parts of the material on harm required different perspectives. Here we found inspiration in the critical realist notion that there is a dimension of experiences related to our sense of dignity which exists beyond the discourses about these (Sayer 2004, Gunnarsson 2018). In this paper we have taken this dimension into account by theorizing harm as confrontation with our human vulnerability (Sayer 2011). In this process, we also employed our concept of *embodied contradiction* to capture the inconsistency between the experience of harm and the meanings available to comprehend the experience.

FINDINGS

In the following three subsections we explore the gender dynamics of unwanted digital sexual attention and the impact it may have on girls' sense of dignity. Firstly, we show how 'dick pics' may confront girls with a gendered vulnerability. Next, we investigate how boys' requests for 'nudes' from girls expose how gendered vulnerability plays out on an interpersonal and social level. Finally, we use two cases of unwanted sexual attention that moves between digital and face-to-face spaces to show how gendered vulnerability on both an interpersonal and social level is conditioned by a symbolic order of values, meanings and norms related to gender and sexuality.

Confrontation With Gendered Vulnerability

Across schools girls shared experiences of receiving unsolicited photos and videos of male genitals, known as 'dick pics'. Such experiences were not shared amongst the boys. For some girls this seemed to happen on a regular basis, most often on Snapchat and Tinder, whilst for others it had happened a few times or they had heard about it from female friends. Girls with personal experiences described how they would receive

'dick pics' from boys they knew or had met only briefly as well as boys they did not know. Often the frequency seemed to be related proportionately with their activity on dating apps such as Tinder, their number of friends on social media and whether their account profiles were public or private. In other words, the more active the girls were in the digital public space, the more likely they were to receive unsolicited penis photos, which may create an idea of a private space online protected by privacy settings as being the safest space for girls (see also Salter 2015). Sometimes 'dick pics' were received out of the blue and at other times it happened during an online 'snapping' conversation. Amongst girls and in a couple of boys' groups, motivations for sending 'dick pics' were discussed and in line with Salter's (2015) study from Australia 'dick pics' were understood as an invitation to sexting, meaning to have an online conversation via sex texts and nude photos. A couple of boys argued that 'dick pics' may serve as a way for a boy to 'test' the girl's willingness to 'snap dirty' and some girls speculated that it may be a way of setting the stage for sex. However, they often expressed distaste for the practice, describing it as 'extremely weird', 'nasty' and 'a stupid way to get in contact with a girl'. 'Dick pics' were often referred to by girls as 'disgusting' and as an unwelcome surprise.

> Fiona: You get all startled, you don't know just how to… like, it's strange
>
> Neha: Yes, it's like, well what should I reply?
>
> Stine: Surprise
>
> Fiona: It's not something you expect
>
> Frederikke: Especially if you'd talked about something else [some giggle]. If you had a conversation about something like 'how has your weekend been?' and then boom, then there's just a penis right in your face [some laugh]. Then you sit there 'well, what am I supposed to do with that, you asked me what I had for dinner?' [laughs]
>
> Stine: Definitely not that one [laughs]
>
> (Girls, focus group)

This excerpt highlights the unforeseen element of the act and the subsequent confusion it generates for the girls in terms of how to respond. Importantly, it also highlights how girls may use humour as a way of coping with the unwanted sexual attention (see also Gillett 2018, Shaw 2016). The 'dick pic' can be seen as what Mary Douglas (2003 [1966]) terms a matter out of place. Thus, sending an unsolicited penis photo or masturbation video seems to symbolically pollute an online conversation and a relationship by introducing an intimacy, which according to the young people belongs within the context of a trusting relationship. The 'dick pic' is a transgressive object as it breaks the moral boundaries of intimacy in a non-intimate context and represents a lack of care for the other person's agency and consent. This became

particularly evident as some girls received 'dick pics', despite declining boys' offers to send one. Hence, the act claims an intimacy that is uninvited, unwanted and at times even rejected as Sidse described.

> 'If I say 'no' to sending nudes and getting a dick pic and then the person still does it, then it's really offensive to me because I don't want it. I don't want to see you naked. I don't want you to see me naked. I don't really want this connection. And then it's just strange because this is sort of forced upon you I'd say […].'
>
> <div align="right">(Girls, focus group)</div>

This enforced intimacy that Sidse refers to can be conceptualized as an intrusion. Feminist scholars have used intrusion to theorize sexual street harassment, defining it as the 'deliberate act of putting oneself into a place or situation where one is uninvited, with disruptive effect' ('Intrusion' cited in Vera-Gray 2016b, di Leonardo 1981). The disruptive effect can be seen in the metaphoric parallels girls make to flashing in a physical context. Both acts are unexpected and create discomfort and confusion by suddenly claiming their attention, response and time.

> Agnete: It's like you're almost being exposed to like a flasher
> Stine: Yes, it's actually kind of like a flasher, that's what it is
> Agnete: That's why it feels like a violation, because it's like you walk in the street and then suddenly there was a flasher. It's not something you wanted or something you had expected or anything.
>
> <div align="right">(Girls, focus group)</div>

In the excerpt above, the girls draw attention to how they feel violated when they are subject to the intruder's will and his disregard for their autonomy to decide where and with whom to engage sexually. If we follow Sayer, girls' experiences of being violated may be interpreted as a consequence of how the intruder's disregard for their agency confronts them with their vulnerability. In order to maintain a sense of dignity we are dependent on other people's respect for the embodied duality of agency and vulnerability (Sayer 2011, 192, 202). Often the girls described that they responded to the intrusion by deleting the person as a friend or ignoring the 'dick pic', both of which can be interpreted as ways of attempting to restore their sense of dignity. However, a couple of girls also described how they had received 'dick pics' at family dinners, which they found embarrassing because the photo could expose them to family members, as Stine noted: 'It's like going naked to a family dinner'. The nakedness that Stine refers to signifies how she may feel vulnerable to family members' judgements. Her dignity may not only be affronted by the intruder's disregard for her agency and consent, it may also be affronted when family members evaluate something that they assume to be related to her sex life. Thus, it seemed that the impact of the 'dick pic' could be exacerbated in particular contexts.

To sum up; by enforcing an unwanted intimacy, 'dick pics' may confront girls with gendered vulnerability impacting their embodied sense of dignity.

Gendered Interpersonal And Social Vulnerability

At all three schools girls shared experiences of boys asking them for 'nudes', meaning photos showing more or less nudity, something none of the boys shared any experiences of. Like 'dick pics', boys' request for 'nudes' seemed to be related to girls' acceptance of friend requests from boys with whom they had no prior connection, their privacy settings on social media accounts and their online dating activity on Tinder and Happn, as Vibeke experienced: 'I once had a page on Ask.fm and wrote my Snapchat in there and I think ten minutes passed and then I'd gotten ten images of different dicks and "send something you're so hot"'. The girls with no such experience often attributed this to their vigilance on social media, such as being careful about whom they befriended. This testifies to the impact that such experiences, and even just the anticipation of them, may have on how girls occupy digital spaces (see also Condon, Lieber, and Maillochon 2007, Johansson, Laflamme, and Eliasson 2012).

Whilst being asked for 'nudes' by strangers may be experienced as both uninvited and unwanted attention, being asked for 'nudes' in a flirting context seemed less uninvited and could be considered flattering given the normalization of sexting (see Burkett 2015, Burén and Lunde 2018, Hasinoff 2015). However, what may at first appear as consensual sexting could turn out to be part of a process of online sexual exploitation, as Sandra described.

> 'There are a lot of boys in nude-picture-situations, where they get all personal and try to be like, "well, you're just really nice and I really like you" and then suddenly "can't I see you, can't I get a picture" and then the girls are like "well, he does like me, so maybe this could be something", and then you're stupid enough to send a picture and then afterwards it's passed around because it's all just a lie'.

<div align="right">(Girls, focus group)</div>

The excerpt highlights how some girls may share 'nudes' in order to preserve a romantic connection and how some boys in turn may exploit the girl's trust and anticipation of a relationship to get access to 'nudes'. The betrayal that Sandra describes can be conceptualized as what Ashurst and McAlinden (2015) describe as a peer-to-peer grooming, which accentuates the manipulative tactics that go into the exploitation process such as paying compliments and showing affection in order to establish trust with the aim of getting 'nudes' (see also Ringrose et al. 2013). The effect of such manipulative tactics was recognized among the boys at one of the schools. In the excerpts below the boys respond to the question of how it is possible to get 'nudes' from girls with whom one is not in a relationship.

Sead: If you've written with the person in a couple of days, then it can be fixed quickly, like you know the girl has started to [hesitates]

Edvin: Think you're nice

Sead: Yes, she thinks you're nice and if you ask about it, they do it. So you just have to charm her.

(Boys, focus group)

Jesper: Well, but that's like 'fuckboy material', where you go in and really like ehm…You're really affectionate with the girl right and…give her false expectations more or less, right, who then ends up sending this [nude] and then you can practically just cut the contact right away.

(Boys, focus group)

These excerpts illustrate how some boys are familiar with the manipulative tactics employed to get 'nudes' from girls, although they do not describe personal experiences. Jesper's description shows that such actions may be recognized as a 'fuckboy' practice, which among girls (in particular) was a term used to denounce boys who abuse girls' care and trust. This underlines how peer-to-peer grooming may weaken trust and care, but may strengthen the value of opportunism. The online grooming process seems to share similarities with what some girls' referred to as 'ghosting'. 'Ghosting' was described as the practice of a boy (or girl) cutting contact after sex, leaving the girl feeling objectified, as Stine described: 'Then you're really an object, because he wants our vagina and he wants nothing more from us.' What this excerpt highlights is the experience of being treated as a means to an end, which according to Sayer (2011, 196ff) marks a failure to recognize the other's vulnerabilities. In relation to online grooming, girls could paradoxically be confronted with their vulnerability *both* if they learned that they had been exploited for 'nudes' *and* if they refused to send nude photos.

Stine: I don't feel pressured, but I kind of get like a very annoying feeling, when he writes like "why can't you [send a nude]" and "that's bad form" and like "well, come on, just like send a picture." You feel – I don't feel pressured, because I wouldn't do it if I didn't feel like it, but you still get this strange feeling. This boo-feeling.

(Girls, focus group)

Stine's description draws attention to how the negative responses to her agency confront her with interpersonal vulnerability manifested as a 'boo'-feeling (Sayer 2011, 195). Declining to send a 'nude' could invoke various negative responses such as 'slut', 'ugly', 'disgusting' and 'miserly'. Across school contexts, parallels were drawn with experiences of face-to-face unwanted sexual attention outside the digital context.

Celina: I also had one, who wrote like 'hi', and then I wrote like 'hi' back. Then he wrote 'can I have a nude?', and then I replied 'well, no', and then he wrote, 'why are you so slutty on your pictures then?' First you want something and then when I don't give it to you, then you call me a slut. You could have called me that if I send you something, really. […] But when you walk in the street and people are like, 'hey beautiful' and you're just like 'wow', and then they are like 'okay, relax slut', right. You just get this 'slut', I don't know why, but they just use it.

(Girls, focus group)

Here Celina draws attention to how she has experienced negative reactions from boys when she had rejected their unwanted attention. It seems that when girls assert their agency, some boys may move from non-intimidating to intimidating tactics using sexist language. This is a move which has also been described in studies of street harassment (Larkin 1991) and online debates where it is known as 'flaming' (Megarry 2014, Jane 2014a, Jane 2014b). Considering Arne Johan Vetlesen's perspective on human capacity for evil understood as acts of knowingly harming others, negative responses may be about removing a confrontation with one's own vulnerability by confronting the other person with their vulnerability in order to feel empowered (Vetlesen cited in Sayer 2011, 132-133, Stefansen, Smette, and Bossy 2014). From this perspective, insulting responses to girls' rejections may be interpreted as a way of responding to social vulnerability shaped by gendered values, meanings and norms where 'nudes' and sexual activity in general can be a source of recognition that testifies to boys' sexual experience and what Ringrose et al. (2013) terms 'powers of persuasion'. The gendered values inform meanings and norms for boys to act as sexual pursuers and girls as sexual gatekeepers with the power to permit or decline access to sexual activity, as argued by Anton.

'It's because boys they have to do an effort in relation to girls – like it's not to be sexist – but boys have to do all the work. Girls have to do their hair and make-up and then they have to go out. Boys have to buy drinks, work like open the door, pull out the chair and blah blah blah to get some [sex], but girls they just have to come along. That's why girls are sluts and boys are studs like Carl said'.

(Boys, focus group)

Although both boys and girls challenged perceptions like Anton's, it was still present across contexts and genders. The symbolic power of the sexual double standard referred to in the excerpt above reveals how a gendered sexual morality may be constructed on the basis of a symbolic order of values that are constructed as feminine vis-à-vis masculine, such as the distinctions between passive versus active and 'used' versus 'experienced' (see also Holland et al. 2004). Despite the fact that Denmark is known for cherishing values

of sexual liberal-mindedness, gender equality and individual freedom (Sandberg and Rönnblom 2013)[1], young people across school contexts described how girls' sexual activities could be held accountable to a sexual double standard.

Unmasking Personal Vulnerability As Structural

The previous two sections show how unwanted digital sexual attention bears a resemblance to face-to-face experiences and how they appear to be related to a symbolic order of values, meanings and norms related to gender and sexuality. During the fieldwork, observations and stories of sexism and unwanted sexual attention surfaced. The majority of these cases involved boys and men against girls, yet girls could also display sexist attitudes towards other girls. Moreover, it was not uncommon for some boys to use derogatory references to homosexuality as a way of humiliating each other. At times experiences moved between contexts, which may be conceptualised as *cross-over intrusions* signifying the transgression between digital and face-to-face and between public and private, as illustrated by the following two episodes.

At the vocational training school sexism or sexual topics arose almost daily in comments, storytelling, and unwanted sexual attention, sometimes taking the form of banter, as in the following episode.

> In the workshop Marley and Thomas make Ines believe she has marks from her blue ballpoint pen on her face and Ines, consequently, leaves the room to go to the restroom to see for herself. The boys are laughing and Marley tries to get Thomas to make her believe it again, as she returns. He succeeds as Ines leaves for a second time to check in a mirror, to see whether the pen marks are still there. Marley says, 'females are just so easy, they'll believe anything'. The boys are laughing. Ines returns again and Thomas shows her a photo that he took of her the week before. In the photo Ines is on her knees cleaning something up off the floor. Thomas had uploaded the photo on his social media account with the text 'The slave's working'. Several of his friends, both boys and girls, have commented approvingly on his post. Now Thomas wants to take a new photo of Ines, but she doesn't want to. 'Come on now; get down on your knees' he commands at her several times. Marley notices she's blushing and says 'I think you've got something red on your cheeks'. Ines looks at them but stays quiet.
>
> (Fieldnote, 2015)

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[1] These three values have also been highlighted as part of the 'Danmarks kanon' - a canon of the ten most significant values for Danish society at present and for the future. https://www.danmarkskanon.dk/, accessed 14 November 2018

At first sight this episode can be understood as an example of banter. However, Ines' blushing testifies to the humiliation she experiences, which seemed to be exacerbated by Thomas' publication of the photo and demeaning text online. Whilst Thomas had gained recognition for his online post from friends, it seemed that he had done this at the expense of Ines' sense of dignity. The episode can be interpreted as an undignified experience because Thomas does not acknowledge Ines' vulnerability – vulnerability which, we argue, is shaped on the basis of a symbolic order – but takes advantage of it (Sayer 2011, 203). Hence, when Thomas and Marley ascribe 'being easy to fool' as a natural characteristic of women, sexualise her posture and position her as a 'slave', they tap into gendered values, meanings and norms (Bourdieu 2001, 23, 37). The power of these values, meanings and norms may be based on a symbolic distinction between what are considered masculine and feminine emotions, characteristics and activities, which tend to position the masculine above the feminine (Bourdieu 2001, Ortner 1972, Connell and Pearse 2014). Blushing may be seen as a visual manifestation of the embodiment of such a symbolic order, which suggests that Ines is confronted with her vulnerability on an interpersonal level by Thomas and Marley's actions and on a social level by online spectators' judgements of her. This draws attention to how the sense of embarrassment that girls may feel under the gaze of the other is dependent on a shared recognition of the values, meanings and norms on which the judgement rests (Sayer 2011, 167).

Whilst girls sometimes resisted face-to-face unwanted sexual attention verbally either directly or indirectly by framing an act as offensive, this appeared more challenging when the actions were interpreted as banter. This can be illustrated by an episode at one of the upper secondary schools. At this school sexist remarks arose at times during the fieldwork and girls described how some boys could refer to girls as 'krid', 'crane' and 'tank', dividing them according to their sexual attractiveness and respectability as Mary described: '[…] krid, is a good-looking girl, crane is an ugly girl, but who you'd still fuck and then there's tank which are ugly girls.' This echoes what Kelly (2005) terms 'hierarchies of worth', signifying how girls can be situated hierarchically in relation to one another as well as to men according to their sexual attractiveness and respectability (see also Farvid, Braun, and Rowney 2016). The terminology exposes how some girls may not enjoy respect in situations, where others do, as Elin experienced.

> Elin: Bjørn had been out to get me for a couple of days and then he'd changed another boy's SoMe account to 'Elin Crane'. […] They wrote [online] that I was a disgusting 'crane' and shouldn't be here and stuff like that. […] Like we went down to talk to a teacher, I went with Sophie and Lily right, and I could barely say what had happened and I just said something had happened and then I started crying. […] I thought it was so awful.
>
> Mette: You just don't want to go back to class after such an episode, because you feel that everyone's against you.
>
> Elin: And the worst part is that the boys still think I'm the one overreacting.

Henriette: Yes, they still think that.

Interviewer: They think you're overreacting?

Elin: That it's my own fault.

Rana: But that's because they are so male chauvinist they don't see it from any other perspective than the guy who did it.

(Girls, focus group)

Elin's experience highlights how banter framing works as a shield against criticism and thereby what may be interpreted as her attempts to restore her sense of dignity by referring to the episode as hurtful. When framed as a way of making fun it invalidates the moral ground for Elin to make claims about the impact that the experience has had. Having the power to name and define entails a power to uphold certain perceptions about the reality (see also Megarry 2014, Kelly and Radford 1990) and by insisting on Elin's reaction as disproportionate to the intrusion, the boys impose a perception of reality that delegitimizes her emotional responses as a way of knowing, in what Bourdieu (1989, 21) calls 'the symbolic struggle for the production of a common sense'. Similarly to a Finnish study (Aaltonen 2017), young people sometimes articulated or were confronted with neoliberal agency notions, as Henriette noted: "[…] in our class and maybe also among boys here at the school, you have to be this tough girl, who can bear being called a 'crane', because if you get upset, what are you made of then, right?". Elin's experience accentuates what we term an *embodied contradiction* between her emotions of being treated in an undignified manner and the meanings available to comprehend it as such, drawing attention to our fundamental sentient ability to feel hurt and humiliated (Sayer 2017).

The boy's evaluation of Elin's attractiveness was not limited to the individual action but tapped into a shared understanding of the meaning of such terms across school contexts. Girls and boys mentioned how a hit song called 'Crane alarm' made by two young men was listed on Spotify and YouTube. The girls also mentioned how a male teachers who used the term for fun, which they found legitimated the boys' use of the term. This illustrates how Elin's cross-over intrusion may be exacerbated, as the derogatory term 'crane' is not only an interpersonal insult, it is also a public evaluation of her gendered worth in terms of respect based on her physical appearance (see also Megarry 2014). Ultimately, the empirical realities of unwanted sexual attention transgress the boundaries of what it means to be online and offline and public and private confronting girls with gendered vulnerability irrespective of context and the meaning ascribed to these.

Helena: […] I don't know why girls to a greater extent [than boys] are sexualised. That's just how it is.

Vilma: Women have always been sacred ever since the medieval times […] It's just so deeply rooted in us that it's part of the perception of women – part of the culture.

Interviewer: Do you think such perceptions can be changed?

Vilma: Yes, personally yes – but not a whole people. That's difficult.

(Girls, focus group)

Similarly to the excerpt above, other young people also made historical references to explain the persistence of the symbolic order of meanings, values and norms related to gender and sexuality. This suggests how young people are able to unmask individual vulnerability as structurally founded, which has been articulated in earlier feminist works as part of the consciousness-raising process (Stanley and Wise 2002). According to Bourdieu (2001, 103), it is 'the order of gender that underlies the performative efficacy of words – and especially insults […]' and this may not be changeable by consciousness-raising alone.

Across gender and school contexts young people expressed excitement about discussing gender, sex and unwanted sexual experiences, and most of them had never been given the opportunity to do this before. The focus groups in particular seemed to create a space to share unwanted sexual attention experienced, as Stine described: […] It was really nice to get it off one's chest and you got all like "wow, that was cool", because it was kind of a load that had been lifted of my shoulders in some way. So it made me pretty happy.' Finally, it seems that providing a space in which to discuss sexual harassment may create an opportunity to unpack *embodied contradictions* and give experiences of harm the opportunity to inform new perceptions of what is acceptable and unacceptable both digitally and face-to-face.

CONCLUSION

Using Sayer's theorization of human dignity as dependent on others' recognition of our agency and vulnerability, this paper sheds light on the gender dynamics and impact of unwanted digital sexual attention. Digital intrusions, peer-to-peer grooming and cross-over intrusions may confront girls with gendered vulnerability on an interpersonal level and on a social level. On the interpersonal level, girls may be confronted with their vulnerability when they experience disrespect for their agency and a misuse of trust and care, whilst boys on the other hand may be confronted with their vulnerability on an interpersonal level when girls' reject their 'nude' requests. On a social level the gendered values, meanings and norms, may inform sexist language and peer judgements confronting girls with their vulnerability and shaping the basis for misrecognition from peers among boys. These levels can be analytically distinguished but they may be equally enmeshed in young people's sense of dignity.

This paper suggests that gendered meanings such as the sexual double standard may condition the gendered nature of digital and face-to-face sexual harassment. Girls' emotional responses such as insecurity, discomfort, blushing and humiliation are evaluative judgements of how unwanted sexual attention affect their well-being (Sayer 2011, 36-37). In line with studies of face-to-face sexual harassment (Vera-Gray 2017a, Condon, Lieber, and Maillochon 2007, Larkin 1994), girls' social responses such as vigilance, distrust and avoidance reveal how the cumulative confrontation with their vulnerability may

shape their sense of agency across contexts. Contrary to other studies (Attwood 2011, Evans, Riley, and Shankar 2010), this suggests how girls' agency is not shaped by social meanings alone and how empowerment cannot be achieved by subverting meanings of, for instance, 'sexiness'. Essentially, we argue that girls' agency cannot be understood without taking account of confrontations with their vulnerability; vulnerability that is fundamental to human existence but shaped socially.

Theorizing the embodied impact of sexual harassment as a confrontation with vulnerability, this paper has explored how girls' sense of dignity is shaped according to both passing experiences such as 'dick pics' and sexist comments and an enduring historical symbolic order of values, meanings and norms. Yet, a limitation may be the lack of attention to how intersections with class and ethnicity are confronting young people with their vulnerability in different ways.

Understanding sexual violence against women as linked to gender structures has yet to gain a foothold in public discourses in Denmark (Pringle, Balkmar, and Iovanni 2010). Perhaps this study may contribute to an understanding of the cumulative impact that digital sexual harassment may have on young women's sense of agency. Likewise, we remain optimistic that the visual documentation that unwanted digital sexual attention can contain may serve as a window onto how the symbolic order of values, meanings and norms related to gender and sexuality are woven into the fabric of young people's everyday lives. Such a window may present a view that unmasks the gap between Danish values and reality.

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