

WOMEN, IMAGE BASED SEXUAL ABUSE AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

ANTOINETTE RAFFAELA HUBER

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Abstract

Through the use of 28 in-depth interviews with victims, activists, and criminal justice staff, this research details the emotional, physical, and social impact of image based sexual abuse (IBSA) on women's everyday lives, and identifies some of the key policing and legislative issues which prevent women from achieving justice within the criminal justice system. In doing so, this study is the first and one of the largest pieces of research to examine IBSA through the use of in-depth interviews with victims in the UK. Therefore, it is able to significantly contribute to our understanding of victims' experiences. By taking a radical feminist and victimological approach, this research also highlights the gendered nature of IBSA, including the motivations behind perpetration, the normalisation of sexual violence against women in online environments, and the link between IBSA and domestic abuse. Importantly, by examining IBSA as part of a victimisation process rather than as an event, this research identifies IBSA as being interlinked with coercion, control, blackmail, harassment, and verbal and physical abuse. Thus, the research places IBSA on Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence. The research also identifies continued problematic responses within policing and legislation, demonstrating a failure of the state to account for gendered violence and the silencing of women's experiences. The findings raise fundamental concerns; they call for greater recognition of IBSA as a serious form of sexual violence against women, and for a radical overhaul of criminal justice responses in order to aid women in their pursuit of justice.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Image Based Sexual Abuse: Key Issues and Vital Research

Image based sexual abuse (IBSA) sits within a broader category of ‘technology facilitated violence’, which “refers to 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, cyberstalking, image-based sexual exploitation, and the use of a carriage service to coerce a victim into an unwanted sexual act” (Henry and Powell, 2018:195). This research specifically focuses on one sector of technology facilitated violence; that is, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing of sexual images without the subjects’ consent is often referred to as ‘revenge pornography’ (Laird, 2013; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015; Stroud, 2014).

According to a survey of 4,122 Australians ... one in ten Australian respondents had experienced a nude or sexual image of themselves being distributed to others or posted online without their consent... One in 10 reported they had taken, distributed or made threats to distribute a nude or sexual image of another person without that person’s consent (Powell *et al.*, 2019:1).

Whilst it is not known how many people in the UK are subject to or perpetrate IBSA, it is known that women are disproportionally subject to IBSA and that men are more likely to perpetrate it (Citron and Franks, 2014; Cyber Civil Rights, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franklin, 2014). One of the most common perceived motivations behind IBSA involves images being shared by an aggrieved ex-partner who feels that they have been wronged by the victim, often in cases of infidelity (Chemaly, 2016; Laird, 2013, Stroud, 2014). In these cases, image distribution is seen as a mechanism to seek ‘justice’ or ‘revenge’ (Franklin, 2014; Salter, 2017). However, feminist writers have highlighted that the use of the term ‘revenge pornography’ is not only misleading but fails to encompass the full nature of the issue (Henry and Powell, 2016). By taking a feminist approach to examining IBSA, it becomes evident that the motivations for IBSA are more complex in that they mirror other forms of abuse and control, including “coercion, blackmail, fun, sexual gratification, social status or monetary gain” (Henry and Powell, 2016:4). Consequently, the term ‘image based sexual abuse’ has now generally been adopted as a means to recognise the complexity of the motivations behind, and the nature of, this offence (Henry and Powell, 2016; McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, ‘IBSA’ will

be the term used throughout this thesis to refer to the non-consensual sharing of these images.

The technological nature of IBSA means that abusers no longer have to be within the proximity of the victim to be abusive; they no longer even have to be in contact with the victim. Instead, abuse can be perpetrated by releasing intimate images online and within the victim's local community (Citron and Franks, 2014; Franklin, 2014; Franks, 2011; Laird, 2013; Lee, 2012a; Stroud, 2014). This is ultimately facilitated by the creation of handheld devices, which contribute to the instantaneous, easy, and convenient nature of the Internet. The development of instant messaging and public sharing platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram increases the ease of sharing images, and what was once a private image quickly becomes public information (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015). Furthermore, the ease with which we can instantly connect with other users (including strangers) online provides new avenues through which online harassment and abuse can be perpetrated. Thus, it is the development of the interactive web which initiates new foundations for crime and victimisation through the exploitation of new and emerging media environments (Yar, 2012).

However, it is generally agreed that social media does not *cause* harm but *contributes* to facilitation of IBSA (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Laville, 2016a). Since the increase in use of these platforms to facilitate abuse online began, platform owners have attempted to put measures in place to combat the perpetration of IBSA. For example, Facebook has banned the use of IBSA and claims to have increased its swiftness when responding to reports (Laville, 2016a). This is in addition to the tools implemented to counter hate speech, including the ability to unfriend and block other users (Laville, 2016a). Google is also making efforts to remove these images from search results when victims bring cases to their attention (BBC Newsbeat, 2015). It introduced a 'right to be forgotten rule'; whereby victims can request Google to attempt to delete the images as well as links to the content (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015). Microsoft has also followed suit by removing links to images in Bing search results and removing the specific content if it is shared on its services (OneDrive and Xbox Live) (BBC News, 2015a). However, these platforms continue to face criticism for being slow in responding to victims' requests and responding to victims inadequately. Google has also been seen to resist requests from victims to remove images from its search results (BBC Newsbeat, 2015).

Nonetheless, sole responsibility for (combating) online abuse cannot be placed on Internet platforms because online abuse is not “discontinuous with established patterns of inequality but rather intersects with and can amplify them” (Salter, 2017:5). It is the gendered inequality within the offline world which has permeated the online environment and, therefore, the issue of online abuse is fundamentally rooted in the asymmetry of sexual violence in the offline environment (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Even the initial (consensual and non-consensual) exchanges of images between partners is influenced by ‘appropriate’ gendered norms. Images are often exchanged through what is commonly called ‘sexting’, in which partners share sexualised images with each other; this is common in modern relationships (Salter, 2017). Within these heterosexual exchanges, men are more likely to request these images from women than vice versa, and the exchange of these images is often characterised by a lack of reciprocity and mutual desire (Salter, 2017). That is, men are more likely to seek to obtain these images than women, and this is fundamentally linked to the objectification and pornographisation of women’s bodies (Salter, 2017). Women and girls are now increasingly pressured to engage with this type of image sharing, with many adhering to men’s requests on the grounds that this is part of a woman’s role in satisfying the desires of men’s sexual needs (Salter, 2017). This raises some fundamental concerns in relation to consent for image production, something which became increasingly evident during the interviews within this research. When these images are disseminated online, women become subject to (slut) shaming, judgemental, and degrading treatment on an exacerbated level, due to the public nature of this abuse. This societal response is underpinned by patriarchal attitudes and norms which continue to define the parameters of women’s sexual behaviour and legitimise the punishment of women who are seen to demonstrate inappropriate or unfeminine (sexual) behaviour (Stoltenberg, 1993).

The blurred consensual boundaries and the continuing patriarchal attitudes towards women’s sexual behaviour result in very little sympathy or understanding of victims’ experiences; instead, it results in the perception that women and girls who experience online abuse are responsible for their own victimisation (Henry, 2016; Stroud, 2014). This problematic response to IBSA comes not just from public reactions, but it is evident in the responses from state agencies. In fact, the problems faced by victims of IBSA mirror the issues historically faced by victims of rape, including issues of consent, the treatment of women victims in the criminal justice system, and legislative responses (Ballinger, 2009; Smart, 1989; MacKinnon, 1987). Thus, women’s experiences of gendered violence

continue to be silenced through the failure of police and legislation to respond to and account for victims' experiences appropriately. Consequently, women are being forced to silently suffer from a wide range of mental, physical, and social issues as a consequence of their victimisation, including anxiety, panic attacks, anorexia nervosa, depression, low self-esteem, paranoia and victim blaming (Bloom, 2014; Citron and Franks, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2016), loss of employment, suicide, and feeling unsafe to leave the home (Cyber Civil Rights, 2014).

The purpose of this research is to provide a platform through which these women's voices can be represented and accounted for in a way they see fit. The primary research question centres upon examining the emotional, physical, and social impact of IBSA on women over the age of 18, and their experiences and perceptions of policing responses and legislation. Initially, the research was intended to examine victims' criminal justice experiences as a whole; however, only one of the women in this study had their case taken to court during the time of their research participation. Therefore, this research is primarily focused upon victims' experiences thus far in the criminal justice process. The research, therefore, sought to achieve the following aims:

- To investigate the emotional, physical, and social impacts, if any, of being a victim of image based sexual abuse.
- To explore the coping mechanisms and life changes employed by victims as a result of their victimisation.
- To examine perceptions of the protection and justice provided by current legislation and criminal justice policy and practice.
- To identify whether image based sexual abuse should be considered as a form of violence against women.

This research addressed these aims by conducting interviews with victims of IBSA ($n = 17$) and activists ($n = 6$). The latter, for the purposes of this research, are defined as people who have professional experience in working with and/or supporting victims of IBSA; these included support staff working for government or voluntary organisations and lawyers who had legally represented victims. Criminal justice staff ($n = 5$) were also interviewed. These included four police officers and one representative from the Crown Prosecution Service. These interviews not only provided a collection of women's experiences of victimisation, but also helped to inform a critique of current policing and legislative responses. By critically exploring the views of victims, activists, and criminal

justice representatives, this study contributes to criminological knowledge by putting forward the first in-depth qualitative study examining victim experiences of IBSA within the UK. Furthermore, until the recent publication of a report by McGlynn *et al.* (2019), this was the largest interview study with victims internationally.

The Ministry of Justice (2015, added emphasis) has defined IBSA as:

the sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with *the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress*.

The definition of private and sexual materials is characterised as:

materials ... showing anything not usually seen in public. Sexual material not only covers images that show the pubic region, but anything that a reasonable person would consider to be sexual so this could be a picture of someone who is engaged in sexual behaviour or posing in a sexually provocative way. (Ministry of Justice, 2015)

As a result of the numerous issues already highlighted with the current legislation (see Bartow, 2012; Citron and Franks, 2014; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015), and this study's aim to put victims' experiences and perceptions at the forefront, an alternative definition of IBSA was adopted. This meant that this research examines a broader range of cases which may not meet the legislative requirements for prosecution, but still broadly include the sharing, or threat to share, images which the victims *perceive* to be private and sexually explicit. By taking into account the issues with the law's definition of IBSA in the current literature, and including cases of non-consensual image sharing which do not fall within the remit of the current legislation, this research is able to identify cases which should be included within the legal definitions due to the impact on victims. In order to recognise these victims' experiences, radical changes to current legislation need to be made; therefore, this research suggests a more informed and inclusive definition of IBSA which attempts to represent a wide range of cases. This research defines IBSA as:

The distribution, or threat of distribution, of intimate images without the depicted person's consent.

Intimate images are defined as:

Images which are intended by the subject depicted to remain private *and*;

- (a) Images which are sexual in nature (this includes anything from nudity to images of the subject in their underwear and images of subjects involved in sexual behaviour).

- (b) Images perceived by the subject (and the community to which they belong) to be sexual in nature.
- (c) Images in which the original non-sexual material has been altered to create a sexualised image (otherwise known as ‘deepfake’ images or ‘fake porn’).¹

The findings of this research are underpinned by a feminist and victimological analysis. In doing so, this research uncovers the gendered nature of IBSA and how this endorses problematic criminal justice responses in policy and practice. This research therefore argues that as a result of gendered discourses and the increasing use of technology to perpetrate violence against women, IBSA is fundamentally a form of gendered violence which results in significant mental, social, and physical impacts that cause significant changes to women’s everyday lives. These experiences continue to be met with poor policing and legislative responses through the failure to recognise the gendered nature and seriousness of victimisation. Ultimately, victims are currently facing fundamental barriers to having their experiences recognised and achieving justice. As a result of these research findings, recommendations are put forward in relation to policy and practice which are aimed at increasing support for victims of IBSA and improving policing and legislative responses. It is expected that this will increase victims’ willingness to report their experiences, reduce the amount of trauma faced by victims in the criminal justice process, and increase the likelihood of victims achieving justice.

The next chapter in this thesis (Chapter two) examines the existing literature surrounding IBSA and makes a key contribution to the argument that IBSA should be considered a form of sexual violence. It discusses the parallels between IBSA and sexual violence, highlighting that the issues historically faced by victims of sexual violence replicate those faced by victims of IBSA. However, this chapter additionally argues that the

¹ ‘Fakeporn’ is the altering of videos or images to make them sexual: “for example, taking a profile picture from Facebook and digitally editing it to make it sexual or pornographic” (McGlynn, *et al.*, 2019:2). Although photoshopping is not new, there has been the recent development of artificial intelligence apps which are able to make ‘deepfake’ images. “To the untrained eye, it is very difficult to tell the difference between the fake and real images, and so the harm and harassment felt by victim-survivors is just as significant” (McGlynn, *et al.*, 2019:2).

development, and misuse of, technology contributes to the rise of additional consequences for victims which are specific to the public nature of online platforms.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the research. It draws upon radical feminist work on sexual violence and pornography, as well as critical victimology. This chapter identifies the gendered nature of IBSA and the problematic state responses which continue to underpin the silencing of IBSA victims. These include the limited freedom women have to define their own sexual experiences and how this contributes to the normalisation of sexual violence in women's everyday lives. Chapter four details the methods and methodological approaches undertaken during the research process. In particular, it highlights the difficulties of researching such an intimate and silenced area of victimisation.

Chapter five is the first of two findings chapters. It details the nature of IBSA and some of the most significant issues faced by victims, as well as providing a detailed account of how victimisation has impacted upon women's everyday lives. It also details how victimisation not only impacts upon the victims, but upon those who are providing vital support or are dependent on them, as well as how victims have made attempts to take back control of their lives. Chapter six details policing and legislative responses to victims of IBSA and highlights some serious concerns with regards to women's treatment within the criminal justice process. It also demonstrates how the current legislation is not fit for purpose and requires radical reform in order to represent the complexity of IBSA.

Chapter seven provides a discussion of the key findings, highlighting how this research contributes to the call from other academics in the field for a better recognition of the impact of IBSA on women and the need for improved responses from the state. It also highlights the key contributions of this research to the field, identifying new information with regards to victims' experiences. In doing so, it puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at improving policing and legislative responses to increase the likelihood of victims' needs being met. Chapter eight concludes the thesis by identifying the key themes within this research and ultimately presenting the argument that IBSA should be considered as a gendered form of sexual violence.

Chapter 2

Same Issues, Different Era? The Parallels Between Sexual Violence and Image Based Sexual Abuse

Introduction

Feminist criminology arose as a response to gender-blind traditional criminological theories (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Naffine, 1997; Rock, 2007). Prior to the 1960s, gendered analysis within criminology was almost non-existent (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2016). Research was primarily conducted by men, on men, for the purposes of men; consequently, criminologists had failed to consider the impact and biases this had on criminological theory and research (Naffine, 1997). This focus on men's knowledge and offending within the discipline was not a result of a gendered approach. Explanations of men's behaviour did not centre on men and masculinity; it was a case of women being excluded from analysis (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2016). In the rare event that female offending was considered as a part of criminological work, theorisations served to reinforce distorted views and problematic assumptions about women (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2016). This analysis was heavily influenced by Lombroso's work, which contended that female offending was the result of genetic and physiological characteristics, and therefore of genetic disadvantage (Lombroso and Ferrero, 1898).

Even when explanations of male offending progressed within criminology, namely the movement away from biological theories towards ecology theories and state control, explanations for women's offending remained rooted within biological ideas (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2016). It was due to this exclusion within criminological analysis and knowledge production that feminists made attempts to place women on the criminological agenda. In the 1960s and 70s, feminists began to make inroads in understanding relationships between women and crime. Initially, liberal feminism questioned historical claims of objectivity, arguing for women's lives to receive the same scientific treatment as those of men (Naffine, 1997). However, it was the ground-breaking work of Carol Smart (1977) which highlighted the need to examine women's oppression and jurisprudence. Nevertheless, sexism within criminology remained an unaddressed issue as feminism remained a side-addition to a continuing positivistic, gender-blind discipline (Naffine, 1997). Mainstream criminologists still examined women through traditional criminological theories, continuing to deny the gendered nature of female offending, and marginalised work in the area by giving it a separate category in

criminological literature (Smart, 2008). For second wave feminists, one of the key concerns was placing women on the criminological agenda, as well as demonstrating that applying male-centred theories to female behaviour was unfitting in explaining women's criminality (Carlen, 1990). Another key concern was to highlight how sexual assumptions about womanhood impacted upon not only explanations of women's behaviour but their welfare, criminal justice, and penal treatment (Carlen, 1990).

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that feminist analysis of women as victims, rather than just offenders, began to surface (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2016). Until this point, the causation of male violence against women was explained through psychological accounts of male mental illness, personality disorders, and drug and alcohol consumption (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2011). It was radical feminists who particularly addressed the issue of violence against women, instigating a widespread debate alongside the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement (Mackay, 2015). Women collectively began speaking and sharing knowledge of violence against women, bringing about the realisation that their experiences were not the result of individual failings but of male supremacy and female subordination (Mackay, 2015). Feminist criminology thus started to draw attention to abuse which women were being subjected to in the home (Stevens, 2006). This led to a movement away from biological theories of violence against women and the idea of stranger rape being women's primary cause of victimisation. Instead, rape and violence against women was argued to be an extension of learnt male aggression, in an attempt to demonstrate masculinity and exert control, which commonly occurred within the home (Stevens, 2006). This eventually led to violence being recognised as a series of events along a continuum rather than isolated incidents (Kelly, 1988).

Mackay (2015:61) identifies four distinguishing factors of radical feminism: (1) the belief in, and attempts to end, patriarchy; (2) the promotion of women-only space and political organisation; (3) the belief that violence against women is a "keystone of women's oppression"; and (4) understanding violence against women through the analysis of institutions, including pornography. The overarching argument is that those who perpetrate violence against women are "not abnormal, but the product of a sexist culture" (Cameron and Frazer, 1987:118). Male violence against women, especially within the home, has now become recognised across the world as an important problem which needs to be placed on agendas for social and political change (Dobash and Dobash, 2000).

This feminist work not only began to change explanations of crime within criminology; it also influenced perspectives within victimology (Stevens, 2006). Positivist victimology

can be traced back to the 1940s, when positivists' concern for what is knowable, observable, measurable, and objective fundamentally influenced methodological advancements and foci within victimology (Davies *et al.*, 1996; Rock, 2002; Walklate, 1989). This included a focus on victim typologies and precipitation (Walklate, 2010). It wasn't until the 1960s and 1970s that victims came to the forefront of research (Walklate, 2010). The contribution of feminist work meant that victimology was net-widened in relation to examining types of victimisation, thus uncovering a large number of domestic incidents; and, through the use of surveys, a more meaningful picture of violence against women, and its impacts (Walklate, 1989). Walklate's (1989) work, in particular, influenced a shift towards critical victimology. This not only provided a critique of positivist victimological concepts, which served to reinforce victim blaming attitudes (Walklate, 1989); it further encouraged the examination of how gendered victimisation impacts upon women's everyday lives, as well as women's ability to cope with, and resist, victimisation (Mawby and Walklate, 1994).

This chapter will therefore begin with an overview of feminist literature on violence against women, starting with feminist debates focused upon defining domestic abuse and sexual violence. It demonstrates how feminist work has widened definitions of violence and in doing so, has highlighted problematic assumptions and perceptions about sexual violence, and how this has a direct impact upon law and policy responses to victims' experiences. The remainder of the chapter will discuss these issues in relation to image based sexual abuse (IBSA). Whilst there is limited literature surrounding IBSA, the literature does suggest that the experiences of victims of IBSA mirror those of rape and sexual assault victims. This includes how technology has changed the scope of violence against women by amplifying already existing issues and also creating new ones. The impact of this on victims is then considered; this chapter argues that the impact of online violence not only reflects the impact of offline violence, but also causes additional consequences as a result of abuse facilitated by an online context. Essentially, this forms the basis of the argument that IBSA is a form of gendered violence. Finally, this chapter examines policing and law responses to victims of IBSA and considers how these responses mimic the same problematic responses to violence against women which have historically been highlighted by feminist work.

Defining Violence Against Women: Broadening Feminist Definitions.

Before the 1970s, terminology in relation to violence against women did not exist due to a liberal feminist focus on a right to vote and the inclusion of women's voices in the legal process (Ashcraft, 2000). However, an increasing number of calls to Rape Crisis about women being attacked by their husbands influenced a need to recognise this behaviour with new terminology (Ashcraft, 2000). Essentially, the increased visibility of, and attention being given to, men's violence against women has given rise to debates about how to define women's experiences. Over time, the examination of language has resulted in terminology changes (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2011). In the mid-1970s, the terms 'domestic violence' and 'battered woman' were used to identify partner violence (Ashcraft, 2000; Westmarland, 2015). The term 'domestic violence' in particular was often favoured by policy makers because it is inclusive of all domestic relationships, including those which have broken down (Mooney, 2000:26). In the 1990s and 2000s, feminists challenged the gender blindness of the terms 'domestic violence', 'family violence', and 'interpersonal violence', arguing that they do not take into account the disproportionate number of men as perpetrators and women as victims (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2011; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Mackay, 2015).

In an attempt to incorporate gendered definitions, feminists adopted the use of the term 'wife abuse'. However, this was later criticised for implying that marriage was an essential factor for domestic violence, dismissing other types of relationships in which violence could occur (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Subsequently, the term 'woman abuse' was coined to reduce the significance of the traditional marriage as a defining factor (Dobash *et al.*, 1992). This opened up avenues for examinations of violence to be extended to all relationships, whilst also taking into account gendered differences and thus providing an explanation of "the overall process of violent events within their immediate and wider contexts" (Dobash *et al.*, 1992:84).

In the mid-2000s, domestic violence also became termed 'intimate partner violence' as a way to differentiate between other types of family violence and violence which occurs during intimate relationships. This term is inclusive of all forms of relationships regardless of marital status, age, and gender (McClennen, 2005). However, this term still does not fully acknowledge the gendered nature of men's violence against women. Therefore, feminists have stressed the use of the term '*men's* violence against women' due to official policy and government documents often failing to emphasise the role men play as perpetrators (Mackay, 2015). By incorporating this within the definition, feminists

bring the disproportionateness of violence to the forefront within their arguments (Mackay, 2015). Dobash *et al.*'s (1992) research indicated the importance of this asymmetry in men's violence against women; they argued that the symmetry of violence within marital relationships is often exaggerated by the ignorance of the fact that the types and motivations of women's violence differ from those of men's violence:

[T]here is no reason to expect the sexes to be alike in this domain and that efforts to avoid sexism by lumping male and female data and the use of gender-neutral terms such as 'spouse-beating' are misguided. If violence is gendered as it assuredly is, explicit characterization of gender's relevance to violence is essential. The alleged similarity of women and men in their use of violence in intimate relationships stands in marked contrast to men's virtual monopoly on the use of violence in other social contexts (Dobash *et al.*, 1992:72).

Feminists have also challenged the reasons for, and the types of violence which constitute, men's violence against women within the law and public perceptions. Prior to feminist work, men's violence against women was attributed to pathology and poor anger management (Ashcraft, 2000). Instead, feminist work argued that sexism was the main cause of domestic violence because of the power that men have over women's lives (Davis, 1988), and that domestic violence was more an issue of control over partners than an expression of anger (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Liddle, 1989). Feminists also began to argue that physical violence was not the only way to exert control over partners; therefore, they began to extend perceptions of 'violence' to include both physical and non-physical violent behaviour (Ashcraft, 2000). Domestic violence therefore became recognised as an "array of physical, psychological, and verbal acts used to achieve domination and control over an intimate partner" (Gordon, 2000:748). In light of this knowledge, some organisations and family violence researchers used the term 'domestic abuse' as opposed to 'domestic violence' in an attempt to distinguish between violent and non-violent assaults (Gordon, 2000; Westmarland, 2015). This was soon criticised by radical feminists, who argued that narrowing definitions of violence have resulted in psychological and emotional abuse being seen as less serious, if not ignored. This is argued to have resulted in the perception that some types of violence are less significant, causing a trivialisation of women's experiences (Basile and Black, 2011; Clarke and Lewis, 1977). Feminists stressed that instead of separating forms of violence and understanding them as separate incidents, they should be seen as patterns of behaviour (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Gordon, 2000; Kelly, 1988).

However, even with the increased awareness of the need to recognise the gendered nature of violence against women, there is still no universal agreement or consistency in the use of terminology, with ‘domestic violence/abuse’ and ‘intimate partner violence’ often being used interchangeably to identify this type of behaviour (Office on Women’s Health, 2018). Nonetheless, these debates have highlighted the importance of terminology; feminists have demonstrated that the way in which we define women’s experiences has a fundamental impact on the way that the reality of victims’ experiences is perceived. The importance of terminology continues to be highlighted, particularly in relation to IBSA, with feminists consistently arguing that terminology such as ‘revenge pornography’ misrepresents victims experiences (Henry and Powell, 2016).

The term ‘domestic abuse’ will be used to refer men’s violence against women within intimate partner relationships throughout this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, this term is not only convenient in relation to presenting a cohesive argument; it is also one of the most recognisable terms. Secondly, whilst the term ‘domestic’ abuse does not necessarily highlight the gendered nature of this abuse, it does represent the wide range of intimate relationships which victims have with perpetrators, and also those who can become affected by domestic abuse other than the primary victims, including family members and children. The issue of abusive behaviour impacting those close to the victim has also been identified in relation to IBSA; therefore (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019) recognition of these experiences also needs to be taken into account. Lastly, the term ‘abuse’ will be used not only to emphasise the significance of the consequences for victims but also to acknowledge that domestic abuse incorporates multiple forms of violence, including physical and non-physical abusive behaviours. In doing so, IBSA can be recognised as a form of victimisation which can be included within the definition of domestic abuse.

The ‘Reality’ of Sexual Violence: Patriarchal Normalisation and Silencing of Rape

One of the key issues radical feminists have explored with regards to men’s violence against women is sexual violence. Radical feminist research argues that sexual violence plays a fundamental role in men’s control over women (Waklate, 1995). Rape, and women’s experiences of rape, were one of the first focal points within the radical feminist movement internationally (Kelly and Radford, 1998). The specific focus on rape was due to three underlying arguments (Kelly and Radford, 1998). First, that rape is the most brutal expression of male violence and dominance. Second, that discourses surrounding

rape uncover huge amounts of information about social relations. Finally, that rape illuminates how representations of women's bodies are produced and reproduced in society (Kumar, 1993, *cited in* Kelly and Radford, 1998).

Whilst radical feminism had already started to argue that rape, objectification, and violence were mechanisms used by men to subordinate women, Brownmiller (1975) was one the first feminists who sought more complex and detailed explanations. She argued that women learn from an early age that women get raped, not men; and therefore, "rape has something to do with our sex". If women are not careful then rape becomes inevitable (Brownmiller, 1975:309). This passivity, in contrast with male power, is said to encourage rape myths and ideologies that women are willing participants in rape. Such myths not only place blame on victims but excuse the behaviour of perpetrators, allowing rape and sexual violence to be used as weapon of control. Hence, Brownmiller (1975:15, original emphasis) makes her feminist stance clear, arguing that rape "is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear". Consequently, all women suffer from rape in some form (Brownmiller, 1975).

This argument was reiterated by Griffin (1979). Griffin conducted an analysis of the history of rape, pointing to the difficulty of producing counter-discourses to arguments which excuse rape and therefore reinforcing the argument that the identification and deconstruction of patriarchy is fundamental in campaigning against rape; only by doing this can we examine the power of rape (Griffin, 1979). Ideologies that girls are vulnerable to rape when leaving the home have resulted in fear permeating women's lives, politics, and sexuality. At the same time, those who rape or threaten to rape are free to govern, forcing women to live under oppression (Griffin, 1979). In 1981, Dworkin further highlighted that patriarchy has not only silenced women's experiences, but that men have the power to define their experiences. This, she argues, contributes to the prevalence of rape myths; a mechanism which provides justification for behaviour that solely benefits men (Dworkin, 1981). Feminist work has therefore been concerned with challenging rape myths which contribute to women's oppression. This includes assumptions that "all women want to be raped" (Brownmiller, 1975:311); that when women say no, they really mean yes; that rape only occurs outside the home; and that only stranger rape is 'real' rape (Waklate, 1995).

The concept of 'stranger danger' is heavily challenged by feminists. Denouncing the idea that women are more susceptible to rape and sexual violence in public spaces became a fundamental aim of radical feminism, due to the impact of rape misconceptions on

reporting (MacKinnon, 1987). MacKinnon unpicks state definitions and under-reporting of sexual violence and in doing so, creates a focus on how inequalities and problematic assumptions surrounding sexual violence prevent women from coming forward. The common misconception is that ‘real’ rape is perpetrated by strangers, particularly black strangers. Yet the majority of victims are of the same race as and are known to the perpetrators, such as husbands and bosses (MacKinnon, 1987). The failure of these experiences to match society’s conception of rape means that women often do not speak out because they do not perceive themselves to be victims, or they expect that the police will not perceive them as victims (MacKinnon, 1987). In relation to the former, Walklate (1995:93) argues that women were reluctant to name their experiences of rape in a marital context; they were more likely to differentiate between “persuaded sex, forced sex, and rape”. In relation to the latter, Lees (2000) states that women are less likely to report rape in marriage because victims think they will not be believed or receive the necessary support from police, including dealing with issues of retaliation from their assailant. In March 2017, it was found that 87 per cent of those who are raped know who the perpetrator is, but that only 17 per cent of victims reported their experiences to the police (Office for National Statistics, 2018a).

These perceptions surrounding rape link to feminist arguments that normative heterosexual scripts create ambiguity between rape and sex, resulting in unclear distinctions (Gavey, 2019). Gagnon and Simon (1973, *cited in* Omark, 1978:278) were the first to apply social scripts to human sexuality. They defined sexual scripts as “as a repertoire of acts and statuses that are recognised by a social group, together with the rules, expectations and sanctions governing these acts and statuses”. This means that women and men have different attitudes towards sexual behaviour, as a result of internalising different cultural scripts (Wiederman, 2005). “Societal scripts specify the appropriate objects, and desirable qualities for sexual interactions”. They also provide individual actors with instruction as to the appropriate “times, places, sequences, and so forth with regard to sexual activity” (Wiederman, 2005:496). Gavey (2019:2) argues that these “taken-for-granted normative forms of heterosexuality work as a cultural scaffolding for rape” because they cause the line between sex and rape to become blurred when we move beyond assumptions of rapists being strangers. That is, the discourses surrounding sex and gender create preconditions for rape, including women’s passive asexuality and men’s frank pursuit of sexual release. The existence of these scripts allows

for sexual encounters which cannot be easily separated from rape (Gavey, 2019). Gavey (2019) provides examples of these instances:

Many women have talked to me about experiences that they didn't call rape, but which I find difficult to see as just sex. They include stories of situations in which a man applied pressure that fell short of actual or threatened physical force, but the woman felt unable to resist, as well as encounters where a man was rough and brutish, and the woman described letting sex happen because she felt unable to stop it. They also include stories of situations where a male partner was not coercive at all, but where the woman nevertheless found herself going along with sex that was neither desired nor enjoyed because she did not feel it was her right to stop it or because she did not know how to refuse. All of these accounts in different ways point to a complex grey area between what we might think of as mutually consenting sex, on the one hand, and rape or sexual coercion on the other (Gavey, 2019:128).

Sexual scripts also influence the more overt characteristics of sexual violence, such as victim blaming and the trivialisation of rape through slut shaming and rape jokes, both of which curtail sympathy towards women (Gavey, 2019). When rape occurs, the seriousness of sexual violence becomes minimised and, in some cases, justified (Gavey, 2019). For example, Fairchild (2016) highlights that the way a victim is dressed impacts upon perceptions and decisions when determining the blame or responsibility for rape. A woman who is dressed 'provocatively' receives more blame for their own victimisation compared to those who are perceived as conservatively dressed (Fairchild, 2016). Helena (2005) also identifies that going out late at night or being seen to have sex with multiple partners increases the likelihood of victim blaming. These perceptions can cause women's 'no' to become ambiguous, leading to the assumption that women are "up for it" (Helena, 2005:118). Dressel *et al.* (1995) identified that such victim blaming can result in victims internalising blame. This can lower victims' self-esteem and potentially result in self-hatred. Therefore, "one's adoption of negative images from others can be viewed as a form of auto-oppression which has within it the seeds of self-destruction" (Dressel *et al.*, 1995:118).

The line between rape and sex also becomes blurred when we account for threats or force against the victim (or their loved ones), coercion, and the use of drugs or alcohol on the victim. Even though these sexual acts often show little or no sign of physical injury, they are still recognised as force because of the lack of consent (Koon-Magnin, 2015). By acknowledging that rape is not just an act of physical force, Gavey (2019:1) states that "the divide between rape and what was once just sex has well and truly begun to crumble. Rape is no longer rare". Therefore, rather than viewing violence as a disruption in life,

Stanko (1990) argues that, for women, it is an ordinary part of life. Similarly, Walklate (1995:85) states that rape and sexual assault has become a normality for women and that “rape is the ordinary product of ordinary (male, heterosexual) behaviour”. It is this ordinariness that makes issues and behaviours surrounding sexual violence difficult to fully understand, because it forces us to challenge our own everyday behaviour and relationships (Walklate, 1995). The majority of women have learnt to manage violence by taking everyday measures in an attempt to guarantee safety: “staying alert on the street, resisting arguments with our intimates because their bad tempers might lead to a beating, or avoiding certain public places that make us feel uneasy” (Stanko, 1990:5). These issues surrounding consent, sexual scripts, and the blurred lines surrounding rape and sex have fundamentally underpinned poor legislative and criminal justice responses to sexual violence (Clarke and Lewis, 1977; MacKinnon, 1987; Smart, 1989). It is through the identification of these issues that feminists have challenged these responses.

It’s Not Just About Law, It’s About Practice: Feminist Challenges to Law and Policing Responses to Sexual Violence

Radical feminists have strongly objected to legislative definitions and requirements surrounding rape. This has resulted in some important changes within the criminal justice system, including the legal reforms of the 1970s and 1980s (McGregor, 2012). For example, feminist objections to the corroboration rule that a person could not be convicted based on the victim’s testimony alone, resulted in this requirement being dropped in the 1980s (Larcombe, 2011; McGregor, 2012). Feminists also critiqued the treatment of victims, and evidentiary rules in the criminal justice system (Larcombe, 2011). They objected to the victim’s sexual history and lifestyle being used as an indicator for consent, including what they wore and how they behaved, which in turn contributed to perceptions of consent or deserved victimisation (McGregor, 2012). This resulted in ‘rape shield’ laws to protect the use of this information during rape cases in a number of countries, including the United States (McGregor, 2012). However, within the UK, women are still consistently asked questions which are not asked of men; for example, why they were out alone, about their clothing, their use of contraception, and their sexual history (Helena, 2005).

Arguments were also raised in relation to the law’s definitions of consent; in particular, the requirement of force as a demonstration of resistance (D’Cruze, 2012). Historically,

rape law did not refer to consent: it required a demonstration of physical resistance from the woman to determine whether a rape had occurred (Cowan, 2007). Thus, feminists called for a shift in rape law so that consent was determined by what takes place in the mind rather than what is demonstrated through the body (Cowan, 2007). The argument was that requirements for victims to demonstrate force to show a lack of consent reinforced male perceptions and actions rather than those of women (McGregor, 2012). That is, physical resistance is a typical male reaction to attack, due to men being socialised to fight and respond physically, whereas women may be more likely to respond with silence (McGregor, 2012). Consequently, consent is blurred with submission; submission *becomes* consent (Clarke and Lewis, 1977). This blurred consent boundary is argued to contribute to why victim blaming is most visible in the courtroom (Kelly, 1988; Smart, 1989; Helena, 2005). Issues of consent also proved to be particularly problematic in domestic abuse contexts. In cases where a woman is attacked by a stranger, the word ‘no’ is taken for granted; however, in cases where the perpetrators are known to the victim, the court begins to assess where seduction ends and rape begins (Helena, 2005). However, in 1991, feminist work to raise awareness that the majority of rape and violence occur within the home (Stevens, 2006) resulted in rape within marriage becoming criminalised in the UK (Westmarland, 2015).

The objection of force as resistance was very much influenced by the work of Brownmiller (1975) and MacKinnon (1987). Brownmiller (1975) states that a woman’s definition of rape “can be contained in a single sentence. If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape”. Yet this definition does not lawfully constitute rape (Brownmiller, 1975:18). MacKinnon (1987) brought to light the gendered inequalities within the criminal justice system that resulted in Brownmiller’s observation. She pointed to how laws defined by men subsequently impact on definitions of women’s violation. This includes the law failing to account for the coerciveness of sex (MacKinnon, 1987; Smart, 1989). Eventually, in 2003, the Sexual Offences Act was introduced to modernise the consent rules, removing the requirement of force as resistance (McGregor, 2012).

Whilst these changes within the criminal justice system were important, they did not equate to increased prosecution or conviction rates (Larcome, 2011). The conviction rate in Britain for rape crimes remained the lowest for all serious crime, despite any increases in reporting (Helena, 2005). Hohl and Stanko (2015) also highlight that data from the Home Office and Ministry of Justice (2013) demonstrates that conviction rates for rape

were at 24 per cent in 1985 and at 12 per cent in 1995. In the 2000s, conviction remained around 7 per cent. Whilst more recent figures, from 2017, show conviction rates to be significantly higher at 36 per cent, rates still remain low and have decreased since 2012, when they stood at 41 per cent (Office for National Statistics, 2018b). Whilst the 2018-19 data published by the Crown Prosecution Service (2019a) shows an increase in conviction rates to 64.4 per cent, the number of actual rape convictions has decreased. In 2014-15 the number of rape convictions was 2,581 and in 2018-19 the number of rape convictions was 1,925, a decrease of 26.9 percent; the lowest number of convictions in the past five years (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019a). This is despite the fact that the number of rapes recorded by police has risen from 20,751 to 58,657 in the same period (Barr, 2019). This is due to a number of factors including, but not limited to, a reduction in the number of cases being referred to the Crown Prosecution Service by police, and a reduction in the number of defendants being charged by the Crown Prosecution Service (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019a).

Hohl and Stanko (2015:333) also conducted their own research into attrition rates, finding that only “9 per cent of cases had not suffered attrition and were awaiting police trial”. Temkin and Krahe (2008) also highlight that although the number of sexual assaults being reported to the police has increased, the number of convictions remains low due to the attrition problem. Kelly *et al.* (2005:x) argued that this has resulted in an “increasing justice gap”. In the UK, the highest proportion of cases are dropped in the early stages of reporting and around half of victims drop out of the criminal justice process during the investigative stage. Furthermore, withdrawal by complaints was one of the most common reasons, alongside some cases being categorised as ‘no crime’ (Kelly *et al.*, 2005).

The continuing issues after attempts to address men’s violence against women through the law demonstrate the importance of Griffin’s (1979:31) argument that “rape does not end with the changing of laws; the causes go deeper and belong to the whole fabric”. Acknowledging that the patriarchal criminal justice system silences the crime of rape requires an investigation of rape and power relations, moving beyond ideologies that legal reforms rectify the problem (Griffin, 1979). By addressing sexual violence with legislation, the state is ignoring complex structural issues which contribute to sexual violence (Ballinger, 2009). Instead, the law serves to retaliate against sexual violence on an individual level. By doing so, it maintains the perception that sexual violence is perpetrated by the minority rather than recognising the use of violence in intimate relationships as a norm (Ballinger, 2009). The state is therefore not only considered

patriarchal because of its bias towards men; it is patriarchal because of the way the system operates, with patriarchy embedded in its procedures (Connell, 1990).

The feminist focus, therefore, also concentrated on improving the criminal justice process so that it did not exacerbate victims' trauma through secondary victimisation (Larcome, 2011). This included the creation of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (where medical and psychological care is the main focus for victims of sexual assault), the introduction of specially trained officers (Sexual Offences Investigative Trained Officers) to attend rape and sexual assault cases, making female police officers available to take victim statements, the installation of rape suites in police stations so that victims are afforded more privacy and comfort when making reports, and early evidence kits so that forensic evidence can be collected as soon as possible (Hohl and Stanko, 2015). Efforts have also been made to protect victims from having to confront their abuser in the court processes during cross-examination, through the use of special measures (giving evidence via video link) (Larcome, 2011). Victims of rape and sexual assault are also afforded anonymity, in that access to their counselling and confidential records is restricted, as well as restrictions being placed on the public identification of the victim or any identifying details (Larcome, 2011). Additionally, arguments have been made for victims to be given independent representation which is focused on what the victim needs rather than just what the criminal justice system offers. This includes someone to navigate the complex criminal justice process for them (Seidman and Vickers, 2005). Attempts have also been made to improve communication between the police and victim so that victims are informed promptly on decisions made during their cases (Larcome, 2011:8).

These changes have been somewhat successful in improving the treatment of victims. For example, Mooney (2000) highlights that women who reported their experiences to the police prior to the introduction of these policy changes (including domestic abuse units) were more critical of the police response than those who had sought support when supportive policy changes had been put in place. However, these changes do not mean that victims always experience appropriate treatment from criminal justice personnel (Clevenger, 2015). Victims continue to feel blamed or treated insensitively by criminal justice staff (including those who are put in place specifically to assist those victims), as well as feeling a lack of justice (Clevenger, 2015). Victims are also still being made to endure painful and embarrassing medical examination questions (Clevenger, 2015). Clevenger (2015) argues that police concern with obtaining physical evidence and interview testimony to build strong cases surpasses the needs and welfare of victims. Such

treatment is argued to be common and just part of the policing role. There also continues to be a disparity between victims and criminal justice personnel in relation to consent. Attitudes of those who make decisions in the criminal justice system have not changed in accordance with statutory reform. Criminal justice staff remain confused about the boundaries between sex and rape and fail to understand the role that sex roles play in the perpetration of rape (Seidman and Vickers, 2005). Thus, victims “continue to encounter the same hurdles that they did thirty years ago” (Seidman and Vickers, 2005:468).

It is this kind of policing approach which makes victims less likely to cooperate in prosecutions, especially when they hear about the insensitive treatment of others who have come forward to report their experiences (Clevenger, 2015). Helena (2005) therefore states that policy changes, including the removal of the corroboration requirement and restrictions on cross-examination, have been inadequate in making a significant difference in victim experiences and case outcomes (Helena, 2005). The argument that Dobash and Dobash put forward in 1992 still resonates with today’s criminal justice system. They argue that changing criminal justice practices is not just about altering the laws and policies; it is about changing the structures, perceptions, and cultural practices that are embedded into the system (Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

The fundamental issues identified thus far, including issues of consent and poor criminal justice responses, have also been identified in cases of IBSA (see McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will discuss how the normalisation of sexual violence, issues of consent, and poor criminal justice responses remain evident in contemporary forms of violence against women, and have been exacerbated by technological developments.

The New Era: Technology’s Contribution in Facilitating Violence

Advancements in technology, including the Internet, social media, smartphones and webcams, have undoubtedly resulted in many positive changes, including the ease of networking, increased success of campaigns, and access to almost any kind of information (Yar, 2012). However, simultaneously, this freedom has increased the public’s exposure to crime by amplifying offline vulnerabilities and also creating new ones. This includes an increased likelihood of becoming a victim of stalking and harassment (Yar, 2012). Cyberspace idealists originally perceived the Internet as a platform for free speech and potentially equality (Bartlett *et al.*, 2014; Franks, 2011). However, its growth in

popularity since the 1990s has started to uncover the fact that offline inequalities are integrated within online contexts (Bartlett *et al.*, 2014). It is now often argued that the Internet, and particularly social media websites, are platforms which facilitate and intensify harassment and violence against women and girls (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franks, 2011). Jane (2017:1) argues that regardless of the fact that the Internet was supposed to be an inclusive place, “men have turned on women online”. On the Internet, men openly discuss wanting to rape women as if this should be taken as a compliment (Jane, 2017). Franks (2011) further states that the online behaviour of others can result in increased offline restrictions. It is argued that men often enjoy this freedom at the cost of women’s liberty; women are presented as sexual objects on numerous platforms, resulting in negative impacts on women’s everyday lives (Franks, 2011).

Jane (2017:3) highlights how rape threats have become a “lingua franca – the ‘go-to’ response for men who disagree with what a woman says, who dislike the way a woman looks, who are unhappy with the response to the unsolicited ‘dick pics’ they keep sending ... Misogyny, in short, has gone viral”. These attacks, which began exclusively online, are also permeating into offline spaces through ‘doxing’ (the publishing of personal and/or identifying information) and IBSA, in an attempt to incite others to harm women in person (Jane, 2017). The treatment of women online is a reflection of the historical treatment of women offline, with women forming an overwhelming majority of those who are attacked online, as well as being attacked more severely and in more violently sexualised ways compared to men (Jane, 2017:10). Women are often subject to descriptions of how and where they will be violated. In some cases, explicit details about “which orifices will be desecrated via which instruments” are made, as well as threats that family and friends will be made to watch such abuse (Jane, 2017:10). There are a number of platforms which are used for such communications, including private email addresses, public posts on message boards, tweeting, blogs, Facebook pages dedicated to attacking women, dating apps, and gaming sites, to name but a few (Jane, 2017). Marganski (2018:19) also identifies the multitude of ways women can be subject to harassment online including: “direct sexual assault and rape threats, photo-shopped images of women containing graphic violence intended to insinuate physical harm, posts that share a woman’s private address and invite persons over to her place for sex”. She argues that this forms part of an online rape culture in which victims become blamed for perpetrators’ actions and offenders become mostly overlooked (Marganski, 2018).

The reason and ability for men to instigate abuse towards women online is said to be due to men having a disproportional amount of political, economic, and social power, which is ultimately being used to subordinate women (Jane, 2017). Thus, similarly to the offline environment, men expect women to display obvious and normative female sexuality and punish those women who do not meet these demands. For example, ‘attractive’ women are seen to be asking for coerced sex because they lead men on, while women who are not seen as attractive need to be taught a lesson for not conforming to beauty requirements (Jane, 2017). This widely distributed misogynistic material has been seen to create hostile Internet cultures which reinforce gender inequality (End Violence Against Women, 2013). Thus, although cyberspace is relatively new, feminist theory supports the arguments that women’s treatment online stems from a long tradition of gendered abuse which reduces women to their sexual value whilst at the same time punishing them for adoption of these characteristics (Jane, 2017).

Image based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a prime example of how technological advancements are being exploited to cause harm. Dworkin and MacKinnon’s (1988) exploration of pornography acknowledged the use of IBSA in 1998. Whilst Dworkin and MacKinnon did not examine IBSA in isolation, it is clear that non-consensual image sharing was already being recognised as a form of abuse. With the World Wide Web yet to exist, they pointed to the use of IBSA in physical form, thus recognising a harmful behaviour which was to become significantly intensified by technology:

Young women are tricked or pressured into posing for boyfriends and told that the pictures are just ‘for us’ only to find themselves in this month’s *Hustler* (Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1988:43).

Many women are photographed by lovers and find the photographs published as pornography in revenge or retaliation (Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1988:70).

It was the creation of ‘Babes on the Web’, which was claimed to be the first major sexist incident online, that brought about the realisation that the Internet would not be a sexism-free space. Created by Robert Toups, it displayed the names and photographs of women who could then be subjected to attractiveness ratings (Spertus, 2016). Whilst at this time IBSA did not ‘exist’, the creation of this site demonstrates that the sharing of women’s images for the purposes of judgement is not a new concept, but rooted in a historically complex web of discourse and ideology. It is only since the creation of IsAnyoneUp.com that IBSA has been pushed to the forefront of academia, police inquiries, and the media.

IsAnyoneUp.com was created by Hunter Moore in 2010. Hunter Moore made money from publishing pornographic images of men and women on his website without their consent (Lee, 2012a). He encouraged website users to submit sexually explicit or nude images of former partners, as well as information as to why their former partners deserved to be featured on the website. Alongside the victims' images, he would also publish their full name, location, and links to social networks (usually Facebook accounts) (Lee, 2012a).

Today, IBSA is often a negative consequence of 'sexting'; a form of sexually explicit electronic messaging which can include text, images, and videos (usually between two people) (Calvert, 2014). Although men are subject to IBSA, women are disproportionately victimised and men are the primary perpetrators (Citron and Franks, 2014; Cyber Civil Rights, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franklin, 2014). Whilst there is some statistical disagreement as to the exact percentage of female victims (ranging from 60 to 90 per cent) (see Cyber Civil Rights, 2014; Laird, 2013), there is overall agreement that women are the primary targets and that men are the primary perpetrators (Henry *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, Laird (2013:47) describes IBSA as the "next wave of violence against women".

Social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, are just some of the platforms being used to share these images (End Violence Against Women, 2013). These particular platforms are already facing heavy criticism for aiding in the abuse of women and girls, both directly and indirectly (End Violence Against Women, 2013). This was demonstrated by Bartlett *et al.*'s (2014) research on Twitter posts within the UK. During a three-week period, the word 'rape' was used 100,000 times with 12 per cent of its usage being of a threatening nature. The words 'slut' and 'whore' were used 131,000 times, with 18 per cent of these posts being misogynistic. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that this is still a gross underestimate, given the limitations of the research. Not only was there a vagueness as to who defined – and what was defined as – misogynistic, but images, and the context in which they were used, were not accounted for (Bartlett *et al.*, 2014). This only strengthens the argument that misogyny and abuse are rife on social media and that IBSA is another mechanism ensuring their continuation. In addition to the use of social media platforms, images are also shared on websites and other interactive platforms, including dedicated IBSA websites, dating websites, message boards and chatrooms, and instant messaging applications (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015). Short *et al.* (2017) also conducted a survey with 66 respondents finding that the publishing of

these images was most common on social media platforms (37%), followed by mobile phones (27%) and websites such as YouTube (25%). Images are obtained in a number of ways, with the most common being sharing between partners. Other ways include hacking, downloading images and sharing them across different websites (Franklin, 2014; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015; Stroud, 2014), photoshopping, and leaked images from app hacking (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015).

Arguments in relation to inequality, patriarchy, power, control, discourse, and language are significant in framing the nature of IBSA. Radical feminists perceive male violence as a reflection of male domination, in that sexuality constitutes a form of power. Therefore, sexual violence, which is often linked to control, is perceived as a method of subjugating women (Lanier and Henry, 2010; Williams, 2008). Whilst IBSA is not a physical act of violence, the Internet is not only a space which can be exploited and used to reinforce offline cultural norms and stereotypes; it amplifies gendered discourses, harassment, abuse, stalking (Westmarland, 2015), and self-policing of women's sexual expression through the ability to 'slut-shame' women to wide audiences (Chemaly, 2016; Franks, 2011). Furthermore, the anonymity of the Internet allows audiences to specifically target women with reduced fears of repercussions. From a radical perspective, this reinforces ideologies that women's bodies are public property and constantly under review (Kelly, 1988).

The ability to humiliate and punish women online resembles radical feminist arguments surrounding ideologies of ownership, the right to punish, and fear of rape (Griffin, 1979; Dobash and Dobash, 1998). IBSA can, and has, been used to control women (Channel 4, 2015). Men's ability to use explicit images as weapons to either threaten women with their distribution, or as punishment for the decisions they make (Channel 4, 2015), indicates that maintaining or regaining control of women may be a vital factor within IBSA. Furthermore, the ability of the public to comment on images leaves victims vulnerable to online threats of violence, including rape (End Violence Against Women, 2013). End Violence Against Women (2013) has argued that such threats should be treated by law enforcement with the same seriousness as offline threats. Therefore, an investigation is needed to assess the physical, emotional, and social consequences of online threats, even if victimisation does not result in physical harassment or violence.

As with feminist arguments surrounding violence against women, IBSA victims are also subject to misconceptions surrounding consent, and subsequently, victim blaming. Dobash and Dobash (1998) highlight that violence often occurs in relationships due to

disagreements, particularly when men have feelings of possessiveness or jealousy. Therefore, when IBSA is perpetrated, women are often perceived to be the cause of disagreement, especially in cases of infidelity; thus, shame is considered deserved (Chemaly, 2016:132). Victims are also perceived to be at fault for taking explicit images in the first instance. These perceptions are said to have significantly influenced reactions towards victims from society and the criminal justice system (Channel 4, 2015). Kelly (1988) and Smart (1989) also highlight that victim blaming often occurs as a result of assumptions that if women consent to one act, they consent to all related acts (Kelly, 1988; Smart, 1989). This lends itself to an exploration of consensual issues surrounding the initial taking of images (Jane, 2017). In more cases than not, images within a relationship context are taken with the agreement (or implied agreement) that they will remain private (Barmore, 2015; Citron and Franks, 2014). Victims often state that they agreed to share images *because* they had been assured by their partners that these would not be further distributed (Citron and Franks, 2014). Thus, perpetrators commonly distribute images with the knowledge that there is a lack of consent (Channel 4, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to explore the role that overt lack of consent plays in IBSA. An examination of motivations behind the use of IBSA may provide some insight into why a lack of consent plays a pivotal role.

Perpetrator Motivations: Weaponising Image Based Sexual Abuse

Franklin (2014) begins to unpick the issue of distribution by identifying two possible motivations for sharing images in the knowledge that the victim did not consent to do so. Firstly, it is argued that there may be a particular sexual interest in these kinds of images, and secondly, a belief that this image sharing is legitimised through claims of moral purpose. Whilst the former motivation is conceivable, the latter is plagued with ambiguities. There is no guarantee that the person featured in the image actually engaged in the alleged wrongdoing. Therefore, Franklin (2014) continues to argue that distribution is rooted in patriarchal perceptions that women should be punished for inappropriate behaviour. These perceptions are outdated, hypocritical, and rooted within misogyny (Franklin, 2014). Research has also found that motivations behind the sharing of images can vary widely, including motivations relating to “misogyny, sexual entitlement, ‘lad culture’” and control (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019:5).

Henry (2016) and Stroud (2014) argue that the sharing of these images can occur in a variety of different contexts and for a wide range of motivations, including blackmail, coercion, sexual gratification, social status, financial gain, and utilising the power of expression (Henry, 2016; Stroud, 2014). Henry and Powell (2016) and Salter (2017) also highlight how the filming of sexual assaults is being used to threaten victims with humiliation and prevent them from reporting the assault to the police. In these instances, sexual material may not actually be shared. Furthermore, threats of image distribution as a mechanism of coercion and control are particularly evident in domestic abuse situations, especially if the abused partner is trying to leave the relationship (Citron and Franks, 2014; Powell and Henry, 2016). Men's violence against women during and/or following the end of a relationship is argued to be an attempt to restore lost pride and honour in their own minds and also within the minds of their peers (Salter, 2017). Therefore, the motivation behind online abuse may work in a similar fashion; it may not only be an attempt to take revenge, but also a way of restoring a loss of masculinity within a relationship or after a breakup (Salter, 2017). Furthermore, the threat of humiliation is an additional factor which prevents women removing themselves from dangerous relationships (Powell and Henry, 2016). Further issues also arise surrounding consent to having the images taken. There is an increased possibility that individuals may be coerced, or submit to having images taken, in an attempt to avoid violence; something which is not fully explored within police investigations (Powell and Henry, 2016).

Salter (2017) found that whilst young people generally agree that boys or men are more likely to enjoy viewing these images than women, more problematic issues arose in relation to boys' sexual desire to solicit and share images without the girl's consent. In particular, collecting nudes of girls and/or women was a way for boys and men to establish masculinity amongst their peers, with young people describing instances of teenage boys crowding around their phones, competitively comparing their collections (Salter, 2017). Salter (2017) argues that this encourages predatory behaviour amongst males, thus weaponising these images to affirm power hierarchies and to play out public performances of aggression and sexual masculinity (Salter, 2017).

Disclosing Victim Identities and Perpetrators' Blanket Anonymity

It is not just the sharing of images which presents fundamental concerns for victims, but their public identification. When images are distributed, not only can they become

instantly recognisable by those within their community; it is common for those outside of their community to be given, or gain access to, their personal information. For example, alongside the images, victims' names (first and/or second), links to social media profiles, telephone numbers, and locations (city and/or address), may be disclosed (Citron and Franks, 2014; Franklin, 2014; Franks, 2011; Laird, 2013; Lee, 2012a; Stroud, 2014). Cyber Civil Rights conducted the End Revenge Porn Campaign in 2014 to raise awareness and gather information on the nature and prevalence of IBSA. Their online survey concluded that 59 per cent of victims had their full names disclosed, 40 per cent had their social network profiles identified, 20 per cent had their phone numbers released, 49 per cent had been stalked and harassed online by those who had come across the material, and 30 per cent had been harassed and/or stalked offline (Cyber Civil Rights, 2014). Although there are some methodological issues with the study, including sampling (the reliance on users of their website), the results demonstrate the ease with which victims can be identified and contacted when any kind of personal information is released alongside the images.

Several reasons have been suggested for the identification of victims. Franklin (2014) argues that individualising the images increases the ability of users to create imaginary scenarios, which heightens the thrill for perpetrators. Others, including Citron and Franks (2014) and Laird (2013), highlight that identification is used to cause an amplification effect; it broadens the audience of the content by causing images to become prominent in search engine results when individuals' names are searched for. However, it is important to note that although victims are seen to suffer from higher levels of harm when identified, this does not mean that those who are not identified are not harmed (Franklin, 2014). In these instances, users within the victim's local community will be able to identify the victim if their face is visible in the image; hence, victims may be identified by users rather than perpetrators (Franklin, 2014). Furthermore, in some cases images are sent, or pointed out, to employers, co-workers, families, and friends (Citron and Franks, 2014; Laird, 2013; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015).

Whilst website hosts and users are quick to make women accountable for their 'wrongdoing', this rule does not apply to perpetrators; websites do not disclose *any* personal information of their users (Franklin, 2014). Perpetrators use pseudonyms, allowing them to post freely with little repercussions, consequently aiding in online inequality and harassment (Franks, 2011). Furthermore, it is argued that the anonymity of posters can increase victim fear; when users threaten victims, for example with rape,

the anonymity means that victims are unsure of how real the threats are (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Henry and Powell, 2016). Therefore, on the one hand online anonymity has given us more scope for expressive freedom; on the other hand, the use of IBSA demonstrates how the same anonymity can have a negative impact and fundamentally heighten online inequalities. The impact this has on victims needs to be considered.

Victimisation and Vulnerability: The Impact of Image Sharing and the Aftermath

Men's violence against women can have a number of serious consequences for women's physical and mental health. Mooney (2000) conducted a survey ($n = 1000$) and interviews ($n = 15$) in London, focused upon the prevalence of domestic abuse and women's experiences of this. She found that 20 per cent of women who had experienced violence had taken time off work, 46 per cent had feelings of depression and a loss of self-confidence, and 51 per cent were worried, anxious, and nervous. Numerous women also reported that they experienced nervous breakdowns and suicidal thoughts; some had made suicide attempts (Mooney, 2000). These findings were mirrored by Short *et al.*'s (2017) survey which found that 65 per cent of people felt nervousness and anxiety and 59 per cent of people self-harmed. Mooney also argues that the effects of violence could be long lasting; in circumstances where the relationship had terminated, women became fearful of men and worried about forming relationships with other men in case they ended up in a similar situation. These women stated that they had a general lack of trust towards men and that they feared reprisals from their ex-partners, including being found or killed (Mooney, 2000). The literature suggests that some of the impacts of online abuse, or cyberhate, resemble the consequences of men's offline violence against women. Jane (2017:63) describes victims feeling a range of emotional responses, "from feelings of anxiety, sadness, shame, isolation, vulnerability, and unsafeness, to distress, pain, shock, fear, terror, and violation". Some report mental health problems such as anxiety disorder, depression, panic attacks, agoraphobia, and self-harm.

However, some of the consequences of online abuse are more specific to the online context, and in some cases, the impact on victims can be amplified by this context because of the "sheer relentlessness" of online abuse (Jane, 2017:61). Jane (2017) argues that, in most cases, gendered abuse is not a one-off incident that can be forgotten about. Harassment and abuse often occur repeatedly via online platforms and the ease of access

through technology means that victims can end up constantly checking devices whilst carrying out everyday activities. Therefore, even in instances where messages or abuse are not particularly heinous, it is the accumulative impact of abuse through online messaging that can be debilitating (Jane, 2017).

Cyberspace plays a fundamental role in the perpetration and consequences of online abuse, and therefore, in the impact on victims of IBSA. The impact of IBSA is amplified when considering the permanency of online material. Whilst something said in public can potentially be forgotten, the sharing of material on the Internet remains a permanent feature (Chief Constable of Essex Police *cited in* UK Parliament, 2014). Even if images are removed from one website, the ease of downloading or saving images renders removal irrelevant to those who already possess them (Franklin, 2014). Once possessed, material can be re-uploaded at any time, and as many times as the person chooses; it is impossible to guarantee complete removal (Bartow, 2012). Essentially, the permanency of the Internet significantly increases the harm caused by image sharing; there is always potential for images to resurface, even if the individual has been successful in removing them at a particular point in time. McGlynn *et al.*'s (2019) interviews with victims also found that the permanency of images being shared online meant that victims lived in constant fear and second-guessed their interactions with others because of the potential for images to be constantly available online. Thus, they argue that victims did not talk about an event or incident of abuse but of something which was constantly ongoing.

Harm is also amplified by the worldwide audience. Before the creation of, or even during the early days of the Internet, compromising images could only cause limited damage given the restricted audience (Laird, 2013). With a bigger audience than ever before, alongside the creation of specific IBSA websites, the potential damage has exponentially increased. This is further problematised when website operators choose to ignore removal requests from victims. On IsAnyoneUp.com, Hunter Moore often encouraged website visitors to submit compromising images as well as personal information about the subjects, and to state why they deserved to be featured. This would result in a high volume of users commenting on the images, often criticising the victim's attractiveness (Lee, 2012b). Once victims found their images online, he often refused to remove them, even when faced with legal action. He would also openly ridicule those who requested removal of material on the website (Lee, 2012a; Lee, 2012b).

Research so far has demonstrated that being publicly identified in this way can have some devastating emotional, physical, and financial consequences (Citron and Franks, 2014;

Henry and Powell, 2016). However, there is limited knowledge on the prevalence of IBSA and its impacts on victims. The majority of the literature outlined below is based on studies within the USA and Australia. Contextually, we know even less about the impacts on UK victims. Henry and Powell (2016) and Stroud (2014) state that the released images cause women to feel shamed and humiliated due to the reputational damage that is incurred. This shame often becomes internalised, especially when victims come to view the images, or become aware that others are viewing them (Citron and Franks, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2016). This can result in significant psychological consequences; victims become vulnerable to suicide (51 per cent of them, according to the Cyber Civil Rights 2014 survey), and feel unsafe leaving the home. These emotional and psychological effects can also extend to family members. In a Channel 4 documentary, one victim described how her images were uploaded onto nine different websites, with some images gaining 48,000 hits. This also had consequences for her daughter, who suffered embarrassment when her friends viewed the material (Channel 4, 2015). McGlynn *et al.* (2019) also emphasise that the impact on victims can extend to family members who are supporting them. Many women also choose to remove themselves from social media to avoid further abuse (Citron and Franks, 2014; Franks, 2011; Lee, 2012a), resulting in isolation from possible support networks. Moreover, having to fight websites for image removal means that victims feel a sense of powerlessness (Wiseman, 2016).

The Cyber Civil Rights (2014) survey found that 82 per cent of victims suffered from occupational problems. The reputational damage to the victim causes employers to also fear reputational damage; companies do not want to be associated with 'porn' (Bloom, 2014; Franklin, 2014). Furthermore, employers are now using the Internet to conduct background checks on potential candidates; after losing their current jobs, victims are often rejected from future employment because their images are prominent within Google search results (Bloom, 2014; Citron and Franks, 2014). Short *et al.*'s (2017) survey also found that 22 per cent of people said that victimisation impacted upon their performance at work, with 12 per cent changing their jobs and 5 per cent being fired or demoted. Financial loss due to IBSA mirrors research findings in relation to sexual violence and domestic abuse. Boyd (2011) found that sexual victimisation can result in financial costs, including loss of earnings, loss of earning capacity, medical expenses, and counselling expenses. Thomas *et al.* (2015) conducted a survey of 309 victims of domestic abuse and found that one fifth of their participants had problems with financial instability as a result of changing employment or struggling to find employment altogether. For example,

changing jobs in order to move away from their perpetrator resulted in the women becoming employed elsewhere at a lower wage. This also resulted in added stress due to uncertainty of being able to pay bills and a feeling of lost freedom (Thomas *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, when personal information is released, perpetrators are granted constant access to victims. This leaves them particularly vulnerable to further victimisation online and offline, including harassment, stalking, domestic abuse, and generally, risks to personal safety (Citron and Franks, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franks, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2016; Stroud, 2014). Citron and Franks (2014) further argue that the posting of personal information encourages users to confront victims in offline contexts. This was verified by one victim whose images had been obtained through hacking. Her real name and Facebook profile information were released alongside the images. Consequently, through Facebook, she received messages of solicitation and was approached by strangers in public (Laird, 2013). It was argued that many of these strangers assumed she was seeking this kind of attention because of the sexually explicit images online (Laird, 2013).

This is further worsened by the repercussions of trying to take legal action against perpetrators. Given the argument that victims are harmed when people continue to view the images (Citron and Franks, 2014), taking legal action means going public about their victimisation (Lee, 2012a). This is often known as the Streisand effect: taking legal action can further exacerbate the issue through increased publicity (Fenton, 2016). Victims are not given the same anonymity as rape victims when cases come to trial because IBSA is not legally classified as a sexual offence (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019), something which is currently being campaigned for (The Guardian, 2015). However, whilst the above research has started to uncover the effects on victims, it still lacks significant detail on how this directly impacts on victims' everyday lives.

Problematic Policing: Police Responses to Image Based Sexual Abuse

Women who have suffered online abuse are said to regularly receive advice from police officers which suggests “they simply take a little break from the Internet” (Jane, 2017:4). Women have also been told to use ‘less attractive’ profile pictures and avoid engaging with provocative issues and discussions online (Jane, 2017). This advice resembles problematic criminal justice responses to victims of physical sexual assault by shifting

the responsibility onto the victim to solve the issue (Jane, 2017). Consequently, victims are punished during this process because they are asked to withdraw from their online worlds or significantly change the way they use something which has become integral to contemporary life (Jane, 2017). In relation to IBSA in particular, it is argued that many victims do not report victimisation because other victims have been subject to victim blaming responses from the police (Laird, 2013; Channel 4, 2015). Therefore, it is argued that police and policy makers do not understand the extent and seriousness of online abuse, because withdrawing from cyberspace is not a viable solution (Jane, 2017).

Crime is generally perceived as something which causes physical or emotional harm in an offline context; thus, cybercrime, or harms committed in an online context, are often dismissed as unreal (Franks, 2011). With the aforementioned increased use in technology for online harassment and abuse, we need to move away from the perception that online abuse is less harmful than offline abuse. For example, McGlynn *et al.* (2019) also argue that more generally, policing responses to IBSA are unacceptable, with very few victims having a positive experience when reporting. In the majority of instances, victims felt that their experiences were not being taken seriously. This issue was also demonstrated by a case taken up by Sussex police, who faced high levels of criticism for failing to charge a man who had distributed sexual images of five different women. The police issued the individual with a caution on the premise that this would effectively prevent recidivism (Laville, 2016b, Laville, 2016c). This incident occurred after the implementation of the IBSA law (cases before April 2015 do not fall within the law's remit), demonstrating a failure to enforce the law.

However, more research is needed to examine why victims choose not to engage with the criminal justice system. Whilst victim blaming and shame are significant factors (Barmore, 2015), questions should be asked as to whether victims feel that reporting may have more severe consequences for their safety, especially within domestic abuse settings. For those that do engage, there is a need to explore victims' experiences with frontline police when reporting victimisation and their experiences and perceptions of the criminal justice process. Furthermore, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties that the police and criminal justice systems may be facing; for example, trying to encourage victims to move forward with prosecutions, how easy prosecutions are to achieve, whether police officers are handling cases appropriately, and whether measures need to be implemented to aid victims and police officers in achieving justice in a way that limits the emotional harm caused to victims. These issues

may influence whether victims are likely to achieve justice. It is also vital to consider the effectiveness of current legislation and the impact this may have on victims' experiences and perceptions of the criminal justice system.

The Scope of Image Based Sexual Abuse Law

In the UK, IBSA was criminalised in April 2015. Whilst this can be regarded as progress in addressing the issue, there are continuing debates surrounding the adequacy of legal definitions and their scope. Pre-criminalisation, there were, and still are, two pieces of legislation which could have been used to prosecute offenders. Firstly, the 1998 Malicious Communications Act. This outlaws communication which is perceived as "indecent, grossly offensive, poses a threat, or is false, with the intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim" (UK Parliament, 2014). In the majority of IBSA cases, this would have been the most appropriate legislation for prosecution. However, with a failure to recognise IBSA and its effects as a fundamental problem, application of the law in these cases was unclear. Consequently, cases were rarely, if ever, taken up by the criminal justice system (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015). Secondly, the 1997 Protection from Harassment Act also had prosecution potential. However, it could only be applied when behaviour was repeated. In this instance, images would have to be re-uploaded by the *same individual* multiple times to warrant a conviction. Images which went viral through re-uploading or sharing by the *public* would not sit within the law's remit (Citron and Franks, 2014).

With an increasing number of people contacting grassroots organisations about their experiences, it became clear that more needed to be done both in policy and practice to address victims' needs. This led to multiple activists, academics, and politicians campaigning for the creation of a new law on the premise that existing laws were not being utilised, were inadequate to deal with the complexities of the issue, and were likely to result in lenient sentences, thus failing to serve as a deterrent (Citron and Franks, 2014). Those who argued against criminalisation with fears that new laws would undermine free speech were soon criticised by academics for taking a victim blaming approach, on the argument that IBSA rarely qualified as public interest (Barmore, 2015). Nonetheless, the first attempt to criminalise IBSA was rejected by the House of Lords Committee on the basis that the existing laws were capable of addressing the issue (BBC Newsbeat, 2014).

However, in February 2015 the Revenge Porn Helpline was launched and campaigning continued (Revenge Porn Helpline, n.d.). With an ever-increasing number of victims coming forward, a somewhat limited, but more informed understanding of the issue started to emerge. Consequently, the Justice Secretary agreed to amend the Criminal Justice and Courts Act and, under Section 33, IBSA became criminalised with a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015; UK Legislation, 2015).

Criminalisation is said to have increased the number of victims coming forward to the police (Halliday, 2015) and in some cases has resulted in some form of prosecution. The first person to be convicted under the new law was Jason Asagba; he was given a given a 6-month sentence (suspended for 18 months), and 100 hours' community service for sending images to a victim's family (BBC News, 2015a; Crown Prosecution Service, 2016). A number of other cases have also resulted in suspended sentences, community service, and/or fines (BBC News, 2015b; BBC News, 2015c; BBC News, 2015d; BBC News, 2015e). However, it is important to note that those who were given prison sentences were mostly convicted for other offences, such as harassment, rather than IBSA itself.

Furthermore, there are a number of limitations to the new legislation. Firstly, it has been stressed that 'intent to cause harm, embarrassment or distress' should be removed as a requirement for criminal justice action (Citron and Franks, 2014). UK Legislation (2015) states that this was included within the law to prevent an overwhelming number of people being criminalised, either through re-posting on social media, or distributing images without the knowledge of a lack of consent. In other words, it was included to prevent the criminalisation of those who do not upload the images in the first instance. However, there is general agreement amongst academics and activists that any image distribution in this context is likely to cause harm or distress; disclosure in itself is a violation, and thus motivations should be irrelevant (Bartow, 2012; Citron and Franks, 2014; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015). Therefore, it is argued that this could potentially lead to a hierarchy of seriousness, deeming some victims more deserving of justice than others (Citron and Franks, 2014). Consequently, a number of alternative definitions have been suggested, all of which include the basic principle of non-consent to explicit image distribution (with or without consent to capture the original image) but the removal of intent as a signifier (Bartow, 2012; Citron and Franks, 2014; Revenge Porn Helpline, 2015).

Secondly, there is a need to examine the applicability of the ‘private and sexual materials definition’. As it stands, private and sexual material mainly refers to images which contain nudity (Ministry of Justice, 2015). This means that, in instances of photoshopping or where victims may be semi-nude (in underwear or limited clothing), without appropriate religious clothing, or even fully clothed, they may not be able to engage with law enforcement under the IBSA law. However, with a lack of research to determine whether these image types also have a negative impact on individuals’ lives, we could potentially be silencing a large proportion of victims, consequently leaving many women particularly vulnerable to further harassment and abuse due to an inability to take legal action. These limitations and the lack of knowledge demonstrate a critical lack of understanding as to the nature of IBSA, and a need to examine these types of cases.

These issues reinforce the argument made by Brownmiller (1975) and MacKinnon (1987) that in order to account for women’s experiences, women’s definitions of sexual violence need to take precedence in order to prevent the law serving the interests of men, and ultimately undermining women’s experiences of violation. Therefore, it is vital that an examination of women’s perceptions of IBSA, and the legislative responses, is uncovered in order to create more effective and victim-informed criminal justice responses.

Conclusion

Feminist work has been vital in understanding the issues and experiences of women in relation to violence against women. By widening the definition of both violence and sexual violence, research has shown the gendered nature which underpins violence. In doing so, it can unpick some fundamental issues surrounding the blurring of consent and recognise that men’s violence against women results in a complex web of both physical and psychological causes and impacts, particularly in cases where the victim and the perpetrator are involved in an intimate relationship. From this, we can also begin to examine why policy responses from the criminal justice system have historically failed to recognise and protect women from violence, due to a system which is created by and benefits male interests. Literature surrounding online abuse reiterates feminist arguments by highlighting that offline gendered discourses permeate the online environment. Technology has provided an additional and easily accessible platform for gendered violence to be perpetrated, but with a reduced risk of conviction. This has become particularly evident in cases of IBSA where image sharing without consent is underpinned

by the shaming and punishing of women in an attempt to reinforce feminine and masculine ideals. The ability to publicly shame and identify women, whilst the perpetrators remain hidden, reflects the increasing power inequality between female victims and male perpetrators. Furthermore, the overlap between abuse in the offline and online environment means that the impacts of online sexual abuse resemble those of offline abuse. It is these links between issues pervading violence against women and IBSA that suggest consideration needs to be given to understanding IBSA as a form of gendered violence, which has emerged as an extension of already existing forms of abuse due to technological advancements.

However, there is also a fundamental need to further explore the impact of sexual abuse in an online context. Literature suggests that, in addition to the common impacts of offline sexual abuse, an online context creates additional impacts which are specific to the nature of the online environment, including an increased vulnerability to other forms of abuse. With IBSA being a relatively new area, literature is predominantly focused upon much-needed legal changes; however, it lacks understanding of the reality of being sexually abused online, and how this impacts upon women's everyday lives. Furthermore, policy, policing, and law responses to IBSA reflect historical issues feminists have highlighted, including issues surrounding victim blaming responses, the failure to fully acknowledge the serious consequences of sexual abuse, and treatment of victims in the criminal justice process. Whilst this has resulted in some positive changes in a bid to address victims' needs, the state's continuing attempt to address sexual violence and IBSA through legislative responses has done little to provide justice for victims. Again, with IBSA specifically, these issues surrounding legislative policy and practice can become exacerbated due to assumptions that online abuse does not constitute 'real' abuse or violence. Therefore, there is a general lack of understanding within the criminal justice system with regard to the impact that the online environment can have. Consequently, law and policy are failing to keep up with an ever-changing online environment. The next chapter further explores the theoretical underpinnings of some of these key issues, and therefore the theoretical framework which will be used to examine the impact of, and criminal justice responses to, IBSA.

Chapter 3

Patriarchy in Sexual Violence and Criminal Justice

Introduction

Drawing upon radical feminist work on sexual violence, pornography, and critical victimology, this chapter sets out the theoretical framework underpinning this research. Utilising these perspectives offers an in-depth analysis of image based sexual abuse (IBSA); that is, of its nature and how the consequences of online victimisation not only impact on the everyday lives of women but can be exacerbated by the criminal justice process. Whilst feminist literature on sexual violence has not extensively addressed IBSA, radical feminist concepts of patriarchy, power and control will be applied in order to theoretically frame the analysis of IBSA. Radical feminists perceive male violence as a reflection of male domination, in that sexuality constitutes a form of power; and therefore sexual violence, which is often linked to control, is perceived as a method of subjugating women (Lanier and Henry, 2010; Williams, 2008). The Internet is a space which can be exploited as a means to perpetrate sexual violence and reinforce gendered cultural norms and stereotypes, in turn amplifying gendered violence, harassment, abuse, and stalking (Westmarland, 2015). The ability to shame women to wide audiences also reinforces the self-policing of women's sexual behaviour (Chemaly, 2016; Franks, 2011). With that said, there is a strong argument for IBSA to be included within the spectrum of what constitutes violence against women, and placed on Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence. It is these key concepts which provide a theoretical grounding for the research and in doing so, they contribute to understanding the gendered nature of IBSA. Therefore, this chapter is pivotal in identifying the gendered approach taken within the research process.

This chapter firstly discusses radical feminist analysis of men's sexual ownership and assumed sexual access to women by detailing how historical patriarchal discourses and pornography continue to influence problematic discourses surrounding women's sexuality. Following this, this chapter then addresses definitions of sexual violence in accordance with Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence and Dobash *et al.*'s (1992) asymmetry of violence. This is particularly important given that IBSA is linked to multiple forms of sexual abuse. This leads to a discussion of the normality of sexual violence; that is, the normalness of, and everyday experiences, of sexual violence. These everyday experiences lend themselves to a radical feminist and critical victimological

analysis where we can begin to theoretically understand the impact of sexual violence on women's everyday lives (Mawby and Walklate, 1994), whilst also accounting for the impact of victim precipitation theories on these experiences (Walklate, 1989). For radical feminists and critical victimologists, this is particularly important when considering state responses to sexual violence. Consequently, this chapter includes a discussion of how state responses to sexual violence continue to reinforce male power and patriarchal discourses (MacKinnon, 1987). The chapter closes with the argument that the impact of sexual violence can be influenced by women's coping and resistance strategies (Kelly, 1988), as well as a critical victimological approach to the 'victim-survivor' debate, suggesting the need to consider the fluidity of these terms (McGarry and Walklate, 2015).

Defining Women's Sexuality: Do Women Really Have Sexual Freedom in Contemporary Society?

Definitions of sexual violence have had a direct impact on the perceived ownership of women and assumed sexual access from husbands and partners. Historically, women's definitions of sexual violence, or feelings of violations, have counted for very little and consequently, whether women have been subject to violence has been dependent on male definitions and perceived rights of access (MacKinnon, 1987). For example, Brownmiller (1975) traces the history of rape back to the prehistoric period, in which she highlights the 'ownership' of a woman within a partnership. Due to rape being perceived as a crime against men's property, and not against women, women exchanged domestication and dependency on men for protection against rape from other men. With this explanation, Brownmiller identifies early patriarchal attitudes towards women in that rape was only deemed unacceptable on account of its impact on men. For Brownmiller (1975), instilling fear of rape in women reinforces women's passivity; thus, it is a mechanism through which men can maintain their dominance through force. Consequently, she argues that all women suffer from rape in some form, and that women are trained to be rape victims:

To simply learn the word "rape" is to take instruction in the power relationship between males and females. To talk about rape, even with nervous laughter, is to acknowledge a woman's special victim status. We hear the whispers when we are children: girls get raped. The message becomes clear. Rape has something to do with our sex. Rape is something awful that happens to females: it is the dark at the top of the stairs, the undefinable abyss that is just around the corner, and unless we watch our step it might become our destiny (Brownmiller, 1975:309).

Whilst the ownership of women today is less ambiguous than what was seen in Brownmiller's historical account, Dworkin (1976) argues that the historical ownership of women by their fathers and their husbands forms the basis of a social order which has ultimately resulted in myths about the ownership of, and easy sexual access to, women. What makes myths of ownership, access, and women's subordination so prevalent and insidious today is the expectation of women to live alongside, and have intimate relationships with, men who hold power over them (Kelly, 1988). In these instances, rape operates as part of romantic love. In the modern world, "rape is no longer synonymous with abduction—it has now become synonymous with love. At issue, of course, is still male ownership—the rapist owns the woman; but now, she loves him as well" (Dworkin, 1976:29). Furthermore, the concept of sexual access is linked to a range of processes, including the ideology that biological drives determine male (hetero)sexuality. This works to excuse men's assumption of sexual access to women they do not know, and is demonstrated through sexual approaches, remarks, or rape (Kelly, 1988). Sexual access, then, is determined by the power a man can claim over a woman; the more sexual access he feels he has, the greater the perception of exclusive access rights (Kelly, 1988). Consequently, some levels of sexual aggression become seen as legitimate (Kelly, 1988). Dworkin's account of how rape becomes sanctioned by social processes is in accordance with Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence. Rape is legitimised by men who:

harass women on the streets and in other public places; who describe or refer to women in objectifying, demeaning ways; who act aggressively or contemptuously toward women; who tell or laugh at misogynistic jokes; who write stories or make movies where women are raped and love it; who consume or endorse pornography; who insult specific women or women as a group; who impede or ridicule women in our struggle for dignity. Men who do or who endorse these behaviours are the enemies of women and are implicated in the crime of rape (Dworkin, 1976:45).

Through a discussion of pornography, Stoltenberg (1993) and Dworkin (1981) also highlight how men's ability to define the parameters of women's sexual freedom contributes to the maintenance and prevalence of patriarchal attitudes towards ownership and sexual access. Stoltenberg (1993) details how increased sexual freedom for women creates the perception that women are free to be sexual beings, that they have a right to be free of degradation, express individual sexuality, and have autonomy over their bodies (Stoltenberg, 1993). For example, the 'sexual revolution' in the 1960s meant that women's sexual desires and pleasures became promoted, and this was aided by biotechnical developments including the contraceptive pill. This created the perception that women were benefiting from autonomy and control over their bodies through the

separation of sex and reproduction (Gavey, 2019). Pornography was also seen to be a signifier of sexual revolution; women being able to speak more openly about pornography is seen as evidence of movement away from restrictive norms (Assiter and Carol, 1993; Carol, 1993; Clarke, 2004; Cornell, 1995; McNair, 1996).

However, in reality, this sexual liberation constitutes a form of celebration of male sexuality (Gavey, 2019). The double standards of sexuality and sexual gender inequality are reinforced by the way women are judged by men. Whilst a woman can resist a man's sexual advancements, her decision to do so becomes stigmatised (Gavey, 2019). She becomes labelled as "ball-breaking, a cock-teaser, frigid, cold bitch, uptight" for setting sexual limits. Conversely, if a woman is seen to be sexually excessive, she becomes labelled as "slut, slag, nympho, whore, tart, loose, easy" (Gavey, 2019:100). This vocabulary means that although women are told that they have sexual freedom, their sexual behaviour still remains policed by men and other women (Gavey, 2019). Furthermore, the ability of women to separate sex from reproduction continued to benefit men more than it did women. Previously, men were expected to take responsibility for children which they conceived, but the separation of reproduction from sex meant that "women lost not only the right to expect traditional forms of exchange for sex (love, commitment, marriage)", but also the morally based grounds on which to refuse sex they did not want (Gavey, 2019:103).

This anti-marriage sentiment, or lack of responsibility attached to sex, very much fed into the messages within pornography, which served to celebrate a type of sexuality which is exploitative of women (Gavey, 2019) and the reinforcement of masculinity through the consumption of women as goods (Dines, 1998; 2010). Therefore, Stoltenberg (1993) highlights that the way sexual freedom has come to be perceived within society does not represent reality; he suggests that sexual freedom continues to maintain male power through sexualising women's subordinate status, which in turn, protects male supremacy. Thus, he argues that pornography sexualises male supremacy:

it makes dominance and subordination feel like sex; it makes hierarchy feel like sex; it makes hate and terrorism feel like sex; it makes inequality feel like sex. Pornography keeps sexism sexy. It makes sexism *necessary* for some to have sexual feelings (Stoltenberg, 1993:150, original emphasis).

Essentially, creating discourses that pornography is liberating for women serves to liberate men; women are taught that male liberation is also their liberation and that women's and men's sexual desires are the same. Consequently, women internalise

messages of 'sexual freedom' which are associated with punishment, domination, and powerlessness (Stoltenberg, 1993).

The sexualisation of patriarchy is also argued to result in men having the ability to define women's sexual experiences (Dworkin, 1981). In Dworkin's (1981) historical account of pornography, she chronicles how male supremacy is entwined with language, and therefore men have the 'power of naming'. They name both women's and men's experiences; thus, "men define the parameters of a subject", which serves to restrict women's freedom (Dworkin, 1981:17). This has historically been achieved through men's power to define femininity; that is, what it is to be a woman sexually, socially, and emotionally. Women who do not conform to men's definitions are seen as deserving of punishment: "if she wants him sexually, he names her slut; if she does not want him, he rapes her and says she does" (Dworkin, 1981:18). Hence, Dworkin (1981:18) argues that "[h]e actively maintains the power of naming through force and he justifies force through the power of naming". Therefore, the power to name "is a form of force".

This association is said to reinforce historical discourses of possession and dominance (Dworkin, 1981). Historically, men have sexually controlled women's bodies through "marriage, prostitution, pornography, healthcare, religion and violence" (Dworkin, 1981:203). The presumption of men's right to own women's bodies means that the sexual will of men "define[s] the parameters of the female sexuality and identity" (Dworkin, 1981:203). Therefore Dworkin (1981:23) argues that "fucking is an act of possession – simultaneously an act of ownership, taking, force; it is conquering; it expresses in intimacy power over and against, body to body, person to thing". Thus, masculinity, power, and manhood are performed through using the penis as a source of power to act upon women (Dworkin, 1981). Ultimately, women are in a constant struggle to gain physical control of their own bodies because of the way in which men define them (Dworkin, 1981). Furthermore, Stoltenberg (2004:402) argues that sex is the ownership of the body because male identity is linked to the 'eroticism of owning'. Essentially, manhood, or the idea of a 'real' man, is achieved through sex: taking and possessing someone. It is something which is learnt by men "in a society which is organised both to serve and perpetuate the eroticism of owning" (Stoltenberg, 2004:402).

Discourses of possession and dominance can now be reinforced through the use of technology, including the use of monitoring and threats through electronic communication. Towns and Scott (2013) identified how technology is being used to monitor women's behaviour, reinforcing men's ownership of their female partners. This

includes an assumption that men should be able to contact their partners at all times by phone and the ability to use the Internet to check their whereabouts. The ease of access to women means that this behaviour becomes ever more challenging to avoid; even if women physically remove themselves from abusive situations, it becomes hard to remove themselves psychologically, due to the ease of constant communication (Woodlock, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to examine whether, and how, technology is changing the nature of the ownership and possession of women.

Defining Sexual Violence: Placing Online Abuse on the Continuum of Sexual Violence

A feminist analysis of sexual violence involves acknowledging and examining the exercise of power as a form of social control, which denies women freedom and autonomy (Kelly, 1988). This includes the perception that some levels of force, coercion and abuse are justified (Kelly, 1988). Stanko (1985) therefore argues that women's experiences of sexual violence are determined by understandings of male behaviour; that is, whether behaviour is characterised as "typical or aberrant" (Stanko, 1985:10). Furthermore, Stanko also states how feelings of violation as a result of typical male behaviour become difficult to evidence or explain:

In abstract we easily draw lines between those aberrant (thus harmful), and those typical (thus unharmed) types of male behaviour. We even label the aberrant behaviour as potentially criminal behaviour ... Women who feel violated or intimidated by typical male behaviour have no way of specifying how or why typical male behaviour feels like aberrant male behaviour (Stanko, 1985:10).

Kelly (1988) utilises this argument by stating that, although feminism has increased the visibility of violence against women, the impact on women's lives has not been fully acknowledged due to a tendency to categorise acts of violence in a hierarchy. Through her continuum of violence, Kelly (1988) argued that the tendency to categorise violent events was resulting in the most extreme forms of violence coming under scrutiny. This she argued, was causing other forms of violence, especially those considered non-physical (including coercion and intimidation) to be ignored. Consequently, women's experiences were not being fully acknowledged. Therefore, her definition of sexual violence aims to reflect the vast range of sexual violence to account for women's perceptions of what sexual violence is. For Kelly (1988:41), "sexual violence includes any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the

time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact”. Hence Kelly (1988) develops the concept of the continuum of violence, in which violence occurs through a series of different and multiple events which often overlap. This opens up avenues through which physical, verbal, and threats of, violence can be explored as intersecting events rather than isolated incidents. This is particularly important because violence, she argues, is not only characterised by physical acts but also by “intimidation, coercion, intrusion, [and] threat[s]” (Kelly, 1988:76).

Dobash *et al.*’s (1992) criticism of family violence research also demonstrates how categorising violence as isolated incidents is fundamentally problematic. Family violence research concludes that domestic abuse is symmetrical: that violence is perpetrated by women as often as men. This conclusion is argued to be the result of the use of the Conflicts Tactics Scale Survey, which uncovered the prevalence of different types of violence (Dobash *et al.* 1992). It does not, however, reveal the context in which the violence occurs. This includes the relationship history, mechanisms of control and coercion, and motivations for violence (Dobash *et al.* 1992). Consequently, such categorisation fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of violence against women. Therefore, Dobash *et al.* (1992) reject the argument that we perceive male violence as commonplace solely due to the underreporting of male victimisation on account of stigma. Instead, they contend that domestic abuse is asymmetrical. Even when women perpetrate acts of violence, these usually originate from different motivations than those of acts perpetrated by men, including responses to long-term suffering and fear. Research that actually examines motives, intentions, and consequences produces results which illustrate that women are more likely to suffer from intimate partner violence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2011; Dobash *et al.* 1992). Dobash *et al.* (1992:71) therefore state that men’s violence against women “is often persistent and severe, occurs in the context of continuous intimidation and coercion, and is inextricably linked to attempts to dominate and control women”. Furthermore, Kelly and Radford (1998) also maintain that by drawing distinctions between types of violence, the connections between, and the accumulations of, different life experiences are often neglected (Kelly and Radford, 1998). Therefore, it becomes increasingly necessary to identify the specific relationship contexts and abuse which takes place, because each type of relationship may involve different factors and require different needs (Mooney, 2000).

With feminists widening definitions of violence against women (Kelly, 1988; Dobash *et al.*, 1992; Kelly and Radford, 1998), IBSA will be analysed in line with Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence. IBSA itself, and the consequential types of violence which are linked to IBSA, including harassment and threats of violence (Citron and Franks, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Henry and Powell, 2016), are already recognised by feminists as interlinked acts of sexual violence against women. For example, Douglas *et al.* (2019) identified the use of technology by perpetrators to sexually and emotionally abuse victims, because technology allowed the perpetrator to create a sense of omnipotence. Therefore, sexual violence which is perpetrated with the use of modern-day technology has come to be identified as "technology-facilitated sexual violence" (Henry and Powell, 2015:758).

The Normalisation of Sexual Violence: Women's Everyday Experiences

With women's sexuality and experiences being defined by men, women, from a young age, learn that they do not define their own sexuality and therefore "maleness can at any point intrude into it" (Stanko, 1985:74). It is because of this inequality that women are subject to dominant stereotypes, in particular the Madonna/Whore dichotomy: "the Madonna somehow avoids male intrusion; the whore invites it" (Stanko, 1985:74). In reality, radical feminist theory has worked to challenge these conceptions by bringing to light the argument that women's social position makes them vulnerable to sexual violence and that sexual violence "is a declaration of women's powerlessness" (Stanko, 1985:71). This display of male domination is not something which is unusual. Instead, it is typical because women's experiences reveal that sexual violence or aggression is not prohibited but instead regulated:

Fathers have the right to use their daughters as they please; husbands, their wives; bosses, their female employees; even men unknown to us act as if they have the right to comment or abuse any woman's body. The fact that all men do not exercise this right is irrelevant to the power afforded to men as a gender (Stanko, 1985:71).

Therefore, Stanko (1985) argues that the act of rape is not different from the act of harassment because both acts are a form of sexual intrusion; the only difference is the intensity of the intrusion. Thus, in a feminist analysis, rape is not an isolated occurrence or "interchange gone wrong" but an act of "terrorism and torture" used to subjugate the female sex (MacKinnon, 1989:172). Walklate (1995) highlights that Home Office figures

on marital and date rape indicated that rape was an ordinary occurrence for some women and that rape is more common than first thought. She therefore stresses the normality of rape and sexual assault, arguing that “rape is the ordinary product of ordinary (male, heterosexual) behaviour” (Walklate, 1995:85). It is the ordinariness of sexual violence which brings us to question our societal relationships (Walklate, 1995).

Drawing upon Giddens’s theory of structuration, Mawby and Walklate’s (1994) approach to critical victimology focuses upon the process of victimisation (rather than incidents of victimisation) by investigating the dynamics of women’s structural location and victimisation, and thus women’s negotiation or survival of that structural location (Walklate, 2009; 2010). They emphasise the importance of everyday processes providing a platform for a critical understanding of the law, state responses to victimisation, and the potential for resistance (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). This includes taking account of:

[the] processes which contribute to the construction of everyday reality ... People’s conscious activity, their unconscious activity (that is, routine activities people engage in which serve, sustain, and sometimes change, the conditions in which they act), the generative mechanisms (unobservable and unobserved) which underpin daily life, and finally, both the intended and unintended consequences of action which feed back into people’s knowledge (Mawby and Walklate, 1994:18–19).

Kelly’s (1988:76) continuum of violence also plays a key role in examining these everyday experiences. Kelly’s concept of the continuum centres upon two meanings. A continuum is, first, “a basic common character that underlies many different events”; and second, “a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be readily distinguished”. The former meaning allows for a discussion of sexual violence generically; that is, the basic types or acts which constitute violence. The latter allows us to “document and name the range of abuse, intimidation, coercion, intrusion, threat and force whilst acknowledging that there are no clearly defined and discrete analytic categories in which men’s behaviour can be placed” (Kelly, 1988:76). Using the continuum to theorise sexual violence means acknowledging the complex connections between different experiences. Furthermore, the continuum does not mean placing forms of sexual violence on the continuum in order of seriousness; Kelly (1988) perceives all forms of sexual violence as serious, and therefore rejects the use of hierarchies within this concept. The continuum enables women to make sense of their most common everyday experiences by highlighting that ‘typical’ and ‘aberrant’ behaviour can overlap:

The 'more or less' aspect of the continuum as I use it applies only to prevalence: that there are forms of sexual violence which most women experience in their lives and which they are more likely to experience on multiple occasions. While these common forms are more likely to be defined by men as acceptable behaviour (for example, seeing sexual harassment as 'a harmless bit of fun'), they are connected to the forms of violence which are currently defined as crimes within the law (Kelly, 1988:76).

Understanding sexual violence as something which continuously impacts on women's everyday experiences, rather than as individual events, can contribute to a victimological analysis which seeks to examine what women's everyday experiences of sexual violence are. This is fundamental to understanding the important processes which "go on behind our backs"; that is, what we "do not see" as opposed to what we "do see" (Mawby and Walklate, 1994:19). Applying this concept to sexual violence, Walklate (1995) argues that social relationships are fundamental in understanding issues surrounding sexual violence. By examining the process of sexual violence, we begin to understand three important factors: "first, the extent to which sexual violence can be understood as an 'ordinary' experience; second, the extent to which such 'ordinary' experiences are a product of men's behaviour towards women; third, the extent to which this behaviour can be understood, theoretically, as a product of the way in which men negotiate and construct their expression of themselves as men" (Walklate, 1995:101). Therefore, she contends that gendering sexual violence requires more than identifying victims and perpetrators of sexual violence; it requires a critical approach towards perceptions of normal male heterosexuality and how these discourses reinforce violence and influence how we understand them (Walklate, 1995).

Furthermore, Walklate argues that in order to uncover these experiences we need to examine power especially in relation to gender. She observes that "power is a feature of everyday life permeating all of our relationships, and at all levels". Therefore, in order to understand the complex nature of victimisation, and the diversity of its impacts, victimology needs to include power manifestations within its investigations (Walklate, 2008:213). Walklate (2007; 2013; 2014) suggests that in order to unpick sexual violence, we should question what should constitute as knowledge and whose voices should count in knowledge production. This involves acknowledging two things. Firstly, that violence is subjective and therefore, the need to move beyond political and policy definitions and examinations. Adopting non-legal definitions means we can use broader definitions which are more likely to represent everyday experiences (Walklate, 2016). Secondly, although men can also be victims, women's voices must be prioritised in order to uncover

unequal and patriarchal power structures (Walklate, 2014). She contends that in relation to rape and sexual violence, our responses should be to understand the gendered context in which the event occurred: “It is at this level of understanding that it is possible to appreciate how violence becomes folded into everyday life” (Walklate, 2014:81).

Stanko (1985) discusses how women’s everyday behaviour reflects precautions and measures that women take to protect themselves against sexual violence from men. Walklate (2007:42) often refers to Stanko’s work because of its focus on the everyday experiences which we might otherwise consider ‘just part of life’. Stanko (1985) identifies the uncritical approach often adopted in relation to sexual violence; that is, the failure to acknowledge and inform women about sexual violence from those men who are known to the victims. In doing so, she highlights the importance of the context of the relationship between the victim and offender. She concludes that much of the sexual violence women experience is perceived as “what it means to be female” (Stanko, 1985:9).

To be a woman – in most societies, in most eras – is to experience physical and/or sexual terrorism at the hands of men. Our everyday behaviour reflects our precautions, the measures we take to protect ourselves. We are wary of going out at night, even in our own neighbourhoods. We are warned by men and other women not to trust strangers. But somehow, they forget to warn us about men we know: our fathers, our acquaintances, our co-workers, our lovers, our teachers. Many men familiar to us also terrorise our everyday lives in our homes, our schools, our workplaces ... Physically and/or sexually assaulted women speak in similar voices; much of what they say describes what it means to be female: the child who finds she is treated as sexually available at 9, the battered woman who is embarrassed by her black eyes, shamed by her failed marriage; the raped woman who is grateful to survive, only to live with nightmares; the sexually harassed woman who is humiliated by the pornographic pictures she finds every day on her desk. In each case, a woman endures an invasion of self, the intrusion of inner space, a violation of her sexual and physical autonomy ... Cast in a mould constructed within male-dominated society, women’s experiences of sexual and physical violation take on an illusion of normality, ordinariness (Stanko, 1985:9).

Stanko (1985:10) therefore argues that the way in which we account for sexual violence against women centres “around the naturalness or unnaturalness of male aggression in relation to women’s behaviour”. Stanko (1985) identifies the reality of these experiences: she states that women are likely to be subject to intimidating or violent behaviour from men within their lifetime; often on multiple occasions. It is irrelevant whether this behaviour is conscious or unconscious, typical or rare; to women, it is experienced as “intimidating, harassing and violent” (Stanko, 1985:18).

Dworkin (1976:52) discusses how sexual violence underpins the “sexual politics of fear and courage”. Essentially, she argues that learning fear is part of femininity within a male supremacist culture. Men are automatically and consistently placed as the superior gender to women in society and consequently men’s views, and men’s actions, are defined as the norm; this includes “the norm of masculinity [as] phallic aggression”. A man’s identity is underpinned by his possession of a phallus and therefore, his worth is located in this “phallic identity” (Dworkin, 1976:46). In a patriarchal society, intellect, moral judgement and courage are perceived to be phallic characteristics; if a woman attempts to develop these characteristics, she becomes perceived as masculine because men are seen to be biologically born with this capacity; women are not (Dworkin, 1976). Therefore, to be feminine is to lack these qualities and it is this requirement of femininity that underpins female invisibility in a patriarchal culture:

No matter what we do, we are not seen. Our acts are not witnessed, not observed, not experienced, not recorded, not affirmed. Our acts have no mythic dimension in male terms simply because we are not men, we do not have phalluses (Dworkin, 1976:53).

Instead, femininity requires women to learn fear, the inability to act; thus, to be passive (Dworkin, 1976). Therefore, a feminist approach to power and sexuality requires an acknowledgement and understanding that social control is not only the purpose of sexual violence; it is also the outcome (Kelly, 1988).

However, understanding women’s everyday experiences also means acknowledging, and critiquing, how historical discourses have an impact on the way sexual assault victims are perceived, and therefore, responded to. Women subject to IBSA are facing victim blaming attitudes and safety prevention strategies which are focused on the victim rather than the offender (Henry and Powell, 2016). Therefore, an examination of how positivist victimology has influenced perceptions of the worthy victim (Godfrey, 2018) can underpin explanations of how and why victims of IBSA are subject to problematic perceptions and responses. This includes Von Hentig’s (1948) argument that the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator plays a significant role in the perpetration of crime. By identifying a “doer-sufferer” relationship, he argued that victims of crime contributed to their own victimisation (Von Hentig, 1948:383). For Von Hentig (1984), victim-perpetrator relationships are influenced by the characteristic interactions which take place within society. Victim typologies are also influenced by the extent to which guilt can be placed on the victim during the incident. Mendelsohn identified six typologies:

the completely innocent victim; the victim with minor guilt; the victim whose guilt is equal to that of the offender; the victim who is more guilty (for example, by provocation); the victim who is most guilty (for example, who initiates the fight in which he comes off worse); and the simulating or imaginary victim (Mendelsohn, 1956, *cited in* Miers, 1989:9).

For Mendelsohn (1963), the degree to which a woman resisted during rape determined the victim's culpability. The relationship between victims and perpetrators was also emphasised in Wolfgang's (1958) research on homicides. He argued that individuals were more likely to be killed by a known associate or family member rather than a stranger; in doing so, he identified the victim-offender relationship as a contributing factor to victimisation. Therefore, the victim is seen to play an active role in their own victimisation (Wolfgang, 1958:245).

Walklate's (1989) critical victimological approach provides a critique of these positivist theories. She identifies how assumptions about the characteristics of a true victim are interrelated with the need to evidence physical injury and resistance. In circumstances where individuals cannot display the required qualities, the explanation for their victimisation may lie in their own behaviour; hence the notion of victim precipitation (Walklate, 1989). As such, the ability to claim a legitimate victim status is dependent on how 'innocent' a victim is perceived to be. Therefore, it is argued that the notion of victim precipitation reinforces the dominant discourses that rape victims have "asked for it" (Walklate, 1989:4), whilst also reinforcing victim blaming attitudes and creating a victim hierarchy, especially in rape and sexual assault cases (Spencer and Walklate, 2016; Walklate, 1989; 2007; 2013). Spencer and Walklate (2016) suggest that by deciphering between the deserving and non-deserving victim, we make women responsible for their own victimisation, and in turn, we continue to mythicise forms of rape and sexual violence.

This research utilises this feminist critical criminological approach by examining how online sexual abuse works to reinforce the normalisation of sexual violence (Jane, 2017). By examining this process of normalisation, this thesis will uncover how IBSA impacts upon women's everyday experiences of victimisation. By adopting this approach, it aims to understand the role that gender plays within the nature of IBSA and its consequences for women, including how women's everyday online and offline behaviour changes as a result. By generating knowledge from women's everyday lived experiences, it will critically examine victimisation in relation to women's societal position. The research will also take a radical feminist and critical victimological approach by adopting a broader

non-legal definition of IBSA, which will contribute to a critical examination of how legal definitions are underpinned by a patriarchal criminal justice system. However, an examination of women's oppression by the state requires an examination beyond legal definitions; therefore, it is also important to consider feminist understandings of how the state responds to, and influences, women's experiences of sexual abuse. Therefore, the research combines this analysis with a radical feminist examination of how police forces are responding to victims' needs. This includes whether victim precipitation is influencing problematic and victim blaming responses.

How Coping and Resistance Strategies Influence Women's Experiences

Both radical feminism and critical victimology also call for acknowledgement that the impact of victimisation on women may be influenced by women's coping strategies and resistance (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). When addressing the consequences of sexual violence against women, there is a tendency to manage the issues medically in order to aid recovery and return women to 'normality'. Whilst this approach does support the victim, it does not account for the complexity of women's experiences (Foley, 1994). Foley (1994:44) states that "women's reactions to rape are effectively reduced to a series of mathematical equations that provide the basis for treatment". Essentially, symptoms are identified (for example, post-traumatic stress disorder) and once understood, a cure can be utilised. However, recovery in this instance refers to women returning to 'normal'; that is, returning to their pre-victimisation state (Foley, 1994). Foley (1994:44) argues that this goal is inappropriate because "it fails to acknowledge that women's responses to male sexual violence may lead to permanent changes in attitudes, behaviour and circumstances".

Kelly (1988) argues that it is not possible to easily distinguish between the effects of sexual violence and women's coping strategies. She maintains that coping strategies are used during assault, after assault, and over time. Her interviews found that how women coped directly influenced the impact of abuse on them. For instance, in cases where abuse had occurred more than once, Kelly (1988:160) argued that:

coping responses already have interacted with effects making their separation almost impossible ... Women's coping response are active, constructed adaptations to experiences of abuse. The responses of any particular woman will depend on how she defines her experience, the context within which it occurs and the resources which are available to her at the time (Kelly, 1988:160).

Kelly (1988) examines how women also utilise resistance strategies. She argues that resistance is a coping strategy which is adopted in an attempt to prevent abusive men holding all forms of power over women: "To resist is to oppose actively, to fight, to refuse to co-operate with or submit" (Kelly, 1988:161). Women who are subject to harassment or flashing resist by making a remark to the harasser or publicly shaming their behaviour, in an attempt to themselves feel less violated by the experience: "perhaps because they expressed their anger, they did not internalize feelings of shame or self-blame" (Kelly, 1988:167). In cases of obscene phone calls, women resist by refusing to be frightened or to let the abuser see their fear (Kelly, 1988). Violence is often an attempt to exert control; thus, women resist by refusing to be controlled even if they do not physically resist the assault(s) (Kelly, 1988). In these instances, Kelly (1988) found that women used both resistance and avoidance strategies, depending on how fearful they were at that particular time and whether they were seriously thinking about leaving a relationship:

Despite being in fear for their lives, or that incidents might escalate, many women chose to resist sexual violence. Resistance included physical struggle, verbal challenge and refusal to be controlled by abusive men. Some women's resistance resulted in the avoidance of rape or a particular incident of abuse. Other women altered the course of the assaults (Kelly, 1988:183).

Kelly (1988) therefore contends that women's attempts to take control influenced the impact events had on them. For example, for those who left abusive relationships, the willpower of some women to cope on their own was linked with wanting to regain the power and control over their lives that had been taken away from them during abuse. By acknowledging women as decision makers, rather than passive victims, we can question the assumption that the impact of sexual violence is always negative, especially in the long term:

I am neither saying nor implying that this process is desirable; only that it is one in which women make choices and act. Just as we are not passive victims at the time of assaults nor are we passive victims in relation to the consequences of abuse. This change of direction led me to focus on how women cope with violence at the time it is happening and over time, and through this to notice the range of ways in which women resist (Kelly, 1988:159).

For example, a distrust of men after an abusive relationship is argued to be a “healthy and self-protective response” to the reality of experiencing sexual violence (Kelly, 1988:187). In support of this, more recent research conducted by Rowntree (2010) into the resilience of women who have suffered sexual or domestic abuse indicates the potential for some impacts which are not wholly negative. For some victims, Rowntree (2010) found that coping was instigated through the desire to understand the purpose of, or lessons to be learned from, their victimisation, rather than trying to find out the cause. She encountered responses such as “it happened for a reason” and “learn from it” (Rowntree, 2010:452). Rowntree (2010:456) identified that victims focused upon their own ethical behaviour and how they could “protect themselves and others from sexual violence”. With this in mind, it is useful to consider critical victimology’s contribution to the victim/survivor debate, which highlights the fluidity in women’s self-perceptions and labelling.

Victim/Survivor: A Fluid Dichotomy?

One of the key distinctions between radical feminism and critical victimology is the language used, with feminists preferring the term ‘survivor’ and victimologists favouring ‘victim’. (Hoyle, 2007). Feminists recognise that the term ‘victim’ denotes passivity and powerlessness. Walklate (2007:27) further explains the gendering of the word victim:

The word ‘victim’ is gendered – as in French, for example, being *la victim* – it is denoted as female. If the genealogy of the word ‘victim’ is examined, it is connected to the process of sacrifice in which again the victim was more often than not female. The links between this word and being female imply that the passivity and powerlessness associated with being a victim are also associated with being female.

Therefore, not only does the word ‘victim’ emphasise passivity and powerlessness; it specifically emphasises *female* passivity and powerlessness (Walklate, 2014). As a result, feminists support the use of the term ‘survivor’ in a bid to acknowledge women’s resistance to powerlessness and potential victimisation (Walklate, 2007). Kelly (1988) was key to this debate. By recording women’s experiences in relation to resistance and coping mechanisms for abuse, she revealed that women are not passive victims; women often resist being sexually abused both individually and collectively. Hence, she stressed the importance of identifying abused women as ‘survivors’ rather than ‘victims’. The reasoning for this is rooted in the argument that ‘victim’ refers to someone who has been killed or destroyed; ‘survivor’ allows for the recognition of a woman’s physical and

emotional survival, given that many women do not survive their experiences (Kelly, 1988).

Critical criminologists critique this approach, with Spalek (2006) arguing that the term 'survivor' can pressurise individuals to behave as if they have overcome their victimisation when they may not be ready to do so. Furthermore, Christie emphasises that "being a victim is not a thing, an objective phenomenon"; victimisation will not be the same to all people and therefore whether an individual identifies as a victim "*has to do with the participant's definition of the situation*" (Christie, 1986:18, original emphasis). Therefore, critical victimologists argue that there is a need to recognise the fluidity of the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' as individuals are likely to be both victims and survivors at different times, sometimes showing acceptance of harm and sometimes showing resistance (Spalek, 2006). McGarry and Walklate (2015:7) support this argument by stating that the labelling of individuals as victims or survivors is "rather static [and] uniform" and therefore to unify these terms does not necessarily reflect empirical reality:

Tensions between being labelled a victim and being labelled a survivor are also problematic for others interested in criminal victimization since the either/or distinction fails to capture the processes of victimization. In other words, it is possible that an individual at different points in time in relation to different events could be an active victim, a passive victim, an active survivor, a passive survivor, and all the experiential possibilities in between these. From this viewpoint, the label 'victim' seems quite sterile (Walklate, 2007:27).

In doing so, critical victimology provides a significant contribution to the victim/survivor debate. With the focus of this research on representing victims' voices, rather than the researcher's, this research will adopt the use of the term which victims feel best represents their experiences.

Patriarchal State Responses to Sexual Violence: Discounting Women's Experiences

Radical feminists have highlighted the patriarchal nature of the state's formal and informal practices and how this translates into the state's decision-making process (Kantola, 2006). They adopt a critical analysis which highlights the state's role in continuing gender inequalities by focusing upon women's struggles, including sexuality (Kantola, 2006). For feminists "the state is, at the very least, a significant vehicle of sexual and gender oppression and regulation" (Connell, 1994:147). Drawing upon Connell's (1994) work, Ballinger (2009) reiterates that gender oppression within the state is not

something which is direct; instead, it is embedded within the practices and state responses. Ballinger (2009:23) identified three ways in which the state can be seen to be “doing gender in its response to violence against women”. Firstly, whilst legal responses to sexual violence create the perception that the state is responding to feminist concerns, this is not enough to solve issues surrounding sexual violence because the law does nothing to change the wider social relations which legitimise such violence (Ballinger, 2009). With legal definitions of rape and sexual violence, the state can be seen to be doing gender by providing generalisations of what victimhood is and thus excluding and silencing those victims who do not meet the state’s criteria of victimisation. In doing so, the state also fails to recognise that the treatment of victims by the state can be equally as traumatic as the sexual offence (Ballinger, 2009). The state can, therefore, be seen to be doing gender by refusing to acknowledge feminist arguments that patriarchal law and criminal justice responses to rape and sexual violence are part of the problem (Ballinger, 2009). Secondly, policing responses to sexual violence, which are influenced by historical discourses including pathology and problem families, mean that inadequate policing is the result of patriarchal discourses embedded within the state (Ballinger, 2009). Lastly, Ballinger (2009) argues that the state can be seen to be doing gender by consistently reducing funding for research and services in this area regardless of the increasing amount of attention on sexual violence by academics, the media, and the state itself. This ultimately leads Ballinger (2009:32–33, original emphasis) to conclude that:

despite the state’s willingness to legislate in favour of women’s *formal* equality, this has done little to shift dominant ideologies and discourses around traditional femininity or the power relationship between gender and the public/private sphere. Such legislation has therefore been unable to deliver *substantial* equality. On the contrary, the changes within technical and legal procedures discussed above, have *reinforced* existing state priorities and official discourses ... which subsequently have remained largely ‘the same as they ever were’ – that is, they have been constructed and reconstructed to enable the preservation of the heteropatriarchal social order. The centrality of the state in constructing gender relationships, as well as its ability to define and redefine the gendered subject, thus becomes visible in what it prioritizes, but equally in *what it fails to prioritize*.

This argument can be further developed when considering how the maleness of the criminal justice system, alongside positivist concepts of victim precipitation, influences the legal definitions and perceptions of sexual violence. For MacKinnon (1987), the law defines rape by deciding what level of force is unacceptable. Rape is said to occur when force exceeds “what is seen as normal male sexual behaviour” (MacKinnon, 1987:143).

Thus, rape is not what the victim, or the woman, sees as a violation but what men consider to be a violation. For example, in intimate partner relationships, the closeness of such a relationship can result in assumed consent and therefore the implication that rape law cannot be applied due to assumed consent (MacKinnon, 1989). MacKinnon (1989) also identifies how the maleness of the criminal justice system makes the reliance on consent to distinguish sex from rape problematic. Although a feminist distinction between rape and sex is focused upon the woman's interpretation of an act, legally, violation is determined from a woman's lack of consent *and a man's knowledge of non-consent*. Whether a rape has occurred "comes down to whose meaning wins" (MacKinnon, 1987:145). Therefore, what is important is not so much what rape is but how particular events are constructed (MacKinnon, 1989). Moreover, consent is not given under conditions of equality; it sits somewhere between what a woman wants and what the man thinks. Consequently, consent or a woman's desire are not fundamental because rape laws do not allow women control over their own sexuality (MacKinnon, 1989):

[The crime of rape] requires that the accused possess a criminal mind (*mens rea*) for his acts to be criminal. The man's mental state refers to what he actually understood at the time or to what a reasonable man should have understood under the circumstances. The problem is this: the injury of rape lies in the meaning of the act to its victims, but the standard for its criminality lies in the meaning of the same act to the assailants. Rape is only an injury from women's point of view. It is only a crime from the male point of view, explicitly including that of the accused (MacKinnon, 1983:652).

Smart (1989) further argues that consent is a dyad and that reliance on it fails to address the complex positions women face when countering a sexual situation or abuse. For example, a woman may consent to a sexual encounter, but she may not consent to intercourse. Legally, consent to the former is often translated into consent for the latter. There is also little consideration given to submission: fear of violence or fear of losing employment can result in women unwillingly submitting to sex. However, legally this is considered consent, and therefore, women are not considered to be violated (Smart, 1989). Smart identifies how the narrow definition of consent is a mechanism which allows patriarchal 'truths' to be reinforced:

This legal process of narrowing down the possible interpretations of behaviour is, in turn, linked to law's 'claim to truth'. This is because law is a powerful voice or signifier which has the authority to assert that the version of events it allows to prevail is the only truth of the event. The outcome of every rape trial which finds the accused innocent is also a finding of sexual complicity on the part of the victim. The woman must have lied. In this way the phallogentric view of women's capricious sexuality is confirmed. In the symbolic sense, every rape case that fails is a victory for phallogentric values (Smart, 1989:34).

These state responses to sexual violence are also fundamentally influenced by gendered stereotyping of sexual deviancy; consequently, ideologies surrounding victim precipitation pervade these responses. Phoenix and Oerton (2012) refer to the way in which institutions, particularly state agencies, publicly define what (problematic) sex is. They define what is acceptable and non-acceptable sex: "most utterances or publications are concerned with specifying what adults and children, men and women and individual adults should not do without incurring some type of punishment or censure" (Phoenix and Oerton, 2012:3). When considering the historically patriarchal nature of the state, this becomes particularly problematic. Not only is the state an institution of power; it is an institution which is controlled by men and operates in the interests of heterosexual men (Connell, 1994:163). This includes setting the limits for personal violence and criminalising stigmatised sexuality (Connell, 1994). Essentially, the state is "the central institutionalization of gendered power" (Connell, 1990:519); therefore, it has "considerable, though not unlimited, capacity to regulate gender relations in the society as a whole" (Connell, 1990:527). Subsequently, the state stigmatises women's sexual deviance and normalises perceptions of such deviancy (Smart, 1977). Edwards (1989) argues that perceptions and attitudes influence the opinions of those applying the law, resulting in its application becoming a selective and inconsistent translation and negotiation of the law. This argument was reiterated by Harris and Miller (2000), who found that perceptions of danger and legal responses to it are affected by the gender of the victim, the gender of the aggressor, and the relationship between the two. Peterson (1977:361) clearly identifies how gendered discourses impact upon perceptions of rape:

Rape, however, is a form of activity specified by a system of rules, in this case by rules formulating desirable and undesirable (or moral and immoral) sexual behaviour. These rules are steeped in our prevailing attitudes and beliefs about sex, which in turn are largely informed by the patriarchal male-dominated society ... Popular sexist morality holds the central belief that men are men, but there are two kinds of women, good and bad ones. Good women deserve not only protection, but honour and good position. Bad women deserve punishment and disrepute; if they get raped, they only get what is coming to them.

MacKinnon (1987) argues that these state responses to rape and domestic abuse have caused women to view the law as unenforceable or not applicable to them because the law delegitimises their experiences. Women may conclude that they have not been raped because they were dating or married to the aggressor, they were ‘inappropriately’ dressed, not a virgin, engaged in prostitution, they were willing to put up with it, or they were raped over a number of years (MacKinnon, 1987). Essentially, “if we probably couldn’t prove it in court, it wasn’t rape” (MacKinnon, 1987:144). The contrast between lawful definitions and women’s experiences of rape means that someone else’s definition of rape becomes imposed on women. MacKinnon (1987:144) therefore states that “rape, from women’s point of view, is not prohibited; it is regulated ... Rather than deterring or avenging rape, the state, in many victims’ experiences, perpetuates it”. The law, then, reflects a society in which women are ruled by men and therefore “ruled in a male way” (MacKinnon, 1987:141). It not only reproduces patriarchal norms; it restricts women’s accounts of rape from being constituted as truth. In doing so, the “maleness of the law” disqualifies women’s sexuality and experiences whilst celebrating their disempowerment (Smart, 1989:26).

Furthermore, Peterson (1977) argues that the state puts conditions on women’s ability to exercise free bodily movement. Women must sexually secure protection for themselves, particularly in public spaces (late at night), which ultimately means that the law puts curfews and other restrictions on women’s lives. Therefore, the state does not discourage the offender from raping, but the mobility of women (Peterson, 1977). This means that the state has the ability to deny that a rape has occurred, and therefore deny victim status, if the victim does not fit into stereotypical victim categories (Smart, 1977). The decision-making process results in criminal justice agencies only offering conditional protection for women against some forms of violence. Protection is conditional upon police perceptions of deservedness and definitions of crime which are ultimately informed by ideologies of misogyny, racism, and heterosexism (Hanmer *et al.*, 1989). By failing to intervene and/or responding ineffectively, the state is argued to be “indirectly sanction[ing] unequal power relations between men and women” (O’Neill, 1994:122). The state, then, ultimately fails to protect women from sexual violence because of the law’s discriminatory implementation (Phoenix and Oerton, 2012).

For Ballinger (2009:22), the state presents a contradiction in its treatment of women: “on the one hand, formal, (supposedly) legal equality in the public sphere, and, on the other hand, informal inequality through (supposedly) illegal violence within the private

sphere”. It is within the private sphere that the state is argued to be “doing gender” (Ballinger, 2009:26). It defines domestic abuse as an individual issue (Ballinger, 2009); this, in turn, impacts upon the application of the law. Its application is influenced by perceptions of the home as a private space, with relationships often being an indicator of where an incident sits on the private/public divide, contributing to “a dichotomy between ‘real’ criminal assault and what are private ‘goings on’ between a couple” (Ailwood *et al.*, 2012:92). The regulation of the private sphere requires crossing a cultural boundary into peoples’ private lives, and therefore it is not uncommon for state institutions to be reluctant to intervene. It is argued that non-intervention “has tacitly supported domestic violence” (Connell, 1990:527). Even when the state does intervene, Ballinger (2009:26) describes interventions as “gestures” put in place to create the perception that they are responding and “doing something” about violence whilst ignoring the deeper structural issues. For example, there are various pieces of legislation which aim to deal with domestic abuse and theoretically provide legal avenues for women, yet the efficiency of these laws is fundamentally limited by their indeterminacy and the inconsistency of their application by criminal justice agencies (Ailwood *et al.*, 2012).

Whether women seek support from state agencies is also influenced by the racial and cultural communities to which they belong. In many instances, women who are minoritized are likely to face additional barriers when trying to access support. Burman *et al.* (2004) argue that assumptions, anxieties, and expectations associated with addressing racial or cultural issues, combined with community tendencies to cover up domestic abuse, result in violence within minority communities becoming even more invisible. Accounts from services, and those who belong to minority communities, have highlighted the pressure to put community membership before addressing issues of abuse and distress: “an individual’s needs are often neglected ... it’s very important to keep appearances up with the family and the family together no matter what is going on” (Burman *et al.*, 2004:337).

Within Islamic and Hindu communities, women are particularly responsible for the maintenance of family honour, and therefore they must avoid shameful behaviour. At the same time, men within these communities are responsible for ensuring that ‘their’ women do not behave shamefully. This includes the regulation of women’s sexuality and conformity to social norms (Gill and Brah, 2014). This means that women who engage in behaviour which contradicts their cultural social norms are at increased risk of violence from male relatives, including honour-based violence; not only because they are women

but because they belong to communities in which women's sexual behaviour is even more rigorously policed than in Western culture (Gill and Brah, 2014). Even if physical violence is not something that these women are likely to face, some women who choose to disclose or act against abuse, especially when this is external to the community, can become ostracised. It is the fear of this community exclusion which can stop women resisting abuse and, in these instances, the community itself becomes a site of oppression. Asian women, in particular, rely on their family for financial security and "the setting of standards on acceptable behaviour, the resolution of conflict and, above all, the provision of support and shelter" (Bhatti-Sinclair, 1994:76). Therefore, for women in minority communities, anonymity plays a fundamental role as to whether victims seek support. Women who were interviewed by Burman *et al.* (2004) specified that one of the reasons they sought support from within their own community, as opposed to official government support organisations, was their lack of confidence in the process of granting anonymity and in turn, being recognised, encountering racism, or shedding a bad light on their community (see also Lupton and Gillespie, 1994:3).

With the rapid growth of technology presenting new challenges in relation to the nature and impact of sexual abuse, an examination of state responses to sexual violence is vital. Given that state responses to offline sexual violence remain problematic, there is a need to examine whether these phallogentric state responses are reflected in IBSA cases, as well as to investigate whether the state is able to effectively respond to the changing nature of sexual violence in contemporary society. This includes a critical analysis of whether the criminalisation of IBSA, and criminal justice responses, are providing protection and justice for women.

Conclusion

This research will utilise radical feminist and critical victimological approaches to examine the nature of IBSA and the impact of this on women. Drawing on these two perspectives allows for broader definitions of violence against women to be used, and therefore an in-depth examination of how online abuse reflects offline discourses. This includes how the use of technology to facilitate violence may be changing the nature of, and exacerbating, sexual abuse against women. This includes taking account of how technological advancements may be used to facilitate the reinforcement of patriarchal discourses surrounding men's ownership and assumed sexual access to women by

allowing this control to be conducted from a distance, making it harder to recognise and often more sinister. Contemporary society encourages women to embrace sexual freedom, creating the perception that women are less sexually restricted than ever before. However, this comes at the cost of increased levels of objectification and surveillance which ultimately means that women's experiences of sexuality and sexual abuse are still defined by men. The reason that this is becoming increasingly problematic is the continued normalisation of sexual violence embedded within a patriarchal structure, making forms of sexual abuse so ordinary that they become harder to address and challenge because they have to come to form part of women's everyday lives. Therefore, this research adopts a critical victimological approach by uncovering victims' experiences of IBSA, not just as events of sexual abuse but as an ongoing form of abusive interactions which change victims' everyday thoughts and behaviours, both online and offline. This approach is also underpinned by Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence. By understanding instances of sexual violence as intersecting events, it allows for an exploration of the range of sexual violence which contributes to IBSA, thus moving beyond an examination of IBSA as a single event of image dissemination. This includes a feminist analysis of victim coping and resistance strategies and whether the way that women respond to IBSA is underpinned by gendered discourses. The research also utilises radical feminism and critical victimology to examine how male definitions of violence and women's sexuality have a direct impact on institutional responses to victims of IBSA. This includes an examination of how victim precipitation theories impact on problematic and victim blaming responses, combined with a feminist analysis of whether the male-centred criminal justice system is responding to IBSA victims' needs both at the policing and legislative levels. The next chapter details the methods and methodological approaches undertaken within this research.

Chapter 4

Reluctant Victims and Reluctant Gatekeepers: Researching Image Based Sexual Abuse

Introduction

This research was inspired by my own interest in feminist understandings of, and approaches to, violence against women, as well as my own previous research which focused upon gendered media responses to women's sexual and violent behaviour. Before undertaking the PhD, I came across a small number of documentaries on 'revenge pornography' which led me to reflect upon my own experiences, and the experiences of those around me, with regards to increasing pressure to engage in sexting in the digital age. With a steadily increasing amount of literature on how technology was impacting upon and changing the nature of violence against women, an investigation of the nature of image based sexual abuse (IBSA) and its impact seemed like the perfect opportunity to produce research which not only centred upon my own interests and specialisms within criminology, but also incorporated something which I could personally relate to, having watched the growth of online social platforms from a young age. I belong to the generation of adults who have not only witnessed the progression of these platforms and behaviours, but for whom they have become a normalised aspect of life.

The aim of the research was to investigate the impact of image based sexual abuse (IBSA) on women, and their experiences and perceptions of policing and legislation. These issues were addressed through focusing upon the following objectives: (1) investigating the emotional, physical, and social impact of IBSA on victims; (2) identifying coping mechanisms and life changes employed by victims as a result of victimisation; (3) exploring perceptions of policing responses and justice provided by current legislation; (4) investigating whether IBSA should be considered a form of violence against women.

The approach taken to meet the research aims and objectives was a constructionist ontology and feminist epistemology, which instigated a qualitative research design. An exploratory research design was also utilised in order to investigate the experiences of women who have been subject to IBSA. A justification for these approaches is detailed within this chapter. This is followed by a discussion of the range of sampling techniques which had to be employed to recruit activists, victims, and criminal justice staff for interview. The selection of each of these approaches was fundamentally influenced by

the difficulty of accessing victims who had suffered from this form of sexual violence. The sexual nature of victimisation, alongside the gendered discourses which surround women's sexual conduct, meant that in-depth sensitive research methods were vital in uncovering the everyday realities of online sexual violence for women. Therefore, interviews were the chosen method of data collection. This chapter discusses the importance of this method and the selected interview approaches. An explanation is then provided of the data analysis techniques used to draw final research conclusions. The chapter concludes with discussions of research validity and the ethical steps taken during the research process.

Accounting for Women's Experiences: How to Count, What to Count, and Whom to Count

The aim of this research was to understand victims' experiences of victimisation in a way which reflected participants' own perception of reality (as opposed to examining a concrete and objective reality) (Backman and Schutt, 2007). This means that the research interviews were focused upon the women's thoughts and feelings before, during, and after victimisation, in order to examine victims' experiences contextually and therefore understand if and why women were having different experiences (Bahari, 2010). This included "exploring how different stakeholders in a social setting construct their beliefs" (Backman and Schutt, 2007:23). For this research in particular, the gendered context of the women's relationships, the ways in which images were produced and distributed, the community the women belonged to, the type of employment the women held, whether the women were mothers, and criminal justice responses all contributed to the women's experiences of victimisation. This epistemological approach parallels Walklate's (2007; 2013) argument that when considering how to count, we must understand the context in which the event occurred, because "it is at this level of understanding that it is possible to appreciate how violence becomes folded into everyday life" (Walklate, 2014:81).

Consequently, the contextual approach in this research plays an important part in examining how social structures play an important role in explaining why women experience victimisation, and the way in which they experience it. Therefore, an epistemological approach includes not just the counting of women's experiences but the inclusion of women's life experiences beyond the victimising event. Thus, the research was guided by an interpretivist, or more specifically, constructionist, ontology which worked to acknowledge both differing and similar experiences in order to reach a

consensus (Backman and Schutt, 2007) with regards to the most common impacts on women and their perceptions of policing, legislation, and sentencing. In short, this approach was chosen because of the need to recognise and present the women's multiple realities and experiences (Bahari, 2010; Gray, 2018) and how the women's social lives and interactions influenced their realities and perceptions (Bahari, 2010:23). This also included a recognition that the victims' realities were fluid, and therefore, likely to be continually changing (Bahari, 2010). This is why the context of the women's victimisation plays an important role in the analysis. Women's perceptions of consent in relation to image production, and their perceptions of the nature of the relationships they were in before and after their images were shared, may cause women's perception of reality to change at different times. This also applies to the ways in which women perceive themselves as victims or survivors, the acknowledgement of individual and differing forms of resistance, and how these may change over time.

By examining the context of victims' experiences, we also gain a better understanding of whether victims' interpretation of sexual violence is aligned with policing and legislative responses. Violence is a concept which is "situated within particular cultural settings" (Walklate, 2016:50). Walklate (2016) highlights how what may be considered sexual violence by some may not be considered sexual violence by others; therefore, there is a need to move beyond legal definitions. By doing so, we can use broader definitions and thus become more likely to represent those everyday life experiences (Walklate, 2016:50). Therefore, this research adopts the participants' definitions and/or perceptions of sexual violence and IBSA; in doing so, it challenges the legal definitions by examining how the participants' perceptions and experiences of IBSA contradict current legislation. These definitions are placed at the forefront of the research so that the women's perceptions are not only reflected in the findings but contribute to making recommendations with regards to how the law and sentencing guidelines can better reflect women's experiences.

With the women's own interpretation of experience being placed at the forefront of the research, a feminist epistemological approach was vital. Therefore, with regards to how we acquire knowledge, those who are the "knowers" and what constitutes knowledge in this instance (Stanley and Wise, 1993a:26), are the women who participated in the research. The gendered nature of IBSA and subsequent forms of victimisation lends itself to a feminist epistemological approach in that there is a need to recognise and account for how a woman's social position influences experiences of victimisation (Gray, 2018). In

order to understand women's experiences of IBSA in relation to social structure, it was important to place women at the centre of the research and adopt methods which were suited to understanding their experiences (May, 2005). Women are able to use their experience of oppression to provide a criticism of gender and are therefore able to highlight "how gender practices shape behaviour and belief" through the interrogation of masculinity and femininity (Harding, 1993:60). With men not only coming from a position of power, but also constituting the majority of perpetrators, men's perception of events is more likely to be distorted compared to women's (Gray, 2018):

The experience of oppression due to sexism can create a unique type of insight, involving the ability to penetrate 'official' explanations and assumptions in order to grasp the underlying gender relations and their motor mechanisms (Fonow and Cook, 1991:1).

For this reason, only women were recruited for this research. This does not imply or suggest that men's experiences of IBSA are to be ignored or undermined; instead, it is an acknowledgement that women make up the largest proportion of IBSA victims (Franklin, 2014; Citron and Franks 2014) and that gendered discourses play a fundamental role in influencing women's victimisation and how they experience it. By recognising that women's experiences constitute a different reality and consequently, a different way of making sense of the world, we adopt a 'feminist consciousness'; that is, "the notion that consciousness of 'sexual asymmetry' can lead to a creative insight of gendered experiences" (Fonow and Cook, 1991:3). Acknowledging how women's social position plays a role in lived experiences means that the research generates an understanding "about what it is to be a woman, what the social world looks like to women, how it gets constructed and negotiated by women" (Stanley and Wise, 1993b:120).

This epistemological approach was not only adopted through the focus upon women's experiences but also through taking into account how power structures and victim-offender relations influence sexual victimisation (Walklate, 1996). The victimological approach taken within the research contributed to this approach by attempting to combat perceptions that women's suffering and victimisation, including the normalisation of sexual violence online, is "just a part of life" (Walklate, 2007:42). The research explores the women's everyday experiences and changes of behaviour as a result of victimisation. Therefore, it challenges structural power by acknowledging that victimisation is not an incident but a process (Walklate, 2007) which impacts upon victims' mental, physical, and social wellbeing at different periods of time, whilst also leaving them vulnerable to other forms of harassment and abuse. By examining how victimisation impacts on

women's mental health, their negotiation of physical space, social wellbeing, and their ability to function in employment and educational settings, the research utilises Walklate's argument:

[It] is useful to consider the ways in which women routinely negotiate their lives in circumstances which render them more or less safe. Women know how to do this. They know how to negotiate the workplace, the home and street. All of these domains are endemically structured in such a way as to place women on the edge of them, rendering their sense of ontological security (their personal sense of being) almost permanently precarious. This does not mean that women are in a permanent state of anxiety or neurotic. It does mean that their responses to criminal victimisation survey questions need to be understood in terms of a socio-structural location which locates them as being (essentially) emotional; that is not rational. In empirical terms this may mean, of course, that it is just as important to listen to that which is not being spoken alongside what is ... it moves us beyond considering how women routinely negotiate their lives living with the (known) threat of physical danger, to considering the structural circumstances in which those routine negotiations take place (Walklate, 1995:68).

Qualitative Methods: Building a Complex Picture

With the research being underpinned by a constructivist and feminist epistemology, qualitative research methods were chosen because they can account for subjectivities. The participants were not objects, but contributors who were able to become part of an empowering process in which they were able to become their own writers of reality (Tuli, 2010). Essentially, the research takes a phenomenological approach by uncovering the lived experiences of individuals as described by them (Bahari, 2010). As more participants were asked about their experiences it began to build an accumulative picture of the nature, impact, and responses to IBSA. An accumulation of these experiences meant that a larger and more complex picture of IBSA could be formed, allowing for an examination of how multiple factors interact in different ways (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the research was able to produce knowledge that "mirrors real life and the way that events operate in the real world" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018:182). This included an investigation into women's experiences and how women's lives are shaped by social situations and relationships that are heavily influenced by gender and power discourses (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). In order to understand these power relations, it was vital that gendered discourses surrounding women's behaviour, and in

particular sexual behaviour, were explored as well as deconstructed, considering the substantial influence these discourses have on women's lives (Comack, 1999).

Furthermore, a qualitative approach was needed to conduct exploratory research. The limited in-depth research on the impact of IBSA on women and their experiences within the criminal justice system meant there was a need to adopt an exploratory approach (Bachman and Schutt, 2007). Although we know that IBSA exists, we do not have a detailed picture of how or why IBSA occurs. Therefore, a qualitative approach provided an avenue to gain a better insight into the complex nature of IBSA and its links to other forms of sexual abuse. One of the key reasons for this limited awareness of the nature and impact of IBSA is its relatively new growth due to technological advancements (End Violence Against Women, 2013) and the sensitivity of the subject. Therefore, IBSA is an area of criminological inquiry that is difficult to investigate using quantitative techniques because there is a need to explain contextual issues within victimisation experiences (Wincup, 2017).

The flexibility of qualitative methods made them more appropriate for researching this issue and the anticipated phenomenon of hard-to-reach groups. For example, the design of data collection methods could be adapted to new developments within the research process (Bachman and Schutt, 2007). This meant that the initial data collection plan was flexible or changeable within the research field (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This was vital for the victim sampling process (discussed later), given the sensitivity of the research topic, the lack of existing literature, and the difficulties that arose during participant recruitment.

Sampling

Overall, 28 interviews were conducted. These included three types of participants: (1) activists, defined as organisational workers and/or lawyers who had directly worked with victims ($n = 6$); (2) victims of IBSA ($n = 17$); and (3) criminal justice staff who had worked on IBSA cases either as police officers or prosecutors ($n = 5$). Interviews were conducted with 27 participants (one participant was both a victim and an activist). The sampling selection of participants could not be pre-planned due to the exploratory nature of the research; therefore the sampling methods evolved once the fieldwork began (Gray, 2018). Consequently, a variety of sampling methods were used in order to obtain the 28 interviews, otherwise known as sampling triangulation (Gray, 2018:184).

Activist Sampling: Finding Specialists in the Field

Activists were the first participants to be recruited: two were recruited through purposive sampling and four through snowball sampling. They were initially asked to take part in an interview to get a general understanding of victims' experiences of IBSA and criminal justice responses. Activists were purposely chosen on the basis of their knowledge of victim's experiences making them the best fit to the research study (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018). It was important to ensure that these participants had knowledge of a wide range of cases and victim experiences to prevent the research focus becoming biased towards activists' interests or specialisms (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018). Thus, it was necessary to employ purposive sampling to ensure that interviews would be broad and fruitful enough to guide victim interviews. Organisations and law firms within the UK who were likely to have had experience of working with multiple victims of IBSA were contacted, and at this stage, one organisation worker and one lawyer agreed to participate. From these interviews it was possible to recruit more activists for interview through snowball sampling. Whilst this sampling method posed a risk that the initial contacts might come to shape the entire sample population (Bachman and Schutt, 2007), the two activists originally recruited were independent of one another, and therefore both signposted within different areas. For example, the organisational worker signposted to Folami Prehaye (founder of Victims of Internet Crime),² a victim who had independently become an activist, as well as other organisational workers. The lawyer signposted to other lawyers who specialised in the field. These potential participants were then contacted via email and four further interviews were carried out.

Although snowball sampling reduces the generalisability of findings, the purpose of these interviews was to gain a general understanding of victims' experiences. Therefore, interviewing activists who worked with hundreds or thousands of victims meant a more generalisable picture of victims' experiences could be built. This method was also particularly useful because of the limited number of specialists in the field, making it easier to find and connect with additional participants. Furthermore, using this method rather than contacting other activists independently meant that trust was established more easily with other potential participants who might not have agreed to participate were it not for the referrals (Bell, 2014). This is due to snowball sampling being "essentially social because it uses the activist's social networks"; therefore it is likely to produce "thick knowledge" (Chaim, 2008:332). Overall the activist sample consisted of four

² Folami Prehaye chose to waive her anonymity (see Appendix A).

participants who provided emotional and practical support for victims and two lawyers who had represented IBSA victims either civilly or criminally.

Victim Sampling: The Issue of Hidden Populations and Reluctant Victims

The sexual nature of IBSA means that victims are a hard-to-reach group. Benoit *et al.* (2005:263) state that “research on sexual matters poses unique methodological problems, including the tendency for participants to not want to disclose information about sexual matters especially when the sexual behaviour of participants is viewed as negative by society” (Benoit *et al.*, 2005:263). Heckathorn (1997:174) identifies the characteristics of hard-to-reach groups when researching sexually stigmatising events or situations:

Hidden populations have two characteristics: first, no sampling frame exists, so the size and boundaries of the population are unknown; and second, there exists strong privacy concerns, because membership involves stigmatised or illegal behaviour, leading individuals to refuse to cooperate, or give unreliable answers to protect their privacy (Heckathorn, 1997:174).

The difficulties which occurred when trying to recruit victims for interviews confirmed that the stigma surrounding IBSA, and negative social responses, meant that many of the victims chose not to disclose their experiences to their own families, friends, or the police. Consequently, participating in research was not something many victims were willing to do, so recruiting victims for interviews became a long and difficult task. Therefore, the most appropriate way to recruit participants was to combine sampling methods (Benoit *et al.*, 2005). Nonetheless, it still took 12 months to undertake 17 interviews.

The first victim (Folami Prehaye) was recruited through the snowball sampling method used when interviewing activists. Whilst attempts were then made to find participants with Folami Prehaye acting as a gatekeeper, this was unsuccessful. Attempts to find alternative gatekeepers at this stage were also unsuccessful. Therefore, convenience sampling had to be utilised. Convenience sampling involves recruiting the most easily accessible people who are useful to the research; that is, people who are in the right place at the right time and are willing to partake in the research (Gray, 2018). Whilst data from a convenience sample is extremely limited in terms of generalisability (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018), this method was necessary to secure data collection. The research was advertised on posters around Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and the University of Liverpool buildings, as well as on social media platforms (see Appendix B) (including

within some specialist IBSA groups). Again, this was unsuccessful, and so calls for research participation were emailed to postgraduate and undergraduate students across LJMU departments on a number of occasions, resulting in four interviews (see Appendix C).

Following this, UK victims who had already shared their stories in the media were contacted. In these instances, journalists who had authored particular newspaper articles were contacted and asked to pass the call for participants on to the victim. Five attempts were made to contact participants via this method and one victim agreed to take part in an interview. However, she later withdrew from the research process before the interview had taken place, stating that she did not want to discuss her experiences. Two television producers were also contacted; the first stated she was unwilling to aid in participant recruitment because most of the women would not be willing to take part. The second producer was willing to pass the information on to the three relevant women and one of these women was willing to participate. After the interview took place this participant suggested another victim for interview, who later declined, stating that she wanted to move on from her experience. Overall, six victims were recruited through the above methods. With finding participants still proving incredibly difficult, even when targeting the population of victims who had already publicly shared their experiences, attempts were made (again) to find a willing gatekeeper.

Breaking Down Barriers: Working and Negotiating with Gatekeepers

Contact (via email and phone) was made with over 30 different organisations across England, including IBSA support organisations, domestic abuse organisations, and sexual assault organisations. This also included national organisations such as Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (RASA), Victim Support, Women's Aid, and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and local MPs who had spoken publicly about IBSA. The vast majority of these organisations failed to respond to multiple contact attempts, and many of those who did respond stated that they were not willing to be gatekeepers or that there was not enough disclosure amongst their clients to warrant aiding with the research (see Appendix D). Clarke (2010) and Din and Cullingford (2004) highlight that this is not uncommon; they argue that gatekeepers may not agree to help because of the amount of time and work involved in acting as a gatekeeper, which in turn can disrupt the efficiency of the organisation. For this research, this was likely to have played a key part in decision

making, considering that austerity measures within the UK have left domestic abuse services suffering funding cuts (Oppenheim, 2018). This included the Revenge Porn Helpline, who, during the data collection phase of the research, were also facing the possibility of closing due to government funding cuts (Laville, 2017). Furthermore, the very limited disclosure to most organisations meant that it was likely that the amount of time and resources required to aid recruitment would not produce any significant results. Some of the smaller local charities that were contacted at the time were unaware of what IBSA was and stated that “they only deal with domestic violence”. Overall, two potential gatekeepers were identified: the Revenge Porn Helpline³ and a domestic abuse organisation who will be referred to as Gatekeeper One.

Initially, contact was made with the Revenge Porn Helpline; however, they were unwilling to act as gatekeepers. They are the only government funded organisation in the UK which is specifically dedicated to IBSA; therefore they had the largest target population. At the time, they did not provide a rationale for this decision (see Appendix E). With the key organisation not willing to aid with recruitment, Gatekeeper One was then contacted. Whilst they agreed to help with the research, they operated on a drop-in basis. This meant that whilst they were willing to signpost any potential participants to the research, they could not identify anyone suitable for the research when they were first approached. Therefore, it was a case of attending the drop-in sessions in the hope that some potential participants approached the organisation. I attended the organisation at their weekly drop-in time for 10 months. With other volunteers also attending the sessions, there was an expectation that I would also take on the role of a volunteer. Whilst this was important in order to build trust and rapport with the organisation and those who sought their services, the time spent with the organisation was not particularly fruitful for a number of reasons. Firstly, the volunteers were not assigned to any particular roles or given any significant training, which meant that I and the other volunteers were consistently unsure of our roles and how and whether the organisation wanted us to approach those who attended the drop-in. The majority of the women had arranged meetings with the head of the organisation, which meant that there was very little opportunity to engage with the women and get to know their cases. This made it very difficult to identify those participants who might be suitable for research participation. Furthermore, taking on a volunteer role meant that my purpose at the organisation became

³ This organisation opted to be identified in the research (see Appendix M for consent form proving an anonymity waiver option).

blurred, in that the organisation was not particularly active in trying to find potential participants.

Secondly, the organisation operated as more as a community centre than a domestic abuse charity, with many of the people attending the drop-in sessions to get help with issues other than domestic abuse. My time there was primarily spent helping people who spoke very little English to deal with other tasks like contacting gas and electricity companies, filling out forms, and the general other administration needs of those within the local communities. In fact, the number of women with whom I came into contact who did have issues with abusive relationships was very low. These issues caused tensions between the organisation and the volunteers: the volunteers consistently felt that they were left sitting around without a specific role or purpose because of a lack of training and engagement with the community, and the organisation felt that the volunteers were not being productive. Whilst I tried not to get involved in these discussions, I couldn't help but feel that the lack of organisation and focus within this charity meant that it was unlikely that any potential participants were going to be identified, and after eight months I began to consider leaving the organisation.

It was at this time that one of the organisation's leaders eventually discussed my research project with one of the women who had been attending on a weekly basis for what I could only assume were social visits. It was this woman who identified two friends who had had issues of images being shared without their consent, and at this point I tried to arrange meetings with these women. Whilst I was happy that participants had eventually been identified, I was also frustrated that the organisation had not disclosed the purpose of my work until this time. Furthermore, even with the identification of these potential participants the staff were very slow to respond to my requests to contact these women to see if they would be willing to participate, which meant that I had to chase staff members to arrange these meetings. Eventually, two interviews were conducted and a third participant was identified; however, staff members felt that this woman's ongoing situation meant she was not ready to participate in the research (see Appendix F).

After 10 months of volunteering with Gatekeeper One, and only two participants recruited, attempts were made again to contact the Revenge Porn Helpline. After discussing the difficulties of finding research participants, they agreed to negotiate due to the need for research in this area. Munro *et al.* (2005) state that such negotiations can result in significant delays in research because services can take several months to make a decision. In this case, it took eight months for the helpline to agree to a gatekeeping

role, which significantly slowed down the recruitment progress. This was also due to negotiations which included writing formal letters to their funders to ensure that the research did not conflict with data collection already taking place within the organisation (see Appendix G). Alongside this, the practicalities of recruitment were also discussed before the helpline committed to a gatekeeper role. Their assistance was given on the condition that they would be responsible for contacting potential participants via email; if a victim agreed to participate, their contact information was then passed on to me and the victim was directly emailed with information on the study before they officially decided to participate. Essentially, their role as gatekeepers was conditional on the organisation having full control of participant selection, with the rationale that they would choose participants they felt were at a stage where they would be more likely to engage with research and whom the helpline had built good relationships with.

This reflects Wincup's observation that within negotiations, researchers have to discuss and make clear to potential gatekeepers the purpose of the research and the implications or requests which will be made of those who work within the setting. Therefore, negotiations had a detrimental impact on the timeline of the study. Nonetheless, these negotiations were particularly fundamental because this was the first research study in which the helpline had allowed a researcher to speak directly with victims; therefore, not agreeing to these terms would potentially have resulted in a refusal by the organisation to accept a gatekeeper role. This also highlights the importance of Wincup's (2017) argument that this kind of situation is not uncommon, in that researchers often find themselves becoming reliant on a particular gatekeeper, and in this instance, not agreeing with the gatekeeper's conditions would have resulted in the abandonment of the study.

Corra and Willer (2002) suggest that commitment of access to an organisation's users may also be dependent upon providing the organisation with something that would benefit them. This was something which played a key role in negotiations. As part of these, two weeks were spent in Exeter working with, and volunteering at, the helpline. At this time, the Helpline was facing the withdrawal of government funding; therefore, a large proportion of my time was spent contributing to their crowdfunding page and contacting large companies willing to make a contribution to support the organisation. This also meant that staff were already dividing their time between supporting victims and generating new sources of funding. In some instances, this stress on the organisation made recruitment difficult. Trying to balance my own needs for recruitment alongside the pressure on staff to deal with funding issues meant I had to push staff members to continue

making a proactive effort with recruitment without being too imposing and risking my positive relationship with staff. However, it was my physical presence at the helpline, as opposed to constant communication through telephone or email, which made maintaining this balance easier. By sitting with the telephone operators, during casual conversation I was able to remind staff to ask victims about participation, which on many occasions resulted in successful participant recruitment. With staff sometimes forgetting to ask potential participants to engage with the research, had I not been physically present as a reminder of their role as gatekeepers it would have been likely that many opportunities for interviews would have been missed. Prior to my time at the helpline, the staff had not managed to recruit any participants (as planned); during my time at the helpline, nine participants were recruited. Therefore, my physical presence was extremely important given the pressure the helpline was then under, as well as a history of reluctance to recruit participants. This led me to conclude that the recruitment of participants would not have been as successful had this communication been done via email or telephone.

Whilst negotiating and maintaining working relationships with staff at the helpline were long and difficult tasks, the importance of their role as gatekeepers was highlighted by the victims themselves. The relationships that were built between the staff and victims played a fundamental role in the willingness of victims to participate. Given the difficulty of finding victims willing to share their experiences, the utilisation of these relationships was a way of making victims feel comfortable in coming forward, which outweighed the need for generalisability. For example, in response to an email inviting Victim Nine to participate in the research, she stated that:

[I am] happy to take part and help in any way I can, especially after the help I received and since I'm still dealing with the situation where nothing has been resolved (Victim Nine).

The advice and practical support that the helpline had provided these victims meant that they had built positive relationships, which positively impacted victims' willingness to partake in the research. In doing so, it aided in "productive research relationships" with participants (Clark, 2010:488). This trust also significantly aided in the production of particularly rich data because it legitimised the research as trust was automatically given to the researcher by association (Bell, 2014). Utilising these networks was also vital for the feminist research approach; sampling in this way provided a more comfortable research environment for participants because working with their trusted networks alleviated fears of mistrust. This was essential for securing access because it is important to use research strategies which are accepted by those being studied (Woodley and

Lockard, 2016). This was confirmed when considering the difficulty of the data collection process without the use of victim-trusted networks; when victims were recruited independently from the helpline, many withdrew from the interview process, potentially due to a lack of rapport and uncertainty about the research without the association of a trusted organisation.

Recruitment through the helpline also revealed the significance of time with regard to research participation; that is, how likely victims were to be willing to participate was dependent on how recent their experiences were. Staff began contacting victims by sending emails to those who had called the helpline two to three weeks previously; this resulted in four interviews. A lower response rate was recorded for those victims whose experience was not as recent. For example, seven emails were sent out to victims who had contacted the helpline four weeks previously; these did not result in any responses. With participant rates being poor when trying to recruit the slightly older cases, emails were sent to victims who had contacted the Revenge Porn Helpline one to two weeks previously. This produced the largest response rate ($n = 5$). The importance of timing when contacting victims was also highlighted by Activist One:

I can imagine it is difficult to get victims to speak with because there's been some time delay often between when it actually happens and when they are happy to talk about it. So, I can imagine it's difficult to get people in the right timeframe (Activist One).

The interviews confirmed that those who had contacted the helpline more recently (one to three weeks) were more willing to discuss their experiences for two reasons: (1) they had not discussed their experiences with anyone else, and given how recent their experiences were, they used the interview as a way to offload; (2) victims were likely to be in the early stages of the criminal justice process and specifically wanted to express their experiences of poor police responses which they were currently dealing with. Essentially, their cases were still ongoing, and therefore, victims had not reached the stage where they were trying to put the experiences behind them. Thus, research participation was influenced by the emotional state of victims as well as case progress at the time, meaning that there was an optimal time at which victims were more likely to be recruited for research interviews. Those victims who rang the helpline at the time of recruitment were not asked to participate. This was because victims often rang the helpline in a state of panic, having just found their images, and therefore had rung for advice and support at a very difficult time. In such cases, victims were often unable to coherently explain their

situation. Therefore, it would have been unethical to ask them to take part in the research at such an emotional time.

Overall, a total of 17 victim interviews were conducted. The difficulty of recruiting participants meant that trying to achieve a larger sample size would have required considerably more time and resources. Furthermore, whilst Maruna and Matravers (2007) highlight arguments that even in qualitative research there is an assumption that a sample of around 40–50 participants is preferable, they argue that smaller sample sizes have the advantage of allowing for a life narrative and therefore the richest data. In relation to this research, the smaller sample size, which attempted to uncover the narrative behind the women’s experiences, did result in considerably rich data. With feminist epistemologies and women’s experiences playing a key methodological part in the research process it was more beneficial to have an in-depth detailed understanding of these women’s experiences rather than shallow data on multiple experiences (Maruna and Matravers, 2007). Therefore, having a smaller sample size allowed for the consideration of complexities, including “emotions, confusions and insecurities” amongst participants, limiting the “oversimplification of human nature” (Maruna and Matravers, 2007:430) Table 1 shows the number of victims recruited via each sampling method.

Table 1: Number of victims recruited by sampling methods

Sampling Method	Number of Victims (<i>n</i>)	Organisation Victims Recruited from	Total Number of Victims Per Organisation (<i>n</i>)
Snowball Sampling	1	N/A	N/A
Convenience Sampling	5	N/A	N/A
Gatekeeper	11	Gatekeeper One	2
		Revenge Porn Helpline	9
Total	17		

Demographically, this sample included victims within the age range of 19–46 years. Five of the women had religious backgrounds, which included Christianity ($n = 2$), Islam ($n = 2$), and Hinduism ($n = 1$). There was also a diverse range of occupations amongst the women interviewed; they included teachers, customer service staff, accountants, digital marketing staff, students, and unemployed participants. Each case involved the sharing ($n = 15$), or threat to share ($n = 2$) images. The 15 women who had images distributed had multiple images published and, in some cases, both still images and videos were shared. The lowest number of images shared (of the same woman) was 1 and the highest number was 50. This suggests that in cases of IBSA, victims may be more likely to be subject to the dissemination of multiple images rather than a single image. In all of the cases except one (a Muslim woman without her hijab) the images were sexually explicit; this included images of full nudity, partial nudity, women performing sexual acts, and/or images of women in their underwear. One of these cases included non-nude images which had been photoshopped to appear sexual in nature, otherwise known as ‘deepfake’ images. Whilst 10 of the women had their images shared by someone they were in an intimate relationship with, 3 had images shared by someone with whom they had a short-term casual relationship, 1 woman was subjected to photoshopping by a manager at work, 1 had images non-consensually obtained and faced threats of dissemination from a work manager, and 2 women had images non-consensually obtained and shared by a friend.

Recruitment of Criminal Justice Staff

Four police officers and one CPS prosecutor were interviewed in order to gain an insight into their understanding of IBSA and surrounding legislation, as well as any practical issues which might be influencing policing responses, and in turn, victims’ experiences. They were recruited through convenience ($n = 5$) and snowball sampling ($n = 1$). Emails were sent out to police forces across England in an attempt to recruit police officers (of any rank) who had investigated cases of IBSA. Two police officer interviews were conducted as a result of this: with a detective and an officer in a public protection unit. A detective chief superintendent was recruited via snowball sampling. He was recruited after a victim interviewee suggested him for interview as he had handled her case. One officer was recruited through an organisation, and finally, a prosecutor for the CPS was recruited after an acquaintance had seen an advertisement for the research and had passed contact details on. Overall, five interviews were conducted with criminal justice staff.

Data Collection: Giving Victims a Platform to Speak

With the research taking a feminist approach, the aim was not to generalise what is, but how women experience things; therefore, interviews were conducted with the aim of understanding these experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2014). The fundamental task was to make women's life experiences visible by listening to their stories and gaining knowledge of their understanding of the world, including experiences of oppression, patriarchy, and control (Comack, 1999). These understandings and experiences are fundamental to the foundations of knowledge production in theorising the social world from women's perspectives (Letherby, 2003). Focusing on women's experiences of IBSA, as opposed to male perpetrators, allows victims' voices to be heard. This not only formed a more complex body of knowledge but also a more appropriate body of knowledge that can be applied to, and make a difference to, women's lives (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007; Kelly *et al.*, 1995).

In accordance with this phenomenological approach, one-to-one interviews were conducted with each of the research participants. Interviewing is viewed as the interaction "between two individuals where one of the individual's goals is to obtain recognisable responses to specific questions" (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018:144). This was the most appropriate method for a number of reasons. Firstly, being as close as possible to those being studied was vital to get first-hand accounts of victims' experiences (Bahari, 2010). Secondly, interviews proved particularly appropriate in trying to access sensitive or personal information (Wincup, 2017). Lastly, they are also the most appropriate approach when conducting an exploratory examination of feelings and attitudes (Gray, 2018). Essentially, interviews were chosen because of their effectiveness in producing in-depth data on the experiences of participants. Wengraf (2004:6) highlights the importance of in-depth data:

to go into something 'in depth' is to get more detailed knowledge about it. To go into something in-depth is to get a sense of how the apparently straightforward is actually more complicated, of how the 'surface appearances' may be quite misleading about 'depth reality'.

Thus, in order to gather meaningful data which represented the participants' experiences, it was fundamental that the interviews were used to provide rich insights into people's "biographies, experiences, opinions, values ... attitudes and feelings" (May, 2005:120). Furthermore, interviews are useful for those who may want to talk about their experiences, by giving them an opportunity to reflect on events without having to submit

anything in writing. The lack of writing can also help participants feel more secure about information being confidential (Gray, 2018).

All of the interviews were digitally recorded for ease of transcription and to increase the accuracy of recorded data (compared to manual note taking) (Gray, 2018). Nineteen of the 28 interviews took place face-to-face. This included all of the activists and criminal justice staff as well as eight of the victims (those recruited independently of the Revenge Porn Helpline). Face-to-face interviews allowed for physical presence between the interviewer and the participant (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018). Initially, face-to-face interviews were chosen because they provide positive reinforcement and a personal element for both parties involved. They also allowed for confusion and misunderstandings to be addressed at the time and for the consideration of non-verbal cues, thus increasing rapport and in-depth discussion (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018).

Once participant access through the Revenge Porn Helpline was granted, the limitations of face-to-face interviewing became more prominent. It would have been impossible to arrange face-to-face interviews with each of these participants within the two-week time frame (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018); therefore, telephone interviews were conducted with the nine victims recruited through this gatekeeper. Whilst telephone interviews are uncommon in qualitative research, geographical practicalities meant that they were necessary in order to secure the interviews (Greenfield *et al.*, 2000; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). There were initial concerns that these interviews would not generate as much in-depth data because of the lack of human contact (Greenfield *et al.*, 2000). For example, the lack of physical presence with the participants meant that achieving rapport through visual cues was not possible. Therefore, there was an increased chance that the telephone interviews would not generate the same quality of data as the face-to-face interviews, especially considering that telephone interviews tend to be shorter in length due to participant fatigue, estimated to set in after 20–30 minutes (Carr and Worth, 2001). However, the data supported research studies which found there to be little difference between face-to-face and telephone interviews (Fenig *et al.*, 1993; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004:108).

In some respects, the telephone interviews may have been a more advantageous method, for two key reasons. Firstly, the efficiency of using the telephone meant that interviews caused less disruption to the participants' lives; therefore, there was more incentive to take part because of the convenience (Wincup, 2017). Furthermore, reducing the amount of time and money spent travelling meant that participants could be interviewed from all

over the UK; in one instance, the victim had moved abroad since having her images shared (Wincup, 2017). Given the sensitivity of the topic, it would have been unethical to visit victims' homes or ask them to discuss such sensitive issues in a public place, such as a café; arrangements would have had to be made for them to attend the university. Therefore, this method allowed for access to participants who would otherwise have been excluded from the study (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). Thus, it aided in the "completeness of data" (Fenig *et al.*, 1993:896).

Secondly, telephone interviews provided further security with regard to anonymity because they ensured that the women's physical identities remained unknown. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) argue that this anonymity can increase the quality of data when the subject area is particularly sensitive or embarrassing. In turn, this can potentially increase the validity of responses (Fenig *et al.*, 1993). The sensitivity of the topic meant that telephone interviews might have been more appealing to participants as due to the lack of visual contact, they are less intimidating than meeting a stranger face to face. Therefore, "interviewees may feel able to answer more honestly because they feel less exposed" (Wincup, 2017:104). This may have been particularly useful for those victims who still had images in circulation as it prevented me from potentially recognising their images online. Therefore, the lack of contact with the researcher may have reduced the self-consciousness of the participant by allowing them to be interviewed in their own home without any "visual scrutiny or observable judgement" (Tausig and Freeman, 1988:426). With victims' fears and anxieties of IBSA often stemming from societal judgement, this gave participants a more comfortable platform from which they could discuss sensitive issues, including sexual encounters.

However, one issue that these telephone interviews did present was the increased likelihood of interviewees becoming distracted during the interview. Some of the participants were at home with children and others received phone calls whilst taking part in the interview. Whilst this did mean that some of the interviews were interrupted, the difference in quality or length between face-to-face and telephone interviews was minimal (average face-to-face interview length 64 minutes, average telephone interview length 62 minutes). This suggested that telephone interviews were just as effective as face-to-face interviews in this data collection process.

The interviews were semi-structured. Such interviews are non-standardised in that there are a list of issues and questions to be covered but the order in which they are covered may change and some issues may not be addressed at all (see Appendix H, I, J). This

semi-structured approach allowed for additional questions to be asked, including questions surrounding issues which might not have been anticipated (Gray, 2018). Unanticipated issues often arose through the probing of participants by asking for more explanation of their answers or following up on responses with additional questions to obtain a more detailed response (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018). This was vital for a phenomenological approach because the aim was to explore “subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to concepts or events” (Gray, 2018:381). Semi-structured interviews are also fundamental for feminist research. Feminists try to avoid the objectification of research participants that is often found in positivist methods. One way feminist researchers achieve this is through utilising semi-structured interviews because they allow the participant greater input:

[Feminists] argue that an interview based on closed questions with a rigid structure overwhelmingly serves the interests of the interviewer. The qualitative approach gives more scope for the interviewee to set their own agenda and typically provides a more in-depth response to questions posed (Wincup, 2017:99).

The research questions were separated into key themes which were informed by the existing literature. For the victim interviews and police interviews, the questions also included issues raised within the activist interviews. Activists and criminal justice staff were asked about their perceptions of IBSA, types of image sharing, issues with consent, the types of support offered for victims, the impact of IBSA on victims, and their perceptions of policing and legislative responses. Victim interview themes included their understanding of IBSA and a general overview of their story, information on the image, questions surrounding consent, their relationship with the perpetrator, image distribution, contact with strangers and disclosure to family and friends, contact with support organisations, experiences with police, and perceptions of the law. However, during the interviews, the women were asked to explain what had happened in relation to their sexual images being shared without consent. This allowed the women to tell their stories in full, in the way they wanted, with their own perceptions, in their preferred order without interruption. They were later probed for information which was missing from the account in relation to the research questions. It was during the women’s accounts that they were asked about how their experience made them feel and the impact this was having on their everyday lives. This approach of asking victims about the impact of IBSA on their lives as they were recounting their experiences was important because, as one participant stated:

So, I'd say it affected us quite a bit, but it's not until you talk about it you realise how much it did affect you (Folami Prehaye).

Many women found it particularly difficult to vocalise the impact IBSA had on their lives. This was partly due to a sense of being overwhelmed; that it was almost impossible for them to truly explain how having their images shared made them feel because the range of emotions and impacts was so broad. Some women were not able to completely identify some of the impacts; they were able to name the most obvious emotional impact (feelings of anger, upset, depression, and anxiety) but they could not always recognise some of the wider social and physical impacts. This included how their automatic coping mechanisms were impacting upon other areas of their life (often the use of physical space). The findings with regards to impacts on the women were not always the result of explicitly asking, "What impact has this had?" Rather, they were found more generally within the stories the women told.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to highlight about their experiences. In some instances, this resulted in new information which would otherwise have been undiscovered. It also gave participants a chance to state which parts of their responses they considered of most importance (Wengraf, 2004). This meant that although many of the women suffered from similar everyday impacts, each participant was able to tell their unique story in relation to the context of their situation. Allowing participants to do this also meant that greater rapport was developed by indicating that their experience was being recognised and accounted for (Gray, 2009; May, 2005). This rapport with participants was vital because it encouraged the engagement of participants by limiting the hierarchy between the researched and the researcher. In doing so, it increased the comfort of participants with discussing sensitive and embarrassing issues (May, 2005).

Whilst the majority of the interviews went smoothly, two presented some further issues. One of the women spoke very little English and needed an interpreter. This participant decided that she would be happy for her friend to take on this role rather than using an official interpreter. Whilst this provided some comfort to the victim in that the friend was aware of most of her background and she therefore felt more comfortable disclosing her experiences, it still presented some issues. For example, some of the issues which this woman disclosed in interview had not explicitly been detailed to her friend previously, which resulted in the following discussion:

Interpreter: You are my friend; she should tell me that.

Victim Fifteen: You [didn't] ask me, she asking me!

Interpreter: Yeah but I mean, why didn't you tell me that before [laughing].

Victim Fifteen: They erm, you [said it was] my fault, why [did I give him the] picture.

Interpreter: Me? Did I say it was your fault?

Victim Fifteen: No.

Although this participant may have disclosed more personal information during interview because of her friend's knowledge of her situation, this still did not mean that her answers were not restricted with regards to disclosing information which her friend had no knowledge of.

Whilst gatekeepers played a pivotal role in the data collection process, when interviewing one of the women contacted through Gatekeeper One it became clear that the staff members had very little knowledge of the research process, which presented me with some further issues. The staff members began highlighting the fact that these women were living on the poverty line and suggested that I pay the participants to partake in the research. At this point, I had to explain that ethically, I could not provide a fee for partaking in the research but I could cover any travel expenses the women incurred. I also asked if the women would be able to attend the university due to the limited physical and private space in which to conduct interviews at the organisation. I was told that this 15-minute walk was too far for these women to go, and therefore I would have to conduct the interviews at the organisation. After agreeing to this I set up an interview room in one of the storage rooms at the centre so that the interview could take place without the influence or interruption of the organisation. Eventually, the interview took place but was interrupted by one of the staff members suggesting that we move into the main seating area as no one else was currently using the building. Whilst this did not have a detrimental effect on the research interview, it did break the flow. Essentially, whilst this gatekeeper aided with the recruitment of participants, their behaviour during the data collection process made the interview process more difficult.

From Stories to Themes: Analysis of the Women's Stories

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed them to ensure that I was able to understand the different nuances of the interview data and reflect on the data and its emerging themes (Wincup, 2017). The transcripts were then downloaded into NVivo: a qualitative software that made the organisation of data more efficient and allowed me to

sort and search for information easily within the database. This included examining if participants were responding to a particular theme in the same way (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This also meant that the analysis was more transparent (Kelle, 1995), which was important given how subjective qualitative data is. Therefore, use of this software ensured a level of systematic analysis, adding trustworthiness to the methodology (Kelle and Laurie, 1995).

The transcripts were coded inductively and thematically. The first codes created were those which identified the group of participants the transcript belonged to: victims, activists, and criminal justice staff. Within these categories, each line of the transcript was coded, and as the data analysis progressed, themes which were touched on in a large proportion of interviews were identified as key themes within the data. For example, within the victim interviews, some of the themes identified were the type of images that were shared, how they were distributed, the personal information that was shared, the impact on victims, any instances of harassment, and the victim's relationship with perpetrators. Hierarchical categories were then created. For example, the code relating to personal information being shared was further broken down into the types of information shared, including the victim's home address, their email address, their face as a recognisable feature, their Facebook profile, their name, the tagging of family in shared images, telephone numbers, and their place of work. Essentially, every time an instance of a category was found, it was compared with other instances already within that theme. If the new instance did not correspond with the original defined category, a new category was created (Gray, 2018). This not only meant that questions could be asked in relation to how the women's experiences were similar or different (Gray, 2018:687); it also meant that the qualitative data could be converted into quantitative data. Therefore, I was able to identify how many victims had suffered from a particular experience (Dantzker *et al.*, 2018).

This is a typical approach for qualitative researchers as the aim is to build categories or themes "from the bottom up" until a comprehensive set of themes have been established (Creswell and Creswell, 2018:181). This uncovers findings without jumping to unfounded conclusions or relying on researcher assumptions (Gray, 2018), which would not constitute exploratory research (Maynard, 1995). Maynard (1995:12) also argues that women's lives "cannot be pre-known or pre-defined"; the silencing of women's experiences throughout history means that in order to uncover their experiences, exploratory research is required. The themes that emerged were then developed into broad

patterns or generalisations, which could then be compared with existing literature with the goal of building a more complex understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Validity: Letting Women Represent Themselves

With a feminist epistemological standpoint underpinning the research process, the validity of this research is not measured solely by positivist standardised techniques which argue that the interactions between the interviewee and the researcher should be minimised (Rose, 2001). Instead, there was an acknowledgement that knowledge is socially constructed, and therefore, the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee played an important role in the validity of the research. This includes my own position as a female researcher uncovering knowledge of a type of victimisation which is influenced and impacted upon by gendered discourse. This essentially means that my own gendered position correlated with the research participants; therefore, my interpretation of the women's experiences and events is more likely to correlate or reflect the victims' experiences accurately because of my own experience as a woman (Rose, 2001). For example, the victims' accounts of what some people might perceive to be unharmed behaviour such as online friend requests and direct messages from strangers (whose sole purpose was for solicitation) were identified by me as harmful behaviour because my own experiences as a female engaging in the online world aided my understanding of victims' perceptions and interpretations of events. Essentially, I was able to recognise how significant these normalised everyday behaviours are for women's lives because I had an 'insider' position within the research process (Rose, 2001:5). Not only did this minimise the hierarchy between the interviewee and myself; it made it easier to establish common understandings, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation (Rose, 2001). Furthermore, my role as a female researcher meant that rapport was easier to build with participants (Rose, 2001). Some of the women identified how discussing their experiences with male police officers was an uncomfortable experience due to the sexual nature of their victimisation; therefore, my gender played an important role in the women being comfortable disclosing their experiences.

Validity is also demonstrated through the adequacy of interpretation of participants' experiences. This includes giving participants an active voice within the research, and therefore understanding reality from the perspective of the participants (Dallimore, 2000). Since participants had more knowledge of their experiences than the researcher, their

explanations of events were regarded as ‘truth’ and presented through the use of quotes in order to limit the researcher’s interpretations of events from the researcher’s perspective (Rose, 2001). The role that I played with regard to interpretation was to fill the gaps in relation to participants’ potential lack of awareness of patriarchal systems which impact upon their experiences; thus, it was my job to connect the victims’ experiences with these systems of power (Rose, 2001). Therefore, the women’s experiences and stories are represented in the way that the participants saw them; my interpretation of their experiences was limited to linking these experiences to gender inequality and power relations that I was able to identify due to my specialist knowledge in the field.

Whilst more traditional forms of validity are critiqued by feminist researchers, the interviews with activists and criminal justice staff alongside victims lent themselves to validity through triangulation sampling. Although the victims’ voices are the most fundamental form of validity for this research, the fact that this triangulation approach also constitutes a form of validity cannot be discounted. Whilst the research was solely based on one method (interviews), data collection from three sources (activists, victims, and police officers) meant that findings were not collected from a single source. Therefore, the key themes were drawn from several different perspectives. adding validity to the research (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) For example, the activists’ specialist knowledge in this area from working with thousands of victims meant that they were able to describe general, or the most common, experiences faced by female victims, which directly correlated with the victim participants’ experiences. Therefore, the activist interviews did provide validation for the findings in the victim interviews and vice versa.

Furthermore, using activist, victim, and criminal justice staff interviews made it possible to examine contradictory themes running throughout the different interview categories with regards to the impact of IBSA on victims and their treatment in the criminal justice system. For example, whilst the activist interviews generally correlated with the victim interviews in relation to the impact on victims, many of the victims I interviewed did not identify self-blame as a key impact of victimisation, whilst the activists identified this as an important consequence of IBSA. The difference here could be accounted for by the fact that activists tended to be in contact with the victims when they had first found their images, and feelings of self-blame had lessened by the time the interviews took place. Additionally, police officer perceptions with regards to whether policing responses to victims were effective, and potential reasons why policing responses might be inadequate,

significantly differed from the victims' perceptions of the policing experience. Police officers' perceptions of legislative issues were also much less informed than the perceptions of activists, with some police officers not being able to identify any issues within the legislation whilst all the activists felt that inadequate legislation was having a direct impact on women's experiences within the criminal justice system. This was vital because discussing discrepant information that counteracts themes adds to the credibility of the findings "because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018:201). Consequently, the different interview populations were able to provide an overview of collective experiences for analysis (Bloor, 1997).

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the British Society of Criminology's (2015) code of ethics, this research aims to advance criminological knowledge by providing an insight into a progressive societal issue that is fundamentally linked to violence against women. The lack of research into the impacts of IBSA and victims' experiences and perceptions of policing and criminal justice responses mean that this research provides the criminological field with new knowledge of how technological advancements are impacting upon women's victimisation, how the nature of the online environment alters the impact, and policing responses towards women compared to offline forms of victimisation. Conducting the research in a way which aimed to allow victims to tell their own stories and use their own words to represent their experience also contributed to ensuring that the women's experiences and perceptions were not misrepresented (British Society of Criminology, 2015).

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Liverpool John Moores University before any empirical research was conducted (see Appendix K). This addressed many of the key concerns during the data collection process, including the selection criteria for participants. Individuals below the age of 18 were excluded from the sample. Although instances of IBSA have occurred where victims were under the age of 18 (Halliday, 2015), the uploading of these images is legally categorised as child sexual exploitation; therefore, these cases were excluded from the study due to these instances being dealt with under different legislation. There would also be a need for such participants to have additional safeguarding procedures put in place due to their age; therefore, it was more suitable to focus on victims over the age of 18. Those victims that did take part were

signposted to relevant support services after the interviews; these were detailed on the participant information sheets (see Appendix L).

Many of those interviewed could be considered a vulnerable group and therefore might be more open than others to coercion, exploitation, and harm; consequently, informed consent was fundamentally important in the research process. Therefore, I explained the aims of the research, which university I belonged to, and how the research findings would be disseminated (British Society of Criminology, 2015). Participants were also given an overview of the topics they might be asked, the possibility of being directly quoted (Liverpool John Moores University, 2014), and their right to refuse to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with (Gray, 2018). This was followed by a discussion of the harms that might result from taking part in the research, including raised levels of anxiety and emotional stress due to providing accounts of distressing experiences. Participants were also asked whether they were comfortable with interviews being digitally recorded and were informed that any digital recordings would not be used by anyone other than myself (British Society of Criminology, 2015). This was followed by an explanation of how the data would be stored to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Liverpool John Moores University, 2014). Participants were also informed of how long the interview was likely to be, that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, even if the interview had already taken place (Economic and Social Research Council, 2018). This information was given to participants both verbally and in written form (see Appendix L) before they signed consent forms (see Appendix M). Gatekeepers were also fully informed of the research purposes and their roles within the research before they signed gatekeeper consent forms. For those victims who were interviewed by telephone, if they agreed to take part, the consent forms were signed on their behalf by the researcher after reading the relevant criteria on the information sheet and consent form.

Gaining informed consent was not just for the avoidance of harm but for the positive impact that informed consent can have: participants are more likely to have confidence in the research if they understand its true purpose, and therefore, may be more open and honest with their responses (Gray, 2018). The positive influence of informed consent was evident when informing the participants of the purpose of the research; some of the women took part because they wanted to help make a difference in addressing issues related to IBSA. One victim stated:

Yes, I'd like to take part as I feel it's important. Thank you (Victim Two).

With regards to the face-to-face interviews, some victims were asked to attend the university (at a time convenient for them), where a private room was booked to ensure confidentiality and the protection of the victims' identities. Two women were interviewed at a time of their choosing at the organisation which they were familiar and comfortable with. Interviews with activists and police officers were conducted at a time and place of their choosing. Giving participants the choice of time and place was important because whilst researchers must always avoid the most extreme forms of mental and physical harm, it is also important to avoid harm which may be considered more trivial; for example by scheduling interviews at a time and place which causes the least disruption to participants (Gray, 2018). Telephone interviews were conducted in a private room at the Revenge Porn Helpline to ensure confidentiality. In these instances, victims were informed that the research was independent of the helpline and that their interviews would not be relayed back to the helpline in a way that would specifically identify them. Furthermore, with the Revenge Porn Helpline often dealing with victims in a state of panic, only victims whom the staff felt were able to think rationally about participation were invited to take part in an interview. Allowing the Helpline to have this control not only prevented potential harm to participants but also ethically prevented interrupting the flow of activities. Therefore, it minimised the disruption the researcher caused to the organisation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Anonymity was something that participants clearly highlighted concerns about; therefore, this was discussed in depth before the start of each interview. This was particularly important for the victim participants who had already had their confidentiality and anonymity broken through IBSA. The victims themselves emphasised the importance of this:

The anonymity is important to me cos I haven't really told any of my family so I'm kind of dealing with this on my own (Victim Nine).

It's just obviously there's still a site that's got some of my pictures up you see and I'm going through a solicitor's and stuff to get those removed, the company is being complete arseholes basically. That's the only thing bit worried about [taking part in the research] because one of the sites does still have some of my pictures up (Victim Two).

Therefore, anonymity of participants was maintained throughout the research process. This included ensuring that participants' names were not used and that victims could not be identified through their stories (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Therefore, information

which could result in readers locating victims, or their images, was excluded from the findings. This included anonymising participant names, where they lived or places of work, and also where their images were disseminated online. Perpetrators were also anonymised in order to assure that the victim's identity could not be revealed through identification of the perpetrator. However, Creswell and Creswell (2018) have highlighted that some participants do not want to remain anonymous. This was something which occurred with one participant in particular; Folami Prehaye explicitly stated that she did not want anonymity (see Appendix A), and given her current determination to publicly speak about her experiences, it would have been insensitive to deny her request. Waiving anonymity in these circumstances allowed the participants to "retain ownership of their voice and exert their independence in making decisions" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, it is also important to give credit and ownership to those advisers who want it (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The organisations who aided the study also play an active campaigning role; therefore, they were also given the *option* of whether they would like full confidentiality and anonymity. Gatekeeper One and the Revenge Porn Helpline chose to waive their anonymity after reading the gatekeeper information sheet and signing the gatekeeper consent form (see Appendix). However, for Gatekeeper One, there were some methodological and ethical issues which arose as a result of their role in their research. Subsequently, the organisation was subject to critique within this thesis. Therefore, in order to ensure that reputational harm to the organisation, and subsequent research they may be involved in, is minimised, this organisation has been anonymised (British Society of Criminology, 2015).

All data containing personal information (in electronic and hard copy form) was stored in accordance with Liverpool John Moores University's (2014) ethical guidelines. Electronic data was stored on LJMU password-protected computers, and paper records were stored in a locked filing cabinet within a locked room within the university. Three years after PhD completion, any identifiable material will be destroyed and only anonymised transcripts will be used for future research (Liverpool John Moores University, 2014).

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to uncover the everyday life experiences of women suffering from IBSA and their experiences and perceptions of policing and legislation. In order to

do this, it was imperative that women's experiences and voices underpinned the research findings. This meant that, ontologically, reality was seen as something which was constructed by society and by the victims in order to account for the patriarchal structures that were impacting on victimisation and victims' experiences of it. In accordance with this, feminist epistemologies highlight the importance and rationale of why women's experiences constitute a vital form of knowledge and contribute to understanding the shared experiences of women. In order to uncover women's experiences in an under-researched field, a qualitative and exploratory research design was chosen in order to produce data which carried enough depth to answer the research question. Whilst it was relatively simple to recruit activists and police officers through purposive and snowball sampling, the sexual nature of IBSA meant that sampling became a complex task, with victims and gatekeepers generally being reluctant to engage with the research. Therefore, recruitment methods based on convenience sampling and the utilisation of victims' trusted support networks were used to ensure data collection. Whilst these sampling methods do not produce the most generalisable findings, feminist research often has to rely on these methods because they appeal to potential participants who are hard to reach due to their vulnerability. For those women who did come forward, it was important (for data collection and for the participants) that they could tell their story in the way they wanted and felt most comfortable about. Semi-structured interviews provided the most effective platform for this by allowing the flexibility needed to uncover the women's experiences. Whilst the activist and police interviews did contribute to the validity of the research, the most important factors which worked to maintain validity were my own positioning in the research process and ensuring that victims' experiences were presented in their own words with limited interpretation from the researcher. The deductive and thematic approach to data analysis meant that expected and unexpected experiences were able to be identified and these could be compared across interviews. The data findings are separated into two chapters: the first details the nature and impact of IBSA on women, and the second details the women's experiences within the criminal justice system.

Chapter 5

The Nature and Impact of Image Based Sexual Abuse

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings on the nature and impact of image based sexual abuse (IBSA) on women. In doing so, it aims to provide a contextual and detailed understanding of how this type of victimisation impacts upon women's everyday lives. By examining how and why women become subject to IBSA, it allows for an understanding of how and why the nature of IBSA can have such devastating consequences for women. The chapter also highlights how IBSA is linked to other forms of sexual violence, suggesting that the technological nature of IBSA serves to exacerbate the impact of sexual violence.

The chapter begins by highlighting why the term 'revenge pornography' is not only unfitting, but contributes to problematic and stereotypical assumptions of IBSA and the victims subject to it. This is followed by an examination of the women's cases in relation to how their images were produced and obtained by the perpetrators. This reveals fundamental issues with regards to the blurring of consent. An exploration of how the women's images were distributed also highlights how the impact of victimisation is not just the result of image distribution but the disclosure of victims' personal information, which can significantly increase women's vulnerability to other forms of abuse, including sexual harassment and blackmail.

The chapter then moves onto detailing how IBSA impacts upon women's lives, including a wide range of mental, physical, social and employment issues that women face. Whilst the majority of women do adopt coping strategies, the research suggests that some of these coping mechanisms may be contributing to the worsening of their general health. Following this, the chapter discusses the women's attempts at resistance, demonstrating how women are making important strides to retain control over their lives and empower other women. This leads on to a discussion as to whether victims perceive themselves as victims or survivors; in doing so, the findings suggest the need to account for fluidity within these terms rather than considering them as a static dichotomy. Finally, the chapter details victim, activist, and police officer perceptions as to whether IBSA should be recognised as a form of violence against women.

From ‘Revenge Pornography’ to ‘Image Based Sexual Abuse’

Those participants who chose to address the use of the terms ‘revenge’ and ‘pornography’ considered these terms problematic. They were often considered inflammatory, sensationalist, and inaccurate. For one victim in particular, the use of the term ‘revenge’ created inaccurate assumptions.

[What did you do to him?] ... and that’s what people said to me. And I said to people, “what did I have to do wrong?” What would cause somebody to do that, you explain to me. Why would you even ask that stupid question? What could I have possibly done? There is no reason that would give somebody the right to do that. Nothing. That’s why the revenge bit needs to go. It needs to go (Folami Prehaye).

This assumption was also highlighted by activists who argued that revenge was not always the motivation and therefore, the use of the term was misleading:

It’s just very misleading, it’s very inflammatory and sensationalist. It’s not about revenge; it diminishes the impacts I think, it somewhat trivialises what people are going through. It’s inaccurate (Activist Five).

Nope, it’s definitely not always about revenge, so we have the term revenge pornography because it’s neither porn nor revenge (Activist Four).

In relation to the use of the term ‘pornography’, there was a strong consensus that even though the images were sexually explicit, they should be not be considered a form of pornography for two main reasons. Firstly, the context in which these images are produced, and secondly, the negative connotations with which the term pornography is associated.

I took intimate pictures, sexually explicit, yeah, so be it. But they weren’t pornography because pornography is, you’re dressed in a particular way, you look in a particular way, you have a particular pose and you’ve consented to it. I didn’t consent to it. The pictures were taken of me in my George dressing gown, pink polka dots, I’ve still got it, and if I’d known he was gonna do that and it was gonna be called revenge pornography I would of made sure I had the proper outfit on and I looked the part. And I didn’t look the part *[laugh]*. So as far as I’m concerned, it’s not pornography. So that word needs to go (Folami Prehaye).

I don’t like the term pornography ... the person in the image may not consider themselves to be doing anything pornographic. So, I think it’s a much wider concept than the general public’s sort of initial image that springs to mind when they hear the word. And it can be as simple as taking a picture of somebody in like a changing room situation and spreading it ... so I think it’s grossly misleading (Activist Two).

Cos pornography, people think of smut and blame and shadiness and it's not, it's a sexual act, or it's an intimate act, or its content, but that's not the point. Revenge pornography is the response and it's not focusing on the victim, so, it's tricky (Activist Three).

Victims and activists confirmed the need to find appropriate terminology for this type of offence. Folami Prehaye preferred the use of 'image based sexual abuse', stating, "that's what it is. It's sexual abuse based on images". Some activists, however, argued that the inclusion of the term 'sexual' didn't necessarily encompass all of the different situations and image production. Therefore, they preferred the term 'non-consensual image sharing'.

Sending Sexy Pictures: The Blurring of Consensual Boundaries

The interviews indicated that the four most common methods of obtaining images were hacking, consensual sharing, coercion, and hidden cameras. Two of the 17 victims had their images obtained by the perpetrator non-consensually through hacking.

I was with [my ex] from like when I was 16 to when I was 18. Erm ... we split up and like we ended on good terms ... I started seeing my [current partner] ... I'd sent pictures to [my current partner] and he's sent pictures to me and it was just it built a different side to the relationship, it was like fun, and it was something different because I hadn't done it before. A year after that I had a message on an Instagram account [from my ex] saying, "I've seen these pictures of you, I know you from school and I know you're not the type of person to do this," and then sent me like two or three links to different porn sites and then I opened them, and I was there, and I was like, "How has that happened!" Like I didn't even think, like, he obviously was in the account in the past but I didn't think he was still in there but he was getting in through an email address. So, every time I changed my password, he knew about it and then there was a few times when he changed it and it was all like weird things kept happening (Victim Ten).

He went through my phone and sent like a picture with me like, just with a bra on and I didn't notice that he had that picture (Victim Sixteen).

Whilst there were only two cases of images being obtained by hacking within the sample, activists revealed that although hacking may not be the most common way to obtain images, it is not a rare occurrence either. Activist Three stated that "there is a large percentage where they've been hacked. The original [pictures] may have been done consensually." Activist Three also highlighted that a small percentage of victims have their accounts, such as iCloud, hacked by cybercriminals: "either professional[s] or someone that has done it through bots and spams".

Six out of the 14 women interviewed unknowingly had images taken of them; these women did not know the images even existed until they were distributed. Three of these women were subjected to hidden cameras and two of the women had images taken of them by the perpetrator whilst their backs were turned.

[My partner] put his phone in the room and I knew nothing about that. So that was like full-on start-to-finish sex basically (Victim Four).

[The person] I was dating had obviously taken them with a camera in his bedroom and they were me getting dressed, like they were me partially naked and topless, that kind of thing. He also said that he had a video recording as well but he, I've never saw that, he's never sent it to me so I don't know if that's true (Victim Eight).

At some point I was getting changed [at work] from Uni. I was behind the screen but the floor's quite sprung and you can't hear footsteps very well, there's plenty of times that we'll scare each other and just walk in. And I turned around at some point and there was a phone ... I tried to cover up. Didn't know how long [my manager had] been there, I had my phone on with my music on so I was just completely unaware, thought everybody was either sat down or outside at this point and he just sort of went. Cos then I just sort of went like that [*action demonstrated*] to cover up, as far as I know he's got pictures and a video of me getting changed, topless (Victim Thirteen).

I was sleeping [i.e. having sex] with [my partner] from the back so I'm in the front and he's at the back, he's recording from the back (Victim Seven).

The use of hidden cameras and the taking of images without the victim's knowledge during sexual intercourse was something that was also highlighted by four of the six activists. Activist Three stated that these kinds of recordings are "quite common" and Activist Five estimated that around a quarter to a third of victims seeking the organisation's support had not been aware of the images being taken of them.

The remaining nine women consented to sharing their images with a partner or having images taken by a partner. However, in six of these cases, consent was not entirely free. When the women were asked if they consented to sharing, or having their images taken, the initial response from all six women was that they had consented. However, the research suggested that pressure and/or alcohol significantly influenced the women's decisions.

Well I've realised it was big lie now but he told me that he had cancer the whole time. I think that was probably partly why I ended up doing [the sexual act over Skype], you know it wasn't me who, I never offered to do it, it was something that's being constantly asked of me (Victim One).

It had been over long period of time, something that he wanted to do. And also, I wouldn't have done that had I not had so much to drink, bearing in mind he had only had a couple of bottles of beer. So, you know, he definitely knew what he was doing and if he plied me with enough drink that I would, the hope that I would let him (Victim Twelve).

Victim Eleven was 14 when her images were shared at school, as well as other schools in the surrounding area. Her case highlights how younger generations are not only susceptible to pressure from partners but also face pressure to conform. She perceived the sharing of sexual images with partners as 'normal' because it had become common practice amongst her peers: "I knew full well, so many other girls done it". Therefore, her experiences indicate how the use of technology within society means that in addition to pressure from partners, there can also be pressure to conform with peer behaviour.

He was like asking like ... well he didn't even have to ... like he did ask a lot of times and was like, "when are you going to come see me" ... asking me to do things that I wasn't ready to do because I was younger ... *but at the same time I thought it was normal*. So, after a few times of him asking, like I thought, "oh, OK, it must be what you do if this boy is so set on, like making me do it."

Activists also identified pressure being applied to victims as one of the most common ways in which images are obtained. Five of the activists interviewed confirmed that they had dealt with multiple cases where images had been obtained through pressure or coercion in both domestic abuse and non-domestic abuse situations.

So, sometimes it's just a bit of pressure from a partner or a bit of coercion ... and of course clearly there are others that are domestic abuse situations when some of this content is made (Activist Four).

Yeah. There's been coercion. Yeah, you do hear that they were very reluctant. You do hear a lot of, "he persuaded me to do them", or "I didn't really want to" (Activist Five).

Overall, with a total of only four women in the sample stating that they freely consented to have images taken or sharing images with a partner, the majority of women ($n = 13$) did not freely consent to having their images taken or obtained by the perpetrator. The research also suggested that those victims who did agree to taking or sharing images, but were particularly reluctant, were more likely to have had conversations about the privacy of the images with the other party.

Erm, I said, well I'd been talking to this person a long, long time, I'd say maybe a year before I even considered going on the Skype call. And so, I kind of felt like I kinda trusted him. He said, "no I would never ever record it; I wouldn't record it I just wanna see you on the Skype call." And then, so I had expressed these kinds of concerns before it happened and I was assured, "no, no that would never happen" (Victim One).

Erm ... it was agreed that they wouldn't be posted online explicitly because he'd mentioned that he would like to do that at some point and I just said flat out "No". But there was an explicit agreement that they wouldn't be passed on (Victim Five).

Yes. We had completely 100 per cent had that discussion because I said, "you know I'm uncomfortable, I'm worried about this because I teach, it would be awful if they ever got up there." And we talked about it and I was absolutely obviously reassured 100 per cent (Victim Six).

Yeah. It was years ago but I just said, "do not show anyone, like please." And he was like, "no I won't." And even the next day I was like, "have you deleted it now?" and he said "yeah" (Victim Eleven).

Making the Private Public: Types of Image Distribution

Two of the women in the sample did not have their images disclosed because they were subject to blackmail; images were used to make attempts to extort money or more sexually explicit images from the women. Whilst the women did not comply with these requests, they were not aware of any further image distribution; therefore, their cases did not apply to interview questions surrounding image distribution. For those women who did have images shared, the number of images distributed of the women interviewed ranged between 1 and 50. This included a mix of sexual images and videos as well as non-sexual images. The interviews highlighted five forms of image distribution: direct messaging platforms, for example WhatsApp (including group communication), Facebook messenger, and email ($n = 8$); social media ($n = 7$); pornography websites ($n = 6$); dating websites ($n = 1$); and IBSA websites ($n = 1$). Twelve of the 15 women found that their images had been distributed multiple times and/or through the use of multiple dissemination methods. For example, those who had their images uploaded onto pornography websites found that these images existed on multiple pornography websites. Those women who had their images shared via direct messaging found that their images had been sent to multiple people (friends, work colleagues, strangers) and/or that they had also appeared on social media.

Four of the women (including the two women who were subject to blackmail) had their own images electronically sent to themselves, instantly causing them to become fearful. This was seen by the women as an attempt to elicit responses from victims.

Around Christmas time I just thought I needed to tell him straight like, don't contact me again. So, when I did that, that's when things turned nasty and I never sent him any naked pictures, but this was over Christmas when I said to him, "don't contact me again I don't want nothing to do with you," he started saying to me that he'd been taking pictures of me in his room, without my knowledge. And then he started sending me all these pictures that he's obviously taken with a camera in his bedroom and they were me getting dressed (Victim Eight).

So about three months ago I blocked him and everything, after that three months he text me with another number, like a new number, and he sent my picture (Victim Sixteen).

Four of the women whose images were shared via Facebook or dating websites had profiles created in their own names.

I found the images were shared because people were contacting me via Facebook at first. So, friends, cos he, basically set up the Facebook and invited people who were on my friends list and then people in work and then just randoms onto that Facebook page. And then that's how I knew because people were saying, "why you inviting me for, we're already friends," and then that's how it started (Folami Prehaye).

You know, like it might be a prostitute that wants to make money they put "sex for money", that's what they tried to make my Instagram about basically. That's why I was getting harassment from girls laughing at me and threatening me (Victim Seven).

For Victim Seven in particular, the Instagram account led to her receiving a high volume of phone calls from strangers who were under impression that she was operating as a sex worker. This also left her being ridiculed by others within her community and receiving threats of violence. Victim Eight had a somewhat similar experience: a profile of her was set up on a dating website and therefore, other men were under the impression that she had set up the profile. She described her suspicions that the perpetrator was engaging with men on the website using her identity.

I think he was actually messaging men personally from this profile cos I was getting messages from men saying, "oh you just asked me to call you," and "you just asked me to message you." So, I'm sure he was actively using the profile and contacting men to call me as well ... I literally, within that night I had about three hundred WhatsApp messages from different men. And my phone was constantly ringing (Victim Eight).

In these instances, whilst those who were contacting these women had no knowledge of their victimisation, it is clear that the perpetrators made a conscious effort to ensure that

these women's lives were significantly disrupted and thus played a fundamental role in knowingly facilitating harassment. Victims and activists highlighted that an increase in the distribution of these images and use of IBSA as a form of abuse has been significantly influenced by the technological developments and the anonymity that the online world offers.

There is a lot more content nowadays, when I say nowadays, I don't mean compared to the last year, but now from 10 years ago, you know, smart technology has enabled us to take a lot more photos (Activist Four).

Anyone can just set up a profile [on the dating site], you don't need to be verified, you don't need to give an email address or sign in with Facebook or anything like that. So, I don't think [the police are] gonna be able to prove it was him that put the pictures up (Victim Eight).

[Perpetrators are] not even saying their name ... people hide behind websites; they can say what they like cos you can't trace them back (Folami Prehaye).

Activists highlight how this leaves victims feeling frustrated because they are often almost certain that they know who uploaded their images but are left doubting themselves because they have no physical evidence.

The anonymity of the perpetrators. So how easy it is for them to create a fake account or a WhatsApp group without naming themselves, actually it's a bit harder to do that, but you know. Doing something, creating an account on myex.com which is in a different jurisdiction and all of that kind of stuff, it's hard to trace sometimes. And I've had so many, I've seen too many cases where they're like, "I think it's this person who's done it, but someone else had access to my phone or I know that my iCloud was hacked anyway so it could be from this person or this person." So, that kind of blanket behind which they can hide, which is creating fake email account, really makes it easier for them to do it (Activist One).

It's Not Just the Images: The Sharing of Victims' Personal Information

The disclosure of victims' personal details alongside image distribution is a common feature of IBSA (Citron and Franks, 2014; Cyber Civil Rights, 2014). All of the women interviewed could be identified by their face in all or some of the images. In some cases, there was a conscious effort by the perpetrator to include non-sexual images which were more likely to depict the women's faces, as a means of identification.

There was 19 images on that first profile of which 12 of them were explicit, the rest were taken from my Facebook pages which was kind of another adding insult to injury because that was his way of saying yes, this is who you think this is, this was another reinforcement that, yes, it does look like her doesn't it because that is who this is (Victim Twelve).

It was in my name, so what he done, he's used two of the naked pictures and then he'd also copied some pictures from my Facebook profile so altogether there was about five pictures. Three that he copied from my Facebook and then two naked pictures that he's taken from his room (Victim Eight).

No. But obviously I was identifiable, you could see my face and everything, so people knew it was me (Victim Three).

Yeah, I mean they were nude pictures of me, not anything graphic but nude pictures that had my face in it so I was identifiable in them, it was me (Victim Six).

Some of the women also had additional personal information posted with the images, including their names ($n = 11$), friends and/or family tagged or befriended on social media to ensure that those close to the victim would see the image ($n = 4$), email addresses ($n = 2$), home addresses ($n = 2$), telephone numbers ($n = 2$), links to Facebook profiles ($n = 2$), and work locations ($n = 1$). As a result of this type of identification, seven women were contacted by strangers through online communication and one woman had a stranger attend her home. For those who were contacted online, contact ranged from an unusually high volume of Facebook friend requests to direct messages through social media, Skype, phone and/or email.

I was really upset about the male requests, yeah. It just added to the kind of invasion and the feeling of being dirty because I thought well, these men just think I'm just, you know ... So, these men who are trying to friend request me on Facebook they don't know me so they must of thought, or I had this in my head, that I was just a piece of meat, she'll go with anybody, look what's online (Victim Twelve).

At the time I didn't, I thought it was just random people adding, you know, people on Facebook. But then afterwards, it was a lot, probably over a hundred over a course of six to eight months, but afterwards I just kind of realised how far it had gone and that wasn't nice (Victim Five).

I just started getting loads of WhatsApp messages, like one after the other. I literally, within that night I had about three hundred WhatsApp messages from different men. And my phone was constantly. [The messages] was just like "oh hi sexy" and like "nice pics" and things like that. And, some men got sending me like nude pictures of themselves, others were asking to meet up like all of that kind of nature (Victim Eight).

Someone [messed me on Facebook], “oh here’s the picture you asked me for” and sent me a picture of their dick. Honestly, I think they’re trying to see if they’re gonna get a reply. I think they’re probably going to get a massive kick out of someone actually replying to them. So that’s why with the dick pics I never replied (Victim Fourteen).

Activists also identified a link between victims being publicly identified and being contacted by strangers. They argued that this left victims more vulnerable to messages of solicitation and blackmail.

They pretend to be good a Samaritan and said, “I don’t know whether you know this but someone’s published some really awful private images of you.” And [the victim says], “oh my god thank you so much.” And then there was kind of a grooming element to it and that was pretty shocking. But yeah actually, all of the cases that I’ve seen the third-party contact has been through Facebook. The other stuff that I’ve seen is where, so for example, I’ve seen where myex.com they’ve published the images and the Facebook account number and name. So, then we’ve had victims who have received blackmail or requests for further images to their Facebook because, and that’s unconnected parties (Activist One).

Yeah that’s pretty common for strangers to start making comments, to make contact, yeah. It’s quite often on Facebook messages and other private message. “Oh, I just thought you would like to see this image of you, if you phone me, I’ll send you link.” The person phones them and then of course they have access to everybody, to that victim’s friend list and they go, you know, “give me this money or I’m going to share this image with all of your friends” (Activist Two).

So, either if someone puts up “let’s date” then it’s people that would like to date them, sometimes it’s they think they’re prostitutes, sometimes it’s the people just want more images ... And other things it can literally be as simple as, “do you want to fuck me I’ve seen your tits online” or “send me more”. And then you’re just like, “huh? Who are you?” (Activist Three).

A Pattern of Abuse: Linking Domestic and Image Based Sexual Abuse

Nine of the 17 women interviewed had suffered abuse from the perpetrator prior to having their images shared. These women’s relationships with their perpetrators corresponded with legal definitions of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (2017) as “any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members”, including “but not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse”. These women suffered from a variety of abuse, including physical violence, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, coercion, and controlling behaviour. The most common type of abuse suffered by victims was controlling

behaviour. Similar to Kelly's (1988) approach to sexual violence, the Crown Prosecution Service (2017) argue that domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident, but is often interlinked with multiple forms of abuse. For these women, being subject to IBSA meant that domestic abuse was interlinked with sexual abuse.

He had hit me once which was about a year before that happened. That would be New Year's Eve. I can't even remember what the argument was about but he was quite drunk and he grabbed me by my neck against the door and then sort of dropped me, you know, and was like, "oh my god I didn't really mean to do that." But that was the first thing that happened and then the next day, when we were packing our stuff up to leave the hotel, he slapped me across my face ... I didn't go out for like two years, I didn't see my friends or anything because if I'd go out, he's like, "oh you're talking to other lads" and you know, I have a lot of lad friends and he didn't understand that. At the time I didn't think that was like abuse, it was more him looking out for kind of thing (Victim Four).

In sort of November time his behaviour was becoming a bit weird, I kind of felt like he was becoming a bit obsessive, he was trying to sort of control me and things like that. So, I ended the relationship with him ... It was just things like, I've always been quite independent I just felt like he wanted to go everywhere I wanted to go, he didn't trust me to go places by myself. And we'd only been together for a short time and he kept asking me to move in with him and he lived quite a long distance away from him so for me to move in with him would be quite a big thing. So, I kept saying to him, "give me time," but he was like pressuring me, it's like he wasn't taking my word for an answer. I felt like he was tryna tell me what to do. And then, he started buying me like clothes, telling me what to wear and he was telling me my clothes didn't look nice and he was just buying clothes for me that I didn't like, or they didn't particularly fit me. I just found that kind of behaviour a bit controlling and a bit weird (Victim Eight).

I was with a partner for two years, almost two years. I mean it was a very manipulative relationship that I was in. Looking back, I definitely was manipulated into what I was wearing, how to wear my hair, how I would do my make-up, you know, which family members I would see, who would come to visit. Basically, it was abuse of the kind that you don't really see it happening to you because it's all done subtly over a length of time ... Not long into the relationship and he would say, "you don't need to put make-up on." Now, anyone who knows me knows I don't go out the house without make-up on, I never have done ... I did always still wear make-up and I probably toned it down quite a bit and I would do very natural, just some mascara and some foundation. Then I can remember one night that I'm out with family and my sisters commented, both of them, "oh my goodness, were you in a rush tonight? Why have you not got make-up on?" I had so little make-up on that they were sure I had none on at all. And I said, "no, no I've got make-up on and I like this" and my sisters all said, "this isn't you; you would never come out without your make-up on," and they, early on noticed this was something that wasn't right. I would even, you know, start wearing different clothes, my hair would always be tied up off my face because that's the way he liked it. I started growing my fringe out because he said he didn't like my fringe (Victim Twelve).

Some victims argued that the use of IBSA was an attempt to maintain power and control when they chose to end the relationship.

They put it up there to cause you stress, to control you and to cause harm and stress ... [the perpetrator] did it cos I think it gave him some sort of power because I basically didn't want to be with him and he thought, well, she won't be with me so the first thing I'm going to do is do this to her (Folami Prehaye).

I think because, because we split up in October and he waited until the December to upload them onto this site I think that's when he's realised, "she'd not taking me back" and I think he's done it in anger. Without actually speaking to him myself I don't know why he's done it, but to me it's as if it was his way of saying, "I can't have you so nobody else will want you if they see this on a porn site" (Victim Twelve).

The interviews also showed that all of the women who were in abusive relationships were subject to harassment from the perpetrator, either before or after image dissemination.

Yeah. The whole time we've been apart he's messaged me, if it wasn't a daily basis it was definitely every other day, it was constant. It was constant in that he actually wore me down to the point where we'd been apart for all the time, where I'd actually started to feel that no one wants me, no one asked me out on a date, I didn't have any dates, didn't have any attention really. I started to think do you know that I don't have anybody else I've just got him. But you see this was part of the manipulation as well because he started to make me feel like I only had him and that no one loved me as much as he did and "no one else will love you like I do". He started to sort of wear me down to the point where I thought do you know what, maybe I am better off with him. I said to him you know what, "I'll be your friend but I can't be anything else because my son would never accept it," and that's what I kept going back to ... He basically hounded me and texted and harassed me with messages every day, sometimes 20 messages a day, begging for me to take him back (Victim Twelve).

I told him the last week in November, it's finished, that's the last time I saw him, I went and met him, you know the last week of November and said it's over. But he kept still like messaging me, like constantly throughout the month of December. I mean, I dunno if I'd really push it as harassment, probably towards the end. Cos, towards the end I made it quite clear that I wasn't interested in meeting him or anything again but he was still messaging me asking me to go meeting him and that so yeah (Victim Eight).

The women also identified the use of IBSA as way of getting the women's attention when they had ceased all contact with the perpetrator after the relationship had terminated.

I think, cos this kind of, this started when I originally blocked him from my phone and social media, it was the following day that he started contacting my work colleagues so I just feel he done this because he knew there was no way he would be able to get in contact with me, that I'd totally put a line under it. So now I just feel like he's just trying to get at me and this is the only way that he can do it (Victim Eight).

Like I said he did try and get me to go see him so I don't know if that was him tryna get my attention or whatever (Victim Five).

The links between domestic abuse and IBSA were confirmed by the activists and criminal justice staff. They argued that IBSA is a modern form of domestic abuse and that IBSA is often part of a series of abuse which has already been suffered by victims. One activist also highlighted that some women do not recognise themselves as being in abusive, coercive, or controlling relationships until they become subject to IBSA.

It's to do with having that control over that person, it's another form of abuse isn't it. So, you know, not only am I weakening you by physically and sexually abusing you it's keeping that person in that victim state so it's a control mechanism, they're controlling them by doing it. So, it's definitely linked ... Because the people who are being abused, they're sitting in the relationship and they can't get out of it, [the perpetrator] will then use those pictures against them to either stay in a relationship, "don't go because I've got these pictures" (Folami Prehaye).

And it's effectively, I view it as another limb of domestic violence. So yes, it used to be at one time you just knocked your wife about but now with the rise of social media and the fact that it's here in our lives there are other ways of getting revenge ... Yeah one time, all you could do was perhaps be physical and yes there was the psychological element and then I suppose you could post pictures through people's doors but now you don't, you can just, you don't have to leave your house you just pick up your phone and it's done, it's out there (CPS Participant).

I think it is quite common for victims of domestic abuse not to realise exactly what's going on and that's the insidious nature of coercive control. But something like this is very clear, I think it's much clearer sometimes to people that this is wrong ... possibly because the image is a concrete thing, even though it's digital, it's still a real thing, being shared has real-life implications. But sometimes victims of domestic abuse don't actually realise that they're being abused and it only comes out in a bit of circumstantial information in the conversation and you think, hang on a minute, have you spoken to domestic abuse support, have you spoken to stalking helpline? Actually, there's a pattern of behaviour and you need to look at the whole pattern (Activist Five).

Although there are strong links between IBSA and domestic abuse, not all participants had been in abusive relationships; therefore, it would be unfounded to assume that domestic abuse is an underlying factor in all cases. However, those women who had not suffered abuse prior to image dissemination stated that they had no direct contact from the perpetrator after their relationship terminated. These women also provided a wide range of possible motivations, including anger and upset that a relationship has broken down (revenge), attempts to ruin the women's reputations, excitement, status gain, and mental health issues. In the two instances where images were not distributed because the women were subject to blackmail, one motivation was monetary and the other was an attempt to obtain more images. The activists also recognised that IBSA is not always linked to domestic abuse.

I would say it certainly fits within [the domestic abuse] category. But there are a comparable number of people who have flipped at the end of a relationship and have been dumped and think that this is an appropriate measure (Activist One).

The Impact of Image Based Sexual Abuse: An Activist Overview

When examining the impact of IBSA on victims, there were a number of key themes that were identified in the findings. These included changes to the victims' mental, physical, and social wellbeing. When the activists were asked what the impact of IBSA was on victims, they described a broad range of mental, physical, and social consequences.

Anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, attempted suicide, agoraphobia, self-blame, lack of self-worth, lack of self-confidence, shame, so much guilt, blame on themselves ... paranoia of people, everyone's looking at them. So, some, don't eat, they drink [alcohol], they're medicated, they change their body, they self-harm. And then, the going out, like some move house ... they change their [phone] lines, they change their jobs, they get fired, they won't go out, they get spat at in the street or get shouted at in the street. Socially, like they can get cut off from friends, they can either have friends respond very badly and blame them, friendships are cut down, family are cut down. Agoraphobia and isolation. There're some women that are just fearful to go out in the street afterwards because they're just scared. Socially that's a massive thing (Activist Three).

Agoraphobia, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, that does come up. The whole raft really of negative mental health problems can come from this. And I think low self-esteem, body confidence (Activist Five).

However, three of the activists identified self-blame as one of the most common impacts. Given the nature of IBSA this was something which was expected to be found amongst the victims interviewed. Yet, whilst the victims who were interviewed often used the words 'stupid' and 'naive' for allowing the images to be taken or shared with a partner, the women generally felt that they were not at fault for their victimisation. It is likely that because the majority of the women were recruited from the Revenge Porn Helpline, and had therefore accessed a support service, they had already begun to overcome this issue before taking part in the research. Therefore, it is likely that the levels of self-blame amongst victims are significantly higher than the victim interviews would suggest. Nonetheless, activist statements very much reflected the victims' stories.

The public and abusive nature of IBSA meant that the majority of the victims suffered from a variety of mental health issues. Victims generally felt that the sharing of their images had been a violation. On some occasions the women associated IBSA with rape and/or physical violence.

It made me feel violated, it actually made me feel raped almost (Victim Two).

I was looking at articles about this subject online and there was something that was written about, someone saying it was like being raped online, and

that statement had really like kept in my head cos ... it really is how it feel (Victim Nine).

So, I felt helpless, I felt abused like, that's not the best word but I felt as if I'd physically been abused even though obviously, I hadn't been physically abused but it's just that sick feeling that I had. It was as if somebody had actually punched me in the stomach ... it's just, it's complete devastation (Victim Eleven).

Image Based Sexual Abuse and Mental Health

The emotional impacts of IBSA resulted in at least one mental health issue for 16 of the 17 women. These included high levels of stress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, insecurity, paranoia, obsessive behaviour, and suicidal thoughts. The most common impact was depression. At least 15 of the women interviewed had depression as a result of IBSA. This depression often led to further issues for the women, including an inability to carry out simple everyday tasks.

So, it made me really depressed and I started neglecting myself a lot. I wouldn't do my hair, I wouldn't wear make-up, I would just dress ... rough, all the time. And I wasn't eating properly and I wasn't cooking properly. I just couldn't be bothered you know. So, I'd say it affected me quite a bit (Folami Prehaye).

Yeah, I was on antidepressants anyway so it definitely like, my anxiety has gone through the roof really (Victim One).

I've actually, I have to go to counselling once a week now, I got quite depressed from it (Victim Two).

There was just no getting away from it. It definitely made me feel more depressed, more anxious about coming out the house and speaking to people (Victim Four).

Depression was often combined with victims having low self-esteem, a loss of confidence, and general feelings of worthlessness.

Before this happened, I always stuck up for myself. But then that happened and I'm just a completely different person. I'd just didn't say nothing to anyone and I didn't know why. Cos I was like, it just completely changed me. Cos I was always quite mouthy and confident and then that happened and I was just like an actual shadow of me old self (Victim Eleven).

Erm ... to be honest I felt destroyed and upset and just, I wasn't worth anything (Victim Seven).

Paranoia was also a common side effect. Victims feared that those in their local community had seen the images and would instantly recognise them. Consequently, there was an assumption that people were looking at them and/or talking about them. This was

heightened when women worked in occupations that required face-to-face contact with the general public; for example, customer service roles.

You know, I'd go to the shop and I'll have a hoodie on and if anybody looked at me, I'd jump, and I'm thinking, "everybody's looking at me," cos you do. Cos I'm thinking, they know it's me, everybody knows it's me, everybody's seen the pictures and even if that's not the case (Folami Prehaye).

For ages if people looked at me funny, I was like, oh do they know me cos they've seen me through a friend of a friend on Facebook or do they know me because they've seen, they've been on the website (Victim Fourteen).

I have been having quite regular nightmares, I'm on propranolol, I'm having to see like a CBT-type person. I am paranoid and I know I shouldn't be but it's just how I am (Victim Five).

I just felt depressed and I'm never happy. So, it's a thing where I'm very paranoid, people watch me like, I can tell when somebody looks at me and dislikes me, like it's very disgusting you know, it's very sad (Victim Seven).

Because I work in retail I don't like people being close to me, I don't like people looking at me, sometimes I get paranoid because I feel like someone's looked at me and thought, "I've seen her online," and think it's like, and I've got like a bit of a hate I guess towards men (Victim Ten).

The ease of uploading images online also caused increased levels of trauma. For the two women who were subject to blackmail, the uncertainty of whether images would be uploaded online caused constant fear and anxiety. Even for those women who had managed to remove their images from online platforms, they consistently feared the images might resurface in the future.

It still could have an impact on my career and my life because nothing is resolved and he could still keep continuing to post pictures or send pictures. I just don't know what he's capable of. Those images whether I like it or not are just always gonna be somewhere (Victim Nine).

If he gets drunk how do I know he's just not gonna go click, there it is [share images]. It's just hanging over me like, I don't know if it's going to happen at some point, I don't know whether he's deleted it and moved on with his life. There's still a possibility that he could have a really bad day at some point and post it (Victim Thirteen).

I think depending on the situation obviously, but it doesn't necessarily ever end. You never know if they haven't been published yet, if they will, or if they're gonna be republished, or once they're there you can't get rid of them. And I do, I have questioned whether or not I'll go through with the teacher training, whether it's worth me doing it, whether or not this does all come out whether it would even be possible for me to teach. It's really hard. And also, for my daughter, luckily, she's young enough at the moment just about still ... I'd just, even the thought of it impacting her and people seeing it and saying stuff to her. That's a massive issue for me. It's one thing it affecting me but it's something else when something hurts my daughter (Victim Six).

I just wanna highlight the point that although this happened two months ago, it's still like a constant worry for me that this could happen again or, you know, sometime in the future this could happen. Even on social media, like when I get messages and stuff, when it pops up on my phone, I have this worry at the back of my mind: "oh is it something to do with this." I just feel like there's not closure, there hasn't been any closure to it and I don't think that there will ever be any closure to it ... It's quite long term. Cos even though the images might be removed, I wouldn't say I was just totally better or forgot about it. It's still ongoing, I don't know who else these images have been sent to, other people could have them, he could do it again. So, it's a long-term kind of effect for you (Victim Eight).

For four of the women, the mental health issues became so severe that their victimisation caused them to have suicidal thoughts.

But that really affected me and I did feel suicidal twice because [the perpetrator] did say [he was] going to embarrass me with the revenge porn account to my manager. And that will be real embarrassing so that's why I've been going through depression at the moment because, you know, I couldn't do it anymore. I was looking to kill myself. I'm so sorry to say this but I was looking to suicide myself because it was affecting me a lot, I couldn't go through it (Victim Seven).

I was just really keeping to myself. I just didn't know what to do. I just thought, I don't know, I just didn't want to be dealing with it any more so I did have extreme suicidal thoughts. I guess you feel really kinda alone when somebody is making threats towards you and then you know I was embarrassed, and they were threatening to show other people (Victim One).

Yeah. I think I suffered with like mild depression myself for a number of years but this is you know something that comes and goes but this has definitely, you know, triggered it massively. And, you know, I have been suicidal, it was something that I was contemplating (Victim Nine).

Women's Physical Health and Use of Space

The impact on the women's mental health was interrelated with physical impacts. Poor mental health contributed to, or resulted in, poor physical health. This included lack of nutrition, weight loss, lack of general hygiene, lack of sleep, and general ill health.

[I] hid away, I lost weight. And I literally lost weight. And I'm not the biggest person. I must have gone down to a size 10. Cos I wasn't eating, I stopped eating (Folami Prehaye).

I think it's made me physically ill, I've just been constantly sick since this all happened. I can't sleep, I'm not really eating properly, quite a big effect (Victim Five).

I don't know. I think at the moment I'm still in the mindset of this is hanging over me, it's like, I'm going to make a really bad analogy now, it's like a dark cloud and at the minute I'm stuck in that every day because the anxiety makes it hard to sleep and the depression makes it hard to get up and that's where I am at the minute (Victim Thirteen).

The women also became physically restricted in terms of the environmental space they felt comfortable using. The embarrassment and anxiety caused by the possibility of the local community seeing their images meant that the women began to show signs of agoraphobia. The majority of women found it incredibly difficult to leave their own homes; this varied from a few days to six months. Feeling uncomfortable leaving their homes meant that the simplest everyday tasks became a struggle to carry out and, in some cases, were not carried out at all.

I didn't leave the house, it happened on the Monday, on the Saturday my sister, my niece and friend came to house and told me they were taking me away for the night. Now, it took me two hours and diazepam to get me into the car. Now, once I was away actually it was best thing they could have done because I ate for the first time, I slept better that night and because I was away and no one knew me. And I just, I could breathe again, I felt as if a weight had been lifted from my shoulders and it was lovely for that one night but the next day my panic attacks started, I cried. I didn't want to go home and I knew I had to walk in the front door to the house, even just driving up to the front door and having to walk through my front door at the house, I mean my friends accompanied me, but I had to do it and once I was in the house that was me, I stopped eating, I stopped sleeping again ... I would most days go to the shops after work, I would go and get extra milk, extra bread, you know, just the usual things. I would go to my local shop just about every day and I've not been doing that, I've not been in my local shop hardly at all. And even the shop where I work, in the town where I work, I would go to the shop maybe every other day. [Now] I need to set a date in place when I'm going to shopping, you know, not an impulse, like oh I need milk, I'll nip down to the shop. I've got to set a date and get someone to come with me to go to the shops. I still don't want to go shopping on my own (Victim Twelve).

I didn't go out for a long time, I didn't speak to anyone, didn't come to Uni. Erm, I had like three months off of life. I just couldn't ... really go out. It wasn't until like summer really, the end of summer this year all my friends were on holiday and I was like, "no I still like can't, I can't go out" (Victim Four).

Victim Seven: [The police] came to my house because I was too embarrassed to leave anywhere.

Researcher: You wouldn't leave your house?

Victim Seven: Nope.

Researcher: How long was that for?

Victim Seven: About three weeks.

Victims also feared that they would be subject to physical violence from strangers and/or the perpetrator, causing the women to make changes to their daily lives.

And for ages I kept thinking I didn't want to go out anywhere at night by myself, I didn't want to walk to my car. I'd always have to say [to my staff members], "can you walk me to my car, or can you drop me off at my car" ... I always change up my route now whenever I go home just cos I heard people can follow you and stuff and they know your route and stuff like that (Victim Fourteen).

I was like worrying cos where I live, my building is not very secure so just worrying that what if he comes to my building, what if he comes to attack and things like that. I thought if he's gonna go so far to do something like this then he might come and attack [me] and I was just kinda like having these thoughts (Victim Eight).

They put my place of work on there and I know they know where I work so I don't know if they're gonna turn up or whether a random bloke's gonna turn up. I mean I'm moving jobs in a few weeks (Victim Five).

Victims also actively avoided areas or spaces where their perpetrator lived, worked, and socialised to avoid being in proximity to him. However, with all of the victims knowing their perpetrator, it meant that he often lived, and sometimes socialised in, the same areas the victims did.

I avoid everywhere he goes, which is a lot of places where we used to go together, which is like round where I live. And I won't go because I don't know how I'd be when I saw him. And to stay away from him is a lot easier than to face that (Victim Four).

I was thinking about leaving my job anyway but when this happened, I was just like, right, "I don't want to be here anymore, I don't feel safe." And I've moved quite a considerable distance away ... 35 miles (Victim Five).

So, while I'm driving in the town where he lives to go to work, I've actually avoided going through the town, I've actually got a different route to work so I don't go through the town. So, that's just deliberately going a different route to work. It's just in case I see someone I know or I see him (Victim Twelve).

With IBSA often being linked to social media – either having images distributed on a platform or receiving messages of solicitation – removing or suspending social media accounts was also a means of self-preservation.

Well I've had to, you know, remove myself from most of my social media just for the fear of him getting into it and finding out who my friends and family are and sharing this, this video. So, it has had an impact because I've had to withdraw myself from all my social media and yeah, I'd say it's had a big impact (Victim One).

I did abstain from updating my LinkedIn just in case somehow, my ex-boyfriend was able to see where I'm working now, so I've just refrained from updating cos I am a little nervous he might try and share anything with my employers (Victim Nine).

I deactivated [Facebook] (Victim Eleven).

Furthermore, the uncertainty of whether images would resurface (or surface at all in the blackmail cases) meant that some of the women developed obsessive behaviour. These women spent a lot of their time searching the web to see if images had been uploaded or removed from platforms. The number of times women checked online for their images ranged from every couple of minutes to every few days.

Victim Nine: you know I've been, especially in the first few weeks and after I saw profiles posted, I was kind of actively looking on Facebook, you know, with a lot of anxiety every day. I still do it ... normally once a day. I feel like it just stresses me out if I try to do it more than that and it's just a lot of anxiety when I do it, so I kind of avoid it.

Researcher: What makes you want to check online when you do?

Victim Nine: The fear of somebody else finding it, the fear of someone that I know finding it and sharing it, just it being available for friends or family to see.

Every two minutes I was updating [the webpage]. Because I wanted to know what people, not thought of the pictures, but thought of the situation and like what they were, what I don't know, what everyone was thinking really. Who'd seen it (Victim Four).

Every day. I'd probably check like two or three times a day. In case anything bad was going on without me knowing I guess (Victim Ten).

Women's Social Wellbeing: The Problem of Isolation

For some of the women, the changes in their behaviour meant that they ended up socially isolating themselves, resulting in breakdowns of social relationships. When women struggle to leave the house or attend social events, some friendships can quickly dissolve because the victim is at an impasse whilst those around them continue with their lives.

I sort of lost touch with a lot of me friends, I became really dependent on [my current partner] because of like, I didn't want him to like ever leave me on my own again. But now I'm thinking, like now I'd be perfectly fine on me own, he's not a necessity anymore, whereas in school he was. And I fully lost contact with loads of friends because I was just completely dependent on having this relationship and then I was like putting a strain on it, that he had to be with me all the time. I think that affected his life. At times, we'd like we had split up over things because I'd be so needy cos I didn't feel comfortable on me own at all ... it wasn't healthy. And then I fell out with loads of me friends, I literally had like two friends and we weren't even that close (Victim Eleven).

To be honest, felt weak y'know. I liked staying home because my mum supported me and stuff. But I do have two balconies at home so I'll literally just read a book and stuff like that on my balcony. Because that's when I lost friends and when I realised who my friends were (Victim Seven).

One of the women in particular experienced the breakdown of multiple friendships because she and the perpetrator shared the same friendship group.

We had the same friends really because obviously being together so long you do everything together. Quite a few of his friends liked the post, shared the post, and a few of his friends knew about the video and didn't tell me. So obviously straight away they were wiped off my friends list. And a couple of the girls who I was really close to are [in a relationship] with them lads and we can't be friends because of that. So yeah, I've lost quite a lot [of friends] (Victim Four).

For those women who did not have any significant relationship breakdowns, some still did not disclose their experiences to the majority of people, especially family members. This meant that isolation remained a fundamental issue. There was also a fear amongst the women that their families would blame them for their victimisation.

I did feel that I couldn't really share this with a lot of people, I couldn't really tell people about it. I told some of my close friends and they were aware of what was going on and they were quite supportive but some other people I just didn't really wanna like share this with them. And like, a few weeks afterwards I just didn't really feel like mixing with anyone I just became quite isolated in myself because I think it was that combination of stress and worrying (Victim Eight).

[I haven't told my] family, I wanted to because my family thought so highly of [the perpetrator], they loved him and then when I finished with him they were very accusing and stuff like "why would you do that" and then they really dislike my new partner. Because I feel like they always compare my new partner to him, my old one, because they think that he was so great. And there's part of me that just wants to say like, "you don't understand like what he's done to me," and like since then how he's treated me. [I haven't told them] out of the fear that they're gonna say, "well you finished with him, in a sense you've brought it on yourself and he's gone and shown people since because he's obviously angry with you." So, it does frustrate me that I haven't told my family but it's just the embarrassment of knowing that they'll know that I've ... you know ... the photo of me (Victim Three).

I kinda just felt like because they're like an older generation, my parents are in their 70s, like my friends have all been really supportive, like they fully understand that this is not my fault, I don't think it's my fault, they don't think it's my fault. But I just feel like members of the older generation would be like, "oh you should have been more careful," kind of put the blame onto me or they just be like really, really worried for my safety and I wouldn't want them to be worrying about me like that (Victim Eight).

The Impact on Women's Employment and Education

The women also explained how the consequences of victimisation were having a direct impact on their employment or education. Those who worked in customer service occupations described difficulties when having to face customers whilst those in other occupations still found it difficult to concentrate at work. The women who were in education found their grades being negatively impacted by the experience due to lack of concentration and absences.

I've missed work because of this as well. [Work] say they do understand but they can't, they don't want me in the environment, retail environment, while I'm stressful because anything could happen, I could collapse because an ambulance did come once upon a time to pick me up once when I felt suicidal so I don't want that again. I think I'll just not work for the moment, maybe look for a home-based job or something (Victim Seven).

I know it doesn't matter where you work or what you do but I think having to face the public, I just know from my experience, I found it extremely difficult, I still can't go to counter and serve someone and I'm four weeks in (Victim Twelve).

That month at work I was really stressed, the whole of the month of January. I had to take a couple of days off where I wasn't sleeping and stuff. I wasn't coping very well with my work because of the stress and kinda insomnia, and then I was also worrying. So, I mean it was quite a difficult time. I did get pulled up a few times at work that month for like mistakes and sort of doing things wrong. I didn't want to tell [work] so I had to just make something up. A couple of days I just booked it off as annual leave but then there was another few days, I got my doctor to sign me off with stress but I didn't specify what the stress was, I didn't specify details. I don't think I would have felt comfortable telling my boss that kind of thing. I think for about a month afterwards I was really struggling at work (Victim Eight).

Well, I stopped going [to university] on the third [of December], literally that day and I didn't go in until March. So, I had like a Christmas month off and then I was like, no, I still can't do it, everyone's gonna be saying, "oh how was your Christmas after all that happened?" So, I thought, I need more time than that off. First day back was like starting high school again. I was convinced everyone knew and ... about four or five people in the whole year knew but I just couldn't, couldn't get that in my head. And it took a couple of weeks before I'd sit and talk to people in lectures and stuff, like I just sat right at the back and ... I had no contact with anyone (Victim Four).

I say my grades slipped but my lecturers don't. So, the first written work that I came out with was a first and I thought oh great that's where I'm at and then everything else came out as a 2:1 which everybody's going, "that's really good, that's amazing," and I sort of like, "it's not a first." I feel like that could have been better if there wasn't everything going on behind the scenes of whatever so. I feel like I have not been able to concentrate (Victim Thirteen).

Islamic and Hindu Communities: The Implications of Image Based Sexual Abuse

The research also suggested that those women who belonged to strict Islamic or Hindu communities suffered from additional impacts. The cultural norms within these particular communities meant that shame (for the women and their families) played a fundamental role in the severity of the impacts on women. In some cases, the women's attachment to a religious community may be an influencing factor for the perpetrator's behaviour.

Victim Fifteen: [He was] my boyfriend. After we [split up], he [had] my pictures, normal pictures, with [my] hair [visible]. And [in] my country [this is] not allowed, [you must wear a headscarf]. After [we broke up he told me] you can't [leave] me, you have to [marry] me now. My family don't like this boy. [I told him] "I can't [marry] you." He [said to me] "you have to [marry] me and live with me" and [I ignored him]. [He said] he [would] put my picture on Facebook. When he put picture on Facebook, I [was] angry. I [spoke] with [another] boy from my country [who helped] me to speak with him. [My friend spoke to him about these] Facebook pictures [and asked], what do you want to [leave the victim] alone. He [said] "give me [the] money which [I spent on] the girl, afterwards I delete all pictures on Facebook."

Interpreter: Like you know, presents [he had bought] and things like that.

Victim Fifteen: And sometime get me food [*sic*].

Interpreter: And then [he said] "she has to pay me all the money."

Victim Fifteen: Like £1,000.

Interpreter: £1,000 something, and I'll take the photograph down.

Researcher: What kind of photograph was it? Nude, semi-nude, clothed?

Victim Fifteen: This my country not allowed [*sic*].

Interpreter: It's a normal photograph of [her] hair out dressing like [normal]. Yeah, she [sent it to him and] he put [it] on Facebook. Cos we [are] not allowed to have your hair out in [public], you know, everybody see you with a scarf [*sic*].

Interpreter: Yeah. And his account as well. People are going to say things [like] "why's he got [her] photograph? They're not married, nothing. He's just trying to blackmail her."

Victim Nine associated herself with Hinduism; she also suffered from heightened forms of anxiety because of the shame and disappointment she would cause for her family if they found out about the images. This was regardless of the fact that she had images taken of her without her knowledge.

Victim Nine: I felt very scared, I felt really scared because I didn't want my parents to find out and you know I'm from an Indian background so it was, I was just so scared of what my parents would think.

Interviewer: You haven't told your parents?

Victim Nine: No, I haven't told my parents.

Interviewer: Why do you not want to tell your parents?

Victim Nine: Just to do with the community. I don't wanna worry my parents and stress my parents out. And I just don't want them to look at me differently and I know that ultimately this would be one of the biggest disappointments for them.

Activists also highlighted that for those victims who are part of the Muslim community, the impact of IBSA can be exacerbated regardless of whether the images are typically sexually explicit. This tended to happen when the women belonged to practising Muslim communities where maintaining the reputation of the family and the Muslim community was particularly important to the women and those around them.

Muslim communities, the impacts are just as bad, if not worse, of someone in a bra, or with shoulders out. We're so limited in the fact that we get calls from women that are frightened of honour-based killings, of ostracization when there's them in a bra, and to me I'm just like oh yeah, that's just a bra. Actually, no it's not to them, it's just as bad as sex. And when I say the word bad, I don't mean 'bad' but to them it's just as impactful (Activist Three).

It's very underreported [in the Muslim community] and there is so much fear both of physical violence, reputation, we still regularly hear, "I couldn't bring shame on my family." And actually, it's probably perceived shame, in some cases it's not even a perpetrator going, it's going to kill your parents if they hear about this, but it's the victims themselves. But we have had some cases clearly where some people are in extreme danger. We had one lady who had to leave her children behind and leave her whole community, it was that bad so. [She was] a really vulnerable woman and she had already been ostracised by her community, her mental health was really suffering. She wasn't taking her children to school. So of course, we were then like technically there's other safeguarding issues because I'm not sure you can look after your children right now. So, we had to sort of really manage the whole situation (Activist Four).

I wouldn't want to tar the Muslim community with honour killings you know, but that is a reality for a certain number of people, that is what could happen. But even if it's not that, it is being ostracised and cut off from that support and if that, in such a close community, and those communities do tend to be close particularly, it's not my area of strength, but my perception is that if you are part of a particular religious community, cultural, then that is quite close-knit. And if you are, if there's a perception that you have shamed your family then the consequences of that are, that social ostracization it's much more painful possibly because of the, the classic white person in this country, even if people are Christian or churchgoers those communities aren't so close-knit and you are not so dependent on them for everything. Because it tends to be you work in that community, you live in that community, you socialise, you marry someone in that community, everybody's within that one small group (Activist Five).

Beyond Primary Victims: The Impact of Image Based Sexual Abuse on Loved Ones

Whilst those who have their images distributed suffer from a wide variety of impacts, the interviews revealed that some of the impacts extend to those who have close relationships with the victims. This includes family members, partners or potential partners, and children.

It affected my family as well. My sister was in bits. My mum, she was in bits cos everybody knew about it. And then you got people in the community talking to my mum: “oh I saw the pictures, oh I saw [interviewee name] in the newspaper.” And it was continual you know. My sister was crying on the phone when it happened, she didn’t know what to with herself ... my sister was really stressed out, my daughter was stressed, my son was stressed (Folami Prehaye).

There was an entry near my school and that said [I was a slag] and I remember seeing that when I was walking home from school and me little sister seen it when she was walking home from school. But it’s proper shameful (Victim Eleven).

Victims and activists also stated that the trauma of image dissemination can put a strain on new relationships because of the level of support the victims need from their partners. This meant that the relationships were hard to maintain.

There was a lot of stress. He has Asperger so for him to have to process that, that had a massive effect on him. It’s made him very angry. When it happened, he came down to the police station and he lives literally five miles away from me and he had to get the train down so it was quite a considerable journey ... I’m convinced if he did actually see one of them in the street he would actually do something. Cos that’s how he deals with things because he doesn’t rationally know how you deal with things as you should. So, it has just put a lot of stress on us because he’s had to see it all and I told him it, you know, I’d had dodgy relationships in the past but obviously I didn’t tell him details or to what extent it was. So, for it to all come back up I don’t particularly want to talk about it but he wants to talk about it and try and get it sorted whereas I don’t want to talk about it to *him* because I don’t want it to make him feel worse and that’s really frustrating (Victim Five).

Her husband found a video of her on a porn site ... she had no idea, he had no idea, with the previous partner she was with engaging in a quite extreme sex act that she had never done with him (current partner). This video is *everywhere*, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of websites so we have had to work with her through reporting and trying to get it under control, it’s been really really difficult. With this particular case, what was a really happy, solid marriage has now, he can’t cope with it so she can’t talk to him about it and he’s always been her source of support. She can’t talk to anyone else, she was too scared to go to the police because of her position because she doesn’t want it to get out at all and yeah, so she’s kind of on her own dealing with it, with a bit of help from us. She’s suicidal, husband keeps watching the video *obsessively*, there was some strange behaviours but he’s now got extremely controlling (Activist Four).

Those victims who had not entered into new relationships also described how they had severe trust issues and therefore struggled to allow anyone to become emotionally or physically close to them.

I can't trust anyone. It's been hard, like I've got a lad who I'm really close to now, we're seeing each other kind of thing, we've been best mates for years and he stood by me so much through that. And it keeps getting to the point where things get a bit interesting and I'm like ... no I can't. And it's a year next Saturday that this has happened and I'm like when is this gonna [end]. I've not been near anyone since him. And I can't imagine it because the trust isn't there (Victim Four).

Like even now I can't get close to people. I can't. Cos obviously me and [the perpetrator] have split up and I just, I haven't been with anyone since because I just can't (Victim Ten).

The impact on children was something which consistently concerned those victims who were parents. Children were impacted in a variety of ways and victims felt that the age of the child influenced the severity of the impact.

But like this is what really got me cos my daughter was on [one of the images which was uploaded online]. Do you know what I mean? Because at the time she was like two. If [my daughter] goes online in future, it'll be dead buried by then like, but if she wanted to look hard enough you could find anything about me. And I'm like it's just annoying (Victim Fourteen).

My daughter who was not on my Facebook, she come onto the search thing on her phone and found two Facebooks, both pictures, profile pictures exactly the same. One was my normal one and she opened the other one and there was all the pictures, [laughs] basically. Yeah luckily, my daughter is 26 now, so she was 24, so luckily, she was at the age where she can deal with it (Folami Prehaye).

My son was young at the time ... both my kids were really good actually, my daughter was stressed out about it, my son was but he didn't show it, he just wanted to get out of that house to be honest. And the most, one of the stressful things I think for my son, he's not estranged from his dad, but kind of, might as well be. His dad said to him, "oh you didn't tell me what happened to your mother." My son said, "well you don't talk to my mum anyway so why would I tell you?" [His father said] "oh have you seen the pictures?" Now, who says that? What dad would say to your son, have you seen naked pictures of your mum? Wack. So, it's just things like that you know. I was living with my brother. And me and my son because of this guy were sharing a bunk bed for a year. And that was fucking hard work, I just couldn't stand it. None of us could, it was depressing and that was all on the back of this revenge porn thing. So, it affected us to a degree, you know, and I was determined, and my son was going through his GCSEs as well, well just about to (Folami Prehaye).

Because after it first happened, for about six months, I was depressed. I wouldn't come out my house, I wouldn't eat, I wouldn't wash. I don't know how my son got through it cos I just don't know, because you don't think of those stuff ... My life will never be the same again and nor will my children's and I've got to deal with the impact this has had on the 17-year-old son who's due to go on to further education college. He's about to sit his higher exams soon and I don't know what impact that's had on my son's life, on the outside he seems to be coping really well but I don't know that. And so, the impact that it's had on my life and my children's life and my family and my friends' life, no amount of time will ever pay for that (Victim Twelve).

One of the cases highlighted further issues for those children old enough to access technology. The use of technology means that children are at a higher risk of being sent or coming across the images if they are being circulated in the community.

[My son] had seen an image was being shared on the group chat, or he seen that there was an image so he didn't open it and then obviously all his other friends had said, "why would you do that? That's terrible that [son's name] mum." And he realised: "oh my god that's my mum in that picture and they've got that picture." And he didn't open up the chat but he was obviously aware that all his friends had seen it and that must have been devastating for him to know that. Not that he thought they might have seen it but to have the knowledge that they *had seen it* was awful and there was 20-plus friends amongst that chat. So, that devastated him, and on the Tuesday night his dad actually came and got him and took him away. When he went, he said, "mum this isn't because I don't want to be here but you've got friends, you've got support, I need some space and you need some space." So, he went away and he didn't come back until the following Monday and I chatted to him on the Monday and I said, "do you think you can go to school tomorrow?" and he said, "yeah, I think I can." But then he got up on the Tuesday morning, got himself ready for school and he couldn't go out the door. I totally understood how he felt but at this point still he couldn't go out the front door. I knew exactly how he was feeling to have to walk round to the bus on his own and just stand and wait for the bus and everyone talking about it (Victim Twelve).

Taking Back Control: Women's Resistance and Empowerment Strategies

Whilst many of the women's life changes discussed above are coping mechanisms which they adopt to prevent further victimisation (Kelly, 1988), these same coping mechanisms also contributed to increased levels of isolation for the women. However, many of the women did show forms of resistance. The women chose to adopt practical responses which demonstrated a refusal to submit to victimisation, and instead, actively oppose or fight against it (Kelly, 1988).

I'm going to have to go to the special place in London to get myself an injunction put on the photographs. What I've done is, I've contacted all sort of search engines, put in reports and stuff to have myself removed from the net so the pictures will be eventually archived if you know what I mean. You won't be able to search my name with porn next to it (Victim Two).

When the images came up, it shows you the images and then it shows you all the URLs. So, I wrote down all the URLs, went back to the police and said, "well you know what, he's also done this." And then I said to them, "well how do you take them down?" they said, "we don't know." So, I just thought all right, I went back home and I said to Google, "how do you remove pictures?" So, I just went up to the webmasters, contacted the webmasters of all the websites and by then I had a crime reference. So, I said, "oh I've been perpetrated this is this, I didn't agree to this, can you remove them" ... I was checking was whether they removed it. So, I go back to them again, I said, "this is the second or the third time, can you just remove it." And that was it. I haven't looked back since. I have not gone back to even look, don't wanna know. Because it is what it is. And I'm quite blasé about it because for me, and I know some victims are not like me, everybody is different. I'm two years in now, you know what I mean, and I know time is a healer if you allow yourself to heal. And I think by dealing with it the way, I've dealt with it (Folami Prehaye).

Tuesday again, I was completely distraught basically Googling how to remove the images and that's how I came across the revenge porn helpline number. So, I rang them and gave them the details and said, "could they help me with this," and also, I was trying to get in touch with the police. I never slept the Tuesday night thinking what am I gonna do, I need to get rid of these images and also, I knew that I couldn't get rid of the ones people had screenshotted and were seeing. But I thought if I could just get rid of the original ones, that was my next hope. Once I started to process what has happened to me, I thought I need to take control of this. I think at that point I'd had the practical advice from revenge porn helpline with all the links and how to get them removed. So, again on Tuesday night I never slept and at six o'clock in the morning I got up, made myself a cup of tea, sat at the kitchen table and thought, "right, you need to do this." So, I spent the whole day, it took me from the six o'clock in the morning to half-seven at night and that was only the start. And I spent a lot of time Googling how to do different things. So, that was the whole day on the Wednesday taken up by all that but I did sleep a little bit on the Wednesday night and I think it was because I'd done that and if nothing else it had actually tired me out as well (Victim Twelve).

Two of the women also described how removing the images themselves played an important part in taking back control of the situation.

You know, the helpline are really good in that they give the tools in which to remove the images but they also tell you, “you know, this is something you need to do yourself,” and at the time that’s hard to listen to but it’s actually a really good thing for them to explain to you because no one else can do this for you, you don’t want your friends doing it, you don’t want your mum or your sisters doing it because each image is obviously of you and it’s not a nice thing to show anyone. So, you kinda take control and by doing that you sort of feel you’re in control and I found that really helpful (Victim Twelve).

And then I saw the revenge porn hotline so I rang them up and they did a search for me and they were like, “yeah, you’re only on these ones” and they were like, they were quite shocked at how efficient I’d been. But I was like, “well I can either get stuff sorted or can just sort of sit there and that’s not really gonna help so” (Victim Two).

Three of the women also chose to publicly speak out about their experiences in the national media in an attempt to raise awareness, help other victims, and regain control of their own experiences.

I thought, you know what, he’s not gonna get away with this, why should he? Why should he perpetrate me in such a way and publicly shame me in my own community ... I thought you know what, na you ain’t gonna get away with this. So, by standing up and like speaking about what’s happened to me and openly saying well you know what, it’s wrong, you move away from that victim state, you know. Which is not an easy thing to do. I just had to do something about it. I just couldn’t sit and have that over my life because if I didn’t deal with it, it might come back to haunt me later on. And at least this way people can see, “well actually you know what, you done good because you stood up.” The amount of times I’ve gone on TV and said the same thing over and over again. I’ve never deflected from what I’ve always said: “stand up and take control, you need to stand up. If you stay in that victim state they win” (Folami Prehaye).

I’m the one that chose to [name the perpetrator on Facebook] because I’m a lot stronger than the other girls. And the other girls are like, “oh shall I do something? Shall I write something?” and [one of the other girls] was like, “yeah maybe I’ll get my mum to do it,” and I was like, “look your mum doesn’t have the same network that we do, your mum won’t get to as many people.” I was like, “if we do it and we tag us in it, all the girls that have been affected, it will reach all of our pages and all of their friends.” And all I wanted to do was get it out around [the city] that this guy was out there doing this sort of stuff (Victim Fourteen).

Victim or Survivor? Recognising Victims’ Self-Perceptions

Whether the 17 women subjected to IBSA considered themselves victims or survivors was heavily influenced by the length of time between women finding their images online and when the interviews took place. The experiences of the women recruited through the

Revenge Porn Helpline were more recent than those who were recruited independently; this was due to the Revenge Porn Helpline often being the short-term contact for women who were in the ‘panic stage’, or the initial stages of finding their images online. For these women their experiences were still very raw; therefore, they very much identified themselves as victims.

Yeah, I would [consider myself to be a victim] because basically I hadn’t done anything wrong (Victim Two).

Yeah. [I would consider myself to be a victim] It’s still held over me (Victim Thirteen).

Researcher: Would you consider yourself to be a victim of revenge pornography?

Victim Five: Yes.

Researcher: Why is that?

Victim Five: Because I never gave my consent for them to be put online.

Victim Three also raised questions as to whether police involvement and societal reactions had an impact on how women perceived their own victim status. She described herself as an “unofficial victim” because she had not reported her experiences to the police. Victim Fourteen provided further insight as to why these factors might be influencing the women’s self-perceptions.

I think I feel more like a victim since everything’s come out. Cos, we got told so many times that we were overreacting and stuff that you doubt yourself. You’re like, “oh maybe I am overreacting, maybe it wasn’t as bad as what I thought,” and you start thinking ... [the police have] obviously not taken it seriously so I can’t be a victim, otherwise they would have done something about it. But then the more people we told and the more we came out everyone was outraged by it and we thought, do you know what, actually we are victims from this guy. And all it takes is one person to keep saying to you, “ahh don’t be so stupid,” all it takes is for you not to have the support there to make you feel like actually maybe he isn’t doing anything wrong. That’s why I didn’t feel like I felt like a victim at the beginning.

Those women who considered themselves victims were also asked whether they would consider themselves survivors. Many of the women rejected this identity; for some, this was influenced by how successful they felt police involvement was.

Not particularly. No (Victim Three).

I feel like no criminal action is gonna be taken against him I think he could do this again. Realistically, he’s still got the images. When he was arrested, he hid his phone, they never found his phone. I just feel like I’m in limbo at the moment, like he could still do this again. So, not at the moment I don’t think like that (Victim Eight).

Two of the women also rejected the term survivor because of its strong association with domestic abuse. Whilst the term survivor is used amongst feminists and practitioners to describe women who have survived both physical and non-physical abuse (Kelly, 1988), for these women, there remained an assumption that the term survivor represented those who had been subject to physical, and therefore ‘more serious’, forms of abuse.

I don’t really like the term survivor. Not in this instance anyway. I do think it has merit in maybe other crimes but I don’t think survivor is maybe the right word ... I think if it’s a physical crime like physical domestic abuse or sexual assault or anything like that then yeah, I would agree with it. But I just have a bit of an issue with the word survivor (Victim Five).

No, Not really. Just because I know people who have been raped and I just feel like they are survivors. I wouldn’t put it in the same category really (Victim Fourteen).

However, the importance of time as a healer was significant for some women and this indicated a fluidity between identifying as a victim and/or a survivor. Some of those women who characterised themselves as victims stated that they would like to consider themselves as survivors in the future.

I suppose once everything is settled down I probably will yeah. At the moment, I’m still pretty much in the victim bit (Victim Two).

Not right now, I think just because of where things are with the case. I still very much feel like I’m trying to get somebody to listen to me, I’m trying to get some movement (Victim Nine).

However, one victim highlighted that although she had begun to recover and move on from her experience, the nature of IBSA meant that she would never fully perceive herself as a survivor.

To be honest it was that long ago now it, sometimes it does worry me like I’m thinking, “what if it comes back, what if someone still has that picture somewhere and it comes back round,” like five years later. So, then I can’t really think if it of it as something that’s been finalised and over (Victim Eleven).

Only one of the women strongly associated herself with being a survivor, although she did further highlight the fluidity between these terms.

Definitely I am [a survivor]. Because to me if you stay in victim state you remain under the thumb of the perpetrator and by doing what I’ve done, cos I just went into action mode because I was thinking, OK you can deal with this in two ways Folami. You can either deal with it, or you cannot deal with it. And just, you know hide away, this is what most victims do ... There are still times, there was, not so much now, where I would still go into the victim state (Folami Prehaye).

But Men Are Victims Too: Perceptions on ‘Violence Against Women’

All of the activists and police officers were asked whether they would consider IBSA to be a form of violence against women; this produced a mixed response. All respondents agreed that IBSA was a form of violence, particularly against women, given that women make up the majority of victims. However, they were also adamant to highlight that men were also subject to IBSA; therefore, some of the respondents rejected the term ‘violence against women’.

Yeah, I would. Absolutely [say its violence against women] (Police Officer Two).

Yes, I would [say it is violence against women]. Very definitely. But we tend to say it’s part of a pattern of behaviour and, it’s another tool for an abusive, usually men, to inflict harm upon a woman. So yes, predominantly women are affected. But that I think is more a question about how the images are made and produced and encouraged to be produced in the first place (Activist Four).

Obviously, it’s a form of violence against everyone but yes, it is statistically against a lot more women and it is a horrendous thing, like I said with coercive control and domestic violence. It is used predominantly against women and the effects, I think. As I said, the shame, the way the women are portrayed in society, it does encompass all of that and it’s just hideous. The shame, the way the women are portrayed in society, it does encompass all of that (Activist Three).

Yeah sexual violence definitely. It’s a control mechanism that can be used. It’s not even just women, you can’t just say women because it happens to men as well. It’s predominately women because obviously we are so to say, the feeble species out of the two genders. That’s why it’s predominately women. But you’ve got women doing it to women, you’ve got men doing it to men. It’s big in the gay community as well, *huge*, you just don’t hear about it (Folami Prehaye).

Not just women. I get quite irritated that there is such a woman focus on it. When we first started doing appointments, I forget the exact figure, at one point I think we were almost as high as 30 per cent men, it fluctuates obviously depending on how many inquiries we have. But we do have male victims coming to us. It is a great issue that effects women, I think it is a form of digital violence against women but it’s not quite as narrow as that (Activist Two).

Not just women. I think men as well because on occasions I think men are open to exploitation as much as women are. I think it is a form of sexual violence. For them to be exploited on the Internet or by other means is unacceptable whether you’re male or female (Police Officer Three).

[It’s] violence against the victim (Police Officer Four).

Conclusion

Overall, the findings revealed fundamental issues which need to be recognised, and appropriately responded to, in relation to the nature and impacts of image based sexual abuse. Activists, in particular, have confirmed the need, and importance, of utilising terminology which represents women's experiences. The term 'revenge pornography' is perceived as not only inaccurate, but a term which undermines victims' experiences through implications of victim wrongdoing. The findings also provide an insight into the technological and coercive nature of IBSA in that the majority of the women's cases suggested the need to recognise the blurring of consensual boundaries in relation to image production. Although in some respects, women are seen to consent to have images taken, or to share images with a partner, a closer examination reveals that women are under significant pressure to produce these images, with coercion and alcohol playing a role in the women's decision making. These cases also highlight a range of image dissemination methods which are chosen specifically to create maximum disruption to, and embarrassment within, women's lives; including the creation of fake social media accounts and use of platforms with wide audiences. This is further highlighted by the tendency of perpetrators to make purposeful efforts to release the victim's personal information, increasing their vulnerability to harassment from strangers in both the online and offline environments. There is also evidence to suggest that those women who are in abusive relationships may be at an increased risk of IBSA victimisation as it can become a form of abuse which is interlinked with already existing forms of domestic and sexual abuse.

The impact of image disclosure and identification of victims varies widely depending on individual cases. However, the research indicates that victims are likely to suffer from at least one mental health issue as a result of victimisation. Depression, anxiety, and paranoia were found to be the most common mental health issues, and in the most extreme cases this can lead to victims having suicidal thoughts. These mental health issues may also be contributing to poor physical and social wellbeing. Victims identified a significant deterioration in their physical health, including lack of sleep, lack of nutrition, and being physically sick. Furthermore, constant anxiety and fear of being recognised and/or attacked meant that victims felt uncomfortable leaving their homes or carrying out daily tasks outside of the home. Whilst, for the victims, this was a coping mechanism and a means to avoid further victimisation, it ultimately increased levels of isolation. The women's restricted movements meant that they were more likely to suffer from

relationship or friendship breakdowns because they were no longer willing to partake in social situations. Avoiding social situations also had a direct impact on women's work and/or education due to the women taking lengthy periods of leave or leaving their jobs altogether. When the women did attend work or university, many of them struggled to concentrate and complete work/educational tasks to their usual standard. For those women who were part of strict Islamic and Hindu communities, there is an increased likelihood that they will fear, or be subject to, ostracization and honour killings. The findings indicate that these impacts extend further than the victim; victimisation was seen to impact upon families, partners, and children due to the increased levels of stress in households, within relationships, and amongst family members.

However, many of the victims did demonstrate forms of resistance by taking practical steps to regain control of the situation and their lives. For some women, empowerment was achieved by speaking publicly about their experiences and making attempts to support other victims. However, the majority of the women did not consider themselves to be survivors of IBSA and many victims felt strongly about adopting a victim identity. This was not because they did not make any attempts at empowerment; it was because the women were not at a stage where they felt they were moving on from their experiences. The next chapter examines how the criminal justice system responds to these experiences, with a specific focus on police and legislative responses.

Chapter 6

Policing and Criminal Justice Responses: Victims' Experiences and Perceptions

Introduction

This chapter sets out the research findings in relation to victims' experiences within, and perceptions of, the criminal justice system. In doing so, the findings identify the most fundamental issues that victims face at various stages of the criminal justice process. Alongside victim testimonies, activist and criminal justice staff experiences of working with victims will be presented, to provide further evidential support to support victims' perceptions and highlight some of the broader societal and practical issues which influence the responses to, and treatment of, victims. The chapter begins by highlighting factors which influence victims' willingness (or reluctance) to report their experiences to the police, and the initial police responses towards those victims who do come forward. This is followed by victim and activist perspectives of police responses during case investigations, and the ability of police officers to meet victims' needs. The findings from this suggest that police responses are currently inadequate, and at times inappropriate; therefore, the chapter discusses the need for police training. This includes activist and police officer views as to what should be the aims of police officer training, and what information such training should include. However, the findings also suggest that if we do not make amendments to the current legislation, making it more inclusive of victims' experiences and needs, police officers and the Crown Prosecution Service will continue to struggle to provide justice for victims irrespective of whether police responses are adequate. Therefore, the chapter ends with a discussion of how the limitations within the image based sexual abuse (IBSA) law can significantly hinder the success of victims' cases within a criminal justice context.

Silenced Women: Factors Influencing Reporting

While 11 of my 17 respondents had reported their experiences to the police, it is important to note that this propensity to report is unlikely to be replicated amongst all women who are victims of IBSA, because the Revenge Porn Helpline, who recruited nine of the victim participants, were asked to focus upon recruiting participants who had contacted the police. Activists strongly contended that those women who sought help from

organisations were more likely to report to the police, compared to those who did not seek support.

I think the ones that contact us, and that's not putting us up there, have confidence to ... So, some ring us up and they say, "is this a crime? Does this fit?" and you're like, "yeah you can ring the police," and they just need that reassurance that they can and they're not being silly, they don't want to waste people's time. So, I think there probably are a lot of victims out there that don't contact the police either because they don't want to go through the court process, they're fearful of the response (Activist Three).

I think once they've spoken to us, they're more likely to [contact the police] cos I like to think we reassure them, give them some knowledge about how [contacting the police] could go and what's the best way to go about it. I think before they call, they are much less likely to go to the police than they are after. I think people are often quite empowered by talking to us to go to the police (Activist Five).

Out of the eight women who were recruited independently of the helpline, only two reported their experiences to the police. The six women who did not report gave a variety of reasons for this decision.

I don't know why because, I think I would have felt guilty putting him in trouble. I think at the end of the day it's his education/career that I am potentially ruining. I know it sounds stupid considering what he's done to me but I just didn't wanna cause all the fuss and the upset (Victim Three).

I don't know. I think there should be like, there should be at least some [custodial] time ... but then I think as he was only young himself, he might of matured now. But then, no, what am I saying, he fully deserves everything he gets. I was just about to say how it would affect his career now if he's been in prison. It affected mine and he's just doing nothing. Yeah, I've just tried saying that and then thinking why am I bothered about whether he's OK, he fully ruined my life. I think it's more so I didn't want to go to the police because I was embarrassed. Cos I fully thought it was all my fault and I didn't want to be judged for it by any more people than I already was ... I didn't think it was something serious enough [to report to the police] (Victim Eleven).

It's so humiliating to be in that position. It's almost like why would I want to go and say this has happened to me and it's one of those things, any kind of violation of personal space I think ... you're so vulnerable and you've been made vulnerable and somebody's now got some kind of power over you. It's hard to go forward and say, "I'm in a really bad position right now, please help me" (Victim Twelve).

For me it's the fear of somebody turning around and being like, "well you brought it on yourself." So that's where the issue comes in, I think with it. Actually getting to the truth and getting justice for it ... I feel like there's more serious cases than what's happened to me ... So I just didn't think it mattered kind of thing ... I didn't think it was like a crime (Victim Three).

I think it was more because of the opinions of people. I didn't want them to be like, "well you sent them, why are you surprised that they've gone off one person's phone," and it was more the fear of that (Victim Four).

Cos if he sees me, I go to him, "I speak the police" after he do more and more [intimidating acts]. I'm scared, I'm thinking OK I give him the money and keep quiet (Victim Fifteen)⁴.

Activists also confirmed that non-reporting was often the result of victims not being aware that they had been subject to a crime, as well as feelings of self-blame, fear of victim blaming and fear of judgement. However, activists also highlighted some additional factors which impact upon reporting, including the lack of anonymity, having to prove the perpetrators' intent, not wanting friends or family to find out about their images, fear that they had committed an offence by sending the initial images, the victim's history (for example, sex work), not wanting to force the resurfacing of historical cases, and not wanting to make a second attempt to engage with the police because their first report was poorly and inappropriately responded to.

Interpersonal Responses: Are Police Forces Meeting Victims' Needs?

For those 11 women who had reported to the police, it was important to examine how police officers were responding to victims on an interpersonal level, not just the actions that were taken with regards to their cases. The Department of Justice (2015a:18) states that victims are entitled to "be recognised and treated in a respectful, dignified, courteous, sensitive, tailored [and] professional manner". Only three women stated that they had received a response which met these entitlements. However, in two of these cases, victims suggested that the response they received was influenced by other factors.

[The police officer] was a friend who come round and he just happened to have the authority to go and deal with that situation. And I've got two friends who've had bad experiences with this kind of scenario and the police have been no help at all. I don't think it's the police in general that helped me, I think it was more knowing someone (Victim Four).

⁴ This woman paid her perpetrator to remove images from his Facebook account.

[The police] were amazingly sympathetic ... I think my case is unusual as well because of the amount of money and the fact that bank account details were given to me of where I had to put this money. Possibly it got quite a high sentence tariff involved with it from the blackmail and this came into the category of proper blackmail. So, I ended up with quite high-up police investigators working on it. I don't know if that's one of the reasons why I found that they were pulling out all the stops with it as well. I think because I've had such a positive experience with the police and they've taken it so seriously and at every stage they've made me feel that I haven't done anything wrong, that this has happened to me and it's not fair and it's not OK and that they want to sort it out. I probably have more of the positive outlook, I appreciate that a lot of people haven't (Victim Six).

Whilst the above experiences demonstrate that police forces can, and have, effectively responded to victims' needs, the majority of victims who came forward to the police ($n = 8$) did not receive similar responses.

I only spoke to the woman on the phone she was just a bit mechanical. I just think they could have been a bit more sympathetic cos she wasn't (Victim One).

I just don't think they had much time for me really (Victim Two).

When I went to make the report, it was two male police officers so it was a little bit embarrassing because I had to show them these screenshots with me naked. I found it a bit embarrassing and I just felt like their attitude, they didn't seem too bothered and that about it. I just found it quite like embarrassing. It just seemed like they didn't take it too seriously (Victim Eight).

The lady was very nice, she was really understanding but very, sort of ... cold in the way that "I can't help you with this." You know, "we'll take a statement because what he's done is a crime but I can't help you with this." And that devastated me, that made me even more upset because I thought they could have helped me. And apart from giving me a victim support card that was all the support they offered me (Victim Fourteen).

One victim's experience in particular highlighted a clear discrepancy between victim needs and police officer capabilities.

The police didn't really know what to do and I felt as if they didn't really care cos they were more wanting to get him arrested, they've not even done that yet, but they were more interested in what had happened and where to go from there rather than helping me to get rid of the images and that's really upsetting when they tell you that (Victim Twelve).

The Department of Justice (2015a:20) also states that victims "are entitled to receive information from service providers about the progress of [their] case" within 10 days, as well as being entitled to ask for updates and information "outside the times agreed with

service providers”. Yet victims felt frustrated that the police were not keeping them up to date with their cases.

The police won't tell me if they've spoken to either of [the perpetrators] but Victim Support have said that I do have a right to know ... Before Monday I hadn't heard for them for about three weeks (Victim Five).

No. I had to kept pressing them, calling them up to say, “what's going on?” She [the police officer] was never calling me (Victim Seven).

They [the police] were so hard to get in touch with as well if something happened. You could never really get hold of one, I'd have to sort of email and then they'd get back to you a few days later (Victim Ten).

They're not keeping me up to date, no. And we're four weeks in since it happened (Victim Twelve).

I went back to the police and they said, “they are investigating it,” but they still haven't come back to me, I still don't really know what's going on with it. So, they took my phone to take some of the evidence. They said they'd give it back to me the following day, it's been like two months now of me chasing them up and they don't seem to be getting back to me. I've got a phone number, no one ever answers it. I phoned the property store and they just say that my phone's in the lab. I've got the email address of the officer and I've been emailing her like every week and most of the time she doesn't respond to me. Like, once or twice she has got back to me saying she'll “chase it up” but the majority of the time she doesn't email me back ... They told me that they would give me my mobile phone back the following day and it's been two months and I'm still trying to contact them, no one ever gets back to me ... I'm borrowing a phone from somebody else, from a friend ... I don't know if he's been charged with anything. All I know is he was arrested and bailed (Victim Eight).

Not only are victims entitled to these updates; they are also entitled to have their property (including mobile phones) which has been taken for evidential purposes returned “without delay unless it is needed for the investigation or court proceedings” (Department of Justice, 2015b:8). In total, only one victim was happy with the police communication whilst six women felt that the police failed to keep them informed. Police officers were therefore asked about the reason for this lack of communication.

The victim charter says that [victims have] got to be contacted and updated and all this sort of stuff. At the end of the day if you are frontline staff, they're responding to 999 calls, on average you are holding 20 crimes to investigate and, on your shift briefing you are probably given five or six jobs to go to that day as well as all the 999 calls coming in. Now if you're one of those 20 people you're meant to be updating, how do you do that when you've already got five other jobs you need to go to and responding to 999 calls? And what happens if one of those 999 calls is a major incident and you're stuck there for the rest of the day? How can you update your victims? It's almost an impossibility (Police Officer Four).

However, whilst it is important to acknowledge the difficulties police forces face with regards to providing a service for victims, the activist interviews highlighted concerns over inappropriate responses. All of the activists explained that police officers were seen to adopt stereotypical assumptions and myths surrounding IBSA and that police officers knew very little about current legislation and the nature of IBSA.

One woman had some hideous things shared and [the police] just said, “no, no it’s part of your divorce, just cos you got a messy divorce he’s allowed to do that, it’s not against the law” ... Also, social media; a lot of the time police came back, “oh it’s not on social media, it’s not on Facebook, it’s not revenge pornography.” We’ve had a lady, her boyfriend printed off pictures and put them under every car in the street of her gym. And the police were like, “oh no that’s not revenge pornography.” Well it is. Even the police, they told people that “you can’t have revenge porn against you because this person’s not your ex-boyfriend” and that’s not the case ... and you can get some real unsympathetic, uneducated views and I suppose that’s what we’re working to change. A lot of the time [the victims] have not had a very good response and they’re at the end of their tether. We just get so many complaints about that first call [to the police], people being put off, being upset. The police calls come in and we were just livid, we were like, “look so many people are terrified, upset, it takes everything they have to come and approach you and you don’t respond appropriately” (Activist Three).

So, we had a case a couple of days ago ... ex posted images on Facebook but the police told the victim “he was allowed to do that because he owned the content.” Which, no, I think they got a bit muddled with copyright law and *the law* (Activist Four).

Activists also stressed that victim blaming was still a significant problem within policing responses, although they did argue that since the introduction of the IBSA law, police officer knowledge has increased somewhat and consequently, there has been a gradual reduction in cases of victim blaming.

Someone [a police officer] called someone a “silly girl”, I was livid so the police officer came and said, “actually it’s going to call handlers, they aren’t trained.” One lady said, “they just told him not to do it again,” and she’s just rang me straight way [saying], “what do I do?” (Activist Three).

They were really bad when the offence first came in. And there was a lot of victim blaming and there was a lot of complete ignorance about the potential impact that it would have on the victims’ lives and also how the issue actually operates which I think was *disastrous*. But I think the CPS have really, I don’t know, this sounds maybe too optimistic, but they’ve done quite well in trying to publicise ... So yeah, I think that’s it’s getting better (Activist One).

They’ve been getting better. The amount of clients who come to us who say “the police officer said I shouldn’t of taken the picture” has decreased (Activist Two).

I mean, she [*police officer*] did say to me, “well you know now, you shouldn’t do it again,” and I was like, “yeah trust me I won’t” (Victim Five).

Well, I said people were phoning me and informing that I had a sex tape. They [the police officer] said, “you’re closing your eyes so why did you not get out the bed.” I said, “well excuse me you’re not in the same room.” I literally got really upset because if somebody has literally broken in the house the first thing you’re gonna do is cover yourself in that bed, change yourself quickly and close your eyes because you’re not gonna get out naked in front of people. It’s ridiculous, you know. So, I literally covered myself and the guy never stopped [having sex with me]. It’s like they’re saying people can end it when they get out. What do you mean get out? I’m not standing up when people are in the room (Victim Seven).

Although three of the criminal justice representatives stated that victim blaming responses were not an issue within police forces, two of the officers did highlight the tendency for victim blaming responses to occur.

When cases come in there will be the same comments ... “Oh why did she do that,” and a bit of, “oh God well for goodness sake why did you do that?” Now, I don’t doubt that people would maybe think that. I think victim blaming is putting it quite harshly actually because I can certainly see how we can be perceived as [victim blaming]. Unless we’re really empathetic and listen throughout the whole process, it doesn’t take much for somebody to say, “what! Why on earth?” you know, the tone of voice, if they don’t moderate and just be more understanding in their tone of voice that could come over as victim blaming, it might just be a little bit of exasperation. Do you see what I mean? So, I think that officers would have some of the same reactions as general members of the public around a little bit of exasperation about, or lack of understanding about why on earth would you do that. I wouldn’t characterise it as victim blaming (Police Officer Two).

[There are] oodles. Oodles [of instances of victim blaming]. I mean there was, even in the paper there was a judge the other day who did it as well. So, you know, it’s a complete culture thing out there at the moment. And there’s no excuse for them, but it’s the easiest advice to give isn’t it? “Don’t send pictures.” That’s the easy bit of advice isn’t it, that’s why we still go into schools and I hate it you know, “don’t send pictures.” It doesn’t work like that but it’s the easy way out. We still haven’t got it right for rape victims let alone poor victims of revenge porn, good grief (Police Officer Four)

Due to such poor police responses, support organisations felt that they needed to ‘arm’ victims with information before they approached the police.

They come to us and say, “what’s the legal recourse?” and we discuss with them the wide variety of options but the most helpful route is to go to the police armed with, “this law applies to my case because of this, this, this, look what they’ve done,” and then the police can take it forward (Activist One).

Coaching about how to approach the law has become a massive thing. So, what they'll expect, to ring 101, the fact that it's a call handler cos we just get so many complaints about that first call, people being put off, being upset. I coach people now like, "you're gonna go to call handler," cos those expectations really help and obviously I coach them about the laws, what they need to take. So, you're literally arming them because you can't stop an unsympathetic, ill-educated response from the police sometimes but you can arm a victim so they are confident enough to go there (Activist Three).

The need to do this not only indicates a lack of knowledge on behalf of those receiving reports of IBSA; it also means that those victims who do not seek support from lawyers or third sector organisations may be even more likely to receive inadequate responses from police officers if they are unable to identify the laws that apply to their own case. This was confirmed when interviewing victims. The women were asked what knowledge they had in relation to current legislation. All of the victims (whose images were shared after the implementation of the IBSA law) indicated that their knowledge of the law was very limited and that the knowledge they had accumulated was due to their own online research rather than receiving the information from the police.

Some of the victims interviewed also highlighted the importance of having a female officer handling their cases. Given that this was something that came out during the interviews, rather than being in the original interview questions, not all of the participants were asked how important this was for them. However, four women highlighted this issue.

The first thing that obviously upset me was the fact that it was a male case officer and I had to sit and physically describe every single picture, what I was wearing, what I was doing in my words for when it went to court. And obviously, I mean obviously it's got to be done but I think it could have been handled better (Victim Ten).

We got there, we waited an hour before someone spoke to us. Then someone came and it was a woman, cos I asked for it to be a woman when I phoned the 101 number. I said it needed to be a woman. Now, that seemed to be a silly thing to have done but at the time I didn't want to speak to a man about what had happened to me; I didn't want a man seeing the images (Victim Twelve).

However, Police Officer Four explained that at the time of reporting, sometimes it can be an impossibility to allow victims to choose the gender of the police officer.

It depends on the unit, it depends on how many staff they've got on the unit, it depends on shift patterns, some sections don't have any female officers on, some sections will have 75 per cent female officers. It depends, there's no guarantee you can have a female officer even for rape victims (Police Officer Four).

Improving Police Responses: The Need for Police Officer Training

Due to inadequate police responses, activists were adamant that police officers needed training in order to fully understand IBSA. All of the activists and police officers interviewed stated that training should be aimed at frontline officers and call centre staff. They felt that whilst cases should be handled by those in specialist units, it is those individuals who take initial reports from victims who need to be able to identify IBSA cases and advise victims.

Definitely I think there could be more done in training police officers with how to deal with revenge porn victims. I suspect that would be best use of money at the moment because that's obviously the initial kind of contact. I think there is some kind of training going on somewhere which is great. But it's the bobby on the street, you know, it's all very well having these lovely sexual violence units and things like that but it's the cop, the bobby that goes around straight away that needs to have the training on how to deal with it (Activist Two).

So, it's frontline police officers, but actually the other area is the call centre staff. Over at one of the buildings we've got a massive call centre, there are probably two police officers in there and 100 police staff who are not officers and they're working 24 hours a day answering 999 and 101 calls that come in to the police. They are probably a really key audience because if they don't respond properly and don't recognise the vulnerability and recognise the offence and say, "well, that's not really an offence, he's not actually done anything though has he?" Well the woman on the other end of the phone might well go, "well I don't know, I thought it was an offence but you're the police and you're telling me it isn't," and it goes nowhere. So yeah, the officers that attend and start dealing with it and the call centre staff are just as important (Police Officer Two).

There was a general consensus that one of the reasons police responses were seen as inadequate was a lack of knowledge of the law. There was also agreement amongst activists that police officers were in need of victim awareness and evidence collection training.

Erm, well there needs to a very basic understanding of what the law is because the police's job, if anything, is to implement the law and follow up if a crime has been committed. And it seems like a lot of police don't know what the law is, which is a bit worrying really. So, there's some fundamental training and awareness that needs to be done with the police, understand the law and understand the impact on victims and how serious it is and do something about it, follow through, and that's about finding the will. Hopefully, if you sort out the people to understand the law and the impact then they might find some will to follow through (Activist Five).

The law. Some victim awareness, I guess all the stuff they did 30 years ago with rape victims like, wearing a short skirt doesn't mean you deserve to be raped. Some basic training on the law would be nice ... especially at the grassroots police officers visiting victims and the advice should very much be to keep evidence you know, take screenshots of things however painful and horrible it is, retain as much evidence that you can pass on to the officers who can pass on to the Crown Prosecution Service. Greater training on how to download material quickly from phones and other things because, you know, people might also be reluctant to give up their phone if it's gonna take four days to get something off the phone. We need to have systems where it can be done almost instantaneously (Activist Two).

Police's confidence. So, I realise I'm here going, "this needs to change," I know that [police] confidence in dealing with these crimes needs to be improved and that means positivity. There was a case where something wasn't investigated because the police officer was hesitant to look at a woman's naked images, he didn't know what was appropriate, he was waiting for his supervisor and by that time it had been deleted and obviously then she doesn't get the support she needs. But the police officer wasn't trying be in the wrong, he just didn't know how to manage that crime and that needs to be top-down supporting cos officers deal with hundreds of cases a day. RP is a newer crime and they're dealing with massive amounts of things. So, that support for police officers, and they don't get given specialist training (Activist Three).

The interviews conducted with police officers reflected the need for training in these areas. Police Officer Two stated that police officers are still primarily trained to police traditional crime; crime which usually results in physical injury to the victim, for example assault. Therefore, he argued that "psychological damage and injuries is quite difficult to get your head around and then deal with effectively." The need for training was also evidenced in the stark differences in the way in which police officers and police forces were handling cases. For example, Police Officers Two and Four stated that not all officers have the ability to collect evidence from online platforms, highlighting how restrictions on the servers within the police forces prevent officers from accessing certain

websites. Whilst these restrictions can be lifted when examining these cases, it adds another barrier which may prevent officers from further investigating a case.

You would have to get the IT department to open the gateway or however we do it. So, it still has the appropriate protection. But yeah, we can do it. Officers on the front line may not know that. I know that you can do it. To be fair most officers should know that. Come on we're the police we should be able to get into this stuff. If they're looking for an excuse not to, they might not [talk to the right people] (Police Officer Two).

Police Officer Three also highlighted how he tried to contact a website to gain information about a perpetrator. In this force, he tried to request a username, IP addresses, and the time and date images were uploaded. He had to gain approval from a superior in order to submit the request for information. The request was rejected internally because the authorising officer "knew it wouldn't get the information from their previous experience" (Police Officer Three). In this instance, the request for information did not reach the relevant website. Speaking with Police Officer One about this issue, she stated that she would not face any issues making contact with websites.

Researcher: Are you able to get in contact with the websites easily?

Police Officer One: Yes. Yeah. And if we can't in [another department] will get in touch with them.

Researcher: How do you contact them?

Police Officer One: An email, it's not, I don't think we ever do it by phone call, we always have to have a footprint if you like, a footprint for the investigation so every stage we can see who's made contact and what the responses are if it does ever go to court.

This suggests some inconsistency across police forces with regards to online evidence collection. Inconsistency across different police forces was also evident when considering the size and workload of each force. The police officers who worked in smaller police forces (equivalent to Shire police forces), and therefore dealt with fewer cases, demonstrated a better understanding of the effects of IBSA than the officers who belonged to larger forces (equivalent to Metropolitan police forces).

We're a very small unit and we have benefit of time. Other police forces are probably inundated with [IBSA cases] now. We don't have that scale of work coming in, so we do have time. We have time to thoroughly investigate something, to spend loads of time with the victim, to go to court, to see it from A all the way through to Z. We can do it all. We're privileged (Police Officer One).

Consequently, this police officer provided the following understanding of the impact of IBSA on the victim whose case she dealt with, as well as the support she provided.

But that last particular case I dealt with; the victim was so traumatised it affected her life [from] the minute she woke up to the minute she went to bed. That is not worthy of caution, that isn't a slap on the wrist. She was traumatised and still is. I mean, he's out now and I phoned her prior to his release and said, you know, if she ever needed anything, or anything happened, to phone [me]. She's got the [safety net], and I suppose that will go in time if nothing else comes of it, if he doesn't contact her again. But it must be awful, you know. I think her social media, she's not on as many sites now, it's put her off. But why should it, you know, she's a young girl that's how that generation live don't they? He's [perpetrator] definitely restricted what she does, that's wrong (Police Officer One).

Comparing this response to a police officer who worked within a larger police force, there was a significant difference in how much he understood the impacts of such victimisation. He stated that:

obviously, I haven't discussed whether it's had an impact on her life as in going out on dates and stuff, but I presume it probably has (Police Officer Three)

The same police officer also stated that he was not aware of any emotional, physical, or employment impacts IBSA may have on the victim. Therefore, activists and some police officers highlighted that training should include an understanding of the effects of IBSA to ensure that officers are able to be empathetic, and above all, understand the need for victims to be listened to.

The empathy and around making them feel listened to, making them feel safe, reassuring them that we're actually doing this, and do it, that we understand the legislation and we can apply it. And so, the way that I've sort of reflected on it is that, it's the cyber-nature of it, it's the virtual nature of the crime that actually makes it difficult for officers and investigating officers to get their heads round. But then, you know, smacked in the mouth, we don't all need to have been smacked in the mouth to know that that's really painful. But yeah, just being able to empathise and understand what the impact is, maybe it's just difficult. It is violence, it is coercive, it is controlling but you don't actually have a physical injury. It's more difficult for people to get their heads round because it's not happened to them (Police Officer Two).

However, whilst training police officers on the law, evidence collection, and the effects of IBSA would be ideal, it was argued that this would be incredibly difficult with regards to resourcing.

So, a day's training on revenge porn for example, we've probably got 1500 frontline officers, so 1500 days out of frontline policing to deliver that. Well we really need to do something about domestic abuse, so that's a two-day course, another course around cybercrime and fraud and elderly victims, there's this course and that course. And actually, we'd be training all the time. So, I think that the better way would be for us to deal with it is to recognise that this is violence against women, recognise that this is linked to stalking and harassment, recognise that this is linked to domestic abuse in general and improve our overall response and understanding of that, the vulnerability of women, in this case, and how best to deal with those cases. And of course, there would need to be a bit of input on "these are the laws that you need to be considering." But I personally think it would be unrealistic to think that every officer in the country is gonna have a one day's input on revenge porn (Police Officer Two).

It was also argued that given the nature of IBSA and the tendency for victims to go into a highly emotionally charged panic state when they first find their images online, it would be more effective to have the incident identified as IBSA and then referred to specialist units to ensure that the victims receive both the practical and emotional support they need (Police Officer Four). Furthermore, with the law having some substantial limitations (discussed later), it is likely that even with training, a large proportion of victims will not receive the outcomes they want, or be able to pursue their cases in criminal courts. In these instances, activists emphasised the need for police officers' attitudes towards victims to be more understanding and to take the time to make victims feel heard, even though police officers are limited with regards to legislative responses.

So, the attitude, it may be that we know there's not going to be a massive outcome, won't be a massive prison sentence, all they can do is give a caution, but for 10 minutes sitting with someone who's been afraid and treated this badly, that attitude is everything. So, yeah, I think attitude really needs to buck up and the understanding of the law (Activist Three).

The Law and Criminal Justice Provisions: Failing to Account for Women's Experiences

The sample contained cases which occurred before ($n = 6$) and after ($n = 11$) the introduction of the IBSA legislation. With cases predating April 2015 being outside the law's remit, some of those women who reported cases in which images were shared prior to 2015 stated that the introduction of the IBSA legislation was placing a fundamental barrier to achieving justice.

Obviously, I can't have him prosecuted because it was prior to 2015. And basically, he's got away with it hasn't he so ... it's like a bit unfair isn't it. Because the offence has happened four years ago, I can't have him prosecuted ... because obviously if they [the images were shared] after 2015 then we could have had them prosecuted but obviously they were done prior so we couldn't (Victim Two).

The law came in and obviously I missed that. But obviously he admitted to putting pictures online but they couldn't do anything about it because the law wasn't in when he'd actually done it. It was like, I think it was only like a few months before (Victim Seven).

Activists provided an explanation as to why the introduction of the IBSA law is preventing historical cases being considered for prosecution, even though a large proportion of cases are historical.

We hear regularly, if your crime was committed two years ago, you'll be met with "there's nothing we can do because the new legislation only applies from April last year." As opposed to, so we'd like to look at it under malicious coms, [the police] just kind of go, that doesn't exist for this anymore. Of course, we know it does. And some forces will, but regularly we do hear this being used as almost an excuse not to follow up as opposed to going, actually we've got 10 different bits of legislation we could apply here, let's decide which is going to be the most effective for you (Activist Four).

A lot of the cases we deal with are historic. You know so, again the legislation doesn't fit that because it's saying you need new crime committed since last April but you would be surprised how many people are like, dealing with this for ten years, seven years, nine years (Activist Four).

The research findings also indicated that there are a number of significant flaws in the legislation which are causing victims extreme difficulty in getting their cases to court. The sample contained two cases in which the types of images distributed would not be considered sexual material under the current legislation. One of these cases was a photoshopping incident in which non-sexual images were altered in order to make them sexual, and the other involved a Muslim woman who had five images of her without her hijab uploaded onto Facebook. Both of these women recalled the impact that the sharing of these images had on their lives.

Anxiety definitely, because the same week this all happened, we got like French doors put in the back of my house. And when I come in the front door, I'd see my shadow reflected back because the French door are opposite my front door. And it would always freak me out and I thought, oh my god, I thought that he was going to come and get me because he knew where I lived and obviously, I got him in shit by calling the police, got him embarrassed. For ages I couldn't sleep, I just could not sleep, I kept thinking about him, what if he breaks in and stuff like that ... you know how weird your mind gets at night and it overthinks everything. So that 10 times. And for ages I kept thinking I didn't want to go out anywhere at night by myself, I didn't want to walk to my car. I'd always have to say to someone 'can you walk me to my car? Or can you drop me off at my car?'... I never ever park on the same stretch of where he used to live anymore and like, I always change up my route now whenever I go home just cos like, I heard people can follow you and stuff (Victim Fourteen).

Yeah. She was scared and thinking too much and not very comfortable. Not sleeping, crying, panicking ... she's unhappy. She doesn't wanna go out and do things. She's still scared. She was living in her own house, she had her own house that time. And when she left him and he did this, the photograph on Facebook, she went back to her ex-husband with her three kids, to stay with him because she was really scared... she was living in her own house [she gave it] back to the council and went back to her ex-husband cos she scared from him doing anything crazy (Victim Fifteen, Translated by Interpreter).

Whilst these images, and in particular those of a Muslim woman living in a Western society, are not considered to be sexual material, for the victims the fact of the images being made public was still damaging and left them vulnerable to other forms of abuse, including harassment. Furthermore, some of the activists described their experiences with similar cases and the impacts that they felt IBSA was having on Muslim women.

The law describes [sexual content] as like, nipples, genitalia, sexual acts but I think in the case of, actually I wish it would be redefined in some ways cos, say people from Muslim communities, the impacts are just as bad, if not worse, of someone in a bra, or with shoulders out. We're so limited in the fact that we get calls from women that are frightened of honour-based killings, of ostracization, when there's them in a bra. To me I'm just like, oh yeah that's just a bra. Actually, no, it's not to them, it's just as bad as sex ... to them it's just as impactful ... So, that to me is revenge pornography because it's got the same repercussions, someone's had the same drive, it's the same motivations ... There was a lady that there was a picture of her in her bra and she was in hysterics she was like, "please, that's it, that's as bad as being naked and having sex in the street please take it away." We had a girl saying, "only a t-shirt." She was like, "this is terrible my dad is going to beat me for this picture," and you just think that's someone's arms, that's my everyday but for her that's as bad as me being naked online ... We are a multicultural country, they can't be people we exclude when they make up a massive amount of our population. We need to take that into account (Activist Three).

These cases raised some fundamental questions with regards to the criminal justice system's understanding of IBSA; they suggest that the lawful definition of 'sexual content' in these cases is too narrow to recognise the complexities of IBSA. Victim Fourteen and some of the activists argued that sharing of any intimate image, regardless of how sexually explicit, was within their understanding of IBSA. They described how the context of image sharing and the way in which an image is shared played a more important role than just the image alone. Thus, the victims' and activists' understanding of IBSA in this respect was very different to the way in which the law defines IBSA.

The legislation also requires the prosecution to prove that the defendant acted with the purpose (or intention) to cause the victim embarrassment or distress (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Activists argued that this is presenting fundamental barriers to prosecution.

Yeah. The definition I think, the intent to cause distress causes a lot of issues and you can't, a lot of the time, show that someone's gonna cause distress. One time a man sent it to her work and all her workmates through email, and [the police] said, "well there is no intent to cause distress." Well, what else could it be? Yeah intent, so to cause distress (Activist Three).

Yeah. Because why else would they do it? None of that whole sentence, and I said that from the beginning that needs to go, that makes no sense. And how do you prove that they did it intentionally then? That's why a lot of victims don't come out, how do you prove that? How is that proved? Cos, I don't know how you physically do that (Folami Prehaye).

Four of the six activists strongly contended that any image sharing of this type is going to cause harm and distress and that in the majority of cases the need to prove intent is irrelevant; the fact that somebody has published someone's intimate images online without consent was perceived as something which is not only fundamentally wrong, but as an act by which any reasonable person would know that distress would be caused, even if they did not know the full extent of the harm caused by their actions. However, the two lawyers who were interviewed argued that the clause was needed to prevent overcriminalisation; therefore, they suggested amending the intent clause rather than completely removing it.

The threshold, is not as low as lawyers would say is appropriate because of the level of harm that it can cause the victim. If you look at a whole wide range of sexual offences, you'll see that some sexual offences have higher thresholds that says, you know, it's got to be *devastating* to the individual or intending to cause devastating harm rather than just harm. So, there's different thresholds and we would say that there's a lack of appreciation of how the intent level is too difficult to manage and puts another barrier up for victim. Removing it entirely means that you're creating a different set of potential criminals. So, you may not know that a photograph that you've received into your inbox is actually someone who gave it to you without consent, or gave it to the original publisher without consent. So, you're republishing that but without intent to cause harm. That would put you in the same box as the person who intended to cause the emotional victim harm by publishing it. So, I think there has to be some kind of differentiation, whether it's at two different levels (Activist One).

The *mens rea* is interesting, it's the same sort of level of *mens rea* that you have for a GBH, you know, a specific intent offence. I wonder whether there should be two offences that, the one that's you shared the images with the intention to cause that person distress and then something which is much more like harassment, you knew or ought to have known that it would cause them distress or something in there that's a bracket lower (Activist Two).

The suggestion of a tiered system was also identified by a police officer. He oversaw a case of multiple acts of IBSA by the same perpetrator, who claimed that he was intoxicated when sharing the images, thus automatically presenting problems in relation to proving intent.

Actually, the other issue, legally, I remember now, was the intent. I think intent to cause harm or distress because in this case, and I guess in others, it was a little bit, "well I didn't mean to do that, I didn't mean to, I didn't have the intent." Any offence where you've got to prove intent means that you've got to prove what someone was thinking at the time and that can be tricky. So, if there was a difficulty with the law that's probably the main one. In some cases, for murder or something you've not intent, you can be intent on doing it or you can be reckless, and recklessness can be proved, so you've got intent and then recklessness. Whereas this, you've got intent or nothing. So, if we can't prove the intent, as in really prove the intent to a criminal standard, you haven't got the offence (Police Officer Two).

With IBSA not being legally considered a sexual offence, victims are not automatically granted anonymity during the criminal justice process. One activist in particular raised the issue of whether IBSA should be a considered a sexual offence.

When we first mooted it, we were looking at having it under the Sexual Offences Act there were huge discussions about, we don't want people registered as sex offenders for this but it is a sexual offence, it feels like a sexual offence, and if it were sexual offence they'd automatically get the anonymity right and it would also enable us to get the content removed because then, whilst a picture of an adult woman or a man is not illegal in itself, it is if it's part of a sexual offence; that's part of the weapon. So, then we would have been able to get it taken down much easier but that, that just wasn't the route that was taken (Activist Four).

A lack of anonymity was consistently identified by activists as problematic. Not only was this said to be a common reason for underreporting; it was argued that this could potentially cause additional trauma to victims when coming forward.

I think it's an *absolute disaster* that there is no anonymity for victims. *I mean outrageous*. The nature of the offence means that it's embarrassing itself to come forward. So that's why anonymity of the victims is even more important. *It's just mad*. It's just a mistake. *It must be*, because there is no way they thought about it and decided oh actually we're not gonna have ... it's ridiculous (Activist One).

Well it's the nature of the thing. The whole point of this is that they feel exposed, shamed, and humiliated. So, why would you put yourself through that again, just at the point when actually you might be able to put it behind you because actually, by the time it comes to court ... Somebody yesterday said, "if I do go to court, will I be anonymous?" Well I had to say, "no, I'm afraid you just won't, you know, they won't announce your name but it will be there in record, the press might use it, they might not." And that's quite difficult but you have to say that if they ask you the question, you have to say. Anonymity would be really important (Activist Five).

Yep, [anonymity] needs to be added to the law. And sooner or later they'll have to do it. Look at it this way. You've been perpetrated [against] by your partner or somebody, you then go to court, and then it becomes public domain, you're then perpetrated again by the media. So, it's just a continuous circle. You know, so who says that the media can put the information out there without asking you. They don't even ask anyway, they just do it. And to me you're just adding to the stress that that person's already stressed out about because, you know, they've gone through this ordeal, they're stressed, and now you're just making it worse. Because by publicly, putting it publicly in newspapers or magazines it then feeds public perception and they feed public inquisitiveness, and [the public] start to look and it makes it 10 times worse ... The public side of it is the worst bit. When it happens between you and that person before you go to court, nobody is aware of it. But once it goes to court and it's in the public domain it's a whole different ball game because then you have all the comments, and the people, and the this and the that ... So, they need to be allowed to have the choice, choice is really important (Folami Prehaye).

When victims were asked whether they thought anonymity would be important for them if their cases reached court, there was a mixture of responses.

You know what, actually, I wouldn't have, I don't think I'd have anonymity cos I'd like to have a voice. I think the reason I'd keep myself anonymous is if the pictures were still live, you know. There's nothing to be ashamed of because you're just talking about it so, you know (Victim Two).

I think it should be the same as like, you know sex offences, the same as rape and that, they have anonymity don't they. So, I wouldn't want like the media or like my name or anything put in the media, anything like that. I'm sure there must be some cases, like some of these websites that never remove the images so then what if it goes to court and then this person's name is in the paper and things like that. Then people can go online and obviously look for their pictures and that will make it worse so I definitely think there should be anonymity (Victim Eight).

Erm ... yeah, I definitely think so because if my situation went to court per se, I would prefer for people not to know who I was and what my name is. I'd definitely think that's the right of victims to have that. It's definitely some kind of security for a victim to kind of want to have some justice done and to step forward and so, yeah I feel like it's definitely a really important thing (Victim Nine).

I can understand why a lot of people wouldn't go forward. They might do what I've done I think; remove the images and then not do anything else about it. Because this is not just the impact this has had on my life just now, but I know when it goes to court it's all gonna start all over again and my kids' lives are all gonna be upset all over again. So, I can understand why a lot of women don't want to take it to court because it's all gonna become back out in the public eye again. So, I think women should have anonymity yeah (Victim Twelve).

Victims were also asked whether they had, or would prefer to have, special measures (i.e. giving evidence through a video link) put in place if their cases went to court. Special measures should be offered to those who are likely to "suffer from fear or distress in relation to testifying in the case" (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019b). This often applies in sexual offence cases and cases of domestic abuse (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019b). Whilst IBSA is not legally considered a sexual offence and may not always be perceived as a case of domestic abuse within the criminal justice system, the findings indicated that this provision was being offered to victims because of the intimidating nature and distress caused by the offence. However, whether the victims wanted to utilise special measures was dependent on the women's individual circumstances and experiences.

Yeah, I'd definitely prefer [having special measures]. With my situation as it is and where I'm at with it, [the police] do want to go with me to give a report by video conference and at first, I thought I'd have to give it with my ex [in the room] which kind of scared the crap out of me basically. And so, having this screen or having some kind of privacy while giving that statement and not to have to face your perpetrator is something that if I ever went to court, I would appreciate (Victim Nine).

Yeah. Absolutely, that's why they, we did the video, the evidence has all been done by video and recorded. They didn't pressure me into doing it that way; they explained, they were very good, they explained the benefits and the pros and not pros and were very good about it. But yeah, and they have told me that they did it from the start, cos I think they can put you down as a vulnerable witness and they explained to me why they were doing that and if they do that from the start it makes it a bit easier, I think for them to help you later on. And they said, you know, they said there would be an option of me doing it either from a different room or behind a screen. They're very aware, they don't want me to have to face it because I think they know that, you know, with the recent intimidation, turning up at school pick-up time (Victim Six).

I'd prefer to be actually present in court because I think I'd like to see him actually in the skin cos obviously he'd be there and I'd actually like to look at him like you arsehole, hope you get [prison] (Victim Two).

No, I'd want to be in the court. Again, I'm stubborn. And I don't feel like I should have to hide. And I know for a lot of people it is necessary but I don't think for me, I don't want to sit behind a screen or in another room (Victim Five).

Obviously, they said that I didn't have to go but I wanted to. Like, I wanted like, it sounds a bit weird, but I wanted to see him squirm, see him have to say what he's done in front of people, in front of a judge, in front of me and to me mum as well so (Victim Ten).

The CPS representative also highlighted how special measures are particularly important for IBSA victims because their use can be pivotal in securing convictions:

In that case, [the victim] came to court and gave evidence, she had special measures, she gave evidence from behind a screen so she didn't have to face him in court. But it was refreshing to have a victim because they have a special room where they sit and often in those sorts of cases you walk in and the first thing they say is, "I don't want to give evidence," or they're in tears. And it's really difficult because you're trying to balance being sympathetic but also knowing that if you can't get them out of that room into the courtroom then the chances are [the perpetrator] is going to walk away scot-free.

In relation to the sentencing guidelines, many of the women felt that the two-year maximum sentence that IBSA carries was not proportionate to the harm inflicted on them. There was a tendency for victims to suggest that a two-year sentence should be the minimum, and/or that the maximum should be at least five years.

Well to be honest, and we all know now with good behaviour you get half of that, that's ridiculous. I'm sorry, six months is not enough. At the end of the day that person could come out in six months and the video could still be on the Internet. Remember once it's out there on the Internet it will forever be there, what is two years? I would literally say about six years, six years because somebody could lose a life because of that. Why should somebody do six months or nine months because of a video they've recorded and destroyed somebody's life, they've lost their life, they've lost their money, they've lost so many people in their life, they've destroyed themselves. They feel like shit. Why should somebody go through that and then the next six months they see that same person who videoed them. They should get six years and do three on good behaviour so that they can understand that what they've done is wrong (Victim Seven).

No, it should be more than that [two years maximum]. I don't know, five to ten years at least. I don't know it's hard to say, I guess it would depend how the victim was affected but I'd say at least five years, maybe ten (Victim One).

I think that [two years] should be a minimum to be honest and depending on the severity because I can, you know, having done a little bit of research I know that there's cases that are super severe and so because there's a scale I feel like the penalty should also be a scale but two years as minimum. Yeah, I definitely think as an absolute minimum, it feels like some justification (Victim Nine).

I don't think it's enough but that's just because I'm the victim and I feel strongly about it. But I don't think that's enough (Victim Twelve).

Those victims whose cases were less severe did highlight that they would be happy with a short-term prison sentence, but they were still adamant that they wanted their perpetrator to receive a custodial sentence.

I think two years is actually quite a good punishment to be fair, I mean considering in this country people who rape only get four/five years so. I mean, obviously on someone emotionally it depends how the person is affected emotionally by it and it depends on the case, I think if the person's life is ruined by it then I don't think two years is enough, you can't put any price on it. Personally, two years would be like yeah that's good because what's he's done is put me on the Internet, at the moment nothing too bad has come out of it. I've found it, no one else has found it, but I can imagine a girl of 18/20 or whatever it would be absolutely horrible especially if they come from a background that's religious or, you know (Victim Two).

I think it depends on the severity of the case. But I think a custodial sentence is suitable, I think the length would have to depend on the kind of severity of how many people it was sent to or what not, or how long it went on for. But yeah, I definitely think a custodial sentence is suitable. I mean, I think he [perpetrator] deserves a custodial sentence, maybe two years is a bit harsh. But at least I think it should be at least some kind of custodial sentence, even if it was just like a six-week sentence, I think that would be sufficient (Victim Eight).

Given that there have been no convictions which have resulted in anything close to two years' imprisonment, participants were also disappointed with the current sentences which had been given under the new legislation. Convictions have resulted in, for example, suspended custodial sentences of six months or less, community service, fines, and cautions. (Ali, 2019; BBC News, 2015a; BBC News, 2015b; BBC News, 2015c; BBC News, 2015d; BBC News, 2015e; Crown Prosecution Service, 2016; Day, 2019). However, it is important to note that those who were given prison sentences were largely convicted for other offences, such as harassment or threats of violence, rather than IBSA itself. It is also worth noting that the majority of cases do not progress to court (Ali, 2019). One victim also explained that she felt that IBSA law had not made any changes to sentences.

So, considering that he [the perpetrator] got a six-month suspended sentence for two years [under the Malicious Communications Act], then the revenge porn law came in five months later and people are still getting suspended sentences, what difference does it make? Why have one law that does one thing and another law that does exactly the same. So, to me that new law should have been different, but actually there's not much of a difference (Folami Prehaye).

The women's perceptions of the sentencing guidelines are something we may come to expect given that they are living with the consequences of victimisation. However, the sentiment that sentencing guidelines were not reflective of the harm caused was also confirmed by the activists.

The maximum sentence is two years which doesn't really place it in the category of a serious offence that a lot of people think it should be. Of course, you naturally judge an offence of how serious it is by the maximum sentence people could get. I mean for punching somebody, causing cuts and bruises, ABH, maximum is five years, you know, I suspect it [*RP punishment*] should be at least that as a maximum. Maybe have two years for, if you did have a harassment style, known or ought to have known it's going to have caused distress maybe that would be one that was nearer two-year maximum and then something that was higher than that, I suppose five or seven years (Activist Two).

I think two to five [years]. And it depends what's with it so if its coercive control, 10 years of it, you really need to consider the wider pictures and the effects. Also, if it's gone to someone's work and they now can't get a job. Cus there's another woman that had been unemployed for three years because this was out there. So, the kind of response on the person needs to be matching that (Activist Three).

I think there is definitely an argument sometimes that two years is not gonna be enough. But in practice not many people are going to prison for it, [there are] a lot more suspended sentences, but you could make that a longer sentence. If we had looked at RP on its own, probably not more than three years actually, realistically. It would be nice to think that you can send people away but realistically it wouldn't happen. We're not sending people to prison for all sorts of things that are even more serious so (Activist Five).

Although activists and victims were calling for sentencing which more appropriately reflected the severity of the offence, some activists were also keen to highlight that custodial sentences may not be the most effective response, stating the need for alternative approaches.

It depends what you think about prison. I also have views about prison and does prison work? Well it doesn't always, and for this sort of offence is it the right place, is that the right way to deal with this? I don't really know, but our prison system is not brilliant. Suspended sentences often do work quite well because as long as you give a lengthy period for the suspension it's hanging over people and you can build in all sorts of other things. We probably need more in terms of rehabilitation and domestic abuse work, something that can be operated by probation as part of your suspended sentence and then you get the best of both worlds, than just a community penalty. Well there certainly should be, because often with suspended sentences it should come with some. And I think in the way that the law is just starting to catch up, the support behind that and the way of dealing with it is even further behind. So yeah, if it is part of a community penalty there should be some rehabilitation that's specific to RP (Activist Five).

I don't think it's enough. I think they need to do more than that. It's not just about the punishment per se, it's about public perceptions, it's about changing the way people think about things you know. So, OK you've put that person, you've locked them up for two years, they wouldn't do two years, they would only do half in our judicial system. So, a year later what's to stop you coming back out and doing the same thing again? Cos you only get a year. It's not much of a deterrence is it? But if you then got a year imprisonment and put on the sexual offenders list that's a whole different implication. And maybe have to do something in the community where you're working specifically with women. But just to say, give somebody two years it's just nothing. It's not enough, they need to do more. (Folami Prehaye)

With the majority of the victims who approached the police being dissatisfied with the outcome of their cases, alongside activists' arguments that not enough was being done in relation to appropriately responding to victims' needs, the research indicates that the criminal justice system was generally failing to provide justice for victims. For some of the activists, the legislation was seen as a "token gesture [that doesn't] hold much weight behind it" (Activist Two). Only one police officer felt that victims were achieving justice (she managed to secure a custodial sentence in her case). The remaining officers stated

that Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act was not providing justice for victims.

No, probably not yet but having the specific law is the right direction to go in. In due course as with all new legislation it will settle down, people will begin to understand, officers will begin to understand it, the members of the public will sort of be a bit more confident to assert their rights, assert their knowledge. And, you know, in three or four years' time I would imagine that this will just be fairly, I don't mean routine, but will be something that is dealt with much more regularly. Officers will have dealt with a couple of cases, cos at the moment each officer that deals with it is probably dealing with a case for a first time so they're from a standing start. In a few years' time, you will find that even if they haven't dealt with one, they'll know a friend who has and say, "well what did you do with that?" "Oh well we did this, we got the evidence, we nicked him, duh duh duh," and it will just become part of the legislation that we enforce (Police Officer Two).

No. No because victims are, you know, and it's that, you see it on the TV and it's all wrapped up in half an hour and [the perpetrator] goes to prison. Sadly, real life isn't like that: there are sentencing guidelines and yeah, often victims aren't at all happy with the outcome and it is really hard. I find it hard to know what to say other than "I understand how you feel" but that's the situation (Police Officer Three).

When I speak to victims and say right, "this is the sentence," [the victim will say], "oh well you know that's nothing," or "he's not even got a custodial sentence," or he's been on remand for so long that he gets a custodial sentence but he's served it all so he's released straight away. So, I think the perception of some victims may well be that, no there isn't justice in terms of the sentence, probably not enough people get a custodial sentence. But as prosecutors we try really hard with what, with the evidence we've got to try and proceed and we don't like dropping cases, that's a last resort, I don't like doing that. And we try really really hard ... but I don't think all victims would think it's justice. As a lay person going through that process you want, as a victim you want the perpetrator punished and I think sometimes victims feel that [perpetrators] haven't got enough punishment and it's frustrating because you're often the one trying to explain why they haven't got, you know, they haven't gone to prison (CPS Representative).

With sentencing being perceived as inadequate, some victims have felt the need to seek justice in other ways. Three of the women who felt the criminal justice system was letting victims down decided to publicly speak out about their experiences. These victims utilised mainstream and social media to share their experiences and achieve justice. Others felt that the consequences for the perpetrator, for example the loss of jobs, were sufficient justice.

From the beginning after my depression, I came out of it and I started to do the action stuff; I said to people, “I’m gonna change a negative situation into a positive,” because I look at life like this, yin and yang. There’s always opposites and there’s always negatives and positives, it’s how you deal with it. I’ve said to people, “I’m gonna turn this into something positive.” Cos I was not having it, I just was not having it. I just said, “no, no, no I’m gonna show you. I’m gonna show that idiot that you messed with the wrong woman.” People said to me, “oh Folami you gonna leave Bristol?” “No let him leave Bristol, I grew up in Bristol, how dare you think you’re gonna embarrass me and I’m gonna run away and hide, na!” So no, I’ve come right through it and I just, by standing up and saying fuck you I’m taking control back of my life, you are not ruining my life (Folami Prehaye).

He was in the army at the time but obviously he got kicked out of that. His work got involved, which is the army, and they don’t take stuff like that lightly so they suspended him while it was like all happening. [He] lost his job, and I think like, that is a *massive* change to his life and I think, you know, that was a suitable punishment for him but you can’t do that to everyone (Victim Four).

Even though I wasn’t happy with the result that I got he’s still got a criminal record and I think that’s a lot more, you know, he’s gonna struggle isn’t he, getting a job. I’m assuming it will have a massive impact. I mean, I know that he’s tried to get a few jobs and lost them because they found out (Victim Ten).

Conclusion

The findings indicate that victims’ experiences with, and perceptions of, the criminal justice system are poor and that significant effort needs to be made to ensure that victims receive effective and appropriate treatment from police officers. The findings suggest that problematic responses are apparent from the initial stages of reporting, with victims facing various obstacles preventing them from reporting their experiences, as well as ill-informed responses from police and call centre staff. For those victims whose cases are pursued by police forces, it is evident that police officers do have the ability to provide effective responses, evidenced in the cases of the victims who had a positive experience with the police. However, this response to victims is not consistent, particularly in cases which are not obviously linked to other criminal offences. The findings suggest that for the majority of victims, police responses were largely inappropriate and ineffective, with victims feeling that police officers were not taking their cases seriously or addressing their needs. The findings also indicate that victim blaming remains evident within police responses. A lack of knowledge in the area may be resulting in police officers adopting stereotypical assumptions about these cases and the victims. This has ultimately left the

majority of women with a lack of faith in the criminal justice system, and has led to an urgent call from activists for police forces to instil training within this area.

However, police forces alone cannot be held solely accountable for victims' experiences because we cannot ignore the obstacles they are facing with regards to resourcing and increased workloads, reducing the prospect of implementing effective training for those who need it. As a result, there are some major inconsistencies in the way that victims are responded to across police forces: responses are highly dependent on an officer's ability to dedicate time to understanding the complexities of image based sexual abuse. Yet even if these issues were to be addressed, victims and police forces are facing some fundamental barriers with regards to achieving justice in a criminal context due to the plethora of limitations within the law. Not only do victims and activists indicate that the narrowness of the law and sentencing guidelines are not appropriate for the complexity and seriousness of the offence; the law does very little to encourage women to engage with the criminal justice process, leaving them to seek alternative forms of justice. The following chapter brings together the two findings chapters in a discussion of how the impact of IBSA on women and their experiences and perceptions of policing and criminal justice are fundamentally shaped by gendered discourse.

Chapter 7

Discussing Image Based Sexual Abuse: Supporting, and Contributing to, the Field

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of how technology has influenced the normalisation of online abuse and misogyny, and perceptions that online abuse can be separated from offline victimisation. This leads on to an account of the nature of Image Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) and the fundamental role that technology plays in this type of abuse. It is the nature of online abuse which exacerbates the impact of sexual violence. Therefore, this chapter provides new insights into how this type of victimisation has a profound impact on women's everyday lives, so much so that the consequences of IBSA become normalised as women's day-to-day behaviour undergoes major changes. Following this, an examination is provided of victims' experiences of police responses. This includes police officers' lack of knowledge with regards to the complexities of the offence and their failure to address victims' needs. Therefore, this research calls for more theoretically informed responses to victims, underpinned by radical feminist and critical victimological approaches.

The chapter then explains how these policing responses are also the result of legislative issues which not only make it more difficult for victims to engage with the criminal justice process, but provide some fundamental barriers to prosecution. In doing so, this chapter contributes to existing feminist literature surrounding sexual violence by reiterating the argument that the criminal justice system is still failing to address victims' needs and recognise the gender inequality which underpins sexual violence. This ultimately continues to silence women's experiences and undermine the seriousness of the offence. The chapter argues that IBSA should be considered a form of sexual violence against women and that the impact of such abuse is significantly worsened by phallocentric policing and legislative responses. The chapter will therefore conclude by putting forward recommendations, calling for both legislative change and an overhaul of policing practice with regards to how victims are responded to in their pursuit of justice.

The Nature of Image Based Sexual Abuse: Technology, Anonymity, Masculinity, and Control

This research found that smart technologies are among the primary facilitators of the growth of IBSA. Interviews revealed that technology is being used as a mechanism to sexually abuse women without physical violence, and without a close proximity between the victim and the perpetrator. In doing so, technology has provided new avenues for abuse through the increased opportunities to cause significant harm to victims. Furthermore, it is the distance between the victim and the perpetrator that further removes victims' abilities to assert control over the situation. Subsequently, women are being left in a constant state of anxiety and fear because of the capacity for offenders to unpredictably cause harm through their online activity. This supports previous arguments made by Jane (2017) that the Internet now plays a fundamental role in violence against women. Previous research has also found increasing levels of misogyny online, evidenced by the use of misogynistic material on social media platforms (Bartlett *et al.*, 2014). This has become so widespread that online misogyny has become a normalised feature of the online environment, with threats of rape and violence against women becoming common practice (Jane, 2017).

This physical distance between the victim and the perpetrator also contributes to reduced inhibitions of perpetrators through the protection of anonymity. Many of the women in this study had images shared anonymously by their perpetrator. Suler (2004:321) discusses the "online disinhibition effect" caused by technology, which results in people behaving in ways they would not ordinarily do offline, as a result of feeling less restrained in the online world. He argues that technologies not only provide a physical distance between the victim and the perpetrator but also a symbolic one, in that the use of electronic devices creates a distance by blurring the line between 'real' and 'online' behaviour (Suler, 2004). This underpins the perception that online abuse is 'unreal' or less harmful compared to offline crimes (Franks, 2011). The anonymity of perpetrators creates fundamental barriers for victims in achieving justice because it reduces the likelihood of repercussions for their abuser. Therefore, this research reiterates the argument that offline inequalities are integrated into the online context (Bartlett *et al.*, 2014) and that the use of media platforms to facilitate abuse contributes to this inequality (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franks, 2011).

However, this research takes this argument of inequality further by arguing that for victims of IBSA, the online and offline environments uncontrollably merge, whilst for perpetrators, the online environment continues to be something that can be separated from 'real' life. This only serves to reinforce gender inequality. With the majority of victims of IBSA being women and the majority of perpetrators being men (Citron and Franks, 2014; Cyber Civil Rights, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franklin, 2014), this means that women are still less able to take control or dictate the impact of the online environment on their offline lives than men. Furthermore, the transference of offline inequality is not necessarily a mirror image of offline abuse because the online environment has caused a change in the nature and level of abusive behaviour (Yar, 2012). Therefore, although IBSA reflects the same issues as offline abuse, including consent, harassment, and abuse both physical and psychological, it also creates new issues and consequences which are the result of technologization of abuse.

For the majority of women in this study, victimisation began with the production and/or obtaining of images, and with issues of consent. Whilst previous literature has identified instances of women being filmed during sexual assaults (see Henry and Powell, 2016; Salter, 2017) this research uncovered how issues of consent are present in the majority of cases, rather than just those cases in which a lack of consent is unambiguous (chapter five). Not only are women being filmed during sexual assaults; it is *common* for victims to have images taken without their knowledge through the use of hidden cameras and hacking. Furthermore, the likelihood of images being taken/produced without the consent of the victim increases when accounting for the fact that the most common method of obtaining images is through coercion. Both victims and activists in this study described how victims' reluctance to share images with a partner resulted in them being continuously asked to provide images, to the point where the victim eventually complied. Thus, the constant pressure to fulfil men's requests was often the reason that victims agreed to share the images. Although Henry and Powell (2016) found that women may be coerced into having images taken in order to avoid violence, these findings suggest that women's submission to having images taken is not necessarily due to an avoidance of violence, but an eventual acceptance of the requests of their partners.

There is a fundamental need to move away from examining the most extreme or unusual forms of image production and place a greater emphasis on women's everyday experiences which result in non-consensual image production. Thus, by utilising a critical victimological and radical feminist lens and therefore understanding sexual violence as a

continuous process of women's everyday experiences (Kelly, 1988; Mawby and Walklate, 1994), this research exemplifies the need to theoretically and empirically consider the events and processes which take place, other than just the image dissemination itself. Production of these images without consent is not something which is unusual but something which plays a role in women's everyday experiences of sexual violence, and fundamentally contributes to the perpetration of IBSA. In these cases, heterosexual discourses which reinforce violence (Walklate, 1995) become clear, particularly in cases where consent results as a form of compliance. This behaviour reflects Jensen's (2007) argument that women can often feel that saying yes to sex is easier than saying no. This compliance ultimately embodies violence in itself, because the consistent pressure women face with regards to taking the images causes a blurring of consent, and therefore they are *forced* to engage in sexual activity, even before image dissemination.

One of the most common ways men persuade women to produce sexual images is through the promise that the images will not be further distributed. This supports already existing findings that images tend to be produced with the agreement (or implied agreement) that they will remain private (Barmore, 2015; Citron and Franks, 2014; Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1988). More broadly, it can also be linked to Dworkin's (1976) examination of rape and assumed sexual access to women. She argues that men's assumption of sexual access to their partners within intimate relationships means that some level of coercion becomes legitimised. Thus, the production or sharing of these images as a result of coercion can be linked to this idea of assumed sexual access. Dworkin (1981:23) argues that "fucking is an act of possession" in that the act of persuasion or "conquering" demonstrates men's ability to control the way in which women use their bodies. This research suggests that, in relation to sexually explicit images, men literally come to possess an electronic record of their sexual ownership of women. Obtaining these images through coercion becomes normalised by two factors. Firstly, the perceived legitimacy of using pressure in relationship contexts to gain sexual access to women, albeit in image form, as a result of historically rooted concepts of ownership. Secondly, the normalised nature of technology in contemporary society means that the use of technology in sexualised contexts is no longer seen to be extraordinary. However, this research demonstrated the need to consider this theoretical argument further. In instances where images are taken without the victim's knowledge, assumed sexual access no longer just results in compliance. Nowhere is this concept of ownership demonstrated more than in

instances where images are taken without the women's knowledge. Assumed sexual access has become so extreme that men do not even feel that women's consent, albeit in a compliant form, is necessary. Instead, men now demonstrate assumed access by taking these images at will and wholly undermining women's bodily and sexual autonomy.

Yet the question remains as to why images are being sought, as opposed to just sex itself. The obtaining of images to reinforce a masculine identity was found by Salter (2016), who conducted research on young people's sexual practices on social media. He found that obtaining these images was not always the result of sexual desire but instead of cultural capital amongst peers. Boys were seen to act in a predatory manner when attempting to gain images from girls with *the intention of sharing* those images with their peers (Salter, 2016). Whilst this was a study based on young participants in schools, it demonstrates that the use of IBSA is already being practised, ingrained and legitimised in the culture of young adults. The ability to coerce a partner into producing or sharing these images is forming part of contemporary masculinity in that it is not enough to simply have sexual access: it is important to have proof of this sexual access.

There have also been cultural shifts in relation to women's sexuality. McRobbie (2009:24) argues that institutional gains made by feminism are now being "eroded" due to the modernisation of culture. She refers to the "phallic girl" in contemporary culture who is encouraged to adopt and celebrate practices which were previously perceived as male behaviour (McRobbie, 2009:18). These include casual sex, flashing breasts, and watching pornography, which gives the impression that equality has been achieved (McRobbie, 2009). In reality she argues that this culture requires women to perform masculinity without abandoning the femininity which is desirable to men. In doing so, this creates new constraints and forms of gender power. Encouraging women to engage more openly in sexualised behaviour in the name of women's liberation results in a reluctance to condemn these behaviours as problematic practices (McRobbie, 2009). Hence, despite women's 'freedoms' they are still expected to remain silent about harmful misogynist practices in order to be the "modern girl", who is assumed to uphold previous feminist positions (McRobbie, 2009:18). McRobbie therefore argues that through this perceived modernisation of culture, and the adoption of masculine practices by women being perceived as empowerment, feminism has become "undone" because this liberation still serves men's sexual desires and silences issues of consent and inequality. In her examination of girls' interactions with the justice system, Sharpe sums up this argument clearly:

Generational shifts in gender norms, perhaps most notably in the sphere of sexual subjectivity, have transformed the lives of young women apace. However, the expansion of new technologies, the mainstreaming of pornography and the ‘sexualisation of culture’ have been accompanied by seemingly intractable behavioural expectations, new modalities of constraint and an enduring sexual double standard (Sharpe, 2016:12).

Consequently, the modernisation of masculinity emerged in conjunction with modernised femininity, and so, women now live in a world where the production or sharing of their images (with a partner) is encouraged and celebrated and, at the same time, men’s masculinity is reinforced by receiving and taking ownership of the images. This ultimately provides men with the opportunity to encourage and exploit ‘women’s liberation’ whilst at the same time, using that sexual liberation *against women* when they see fit. Essentially, women are not only pressured into producing images; they are also punished for producing the images when perpetrators begin to lose control over the women’s lives. This corresponds with Stoltenberg’s (1993) argument that women are now encouraged to express their sexual freedom, whilst at the same time, men still maintain the power to define the parameters of that freedom (Stoltenberg, 1993). Franklin (2014) highlights this argument by stating that images are often shared due to a perceived ‘moral purpose’; ideologies rooted in the idea that women should be punished for inappropriate behaviour. Although the women who participated in this research did not have their images shared as a result of ‘moral wrongdoing’, they did have them shared as a result of terminating abusive relationships with their perpetrators.

By examining the context and culture which is embedded within IBSA, this research identifies how and why the sharing and production of such images has become so ingrained within women lives; it has, in fact, become part of both women’s and men’s culture. In doing so, contributions can be made to both victimological and radical feminist literature with the argument that, in order to examine new and emerging forms of violence against women, account must be taken of the shifts within contemporary culture. Today, whilst women’s sexuality is still governed by men, the process by which this happens and the way it is reinforced is undergoing major changes. IBSA is a prime example of how men are weaponising women’s liberation whilst at the same time using it for their own personal gain.

As shown in chapter five, the most common type of abuse suffered by victims prior to IBSA was controlling behaviour. In these instances, women who chose to walk away from abusive partners found IBSA being used in an attempt to force reactions from them

when they refused to maintain contact with their abuser. In doing so, men make clear attempts to regain the control and power over the women which is lost due to the termination of relationships. As Connell (2005) argues, men feel that their violence is justified because they are exercising their perceived right as men, over subordinate women. Thus, in the context of IBSA, the men's behaviour is a clear attempt to restore a sense of masculinity when a relationship breakdown presents a threat to their masculine identity (see Adjei, 2016; Salter, 2017). It is at this point that the link between IBSA and domestic abuse becomes strikingly clear, especially for the victims themselves. Many women are unable to recognise that they are in abusive relationships because of the subtleness of coercive control; however, the sharing of intimate images is something which victims see as obviously abusive or wrong. Therefore, the research found not only that women are still struggling to identify themselves as being in abusive relationships, but that IBSA is being used as part of a pattern of abuse. Thus, those women who are already in abusive relationships are at an increased risk of IBSA.

In cases where there was no history of abuse in the relationship, this research identified a wide range of motivations. For example, Henry (2016) and Stroud (2014) have identified motivations such as blackmail, sexual gratification, social status, financial gain, shaming, and humiliation, all of which were confirmed within the findings of this research. It also confirmed instances of images not being shared, but used as a means to threaten and control victims (Citron and Franks, 2014; Powell and Henry, 2016). Although these motivations appear unambiguous, a deeper examination uncovers how these actions are still likely to be underpinned by attempts to instil terror and uncertainty in the women. The respondents were not threatened with distribution by strangers; they were *purposely targeted* by former partners; therefore, the motivations of threats to distribute images remain much more complex than they appear.

When images are publicly shared, the identification of victims plays an important role in the women's experiences of victimisation. This research confirmed that the identification of the women means that they become recognisable both inside and outside their local communities (Citron and Franks, 2014; Franklin, 2014). In all of these cases, victims confirmed that identification was being used to amplify the effects of victimisation by broadening the audience (Laird, 2013), ensuring the victim's family, friends, and work colleagues were likely to view the images. However, this research found that there is a much more sinister impact on women, other than shame and embarrassment. As a direct result of identification, strangers try to coerce women into producing more sexual material

against their will and to solicit and harass women online by making direct contact with them. Some women are also approached in person and are subject to verbally abusive behaviour (online and offline). Even those victims who did not receive direct messages from strangers, but received unusual numbers of Facebook friend requests, felt that the context of the requests make them feel ‘dirty’ and even more fearful.

Essentially, women are not only abused through the sharing of their images but become subject to a multiplicity of abuse as a result of victimisation. Thus, the increasing access to others that technology facilitates creates even greater risks for their personal safety (Citron and Franks, 2014; End Violence Against Women, 2013; Henry and Powell, 2016; Stroud, 2014). The research interviews therefore highlight the significance of examining victims’ experiences of IBSA as a whole; to investigate beyond online image dissemination. In doing so, it found that the aftermath of image sharing forms an important part in the exacerbation of victims’ trauma. For the majority of these women, their identification is a purposeful act by the perpetrators and forms one of the most abusive parts of the victimisation process.

The Impact of Image Based Sexual Abuse: Women’s Everyday Experiences

Whilst the literature on IBSA has identified some of the most common impacts on women, this is the first piece of research which was able to examine IBSA through the use of in-depth interviews with victims in the UK. As a result, this research goes beyond identifying the most common impacts, and instead provides an understanding of victims’ feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and ability to function day to day. Furthermore, until the recent report published by McGlynn *et al.* (2019), in which surveys and interviews were conducted to examine legislative responses to IBSA, this was, internationally, the first research study which was able to gain access to and interview a significant number of victims ($n = 17$), making this research one of the biggest in-depth pieces of research to date.

As chapter five indicated, victims became significantly traumatised by their experiences; so much so that the women associated IBSA with rape and sexual assault. Indeed, this research found that the trauma of IBSA corresponded with the common effects on women who suffer from offline abuse. Women suffer from a range of mental health issues including high levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. This directly correlates with Mooney’s (2000) research, which identified that women subjected to

physical violence from partners suffered from depression, loss of self-confidence, anxiety, nervous breakdowns, and suicidal thoughts. The consequential similarities between online and offline abuse are also confirmed by Jane (2017:63), who describes victims of online victimisation having “feelings of anxiety, sadness, shame, isolation, vulnerability, unsafeness, distress, pain, shock, fear, terror, violation ... depression; panic attacks, agoraphobia, and self-harm”. Regardless of the fact that image dissemination most commonly occurs in an online context, this clearly indicates that the impact of victimisation on women is so similar to offline forms of domestic and sexual abuse that IBSA should be considered just as serious as traditional forms of rape, sexual assault, and domestic abuse.

This research also found that the technological nature of IBSA fundamentally exacerbates trauma. The permanent nature of IBSA serves to heighten the women’s poor mental health because the ease of uploading images online causes uncertainty for victims, which further heightens anxiety and paranoia. For those women who were subject to blackmail, there was a constant fear and anxiety that images would be published. Those who did have their images published, and successfully removed them, consistently feared images resurfacing in the future, recognising that there was no guarantee of complete image removal and that it was likely that someone personally possessed their images. Many of the women felt that the uncertainty of having images re-uploaded left them with a lack of closure; therefore, they could not see themselves overcoming the trauma. This is supported by Bartow, (2012) and Franklin (2014), who argue that the ease of downloading and sharing of images online means there is always a potential for images to resurface, even if the victim successfully removes them.

Whilst this research reiterates McGlynn *et al.*’s (2019) findings that victims live in constant fear due to the potential for images to resurface, it found further consequences of this fear. Fear of images resurfacing results in women developing obsessive behaviour; women spend a significant amount of time searching the Internet to see if images have been removed or uploaded. Whilst this is an attempt by the women to keep control of the situation, searching for these images on a regular basis reinforces levels of stress and trauma, whether they find images online or not. This is a process that Jane (2017) has argued to be a specific consequence of online victimisation. She argues that the relentlessness of abuse and harassment in the online world means that abuse is an everyday occurrence and victims can end up constantly checking online platforms during their daily activities. Furthermore, as a result of IBSA, women become restricted in the

online world. This confirms previous arguments that after victimisation, many women remove themselves from social media to avoid further abuse (Citron and Franks, 2014; Franks, 2011). Therefore, this research has uncovered that fear not only results in women changing their everyday use of the online environment; it can also result in problematic behaviour which maintains victims' trauma.

Changed and problematic online behaviour are not the only physical consequences for victims. For women, poor mental health becomes so severe that it has a fundamental impact on their physical health. Women suffer from loss of sleep, not being able to eat properly, and being physically sick. However, one of the biggest impacts on the women's everyday lives is the change in the way they use space. Fear of being recognised by those who have seen the images, and a fear of crossing paths with their perpetrator, mean that women feel they can no longer enter spaces they would have done prior to their victimisation. Many women struggle to leave their homes and for those that do, simple tasks like going to the local shops become a terrifying ordeal. Essentially, the physical space that the victims feel they are able to use becomes limited.

This spatial restriction also means that it becomes difficult for the women to socialise with family and friends outside the home. Many women suffer from friendship breakdowns as a result of loss of contact, often due to not wanting to socialise with those who do not know about their victimisation, causing a general decrease in social interaction. Consequently, victims highlight how feeling isolated is one of the most significant impacts. Whilst the mental health issues impact upon women's behaviour, self-isolation also probably works to reinforce poor mental health, leaving victims in a 'cycle of trauma'. Whilst this is not clinically recognised, the research findings clearly indicate that these factors intersect and that this makes it significantly more difficult for victims to maintain normalcy in their lives. Instead, it becomes silencing, as the physical and social restrictions hinder women's abilities to reach out and talk about their experiences.

Literature surrounding the physical impact of IBSA on women is almost non-existent. However, in examining the impact of IBSA from a radical feminist and critical victimological lens, this research has uncovered how women's daily changes in physical behaviour form part of the victimisation process. Victimisation continues to be evident in women's everyday lives (Walklate, 2009; 2010) and ingrained in their everyday behaviour to the extent that these practices became a normal part of these women's lives

(Mawby and Walklate, 1994). IBSA can therefore be seen as something which contributes to the “sexual politics of fear” (Dworkin, 1976:52). That is, part of femininity is to accept the fact that men’s behaviour, especially in relation to sexual violence, is the norm and in doing so, this requires women to learn fear (Brownmiller, 1975; Dworkin, 1976). This is reflected in the women’s changes in behaviour due to fear of further victimisation.

The impact of IBSA also has direct consequences for those women who are employed or in education. Cyber Civil Rights (2014) found that 82 per cent of victims suffered from financial or employment loss. The findings in chapter five not only confirm that IBSA has a direct impact on employment and education; they provide a more detailed understanding of how victimisation impacts upon the women’s working and educational lives. It is common for victims to take time off (or leave) work or education, causing financial difficulty. Others remain in work or education but struggle to maintain a good standard of work. This also confirms Boyd’s (2011) findings that sexual victimisation results in financial costs including loss of income and capacity to earn. Thomas *et al.*’s (2015) research also identified victims of sexual abuse suffering from financial instability, changing employment, or struggling to find employment at all. This is particularly relevant to victims of IBSA as the public nature of the images may result in victims losing their jobs or being rejected from future employment, especially if their images occur in Google search results (Bloom, 2014; Citron and Franks, 2014).

The findings also uncover impacts which are specific to women within Islamic and Hindu communities. For these women, there is a fear of bringing shame upon their families and this means that these victims do not disclose their victimisation to their families. For Muslim women, there are additional fears of ostracization from the community, physical violence, and honour killings. Thus, the common impacts are exacerbated by the complete loss, or threat of loss, of family support networks. Helie (2012:3) argues that Islam is no longer just a question of belief, but something that becomes an all-encompassing part of identity: “one that should shape an individual’s sense of self, as well as the collective code of conduct”. Part of the code of conduct within this society, particularly for women, is the repression of women’s sexuality. Those who do not conform to ideas or expected norms and values may be subject to an exclusionary process because they fail to follow the idea of ‘Muslimness’ (Helie, 2012). Like terms such as ‘Western values’ and ‘Christian values’, ‘Muslimness’ is a term used around the world by “families, communities [and] governments ... to justify stigmatization and repression” (Helie, 2012:2). For the women who took part in this research, not only is it against the

expectations of Muslimness for men outside of the family to own images of them; it is the height of shameful for those images to be exposed publicly online. Thus, the fears of bringing shame on the family and of ostracization are not unfounded, but a reality that these women face. The women also stated in their interviews that their perpetrator knew that the sharing of their images would be detrimental to their lives and would result in devastating consequences within the community. Therefore, this research uncovered how it is vital to account for how community reactions can be used as part of the motivation for IBSA, and as something which can increase harm to victims.

Whilst the majority of the non-Muslim women did disclose their experiences to family members and stated that their families played a supportive role, this also resulted in family members becoming distressed on behalf of the victim. Until recently, this was something which had been given very little attention. Whilst McGlynn *et al.* (2019) argue that the impact of IBSA can extend to family members who take on a supportive role, this research is able to provide a more detailed account of how family members, (potential) partners, and children are also significantly suffering from the consequences of IBSA. Family members suffer from increased stress and anxiety as a result of the women's victimisation and it is common for intimate relationships to become difficult to maintain, or for these relationships to break down. Victims are also concerned about the impact of their victimisation on their children, particularly due to changes to their daily routine. This is dependent on the effects of the trauma on the women. Being unable to leave the house, visit the shops, drop the children at school, go to work, and cook means that they start to lead erratic lifestyles which in turn disrupt the children's daily routine. There are also concerns that the children will find the images online or circulating within the community. Given that women are more likely to be sole carers for children, the impact of IBSA becomes gendered, with women being more likely to have to deal with this additional consequence than men.

Coping Mechanisms and Resistance: How Women Regain Control

Many of the consequences for victims, particularly those which involve a change in everyday behaviour and the inability to trust (potential) partners, are coping mechanisms adopted by the women in an attempt to prevent further victimisation and trauma. This supports Kelly's (1988) argument that the effects of victimisation, and the coping strategies that women employ, cannot be entirely separated. For example, women's

wariness of new relationships is identified by Kelly (1988) as a healthy response to sexual violence. Similarly, women's refusal to enter into spaces where they may encounter further abuse or humiliation, and their refusal to associate or disclose their experiences to those who may respond negatively towards them, are attempts at self-preservation. Stanko (1985) similarly argues that victims' behaviours change as women take precautions and implement measures which protect them from further violence. Furthermore, the impact on women and the changes in their behaviour reiterate the importance of understanding victims' experiences as a whole rather than categorised as events. As Dobash *et al.* (1992) argue, categorising events simply as incidents fails to acknowledge the context in which violence occurs. This research demonstrates that the aftermath of victimisation constitutes part of the violence in IBSA.

However, this research also finds evidence of women's resistance and empowerment. It supports Rowntree's (2010) argument that resistance can take the form of gaining a deeper understanding of the reason for victimisation by making attempts to protect themselves and others from sexual violence. This is demonstrated in this research through victims' attempts to be proactive in image removal, and the women's determination to speak publicly about their experiences both on social media and in the national media. This type of resistance is growing exponentially, particularly on social media with various support groups emerging. These platforms aim to bring victims together, to allow them to share their experiences with each other, and thus to provide advice and support as well as campaign for legislative change (Battling Against Demeaning and Abusive Selfie Sharing, n.d.; Victims of Internet Crime, n.d.). This type of resistance is argued by Kelly (1988) to be a coping strategy adopted to restrict the power men hold over women, something which some of the women find particularly important. Thus, in instances of sexual violence the research indicates that women do adopt both avoidance and resistance strategies, depending on how fearful they feel at a particular time (Kelly, 1988).

The blurring between women's coping mechanisms and resistance means that victims' perceptions of the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' indicate fluidity rather than dichotomy, in accordance with critical victimological theory (McGarry and Walklate, 2015; Spalek, 2006). This research found that in instances where feminists might use the term survivor (because the women have begun to come to terms with their experiences or show resistance rather than powerlessness) (Walklate, 2007), the women generally preferred the term victim. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, some women felt that the term victim better represented their feelings of powerlessness. Secondly, the nature of IBSA,

especially when women are perceived to have consented to the creation of images, lends itself to self-blame and victim blaming. Therefore, for some women, the term victim plays an important role in representing their experiences and blamelessness. Thirdly, the uncertainty of images resurfacing leaves women in a position where it may not be entirely possible to move past the experience, even if they eventually manage to repair all other aspects of their lives. Thus, the term 'victim' also contributes to representing that lifelong burden. Lastly, some women felt that their experiences did not warrant use of the term survivor because they did not perceive their experiences to be as serious as those with which the term is usually associated; that is, forms of physical violence and sexual assault. Whilst this could reflect a lack of engagement with feminist literature, it does demonstrate a societal perception that the term survivor is reserved for those who recognise themselves as being subject to physical abuse, and that this term is still perceived to be associated with physical violence.

However, the majority of the women, including those who identified as survivors, demonstrated fluidity between the two identities. Some felt they had become, or would like to perceive themselves as, survivors, or that the long-term impacts and uncertainty of images resurfacing meant that they identified with both the victim and survivor states at different times. This supports Christie's (1986) argument that being a victim or survivor is not something which is objective because victimisation differs according to each individual person. Therefore, the way we identify an individual, regardless of their coping mechanisms or resistance, should ultimately depend on how that individual *defines their* situation.

By allowing women to take control of how they want their experiences to be defined and refusing to put them in a fixed 'victim' or 'survivor' category, this research leans towards Walklate's (2007) argument that these distinctive categories fail to capture the victimisation process. Instead, the women made clear that they are likely to be a victim and a survivor at different times, or even simultaneously. Theoretically then, whilst it is important to recognise the importance of the term 'survivor', this research finds that the term 'victim' still has an important role to play in representing victims' experiences. It is vital, then, not to enforce our academic perceptions of what empowerment is on women, but to allow them to define their own identities, whether that be a victim, a survivor, a victim-survivor, or none of the above.

Police Responses: Why Police Forces Are Failing to Address Victims' Needs

A failure to recognise the complexity of IBSA and the impact on victims is directly linked to police officers failing to meet victims' needs. Due to this, victims generally feel that police responses are inadequate. Mawby and Walklate (1994) and Venema (2016) argue that police perceptions and discretion play a fundamental role in the police process. Whether and how police will respond depends on the balance between these interpretations and other demands on police time. This can result in inconsistent and poor investigations, poor recording of domestic abuse incidents, and, subsequently, an increased likelihood of missing opportunities for early interventions (Myhill and Johnson, 2016). In relation to IBSA, criminalisation did not occur until 2015, meaning that cases in which images were shared before then cannot be prosecuted under the IBSA law. Victims whose cases predated April 2015 are being told that their cases will not be investigated because the law does not apply. This leaves women feeling that they have missed out on any chances of prosecution. This raises concerns that the introduction of the new law may be narrowing police officers' perceptions of what constitutes abuse in an image sharing context, resulting in the police failing to investigate cases at all rather than considering other possible avenues for prosecution such as the use of the Malicious Communications Act 1988.

Walklate (2018) also identifies the importance of initial police responses, arguing that the first response from police officers impacts upon the relationship between the police and the victim throughout the criminal justice process. Furthermore, Mawby and Walklate (1994) identify the importance of how the interaction between criminal justice agencies and victims plays a key role in victims' experiences. In relation to IBSA, there is very limited discussion within the literature on identifying victims' specific experiences with police officers. McGlynn *et al.*'s (2019) research is the only other study which interviewed victims in order to examine their experiences with police. They found that police responses were generally unacceptable and left very few victims with positive experiences. This was due to a number of factors, including feeling like they were not being taken seriously, feeling like they were being blamed for their victimisation, and being left to navigate a criminal justice system they did not understand without the necessary support (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). The findings of this research reiterate these arguments but also provide a more in-depth understanding of victims' experiences by highlighting the importance of how interpersonal responses impact upon victim perceptions, rather than solely focusing upon the action that police take.

In this research, the women perceive injustice from police responses as being linked to the way victims feel that police officers personally respond. It is within these interactions that victims may suffer from severe secondary victimisation because of the way the criminal justice process contributes to the exacerbation of their victimisation (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). This research found that women either encounter, or fear encountering, victim blaming. This is something which academic literature has previously identified (see Bloom, 2014; Citron and Franks, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2016). Hence, some of the participants did not report to the police because of the fear of being blamed for the creation of the images. This research also supports arguments that victims do not report to the police because they have heard of other cases in which victims received a negative response when reporting (Laird, 2013; Channel 4, 2015). This indicates that victim blaming is still a significant problem which prevents victims from coming forward. Respondents' fear of victim blaming was very much warranted as this research finds that police officers are still responding to victims in this unacceptable way (see chapter six).

Unsurprisingly, many of the criminal justice staff denied the existence of victim blaming. However, some police officers did highlight that victims are being confronted with victim blaming attitudes from officers. This shows positivist victimological approaches still being practised. Victims are seen to play an active role in their victimisation, through the perceived consensual production of images or wrongdoing; consequently this is undermining the women's status as worthy victims (Wolfgang, 1958). Thus, Stanko's argument made in 1985 remains just as relevant today. She argues that traditional discourses surrounding sexual violence suggest that women are deserving of victimisation because of their 'problematic' behaviour (Stanko, 1985). This perception is still underpinning policing responses to IBSA and contributing to the denial of victimisation. Franklin (2014) argues that this is rooted in an ideology that individuals, particularly women, should be punished for inappropriate behaviour; an ideology which is not only outdated but hypocritical and rooted within misogyny (Franklin, 2014).

Furthermore, the sexual nature of these images means that there is an increased likelihood that victimisation will become trivialised and justified, as Gavey (2019) argues that sexual scripts influence the legitimisation of slut shaming. For example, women who are seen to dress provocatively or have sex with multiple partners are more likely to be seen to contribute to their own sexual victimisation (Fairchild, 2016; Helena, 2005). According to Wolfgang (1958), this lack of clear resistance impacts negatively on the victim's perceived culpability. This assumption is aided by the tendency to believe that a 'genuine'

victim can evidence resistance through physical injury (Walklate, 1989). The continuing of these problematic assumptions is evidenced in chapter six, with one officer stating that policing responses are still focused upon physical crime within the offline world and that there is a lack of understanding as to the nature and impact of online crime. Franks (2011) also argues that because crime is often perceived as something which causes physical or emotional harm in an offline context, the harm of online crime often goes unacknowledged. This research therefore finds that the technological (rather than physical) nature of IBSA serves to play on these assumptions because abuse which does not leave physical injury contributes to the denial of victim status and in doing so, aids perpetrators in their denial of abuse.

Responding to IBSA in this way undeniably contributes to the silencing of victims as a result of a hierarchal approach in which the status of deserving or undeserving victim is awarded depending on the type of sexual violence (Walklate, 1989). This is also a clear demonstration of how the maleness of the criminal justice system continues to function within contemporary responses to sexual violence. Through these policing responses, the justice system continues to set the limits for which types of violence are legitimised and which constitute violations, whilst at the same time continuing to stigmatise women's involvement in sexuality (Connell, 1990). Policing, therefore, continues to be underpinned by patriarchal responses which discount women's experiences. It is these victim blaming attitudes which lead activist participants to argue that victims are suffering from self-blame and low self-esteem. Essentially, the nature of the offence, and responses to the women's victimisation, can result in victims internalising blame, which further contributes to women's oppression (Dressel *et al.*, 1995).

Furthermore, this research found a clear discrepancy between victim needs and police officer capabilities. Police officers' general lack of knowledge in relation to what the women's needs are, and how to appropriately help victims, means that women are left without the emotional and practical support that they need. For example, victims feel that police officers are more concerned with apprehending suspects than making attempts to address victim needs. This is supported by Clevenger (2015), who argues that police concern with obtaining evidence and interview testimony means that victims' needs and welfare are ignored. Mawby and Walklate (1994) also argue that even when police do intervene, intervention is not underpinned by the interests of the victim. Police culture emphasis on action and detention means that providing additional services for victims is rare. This is partly influenced by crime being perceived as routine for police officers;

therefore, a recognition of the impact upon on victims becomes diluted (Mawby and Walklate, 1994). Therefore the lack of knowledge in relation to the seriousness of IBSA, the impact on victims, and their needs, is having a detrimental impact on policing responses, ultimately preventing victims from receiving the vital support they need.

The most significant need for victims is information. Victims consistently stated that police officers are not keeping them up to date with their cases and that they are finding it incredibly difficult to get in contact with the investigating officers. This lack of communication leaves victims with an overall lack of clarity with regards to the progress of their cases, resulting in the feeling that the police are not responding effectively. Walklate (1989) highlights that victims require information on the process and progress of cases and court proceedings and that the police are consistently critiqued for failing to give victims sufficient information. Shapland (1986:212) examined victims' satisfaction with police forces and found that one of the major influences on positive perceptions (at the initial investigation stage) was police interpersonal responses and whether they expressed concern for the women and understood the seriousness of their experiences rather than what they practically did: "a concern with process rather than outcome". Therefore Shapland (1986) identified that being given information was one of the most important aspects of the police process; thus, a lack of information was one of the key reasons for dissatisfaction with the police. Larcome (2011) has also highlighted that victims' experiences could be improved by implementing effective communication between victims and the police and ensuring that victims receive the information they need about the criminal justice process. The research findings therefore reiterate the importance of communication between police officers and victims by highlighting just how important this communication is; not only for the victims personally, but also for their perceptions of policing responses.

Additionally, given the sensitive nature of the images, women identified the importance of the gender of the police officer they disclosed their experiences to. This is an issue which is yet to be discussed within the literature surrounding IBSA. On reporting their experiences to the police, the sexual images become an important part of the evidence collection process; therefore, victims are required to disclose these images to the police. Whilst the collection of images as evidence cannot be avoided, victims emphasise that being able to speak with, and share the images with, a female officer impacts upon how comfortable they feel. As indicated in chapter six, some of the women stated that they were either upset they received a male officer handling their case or that they were

relieved they were able to speak with a female officer. Therefore, there is a shortfall with regards to what victims feel would limit secondary trauma and what police forces are able to provide.

Due to such poor police responses, support organisations are having to ‘arm’ victims with information before they approach the police. This includes ensuring that victims are able to identify which legislation applies to their cases in an attempt to guide police forces to take the cases seriously. Precautions are also taken to protect victims from feeling frustrated or disappointed by warning victims that their initial contact with the relevant police force is likely to be inadequate, and may be inappropriate. Whilst this increases the likelihood that victims will fight for recognition, as opposed to automatically accepting police responses because of the knowledge police are assumed to hold, it places responsibility on victims to ensure officers are enforcing the law. This ultimately means that those who do not seek support before contacting the police are at an even greater disadvantage in relation to having their experiences recognised, and for those that do, they are expected to also undertake a policing role as they become responsible for ensuring that the law is enforced. Essentially, Mawby and Walklate’s (1994) argument that victims are in need of a shift in policing priorities, one which places greater emphasis on service rather than crime-fighting, is still very much relevant today. If victims are not at the centre of the criminal justice system, it damages the belief that the criminal justice system can offer anything to victims, and therefore raises questions as to why they should report crimes against them (Davies, 1996). Therefore, radical feminism and critical victimology have an important role to play in providing a more theoretically informed policing response. By understanding the gendered nature of IBSA and inequalities which underpin sexual violence (Walklate, 1995), a more informed understanding of how victimisation impacts upon women’s day-to-day lives can be obtained by police officers, placing them in a better position to identify and therefore more effectively respond to victims’ needs.

How the Law Fails to Represent and Protect Victims

Although there are many flaws within police responses to IBSA, due to legislative limitations the law itself is further exacerbating difficulties with regards to securing convictions. This research finds evidence to support feminist arguments that the law remains slow and ineffective at responding to sexual abuse. In relation to rape cases,

feminists have continuously argued that the criminalisation of rape does not mean that women's experiences of rape are recognised and accounted for within the criminal justice system. This includes the inadequacy of legal definitions of rape and consent as well as approaches, and victim blaming approaches, to examining rape cases within the courtroom (Brownmiller, 1975; Cowan, 2007; Helena, 2005; MacKinnon, 1989). Whilst attempts to address sexual violence through the implementation of law are important, the law itself is not enough to end rape or the silencing of women's experiences because of the patriarchy ingrained within the criminal justice system (Griffin, 1979).

The implementation of the IBSA law and the problems which accompany it mirror these arguments. IBSA law by no means fully accounts for, or recognises, victims' experiences and certainly does not prevent them from being silenced. The patriarchal inequalities within the state's responses to IBSA still mean that the reform has done very little to address the problem (Griffin, 1979). This continued silencing is a consequence of a poorly drafted law which ensures that only specific cases or circumstances will be heard within the criminal justice system. These failures mean that women perceive the law as unenforceable or not applicable to them, which may lead to some women denying their own victimisation because it has not been legally defined by the state (MacKinnon, 1987:144).

Whilst criminalisation of IBSA has increased the number of victims coming forward (BBC, 2019), victims continue to face a number of barriers to qualify for inclusion within the law. The law's narrow definition of sexual material focuses upon nudity, exposure of the pubic region, and images which depict sexual or provocative behaviour (Ministry of Justice, 2015). This ultimately means that the law focuses upon the most sexually explicit images rather than the wide range of images that women are likely to take or share with their partners. In 1987, MacKinnon argued that the legal definition of rape reflects what men deem as excessive and normal male behaviour, and thus, women's perception of violation is unaccounted for (MacKinnon, 1987). This research clearly uncovers cases which do not qualify within the law's definition of sexual material, including women depicted in their underwear, women whose non-sexual images have been edited to create the illusion of the victim performing sexual acts, and a Muslim woman who had images shared of her without her religious clothing. These cases highlight that the impact of victimisation on these women paralleled the impact on those women who had images shared that did meet the lawful definition of sexual material. In doing so, the law fails to recognise these women's experiences and suffering; instead, ignorance of the context of

image sharing means that the sharing of these ‘non-sexualised images’ is perceived as normal and acceptable. Thus, a patriarchal approach is still entrenched within today’s criminal justice system and is evidenced in the legal definition of IBSA, which only allows the most sexualised cases to be legally accounted for. This reflects Smart’s (1989) argument that definitions with the law disqualify women’s definitions of sexuality due to the phallocentric criminal justice system. It is vital that the state takes greater consideration of the sexualised context in which images are shared rather than just examining the images alone. For example, in 2018 the Australian Government criminalised IBSA by making amendments to the Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015 (Yar and Drew, 2019). Within this Bill, the legal definition of intimate images takes account of instances where images are shared of victims without religious or cultural attire which they would usually wear in public (Enhancing Online Safety Act, 2018) It states that:

Material is an *intimate image* of a person if:

because of the person’s religious or cultural background, the person consistently wears particular attire of religious or cultural significance whenever the person is in public; and the material depicts, or appears to depict, the person:

- (i) without that attire; and
- (ii) in circumstances in which an ordinary reasonable person would reasonably expect to be afforded privacy (Enhancing Online Safety Act, 2018:8, original emphasis).

Furthermore, in order for cases to reach court, the law requires there to be evidence that the perpetrator intended to cause the victim distress (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Whilst some of the research participants did highlight that the removal of the clause might result in overcriminalisation, this requirement is significantly restricting to victims’ cases. There is general agreement amongst victims, activists, and police officers that the harm caused by this restrictiveness outweighs the protective measures. This research therefore calls for the removal of this requirement, based on two key reasons. Firstly, that regardless of the perpetrator’s intentions, the sharing of a victim’s images is always going to cause high levels of distress; secondly, that trying to evidence the perpetrator’s intentions ultimately means evidencing a thought process, which can become incredibly difficult to prove, especially if the perpetrator argues that this was not their intention. Citron and Franks (2014) have also identified the need to remove this requirement because basing responses on the intent of the perpetrator rather than the experience of the victim contributes to a hierarchy of victimisation. Thus, there is a strong argument that this requirement within the law does not serve or represent the interests of victims; instead, it serves the interests

of perpetrators by operating in a way in which makes the prosecution of men incredibly unlikely. This also suggests that cases in which intent can be established are more serious than those in which it cannot, creating a hierarchy of seriousness. This may result in fewer victims approaching the criminal justice system and increased likelihood of victims withdrawing from the criminal justice process.

This research therefore finds that inappropriate policing and legislative responses are ultimately denying victims justice. Victims are faced with the almost impossible task of overcoming these barriers, which are not designed to protect victims but to protect perpetrators. In cases of gendered violence, this means that the criminal justice system is not designed to protect women, but to protect men. The law does not take account of women's definitions of IBSA and what women feel is a violation, and instead offers definitions which exclude women from the criminal justice system. Essentially, laws are still being designed to accommodate male definitions of sex and violence (Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1987; Smart, 1989), forcing women to engage with a criminal justice system which is not designed to represent them. Making attempts to address IBSA with legislative change without combating inappropriate policing responses demonstrates a failure of the state to take sexual violence seriously. This research thus reiterates Griffin's (1979) argument that the law cannot end sexual violence. The law does not and will not provide justice for victims until the patriarchal nature of the criminal justice system is eradicated.

The Importance of Anonymity and Special Measures

With IBSA not being lawfully categorised as a sexual offence, it means that victims are not granted anonymity within the criminal justice process (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). This research finds this to be one of the key reasons for victims' reluctance to engage with the criminal justice process. Victims have already been publicly humiliated and embarrassed by their perpetrator; therefore, a lack of anonymity means that further attention may be drawn towards the victims and their images when cases go to court. The research findings suggest that granting victims anonymity would not only encourage victims to come forward and engage with the criminal justice system; it would limit the vulnerability of victims by safeguarding them from further abuse. This research therefore supports the continuing campaign (The Guardian, 2015) for victims of IBSA to be granted anonymity in an effort to increase their willingness to come forward about their experiences and their

chances of achieving justice. Similarly, McGlynn *et al.* (2019) found that this lack of anonymity means victims' names can and have been published in news reports and other public platforms, and that this was a fundamental barrier preventing victims from coming forward. Therefore, they argue that victims should be granted automatic anonymity in these cases. By failing to consider IBSA as a form of sexual violence and failing to grant victims anonymity, the state not only fails to consider the dangers for women who come forward to the criminal justice system; it also suggests that IBSA is less serious than other sexual offences. Therefore, the state is continuing to reinforce hierarchies within sexual violence (Kelly, 1988) and the silencing of women by refusing to implement vital protective measures.

However, this research did find that some victims did not want anonymity. Some women emphasised the importance of gaining empowerment from speaking out, and therefore stated that they would not want anonymity on the grounds that their images were no longer in circulation. Differences of opinion amongst victims were also evident when the participants discussed whether they would like special measures if their cases went to court. Some of the women were adamant that the use of special measures was important to reduce the trauma of the court process, stating that they would not want to have to confront their perpetrator again in person. However, some women also spoke about the importance of being in the courtroom because they wanted to face their perpetrator as a way of showing empowerment. This research did find that for those victims who were preparing to take their cases to court, special measures (in the form of pre-recorded evidence and video links) were being offered to victims of IBSA. A survey conducted by the Home Office (2004) identifies the significance of the use of special measures, particularly for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. They found that most witnesses using special measures rated them highly and that around one-third of witnesses would have chosen not to give evidence were it not for the implementation of these measures. Whilst vulnerable and intimidated witnesses were shown to have a generally more negative experience within the criminal justice system compared to those who were not vulnerable, witness satisfaction was generally higher when these measures were used (Home Office, 2004).

Sentencing Needs to Reflect the Seriousness of the Offence

With victims suffering from such a wide range of intense impacts, this research finds that the current sentencing guidelines are not only inadequate but entirely inappropriate. This is something which previous literature has failed to address. Amongst activists and victims, there is a general consensus that the current two-year maximum sentence should be used as a *minimum* sentencing guideline and that the maximum penalty should be at least five years. This is partly due to current sentencing practice in the UK, which results in most offenders receiving early release from prison (Robinson, 2011). In fact, with the current sentencing guidelines and a lack of custodial sentences being given, there is an argument to suggest that although the legislation has raised awareness of IBSA, the outcomes of cases do not significantly differ from those of cases which are prosecuted under the Malicious Communications Act 1988. Thus, with the state's failure to draft appropriate sentencing guidelines, as well as a general failure to enforce the ones we have, the state can be seen to be legitimising IBSA by doing little more than providing a legislative token gesture for women (Ballinger, 2009). The state, therefore, is undeniably protecting men, and literally demonstrates patriarchy in action.

Even those victims who state that they would be happy for their perpetrator to receive a short sentence still call for these sentences to be custodial. However, McGlynn (2011) has argued that victims tend to call for traditional punishment approaches when discussing ways of achieving justice because of societal assumptions that these are the only ways available. With a more informed understanding of the criminal justice system, some of the organisational staff argue that an increase in custodial sentences may not be the most effective method in rehabilitating offenders, suggesting that community penalties or suspended sentences, alongside programmes aimed at changing problematic perceptions and eradicating abusive behaviour, may be more appropriate. Whilst it is unlikely that victims will be happy to see their abuser serving a community sentence, this does not mean that custodial sentences will ensure victims' justice either. For example, Herman's (2005) research found that even when perpetrators of sexual assault did receive a custodial sentence, the fact that the criminal justice process gave victims little involvement in the process still resulted in victims being dissatisfied with the outcome. Considering that policing responses to IBSA also do not place victims at the forefront, punitive sentencing cannot guarantee that victims will feel justice has been done.

However, what justice could be for these victims reflects McGlynn and Westmarland's (2019) concept of kaleidoscopic justice. For example, for the victims in this research it is important for the abuser to receive some kind consequence and accountability for their actions (McGlynn and Westmarland, 2019). For some, it is that they serve time in custody; for others, it is enough that their abuser is given a criminal record, or that their abuser loses their job. It is also important for the victims' experiences to be believed and recognised (McGlynn and Westmarland, 2019). This research highlights the need for victim blaming approaches to be eradicated (both within the criminal justice system and in victims' communities) and for victims to become involved, or at least feel that they are kept up to date, with the criminal justice process. Essentially, it is the recognition of their experience and the interpersonal response within the criminal justice system which are fundamentally important for victims. Thus, playing an active role in the criminal justice process is vital. McGlynn and Westmarland (2019) identify that justice for victims often means attempts to reduce reoffending and protecting others from the same form of victimisation. For many of the women in this study, this is imperative, with some choosing to speak publicly about their experience in an effort to ensure that IBSA is a recognised form of abuse within the community and to ensure that their perpetrators are made to feel accountable for their actions. This also forms a vital part of the empowerment process. Essentially, justice for many of these women could be what McGlynn and Westmarland, (2019:194) describe as making the victim "whole again", in that justice includes recognition and support within the criminal justice system and the community, ensuring accountability in one way or another.

Image Based Sexual Abuse: A Modernised Form of Violence Against Women

The gendered nature of IBSA ultimately begins with the inequalities that exist when thinking about the fact that the exposure of male and female bodies is subject to different responses, particularly in an online context. Salter (2016) found that digital circulation of sexual images is done in a manner which reinforces gender inequality. For example, young boys who chose to distribute images were able to do so in a humorous way as well as a means to demonstrate masculinity amongst peers. Essentially, for males, images became part of an entertainment and social bonding process. However, when images of a female circulated, the treatment of these always retained a sexual and pornographic connotation (Salter, 2016). It is this unequal perception and objectification of women's bodies which contributes to the gendered nature of IBSA. Discourses which dictate that

women's bodies should be seen as nothing other than pornographic objects result in the use of women's bodies as things which can be commodified or owned. It is this inequality which underpins the motivations for IBSA and detrimental impact of victimisation on women. The research findings, therefore, mirrored the motivations and impact of sexual violence found by Dobash *et al.* (1992) in relation to the asymmetry of violence against women. It is this inequality which underpins motivations for IBSA and the detrimental impact of victimisation on women.

Furthermore, the forms of sexual abuse found within these cases are consistent with the forms of sexual violence Kelly (1988) places on her continuum of violence. The complex and public nature of IBSA means that the sharing of images is unlikely to be the only form of sexual abuse that victims are subjected to. Therefore, women's experiences of IBSA as a whole are often inclusive of other forms of sexual violence, including those practices which are deemed harmless due to the normality of such patriarchal practices within everyday society. The research found that women suffer from many different overlapping forms of abuse and this can be at various stages of the victimisation process, including the creation of the image, the intermediate period where the image is yet to be shared, the distribution of the image itself, and post-image sharing. Therefore, IBSA is a clear demonstration of how different forms of sexual abuse overlap into intersecting events rather than being isolated (Kelly, 1988). The links this research identifies between domestic abuse and methods of control ultimately suggest that we need to be understanding IBSA as a weapon of control. Women's images are consistently being used by men as a means to maintain or regain control and punish women, through either the actual publication or threats to distribute these images. Therefore, image based sexual abuse is a contemporary form of violence against women.

The failure to understand this within policing and legal responses is underpinned by gender inequality. This includes narrow perceptions of what violence and abusive behaviour are, and assumptions that some types of violence are more significant than others (Basile and Black, 2011; Clarke and Lewis, 1977). This results in a failure by the state to recognise the severity of the emotional and physiological abuse which results from online victimisation within the criminal justice system. Therefore, the use of IBSA as a method to control, harm, and shame women must be considered as a mechanism which perpetuates continuations of patriarchal relations and masculine discourses. It is through these poor policing practices that it becomes evident that patriarchy remains ingrained within state responses to IBSA, in that the reporting process ultimately favours

the abusers rather than the victims. There is very little about this process which encourages victims to come forward to the police, and when they do come forward they ultimately remain silenced by the continuing victim blaming responses. These victim blaming responses are underpinned by the patriarchal attitudes which still saturate police officers' perceptions of sexual violence, in addition to an investigation process which does very little to support the gendered needs of these victims. By failing to understand the needs of these victims and effectively respond to them, state responses continue to legitimise, and at the very least allow sexual violence to continue, through their inaction and failure to address the problematic perceptions and cultural practices of the criminal justice system. Addressing these perceptions and practices is vital because as feminist work has already identified, whilst changing the process and providing the correct support for victims is important, this support cannot be fully effective when problematic perceptions and culture continue to undermine a supportive process (Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

Furthermore, the failure of the law to account for the wide range of IBSA cases by excluding cases through its narrow definitions means that it cannot, and does not, fully account for the gendered nature of the offence. Its failure to consider the broadness of the offence, failure to consider IBSA as a sexual offence, failure to grant victims anonymity, and failure to implement sentencing which reflects the seriousness of IBSA, mean that the law serves to benefit abusers rather than victims. This serves to encourage the continuance of IBSA through inaction. In doing so, Ballinger's (2009) argument still remains relevant; the state ultimately can be seen to be doing gender by refusing to acknowledge the patriarchal norms which underpin both policing and legal responses, and by failing to respond to the fact that state responses to sexual violence are as damaging as the offence itself.

This research, therefore, calls for fundamental reform in the way we understand and respond to IBSA within the criminal justice system and society. Whilst the argument that the criminal justice system needs a radical overhaul in order to respond appropriately and effectively to sexual violence is not new, IBSA is a clear demonstration that the state is not listening. This research adds to the multiplicity of voices which stress the need for change. For example, in discussing women's sentencing and the poor approaches and provisions for female offending, Gelsthorpe (2006:424) states that "we've said it before, but we seem to have to say it again, and again, and again" that the criminal justice process needs to be "gender proofed in a way that ensures that women's needs are recognised".

Although Gelsthorpe (2006) discusses sentencing rather than victimisation, the same issues still apply: the justice system needs to account and appropriately respond to the gendered nature of offences.

Policy and Legislative Recommendations: Transforming Victims' Experiences of the Criminal Justice System

By providing an in-depth understanding of why victims are experiencing poor responses, this research is able to make vital recommendations which may not only encourage victims to come forward but also increase their satisfaction with the criminal justice process. In doing so, it hopes to aid victims in their pursuit of justice. Some of these recommendations reiterate already existing recommendations which still have not been adopted by the criminal justice system; therefore, this research contributes to the existing voices calling for radical change. However, this research also contributes to the field by providing recommendations which have yet to be made, or which differ from those already being made by other academics.

The need for police training around IBSA is something consistently highlighted by the literature and confirmed by the activist participants. It is argued that in order for significant improvements to be made, police forces need bespoke training (Henry and Powell, 2016). There is a consensus amongst activists and police officers that training needs to be focused upon frontline police officers because they are the first contact for victims, and given the importance of good interpersonal responses, this research supports the argument that this is where training needs to be focused (Powell and Henry, 2016; Tidmarsh, 2016). However, this research found that the current lack of resourcing would make the training of every frontline officer an unrealistic task due to high policing workloads. This research therefore suggests that the most effective way to implement training may be to ensure that all frontline officers and call centre staff have a basic understanding of the legislation and the key issues, in order to correctly identify cases and respond and advise victims before signposting to the relevant specialist department. Those within these departments should be receiving more comprehensive training on the issues. This could essentially make IBSA training programmes more cost effective whilst also improving police responses.

There is also a need for all investigating police who come into contact with victims to undertake victim awareness and evidence collection training, so that police officers are able to provide victims with appropriate advice which is not informed by victim precipitation theories but instead effectively responds to victims' needs. Victims also need to be given the correct advice in relation to evidence collection, given that providing evidence of this type of offence often falls upon the victim. This can become problematic if victims attempt to remove the images before passing the necessary evidence on to investigating officers. Alongside this, there is a call for police officers to be trained in helping victims with image removal on online platforms; for example, informing them on how to approach websites and making victims aware of RIPA forms, otherwise known as 'right to be forgotten forms', which can be submitted to Google to request that their images be prevented from appearing in Google search results. At the very least, police forces should be referring victims to organisations such as the Revenge Porn Helpline, to aid with image removal in conjunction with appropriate police investigations.

However, officers also need training on how to collect evidence from victims' devices, and specialist equipment so that victims are not forced to forfeit their mobile phones. Activists and police officers state that there is a need for frontline officers to be able to collect evidence in these cases swiftly and securely, whether that be from the victim's electronic devices or online platforms. This is because any delays in evidence collection could result in images being removed from platforms by the perpetrator (Powell and Henry, 2016). There are also concerns amongst activists and police officers about evidence collection and the need for police forces to be given the resources to investigate online crime. Although in many of these cases victims are required to obtain evidence such as screenshots from social media accounts, for those images posted on public websites, including pornography and dedicated revenge pornography websites, the research indicates that police officers are in need of training on how to obtain and preserve evidence. This recommendation reflects Henry and Powell's (2016) argument that training needs to include computer analysis for the purposes of evidence gathering. Extracting social media posts, online threads, emails, and messages needs to be done as soon as the report is made. Ultimately this means that police officers should recognise and take seriously victims' fears of images resurfacing and new online threats emerging due to the technological nature of IBSA, and recognise that victims are vulnerable to multiple waves of victimisation (Powell and Henry, 2016).

Interviews with police officers also indicated that training was needed to improve the consistency of policing across England. Police officers' awareness of the impact of IBSA on women varies considerably; an understanding of the impact that this type of abuse has on victims is considered imperative to providing empathetic and appropriate responses. This includes allowing victims to tell their story and making victims feel listened to, even if police officers are limited with regards to building a case for prosecution. The significance of this kind of understanding is evidenced by those who did have a positive experience as this was a direct result of officers making victims feel that their accounts of their victimisation were important and that the officers understood the gravity of the situation. This was also highlighted by Tidmarsh (2016), who argues that listening to victims needs to play a key role in policing. Victims need to be allowed to tell their whole story before answering police questions on specific information. Doing so will allow law enforcement agencies to understand them whilst also opening up avenues for disclosure (Tidmarsh, 2016). Moreover, victims are often aware that the probability of conviction is low; it is part of the justice process to allow victims to come forward and have police forces listen to and *believe* their stories. This may also improve relationships between police forces and victims (Powell, 2016).

In relation to the gender of the investigating officer, victims express being able to talk to a female officer as an important factor. Whilst this does not mean that female officers provided a better policing response than male officers, it does make a difference in terms of how comfortable victims feel reporting and sharing their experiences and images. Whilst this will not make a significant difference to the policing process, it may make a huge difference to the victim; more importantly, it allows them to have choice and thus feel more in control, or at least involved in the criminal justice process. Therefore, this research recommends that victims should be asked if they want to speak with an officer of the same gender. That said, it should be made clear whether this decision is likely to result in longer waiting times due to policing shift patterns and availability of officers. Victims should also be informed that a longer waiting time may cause a delay in being able to seek image removal as officers may need time to collect live data from online platforms. Whilst a delay for the victim is not ideal, the fundamental factor here is choice. For victims who are in a position which has left them unable to control their exposure, allowing them to make choices over to whom they disclose their experience and images could aid in positive perceptions of police responses.

With regard to the maintenance of contact between victims and investigating officers, the lack of communication leaves victims feeling unimportant. For victims, this lack of communication is one of the most significant factors which cause dissatisfaction with policing responses. Thus, this research argues for these communications to be significantly improved. Victims need to be informed of case progress at every stage of the criminal justice process; even if there have been no significant developments in the investigation, victims should be informed. This will ultimately allow victims to feel police officers are working on their case and feel involved in the investigation process.

This research also supports the need to legally consider IBSA as a sexual offence (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). There are three reasons for this: Firstly, the nature of this type of victimisation is sexual. Secondly, the impact on victims of IBSA mirrors the experiences of women who have been subject to a physical form of sexual abuse; therefore, this offence should not be considered any less severe because of its electronic form. Lastly, categorising IBSA as a sexual offence would allow victims to receive anonymity. With specific regard to anonymity, researchers have thus far suggested that this anonymity should be automatically granted (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). However, this research indicates that choice plays an important role in victim empowerment and that it is important for victims to be given the *option* of anonymity rather than anonymity being refused or automatically granted. If victims wish to remain identifiable, it is imperative that they are fully informed of the potential risks of allowing their case to be public (including their identification in the media and audience widening if their images are still being circulated) before they make a decision. Without this, the criminal justice system not only discourages victims from coming forward but may be causing further trauma for victims.

In relation to the current legislative responses, the legal definition of sexual material needs to be broadened to account for the weaponization of images which do not meet the current legal standard. This means that the law must take the contexts of cases into consideration rather than placing too much emphasis on the images alone. This includes images which may not be deemed sexually explicit in Western culture but may be seen as sexually explicit within the cultural background of the victim, and where this knowledge has formed part of the motivation to share or threaten to share these images. Similarly, the deep-faking or photoshopping of images needs to be included within the current legislation as this research has indicated that the impact on these women is not far removed from that upon those who have their images shared. Thus, in order to take

account for the variety of IBSA cases, the law needs to move away from the focus on the image and towards a greater understanding of contextual and motivational factors.

Furthermore, the requirement that prosecution can only occur when intent to cause distress to the victim can be proved needs amending. This research suggests the need to consider introducing a tiered system, with the introduction of lower thresholds for intent within IBSA legislation. A tiered system could begin to differentiate between those offenders who share images knowing that it will cause distress to victims, and those who share them without *clear knowledge* of this consequence. The legislation may benefit from being drafted similarly to other offences where proof of intent is a requirement, by also acknowledging the harm caused by recklessness in cases where intent is more difficult to evidence. This would aid in narrowing one of the most significant loopholes within the IBSA law. Lowering the evidential barrier would provide victims with a more realistic chance of achieving justice through the criminal justice system. By doing this we can begin to account more effectively for victims' experiences whilst at the same time attempting to avoid the potential for overcriminalisation of those who unknowingly reshare non-consensual images.

Whilst radical feminism has traditionally rejected the approach of working with the state because of its maintenance of patriarchy and violence against women, criminalising forms of abuse is argued to be the quickest way to move towards a societal acceptance that gendered violence is a serious crime (Heo, 2010). Therefore, while it is unlikely that appropriately legislating against IBSA will be enough to reduce the prevalence of victimisation (Duggan, 2012) or resolve the problematic responses women face within the criminal justice system, it will contribute to a more informed understanding of the offence, an increased acceptance of the seriousness of the offence, and a reduction to the harm caused to victims.

Furthermore, in her examination of feminist social movement work with regards to violence against women, Mimi (2015) highlights feminist work which does not collude with the state, but rather begins to control the state through contestation and direct influence on enforcing a system change. This includes advocates playing a vital role in writing legislation surrounding violence against women (Mimi, 2015). Given that this and other research (see Faith, 2000) has demonstrated that only those who have experienced a situation can subjectively detail the reality of these experiences, it is imperative that those who conduct research in the area, and grassroots organisations, are at the forefront

of, and given the power to make, legislative changes. Therefore, these groups should also play a key role in the training of police forces. In the past, this approach has been key to building collaborative relationships between domestic violence advocates and police forces, instigating positive change including the creation of special police units (Mimi, 2015). Essentially, in order for effective legislative and criminal justice change, those who have specialised knowledge need to “infiltrate” the system (Mimi, 2015:16). This approach provides opportunities to take some power away from the state and allow feminist movements to become the dominant power holder with regards to responding to issues of violence against women (Mimi, 2015:16).

This approach can also be seen in anti-carceral feminist work, in which documentation of feminist activism has detailed an “inside/out” approach which includes collaboration between activists, legal advocates, and imprisoned women, working within and outside of prisons (Faith, 2000:158). This means that attempts can be made to change the system through activism on the outside to challenge power imbalances and injustices, as well as using the knowledge from those inside the system to inform and implement calls for change (Carlton and Russell, 2018). It was found that building these collaborative networks was key to instigating social change and legitimising campaigns which had previously worked from outside of the criminal justice system (Carlton and Russell, 2018). It is this kind of approach which will be vital in reforming the criminal justice response to IBSA victims. With victims being resistant to contacting the police, alongside poor policing and legislative responses when victims do come forward, it is researcher and activist knowledge on the gendered nature and the seriousness of the offence, the needs of victims, and the vital changes needed within the criminal justice process, that can instigate reform. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers and grassroots organisations gain power within the criminal justice system in order to force change which ensures that victims are able to receive both support and justice.

However, these types of reform cannot tackle IBSA alone. This is because the criminal justice system is reactive; criminalisation and prosecution may reduce the likelihood of re-victimisation, but for women more generally the law will not be enough to prevent victimisation in the first place (Duggan, 2012). Therefore, it is important to implement both legal and alternative interventions which do not rely on criminal justice intervention; something which has historically been on radical feminists’ agenda (Duggan, 2012). Radical (and liberal) feminists have also argued for development of support services, education in school, campaigns to increase public recognition of violence against women,

books, journals, community education, soap opera storylines, and training of professional staff (Carmody and Carrington, 2000). These preventative approaches would be vital in combating IBSA because, most importantly, they provide a framework for prevention which does not place responsibility on the victim to avoid victimisation by assessing risk (Carmody, 2003). Similarly, Kirchengast (2019) highlights the need to consider multiple approaches when responding to IBSA that move beyond reliance on criminal law. This includes greater consideration of civil remedies, community education, and campaigns which aim to set alternative standards and norms in technology use, thus encouraging a cultural shift to avoid the perpetration of harmful online behaviour. This is because legal remedies often focus on punishment of the offender rather than compensation for the victim (Kirchengast, 2019). He therefore suggests a holistic social policy framework which adopts both legal and alternative responses in order to respond more effectively to the range of issues surrounding IBSA (Kirchengast, 2019).

In order to take this preventative approach to IBSA, public awareness strategies can play a vital role because they provide a key mechanism for challenging victim blaming attitudes and encouraging communities to implement behavioural change (Carmody and Carrington, 2000). This is otherwise known as a “social norms” approach; it is argued that raising awareness of issues could encourage “bystander intervention” in which members of society can promote and engage in pro-social interventions (Flood, 2015). This could not only aid in the prevention of perpetration but also improve societal responses to victims through increased awareness and education in communities. For IBSA, this may also encourage the public to take action against its use, including increasing the reporting of images and contributing to placing pressure on institutions to make change.

There is also scope for education programmes to be implemented in schools to promote discourses around non-violence in relationships (Carmody and Carrington, 2000). Flood (2015) highlights that students who attend rape education sessions at school and university show less adherence to rape myths. However, more evaluation of the types of approaches taken in these programmes is needed in order to ensure effectiveness (Flood, 2015). In relation to IBSA, this means that from a young age, children will have a better understanding of healthy relationships and the harm caused by IBSA. This may not only prevent perpetration; it may also reduce levels of victim blaming responses. Essentially, if sexual violence is something which is ingrained within cultural beliefs and practices

about gender and relationships, there is a need to combat cultural beliefs and the normalisation of sexual violence (Carmody and Carrington, 2000).

This research therefore supports the recommendations of McGlynn *et al.* (2019) that there is also a need for specialist education within communities in order to combat the use and normalisation of IBSA through educating those in schools, universities, clubs, social venues, and workplaces. Finally, this research supports McGlynn *et al.*'s (2019) argument that there is a need to increase funding for specialist services. A preventative approach is likely to involve an increased workload for those who work at the grassroots level; therefore, there is a need to increase the funding for these specialist services so that they can not only continue their work but expand, in order to engage prevention strategies.

Conclusion

Overall, an examination of women's experiences of IBSA and state responses not only confirms the key issues identified in the existing literature but also provides a contribution to the field by deepening understandings of women's experiences. Abuse and misogyny being facilitated by the online environment is not a new argument (Jane, 2017). However, this research has highlighted how IBSA, in particular, causes a problematic merging of the online and offline world in which victims become unable to separate the two environments due to continued victimisation online after image dissemination. The research identified the multiple ways in which images are obtained (consensual sharing, hacking, the filming of sexual assaults, hidden cameras) and also made clear that the creation of these images often forms part of a pattern of abuse, with the majority of women being pressured or coerced into producing image(s). Women are subject to conflicting expectations in that they are expected to provide images for their male partners whilst at the same time being punished for inappropriate behaviour. This research also identifies links between domestic abuse and IBSA, with some of these women having their images shared as part of a control mechanism from already physically and/or mentally abusive partners. The identification of victims can often be the most damaging factor within victims' experiences; it allows men to ensure that the women's online victimisation has a direct impact on their everyday offline lives with the knowledge that women, in particular, are likely to suffer from shame, embarrassment, and harassment as a result. IBSA allows men to have significant power and influence over women's lives

even after the termination of a relationship by utilising already existing gendered discourses which serve to oppress women.

The most significant finding is the impact of IBSA on women. By using a critical victimological lens, this research indicates that victims suffer from a wide range of mental health issues which have a direct impact on the physical health of victims as well as the way in which they utilise space. The research also indicates that changes in behaviour by the women reflect typical gendered preventative strategies to avoid further victimisation as a result of constant fear and anxiety about being publicly judged and embarrassed. Women's tendency to avoid or change the way they use public space online and offline results in isolation being one of the biggest issues for them. Furthermore, the research finds evidence of additional impacts for those who belong to strict religious communities in which ostracization is likely to be a common consequence for women whilst generating an increased risk of violence. Thus, the consequences are often so serious that they mirror the consequences for women who have suffered from physical forms of rape and sexual violence; therefore, IBSA needs to be considered as an equally serious offence. An examination of the women's coping mechanisms did demonstrate resistance from victims in an attempt to regain power over their own lives. This ultimately indicated that these women are both victims and survivors of online abuse, in that both of these terms represent their experiences and self-perceptions at different times. Therefore, this research highlights the need for literature to acknowledge the importance of *both* of these terms and allow women to define their experiences.

There needs to be greater understanding within police responses that victims not only need the same support as those who are victimised in an offline context, but that online abuse requires additional support and safeguarding responses due to the public nature of the offence. Therefore, a lack of police knowledge within this area is resulting in police officers continuing to take an offender- rather than victim-centred approach. However, inadequate state responses to victims are not just a result of inappropriate policing responses but also of legislative issues. The introduction of the IBSA law is a step in the right direction and has increased awareness of the harm caused by this type of image sharing (BBC, 2019), but the law's narrow definitions fail to represent and protect what is likely to be a large proportion of women's experiences. In doing so, the law continues to silence their experiences of sexual abuse. This is undoubtedly influenced by the patriarchal nature of the criminal justice system, which works to provide definitions of abuse and sexual behaviour through male perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable

abuse. In addition, the failure to consider providing victims with the choice of anonymity and to recognise the seriousness of the offence through appropriate sentencing guidelines only encourages the silencing of victims. Therefore, there is a fundamental need to address these issues and redraft the law, reduce state power and increase the power of researchers and grassroots organisations, and implement education and community interventions in order to prevent rather than react to IBSA. All of these issues very much mirror the historical issues identified within other forms of violence and reiterate that the patriarchal state continues to operate in a way which silences women's experiences. This research concludes that IBSA is very much a modernised form of violence against women and that the criminal justice system is still contributing to the legitimisation of violence against women. The next chapter will conclude this thesis.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This research explored the impact of Image Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) on women and their experiences, and perceptions, of policing and legislative responses. By taking a radical feminist and critical victimological approach, this research provided a platform from which to examine the gendered nature of IBSA. In order to contribute to the existing literature surrounding IBSA, 28 in-depth interviews were conducted with female victims, activists, and police officers. This was the first piece of research that has taken this approach within the UK, so this provided a vital platform for women's experiences and perceptions to be placed at the forefront of the research, ensuring that their experiences were accounted for. In doing so, this study is able to present a more complex picture of the nature, impact, and state responses to IBSA than previous research.

In relation to the nature of IBSA, this research has placed it on Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence; in doing so, it found that women's victimisation is formed of multiple intersecting events rather than isolated incidents. Victimisation often begins with the non-consensual creation of sexual images. This raises significant issues in relation to the use of hidden cameras, coercion, and pressure in image production. Therefore, this research contends that previous literature has not paid sufficient attention to the context in which these images are produced. Fundamentally, this can serve as an indicator of potential motivations and forms of abuse already existing within relationships before the dissemination of images. Thus, concentrating on the most unusual forms of image production prevents an examination of how non-consensual image production is a common occurrence for victims and plays an important role in the use of IBSA. Theoretically, this research has taken account of how image production is a clear demonstration that the ownership of women in contemporary society has undergone a cultural shift. The perceived sexual liberation of women and the modernisation of masculinity has resulted in men performing masculinity and ownership through obtaining these images, whilst at the same time, women are encouraged to feed this toxic masculinity. Consequently, women's so-called liberation is being used as a means to serve men's personal gain. The impact of this ultimately results in the women's loss of autonomy over their bodies.

The cases in this study highlighted the links between IBSA and domestic abuse. The dissemination of intimate sexual images is being used in conjunction with other forms of physical and psychological abuse. In instances where women are already being subject to controlling and coercive behaviour from their male partners, IBSA is being used as a means to reinforce or regain control of women. In particular, women who had made attempts to leave their abusive partners were faced with the use of IBSA as a means to maintain power over their lives by instilling fear and using the women's images to ensure that their lives were disrupted. Therefore, this research found that the nature of IBSA and its ability to be used as a mechanism of violence and control allows IBSA to be used within an already existing pattern of abuse.

This was also the first piece of research to place heavy emphasis on the aftermath of image dissemination. The deliberate public identification of victims not only indicates that perpetrators intend to disrupt women's lives as much as possible; it makes victims fundamentally vulnerable to other forms of abuse, including harassment, verbal abuse, and unwanted solicitation. By acknowledging that this plays a vital part in the victimisation process, this research highlights how the identification of victims significantly contributes to the impact of IBSA on women. Thus, the impact of IBSA on victims is not just the result of the image sharing itself, but the subsequent consequences of their identification within their communities and more widely online. By understanding IBSA as a range of intersecting events rather than viewing image distribution as an isolated incident, this research contributes to literature by identifying how the process of victimisation is likely to start before, and continue after, the actual dissemination of images.

In relation to the impact of IBSA on women, a radical feminist and critical victimological approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the nature of IBSA and its impact on women's everyday lives. This is the first and largest piece of research to gain such in-depth data on the impact of IBSA. Therefore, this research contributes to existing literature by addressing a fundamental gap in knowledge. The findings indicate that as a result of IBSA, women suffer from emotional, physical, and social aftereffects, with many women also suffering from severe mental health issues. For many of the women, the emotional, physical, and social impacts are difficult to differentiate because they are often interrelated. The women in this study suffer from anxiety, depression, obsessive behaviour, constant fear, paranoia, deteriorating physical health, and suicidal thoughts. Subsequently, this has an impact on their ability to leave their homes, socialise, and form

new intimate relationships. As a result, the women's use of space in the online and offline environment becomes significantly limited due to the fear of being recognised within the community, of images resurfacing, of coming into contact with the perpetrator, and of further abusive behaviour. Isolation therefore is one of the main impacts on women as relationships with family and friends break down due to victims changing their daily functionality. This creates a cycle of victimisation as self-isolation is likely to contribute to their poor mental health. Unlike previous literature, this research also identified how these drastic changes in the women's everyday lives permeated into the women's employment and/or education, with women taking time off work or education, coupled with a loss of concentration causing a decline in the quality of their work.

This is also the first piece of research to identify the impact of IBSA on women who belong to Islamic and Hindu communities. This research found that for these women, the consequences of IBSA can be even more severe. These women are more susceptible to additional issues and vulnerabilities, including ostracization from the very communities which they can be fundamentally reliant on. Within these cases, bringing shame on their communities plays a factor in the potential for women to face ostracization, violence, and honour killings. This research is also the first to provide an in-depth explanation as to how the impact of IBSA extended further than the victims themselves. This includes identifying how family and friends also suffer from increased levels of stress, resulting in the breakdown of intimate relationships. However, for those victims who had children, there are clear concerns in relation to how the women's victimisation is impacting upon the children's daily routines. As the women's routines start to become dysfunctional and erratic, this impacts upon their ability to maintain the children's routine, thus causing disruption to the children's lives. The public nature of IBSA also means that it is possible for the child's friendship groups to come across and obtain the images, causing additional embarrassment and distress for the victim's child. This raises some concerns with regards to the children's general welfare and education.

The investigation into the coping mechanisms adopted by women as a result of victimisation suggests that victims of IBSA do adopt multiple coping mechanisms and forms of resistance which aid their ability to take back control. Whilst the above effects, including isolation and refusal to socialise, do have a negative impact on the women's lives, this is ultimately a mechanism which is adopted in order to increase the women's feelings of safety, and avoid both further victimisation and potential victim blaming responses. In doing so, women attempt to take back some control by limiting the number

of people they communicate with. The women also make conscious efforts to remove their images from online platforms in an attempt to prevent further dissemination and viewing of the images. Although this is a painful process, it is an important step in taking back control. Other victims also choose to publicly speak out about their experiences, and in doing so, feel empowerment through not only the ownership of their experiences, but ensuring that their perpetrators are able to see that they refuse to be silent victims. It is also important for these women to speak out about their experiences in an attempt to warn other women about IBSA and encourage others to come forward who may be suffering in silence.

However, the women's demonstration of resistance does not always mean that the women perceive themselves as survivors. Whilst some feel that the term survivor is important to the empowerment process, most of the women see themselves as victims and this is important in the acknowledgement of their blamelessness. Thus, the term victim is not something which is seen by these women as passive and silencing, but rather a recognition of the fact that the potential resurfacing of images means that victimisation continues to be an ongoing process, even when they have severed their relationships with their abusive partners. What these cases do demonstrate, however, is a fluidity between the terms 'victim' and 'survivor', with many women either hoping to eventually change their state of mind in relation to seeing themselves as a survivor, or interchanging between being a victim and survivor at different stages of the victimisation and recovery process. This research therefore theoretically contributes to literature by demonstrating this fluidity and arguing that it is important to allow victims to make their own decisions as to where they sit with regards to these terms.

In relation to whether IBSA should be considered as a form of violence against women, this research finds that IBSA does constitute a contemporary form of violence against women due to the gendered nature of this type of abuse. The increasing use of technology within everyday society has resulted in the normalisation of online abuse, and, given that technology has become so ingrained within our everyday lives, the online environment is not immune from gendered inequality. In fact, the online environment is consistently being used as a means to spread misogyny and reinforce masculine identities through the perpetration of abuse against women. This is ultimately impacted by the decreased likelihood of facing repercussions from abusing others online due to the ease of perpetration and perpetrator anonymity. The research also shows how the nature of IBSA is fundamentally underpinned by gender inequality, with victimisation not only being

about the sharing of images but the blurred lines of consent in relation to image production and the identification of victims.

The impact on the women is very much a result of societal, or perceived societal reactions to the distribution of images, which is still fundamentally underpinned by 'appropriate' gender roles. This type of abuse is so damaging to women because the publication of these images is a continuation of the objection and pornographisation of women's bodies. Thus, the dissemination of these images is a modern form of men's ownership of women's bodies; therefore, it is used as a means to punish and control women. Perpetrators know that society's response to these images is going to encompass objectification and shaming; therefore, societal responses to women's 'inappropriate' behaviour are the motivating factor behind the abuse. Without such a societal reaction, the perpetration of IBSA becomes futile. Whilst this research cannot claim that being subject to IBSA is less consequential for men, the societal reaction will not be underpinned by the same gendered discourse; thus, the perpetration of IBSA is ultimately a form of gendered violence which results in specific gendered consequences for women. This is confirmed by the fact that the forms of abuse suffered by the women in this study mirror already existing forms of violence against women (including rape, sexual abuse, physical violence, harassment, stalking, verbal abuse, coercive control, and other practices which may be deemed unharmed due to their normalisation in patriarchal society).

Lastly, in relation to whether the current legislation, policy, and practice are perceived to be providing protection and justice for victims, this research raises a number of fundamental concerns. Those women who do not report their experiences take this course in an attempt to avoid being confronted with victim blaming. There is also a reluctance to report because of the sexual nature of the offence, meaning that victims are too embarrassed to come forward. Others refuse to come forward due to fear that reporting their experiences to the police will exacerbate the abuser's behaviour, or they feel guilty about how their reporting to the police will have a detrimental impact on the abuser's future aspirations and careers. For those women who do report to the police, there is an overwhelming failure with regards to police forces meeting victims' needs and meeting the minimum requirements set out by the Department of Justice in the Victim Charter. Police officers are seen to be generally unsympathetic towards victims, leaving victims with the perception that police officers do not care about their experiences and are not taking them seriously enough. The research also finds that victim blaming responses are not uncommon within policing responses. This may in part be due to police officers' lack

of knowledge with regards to the complexities of IBSA, its links to other forms of abuse, and the seriousness of the impact on victims. Investigating officers are also failing to keep victims up to date with progress on their cases, resulting in victims making numerous attempts to gain this information and often being met with unsatisfactory responses. Third sector support services play an important role in bridging the gap between victims' needs and police officers' responses, in that they aim to equip victims with the knowledge they needed to press police officers to investigate their cases and prepare them for poor policing responses. However, these organisations should not be having to play this role; they should be focusing their resources on supporting victims practically and emotionally rather than trying to counteract poor policing responses.

This research also identifies some significant flaws within the current legislation and victims' general dissatisfaction with legislative responses. Whilst cases in which images were disseminated before 2015 cannot be prosecuted under the IBSA law, attempts can still be made to use alternative legislation to ensure that victims receive recognition within the criminal justice system. This research is the first to highlight that historical cases may be becoming increasingly ignored as officers focus on cases which do meet the requirements for the new legislation. There are also issues with regards to the sexual nature of the images, something which has not been raised within previous literature. In cases where victims' images do not meet the legal definition of sexual material, the impact on the victim is still just as devastating; yet the law's definition of sexual material remains so narrow that it excludes a multitude of cases. Issues also surfaced when considering the requirement to prove the perpetrator's intent to cause distress to the victim to secure prosecutions. A focus on this not only undermines the impact on the victim by failing to consider the victim's perceptions of the event; it also makes it harder for police forces and the CPS to take cases to court.

Furthermore, the fact that IBSA is not considered a sexual offence, and therefore, victims are not granted anonymity, can be regarded as one of the biggest failings of the law. This not only discourages victims from coming forward but places them at an increased risk of further abuse by failing to protect their cases from becoming public knowledge. Whilst this has been highlighted in the previous literature, this is the first study to identify that not all victims may want this anonymity; therefore, it is the first research to emphasise the need for victims to be able to make informed choices in this respect. This is also the first study to examine victims' perceptions of the sentencing guidelines. In this respect, victims' perceptions are also largely negative, with victims generally feeling that the

sentencing guidelines are too lenient and fail to capture the seriousness of cases. There is a general call amongst participants to increase the sentencing tariffs. Taking all of these issues into account, it became clear that the victims and activists did not feel that justice was something that could be achieved through the criminal justice system. Consequently, victims are seeking other ways to achieve justice, including publicly speaking about their experiences.

It is no surprise, then, that the issues victims face in relation to policing and legislative responses are underpinned by the failure of the state to recognise and account for the gendered complexities of IBSA, and that state responses are underpinned by the same patriarchal discourses which make IBSA so devastating. By identifying how policing and legislative responses fail to meet victims' needs and how victims continue to face unsympathetic, uneducated, and victim blaming responses in the criminal justice system, this research argues that victims of sexual abuse continue to be mistreated within the criminal justice system and remain highly likely to be subject to secondary victimisation. It makes clear that not only has very little changed with regards to recognising and responding appropriately to sexual violence, but that the additional factor of the online environment only makes it even harder for women to be taken seriously as victims of sexual violence. It is no wonder, then, that women victims of IBSA are reluctant to come forward and seek justice through the criminal justice system. This research therefore finds that the failure of criminal justice agencies to provide appropriate definitions of rape and sexual violence which account for the reality of women's experiences, demonstrates how the state continues to be doing gender by adopting and reinforcing problematic responses to victims and the maleness of the criminal justice system, ultimately resulting in the silencing of women's experiences.

Whilst not all of these concerns are new, this research contributes to the existing bodies of feminist voices stating that the state is failing to take sexual violence seriously and thus failing to effectively respond to women's needs. Therefore, this research is yet *another* call for radical change within the criminal justice system. Consequently, this research highlights the following recommendations:

Policing Recommendations

- Provide police officers with training on how to identify and respond to victims of IBSA, including victim awareness training.
- Train police officers to advise on image removal and RIPA applications (or at least be able to signpost to relevant services).
- Provide training to officers on evidence collection in IBSA cases.
- Provide police officers with safe and secure equipment so that they can collect data without removing the victims' electronic devices.
- Provide training on the impact of IBSA and the gendered nature of the offence (with an emphasis on the need to listen to victims' accounts in non-judgemental ways).
- Allow victims (or signpost them) to someone they can talk to even when prosecution is not a viable option.
- Give victims the option of speaking to an officer of the same gender.
- Keep victims up to date with their cases and maintain an appropriate level of contact.
- Improve consistency of responses across police forces in England and Wales.
- At a minimum, the Victim Charter should be adhered to as a standard practice.

Legislative Recommendations

- Increase research and activist involvement in informing legislative and criminal justice processes.
- Legislatively make IBSA a sexual offence.
- Grant victims the option of anonymity.
- Give victims the choice of special measures.
- Broaden the legal definition of sexual material (considering the context of the image and the inclusion of photoshopped and 'deepfake' images).
- Lower the intent to cause distress barrier to include a lower-level offence of recklessness.
- Increase advocacy and legal support for victims.

Community Recommendations

- Increase education within communities and schools in order to combat the normalisation of IBSA.
- Increase funding for third sector support services.
- Increase public awareness of the nature and harms of IBSA.

Future Research Recommendations

The data sample within this research limited the ability of the research findings to reach conclusions as to the experiences of victims further on in the criminal justice process, in particular the court process and victims' experiences once cases have been closed. It would, therefore, be useful to conduct research in this area so that a more complete understanding of the criminal justice process can be achieved. The prevalence of IBSA in the UK is still unclear, and whilst it is unlikely that definite figures will ever be reached, quantitative research in this area would be useful to provide a better understanding of the scale of this type of victimisation. Future research should also consider the use of these images by perpetrators, including an examination of how these images are used on online platforms and specific IBSA websites. Similarly, investigating perpetrators' perceptions, motivations, and the use of these images may provide an alternative understanding of the motivations behind IBSA.

Furthermore, although IBSA is a form of gendered violence, the activists in this research consistently highlighted the need for research into the impact of IBSA on men and the motivations which underpin their victimisation. There is also a need to examine IBSA within LGBTQ communities, particularly with regards to the use of IBSA as a means to disclose victims' sexual orientation without their consent; and additionally, how LGBTQ dating apps such as Grindr may be facilitating the use of IBSA.

Despite the scope for possible areas of future research, this should not detract from the fact that this research has been undertaken at a time where research into IBSA, and online sexual abuse more broadly, is a growing field of study. The growing development and use of technology in society calls for a new focus on the way in which we examine and understand violence against women in contemporary society. This is made harder by the sexual and public nature of IBSA making it particularly difficult to gain an in-depth understanding of victims' experiences. Consequently, research in this area is very much

in its infancy. Therefore, the significance of this research lies in its contribution to filling many gaps within existing knowledge. This research not only supports the findings of the limited literature which is available, but contributes a multiplicity of new findings which can ultimately aid in creating a more informed victim response at legislative, policy, and local levels. Thus, the recommendations put forward as a result of this research aim to significantly improve victims' experiences within the criminal justice system through the knowledge of how IBSA impacts upon victims, and their needs, in order to reduce the levels of trauma caused by the criminal justice system and potentially prevent future victimisation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent to Publish Participant's Identity

Hi Antoinette

I hereby give consent for my name to be published for any work you are undertaking for your PhD.

Kind regards

Folami Prehaye

Appendix B: Advertising Research Poster



**SEEKING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF
REVENGE PORNOGRAPHY**

**HAVE YOU BEEN A VICTIM OF REVENGE
PORNOGRAPHY?**

**ARE YOU A WOMAN AGED 18 YEARS OR
OVER?**

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE PART IN A
RESEARCH PROJECT AIMED AT
UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF
REVENGE PORNOGRAPHY VICTIMS?**

**IF YOU ARE HAPPY TO DISCUSS YOUR
EXPERIENCES PLEASE CONTACT:**

ANTOINETTE HUBER
A.R.HUBER@2015.LJMU.AC.UK

YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL BE ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL.

 **LIVERPOOL
JOHN MOORES
UNIVERSITY**

Appendix C: Advertising Research Email

Dear All,

I am a PhD researcher seeking participants for a study examining the effects of revenge pornography.

This research aims to explore the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge pornography on female victims. Understanding and raising awareness of women's experiences is the focal point of the study. The study is based on a series of interviews with victims, campaigners and police officers in an attempt to fully understand victim's life experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this I intend to aid in informing policies surrounding revenge pornography which could increase protection and the effectiveness of justice for future victims.

If you have been a victim of revenge pornography, are a woman aged 18 years or over and would be willing to discuss your experiences please contact Antoinette Huber: A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk.

If you **choose** to participate in the study in you will take part in an hour-long one-to-one interview in which you will be asked a range of questions relating to your experiences of revenge pornography. This will include background information in relation to how/when and why you were subject to revenge pornography, whether identities and contact details were disclosed alongside the posted images (if so which information was disclosed for example, name, address, social media profile links), relationship history with the perpetrator (including any history of violence), your life experiences as a consequence of victimisation, and your perceptions of the law and policies surrounding revenge pornography. However, the interviews will be flexible; if there is anything else you would like to discuss during the interview there will be plenty of opportunity to do so. One of the most important aspects of the interview is to allow you to tell your story and have your voice heard. **Participation in the study will be anonymous and confidential.**

If you are considering taking part in the research please bear in mind that discussing such sensitive issues may cause some emotional distress.

Kind Regards,

Antoinette Huber

A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk.

Appendix D: Responses from Organisations

Hi Antoinette,

Thanks for your email, (name) has discussed your project with me, I then discussed with some of the team including the ISVA team who support survivors of sexual abuse through the CJS. Revenge pornography was not something their clients had disclosed to them as part of their abuse, over 60% of our client are survivors of historical abuse and again looking at our current statistics this has not been disclosed at a rate we would be able to accommodate your research at this time. It might be an idea to contact some organisations that support victims of domestic violence. As awareness grows and convictions increase, I am sure disclosures will also increase.

We wish you all the best in your research.

Kind Regards

(RASA)

Hello Antoinette,

I just wanted to let you know I haven't forgotten about you

I talked to the teams in Merseyside and Preston and unbelievably no-one has dealt with 1 case of revenge pornography this year

One explanation for that could be that neither team is set up to deal with DV/SV offences and those referrals may be going somewhere else in those particular counties

I will cast my net a bit wider and see whether I can link in to any of the Victim Support teams elsewhere who do work with victims of this crime

I will come back to you when I have more information

Thanks

(Victim Support)

Appendix E: Initial Response from Revenge Porn Helpline to Gatekeeper Request

Hi Antoinette, thank you for your email. We would be happy to talk through your research however we probably wouldn't be able to introduce you to clients. Are you free for a chat on Wednesday or Friday at all?

Kind Regards

(Revenge Porn Helpline)

Appendix F: Gatekeeper One Communication

Hi Antoinette

This was a female that (name) was working with, I did speak to (name) about this and it seemed that she would not be ready to participate in an interview as she is currently dealing with many other difficulties. I will forward your email on to (name) and see if she can think of any other women that may be more suitable at this time.

Many thanks

Gatekeeper One

Appendix G: Letter to Revenge Porn Helpline Funders

Antoinette Huber
Doctoral Researcher
Liverpool John Moores University
Humanities and Social Science
John Foster Building
Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
L3 5UZ
+44(0)7772612803
a.r.huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk
01 November 2016

Revenge Pornography Research Collaboration

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write in the capacity of a doctoral researcher in Criminology from Liverpool John Moores University. I have been in communication with (name) over the last few months regarding assistance with my research on image-based sexual violence (otherwise known as ‘revenge pornography’). My research aims to investigate the emotional, physical, and social impacts on the victims of revenge pornography. The study will be based on a series of interviews with organisational staff, victims, and police officers. It will seek to understand victims’ experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this, I hope to not only generate knowledge and awareness on this under-researched subject area but also to seek to inform and influence state policies that aim to protect victims and aid them in their quest for justice.

In order to conduct my research, it is vital that information is collected from those who have been victims of revenge pornography. My conversations with (name) have been focused upon the possibility of her acting as a gatekeeper for the research since she is at the forefront of dealing with, and supporting, victims. The support of the helpline is therefore highly likely to help me in my goal of generating knowledge. I understand that that the revenge porn helpline is limited in both staff numbers and time. I have therefore offered to volunteer at the helpline for one month. (Name) has asked me to outline a few details of how I could potentially assist as well as provide details on how my research project would ethically and practically work. I also understand that some individuals who contact the helpline are more suited to participation in my study than others. This includes those who have been in regular contact with the helpline (even for a short period of time) and those who have entered the criminal justice process for whom they are more likely to have contact details.

With regards to my research, there will be a clear divide between which information can and cannot be used for the study. (Name) will act as a gatekeeper to participants deciding which individuals are at a stage where they may be receptive to participating in the

research. (Name) will provide them with a brief overview of my research and ask if they would be happy to have their contact details forwarded to me. Only if they agree will I then contact them and provide a detailed overview of the study in order to ensure their decision to participate is fully informed. Whilst I would like to speak with individuals face-to-face in a private and secure setting, if a potential interviewee prefers to do this via a telephone interview this can also be facilitated.

In terms of my role at the helpline, firstly, I could volunteer to work on the helpline and undertake any general admin duties that are required. I wish to stress that conversations with individuals calling the helpline will not be used for research purposes. Secondly, I could assist in the collection of demographic data. This could include a number of different approaches depending on which best suits the helpline. I would also be able to aid with the creation of scripts or referral sheets to find the most efficient and sensitive way to collect data. Through my university, I have a series of resources available to me and I am willing to not only utilise them for my own research but for the helpline too.

Below I have attached the gatekeeper information sheet which outlines the aims of the study and the role of the gatekeeper. Also attached is the participant information sheet which informs potential participants about the research process. Alternatively, if you wish to discuss any aspect of my research with my doctoral supervisor, Dr Janet Jamieson, please feel free to contact her via email (J.Jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk) or telephone (0151 231 5089).

I am confident that you will understand the importance of my research as well as my passion for generating knowledge that will help inform policy, whilst also working towards helping victims in their quest for justice and accountability. I therefore remain hopeful to receiving a reply that offers me the opportunity to work with the helpline and speak with individuals who have been victims of revenge pornography.

I thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours Faithfully,

Antoinette Huber

Doctoral Researcher

Appendix H: Victim Interview Schedule

Perception of IBSA and overview

- What is your understanding of non-consensual image sharing?
- Can you tell me a bit about your situation in relation to revenge pornography/image sharing?
- Would you consider yourself to be a victim of revenge pornography?
Can you explain why?
- Would you consider yourself to be a survivor of revenge pornography?
Can you explain why?

Image Information

- Can you tell me a bit about the image/s? Was it nude, semi- nude?
- Who took the photo?
When were the images shared?
How many images were shared?
- Did you agree to have the photo taken?
- Was there an agreement that the photo would remain private? or mutual assumption that it would remain private?
If yes, can you tell me a little bit about that conversation/assumption?
- How were the images distributed?

Relationship with the Perpetrator

- Who posted images/video online?
How long have you known them?
What was your relationship with them, i.e. married, dating, unknown?
- Was there any history of abuse in your relationship? This includes, verbal, emotional and physical
If yes can you give me some examples?
If yes, how regularly did this occur?
- What do you think were their reasons for sharing the images?
- Was there any history of harassment from the perpetrator prior to the image sharing?
If yes, can you give me some examples?
How often was this?
- Was there any harassment from the person who shared your images after the images were made public?
If yes, can you give me some examples?
How often was this?

Distribution and Comments

- How did you find out that your images/video had been shared?
- What was the first thing you did when you found the images?
- How did having your images posted make you feel?
- How has this impacted your life, socially emotionally and physically?
Probe participants to answer these three sections individually
- Have the posted images had any effect on your employment/education?

- Did anybody post online comments relating to, or about the image?
If so, what were the comments?
How did the comments make you feel?
- Have these comments impacted upon your life in any way?
If so how?
- Did you regularly check to see if new comments had been posted?
If so, why?
How regularly did you check?
- Were any of your contact details posted alongside the image/video?
Can you explain what information was shared?

Contact with Strangers and Family and Friends

- Has anyone approached or contacted you since the images/video went online?
If yes, how did they contact you?
What did they say/do?
What were their reasons?
- How did this make you feel?
- Has this impacted upon your life in any way?
If so how?
- Have you told anybody what happened such as family or friends?
Can you explain why?
If so, how did your friends and family react to what happened?
- Has this contact had any effect on your daily routine?
If yes, how?

Support Organisations

- Did you seek any support in response to the images being posted?
If so, who did you first contact?
Did you contact any support organisations?
If so, which organisations?
- Did they provide you with the advice/support you needed?
How did they support/advise you?
If not, how do you think the service could have been improved?

Experience with Police

- Did you report the posting of images to the police?
Can you explain why?
- Can you tell me how the police responded?
- Do you feel that the police response was appropriate and effective?
Can you explain why?
- What was the outcome of your case?
How did you feel about this?
Do you think you achieved justice in reporting your experience to the police?
Can you explain why/why not
- Did you know about what laws could be used to prosecute at the time?
If not, do you think it would have been useful to have more knowledge?

Do you think more knowledge would have impacted the amount of pressure you put on police to take action?

- Would you encourage others to report any posted images to the police?
Can you explain why?

Perceptions on Legislation

- Do you think the new revenge pornography law has the potential to be effective?
Can you explain why?
- Do you think the punishment for offenders of up to two years imprisonment is fair?
Can you explain why?
If not, why? What do you think would be an appropriate punishment?

Closing Question

- Are there any other issues that I haven't already asked you about? Or that you think are particularly important?

Appendix I: Activist Interview Schedule

Perception of IBSA and Overview

- Can you tell me about your current role? Including some of your experiences dealing with non-consensual image sharing?
- What is your understanding of revenge pornography?
- Why do you think that the majority of perpetrators are men?
- Why do you think the majority of victims are women?
- Do you consider revenge pornography to be a form of sexual violence against women?

Perpetration

- When does the sharing of images tend to occur?
 - What are the most common reasons for sharing the images?
 - What are the perpetrators trying to gain? Is it solely about revenge?
 - Can you give me an examples?
- Are there any links between revenge pornography and domestic abuse?
 - Can you give me an example of what might happen in this context?
 - Intimidation?
 - Threats?
 - Control?
- Are there any connections between revenge pornography and domestic abuse?
- Are there any connections between this image sharing and stalking?

Consent

- Have victims usually freely consented to having the images taken or to sharing the images with partners?
 - Why do you think victims consent to having the images taken?
- Are there any instances where they are not freely taken or shared with partners?
 - How might these images be taken?
 - Why do you think they are taken?

Organisations

- What kind of support does your organisation offer?
- How many victims seek help from your organisation?
- Do you think organisations have sufficient facilities to provide the necessary support?
 - If no, how can they be improved?
- Do you think there needs to be greater awareness of support services for victims?

Websites

- Why do you think images are shared online?
- Do you think the sharing of private images online has been increasing?
 - Which websites tend to be used to share the images?
 - Which websites are most problematic? Why? How do they operate?

- Do you think that operators of websites created for revenge pornography should be prosecuted?
 If so, why?
 Is there anything preventing the criminalisation or policing of specific revenge pornography websites?
 Do you think the criminalisation of these websites would prevent perpetration?
- Do the public regularly post comments as a response to images?
 What kinds of comments are made?
 Do you think these comments cause additional impacts on the victim? If yes, what consequences and why?
 Are they equally problematic to the original posting of images?
 What advice is given to victims who are subject to comments?
- Are women contacted by strangers either online or offline?
 If so, how are they contacted,
 Why are they contacted?
 What is often said to victims during contact?

Impacts in Victims

- Does victimisation affect women's everyday lives? i.e. socially, emotionally and physically?
 Social Impacts
 Emotional Impacts/Mental Health
 Physical Impacts
 Effect on employment education
- Does the victim usually know the perpetrator?
 Does this make a difference to the effects on victims?
- Are women often subject to physical sexual violence as a result of victimisation?
 What impact does this have on victims?

Perceptions of Policing

- Do you think that police responses are appropriate and/or effective?
 If not why? How can this be improved?
- Do you think that the police need more specific training aimed at dealing with these cases?
 If so, which police officers do you think training needs to aimed at? (E.g. front line, cybercrime specialists etc.)
 Can you think of anything that you think should be included within such training?
 Do you think improvements needs to be made in relation to gathering evidence?
- Are victims likely to report victimisation to the police? If not, why?
 Do you think changes could be made to reduce any reluctance?

Perceptions on Legislation

- How effective do you think current laws and policies are responding to non-consensual image sharing for example, the new amendment of section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts act?
 Are there any problems with this new law? If so what?
 What difficulties do you face in terms of prosecution?

- Do you think that victims should have the option of anonymity?
- Do you think the punishment of up to two years is fair?
Yes/no why?
If not, what alternative would you suggest?
- What about the Malicious Communications Act? Do you think this has potential to be effective?
Can you explain why?
- What about the stalking and harassment act? Is this effective for prosecutions,
Can you explain why?
- What is the most common outcome of cases?
Do you think these outcomes are proportionate to the offence?
- Generally, then, do you think the criminal justice system is providing justice for victims?

Closing Question

- Are there any other issues which you think need to be addressed and/or raised?

Appendix J: Criminal Justice Staff Interview Schedule

Perceptions of IBSA and Overview

- Can you tell me about your current role? Including some of your experiences dealing revenge pornography cases?
- What is your understanding of revenge pornography?
- Why do you think that the majority of perpetrators are men?
- Why do you think the majority of victims are women?
- Do you consider revenge pornography a form of sexual violence against women?

Perpetration

- When does the sharing of images tend to occur?
What are the most common reasons for sharing the images?
- Are there any links between revenge pornography and domestic abuse?
If yes, how is it used in this context?
- Are there any connections between revenge pornography, stalking and harassment?

Consent

- Have victims usually freely consented to having the images taken or to sharing the images with partners?
Why do you think victims consent to having the images taken?
- Are there any instances where they are not freely taken or shared with partners?
How might these images be taken?
Why do you think they are taken?

Websites

- Do you think the sharing of private images online has been increasing?
Which websites tend to be used to share the images?
Which websites are most problematic? Why?
How do they operate?
- How do the police deal with these websites when cases are brought forward?
- Do you think that operators of websites created for revenge pornography should be prosecuted?
If so, why?
Is there anything preventing the criminalisation or policing of specific revenge pornography websites?
Do you think criminalisation of websites would reduce perpetration?
- Do the public regularly post comments as a response to images?
What kinds of comments are made?
Do you think these comments cause additional impacts on the victim? If yes, what consequences and why?
- What advice is given to victims who are subject to comments?
- Are women contacted by strangers either online or offline?
If so, how are they contacted,
Why are they contacted?

What is often said to victims during contact?

Policing Responses

- How are reports of revenge pornography processed and handled within the criminal justice system?
- How are revenge pornography cases recorded particularly if they are linked to other offences?
- Are police officers aware of what evidence needs to be collected and how and when it should be collected?
 - Do you think improvements need to be made in relation to gathering evidence?
- Do you think that police responses are appropriate and/or effective?
 - Can you explain why?
 - How could police responses be improved?
 - What advice is generally given to victims?
 - Are you aware of any instances of problematic responses from police forces towards victims?
- Do you think the police have sufficient facilities to deal with cases of revenge pornography?
 - Can you explain why/what facilities you do/do not have?
 - Are there any improvement which would be made?
- Do you think that the police need more specific training aimed at dealing with these cases?
 - If so, which police officers do you think training needs to aimed at? (E.g. front line, cybercrime specialists etc.)
 - Can you think of anything that you think should be included within such training?
- Are victims likely to report victimisation to the police?
 - Can you explain why?
 - Do you think changes could be made to reduce any reluctance?

Impacts on Victims

- Are police officers aware of the impacts of revenge pornography in victims?
 - If yes, can you outline some of the impacts?
 - Social Impacts
 - Emotional Impacts/Mental Health
 - Physical Impacts
 - Effect on employment education
- What provisions are in place to support victims?
 - Do you think improvements need to be made?
 - If so, what improvements?
 - Why do you think they would be more effective?
- Does the victim usually know the perpetrator?
 - Does this make a difference to the effects on victims?
 - Does this have an impact on cases?
- Are women often subject to physical sexual violence as a result of victimisation?
 - If so, what impact does this have on victims?

Perception and Experience of Legislation

- How effective do you think current laws and policies are responding to non-consensual image sharing for example, the new amendment of section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts act?
 - Are there any problems with this new law? If so what?
 - What difficulties do you face in terms of prosecution?
- Do you think that victims should have the option of anonymity?
- Do you think the punishment of up to two years is fair?
 - Yes/no why?
 - If not, what alternative would you suggest?
- What about the Malicious Communications Act? Do you think this has potential to be effective?
 - Can you explain why?
- What about the stalking and harassment act? Is this effective for prosecutions?
 - Can you explain why?
- Which legislation is mostly used for prosecution?
- What is the most common outcome of cases?
 - Do you think these outcomes are proportionate to the offence?
- Generally, then, do you think the criminal justice system is providing justice for victims? If not, how can it be improved?

Closing Question

- Are there any other issues which you think need to be addressed and/or raised?

Appendix K: Ethical Application/Approval

No research must be started without full, unconditional ethical approval. There are a number of routes for obtaining ethical approval depending on the potential participants and type of study involved – please complete the checklists below to determine which is the most appropriate route for your research study.

A. Pedagogic Research (ROUTE FOR STAFF ONLY)

To find out if your study can be conducted under the University's Code of Practice for Pedagogic Research please answer the questions below.			
1.	Is the proposed study being undertaken by a member of LJMU staff?	Yes	No
2.	Is the purpose of the study to evaluate the effectiveness of LJMU teaching and learning practices by identifying areas for improvement, piloting changes and improvements to current practices or helping students identify and work on areas for improvement in their own study practices?	Yes	No
3.	Will the study be explained to staff and students and their informed consent obtained?	Yes	No
4.	Will participants have the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw from the study?	Yes	No
5.	Will the findings from the study be used solely for internal purposes? <i>e.g. there is no intention to publish or disseminate the findings in journal articles or external presentations</i>	Yes	No
If you have answered Yes to all Qs1-4 your study may be eligible for consideration under the University's Code of Practice for Pedagogic Research. You should not complete this application form but seek further guidance at http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/114123.htm or by contacting Dave Harriss D.Harriss@ljmu.ac.uk .			
If you have answered No to any of Qs1-4 you should complete the checklists below to determine which route you should use to apply for ethical approval of your study.			

B. National Research Ethics Service (NRES)

To find out if your study requires ethical approval through NRES answer the questions below. Does you study:			
1.	Involve access to NHS patients or their data, or involve participants identified from, or because of, their past or present use of NHS services?	Yes	No
2.	Include adults who lack capacity to consent as research participants?	Yes	No
3.	Involve the collection and/or use of human tissue as defined by the Human Tissue Act 2004? **	Yes	No
If you have answered Yes to any of Qs1-3 you should not complete this application form. You must seek approval for your study through the NHS			

National Research Ethics Service (NRES). For further information and details of how to apply to NRES can be found at <http://www.nres.nhs.uk/>
Please note that once ethical approval has been received from NRES a completed [LJMU Research Governance Proforma](#) must be submitted to LJMU REC with written evidence of full, unconditional ethical approval from NRES prior to commencing their research.

If you have answered **No to Qs1-3** complete the checklist below to determine whether your application is eligible for proportionate review or if a full review by the University's REC is required.

**** Studies involving the use of human tissue from healthy volunteers which are taking place within the University's Research Institute for Sports and Exercise Sciences (RISES) can apply for approval through the University REC (for further information contact Dave Harriss: D.Harriss@ljmu.ac.uk)**

C. Full versus Proportionate Review

Does the proposed study:			
1.	Expose participants to high levels of risk, or levels of risks beyond those which the participant is likely to experience whilst participating in their everyday activities? These risks may be psychological, physical, social, economic, cause legal harm or devalue a person's self-worth. <i>e.g. untrained volunteers exposed to high levels of physical exertion; participants purposefully exposed to stressful situations; research where participants are persuaded to reveal information which they would not otherwise disclose in the course of everyday life.</i>	Yes	
2.	Involve the administration of drugs, medicines or nutritional supplements as part of the research design?		No
3.	Include adults who may be classed as vulnerable? <i>e.g. adults with learning disabilities or mental illness; drug/substance users; young offenders; prisoners/probationers; those in a dependent relationship with the researcher</i>		No
4.	Include children or young adults (below 18) where parental consent will not be sought?		No
5.	Involve the discussion or disclosure of topics which participants might find sensitive or distressing? <i>e.g. sexual activity; criminal activity; drug use; mental health; previous traumatic experiences; illness; bereavement</i>	Yes	
6.	Use questionnaires which focus on highly sensitive areas? <i>e.g. illegal activity; criminal activity; disclosure and analysis of findings based on sensitive personal information as defined by Data Protection Act e.g. racial or ethnic origin; political opinions; religious beliefs; trade union membership; physical or mental health; sexual life</i>		No
7.	Incorporate interviews or focus groups which involve the discussion of highly sensitive areas?	Yes	

	<i>e.g. illegal activity; criminal activity; disclosure and analysis of findings based on sensitive personal information as defined by Data Protection Act e.g. racial or ethnic origin; political opinions; religious beliefs; trade union membership; physical or mental health; sexual life</i>		
8.	For research accessing and analysing existing datasets. Will the dataset include information which would allow the identification of individual participants?		NA
9.	Involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?		No
10.	Involve recruiting participants who have not been provided with a participant information sheet and asked to sign a consent form? <i>Please note that for questionnaire based studies a consent form is generally not request as consent is implied by the completion of the questionnaire. Applicants conducting questionnaire-only studies should answer NO</i>		No
11.	Involve the collection and/or use of human tissue from healthy volunteers? <i>Under these circumstances human tissue is as defined by the Human Tissue Act 2004 - "Any, and all, constituent part/s of the human body formed by cells." Research studies involving the use of plasma or serum are not covered by the HTA.</i>		No
12.	Involve high levels of risks to the researcher? <i>e.g. lone working at night; interviewing in your own or participants homes, observation in potentially volatile or sensitive situations</i>		No
<p>If you have answered No to all Qs1-12 your study is eligible for proportionate review. You should complete the following application form and submit it electronically with any supporting documentation e.g. participant information sheets, recruitment letters, consent forms to EthicsPR@ljmu.ac.uk . Your application will be reviewed by a sub-committee of the University REC and you will be informed of the outcome within 2 weeks. Please note that if the allocated reviewer finds that your application has been wrongly submitted for proportionate review you will be notified and your application will be forwarded for consideration at the next University REC.</p>			
<p>If you have answered Yes to any of Qs1-12 your study is not eligible for proportionate review and will be considered at the next meeting of the University REC. You should complete the following application form and submit it electronically with any supporting documentation e.g. participant information sheets, recruitment letters, consent forms to researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk .</p> <p><i>Please note that applications involving the use of human tissue originating from the School of Sports and Exercise Science should complete the</i></p>			

Research Ethics Application Form for Studies Involving the Use of Human Tissue available at <http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93044.htm>

Guidance on completing the LJMU REC application form can be found at <http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93044.htm>

Please note that following submission of your application to the relevant email address a signed copy of the application's signature page only must be sent to the Research Ethics Administrator, Research and Innovation Services, 4th Floor Kingsway House, Hatton Garden.

Visit <http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93126.htm> for REC submission and meeting dates.

Where teaching practices involve invasive (psychological or physiological) procedures on students or others staff should refer to the guidance provided at <http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93087.htm> regarding the development of departmental/faculty codes of practice.

Research Mode

<input type="checkbox"/>	MRes
<input type="checkbox"/>	MPhil
<input type="checkbox"/>	* PhD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prof Doc e.g. EdD or DBA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other taught Masters programme – specify course
<input type="text"/>	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Postdoctoral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff project
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please specify

Has this application previously been submitted to the University REC for review? – **No**

If yes please state the original REC Ref Number

SECTION A – THE APPLICANT

A1. Title of the Research

Women, Image Based Sexual Abuse and the Pursuit of Justice

A2. Principal Investigator (PI) *(Note that the in the case of postgraduate or undergraduate research the student is designated the PI. For research undertaken by staff inclusive of postdoctoral researchers and research assistants the staff member conducting the research is designated the PI.)*

Title Forename Surname

Post

School / Faculty

Email Telephone

Relevant experience / Qualifications

Previous experience of conducting research using critical discourse analysis with a focus upon gendered representations in the media.

MPhil in Criminological Research – University of Cambridge.

BA (hons) in Criminology - First Class – Liverpool John Moores University.

SECTION B – PROJECT DETAILS

B1. Proposed Date for Commencement of Participant Recruitment *(Please enter the date when you propose to start recruiting participants – note that no recruitment can take place without full, unconditional ethical approval)*

Start Date

June 2016

B2. Scientific Justification. State the background and why this is an important area for research *(Note this must be completed in language comprehensible to a lay person. Do not simply refer to the protocol. Maximum length – 1 side of A4)*

My research will be centred upon the effects of revenge pornography. This is a new phenomenon which has been defined as “the sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress” (Ministry of Justice, 2015:1). I aim to investigate the impact of revenge pornography on the lives of female victims. I will utilise a holistic approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of victim’s experiences and life changes as a result of victimisation. By critically exploring the views of victims, campaigners, and criminal justice representatives, this study intends to aid in informing policy and contribute to criminological theory surrounding violence against women. The potential of this research to inform policy is particularly fundamental given the recent changes in law; revenge porn was criminalised in April 2015 under Sections 1 and 127 of the Malicious Communications Act 2003 (Ministry of Justice, 2015). The first revenge pornography website created in 2010 meaning that, criminalisation has occurred through the use of older, already existing laws as opposed to new laws being put in place. Furthermore, although many revenge pornography websites have been closed down, the creation of such websites has not been criminalised, potentially hindering the protection and justice for current and future victims **(Revenge Porn, 2015)**

To effectively inform policy comprehensive research is vital. Yet literature focused upon revenge pornography is limited. Research which has discussed the effectiveness of these laws often fails to incorporate a victim perspective. The emotional, physical and social effects of revenge pornography on victims has not yet been subject to in-depth analysis. Furthermore, victim’s perceptions of the law and its ability to provide protection and justice have also been unexplored. Therefore, this research will take a new, and more critical, approach than previous research in this field by centring the analysis on the above factors.

Contributions to criminological theory could also be produced. Kelly’s (1998) research focuses on many aspects of violence which can be directly linked to some of the consequences of revenge pornography. For example, she discusses threats of violence, sexual harassment, pressurised sex, sexual assault, and threatening phone calls. Whilst Kelly (1998) argues that these are already common forms of violence against women, the creation of revenge pornography websites has generated another avenue through which these types of violence can occur. By using Kelly’s (1998) continuum of violence we can examine if, and how, the consequences of revenge pornography for victims are interlinked, and the

effect this has on their everyday lives over different time periods and in different circumstances.

Essentially, to fully understand violence against women we have to recognise how women interact with systems of patriarchal control, thus including multiple forms of oppression as well as how this oppression changed over time (Kelly, 1998). This is fundamental to the analysis of revenge pornography, given that, much like violence against women, it has significant links to patriarchy, power, and oppression. Furthermore, there is an even greater need for this exploration within the UK, given that the majority of academic literature is contextualised within the United States. This research will fill a fundamental gap within the current literature surrounding revenge porn and will illuminate the consequences for revenge porn victims.

B3. Give a summary of the purpose, design and methodology of the planned research

(Note this must be completed in language comprehensible to a lay person. Do not simply refer to the protocol. Maximum length – 1 side of A4)

This research takes a feminist methodological approach in that, the aim is to produce knowledge which is helpful to women by producing knowledge about women for women. Essentially, the fundamental task is to make women's life experiences visible by listening to their stories and gaining knowledge of their understanding of the world, including experiences of oppression, patriarchy and control (Comack, 1999). This does not simply mean gaining a description of women's experiences but their understanding of their experiences, "their discursive constructions" (Comack, 1999:298). These understandings and experiences are fundamental to forming the foundations of knowledge production in which we can theorise the social world from women's perspective (Letherby, 2003). Letherby (2003) argues that this grants us access to a wider knowledge of truth, in that, masculinised knowledge has failed to correctly define women's experiences. By focusing on women's experiences of revenge pornography, as opposed to male perpetrators, allows their voices to be heard. This will not only contribute to forming a more complex body of knowledge but a more appropriate body of knowledge than that produced by the assumption that theories created around men can be applied to women (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007). Therefore, the importance of focusing on women's experiences arises out of the failure of masculine knowledge to accurately identify women's experiences, thus a bottom up rather than top down approach is necessary in producing a more inclusive understanding of women's lives (Stevens, 2006).

In order to gain an comprehensive understanding of these experiences it is necessary to use more sensitive research methods which can illuminate women's subjectivity in a non-hierarchical way, increasing the opportunities to represent their experiences more accurately (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007). Therefore, this research adopts a qualitative approach, that is not to say that quantitative methods cannot contribute to feminist theory however, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of these experiences qualitative methods including, critical discourse analysis and interviews will provide a more holistic understanding of victim's experiences. This approach allows for a feminist investigation into women's

experiences in relation to gender and power and understanding how women's lives are shaped by this. This requires a rejection of perceiving women as a homogenous group and instead, recognising that women have different experiences thus, the research will investigate the specific forms of power that are operating within victim's lives including social situations and relationships (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Furthermore, in order to understand these power relations it is vital that gendered discourses surrounding women's behaviour and, in particular, sexual behaviour are deconstructed considering the substantial influence that these discourses have on women's lives (Comack, 1999).

This research will adopt a triangulation approach by using two methods; critical discourse analysis (CDA) and interviews. Combining these two methods will provide a clearer understanding of the use and effects of revenge pornography (Bachman and Schutt, 2007). Firstly, to gain background knowledge on the use of revenge pornography websites a CDA will be conducted to examine the posts made on the websites and the resulting comments from those who view the posts. This involves a linguistic analysis of statements written on revenge pornography websites to examine the reinforcement of gendered discourses outside of cyberspace into cyberspace. It will also investigate whether/how gendered discourses are reinforced by users encouraging other users to post inappropriate, threatening, and/or degrading comments. Furthermore, examining these statements will illuminate possible power links between those who partake in the discussion of women on revenge porn sites and the impact of such discussions on victims when reading or even knowing of their existence. The use of the CDA method closely links with the work of Foucault, in particular "the idea that language and structures display a historical nature and change over time to reflect institutional practices" (McKinlay and McVittie, 2008:12). By using CDA, we recognise the manner in which power is mediated through inequality which is "socially and historically situated" (Locke, 2004:25).

Secondly, interviews will also be conducted with activists, victims and police officers. Interviews are the most appropriate method for this research, as it allows for an investigation of participants feelings and attitudes (Grey, 2014). Interviews will be semi-structured to ensure that relevant information is gained to meet the research aims, whilst at the same time allowing for unexpected information to arise (Grey, 2014). By interviewing activists, victims and police officers I aim to provide a holistic approach to understanding the effects of revenge porn and stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of legislation, policy and practice on this issue.

In relation to activists, five interviews will be conducted in order to gain a wider, and possibly more general, understanding of the effects of revenge pornography. Research questions will be focused upon: their perceptions of the extent of revenge pornography, which websites are the most problematic and how they operate, what are the most common reasons for the perpetration of revenge pornography, their experiences in supporting/working with victims, the consequences of revenge pornography for victims, their perceptions of the effectiveness of current law and policies, why some victims come forward and others might not, and their work in relation to campaigns. These interviews will be used to inform the research questions for the interviews with victims and police officers.

In relation to victims, I aim to conduct 15 interviews with female victims. The interview questions will be primarily based on the following themes: how/why victimisation occurred, whether identities and contact details were disclosed alongside the posted images (if so

which information was disclosed for example, name, address, social media profile links), relationship history with the perpetrator (including any history of violence), their life experiences as a consequence of victimisation, and their perceptions of the law and policies surrounding revenge pornography.

Lastly, interviews will be conducted with police officers from Merseyside to investigate their knowledge and views on the adequacy and effectiveness of legislation, policy and practice. This will include questions relating to: the nature and effectiveness of police responses to revenge porn (proactive and reactive); their views on why some victims are willing to report offences to the police while others are not; how cases are investigated, how victims are treated and responded within the criminal justice system; what factors influence decisions regarding the arrest and charging of perpetrators or the dropping of cases; and what factors influence successful and unsuccessful convictions.

B4. State the principal research question

What are the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge porn on female victims aged 18 and over?

B5a. Give details of the proposed intervention(s) or procedure(s) and the groups of people involved (including psychological or physical interventions, interviews, observations or questionnaires)

Procedure or Intervention	Participants	Number of participants	No. of procedures per participant	Avg. Time to complete
<i>E.g. Interview</i>	<i>E.g. LJMU staff/students, general public, service users, professionals</i>	25	1	1 hour
Interview	Female Victims of Revenge Porn	15	1	1 Hour
Interview	Campaigners/ Activists	5	1	1 Hour
Interviews	Police Officers	5	1	1 Hour

To include additional interventions place your mouse cursor in the last cell of the final column and press the tab button on your keyboard. A new row will be created for the above table.

B5b. Where questionnaires are to be used have these previously been validated?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not Applicable

If yes, state by whom and when. If no, you **must** append copies of the proposed questionnaire (s) to this application.

B5c. Where interviews or focus groups (structured or semi-structured) are proposed you must append an outline of the questions you are going to ask your participants. Please confirm that you have attached an outline of your interview / focus group questions.

☒ Yes ☐ Not Applicable

B6. How will the findings of the research be disseminated?(e.g. thesis, dissertation, peer-reviewed articles, conference presentations, reports)

This research will be conducted with the intention of having social impact. To this end papers will be presented at conferences to disseminate the research results within academia. Papers will also be written for non-academic purposes and, in particular, for organisations who have contributed to the research in order to publicise their services and campaigns and to increase awareness of the effects of revenge porn. Thus, using research as a tool to aid with campaigns. This will increase the influence that research results will have on a local and possibly national scale, depending on the size of the organisations. Contributions will also be made to official enquiries from the government, policy makers, police, and organisations that seek to gain information on revenge porn and surrounding issues, which would have a national and potentially international social impact. This includes, disseminating results directly to the government minister responsible for dealing with revenge porn and disseminating a briefing paper to all 43 chief constables as well as selected media outlets. Finally, articles will be written for relevant journals and publication with a view to contributing to the 2020 Research Excellence Framework.

SECTION C – THE PARTICIPANTS

C1. How will the participants been selected, approached and recruited? If participants are to be approached by letter/email please append a copy of the letter/email. Please include details on how much time participants will have to decide if they want to take part. (where different groups of participants have been identified in section B5a above provide details on how each group will be selected, approached and recruited.)

Given the sensitivity of the topic accessing participants who are victims will be difficult; I propose recruiting victims in a variety of ways on a volunteer basis. Firstly, participants who contact agencies or charities (e.g. The Victim Support Charity for England and Wales) for support will be asked if they wish to take part in the research. These individuals are probably the most likely to take part as they have already come forward as victims to seeking support. Secondly, the study will also be advertised within the university, through social media (including Facebook), and online blogs, which purposely exist to help revenge porn victims. Many of the agencies through which the victims will be recruited also launch campaigns. I aim to access activist participants through agencies. These participants will also be used as gatekeepers to direct the research to more local services and also aid in snowball sampling of participants. Police officers will be recruited from Merseyside police. They will be accessed through direct contact with the police force and again will rely on voluntary participation.

C2. How was the number of participants decided? (e.g. was a sample size calculation performed)

The number of participants were decided based on the accessibility of a hard to reach group. Gaining access to these participants will be particularly difficult. Firstly, given the sensitivity of the topic, many victims may refuse to come forward to discuss their victimisation. Secondly, whilst the government, and some agencies, have attempted to establish means to support victims, as it stands these are centred upon the use of helplines as opposed to support groups meeting on a regular basis. This also makes it particularly difficult to narrow the sample area, as victims will contact these helplines and agencies from all over the country, regardless of where the agencies are initially based. Whilst, some would argue that a higher number of interviews is needed to provide theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2012), particularly in relation to victim interviews, it is unlikely that a higher number of participants can be accessed within the Merseyside area. Therefore, additional interviews with activists and police officers are intended to provide an overview of victims' experiences and treatment within the criminal justice system.

C3a. Will any of the participants come from any of the following groups? (Please tick all that apply)

Please note that the Mental Capacity Act 2005 requires that all research involving participation of any adult who lacks the capacity to consent through learning difficulties, brain

injury or mental health problems be reviewed by an ethics committee operating under the National Research Ethics Service (NRES). For further information please see

<http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/101579.htm>

<input type="checkbox"/>	Children under 16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adults with learning disabilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adults with mental illness (if yes please specify type of illness below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug / Substance users
<input type="checkbox"/>	Young offenders
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Those with a dependant relationship with the investigator <i>e.g. your employees or students</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other vulnerable groups please specify

Justify their inclusion

With the research being advertised within the university it is possible that some participants may be students which I teach as part of my role as a GTA. However, recruitment will not be specifically aimed at these students.
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C3b. If you are proposing to undertake a research study involving interaction with children or vulnerable adults do you have current, valid clearance from the UK Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)?

☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☒ Not Applicable

Due to participants being over the age of 18 a DBS check is not required at this stage. However, a DBS check will be undertaken if requested by gatekeepers.
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C4a. What are the inclusion criteria? *(Please include information on how you will ensure that your participants will be informed of your inclusion criteria and how you will ensure that any specific inclusion criteria are met)*

Participants from all backgrounds are eligible to take part in the research. This will be made clear on any advertisements used to recruit participants. Gatekeepers will also be informed and used to pass on the information to potential participants they aid in recruiting.

C4b. What are the exclusion criteria? *(Please include information on how you will ensure that your participants will be informed of your exclusion criteria and how you will ensure that any specific exclusion criteria are met)*

Exclusion criteria in relation to victims includes gender and age. The aim of the study is to gain an insight into victim's experiences, most of which are female thus, males are excluded from the sample. Individuals below the age of 18 will also be excluded from the sample. Although instances of revenge porn have occurred with individuals under the age of 18 (Halliday, 2015), the uploading of these images is lawfully categorised as child pornography (Crown Prosecution Service, 2015b). Therefore, these latter participants will be excluded, due to their higher level of protection from the law than for those above the age of 18. Preferably participants should be based within the Merseyside or Northwest of England. However, depending on the number of participants accessed those who are based in other areas may be able to participate. This will be made clear on any advertisements used to recruit participants. Gatekeepers will also be informed and used to pass on the information to potential participants they aid in recruiting. In relation to activists and police officers these exclusions do not apply.

C5. Will any payments/rewards or out of pocket expenses be made to participants? If yes what or how much?

Travel Expenses

SECTION D – CONSENT

D1. Will informed consent be obtained from (please tick all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The research participants?
<input type="checkbox"/>	The research participants' carers or guardians?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gatekeepers to the research participants? (i.e. school authorities, treatment service providers)

D2. Will a signed record of consent be obtained? *Please note that where the study involves the administration of a questionnaire or survey a signed record of consent is not required for completion of the questionnaire as long as it is made clear in the information sheet that completion of the questionnaire is voluntary. Under these circumstances return of the completed questionnaire is taken as implied consent.*

If implied consent is to be assumed by return of questionnaires, the following statement (or similar) must be used:

"I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of this research study and for my data to be used as described in the information sheet provided"

Participation in any other interventions within the same study e.g. interviews, focus groups must be supported by obtaining appropriate written consent.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Implied consent for questionnaire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verbal consent
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Where the study involves the use of more than one intervention for example interviews and a questionnaire please the space below to detail the method of consent to be used for each intervention eg

Questionnaire – implied consent

Interview – written consent

Telephone interview – verbal consent

Interviews- Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before they take part in the research. This will be gained in accordance with Liverpool John Moores University's (2013) code of practice for gaining informed consent. Participants will receive full information about the research purposes and processes (British Society of Criminology, 2015). Given that this research aims to aid in increasing protection and support for victims, there is no part of this research which will be excluded from the research explanation to participants. Information will be provided to participants verbally and in written format, which will include a participant information sheet and a consent form signed by myself and

the participant. The self-selected status of participants in this study ensures that consent will be freely given.

PLEASE APPEND COPIES OF ANY PROPOSED CONSENT FORMS TO THIS APPLICATION

D3. All participants must be provided with written information detailing the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of participating. An approved template for the participant information sheet can be found at <http://ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93717.htm>. Please check the box below to confirm that a participant information sheet has been appended to this application.

APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED WITHOUT A PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET WILL NOT BE REVIEWED.

D4a. Will participants be able to withhold consent (refuse to take part)?

* ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no please explain why not

D4b. Will participants be able to withdraw from the study whilst it is ongoing (after they have consented to take part)?

* ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no please explain why not

D4c. Will participants be able to withdraw from the study after data collection has ended (will it be possible to identify and remove an individual's data once it has been collected or has been collected anonymously)?

* ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no please explain why not

**THE ABILITY OF PARTICIPANTS TO REFUSE TO TAKE PART OR TO
WITHDRAW FROM A STUDY MUST BE MADE CLEAR IN THE WRITTEN
INFORMATION PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS**

SECTION E - RISKS AND BENEFITS

E1. Where will the intervention(s) take place? *Please note that where research is to be conducted in participants' homes or other non-public places applicants must be aware of appropriate lone working policies / practices and complete a full risk assessment.*

Applicants should also be aware of potential embarrassment or distress for participants in asking them to discuss personal or sensitive topics in public places.

<input type="checkbox"/> * LJMU premises	<input type="checkbox"/> * NHS or other external organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Public places	<input type="checkbox"/> Participant homes or other non-public places
--	--	--	---

E2. Will individual or group interviews/questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study? (e.g. during interviews or focus groups)

☐ * Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

If yes give details of procedures in place to deal with these issues. Information given to participants should make it clear under what circumstances action may be taken. Where interviews or questionnaires discuss sensitive or distressing topics signposting to relevant support organisations must be included in the associated participant information sheet.

This research will involve participants discussing sensitive and/or distressing topics and this will be addressed in a number of ways. Firstly, when recruiting participants those who wish to take part will be sent an overview of the research and possible topics that may be covered in the interview. If participants feel taking part will be too distressing based on the overview they will be advised not to take part. Participants who do wish to take part will be given a participant information sheet which will again give an overview of the research and highlight that sensitive issues will be discussed. This information sheet will also include signposting organisations in the event that participants require support following the interview. Some of those included will be:

- Victim Support
<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-victims/ive-been-affected/revenge-porn>

- Women's Aid
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk>
- Women Against Revenge Porn
<http://www.womenagainstrevengeporn.com/>
- Revenge Porn Helpline 0845 6000 459
<http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>
- End Revenge Porn
<http://www.endrevengeporn.org/about/>

E3. Explain any potential benefits for individual participants of the study. Where there are no benefits to individual participants provide brief details of the potential broader benefits of the study for example to society or to future service users.

Participants will be signposted to support services which they may not already be aware of. Broader benefits include the potential contribution to informing future policies and laws to elicit effective protection and justice for victims.

E4. Describe in detail any potential adverse effects, risks or hazards (mild, moderate, high or severe) of involvement in the research for the RESEARCHERS. Explain any risk management procedures which will be put in place e.g. lone working procedures, counselling, peer support.

Risks to participants include emotional distress due to discussing experiences of victimisation.

SECTION F – DATA ACCESS AND STORAGE

F1. Personal Data Management

Will the study involve the collection and storage of personal, identifiable or sensitive information from participants? Please note that signed consent forms constitute personal data. (e.g. names, addresses, telephone numbers, date of birth, full postcode, medical records, academic records)

☒ * Yes ☐ No

If yes please provide details of what personal information will be collected and stored

Personal information includes: Names, addresses (with postcodes), date of birth and telephone numbers.

*Applicants should note that personal identifiable information or sensitive information relating to participants **must not** be transferred in or out of the EEA without the explicit consent of participants. Such information must be handled with great care and only used in the way described in the written information you give your participants.*

*You **must** store any hard copies of personal data (e.g. printed data sheets, signed consent forms) in locked cupboards or filing cabinets and any electronic data containing personal information **must** be stored securely on LJMU password protected computers.*

*Personal data **must not** be stored on USB drives or other portable media or stored on home or personal computers.*

Where the use of verbatim quotes is proposed in future publications or presentations or it is intended that information is gathered using audio/visual recording devices explicit consent for this must be sought from participants.

F2. Will you share personal, identifiable data with other organisations outside of LJMU or with people outside of your research team? (e.g. supervisor, co-applicants)

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not Applicable

If yes please provide further details

F3. For how long will any personal, identifiable data collected during the study be stored?

Personal and identifiable data will be destroyed 5 years after the PhD viva in accordance with LJMU REC guidelines. However, anonymised interview transcripts will be saved and may be used in future research.

DECLARATION OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

- The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by the ethical principles underlying the Declaration of Helsinki and LJMU's REC regulations and guidelines together with the codes of practice laid down by any relevant professional or learned society.
- If the research is approved I undertake to adhere to the approved study procedures and any conditions set out by the REC in giving its favourable opinion.
- I undertake to seek an ethical opinion from LJMU REC before implementing substantial amendments to the approved study plan.
- If, in the course of the administering any approved intervention, there are any serious adverse events, I understand that I am responsible for immediately stopping the intervention and alerting LJMU REC.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- I understand that any records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in the future.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher will be held by the University and this will be managed according to the principals of the Data Protection Act.
- I understand that the information contained in this application, any supporting documentation and all correspondence with LJMU REC relating to the application will be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. The information may be disclosed in response to requests made under the Act except where statutory exemptions apply.
- I understand that all conditions apply to my co-applicants and other researchers involved in the study and that it is my responsibility that they abide by them.

X

**TICK TO CONFIRM THAT YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THE
DECLARATION ABOVE**

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION FOR REVIEW

Once you have completed the above application form please submit it electronically to either EthicsPR@ljmu.ac.uk for proportionate review or to researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk for full review by the University REC. If possible please submit your application form and any additional supporting documentation as a single pdf file.

APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA AN LJMU EMAIL ACCOUNT AND FOR STUDENT APPLICATIONS SUPPORTED BY AN EMAIL / LETTER FROM THE MAIN SUPERVISOR CONFIRMING THAT THEY HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE STUDY / APPLICATION.

CHECKLIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY (Please note that applications submitted without the required supporting documents will not be reviewed).

*	Ethics Application Form (MANDATORY)
*	Protocol (MANDATORY) see note below
*	Email / letter from supervisor
*	Copies of any recruitment/advertisement material e.g. letters, emails, posters etc.
*	Participant Information Sheet
	Carer Information Sheet
*	Gatekeeper Information Sheet
*	Participant Consent Form
	Carer Consent Form
*	Gatekeeper Consent Form
	Non-validated questionnaires
*	List of interview questions
	Risk Assessment Form
	Other please specify

Dear Antoinette

With reference to your application for Ethical Approval:

16/HSS/006 - Antoinette Huber, PGR - Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice (Janet Jamieson)

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has considered the above application by proportionate review. I am pleased to inform you that ethical approval has been granted and the study can now commence.

Approval is given on the understanding that:

- ☐ any adverse reactions/events which take place during the course of the project are reported to the Committee immediately;
- ☐ any unforeseen ethical issues arising during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- ☐ the LJMU logo is used for all documentation relating to participant recruitment and participation e.g. poster, information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires. The LJMU logo can be accessed at <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/corporatecommunications/60486.htm>

Where any substantive amendments are proposed to the protocol or study procedures further ethical approval must be sought.

Applicants should note that where relevant appropriate gatekeeper / management permission must be obtained prior to the study commencing at the study site concerned.

For details on how to report adverse events or request ethical approval of major amendments please refer to the information provided at <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93205.htm>

Please note that ethical approval is given for a period of five years from the date granted and therefore the expiry date for this project will be April 2021. An application for extension of approval must be submitted if the project continues after this date.

**Mandy Williams, Research Support Officer
(Research Ethics and Governance)
Research and Innovation Services
Kingsway House, Hatton Garden, Liverpool L3
2AJ
t: 01519046467 e: a.f.williams@ljmu.ac.uk**

Appendix L: Participant/Gatekeeper Information Sheets



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY VICTIM PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Antoinette Huber (PhD Student)

Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies

School of Humanities and Social Science

80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Image Based Sexual Abuse and the Pursuit of Justice.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research aims to explore the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge pornography on female victims. Understanding and raising awareness of women's experiences is the focal point of the study. The study is based on a series of interviews with victims, campaigners and police officers in an attempt to fully understand victim's experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this I intend to aid in informing policies surrounding revenge pornography which could increase protection and the effectiveness of justice for victims.

Who can take part in the study?

Any woman aged 18 years or over who has been a victim of revenge pornography is eligible to take part in the research. Preferably participants should be based within Merseyside or the Northwest of England. However, if you are based in other areas you may still be able to participate.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive. If you wish to withdraw after the interview information you have provided will be removed from the research findings.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research is part of a 3 year PhD study. If you choose to participate, you will take part in a 60-90 minute one-to-one interview in which you will be asked a range of questions relating to your experiences of revenge pornography. This will include background information in relation to how, when and why you were subject to revenge pornography, whether identifying and contact details were disclosed alongside the posted images (if so which information was disclosed for example, name, address, social media profile links), relationship history with the perpetrator (including any history of violence), your life experiences as a consequence of victimisation, and your perceptions of the law and policies surrounding revenge pornography. However, the interviews will be flexible; if there is anything else you would like to discuss during the interview there will be plenty of opportunity to do so. One of the most important aspects of the interview is to allow you to tell your story and have your voice heard.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The results will then form part of a written thesis and may be published as academic papers. Short reports will also be written for the relevant organisations and policy makers.

Are there any risks?

As the interviews involve discussions of sensitive and upsetting events it is possible that taking part in the interview may cause some emotional distress. If you do not feel comfortable discussing some information you are within your right not to do so. Furthermore, if you feel that talking about your experiences will be too distressing I would advise you to not take part in the research.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. Interviews will be digitally recorded and you will get to see the transcript of the conversation before the data is used. You will be able to amend anything that you do not think came out as you intended it to. Your personal details including your name and contact information will not be passed on to anybody. Information which is reproduced within the written research findings will not include any information which can make you personally identifiable. This includes identification of your experiences alongside the relevant revenge pornography websites. Liverpool John Moores data protection policies will also be followed; all identifiable information including tape recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet, within a key pad locked room at the university

which only the researcher can access. All digital or electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer at Liverpool John Moores University.

Will I have to pay for travel costs?

No. Travel expenses incurred to attend the interview will be reimbursed with the presentation of a receipt/travel ticket. Interviews will take place in a private setting and will be based either at Liverpool John Moores University or at the location of relevant organisations who are aiding with the study.

Sources of Support

If you would like to seek any support the following organisations are involved in supporting and advising victims of revenge pornography.

- Revenge Porn Helpline 0845 6000 459
<http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>
- Victim Support
<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-victims/ive-been-affected/revenge-porn>
- Women's Aid
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk>
- Women Against Revenge Porn
<http://www.womenagainstrevengeporn.com/>
- End Revenge Porn
<http://www.endrevengeporn.org/about/>

If you have any further questions which you would like to direct at an alternative contact to the researcher please contact my academic supervisor: Janet Jamieson: **j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk**.

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (16/HSS/006)

Date: 18th April 2016.

Contact Details of Researcher: A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

Contact Details of Academic Supervisor: j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk

If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY
CRIMINAL JUSTICE STAFF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Antoinette Huber (PhD Student)
Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies
School of Humanities and Social Science
80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research aims to explore the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge pornography on female victims. Understanding and raising awareness of women's experiences is the focal point of the study. The study is based on a series of interviews with victims, campaigners and police officers in an attempt to fully understand victim's experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this I intend to aid in informing policies surrounding revenge pornography which could increase protection and the effectiveness of justice for victims.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive. If you wish to withdraw after the interview has taken place any disclosed information will be removed from the research findings.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research is part of a 3 year PhD study. If you choose to participate, you will take part in a 60-90 minute one-to-one interview in which you will be asked a range of questions

relating to revenge pornography and the treatment of victims within the criminal justice system. This includes, your perceptions of the extent of revenge pornography, which websites are the most problematic and how they operate, what are the most common reasons for the perpetration of revenge pornography, the nature and effectiveness of police responses to revenge porn (proactive and reactive); your views on why some victims are willing to report offences to the police while others are not; how cases are investigated, how victims are treated and responded to within the criminal justice system; what factors influence decisions regarding the arrest and charging of perpetrators or the dropping of cases; and what factors influence successful and unsuccessful convictions. However, the interviews will be flexible; if there is anything else you would like to discuss during the interview there will be plenty of opportunity to do so.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The results will then form part of a written thesis and may be published as academic papers. Short reports will also be written for the relevant organisations and policy makers.

Are there any risks / benefits involved?

With one of the aims of the project being to build a more collaborative approach towards the handling of these sorts of cases any information you do provide could potentially improve the experiences of future victims. However, with interviews involving discussions of sensitive and upsetting events it is possible that taking part in the interview may cause some emotional distress. If you do not feel comfortable discussing some information you are within your right not to do so.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. Interviews will be digitally recorded and you will get to see the transcript of the conversation before the data is used. You will be able to remove anything that you did not think came out as you intended it to. Your personal details including your name and contact information will not be passed on to anybody. Information which is reproduced within the written research findings will not include any information which can make you personally identifiable. Liverpool John Moores' data protection policies will also be followed. All identifiable information including tape recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet, within a key pad locked room at the university which only the researcher can access. All digital or electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer at Liverpool John Moores University.

Will I have to pay for travel costs?

No. Travel expenses incurred to attend the interview will be reimbursed with the presentation of a receipt/travel ticket. Interviews will take place in a private setting and will be based either at Liverpool John Moores University or at the relevant police station.

If you have any further questions which you would like to direct at an alternative contact to the researcher please contact my academic supervisor: Janet Jamieson: **j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk**.

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (16/HSS/006)

Date: 18th April 2016.

Contact Details of Researcher: A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

Contact Details of Academic Supervisor: j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk

If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

ACTIVIST PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Antoinette Huber (PhD Student)

Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies

School of Humanities and Social Science

80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research aims to explore the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge pornography on female victims. Understanding and raising awareness of women's experiences is the focal point of the study. The study is based on a series of interviews with victims, campaigners and police officers in an attempt to fully understand victim's life experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this I intend to aid in informing policies surrounding revenge pornography which could increase protection and the effectiveness of justice for future victims.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive. If you wish to withdraw after the interview has taken place any information provided will be removed from the research findings.

The research is part of a 3 year PhD study. If you choose to participate, you will take part in a 60-90 minute one-to-one interview in which you will be asked a range of questions relating to your perceptions of the extent of revenge pornography, which websites are the most problematic and how they operate, what are the most common reasons for the perpetration of revenge pornography, your experiences of supporting/working with

victims, the consequences of revenge pornography for victims, your perceptions of the effectiveness of current law and policies and why some victims come forward and others might not. However, the interviews will be flexible; if there is anything else you would like to discuss during the interview there will be plenty of opportunity to do so.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The results will then form part of a written thesis and may be published as academic papers. Short reports will also be written for the relevant organisations and policy makers.

Are there any risks / benefits involved?

With one of the aims of the project being to build a more collaborative approach towards addressing revenge pornography any information you do provide could aid in raising awareness. However, with interviews involving discussions of sensitive and upsetting events it is possible that taking part in the interview may cause some emotional distress. If you do not feel comfortable discussing some information you are within your right not to do so.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. Interviews will be digitally recorded and you will get to see the transcript of the conversation before the data is used. You will be able to remove anything that you did not think came out as you intended it to. Your personal details including your name and contact information will not be passed on to anybody. Information which is reproduced within the written research findings will not include any information which can make you personally identifiable. Furthermore, identifiable information disclosed in relation to specific cases or people you have supported/worked with will also be kept confidential. Liverpool John Moores data protection policies will also be followed; all identifiable information including tape recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet, within a key pad locked room at the university which only the researcher can access. All digital or electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer at Liverpool John Moores University.

Will I have to pay for travel costs?

No. Travel expenses incurred to attend the interview will be reimbursed with the presentation of a receipt/travel ticket. Interviews will take place in a private setting and will be based either at Liverpool John Moores University or at the relevant organisation's premises.

If you have any further questions which you would like to direct at an alternative contact to the researcher please contact my academic supervisor: Janet Jamieson j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (16/HSS/006)

Date: 18th April 2016.

Contact Details of Researcher: A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

Contact Details of Academic Supervisor: j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk.

If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

GATEKEEPER INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Antoinette Huber

Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies

School of Humanities and Social Science

80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice.

What is the reason for this letter?

This letter invites you to aid in identifying potential respondents for a study examining the effects of revenge pornography.

What is the purpose of the study/rationale for the project?

This research aims to explore the emotional, physical, and social impacts of revenge pornography on female victims over the age of 18. Understanding and raising awareness of women's experiences is the focal point of the study. The study is based on a series of interviews with victims, campaigners and police officers in an attempt to fully understand victim's life experiences and their treatment within the criminal justice system. By doing this I intend to aid in informing policies surrounding revenge pornography which could increase protection and the effectiveness of justice responses.

What we are asking you to do?

Your role as a gatekeeper will involve signposting and providing access to local services and support groups who work with female victims of revenge pornography. If possible your role will also involve identifying potential participants who are willing to take part in a one-to-one interview, lasting around 60-90 minutes, discussing their experiences of revenge pornography victimisation. If you would like to be a gatekeeper for this research you will be asked to;

1. Identify possible participants

2. At the appropriate time, inform the potential participant, local service and/or support group about the study and ask them whether they would like to be emailed the participant information sheet or provided with the researchers contact details.
3. If they wish to take part, your job will be to provide them with this information so they have the means to contact the researcher.

Why do we need access to your facilities and staff

Given the difficulty of locating victims, and in particular, victims who are willing to talk about their experiences, your knowledge of the available local services/support groups and your experiences of working with victims will significantly help the recruitment process for the study. Interviews will mostly be based at Liverpool John Moores University however, if participants feel more comfortable being interviewed at your organisation's premises, use of your facilities or subsequent support group facilities would also be helpful.

If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?

You will be provided with an information sheet detailing the study so that you have the resources and information needed in order to identify potential participants for the study. You will be asked to contact known support groups within Merseyside and any potential participants who could take part in the study. If there are any groups or individuals who may be willing to take part, you will have the resources to pass on the contact details of the researcher so that the participants can confirm their participation and interview arrangements can be made.

How we will use the Information/questionnaire?

The information given by your organisation will solely be used for recruitment purposes. Information given by participants will be recorded and transcribed and will form part of a written thesis and may be published as academic papers. Short reports will also be written for the relevant organisations and policy makers. The recruitment process will also be described within these.

Will the name of my organisation taking part in the study be kept confidential?'

As the study aims to raise awareness of the effects of revenge pornography it is your decision as to whether you would like the organisation to remain anonymous. If you are happy for the organisation to be identified as part of the research process to raise awareness of your work or support for revenge pornography victims you can do so. If you would like the organisation to be identified within the reports, personal information of individuals will still remain anonymous, only the organisation's name will be included.

If you would prefer anonymity then the organisation and any identifying characteristics will not be identified in any discussions or written reports relating to the research. This

research will be undertaken in accordance with Liverpool John Moores' data protection policies and thus all identifiable information will be kept in a locked cabinet, within a key pad locked room at the university which only the researcher can access. All digital or electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer at Liverpool John Moores University.

What should I do now?

If you are happy to be a gatekeeper for this study please sign and return the **Gatekeeper Consent Form** provided.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher: Antoinette Huber: A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (16/HSS/006)

Date: 18th April 2016.

Contact Details of Researcher A.R.Huber@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

Contact Details of Academic Supervisor: j.jamieson@ljmu.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.

Appendix M: Consent Forms



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Antoinette Huber

Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies

School of Humanities and Social Science

80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights. ☐
3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the interview for this study. ☐
5. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and I am happy to proceed. ☐
6. I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

GATEKEEPER CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Antoinette Huber

Faculty of Arts, Profession and Social Studies

School of Humanities and Social Science

80-98 Mount Pleasant, Merseyside, Liverpool, L3 5UZ

Women, Revenge Pornography and the Pursuit of Justice.

Please tick to confirm your understanding of the study and that you are happy for your police force to take part and your facilities to be used to host parts of the project.

This study is seeking to gain an understanding of women's experiences of revenge pornography victimisation and their treatment within the criminal justice system. Your role as a gatekeeper is to assist in locating and signposting the researcher towards individuals who may be willing to take part of the research. This will include informing/advertising the study to potential participants and passing the researchers contact details on so that interviews can be arranged

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that participation of our organisation and students/members in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect legal rights.

☐

I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.

☐

Tick this box if you would like the name police force to be identified within the written reports (optional).

☐

I agree to conform to the Data Protection Act

☐

Name of Gatekeeper:

Date:

Signature

Name of Researcher:

Date:

Signature