A Feminist Exploration of Image-Based Sexual Abuse

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Abstract

As technology and internet use has become prevalent in society, many now have the means to enact violence anonymously and easily. With the rise of AI and deepfake pornography, it is possible for someone to perpetrate sexual violence without meeting or being in proximity to the victim. The focus of this thesis is image-based sexual abuse, a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence which can broadly be defined as the nonconsensual taking and sharing of nude or sexual images.

In this study, a survey and interviews are used to address two key aims. Firstly, the study builds understanding of attitudes towards IBSA and how these are linked to victim blaming and other myths about sexual violence. The thesis also explores how IBSA is experienced by victims and develops the empirical evidence on technology use in sexual violence. Both aims focus on the gendered nature of attitudes and experiences of IBSA. The study builds on previous feminist research on sexual violence, and makes a novel contribution through the development of a feminist analytical framework that links IBSA to feminist research and patriarchal social structures.

This thesis makes a further contribution by developing an IBSA typology. Importantly, this distinguishes IBSA as a form of sexual violence from other forms of image-based abuse (IBA) which were captured in the research. It establishes that IBSA has much in common with other forms of gendered sexual violence, whereas IBA is less clearly sexual and gendered in nature. Previous research has not distinguished these forms of abuse.

Finally, it is clear from the research findings that IBSA has become an 'everyday' experience for many and something that is expected for those engaging in online spaces, particularly women, as reflected by attitudes towards and experiences of IBSA. This has implications for how IBSA should be addressed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Thesis Rationale

Digital technology, the internet, and social media have become essential parts of daily life in recent years. They are used in work, education, to build relationships and portray ourselves to the world. By 2022, 93% of households had access to a mobile phone and 96% had access to the internet in the UK, with internet access in particular having rapidly increased over the past 10 years (ONS, 2023a). Whether digital technology has had a positive impact on society as a whole is a complex question; technology has arguably enabled gendered forms of violence, predominantly referring to male violence against women. There is growing evidence that the rise in technology-facilitated violence has had a disproportionate effect on women, with a recent report finding that 85% of women globally had experienced or witnessed online forms of abuse (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

Although these forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) overlap with other forms of gendered violence, they differ in relation to the ease in which they can be perpetrated. Billions of people now have the means to perpetrate violence anonymously and easily through their access to technology. With the rise of AI and deepfake pornography, it is possible to perpetrate sexual violence without ever meeting or being in physical proximity to the victim. This has the potential to make technology-facilitated forms of sexual violence the most prolific form of male violence against women, and as such a greater body of evidence is needed to help understand what these forms of violence involve and how to address them. Over the course of carrying out this thesis alone, the rate of media reports on technology-facilitated sexual violence has increased rapidly. This includes incidents such as the use of AI to create child sexual abuse images, police officers sharing nude videos of a vulnerable woman, and websites set up to facilitate swapping and sharing nude images of women without their consent (BBC 2021; BBC, 2023a; BBC, 2023b; BBC, 2024; The Guardian, 2022).

The focus of this thesis is on image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), which is one type of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). IBSA broadly refers to the nonconsensual taking and sharing of nude or sexual images. There are two key theoretical concepts that are used in this thesis to understand technology-facilitated

sexual violence and IBSA. Both concepts are aligned with the feminist approach of the thesis, meaning all forms of sexual violence are view through the lens of patriarchal social structures. Kelly's (1988) 'continuum of sexual violence' is one approach that is useful in positioning TFSV and IBSA. With her continuum, Kelly (ibid) proposes that different types of violence against women are interlinked and normative types of behaviour which all act to uphold patriarchal structures. This helps to form a conceptualisation of gendered violence, where everyday experiences (such as being catcalled) can be connected to violent sexual offences such as rape, and even femicide. Such behaviours are now being facilitated via technology at every stage of the continuum, from verbal harassment and rape threats on social media (BBC, 2021) to recording and sharing videos of rape (New York Times, 2012). Within this thesis, the extent to which IBSA can be seen to be an extension of pre-existing forms of sexual violence will be explored.

Although it can generally be argued that IBSA and TFSV exist on a continuum with other forms of violence against women, another key part of understanding the emergence of IBSA (and online violence more broadly) is conceptualising how technology develops within patriarchal societies. For this reason, the second concept that will used to understand the emergence of IBSA is Social Shaping Theory (SST) which critiques the notion that technology develops separately from society (technological determinism) and instead proposes that human action and technology are mutually shaped by each other (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985). Wajcman (2010, p.149) describes technology as 'both a source and consequence of gender relations and vice versa'. This theory works well with the feminist stance of this thesis, as it helps explain why gendered patterns of behaviour are reproduced in online spaces. Previous research has emphasised how social media sites can facilitate and amplify forms of online abuse through a lack of regulation or use of algorithms that push abusive content (Dragiewicz et al., 2018; Global Partnership for Action on Online Harassment and Abuse, 2023; Khoo, 2021). This is also made more complex because legal responses to technology-facilitated sexual violence require an international approach as victims and perpetrators can reside across multiple countries (Citron & Franks, 2014). Kelly's continuum of sexual violence and social shaping theory can be used to explore why technology-facilitated sexual violence

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has arisen, based on the patriarchal nature of technology development and male violence against women.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence includes a range of behaviours such as online harassment and sexual exploitation, the creation of deepfake pornography, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of sexual images. Although there are many ways in which technology is used to facilitate sexual violence, this PhD aims to specifically understand the diverse ways in which images are being used to perpetrate sexual violence. In particular, the thesis focuses on instances of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) where a nude or sexual image has been taken or shared (including threats to share) without consent. There is currently a limited amount of research on this topic which needs addressing in order to support evidence-based policies, laws and education around image-based sexual abuse.

IBSA is arguably the form of TFSV which has the greatest public awareness, due in part to the attention 'revenge pornography' has received in recent years. This media-coined term refers to the non-consensual sharing of sexual images typically by ex-partners with the explicit motivation of getting 'revenge'. In 2023, the BBC and ITV both released documentaries on the subject, involving reality stars who had been victims of revenge pornography reflecting the increase in societal awareness of IBSA ('Revenge Porn: Georgia vs Bear' on ITV and 'Revenge Porn' on the BBC). However, 'revenge pornography' is only one type of a wide variety of behaviours which can be classified as IBSA. In their typology of IBSA, Powell et al (2018: 306) classify the following 5 behaviours as forms of IBSA:

(1) relationship retribution (where revenge, in the context of an ongoing or ended intimate relationship, is the primary motivation for engaging in IBSA);

(2) sextortion (where individuals threaten to distribute sexually explicit photos of the victim unless they send more photos);

(3) sexual voyeurism (obtaining photos non-consensually for voyeuristic reasons, such as 'upskirting');

(4) sexploitation (where non-consensual sexual or nude images of individuals are used in commercial transactions) and;

(5) Recording and distributing videos of sexual assault.

To date there have been few studies focussed on IBSA, with most looking into consensual sexting or online behaviours more generally. These studies are also typically focused on children, despite the fact early studies have suggested IBSA and non-consensual sexting occurs more often amongst adults. Because of this, it is currently hard to establish the prevalence of IBSA (Gamez-Guadix et al, 2015). The results from studies which focus on instances of IBSA amongst adults have been varied due to differences in sample sizes, methodologies and questions posed, although all suggest that IBSA is a significant issue with around 1 in 5 reporting IBSA victimisation (Gamez-Guadix et al, 2015; Thompson & Morrison, 2013; Garcia et al, 2016; Powell & Henry, 2019; Gamez-Guadix et al, 2023). Given this indicates around 20% of the population will be victims of IBSA in their lifetime, this is an area which warrants further research and a stronger evidence base.

One of the most significant predictors of IBSA victimisation is how frequently individuals use technology (Powell & Henry, 2019). People who identify as LGBTQIA+ have also consistently been found to report higher levels of IBSA victimisation compared to those who identify as cisgendered and/or heterosexual (Priebe and Svedin, 2012; Powell, Scott and Henry, 2018). The relationship between gender and IBSA victimisation has received mixed results from studies to state, with some indicating similar rates of victimisation for both men and women. This may, meaning the relationship between gender and IBSA is mor complex than may be predicted from other forms of sexual violence (Wood et al. 2015; Powell & Henry, 2019; Priebe & Svedin, 2012). In comparison to victimisation, there is less known about predictors for perpetrators of IBSA apart from that they are predominantly male (Powell et al., 2018). This study will seek to explore and expand on some of these previous findings.

Research has shown some differences between IBSA and other forms of sexual violence. For example, there is a greater overlap between victimisation and perpetration of IBSA than for other forms of sexual violence (Powell et al, 2018). More research on IBSA is needed to fully understand this. There is also a lack of research which compares attitudes towards the online and offline aspects of IBSA and other forms of sexual violence; attitudinal studies thus far have mainly been focused on the gender of the victim and perpetrator (Hudson, Fetro & Ogletree,

2014; Scott & Gavin, 2018) and this is a further gap that will be explored in this study.

1.2 Research aims

This thesis has three key aims. The most fundamental aim of the thesis is to produce new empirical evidence relating to experiences of image-based sexual abuse using survey and interview findings. This includes the production of a typology of IBSA to better understand the ways in which IBSA can manifest itself, and also detailed analysis of how IBSA may or may not align with other forms of gendered abuse. To date, there is a limited (but growing) amount of evidence that explores experiences of image-based sexual abuse. The evidence collected here not only helps build the evidence base for IBSA victimisation, but can add fresh insights through the contextual information that is explored alongside different types of IBSA victimisation. In particular, it uses the data to establish a typology which distinguishes two types of abuse, broadly categorised as image-based abuse and image-based *sexual* abuse.

The second aim of the thesis is to explore attitudes towards IBSA and the extent to which these are gendered. In particular, this aim connects previous feminist research on rape myths (Burt, 1980) and the notion of the ideal victim (Christie, 1986) to emerging forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence, in this case IBSA. From the 1980s to the present day, feminists have often focused on how societal attitudes and myths feed into patterns of gendered violence. Although there is a rapidly emerging body of literature relating to forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence, there is still relatively little work that explores attitudes towards online forms of violence and whether these are affected by whether an incident occurs primarily in the digital or physical world. This is important to understand as attitudes and myths facilitate sexual violence and are one way in which patriarchal structures in society are maintained, as will be explored in Chapter 2.

Finally, the research aims to produce an analytical framework that situates image-based sexual abuse within its broader context. This will be established through a comprehensive literature review which will then be supplemented by findings from the research. This will be used to establish to what extent IBSA can be compared with feminist research on other forms violence against women (VAW). In particular,

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the extent to which 'continuum thinking' (Boyle, 2019a), or connectivity across areas of sexual violence, can be used to help understanding of IBSA will be explored and situated alongside Kelly's (1988) broader continuum of violence against women. The analytical framework will also seek to explore the role of technology in IBSA, something missing from much of the research on both TFSV and IBSA.

1.3 Thesis structure

The following chapter in this thesis reviews the literature relating to IBSA. There are several key arguments that are established within the literature review which are then investigated through this research. The first section explores the concepts of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) and IBSA, including establishing the key evidence gaps relating to the nature of IBSA that will be addressed within this research. This is then connected to broader sexual violence research in section 2, including the roles of attitudes and myths. The final section of the chapter then establishes the relationship between technology, gender and sexual violence, using social shaping theory. The literature is then used to produce a feminist analytical framework for IBSA which is used throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for the thesis, which included a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. A key focus of the methods was aligning with a feminist methodological approach; the extent to which this was achieved is reflected on in detail. In line with the feminist stance of the research, there are extensive reflections on the design and execution of the methods. The key limitations of the methods and what this means for the interpretation of the research findings are also presented.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research and incorporates these into the analytical framework of image-based sexual abuse. The chapter is made up of two main sections, the first focusing on attitudes towards IBSA and the second focused on establishing a typology of IBSA victimisation. Both sections are based on findings from the survey and interviews. These sections are presented within one chapter due to the interrelated nature of the findings and how they both need to be used to establish an understanding of IBSA. The findings demonstrate that IBSA has many parallels with other forms of sexual violence, including the types of attitudes and cultural 'myths' surrounding it as a form of violence against women.

Chapter 5 is used to discuss these findings in more detail, and in particular link back to the aim to understand the relationship between IBSA and gender. It also discusses the use of continuum-thinking to help understand IBSA and other forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the thesis by presenting key themes in the findings and final reflections on the strengths and limitations of the research. What these findings mean in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches, policy responses and next steps for research is also discussed.

1.4 Terminology

Feminist research is often dominated by discussions of terminology. The aim for this thesis is to use terminology which is empowering, accurate and, where possible, focuses on the role of gender in sexual violence. Terminology in three different areas will be discussed here. Firstly, terms that aim to define different types of violence will be established along with how they have been discussed in previous feminist literature. Then, the terms victim and perpetrator, what these imply and their accuracy will be reflected on. Finally, the use of gendered terms such as man/woman and male/female throughout the thesis will be discussed.

Identifying the best terms to describe a broad spectrum of domestic and sexual violence from a feminist perspective is challenging. Since the women's liberation movement of the 1970s, various terms have been coined and then abandoned as issues with them arose. Dobash and Dobash (1979) for example used the term *wife battering* in their seminal work to highlight the gendered nature of such forms of violence. Although representing a step forward in feminist thinking on domestic and sexual violence, the term is limited in that it focuses on married women and only highlights one form of abuse that women may experience. Wife battering or woman battering are now rarely used as terms. As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, liberal feminist ideas have gained prevalence in more recent years and, alongside this, gender-neutral terms such as intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV) have become favoured in much of the research in this area (DeKeseredy, 2020; Burrell, 2018). These terms have been criticised as their gender-neutral nature does not address who perpetrates the violence in the majority of cases and can add to a 'mutual combat' image of domestic violence (Berk et al.,

1983; DeKeseredy, 2020). The use of more gender-neutral terms reflects the dual focus of most government policy. The dual focus can be useful in highlighting sexual violence that affects male victims and men or women in same-sex relationships, however what it can also obscure how violence is situated within broader patriarchal structures (Boyle, 2019a; Walby & Towers, 2017). Using terminology that situates sexual and domestic violence within the context of a certain relationship (such as 'intimate' or 'domestic) risks ignoring the sociocultural context that underpins these forms of violence (Boyle, 2019a).

For these reasons, throughout the thesis *male violence against women* or *violence against women* has been used as an overarching term to describe the many forms of violence that are predominantly perpetrated by men against women. These terms align with the feminist approach taken in the thesis by being explicit about the gendered pattern of much sexual and domestic violence. Although some feminist work prefers the use of GBV or IPV due to their more inclusive nature, these have been used less frequently here because, as discussed, they do not make it sufficiently clear that what is being referred to is **men's** violence against **women**. However, when these terms do arise in the thesis, they are being used to refer to the broad pattern of male perpetrators and female victims. The term 'gendered' is used particularly in the discussion chapter where the relationship between gender and victimisation is more complex, but still highly relevant.

Sexual violence is the main term used within this thesis to refer to any form of violence that involves a sexual aspect; this could include rape, sexual assault or sexual harassment and broadly aligns with Kelly's (1988) concept of a continuum of sexual violence, where issues such as street harassment are classed within the same group as forms of sexual violence such as rape. In this way, sexual violence is positioned within the broader spectrum of male violence against women. 'Violence' is used instead of abuse to highlight the severity of the behaviour. Some argue that the term 'sexual violence' leads to emphasis being placed on *physical* forms of violence rather than emotional or economic, or that take place online (Boyle, 2019a), however in this thesis the term violence is preferred to show the harms of physical and non-physical forms of violence alike. One potential issue with the term 'sexual violence' is that it is gender neutral, when the aim of this thesis is to explore the gendered impacts of forms of sexual violence. However not including gender in the term can

be addressed in two ways. Firstly, throughout the literature review and discussion sexual violence is positioned within a broader discussion of patriarchy and male violence against women, clearly linking it to the feminist approach of the research. Secondly, within the methodology and analysis, having a gender-neutral term is useful to ensure all forms of sexual violence are explored, including those that affect men or take place within same-sex relationships. In this context, the term sexual violence has more explanatory power as it allows discussion of instances that both do and do not fit with broader patterns of violence against women, such as when men are victimised, or women perpetrate violence.

In addition to these terms, *technology-facilitated sexual violence* and *image-based sexual abuse* are used throughout this thesis to describe the ways technology is used to perpetrate forms of sexual violence. Feminist discussions on terminology around sexual violence have also impacted the development of new terms that seek to describe the ways technology is used within domestic and sexual violence. Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) is an umbrella term that covers a range of behaviours. Originally coined by Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry, it can be broadly defined as 'criminal, civil, or otherwise harmful sexually aggressive and harassing behaviours that are perpetrated with the aid or use of communication technologies' (Henry & Powell, 2016: 195). Other terms that have been used to describe similar behaviours include online harassment, gender-based online harms, ebile, and gendered cyberhate (Henry & Powell, 2016; Jane, 2017; Ostini & Hopkins, 2015). There is still variation in the terminology found in literature on sexual violence that takes place online or involves the use of technology, and debate on the most appropriate term is still ongoing. The main argument for the use of TFSV will be recapped here, but as shown through the quote from Jane (2017) below the aim here is to address this in a proportionate way:

'*…continuing what has already been an extended scholarly conversation about definitional precision and online hostility is not the best use of intellectual energy at this time'* (Jane, 2017, p.160).

One criticism of the term technology-facilitated sexual violence is that it may suggest that technology is the main cause of such behaviours, rather than the sociocultural underpinnings of violence against women more broadly (Vera-Gray, 2017). However,

what researchers hope to capture with the term technology-facilitated sexual violence is to show that technology is a way of extending previous forms of violence against women (hence, facilitated), whilst not downplaying the specific role of technology (Powell & Henry, 2017; Powell, Henry & Flynn, 2018; Henry, Flynn & Powell, 2020). In this thesis, for example, social shaping theory will be used to explore how particular technology is set up to enable perpetration of violence against women as a result of patriarchal social structures. Another reason for TFSV being used in this research is that this thesis builds on the work done by Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry, replicating some of their previous survey design. It therefore makes sense for the thesis to use the same terms as previous research that has used similar survey measures. The fact that many different terms are used across the research and within fieldwork tools means that there is currently a lack of cohesive and replicable evidence on how technology is used to perpetrate sexual violence, and this is something this thesis seeks to address (Henry, Flynn & Powell, 2020).

The focus of this thesis is *image-based sexual abuse*, a term which is broadly used to describe the ways in which nude or sexual images are used to perpetrate sexual violence. The most commonly known term used to denote image-based sexual abuse is 'revenge pornography', coined by the media predominantly to refer to instances where ex-partners shared nude or sexual images as a way to 'enact' revenge on a current or previous partner (Powell et al. 2018). Revenge pornography remains the most commonly known term to describe forms of IBSA, reflected by its dominance across multiple languages such as French, 'vengeance pornographique' and Spanish, 'pornoveganza' (Maddocks, 2019; p.347). As this term originated within the media, it has a sensationalist quality which only accounts for some forms of IBSA, and not those where revenge was not a key motivating factor. Further to this, the use of pornography fails to highlight that revenge pornography is a form of sexual abuse and describing the abuse as 'pornography' has the potential to further harm victims. The frequent use of this term has also harmed responses to image-based sexual abuse, with the focus of laws and policing over-relying on the narrative of a jilted ex-lover (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017; Powell & Henry, 2017).

The critique of the term pornography also accounts for why IBSA is the preferred term in this thesis, rather than 'non-consensual pornography' or 'involuntary

pornography', two other terms commonly found in the literature (Citron & Franks, 2014; Burns, 2015). Both of these terms have a focus on the distribution of images, and thus fail to take into account the non-consensual taking of nude or sexual images (such as upskirting) or threats to distribute nude or sexual images, which are often linked to other forms of domestic abuse and violence. Non-consensual pornography also places an emphasis on the 'product' of the abuse, in this case 'pornography' (Maddocks, 2019). In comparison, image-based sexual abuse prioritises the victim and the effects on them through the use of the term 'abuse' (ibid). Unlike revenge porn or non-consensual pornography, IBSA as a term positions this group of behaviours within the broader continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988). This is useful when conceptualising how IBSA acts as a form of violence against women, a key focus of this thesis, and is also likely to support better policy, legal and educational responses to IBSA. For these reasons, image-based sexual abuse, or IBSA, is the term used throughout this thesis (Powell et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2018; McGlynn and Rackley, 2017).

As will be seen in Chapter 4's research findings, this thesis uses the terms *victim* to describe those who have experienced IBSA and *perpetrator* for those who have carried out IBSA. The use of victim and/or survivor to describe those who have experienced sexual violence has been discussed at length in feminist literature (Gilson, 2016; Hansen, 2023; Gunnarsson, 2018). Victim, as a term, has been criticised by some for being disempowering and stigmatising to those who have experienced forms of sexual violence. To counteract this, the term survivor began to be used in certain feminist circles and by organisations that supported victims (Kelly et al., 1996). However, the term survivor has also been criticised as not all victims of sexual violence survive (for example, victims of femicide) and for many it takes a significant portion of time to feel like they have truly survived in spite of their experience of sexual violence (ibid). The difficulty here is also reflected by the fact that, naturally, the victim and survivor community is a large and diverse group and not everyone who has experienced sexual violence will feel the same about these terms. Whether an individual identifies as a victim or survivor is likely to depend on their own perception of their experience. Feminist research has also stressed the importance of allowing those who have experienced sexual violence to choose their own label and language, whether that is as a victim, survivor, or something different.

Kelly et al. (1996) however criticise treating the terms victim and survivor as a dichotomy, suggesting that instead of being oppositional the two terms are able to coexist:

'…being victimized is what was done – a statement of historical fact; surviving is what individuals who are victimized achieve in relation to, and often in spite of, that historical reality' (ibid, p.92).

For this reason, victimisation and victim are used within this thesis as they describe the state of what has been done – for example, an individual having a nude photo taken without their consent. One of the main focuses of the thesis is to explore what IBSA involves and so these terms can be more easily applied than survivor, which carries an implication that victims have recovered from their experience. This will be further reflected on in the discussion chapter which seeks to understand what is really meant by IBSA victimisation and how this relates to individuals' perceptions of their own experiences. In the survey aspect of the research, for example, respondents were not asked whether they identified as a victim (or survivor) of IBSA, but rather questions were designed in a way that allowed the researcher to ascribe victimisation to some participants. This is a difficult issue to navigate when researching sexual violence and raises whether victim, as a term, is a useful or accurate way to describe someone in this context. For example, if an individual had experienced something that a researcher would conceptualise as harmful, but they perceived the incident to be either humorous or not having an impact on their life, this calls into question whether they should labelled as a victim. This consideration will be returned to in the thesis discussion.

Generally, the terms men or women and male or female are used throughout the thesis, however it is important to acknowledge the inherent binary to this and also consider where those who are trans or non-binary fit within the terminology. Jauk (2013) for example discusses how overly restrictive definitions of violence against women (or gender-based violence) can inadvertently reinforce the normative gender binaries that many feminists want to fight against. There is evidence that shows transmisogyny and violence against trans women aligns with other forms of male violence against cisgender women, although this also intersects with experiences of transphobia (Martin-Storey et al., 2022; Wirtz et al., 2020). For these reasons, the

terms women, woman and female in this thesis refers to all who identify as women, both trans and cisgender, and vice versa for the terms men, man or male unless otherwise specified. It is however important to acknowledge that there can be differences in experiences for cisgender and transgender individuals, and how this was measured will be explored in Chapter 3.

Within this section a wide array of terminology relating to violence against women has been considered. The focus has been on using language in a way that highlights the motivation of this thesis – exploring the patriarchal nature of image-based sexual abuse. Although some of these terms can be limited, particularly in the respect that they tend to focus on women of victims of (hetero)sexual violence, they are well placed to frame a feminist analysis of technology-facilitated sexual violence. This will be further reflected on in the discussion chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature

2.1 Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence and Image-Based Sexual Abuse

"*Unchecked, [technology-facilitated VAWG] runs the risk of producing a 21st century global pandemic with significant negative consequences for all societies in general and irreparable damage for girls and women in particular*"

(UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development Working Group on Broadband and Gender, 2015, pp. 6-7).

The following section will give an overview of the empirical evidence relating to IBSA, and TFSV more broadly. Currently there is an emerging body of empirical evidence relating to IBSA. Although the amount of research in this area is growing, there are still a number of gaps that will be discussed here including the prevalence of IBSA, personal characteristics of victims and perpetrators, and perpetrator motives.

2.1.1 Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence

According to Henry and Powell, there are six broad categories of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). These are:

> (a) the unauthorized creation and distribution of sexual images (including non-consensual sexting or "revenge porn"), (b) the creation and distribution (actual or threatened) of sexual assault images, (c) the use of a carriage service to procure a sexual assault, (d) online sexual harassment and cyberstalking, (e) gender-based hate speech, and (f) virtual rape (Henry & Powell, 2015: 759).

Estimates of the prevalence of technology-facilitated sexual violence differ depending on the type being examined. For example, in relation to perpetration, one early study by Thompson and Morrison (2013) found that over a fifth of the male college students surveyed had engaged in at least one form of sexually coercive behaviour using technology. A further survey by Powell and Henry (2019) examined victimisation and found that 11.7% of British women and 10.1% of Australian women reported having an unwanted sexual experience online, however this figure dropped to roughly 3 per cent when specifically asked about whether a nude or sexual image or video had been distributed without their permission. These findings suggest that, as with other forms of sexual violence, some types of TFSV occur less frequently

than others, typically with those that are viewed as more severe (both legally and by the public) being less common than those which may be viewed as 'everyday' offences (such as receiving an unsolicited sexual image). It is important to note, however, that as much of the research carried out uses different approaches to sampling the results from these studies are often not directly comparable and more work is needed to establish the prevalence of forms of TFSV.

As noted by Henry and Powell (2016), although there are differences between sexual violence facilitated by technology and other forms of sexual violence, it is important to not create a false dichotomy between online and offline behaviours. This notion is linked to what Liz Kelly termed the 'continuum of sexual violence'. Kelly's (1988) continuum proposes that different types of violence against women are not standalone experiences but are instead interlinked and normative types of behaviour. This helps with the conceptualisation of gendered violence, as it links everyday experiences, such as street harassment, to sexual offences such as rape.

Sexual violence involving technology could therefore be considered as part of this continuum, rather than a new and separate phenomenon, as will be explored throughout this thesis. As Powell and Henry (2017) note, certain types of technology-facilitated sexual violence, such as non-consensual distribution of sexual photos via the post, existed before the use of technology increased. However, the advances in technology now mean that such behaviours can be carried out with greater ease. Evidence of the interlinked nature of online and offline sexual violence can be seen in the carryover effect from behaviour online to behaviour offline. Fox et al's (2015) study, for example, found that participants who engaged in a hostile, sexist online environment expressed more hostile sexism afterwards than participants who had not. This demonstrates the importance of considering technology-facilitated sexual violence as part of a broader pattern of sexual violence against women. The next section focuses on image-based sexual abuse as one form of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

2.1.2 Image-Based Sexual Abuse

What is image-based sexual abuse

IBSA is arguably the form of technology-facilitated sexual violence which the public has the most awareness of, due to the attention 'revenge pornography' has received

in the media over recent years. High profile cases of IBSA, such as the mass leaking of predominantly female celebrities' private photos in 2014 (often referred to as 'the fappening') as well as more recent cases such as that involving the conviction of Stephen Bear (a reality TV star), has further raised public awareness of forms of image-based sexual abuse (BBC, 2023b).

Although 'revenge pornography' and image-based sexual abuse are often used as interchangeable terms, there are several other types of behaviour that can be considered forms of IBSA. At its most fundamental, IBSA is constituted of three main types of behaviour. These are a) the nonconsensual taking of nude or sexual images, b) the nonconsensual distribution of nude or sexual images or c) the threat to share such images. Within their typology, Powell et al. (2018: 306) identify a further five key types of IBSA which demonstrates the varying motivations behind IBSA perpetration: relationship retribution, where an image is shared as way to enact revenge by a partner or ex-partner; sextortion, where images are used to blackmail; sexual voyeurism, such as when a photo is taken up someone's skirt or dress ('upskirting); sexploitation, obtaining monetary benefits from trading or sharing photos; and finally the recording and distribution of videos of sexual assault. Powell et al's (2018) typology demonstrates the breadth of harms covered by the term IBSA as well as the different types of motivations for perpetrating IBSA.

The typology is also indicative of the range of scenarios that IBSA could take place in and the different relationships between victims and perpetrators. For example, IBSA is commonly seen to occur within intimate relationships (ibid). Relationship retribution is a key example of this, as it typically occurs when a perpetrator shares an intimate photo of current or ex-partner. This may be done in a number of ways, for example the image could be sent directly to people the victim knows such as their workplace, friends or family. Photos may also be uploaded to pornography sites, which sometimes also involves the victims' personal details being shared alongside the photo known as doxing (Douglas, 2016). Sextortion can also be used in cases of domestic violence, where a perpetrator may threaten to share a nude or sexual image in order to coerce a victim into a sex act or prevent them from leaving the relationships (Powell et al., 2019). The occurrence of IBSA within intimate relationships has been a focus in studies of IBSA to date, many of which have suggested IBSA is most commonly perpetrated by men (Powell et al., 2019).

However, multiple forms of IBSA can occur outside of intimate relationships. For example, sextortion can occur when strangers hack someone's devices and access intimate images they have taken. In these cases, the perpetrator and victim do not necessarily know each other. There is also growing evidence that nude images are shared and traded, typically by men, who may or may not know the victim in the photo (Dodge, 2021). This means that unlike in instances of relationship retribution or sextortion, the main aim may not be to harm or control an individual. Despite this, it is clear that misogyny still plays a role in such behaviours, as will be explored later in this chapter.

A further form of IBSA which has increased in prevalence in recent years is the use of 'deepfake pornography' which can also be described as manufactured intimate images (Maddocks, 2021). This is typically when technology is used to place an individual's face over a pornographic image or video. Similarly to revenge pornography, this type of abuse has received increased attention due to the victimisation of high-profile celebrities, but a growing number of studies have shown that this abuse is becoming more prevalent within school settings and intimate relationships (Ringrose & Renold, 2012; Flynn et al., 2022a). This could be classified as a form of sexual voyeurism, however early evidence suggests that deepfakes may also be used to harm, control or embarrass victims (van der Nagel, 2020).

The wide-ranging forms of IBSA have several implications for research to date. Firstly, it has meant that studies on IBSA often have different parameters for what they define as IBSA and so there is a lack of replicated research findings. This is something this thesis attempts to avoid by replicating the scope and definitions of previous studies, as will be explored in the methodology chapter. It also means that when researching IBSA, it is important to collate enough contextual information to build understanding of how and why the abuse occurred. These factors both affected how the methodology for this thesis was developed. The rest of this chapter will explore what the literature to date suggests about the characteristics of IBSA.

Prevalence

Several studies have attempted to estimate the prevalence of IBSA, however the reliability of these estimates has been impacted by the variety of definitions used for IBSA, an overuse of convenience sampling and a focus on school-aged children

(Powell et al., 2019; Lee and Crofts., 2015). The work of Powell and Henry has produced some of the most reliable estimates of IBSA prevalence, particularly due to their robust sampling methods. In terms of perpetration rates, a survey by the researchers found that 11.1% of their sample of Australian adults had reported perpetrating one or more forms of IBSA over their adult lifetime (Powell et al., 2019). Similarly for IBSA victimisation, they found that 1 in 10 respondents have previously had a nude or sexual photo shared without their consent (Powell et al., 2018). An American study found slightly lower rates of victimisation, with 4% of men and 6% of women under the age of 30 reporting having an image shared without their permission (Lenhart et al., 2016).

Prevalence rates of IBSA also differ depending on the specific type of IBSA, with the more severe types having a lower prevalence. For example, in Powell et al's (2019) study participants were more likely to report having a nude or sexual photo taken without their knowledge (33.2%) compared to having someone share (20.9%) or threaten to share (18.7%) a nude or sexual image of them.

Victim and perpetrator characteristics

In terms of victim characteristics, the evidence on gender appears mixed. Some studies have found women are more likely to be victims (Powell et al., 2019), some have found men are more likely to be victimised (Gamez-Guadix et al, 2015) and many have found gender parity in victimisation (Lenhart et al, 2016; Powell & Henry, 2016; Walker et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2019). This could be a substantial challenge to a feminist understanding of IBSA, which would suggest that women experience disproportionate levels of sexual violence.

There is also significant evidence that intersectionality is important to understanding IBSA, with characteristics such as sexuality, race and disability all being shown to impact on someone's likelihood to have experienced IBSA, similar to other forms of sexual violence. Multiple studies have shown that LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to be victims of IBSA (Lenhart et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2019; Barrense-Dias et al., 2020) as well as other forms of sexual violence (Semprevivo, 2020). Lenhart et al (2016) for example found that 7% of those who identified as LGBTQIA+ had been victims of what they termed 'non-consensual pornography' compared to 2% of those who identified as heterosexual.

Similarly, when looking at the relationship between ethnicity, gender and sexual violence, evidence has shown that women of colour are more likely to experience sexual violence compared to white women. Emerging evidence suggests this pattern is replicated for IBSA (Lenhart et al, 2016; Langlois & Slane, 2017; Dodge, 2020; Powell et al., 2020). Lenhart et al (2016) found that, in the US, 5% of black internet users had an image shared without their consent, compared to 2% of white internet users. In their UK study, Powell et al (2019) found that in 1 in 4 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) respondents had experienced multiple forms of image-based sexual abuse compared to 1 in 8 for non-BAME respondents. It is important to highlight that there is a lack of evidence from the UK on the relationship between gender, sexuality, ethnicity and IBSA victimisation and that the studies discussed are mostly based in the US or Australia. Further research is needed on the experiences of Black, Asian and ethnic minority individuals. Much of the research currently relies on grouping respondents into categories which can effectively be read as white and non-white, neglecting to examine the breadth of experiences for those who are classified as 'BAME'. For example, the experiences of black women are not necessarily the same as those for Asian women, yet this is how analysis is frequently presented.

In terms of perpetrator characteristics, the evidence base is smaller. To date, research suggests that perpetrators of IBSA are predominantly male (Powell et al., 2019; Garcia et al., 2016; Hall and Hearn, 2017). This broadly aligns IBSA with other forms of sexual violence (ONS, 2023b). However, what adds to the complexity of this relationship is that in many of these studies women have made up a sizeable minority of the perpetrators. In Powell et al's (2019) study that covered Australia, the UK and New Zealand, 1 in 5 men (22.3%) reported perpetrating IBSA compared to 1 in 8 women (13.1%). Similar patterns can be found across multiple studies, although it is important to note that each study differs in terms of sampling, definition of IBSA and location (Garcia et al., 2016; Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2019). To understand this from a feminist perspective, it is important to go beyond the male perpetrator and female victim dichotomy that can be found in some feminist research and explore how gendered power dynamics may be able to account for female perpetrators. Powell and Henry (2019) note that although there are instances of women perpetrating image-based sexual abuse, these instances are still closely tied

to gender norms in particular forms of hegemonic masculinity. This will be touched on in the following section on perpetrator motivations and returned to properly in the discussion chapter.

Several studies have looked at the relationship between attitudes and IBSA perpetration, with these generally finding that perpetrators of IBSA were more likely to hold higher levels of sexist views (Thompson & Morrison, 2013; Pina et al., 2017; Clancy et al., 2020). In their study, Thompson and Morrison (2013) were able to establish that men's perpetration of what they termed 'technology-based sexual coercion' was closely tied to rape supportive beliefs, peer groups that approved of rape, and higher consumption of pornography. Powell et al (2022) also found that holding attitudes that minimised or excused the perpetration of IBSA was a predictor for IBSA perpetration, although this was a less strong correlation than for some other characteristics, such as gender and engaging in sending sexual self-images.

Interestingly, there is growing evidence of an overlap between IBSA victimisation and perpetration meaning that those who have perpetrated IBSA, have also often experienced IBSA victimisation (Hood & Duffy, 2018; Walker et al, 2021; Powell et al., 2022; Sparks et al., 2023). Powell et al (2019) found that those who reported IBSA victimisation were between two and four times more likely to have perpetrated IBSA compared to those who had not been victimised. This appears to be one way in which IBSA differs from other forms of sexual violence.

When thinking about why this may occur, it is important to consider the prevalence and risk factors associated with sending nude or sexual images. The fact that sharing images is commonplace in intimate relationships, particularly amongst younger people, could partly explain the higher levels of overlap between victim and perpetrator (Mori et al., 2020). To many, things such as cyberflashing or pressuring someone to share a photo may be so commonplace and normalised that engaging in such behaviours is not seen as sexual abuse (Sparks et al., 2023). Furthermore, engaging in nude or sexual image sharing is a significant risk factor for being a victim of IBSA as well as being associated with IBSA perpetration (Powell et al., 2019; Powell et al.,2022). It is potentially unsurprising therefore that within this group of people (people who share intimate images) there is a higher level of victim-perpetrator overlap. This could also offer insights into how many conceptualise IBSA

victimisation and perpetration. For example, on Grindr users often do not perceive cyberflashing (or nonconsensual sending of nude images) as harmful (Tziallas, 2015). Again, this raises the question of what is meant by being a victim in the context of IBSA, a point that will be returned to in the discussion.

To summarise, there is some early evidence on victim and perpetrator characteristics in relation to IBSA. What is known suggests a complicated relationship between gender and IBSA, despite the evidence that IBSA is a gendered phenomenon in other ways.

Perpetrator motivations

To date, there has been a limited amount of research that is focused on perpetrators of IBSA, and particularly their motivations. In their review of 33 papers on IBSA, Walker and Sleath (2017) found no reference to perpetrator motivations with the focus of research generally being on victims of IBSA. Understanding of the reasons behind IBSA is also complicated by the fact the term denotes a wide range of behaviours which may have different motivations. For example, using a nude or sexual image to extort money from someone is likely motivated by different factors than those perpetrating revenge pornography. Despite these limitations, there is evidence that perpetrator motivations often reflect patriarchal societal values. Like other forms of sexual violence, feminist understandings of IBSA do not view sexual gratification as a primary motivation of IBSA and instead explore how these relate to gendered power relations. In particular, this includes the need to control or coerce (particularly) women and as a way to 'perform' masculinity (Citron and Franks, 2014; DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2016).

IBSA can be used by perpetrators as a way to control, coerce or punish the victim. This can particularly occur as part of a broader pattern of domestic violence. For example, a perpetrator may threaten to share an intimate image in order to prevent the victim from leaving the relationship (Citron and Franks, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2016). Images may also be taken without consent in the first place and then used against the victim, also known as sextortion (ibid). The filming of sexual assault in the 'physical' world has also become more common through the increase in access to technology and can be used to prevent victims from going to the police or reporting the assault. In these ways, control is a key motivation for perpetrators. As

men are the main perpetrators of IBSA, the motivation to control in this way aligns with patriarchal power dynamics.

This form of relationship retribution may also be perpetrated as way to restore masculinity for the perpetrator if they feel a loss of pride or masculinity either at the end of a relationship or within a relationship (Salter, 2018). Men in particular may feel a need to prove their masculinity to their peer group, and sharing an image of their partner can be a way to align themselves with conventional masculinity whilst also shaming the feminine.

Henry and Flynn (2020) looked into the motivations for users of nonconsensual pornography sites such as IsAnyoneUp.com. Although these users did not necessarily take or upload the nonconsensual images themselves, they chose to visit sites where they knew the images were not consensual. Compared to other forms of IBSA, these individuals were not necessarily motivated by a need to control, coerce or punish an individual and often did not know the victims (ibid). This might suggest that users were primarily motivated by sexual gratification, however what was evident across the use of all platforms was that the sites were being used as a way for men to perform hypermasculinity by viewing and commenting on images of women. Henry and Flynn (ibid) hypothesise that these sites became a 'vehicle for the construction of the (gendered) self' by the men who frequented them through exhibiting patriarchal control of women's bodies. Similarly, in their qualitative analysis of images and comments of the 'revenge pornography' site MyEx.com, Langlois and Slane (2017) found that the sites were extremely misogynistic in nature, with comments either being used to further objectify the (typically) female victim or to shame and humiliate the victim further. Discourses reflected broader societal discourses around women's sexuality. Salter (2018) also explored the reasons that boys solicit and share nude photos of girls without their consent. Similarly to the previous studies discussed, masculinity played a key part in this, with boys sharing photos as a way to bond and reestablish gendered power hierarchies.

These studies suggest that DeKeseredy and Schwartz' (1993) concept of male peer support theory can give an insight to the motivations behind some types of IBSA perpetration. Broadly, male peer support theory proposes that some men may perpetrate violence against women due to their attachment to patriarchal male peers.

Engaging in sexual violence can increase someones position amongst their peers and be an area for male bonding amongst certain peer groups. Therefore, men who engage in IBSA may do so to obtain gendered power within the social order through male bonding (Henry & Flynn, 2019).

Impacts

One of the key aims of this study is to understand the impacts of IBSA, both at the individual and societal level. As discussed previously, it is important to situate IBSA within the wider patriarchal context that it occurs. This means instead of solely focusing on the psychological or mental health effects of IBSA, which can have the effect of 'pathologising' an individual victim, a more holistic approach to the impacts of sexual violence needs to be taken (McGlynn et al., 2021). Given the emerging evidence that IBSA may be more likely to be experienced by women, it is important to look at these impacts through a gendered lens and consider how they may both be affected by and contribute to gender inequalities. Although IBSA may occur solely or mostly via the digital world, the harms experienced have been described as 'embodied' meaning they have an effect on real lived experiences, both exterior and interior (Henry & Powell, 2015). This contrasts with earlier works which argued virtual harms were not comparable to 'real world' harms (ibid; Mackinnon, 1997; Williams; 2006).

Many of the physical and mental health impacts of image-based sexual abuse bare similarities to those faced by victims of other forms of sexual and domestic violence. This is particularly true for instances of IBSA that involve the sharing of explicit images by current or ex-partners as a way to enact 'revenge', control or embarrass. This was explored by Bates (2017) in a series of interviews with victims of so-called revenge pornography. The study found that survivors of revenge porn experienced similar negative mental health impacts to rape survivors; this included PTSD, anxiety and depression. Participants also discussed negative coping mechanisms, such as avoidance/denial and self-medication (ibid). McGlynn et al (2021) describe these types of impact as a 'social rupture' referring to the totality of harm and devastation caused. Further to this, those who have experienced IBSA were also likely to report negative impacts on their intimate relationships such as issues with trust, difficulties maintaining relationships and apprehension entering new relationships (ibid; Huber,

2023a; Bates, 2017; Powell et al., 2019; Short et al., 2017). In addition, Short et al's (2017) survey found several impacts to work life for those who have experienced IBSA, including impacts on performance in work and in some cases being fired or demoted. This is likely to particularly be an issue for IBSA victims where an image has been shared with their employer.

The similarities between the impacts of IBSA and other forms of sexual violence support the notion that IBSA should be seen as part of a broader continuum of violence. However, although severe impacts are reported by victims of certain types of IBSA, there is evidence to suggest that many individuals view their experiences of IBSA as 'innocuous' and do not report negative impacts to their lives (Powell et al., 2018). This is likely due to the context of the incident which is likely to affect the extent that an individual feels they have experienced victimisation. This raises the question of whether such types of IBSA still exist on a continuum with other form of sexual violence, an issue which will be returned to in the discussion chapter.

There are also impacts from IBSA that reflect the online nature of the abuse. One feature of IBSA is the potential for the harms to have a permanence or endlessness which can feeling unrelenting for victims due to their online nature (McGlynn et al., 2021). The fact that an IBSA perpetrator could potentially share the image of the victim further at any point or that the photo may have been uploaded onto websites that the victim is unaware of can create a constant sense of stress and dread. Jane (2017) notes that even when occurrences of IBSA or online abuse are arguably less severe, the fact that victims may have to repeatedly check devices and cannot easily prevent further sharing or downloading of the non-consensual image means IBSA victimisation has an accumulative effect, with the impacts on day-to-day life building for victims. This particular feature is a key way in which online forms of sexual violence differ from those which only occur in the physical world. Because there is no way to retract an image once it has been shared, due to the possibility for others to save and download the image, there are limited options for victims to prevent further abuse (Franklin, 2014). McGlynn et al (2021) found that this meant IBSA was not seen as a contained instance by victims, but instead an ongoing harm.

For victims interviewed in Huber's (2023a) study, experiencing IBSA had led to them becoming physically restricted due to not wishing to leave the home because of fear

and embarrassment. This resulted in social isolation and relationship breakdown, further demonstrating how IBSA can impact on all areas of day-to-day life. In some ways, this bears a resemblance to male-perpetrated street harassment that women and girls commonly receive. Women have to carefully manage the risk of sexual violence or harassment when negotiating public space, which restricts their freedom (Vera-Gray, 2019). Similarly, women now have to do this type of 'safety work' when engaging in the digital world, further curtailing their freedoms. Due to this, victims of online abuse may either be excluded or 'choose' to remove themselves from online spaces by deactivating social media accounts or simply stopping using certain sties or apps (Huber, 2023a). Although this may seem like a relatively innocuous harm, technology has become an essential way in which people form relationships, find employment and engage with social and political discourse (Barker and Jurasz, 2019). If victims of IBSA, who are often women or those who do not conform with certain ideas of masculinity, disengage from digital life this has the potential to maintain their subordination in society. Digital spaces have been an essential way to reinvigorate feminist movements and reach women from a variety of backgrounds (ibid). IBSA can therefore be seen as one-way women are prevented from engaging in these spaces, decreasing the likelihood of patriarchal social structures being questioned.

It is also important to note that the impacts discussed here can be heightened through gendered victim blaming, similar to other forms of sexual violence. For example, in McGlynn et al's (2017) study, the female victims reported receiving sexualised insults and victim blaming following their experience of IBSA which heightened their distress. A common theme amongst the research was also the feeling of shame and embarrassment for victims of IBSA, which ties in to gendered views around female sexual agency, particularly through the use of 'slut-shaming' (Powell & Henry, 2017; McGlynn et al., 2017; Huber, 2023a; Bates, 2017). These harms relate to Fraser's (1998) idea that social norms devalue the feminine and privilege traits associated with masculinity. Therefore, women or those who do not conform with traditional notions of masculinity are more likely to experience these types of harms.

Responses

Different ways to address IBSA, including responses from police as well as legal and policy reform, are being implemented but to a mixed degree of success. The options for legal redress for victims of IBSA have improved over the last ten years, and the introduction of the Online Safety Act shows promise. Similarly, new initiatives to improve police responses to IBSA have received mixed results (Huber, 2023a). The policy response to online harms more broadly has lagged meaning the government is now faced with a plethora of issues that are rapidly growing (Bond and Tyrrell, 2018). The inconsistent nature of the response to IBSA will now be discussed, as well as how this is affected by patriarchy.

Policing and legal responses to IBSA

Currently there are few studies that explore police responses to IBSA specifically, particularly within a UK context. Emerging evidence suggests that police responses to IBSA are often inadequate, being negatively impacted by IBSA myths, victim blaming and lack of knowledge on online harms more broadly (McGlynn et al, 2019; Huber, 2023b; Bond and Tyrrell, 2018; Jane, 2017; Flynn et al., 2023). In their national study of police officers in England and Wales, Bond and Tyrrell (2018) found that 39.5% of officers surveyed had some knowledge of revenge pornography, with significant gaps in knowledge. In addition, 44.8% of respondents had limited confidence in collecting evidence for a 'revenge pornography' case. The fact that only a fifth (19.4%) of police officers surveyed knew how to contact internet companies when gathering evidence for an IBSA case (ibid) is also troubling and suggests that police may not be able to properly support victims in getting their images taken down (ibid). McGlynn et al (2021) in interviews with victims of IBSA found that police could be dismissive and not appreciate the seriousness of IBSA, as well as holding victim blaming attitudes. Although these findings align with police responses to other forms of sexual violence in some ways, the fact that IBSA may occur predominantly in the digital world also affects police responses. Jane (2017) notes that a common response from police to victims from IBSA is that they should take a break from online spaces. There is often a misunderstanding in the harms that victims of online violence face, and particularly how this may impact women (ibid).

Police responses to other forms of sexual violence, particularly violence against women, have similarly been criticised for putting blame on victims and being influenced by rape myths (Stanko & Hohl, 2018; Gekoski et al., 2024). The treatment of victims of sexual violence, particularly women, by the police has been critiqued by feminists since the 1980s. This was shown in an episode of the 1982 documentary *Police*, titled 'A Complaint of Rape', showed three male detectives questioning a woman who had reported being raped in a hostile, derogatory way and then persuading her to drop the case. Over 40 years later in early 2024, an investigation by the BBC reported on how police shared videos from body worn cameras of nude women, often on WhatsApp groups and accompanied by derogatory or degrading comments (BBC, 2024). This demonstrates that the police response to sexual violence, and violence against women in particular, is still deeply flawed.

In addition, it is also well reported that women of colour and particularly black women receive poorer responses from police when reporting sexual violence and are also less likely to report in the first place due to these barriers (Slatton and Richard, 2020). There is also stigma around those from more deprived backgrounds, compared to middle class women (Coker., 2016). This may mean that, as with other forms of sexual violence, women from these groups are less likely to report to the police when they experience IBSA.

The increased attention on image-based sexual abuse led to changes in legislation to the criminalisation of sharing private, sexual images or films without consent, in s33(1) of the 2015 Criminal Justice and Courts Act. The Ministry of Justice initially defined this as the 'sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the intention of causing distress' (2015). Although the legislation itself makes no reference to 'revenge pornography', it is clear that it was influenced by the dominant media narrative of IBSA being perpetrated as an act of revenge. There are a number of ways this was apparent in the initial legislation. Firstly, to be convicted the perpetrator needed to have shown intent to cause harm or distress for the victim. Not only is this not always the clear motivation behind IBSA (as discussed earlier in this chapter) but proving the intent behind sharing an image is also extremely difficult (Gillespie, 2015; Dymock and van der Westhuizen, 2018). For example, 'misogyny and entitlement' have been found as a key theme in perpetrator motivations, which are not clearly linked to causing

distress (McGlynn et al., 2019). The conviction rate for this new offence, similar to other forms of sexual violence, has been low likely due to the difficulty to prove intent. Linked to this, the accompanying campaign to the legislation, Be Aware B4 You Share, was also criticised for placing the blame on victims by focusing on stopping women from sharing intimate images which suggests victim blaming attitudes may have impacted on the design and rollout of the legislation (Dymock, 2017).

However, in 2023, and in light of these criticisms from campaigners, the act was amended through the introduction of the Online Safety Bill (Ministry of Justice, 2023). The new legislation brought together different areas of online abuse and, importantly, the requirement to prove a perpetrator had shared an image to cause distress was removed (ibid). The government has confirmed it will also be taking the recommendations made by the Law Commission's (2022) report on the criminal laws relating to IBSA. This includes their recommendations to repeal and replace previous legislation to make it easier to prosecute cases, including having a 'base offence' of sharing an intimate image without consent (ibid). From 2024, new offences for threatening to share intimate images and for the creation and distribution of manufactured intimate images, also known as deepfakes, were introduced (Ministry of Justice, 2023). Whether the introduction of the online safety act helps simplify the legal process for victims of IBSA remains to be seen.

Despite these positive steps, as of 2023 IBSA was still not classified as a sexual offence. As argued in this thesis, IBSA has parallels with other forms of sexual violence and many victims describe their experiences as similar to rape or other forms of sexual abuse. Because of this, a victim who has had a nude image shared non-consensually does not have a right to anonymity, unlike victims of sexual offences (McGlynn et al., 2021). In addition, this misclassification also means victims will not necessarily have their case heard by a judge with specialist training in sexual abuse, as is the case with sexual offences, and the police may not be able to issue perpetrators with a sexual harm prevention order (ibid). Overall, this severely limits the usefulness of the legislation and creates barriers to reporting IBSA. As will be returned to in Chapter 5, embedding IBSA within the broader continuum of sexual violence is needed if legislative responses are to be improved. The value of pursuing legal action is also questionable for IBSA victims. As noted, the harms of IBSA are

closely associated with the fact that, once an image has been shared, there is relatively little a victim can do to prevent the image being shared further. Because of this, the possibility for the perpetrator to be prosecuted may have little practical value for victims (Cook, 2015; Bond and Tyrrell, 2018).

Similar to the discussion of police responses, this form of institutional response can also be heavily influenced by gendered stereotypes. In relation to IBSA, a woman sending nude or sexual images can be seen as a form of sexual deviancy, from the passive type of sexuality women are supposed to possess (Ringrose & Renold, 2012; Salter, 2016). Given the fact the state can often be seen to uphold the dominant, patriarchal narrative it is perhaps unsurprising that they are slow to acknowledge the harms caused by things such as deepfake pornography as well. What, however, may be more effective in countering TFSV is the new Online Safety Act (2024) specifying that online services have a legal duty to keep their service users in the UK safe online. This is likely to be a more effective approach to reducing TFSV than requiring individuals to have to report instances to the police.

With responses from the police still mixed, and new legislation appearing to be more of a 'gesture' from the state compared to meaningful action to address the structural causes of IBSA it may be that the legal route in its current form is not the most appropriate way to address IBSA. I will now turn to other responses to IBSA spanning government policy, technology companies and education and how these may offer better resolutions for victims, or even aid in the prevention of IBSA.

Other responses to IBSA

Government policy along with action from internet platforms are two key ways the response to IBSA could be improved. To date, the UK government had taken a relatively neoliberal approach to regulating online spaces. This means they have been reluctant to regulate online environments for fears of curbing 'freedom of speech' amongst other issues. Partially because of this, internet sites which are commonly used to abuse and harass women have only needed to put in place minimal forms of protection. For example, one of the main ways content such as IBSA or gendered hate speech is dealt with is through individual users flagging content to moderators. This is done across a variety of social media sites, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. However, not only does this put the onus

on victim-survivors and other users to report inappropriate content, but there is also evidence that such content is not consistently removed even when it is reported (Barker and Jurasz, 2021). There is also the possibility for community guidelines to explicitly prohibit certain behaviours but due to the lack of government regulation there are not consistent policies applied across platforms and things such as image-based sexual abuse aren't always explicitly referred to. For example, Pornhub only prohibits content that is "obscene, illegal, unlawful, defamatory, libellous, harassing, hateful, racially, or ethnically offensive' (Pornhub, 2022).

The development of the Online Safety Act (2023) shows a positive step towards government working with companies to better protect people in online spaces. This includes Ofcom's new role as regulator of online spaces. Although the earlier versions of this act were critiqued for not offering a comprehensive approach to online harms, including a lack of emphasis on gender-based harms, newer iterations of the act published in 2023 show progress in these areas (MoJ, 2023; Barker and Jurasz, 2021; Barker and Jurasz, 2019).

Several governments have also created centralised bodies which have a legal mandate to address TFSV, although this has not been introduced in the UK. In New Zealand, NetSafe was established; the organisation receives and assesses complaints about harm caused to individuals by digital communications. They receive around 3500 referrals about online abuse per year, around 500 of which relate to IBSA (Henry et al, 2022). Following their investigation of such complaints, NetSafe offer advice, negotiation, mediation, and persuasion (as appropriate) to resolve complaints. Importantly, they establish relationships with domestic and foreign service providers, online content hosts, and agencies (as appropriate) to achieve the New Zealand Harmful Digital Communications Act's purposes (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2015). Initial evidence suggests that NetSafe is useful for victims of IBSA, but one crucial issue is that victims often do not realise the gravity of the situation due to discourses that minimise or excuse IBSA, and therefore do not look to report via more formal routes (Henry et al, 2022).

The most similar forms of support offered in the UK is the national revenge porn helpline (RPH) which was established in 2015 alongside the introduction of the act which first criminalised IBSA; the organisation is partially funded by the Home Office

(Ward, 2022). The helpline provides guidance and support to people who have experienced image-based sexual abuse and reported getting 9,000 calls in 2022 (ibid). However, the helpline can only assist victims and is not able to report incidents to the police.

One of the most promising areas in addressing IBSA globally is the use of technological tools which can identify and remove illicit images. This typically involves creating a 'digital fingerprint' of an image that either prohibits it from being uploaded to a certain site again or makes it easier to find across sites (Henry et al., 2019). This approach has been criticised by some as it can require the victim to share their photo with the organisation in order for them to remove it, which victims may be uncomfortable with (ibid). Facebook, however, has recently created a new tool using artificial intelligence (AI) that can detect harmful images automatically rather than requiring a victim to share their photos with the platform to be fingerprinted (CBS News, 2020). In terms of responses to IBSA, there is evidence that this type of response is one of the most important to victims of IBSA (Henry & Powell, 2016; McGlynn et al, 2019). As shown in the previous section, one of the ways in which IBSA harms its victims is through it feeling never-ending due to there being no way to stop photos being shared. If social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter along with pornography sites such as Pornhub establish similar policies and share digital fingerprints across organisations this cohesive approach would severely limit the amount of times an image could be shared. Although it would be much harder to stop perpetrators sharing with smaller networks via encrypted services such as WhatsApp, this would significantly reduce the proportion of people with access to non-consensually shared images.

The suitability of legal, government and technological responses to IBSA will be reflected on in the conclusion, in particular relating what the findings of this thesis may suggest about the best support for victims. It is also worth highlighting that although these responses may be intended to support victims of IBSA, it is unclear whether they will be sufficient to deter people from perpetrating IBSA in the first place. As can be seen from other forms of sexual violence, introducing prison sentences does not act as a deterrent particularly when prosecution rates as well as the rates of reporting overall remain extremely low.

2.2 Feminist approaches to sexual violence and IBSA

This thesis takes a feminist approach to understanding IBSA, building on a strong legacy of feminist research on sexual violence. The following section will explore key feminist perspectives on sexual and domestic violence from the 1970s to the present day in order to situate IBSA within the broader literature. As well as discussing how feminist approaches to sexual violence have developed over time, feminist work on attitudes towards sexual violence will be explored in line with one of the key aims of this research being to understand public attitudes towards IBSA. Finally, the section will end with an exploration of patriarchy as a theoretical and analytical tool applied by feminist researchers and establish its relevance in this thesis.

2.2.1 Feminist approaches to sexual violence

A major shift in perceptions of violence against women occurred in the 1970s, following the previous decade of feminist action. Prior to the 1970s, male violence against women was typically thought to be caused by psychological mental illness, personality disorders or drug and alcohol consumption and most of the criminological research focused on the experiences of men as 'perpetrators' rather than women who were victims (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Silvestri & Crowther-Dowey, 2016). However, the start of the feminist anti-rape movement in the United States radically reframed the theory of rape, as the statement of purpose by Chicago Women Against Rape below demonstrates.

'Rape violently reflects the sexism in a society where power is unequally distributed between women and men, black and white, poor and rich…In rape, the woman is not a sexual being but a vulnerable piece of public property; the man does not violate society's norms so much as take them to a logical conclusion.' (Poskin, 2007)

By focusing on the societal rather than the individualistic or sexual elements of sexual violence, the anti-rape movement started to change understanding of sexual violence. Sexual violence was increasingly seen as one way in which men maintain control over women. Brownmiller's seminal book, 'Against our will: Men, women and rape' (1975) was an essential part of this change as it clearly summarised contemporary thinking about rape. In the book, Brownmiller (1975, p.15) states 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…'*. Dobash and Dobash (1979) also

reconceptualised domestic violence, so instead of it being positioned as an issue of individual anger and harm, it was seen as one way in which control could be exerted over partners. As well as exploring rape and domestic violence, feminist work began to define sexual harassment as another form of violence that formed part of the structural inequalities between men and women, rather than being caused by male sexual urges. In her book 'Sexual Harassment of Working Women', MacKinnon (1979) brought forward the idea that men's control in the workplace meant that women had to endure sexual harassment in order to keep jobs, which as a form of abuse was often minimised and excused. Crucially, what MacKinnon added to this narrative was that sexual harassment should be seen as a form of discrimination based on sex, and thus should be illegal. The combination of this work led to a broadening in what behaviours were perceived as gendered violence, and shifted the focus away from individuals and onto the structural causes.

The feminist approach to seeing sexual violence as one facet of the inequalities between men and women and part of a patriarchal society, was also essential to Kelly's development of the continuum of sexual violence (1988). Kelly's continuum of sexual violence was the first conceptual framework that brought together the myriad forms of male violence against women and in doing so built up a powerful picture of the everyday forms of violence faced by women. The continuum includes seemingly innocuous behaviours such as catcalling, through to physical acts of violence, such as rape or femicide. By putting these behaviours on the same continuum, Kelly highlights that even seemingly everyday behaviours, such as catcalling, are linked into a broader pattern of male violence against women. In this way, the everyday acts of violence in women's lives which had often been overlooked were captured through using the continuum (Kelly, 1988). All aspects on the continuum of sexual violence can be seen to generate and regenerate the gender order between men and women, as will be discussed further in section 2.3 (Connell, 1987). This approach to understanding sexual violence is still commonly used in sexual violence research. A key question for this thesis is whether Kelly's conceptual framework of sexual violence can be used to explain technology-facilitated sexual violence, in particular image-based sexual abuse.

Moving forward to the present day, it is clear these works from the 1970s still form the basis of much feminist research on sexual violence. Research has further built

on the notion that sexual violence is a gendered phenomenon by exploring issues such as coercive control, acquaintance rape, and sexual consent in relation to sexism and misogyny (Phipps et al., 2018; Walklate et al., 2018). It is important to acknowledge however that in the 2000s, discussions of patriarchy and sexual violence became hampered by portrayals of feminists and sexual violence in the media and public discourse (Gavey, 2019). The negative discourse around feminists being undesirable along with the idea that society had moved past the need for feminism, with gender equality largely being achieved, hindered feminist research at this time (ibid). This reflects the fact that during the 2000s, there was a depoliticization of rape and sexual violence. Rather than focusing explicitly on the role of gender, much (although not all) of the research on sexual violence became more gender-neutral reflecting the increase in terms such as 'intimate partner violence'.

Generally, at this time a more individualistic approach to sexual violence that focused on the 'bad apples' who perpetrated rape became prevalent across society, and the gendered, cultural aspects of sexual violence became sidelined (Gavey, 2005). This meant that on the one hand, extreme acts of violence against women became sensationalised. In the most violent and disturbing cases of rape and femicide, there was (and remains) a high level of media, public and political attention, with a focus on the perpetrator who committed such 'atrocities', feeding into the 'bad apple' narrative (Galeste et al., 2012). However, the same cannot be said for violence against women that is less easily sensationalised, such as street harassment or other everyday forms of violence women may experience. Kelly (2011) highlights neglecting everyday forms of violence against women limits understanding of VAW, preventing sexual violence from being viewed as a structural issue rather than an individual one. Given that the literature suggests IBSA similarly contains a broad range of behaviours, this thesis will aim to capture the multitude experiences of victims including those which may appear more everyday or commonplace.

Since the 2010s, feminist discussions of sexual violence have been reinvigorated. Many works now explicitly connect sexual violence to patriarchy, something which had become less popular in the early 2000s (Hunnicutt, 2009; Gavey, 2019; DeKeseredy, 2020). Discussions of rape culture have also become more common,

particularly through the #metoo movement where women spoke out about their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse (Mendes et al., 2019). Girls now are more likely to consider themselves as feminist (Young Women's Trust, 2019), and conversations around gaslighting and coercive control have reached the mainstream (Daily Mail, 2022). Generally, thinking on sexual violence has become more overtly feminist and political again (Gavey, 2019). A lot of the current thinking around sexual violence can be clearly linked to the earlier works of radical feminists. Building on this work, gendered analysis of rape culture and how this is perpetrated online has become prominent, signalling a return to a structural approach to gendered violence. Related to this, intersectional feminist research has also become of greater focus in recent years, meaning that rather than solely focusing on gender, feminist research has incorporated how gender interacts with other forms of oppression such as racism, classism and homophobia. This work has been particularly developed by black feminist academics such as Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, and activist organisations such as Sisters Uncut (Collins, 1994; Crenshaw, 2014; Gal-dem, 2021).

Feminist approaches to research have developed in a way that aims to linked sexual violence to structural inequalities between men and women. Because of this, research focused on victimisation goes beyond individual experiences and uses gender as a key ontological tool in understanding such experiences. In line with the feminist approach discussed here, this thesis will attempt to link personal experiences of IBSA to their gendered context. Another essential part of feminist research over the past 50 years has been exploring how attitudes towards sexual violence underpin forms of violence against women. The following section will explore the role of attitudes in relation to sexual violence in more detail.

2.2.2 Attitudes towards sexual violence

Exploring attitudes has been, and remains, an essential part of feminist research on sexual violence. Rape culture is one term which highlights the importance of attitudes, coined by feminist theorists and used since the 1970s (Buchwald et al., 1993; Gavey, 2019). The term highlights the role of societal attitudes and discourses in facilitating gendered sexual violence. As put by Powell and Henry (2014, p.2), rape culture is 'the social, cultural and structural discourses and practices in which sexual violence is tolerated, accepted, eroticised, minimised and trivialised'. For

feminist researchers, attitudes relating to violence against women have arisen due to the patriarchal nature of society (Ryan, 2011; see section 2.3 for further discussion). They are one way in which sexual violence against women becomes perceived as inevitable, rather than the result of changeable behaviours and values (Buchwald et al, 1993). This is because attitudes are one way in which people learn what constitutes rape and other forms of sexual violence (Burt and Albin, 1981). This links to the notion that our understanding of sexual violence is socially constructed and therefore influenced by cultural and societal attitudes towards sexual violence (Ryan, 2019; Ryan, 2011; Walby et al., 1983). Attitudes are therefore an essential part of understanding and preventing sexual violence. Two terms that will be key to exploring attitudes further in this section are rape myths, referring to attitudes towards sexual violence that are generally false but commonly held in society, and victim blaming, where a victim of sexual violence is held accountable rather than the perpetrator.

Attitudes in the forms of rape myths have been shown to have an effect on sexual violence perpetration and victimisation in a number of ways. For example, it has been shown that attitudes can inhibit effective institutional responses to violence against women. Studies looking at police officers' responses to sexual violence consistently show that those who hold attitudes that support rape myths or victim blaming, are less likely to effectively respond to instances of violence against women (Gekoski et al., 2024). This in turn affects whether victims are likely to report instances of sexual violence in future. There is also a connection between an individual's violence-condoning attitudes and the levels of empathy, support and blame they would ascribe to a victim which can similarly impact on the support a victim does (or does not) receive (Flood and Pease, 2009).

On an individual level, there is an association between violence-supportive attitudes and the perpetration of violent behaviour (Flood and Pease, 2009). Of particular relevance to this thesis is the consistent evidence that men who endorse sexist or patriarchal beliefs are more likely to have committed acts of violence against women (ibid). Although there are not studies specifically examining the relationship between patriarchal beliefs and IBSA perpetration, it is possible that there would be a similar relationship between attitudes and behaviour for this form of sexual violence. Endorsement of patriarchal values also had implications for victims of sexual

violence. Women who share patriarchal beliefs are more likely to blame themselves if they are subject to sexual or domestic violence, which in turn can mean they experience more severe, long-term impacts from the violence (Flood and Pease, 2009).

Despite the evidence suggesting that addressing sexist attitudes could be a key way to prevent violence against women, shifting attitudes is extremely challenging. In Hayes and Boyd's (2017) study exploring influences on attitudes towards intimate partner violence, they found that national-level (or macro) factors were significant predictors of attitudes to 'intimate partner violence'. For example, respondents from nations that had greater levels of gender equality in terms of women's economic status and laws relating to intimate partner violence, were surprisingly more likely to endorse victim blaming. Further studies have also found that social and cultural factors influence individual attitudes towards violence (Flood and Pease, 2009; Ali and Naylor, 2013). Linked to this, attitudes towards violence against women can be seen as context dependent, which relates to the concepts of 'real' rape and the 'ideal victim' that are explored later in this chapter (Uthman et al., 2009; Hayes and Boyd, 2017). This shows that addressing or improving attitudes towards sexual violence is likely to be extremely difficult without changes towards the treatment of women at the societal level and that focussing on individuals is likely to have limited effect. The relationship between attitudes and IBSA is summarised in the figure below:

Figure 1: The relationship between attitudes and sexual violence
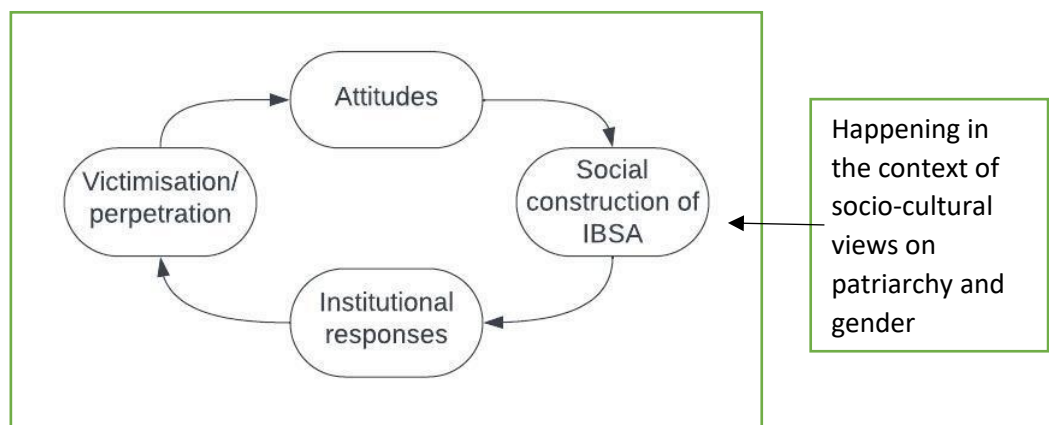
Rape myths and victim blaming are two of the main focuses of feminist research on attitudes. These will now be explored, including what research to date suggests

about attitudes towards IBSA and other forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Rape myths

Rape myths can be defined as "…attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994, p.134). Rape myths are important to explore for reasons discussed in the previous section, namely that men who endorse rape myths have been shown to be more likely to commit acts of sexual violence (Desai et al., 2008; O'Connor et al, 2021a), victims of sexual violence may not seek support or report instances of sexual violence due to rape myths that minimise abuse and victim blame (Anderson & Overby, 2020), and finally that myths can harm institutional responses to sexual violence (Garza and Franklin, 2021). Such cultural attitudes and discourses around sexual violence act to uphold patriarchal gendered norms, thus feminist research sees rape myths as a crucial aspect of violence against women.

There are two rape myths which are particularly explored within this thesis. The first of these is the notion that only some forms of rape are 'real'. This idea leads to minimising of forms of sexual violence that do not adhere to what is perceived, by society, to be how rape happens. 'Real rape' (Estrich 1987) or 'perfect rape' (Adler, 1987) are two terms that were coined to refer to what the public perceive rape to be, and the type of rape which institutions are likely to take most seriously. Chennells (2009) highlights several characteristics associated with 'real rape'. Ideally the victim should be a virginal woman from a respected background, she should be violently accosted by a stranger either close to or inside her home. When accosted she should physically resist, and the rape itself should cause lasting physical injuries. After this happens, she should go straight to the police in a highly emotive state to report the rape (ibid). Westmarland (2015) adds to this that the victim should not have been drinking or taking drugs unless spiked or forced to consume them. This description shows that what the public continue to perceive as 'real' or 'perfect' rape is far removed from most incidents of rape or other forms of sexual violence involve. For example, research and statistics suggest that intimate partners are the most common perpetrators of rape despite the fact that the 'real' rape myth focuses on the

perpetrator being a violent stranger (ONS, 2021). One of the results of the 'real rape' myth, is that it is used to excuse or minimise some instances of rape or sexual. This means that certain instances of sexual violence may not be perceived as abusive, for example people might minimise violence that occurs within intimate relationships as either a miscommunication or misunderstanding.

A further myth of relevance to this study is that of men having uncontrollable sexual urges that they can't help but act on. This myth is used to excuse male perpetrators of sexual violence, by suggesting they are a victim of their own biology. According to Smart (1976: 95), 'Men are believed to have a virtually uncontrollable sexual desire, which once awakened must find satisfaction regardless of the consequences.'. This is still a commonly held position, with Hockett et al's (2016) study showing that both men and women are still sympathetic to the myth that men's sexual urges can't be resisted and that 'female temptation' plays a role in rape. On the other hand, myths around women's sexuality also play a role in how instances of sexual violence are perceived but this is more likely to result in victim blaming for women who are perceived to have too much agency in their sexuality (Pina et al., 2021; Zvi et al., 2021).

Rape myths are heavily reliant on heterosexual scripts that blur the boundaries between consensual sex and rape (Gavey, 2019). The concept of sexual scripts, initially coined by Gagnon and Simon (1973), relate to how cultural perceptions of sex help to define what sex is and how someone should act in a sexual scenario. This aligns with a social constructionist approach to sex commonly found in feminist research (Frith and Kitzinger, 2001). Heterosexual scripts in particular help create the idea that men are 'active' in sexual scenarios whereas women are 'passive'. Cultural scripts such as this can make it hard to identify when a sexual encounter becomes rape, particularly when such instances occur within relationships or without the use of force. Gavey (2019) for example discusses how women talk about 'going along' with sex either because of coercion, pressure, or because they feel unable to say no. Similarly, Kelly (1988) found that women were more likely to use terms such as 'pressurised sex' or 'coercive sex' rather than rape to describe such instances. This is directly linked to the notion that men are in control and that women must passively 'go along' with such scenarios. In this way, such sexual scripts can be seen as the 'cultural scaffolding for rape' (Gavey, 2019:2).

Sexual scripts can be linked to rape myths as they act to minimise and dismiss certain experiences, perpetuating the idea that there is a clearly defined type of 'real rape' that involves strangers and physical force (Gavey, 2019). They allow society to excuse behaviours such a coercion or pressure as being a normal part of (hetero)sex (ibid). Thus, normative heterosexual scripts help to create and maintain rape myths. One aim of this thesis will be to explore if myths relating to IBSA are linked to IBSA perpetration in a similar way, including whether they reflect dominant heterosexual scripts. The blurred line this causes between rape and sex impacts how sexual violence is responded to, particularly the concept that instances of violence have become so commonplace it can be difficult for a victim to name their experience as violence or abuse.

There is some evidence of common rape myths changing in prevalence, particularly since the initial studies of attitudes in the 1980s (McMahon and Farmer 2011; Payne et al., 1999). In particular, there is emerging evidence that attitudes around whether a victim was drinking or what they were wearing are becoming less prevalent in rape myths, but more subtle attitudes that minimise or excuse sexual violence, for example by suggesting it was the result of miscommunication, are becoming more common (McMahon and Farmer, 2011). Given this study will explore these myths in relation to IBSA, it will be important to consider whether the findings reflect this potential societal shift.

In relation to rape myths and IBSA or other forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence, there has been a limited amount of research to date. Powell et al (2022) found that those who minimised or excused IBSA were more likely to perpetrate IBSA. Henry et al (2019) also found that men were more likely to dismiss IBSA harms or excuse perpetrators compared to women (49% compared to 32%). However other studies have found that these attitudes towards IBSA were less prevalent, such as Flynn et al (2022c) who found a low prevalence in such attitudes. Despite this, and similarly to other forms of rape myths, men have consistently been shown to be more likely to holds views that minimise harm of IBSA, excuse perpetration of IBSA, or believe that IBSA is acceptable in certain circumstances compared to women (Flynn et al., 2022b; Flynn et al., 2022c; Henry et al., 2019).

Victim blaming and the ideal victim

Christie's concept of the 'ideal victim' (1986) has often been applied to help understand how instances of sexual violence are perceived. The term 'ideal victim' is used to denote the types of victim characteristics and victim-perpetrator relationships that were granted the most legitimacy in cases of crime, particularly sexual violence. Generally, for a victim of sexual violence to be considered an 'ideal victim', they should be a white woman, who is not intoxicated, promiscuous or unrespectable, and the assault itself should be violently carried out by a stranger, at night, in a deserted location (Hockett et al, 2016: 3). A victim who fits these criteria aligns with Christie's notions of femaleness, blamelessness and weakness which are requirements of ideal victim status. Importantly, Christie's notion of the ideal victim suggests victimhood is not an objective condition, but rather something that is socially constructed and thus can change over time (Gracia, 2018).

Although there is evidence that women who are victims of sexual violence have become more prioritised in societal concerns in recent years, societal concern for women remains dependent on the specific characteristics of the case (Christie, 1986; Gracia, 2018). For example, the murder of Sarah Everard by police officer Wayne Couzens in 2021 sparked a national outcry and led to the Metropolitan Police service carrying out a review of their culture and establishing new protocols for tackling violence against women (BBC, 2021). Public sympathy and compassion for Sarah Everard was high, and part of this was likely because she could be easily viewed as 'faultless' in the scenario, reflected by the social media hashtag 'She was just walking home' (Vanity Fair, 2021). Although this raised valid concerns over the limitations of women's freedoms, the narrative also reflected the idea that at the time of her murder, Sarah Everard was blameless. In contrast, incidents of gendered violence where the victim is seen to have put themselves at risk are more likely to involve victim blaming (Flynn et al., 2022c).

Christie (1986) hypothesised that the most important factors in deciding ideal victim status are victim characteristics and the victim-perpetrator relationship. Since his seminal work, the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) and Moral Typecasting Theory (Gray and Wegner, 2009) have sought to further analyse the role of victim and perpetrator characteristics (Bosma et al., 2018). The Stereotype

Content Model (SCM) brings in the ideas of competence and warmth as related to how victims are perceived. In terms of gendered violence, those who rank as having higher warmth and lower competence are more likely to be seen as an ideal victim and receive what Cuddy et al (2008) describe as 'paternalistic prejudice'. However this also highlights that even when a rape victim is classed as an ideal victim, they are likely to receive a gendered and paternalistic response.

Whether someone is perceived as an ideal victim is closely tied to the premise of victim blaming. Victim blaming, broadly speaking, is where individuals find issues with the victims' behaviour which allows them to hold the victim at least partially responsible for the sexual violence (for example, if they had been drinking). When a victim does not present as 'ideal', they are more likely to be blamed and to not be seen as a true victim (Bieneck and Krahe, 2011). Previous research has shown that victims of sexual violence are particularly likely to receive blame or scrutiny. For example, Bieneck and Krahe (2011) asked research participants to rate the blame of the victim and perpetrator in scenarios involving either rape or robbery. The study found that more blame was placed on the victim in the rape scenario compared to the victim of the robbery, and less blame was placed on the perpetrator of the rape scenario compared to that of the robbery. Interestingly, if the victim and perpetrator had a prior relationship this led to greater blame being placed on the victim in the rape scenario whereas this did not increase victim blaming in the case of the robbery. This suggests that victims of sexual violence are held to different standards compared to those who have experienced different forms of crime victimisation. It is important to link this to the gendered nature of sexual violence, where women make up a higher proportion of victims.

In terms of who is likely to hold victim blaming attitudes, men are consistently shown to engage in greater levels of victim blaming compared to women (Pinciotti and Orcutt, 2021; de la Torre Laso and Rodríguez-Díaz, 2022). Harsher attitudes are also placed on women who do not meet the characteristics of the ideal victim compared to men. This reflects the idea that attitudes towards sexual violence are gendered in nature. This suggests that, as theorised, patriarchal social structures benefit from certain attitudes towards sexual violence and that initial evidence suggests that this applies to IBSA as a form of sexual violence. The relationship

between gender and attitudes will be further explored in the next section, in particular regarding how gendered attitudes affect perceptions of 'sexting' and rape threats.

Victim blaming is extremely relevant to IBSA, particularly where a victim has initially taken or shared an intimate image consensually. Much of the early media reporting on cases of IBSA included advice on how to avoid becoming a victim (Dymock, 2017). This has led to a focus on telling people not to send photos in the first place or to not include their face or identifying features in photos as one of the most typical ways of addressing or preventing IBSA. In terms of previous research on victim blaming and image-based sexual abuse, there is evidence that those who have consensually shared images initially experience greater levels of blame (Flynn et al., 2022c). This links to previous work on victim blaming and the 'just world hypothesis' (Russell and Hand, 2017). The 'just world hypothesis' refers to the belief that people 'get what they deserve and deserve what they get' (Fetchenhauer et al., 2005, p.26). This can be a comforting idea for people to believe in, as it suggests that negative consequences are a result of personal actions, and therefore such consequences can be avoided if someone acts in the 'right' way (Hayes et al., 2013). This perception can be clearly seen when discussing IBSA victimisation, and will be further explored in Chapter 4.

2.2.3 The role of patriarchy in feminist sexual violence research

'[Rape is] not an isolated act that can be rooted out from patriarchy without ending patriarchy itself' (Griffin, 1986, p.35)

Compared to other areas of feminist research, theory development on violence against women has progressed slowly despite the rate of research being produced in this area (Fox, 1993; Flavin, 2001; Hunnicutt, 2009). One concept that was essential to early development of feminist work is that of *patriarchy*, which will be discussed in this section. DeKeseredy (2021) notes that in recent years, sociological analyses of violence against women that use the concept of patriarchy have plateaued or declined and research has become more focused on individuals. Because of this, it is important to bring in the broader concept of patriarchy in relation to IBSA within this thesis to align with the broader feminist approach. Although this research does not explicitly explore the extent to which IBSA has been caused by patriarchy, the

notion of patriarchy has been used in the development of the analytical framework presented at the end of this chapter.

Walby (1989, p.214) defines patriarchy as 'a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women'. The use of the term system is important; it signifies a move away from focusing on how individual men oppress women, and instead looking at how this is enacted at a societal level, better accounting for different power relations between individual men and women. Social structures are a way that limits are set and constraints around social and cultural relations are established, with patriarchal structures establishing constraints around gender. It is also important to note that patriarchy is not a static phenomenon and can manifest itself differently across social systems and cultures (Applin et al., 2022). Importantly, social structures such as patriarchy can be challenged and changed if social reproduction stops (Connell, 1987; Maharaj, 1995). Patriarchy as a hierarchy also interlinks with other social hierarchies, including those around race or sexuality.

Patriarchy operates at both a macro and a micro level. The macro level refers to how societal institutions such as the government or the law reflect patriarchal values. The micro level refers to families, and individual interactions, and how patriarchy may manifest itself here, for example women taking on more of the household labour. Micro-level patriarchal systems fall within the broader macro-level systems, showing that individual actions are tied in with broader patriarchal structures. Walby (1989) further hypothesises that patriarchy is composed of patriarchal relations under six key structures: modes of production; paid work; male violence; sexuality; cultural institutions; and the state. For this thesis, the pillar that is of most relevance is 'male violence', which will now be considered.

Using patriarchy as a theoretical tool, male violence is seen as arising from societal norms that both normalise and justify violence against women (Applin et al., 2022; Walby, 1989). Applin et al (2022) describe violence using the terms 'patriarchy-enhancing' and 'patriarchy-facilitated' in their framework of gendered violence. Using this theoretical framework, it is possible to account for the fact that even though not all men perpetrate violence against women, men, as a group, benefit from it as it is patriarchy-enhancing. Patriarchy-facilitated male violence refers to the idea that patriarchy shapes how male violence is carried out and how it is understood as a

concept, through ideologies, laws and punishments as well as gendered behaviours, masculinities and femininities (Applin et al., 2022).

There are several bodies of evidence that support the idea that male violence against women is facilitated by patriarchal structures. Firstly, it is well documented that most forms of sexual violence and certain forms of domestic violence are mostly perpetrated by men and victimise women (ONS, 2023b; Westmarland, 2015; Brownmiller, 1975; Sheperd, 2019). Further evidence for sexual and domestic violence being patriarchy-facilitated comes from the response of institutions. For example, looking at state intervention, the current rates of prosecution in rape cases is low. Looking at police recorded crime data and CPS data for 2022/23, a total of 68,949 rape offences were recorded by police of which only 1,685 resulted in a charge (CPS, 2023; ONS 2024). Many victims of rape and domestic violence have negative experiences when seeking help from institutions, for example the Family Court system is often described as retraumatising for women who have experienced domestic abuse (Home Office, 2023). Stewart et al (2023) also found that a lack of faith in the criminal justice system was a key factor in victims of sexual violence not reporting. This suggests that institutions are not well set-up to support women who are victims of male violence.

Male peer support theory, as discussed in the section 2.1, also lends evidence to the idea that sexual and domestic violence is facilitated by patriarchy as it is men who share patriarchal values with peers that reinforce the abuse of women (DeKeseredy, 1988; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016). Ptacek's (2020) work examining intimate violence, masculinity and class similarly evidences how hegemonic forms of masculinity (dictated by patriarchal structures) found that men were using abuse against partners to help them feel better about themselves and more secure in their masculinity. In this way, patriarchal views of masculinity can be seen to facilitate male violence against women.

The other term utilised by Applin et al (2022) to describe gendered forms of violence is 'patriarchy enhancing' which refers to when violence is used to reproduce the established gender order. For women who have directly experienced forms of sexual or domestic violence, this impacts on their ability to live their lives freely (ibid). In instances of domestic violence, as well as the use of physical violence there is also

economic abuse, where finances are controlled, and forms of verbal abuse or coercive control which may prevent women from seeing friends or keeping employment. For women who have experienced sexual violence, the stigma of being a victim can lead to social isolation (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Research that explores the relationship between men's violence against women and women's subordinate position in society has found that women's choices and actions are restricted by the threat or fear of male violence, enabling men to participate fully in public life when women cannot (Stanko, 1985; Chakraborty et al., 2018). This is often referred to as women's 'safety work', and can involve things such as not going out after dark, being vigilant or not going out alone (Lennox, 2022; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2022; Vera-Gray, 2018).

Finally, Applin et al (2022) also describe violence against men who do not conform to hegemonic forms of masculinity as being patriarchy-enhancing as it pressures men to continue upholding patriarchal systems. Crime, which can involve sexual and domestic violence, has also been described as a way to 'do' masculinity if other resources are not available (Messerschmidt, 1993; Ptacek, 2020). Related to this, Hyde et al's (2009) study found that boys aged 14-19 were acutely aware of the intensive heteronormative norms and the potential for punishment (typically via verbal abuse or bullying) for those who did not meet masculine norms. This led to pressure to conform with a version of masculinity that is linked to violence against women. Thus, young men are encouraged to continue upholding patriarchal values and punished by others when they do not.

Gender order and hegemonic masculinity are two further useful concepts when exploring sexual violence within the context of patriarchy. These concepts, strongly associated with Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987), expand on what has been already discussed by incorporating how there are power differences within both men and women as a group. This means that some men hold more power than others, and that some women may hold power over men in certain situations. Essential to this understanding is that there is not one universal form of masculinity, rather gender orders construct multiple forms of masculinity which are *hierarchical* (Connell and Messerschimdt, 2005). This also moves the ideas of gender into something that is 'done' or performed and constantly renegotiated and policed by others. This will be

important to consider when trying to understand how IBSA may be affected by hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity.

Despite the usefulness of hegemonic masculinity as a concept, it has received critique. There is a general issue around 'downstreaming' of hegemonic masculinity which can limit its usefulness as a concept; this refers to the ability to link how hegemonic masculinity or certain masculine traits continue to uphold gender inequality (Logan, 2010). In addition, there is also a tendency to view hegemonic masculinity as involving certain static masculine traits, something those who conceptualised the initial term of hegemonic masculinity have critiqued (Messerschmidt, 2012). It is important therefore to not fall into stereotypes around what is or is not a hegemonic form of masculinity. Finally, research using hegemonic masculinity can be critiqued for (as of yet) not fully embracing intersectionality or accounting for how different characteristics interact with masculine traits. This will be important to reflect on in the discussion chapter.

Although using patriarchy as a concept helps situate IBSA in its societal context, it has received substantial critique. One of the main critiques of patriarchy grew from an attempt to use it as a universal theory, putting forward an overly simplistic explanation of the relationship between men and women, and also reinforcing a gender binary. This can obscure how violence is used to uphold the normative gender binary, both for cisgender women who are not seen to align with conventional 'femininity', for trans and non-binary individuals and for men who do not align with hegemonic forms of masculinity (Mack et al., 2018). Linked to the idea of universalism, is the argument that feminist theory either cannot explain male victims of sexual or domestic violence. However, this critique is overly individualistic and misses the broader impact of this violence occurring in a patriarchal society. For example, Williamson et al's (2018, p.64) research with male victims of domestic violence reinforces the notion that gender is key to understanding their experiences, with the men's perception of their own gender 'central to the ways in which men experience abuse, its impacts and potential help-seeking'. To suggest that relationships or experiences of LGBT+ people are unaffected by patriarchy or exist outside of a heteronormative, gendered order is also misguided. There is evidence that suggests violence that occurs within queer intimate relationships can be explained through the use of patriarchy as a theoretical framework (Donovan &

Barnes, 2020). In their study of gay men, Oringher and Samuelson (2011) found that those who endorsed ideas of traditional masculinity were more likely to be perpetrators of intimate partner violence than victims of it suggesting these forms of violence are also patriarchy-facilitated. There is however a gap in the literature on experiences of sexual violence by queer women.

The notion of gender symmetry has also been a challenge for using patriarchy to explain sexual violence. Although there is research that supports the notion that sexual violence most frequently involves male violence against women, there is also evidence that suggests men and women experience and perpetrate sexual violence at more similar rates (Hunnicutt, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Saunders, 2002). For example, studies using the Conflict Tactic Scale have found near parity in the amount of 'intimate partner violence' carried out by men and women (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). Multiple arguments have been used to account for findings that suggest sexual and domestic violence do not follow patriarchal patterns. Firstly, some feminist researchers argue that the types of violence experienced by men and women are different, and when this is taken into account it is possible to demonstrate that violence is gendered in a more nuanced way (Saunders, 2002; Johnson 2008; Johnson, 2011; Brubaker, 2019). For example, extreme forms of sexual violence such as rape tend to show a greater discrepancy in victimisation between men and women (ONS, 2023b). Johnson (2008; 2011) uses their typology of intimate violence to demonstrate this, with intimate terrorism (including coercive control) more likely to be perpetrated by men and victimise women compared to violent resistance (or self-defence) which was more likely to be perpetrated by women.

There is also the issue of bias within samples and set-up of questions in surveys that have shown women perpetrate sexual and domestic violence as much as (or more than) men (Saunders, 2002; Johnson, 2011). Questions in surveys aiming to measure the prevalence of forms of domestic and sexual violence often do not collect contextual information to assess the severity, frequency or impacts from the abuse (Bumiller, 2008; Crocker, 2010). Fagen and Anderson's (2012) study explored surveys which have shown gender parity in terms of victimisation. In the study, 20 men discuss their experiences of 'unwanted sexual encounters' with women, however most experiences did not fit with the traditional definitions of sexual

aggression and most of the men seemed relatively ambivalent about their experiences (ibid, p.264). It is also interesting to note that the women described as coercive or aggressive in these situations often seemed to be seen as such because they were being explicit about their sexual interest. Men in the study seemed irritated by this behaviour, and spoke about ways they reclaimed power (ibid). These arguments suggest the notion that there is gender symmetry in sexual violence is flawed and that the contextual information as well methods to measure violence need to be considered in research.

Overall, although further work is needed to establish the relationship between patriarchy and sexual violence the evidence suggests it is an important part of understanding sexual violence. Although this thesis does not seek to empirically test the relationship between patriarchy and IBSA, it will draw on the theoretical work discussed here to support the interpretation and discussion of the study's findings.

2.3 Technology and sexual violence

'As a vitally important part of 'progress', technological change is a key aspect of what our societies need actively to shape, rather than passively to respond to.'
(Mackenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p.6)

It is important to consider how technology has developed in a way that has at best allowed or at worst encouraged forms of technology-facilitated violence to become a routine part of life. Here the concept of patriarchy, as defined in the previous section, is drawn on to discuss how and why technology has developed in a way that enables IBSA. First, this section will consider social shaping theory, and what this suggests about the role of patriarchy and gender in technological development. Then the empirical evidence that supports the relationships between technology and patriarchy will be discussed. This will then be drawn on as part of the feminist analytical framework used throughout this thesis.

2.3.1 Social shaping of technology

It is important to establish the theoretical approach taken to technological development in this thesis and how this links to violence against women. It is argued here that technologies are not neutral or independent entities, but rather that human action and technology are mutually shaped by each other. This is predominantly how

recent feminist research has theorised the relationship between gender and technology (Wajcman, 2013) and the following section will explain why a social shaping approach to technology was taken.

From the 1990s, researchers theorised that technology and in particular the development of the internet could help us move towards a less gendered society. The disembodied nature of online spaces in particular led to some theorising that the move away from our bodied (or physical) forms might disrupt systems and allow more freedom in how we present gender (Turkle, 1995; Featherstone, 2000; Leary, 2000, cited in Pitts, 2004). Hypothetically, the separation from the physical form could lead digital spaces to become post-gender and allow individuals to experiment with new genders and sexualities. Wilding (1998, p.9), for example, spoke about cyberspace being a 'free space where gender does not matter'. For women in particular this could be extremely liberating and allow them to embrace fluid identities, not as constricted by traditional ideas of femininity (Plant, 2000; Pitts, 2004). Some of these ideas could be seen as examples of 'technological determinism'. Technological determinism views the relationship between technology and society as one-way, technologies change or adapt and this then affects society (Wajcman, 2010). Thus, technology **determines** societal change. In the instances above, the introduction of the internet in particular was predicted to have a deterministic effect on gendered norms.

The fact that society has not become less gendered through the incorporation of technology in everyday life over the past 20 years suggests that technological determinism cannot fully explain the relationship between technology and society, and there is substantial evidence that patriarchal gender norms effect how individuals use and experience technology (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Technology, in many ways, has been used to uphold systems including the patriarchy. Technological determinism also overlooks the fact that the development of technology itself is not a neutral endeavour. It is well reported that those working in technological fields, particularly in leadership positions, are predominantly men. This is not something that has happened by chance, and is a result of the societal gender roles which generally position men as naturally more scientific (Cockburn, 1987). This refutes the idea that technology can be seen as a neutral entity that naturally

follows scientific development, separated from societal influences (Mackenzie and Wajcman, 1999; Winner, 2000).

One of the main theoretical approaches that emerge from this criticism of technological determinism is social shaping theory (SST), which was developed in particular by the work of Mackenzie and Wajcman (1999). Social shaping theory considers how broader social contexts affect technological development and does not view technology as an objective result of scientific advancement. Given the patriarchal nature of society, SST can explain why new forms of technology have not created a utopia for women and minority groups but instead led to replication of gendered dynamics and violence against women in online spaces (Powell & Henry, 2017; Barker & Jurasz, 2019; Dragiewicz et al, 2018; Jane, 2017).

An example of this that supports SST is that the ways in which technology is used is heavily dependent on social norms. Wajcman (2013) uses an example from Offer's (2006) economic work to demonstrate this idea. Offer's study found that there was not a direct link between use of time-saving goods (such as washing machines) and the amount of time spent on housework, so improved technology did not substantially reduce the amount of time spent on household chores. Offer (ibid) argues that new household technologies enter a domain with strong, traditional sex roles and 'genderscripts' where women need to be seen as performing femininity. Housework is an important way in which wives and mothers are expected to align with the feminine, and so the introduction of time-saving goods did not have as strong an impact on the time spend on housework as might have been expected. This shows that technological advances still enter into a relational process where the construction of gender affects technology and vice versa (Wajcman, 2013). The same approach could be applied to social media sites. For example, many social media sites allow for improved access to political discussions and remove certain barriers from women's participation in political thinking. Despite this, due to gendered norms, women who engage in political discussions online often receive high levels of harassment and gender-based harm (Barker & Jurasz, 2021).

Another important aspect of social shaping theory that differs from other social constructivist approaches to technology, is that it looks at technology and society as mutually shaping entities. Thus, society may influence the types of technology that

are developed, but equally such forms of technology may then influence society. Image-based sexual abuse could be viewed an example of this. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, the development of technology is heavily influenced by patriarchal norms. This means that technology is developed in a way that can facilitate violence against women. As VAW is a feature of patriarchal society, SST would argue that technology will therefore continue to enable male violence towards women. However, what technology has added here, and how this may in turn shape society, is the ease and scale at which IBSA can be perpetrated. Wajcman (1991) discussed the notion that gender and technology cannot be separated from one another, describing technology as 'both a source and consequence of gender relations and vice versa' (Faulkner, 2001, p.81).

These examples all show that technology cannot be seen as a neutral entity, and the influence that society has on technological advancement as predicted by social shaping theory. Using this understanding, it is possible to understand why gendered patterns of behaviour, such as violence against women, are reproduced in online spaces, rather than technology disconnecting women from their 'bodied' forms and allowing them to operate in a space freed from gendered power as some predicted. From this, it can be predicted that IBSA will reflect gendered power dynamics. This thesis will look to gather evidence to explore whether SST can help understanding of IBSA perpetration.

2.3.2 Technological development under patriarchy

Given social shaping theory proposes that technology and society are mutually constitutive, it is important to consider how patriarchy might affect the development of technology, and how this in turn might have contributed to the development of technology-facilitated sexual violence. As discussed, patriarchy broadly refers to the social structures in which men dominate and women are subordinate (Walby, 1989) and these social structures are prevalent in almost every modern society in the present day. As discussed by Walby (1989), modes of production are one of the key patriarchal structures. This can be seen in relation to technological development. Huyer and Nunez (2021, p.309) coined the term 's*ilicon wall'* to describe the 'constraints for women and under-represented groups in the design, implementation and adoption of new technology'. Technology now is commonly seen as a masculine domain and until recently online spaces had been more commonly used by men

(ibid). This has led to a skewed view of who belongs in online spaces, as well as who has a role in developing forms of technology that often sidelines women.

Platform governance and design, which refers to both the front-end user-facing features and the back-end algorithms of websites, is directly related to how easily people can spread and share abuse (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that evidence suggests that digital platforms and technology have been designed in a way that enables the perpetration of gender-based abuse, such as IBSA, whilst simultaneously not providing sufficient recourse options for victims. An example of this is the growing threat from the 'internet of things' (such as smart systems) which are being used to perpetrate domestic abuse, for example by allowing individuals to 'spy' on their partners (Lopez-Neira et al., 2019). In terms of digital technology, social media sites often include features that enable abuse, such as users being able to hide behind anonymous accounts and, when harassment occurs, placing the responsibility on moderators (who may have their own biases) to review complaints and decide what repercussions they warrant (Crawford and Gillepsie, 2014). Not only does this put the onus on any victims of online harassment to report abuse, but it also means women entering online spaces have to carefully manage risk and how they use online spaces (Jankowicz, 2022). Although it could be argued that these are unintended consequences of technological design, social shaping theory would suggest it relates to the influence of a patriarchal society.

There is also evidence that suggests online platforms in particular can benefit from forms of online abuse which therefore means they have elements of platform governance (such as algorithms) which may intentionally promote such behaviours (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence and other forms of online gender-based violence have the potential to be capitalised on by online sites such as Twitter and Facebook. As discussed by Langlois and Slane (2017), revenge porn in particular acted as a business for some websites where they could capitalise on the user traffic such posts drew. This is also the case for online gendered hate speech and trolling of women, with sites directing users to such posts in order to encourage conflict and greater use of the sites.

In terms of options for recourse, it is well documented that online platforms where forms of online gendered abuse occur (such as social media and pornography sites)

have often given little thought to this when developing new digital technology (Barker and Jurasz. 2021). Furthermore, when women who experience online abuse do speak out, they are often subject to a barrage of victim blaming and even more harassment online often referred to as 'pile-ons' (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Policy and legal responses have also frequently lagged behind in implementing approaches to support victims, meaning policymakers are now having to rapidly catch up as gendered forms of online abuse grows (Barker & Jurasz, 2021). The initial *Online Harms White Paper* (DCMS, 2019) was heavily criticised for not giving sufficient attention to gender-based abuse, which was revised following consultation in later versions of the paper. Although the updated version of OHWP, the Online Safety Act, considers harms to women and girls more explicitly, it is telling that this was not incorporated until after a consultation period (UK Parliament, 2023).

Having digital spaces that are set up in a way that deprioritises the protection of women and other minority groups has led to a reduction in women's ability to fully participate in public (and political) life, and also restricts women's rights to freely express their views for fear of repercussion online (Barker and Jurasz, 2019). As has been explored in this chapter, many women have experienced gendered abuse online with Amnesty International (2017) finding that just under a quarter of women aged between 18 and 55 had experienced online abuse on at least one occasion. This can also have repercussions for women when 'offline', as previous studies have found associations between forms of cyber abuse and violence that occurs offline (Short et al., 2017; Yahner et al., 2015; Fraser & Martineau-Searle, 2018). This suggests that by allowing forms of abuse, such as IBSA, to be carried out (with relative ease) online, a culture of violence is being promoted where forms of harassment against women and those not adhering to hegemonic forms of masculinity become more tolerated both online and offline (Fraser & Martineau-Searle, 2018). The evidence presented here suggests both these factors are at least partially due to the patriarchal social structures technology has developed under, in line with the theoretical approach taken by social shaping theory.

It is important to note that the relationship between feminism, women's rights and technology is complex. There are many ways in which technology has been used to enhance the feminist movement. Clark-Parsons (2018) work on Girl Army, for example, tracks the group developed from a small group of Philadelphia-based

friends to a vast feminist network through the use of social media. Social media and digital technology allow people to come together who ordinarily would have been prevented from doing so by geography, time and access, and the use of the internet has therefore become strongly associated with a fourth wave of feminism. However, although spaces such as Twitter and YouTube are frequently used by feminist activists to draw attention to women's rights, this comes with risks. Caroline Criado-Perez, a feminist campaigner who became well-known through her petition to put a woman on an English banknote, spoke about receiving a barrage of rape threats following her campaign (Hattenstone, 2013). *Gamergate* refers to a campaign of misogynistic harassment particularly targeted at Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist media critic. Due to their association with feminism, the women were 'doxed' (their private information was published online) and they received rape and death threats (Romano, 2021). These are just two high profile examples of how the same technology which helped these feminist campaigners to gain prominence was also used to cause them harm and prevent women from speaking openly.

In summary, although there are opportunities for the digital world to enhance and liberate women's movements, technology-driven development under patriarchy has the ability to reverse progress made towards gender equality unless changes are made (Huyer and Nunez, 2021). Based on this, it is likely that forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence such as IBSA will reflect and feed into the gendered development of technology and continue to marginalise women. The next section will consider examples of how gender, technology and sexual violence interlink within a patriarchal society. This will also be considered further in the findings and discussion chapters.

2.3.3 Technology, gender and sexual violence

The previous sections have outlined how patriarchy has contributed to gendered sexual violence and affected the development of forms of technology. The following section aims to bring these two aspects together, to explore the relationship between gender and technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). Similar to other forms of sexual violence, this thesis puts forwards that TFSV is similarly affected by the social construction of gender and sexuality. As discussed, conceptions of sexual violence are heavily influenced by discourses around rape and other forms of sexual violence that stem from patriarchy. The discourse around sexual violence is also tied to

discourses around gender and sexuality, meaning that perceptions of gender and particularly female sexuality have affected how sexual violence is experienced and understood. Forms of TFSV are likely to also be affected by the socially constructed ideas around sexual violence; TFSV can therefore be seen to reflect broader rape culture.

It is well reported that women are subject to a range of harms online that are predominantly perpetrated by men. One area which technology has had a significant impact on is the nature of intimate relationships. The use of digital communications in intimate relationships, online dating and the sharing of nude or sexual images are now commonplace in relationships particularly for young people (Campbell and Murray, 2015). Although some studies have shown that technology has a range of positive impacts in relationship building, Campbell and Murray (2015) state, '…relationships are impacted by the integration of technology use, and technology use patterns can reflect the existing relationship dynamics within each couple' (p.255). Given the gendered nature of (particularly heterosexual) relationships, driven by patriarchal structures discussed in the previous section, this suggests that technology use in relationships is likely to reflect such pre-existing dynamics. I will use some key examples to demonstrate the relationship between gender and technology; firstly, the use of sexual messaging (or sexting), and secondly rape threats on social media.

'Sexting' has increased in prevalence due to the availability of camera phones and the ease of sending images and videos. It typically involves the sending of sexual messages, photos or videos via forms of digital technology (Drouin et al., 2017). It has often been portrayed as a negative and deviant behaviour (Wiederhold, 2011), even when occurring in a consensual relationship. Despite this attitude, the use of sexting and sexual self-images in relationships is highly prevalent, with Powell et al. (2018) finding almost half of adults (46%) in a nationally representative Australian survey had sent nude or sexual images of themselves. This suggests that the taking and sharing of nude photos is becoming a more important part of relationships.

Due to gendered (and patriarchal) power dynamics being replicated in the digital world, similar forms of coercion and abuse that occur in the offline world also affect sexting and the taking of sexual self-images (Drouin et al, 2017; Campbell and

Murray, 2015). Firstly, there are gendered differences in who asks for nude photos with studies commonly showing that men are more likely to request nude or sexual images compared to women (Powell et al., 2018; Salter, 2017). This reflects common sexual scripts under patriarchy, where men are encouraged to be active with regards to their sexuality whilst women take a passive role (Gavey, 2019). There is also an element of coercion and control that goes alongside requests to share images with women more likely to report feeling pressured or coerced into sharing nude or sexual images (Lee and Crofts, 2015; Walker et al., 2021). Kernsmith et al. (2018) for example found that, in a survey of high schoolers, the risk of sexting coercion victimisation was approximately 70% higher for girls than for boys. As will be further expanded on in the next session, this indicates that behaviours such as sexting take place within the context of broader patriarchal social structures meaning they are affected by gender norms and the sexualisation of women's and girl's bodies.

It is also important to consider how nude images of men and women are viewed more broadly in society. Women's bodies are often hypersexualised, whilst an ideal image of a chaste and virginal woman is upheld as the ideal leading to women and girls being intensely scrutinised over their bodies (Ringrose & Renold, 2012; Salter, 2016). Despite this, women and girls often experience greater social pressure to share photos compared to men and boys (Walker et al., 2021). Therefore, although women are more frequently asked to share nude or sexual photos, they have to balance this with the knowledge that they are likely to receive societal judgment for sharing these photos as they flout the feminine ideal, yet if they do not share photos they may also receive negative social repercussions amongst their peers or in relationships (Salter et al, 2013; Salter, 2016). Men, comparatively, are not held to the same contradictory standards (Karaian, 2014), a further way in which IBSA must be viewed within the broader gendered context. This also reflects social shaping theory (SST), as discussed in the previous section, which highlights the importance of societal contexts to technology use.

Notably, Powell and Henry's (2019) study illuminates this gender dynamic further by showing that women who reported sharing sexual self-images were more likely to send this to a current sexual partner than to someone they only knew online or a

new acquaintance. Men, in comparison, were similarly likely to send a sexual self-image to a current partner as they were to someone they had just met (ibid). Despite this, the same study found that women were more likely to be victims of image-based sexual abuse (ibid). This suggests that behaviours that were previously conducted in the physical world – such as coercion, scrutinising women's bodies, and sexual control – are now being enacted in online spaces, as predicted by SST.

Another way in which technology and sexual violence are being used to maintain gendered power dynamics is through the use of rape threats. Threats to rape, assault or kill women and those who are from minority groups or do not conform to certain expectations of gender are often found in online spaces, particularly through social media sites such as Twitter (Jane, 2017; Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Research has shown that women are disproportionately likely to receive rape threats (Jane, 2017). They are also used strategically, with women who are prominent in public life, such as politicians, often receiving an unrelenting amount of rape threats and gendered hate more generally. For example, the MP Diane Abbott receives a significant amount of gendered threats online. Much of the abuse she received was also racist, which highlights how gendered violence intersects with racism. This behaviour can be seen as patriarchy-facilitated as it has been made easy to carry out with little options for recourse for victims, as well as being patriarchy-enhancing due to the fact it restricts women and girl's ability to freely express themselves online (Applin et al., 2022).

The impacts of rape threats and similar forms of online harassment can be wide ranging for women. Online rape threats are described as a 'silencing strategy' by Lumsden and Morgan (2016) as they can either remove individuals from (online) public spaces or stop them from engaging in certain discussions. For example, women report speaking less freely around issues such as sexism or feminism online because of the fear of repercussions via online trolling and threats (Jane, 2017). This is then reinforced by victim blaming attitudes held by the public and the media, such as the advice that victims 'do not feed the troll' by responding to threats in case they worsen (Lumsden & Morgan, 2016). The focus on women who are victims being responsible for preventing further abuse or harm reflects gendered attitudes towards women and other forms of sexual violence, such as avoiding rape by not going out

after dark (Beresford, 2015). For those who do not follow this advice, behaviours such as doxing (where personal or identifying information, such as home address, is shared online) are used to punish them (Jane, 2017). The use of doxing is interesting as it demonstrates how online and offline forms of gendered violence are linked. Overall, rape threats and trolling, alongside image-based sexual abuse, contribute to an online rape culture which mirrors and extends offline rape cultures (Marganski, 2018).

The impacts of this relationship between technology and gender means that sexist double standards make it hard for women to maintain meaningful online identities. After experiencing gendered online abuse, some disconnect completely from the online world (Bates, 2017). It will be important to consider how the gendered context that underpins IBSA affects victimisation and perpetration in the following section and the findings of this research.

2.4 Conclusion and analytical framework

Figure 2 below shows how the literature discussed in this chapter relates to the increasing levels of image-based sexual abuse faced in particular by women and girls. It links previous feminist research on sexual violence to current research on IBSA, and situates image-based sexual abuse (as a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence) within the broader continuum of sexual violence against women. Importantly, it highlights the role of patriarchy in developing both the technology which facilitates IBSA as well as promoting attitudes and hegemonic forms of masculinity that facilitate violence against women. The next stage of the research will use the analytical framework to shape the analysis presented in chapter 4 and the discussion in chapter 5. The research will aim to bring these findings together to understand to what extent IBSA is a gendered phenomenon.

As the study of technology-facilitated sexual violence and IBSA are both relatively new fields, the literature presented here is in its infancy. Areas such as prevalence, victim and perpetrator characteristics and the impacts of IBSA have a growing body of literature, but this is affected by the lack of consistent definitions of IBSA across studies, varying methodologies and the fact that few studies have been repeated. This is why one of the research questions this thesis aims to answer is how IBSA is experienced. In the following chapter, I will discuss how the methods for this thesis

were developed to address some of the key gaps in the literature. There has also been a lack of research into attitudes on IBSA, which is a key part of feminist research on sexual violence. Feminist researchers argue that societal rape myths and victim blaming facilitate violence against women and facilitates patriarchy. For this reason, the final key questions this thesis seeks to answer is what the societal attitudes towards IBSA are and whether these relate to other forms of sexual violence.

Having an analytical framework that links the micro-level experiences of individuals to the macro-level social structures is important to situating the research findings in this thesis. This will be returned to in the findings and discussion chapters, in particular to add important contextual information to some of the findings.

To summarise, the three key research questions identified through the literature review are:

1. How is IBSA experienced?

2. What are societal attitudes towards IBSA and how do these relate to other forms of sexual violence?

3. To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?

The following chapter will give an account of how a suitable methodology to answer these research questions was developed.

Figure 2: Analytical framework of IBSA – Version 1
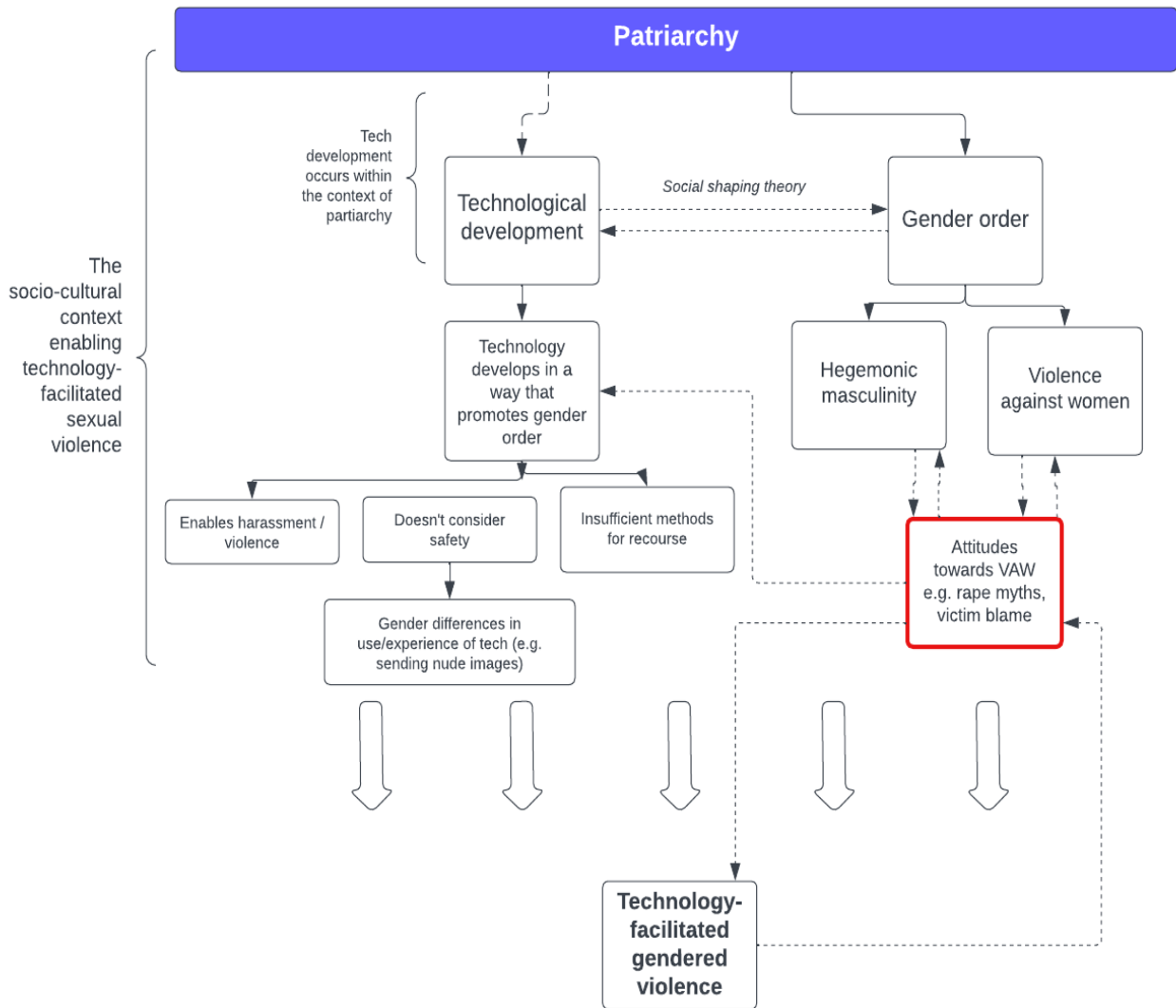
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the mixed methods approach taken in this thesis and how these methods were used to develop knowledge of Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA), particularly in relation to the following research questions:

1. How is IBSA experienced?

2. What are societal attitudes towards IBSA and how do these relate to other forms of sexual violence?

3. To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?

Following on from applying feminist theory to IBSA in the literature review, this chapter will focus on how the feminist stance of the thesis was incorporated in the methods development. In line with feminist research, the chapter also includes reflections on the research process as a whole and a discussion of the limitations of this project.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological positioning

3.2.1 Social constructivism

The development of my ontological approach was guided by the phenomena being studied, image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). Much feminist work views rape and other forms of sexual violence as being social constructs. As discussed in the literature review, forms of sexual violence are heavily influenced by the social and cultural norms prevalent in a patriarchal society (Ryan, 2011). Whether something is viewed as an instance of sexual violence is likely to be at least in part related to whether it aligns with rape myths and cultural attitudes. In this way, certain forms of sexual violence become 'social facts' arising as a result of collective consciousness relating to a certain topic (Durkheim, 1982). This extends to forms of sexual violence such as IBSA.

Although there is evidence that forms of image-based sexual abuse took place before the 21st century, the rapid increase in digital technology use over recent years means that image-based sexual abuse, as currently experienced, is a relatively new form of abuse reflected by its increasing prevalence in recent years (Henry & Powell,

2016). When commencing this piece of research, there was still relatively little social discourse around IBSA and the term 'revenge porn' had only recently started to be used in the mainstream. As discussed in the literature review, there are similarities between IBSA and other forms sexual violence, and this may impact how IBSA is perceived. Further to this, as demonstrated in section 2.3, gendered expectations around technology use also affect what is seen as acceptable and unacceptable behaviours online. Because of this, capturing the ongoing social construction of IBSA became essential to answering my research questions.

To ensure my research methods were reflective of this I took an interpretivist approach, investigating how people construct knowledge and their understanding of IBSA. The social constructivist nature of the research meant that I could explore understanding of IBSA and what implications this had for how individuals viewed their social reality. Although the survey aspect of the research was quantitative in nature, the questions developed focused on respondents' understanding of types of IBSA through the incorporation of attitudinal questions and vignettes. The interviews conducted following the survey allowed the research to explore more nuanced aspects of the participants' views of IBSA and took a constructionist approach, with questions allowing participants to talk through the reasoning behind their answers. Social constructivism also shares certain similarities with the feminist epistemological position taken in this thesis with both approaches focusing on *becoming* (such as how a particular phenomenon becomes a social reality). What feminist epistemology adds to this is a focus on power hierarchies, politics and gender, as will now be discussed.

3.2.2 Feminist epistemology

> *'Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.'* (hooks, 1984).

As noted in hooks' definition, feminism aims to end sexist inequalities through addressing patriarchal structures both at an individual and a societal level. Chapter 2 explored feminist approaches to sexual violence research and highlighted the importance of gender in relation to IBSA. Linked to such feminist research is a specific feminist epistemological position which was the main approach drawn on when developing my methodology due to the focus on gender across this research.

As discussed in the previous chapter, feminist research is inherently political. Taking a feminist epistemological position allows the researcher to examine the power hierarchies that contribute to the specific topic, while also actively seeking to change aspects of patriarchal societies that continue to inhibit women. This does not necessarily mean only focusing research on women, but rather focusing research on any area that has implications for understanding 'a woman's place' within society, including examining how the role of men and masculinities may affect this (Stanley and Wise, 1993). For this thesis, taking a feminist approach meant exploring the ways in which gender and power affect the way sexual violence, particularly image-based sexual abuse, was experienced, aligning with the analytical framework presented at the end of chapter 2 (see figure 2). This ensured I produced data and analysis that focused on gendered experiences of sexual violence. Feminist research also typically seeks to ensure that being part of research is empowering for participants, and avoids re-establishing power hierarchies through the researcher/participant dichotomy (Lather, 1988). This is particularly important when researching sexual violence, an experience which is known to leave victims with feelings of disempowerment (Herman, 1992). In contrast, feminist research promotes collaborative practice, where research is done 'with' participants rather than 'on' them. This type of research also acknowledges that knowledge production takes on the subjective values of those conducting the inquiry, unlike traditional positivist research which seeks to establish fact (Haig, 1999). Due to the emotive and political nature of sexual violence, it was important to establish an approach for this thesis that acknowledged and accounted for my own values as a researcher.

Feminist epistemology was of particular importance when thinking about my methods development, collaboration and positionality, as will be reflected on throughout the chapter.

3.3 Development of my methods

3.3.1 Overview of methods

This thesis took a mixed methods approach, combining survey and interview methodology. The fieldwork for the research took place between March to October 2020, coinciding with the start of the coronavirus pandemic which had implications for how the research was carried out (as will be discussed later in this chapter). The

quantitative survey was distributed prior to interviews taking place, via a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling. Dissemination of the survey was primarily carried out online, via email or social media. In total the survey received 521 responses and follow-up interviews were then carried out with 9 participants, who had been recruited through the survey. These interviews lasted around 45 minutes and followed an interview script which expanded on questions in the survey; some of the interview participants had directly experienced IBSA, but most had not. Most, but not all, of those who took part in the survey or interviews were university students based in Wales, however there were some survey responses from people not currently at university.

The original methods for this thesis had focused on the development of a quantitative survey, with no initial plan to combine this with qualitative methods as a quantitative approach was appropriate for answering my initial set of research questions. This initial research questions were focused on the prevalence of IBSA, however challenges in sampling for the survey (as discussed in section 3.4) led to the research questions being reviewed and adapted. The choice to take a mixed methods approach arose partially as a result of the sampling methods, but the importance of incorporating qualitative research became particularly clear whilst carrying out survey testing. Often the discussions during the cognitive interviews led to unexpected and nuanced points being raised by participants that added substantial insight to their survey responses. It was clear this would not be captured through survey methods alone. Qualitative interviews were therefore introduced to provide an in-depth understanding of how IBSA was constructed and understood by individuals.

Taking a mixed methods approach was extremely beneficial to the study as it meant the research questions could be answered in the most robust way, triangulating high-level statistical information with qualitative insights from research participants. The quantitative aspect of the research involved a survey which was designed to capture a broad range of information in relation to image-based sexual abuse, an approach particularly useful given the dearth of research on IBSA and the breadth or RQ1: '*How is IBSA experienced?*'. This is expanded on in the next section.

The mixed methods approach and inclusion of interviews in the research also allowed me to better align with some aspects of feminist epistemology, including highlighting the participant voice.

3.3.2 Development of survey

'We use statistics not to try to quantify the injuries, but to convince the world that those injuries even exist. Those statistics are not abstractions... Those statistics are not abstract to me. Every three minutes a woman is being raped. Every eighteen seconds a woman is being beaten. There is nothing abstract about it.' (Dworkin, 1983).

As touched upon in the quote above, quantitative research and statistics have been an essential tool in bringing attention to gendered sexual violence. Much western sexual violence research involves the use of surveys and survey scales, including those produced through government statistics. In the UK, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) and police-recorded crime statistics are now two of the main sources of information on sexual violence that are used to steer government thinking and policymaking in this area. These types of surveys, despite some of their limitations, have been instrumental in raising the profile of sexual and domestic violence, as noted by Reinharz (1992).

Despite the current use of quantitative surveys in research on sexual violence and violence against women more broadly, early feminist research is strongly associated with qualitative methods. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminist researchers first started to challenge the fact that academia was dominated by masculinist knowledge by opposing the dominant positivist quantitative research methods of the time and promoting the use of qualitative methods to capture women's voices (Oakley, 1998, p.708). At this time, quantitative methods were seen as antithetical to feminist research. However, since the 1990s there was a considerable shift around what methods can be seen as feminist and the feminist methods debate. Anne Oakley, one key voice on feminist methods, describes the feminist discussion around quantitative and qualitative methods as a 'paradigm debate', meaning both types of methods are falsely held in opposition to one another (Oakley, 1992). The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research in feminist research also feels out of place considering feminist researchers often try to counteract such dualisms in their

work, such as subject versus object, or rationality versus emotion (Maynard, 2013). Quantitative methods are now being increasingly used in feminist studies, although there are challenges in aligning these methods with all aspects of feminist epistemology as will be considered in the next section.

Interestingly, the dominance of qualitative research in areas relating to gender has reduced dramatically in the US but remains high in similar studies carried out in the UK. Hughes and Cohen (2010) reviewed feminist research articles to establish the proportion of research that was qualitative and found that 73% of research articles with a UK-based first author used qualitative methods, and 13% used quantitative methods. In comparison, where the first author was US-based, 60% of the articles reviewed used quantitative methods. Being aware of the use of qualitative methods in much UK-based feminist research meant that I gave considerable thought to how I could make a quantitative survey better align with feminist epistemology. This was considered at two main stages of the survey research, firstly at the survey development stage, as will now be considered, and secondly at the point of survey sampling and dissemination (see section 3.4).

Overview and aims

Given the fact that there was relatively little known about experiences of IBSA at the time this thesis was carried out, a survey that could gather a broad range of information on what current experiences, knowledge and attitudes towards IBSA were amongst people in England and Wales seemed like a logical place for the methods in this thesis to start. This also interlinked with the analytical framework set out at the end of chapter 2, which aimed to connect patriarchy with experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

The survey comprised of several sections, each focused on a different aspect of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). An overview of the survey structure can be seen in figure 3:
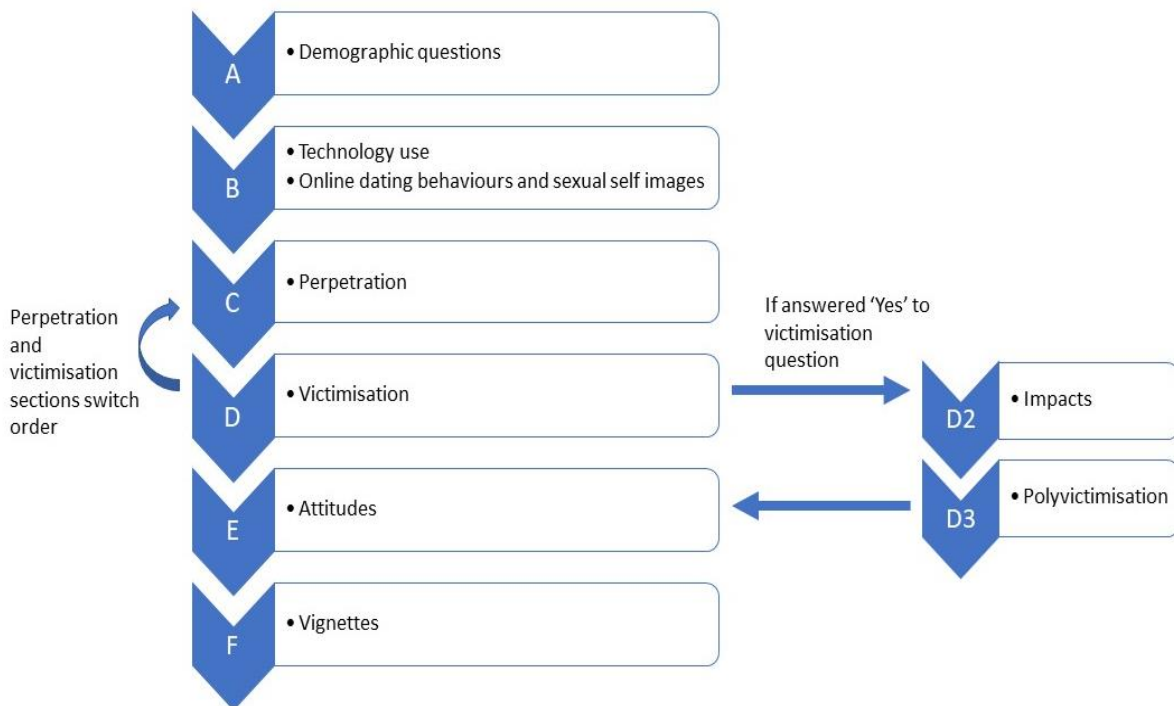
There were several overarching issues that needed to be considered whilst developing the survey. One of the challenges was producing questions that would be able to capture the varied experiences of IBSA despite having a limited amount of evidence on what these experiences typically are. Feminist critiques of quantitative surveys include the argument that women's lives cannot be pre-known or pre-defined (Maynard, 2013), yet survey methodology requires us to produce question and answer options that are limited in terms of flexibility compared to some qualitative methods. One way in which this was addressed was through adapting questions used in other surveys (primarily from Powell et al. 2018), to make use of the knowledge base available at the time. This previous research indicated the majority of respondents were able to use the pre-defined questions to share their experiences, which meant that I could be relatively confident my survey would do the same. As discussed previously, free text boxes were also added to the survey to help the fact that there may be some survey questions that did not fully align with respondents' experiences. This gave respondents the chance to share experiences in their own words and meant that I could assess the responses to see if the survey had failed to identify a key form of IBSA. Questions also included 'other, please specify' response options where appropriate and I could monitor the use of these whilst the survey was live to see how well my questions were capturing respondents'

answers. Survey questions were also thoroughly tested (as expanded on later in this section) to further align with feminist epistemology by getting input from the types of people who were likely to complete the survey.

As shown in figure 3, the survey aimed to capture experiences of perpetration as well as victimisation of IBSA. Including questions on both victimisation and perpetration in the same survey was beneficial as it meant that overlap between these behaviours could be captured in the survey. Previous literature suggests that, compared to other forms of sexual violence, it is more likely for someone who is a victim of IBSA to have also perpetrated IBSA and so this was particularly important to examine within the survey (Hood & Duffy, 2018; Walker, 2019; Powell et al., 2022; Sparks et al., 2023). However, it is possible that having questions on perpetration and victimisation within the same survey could have introduced *response bias* as respondents may alter their answers dependent on whether they were presented with questions on victimisation or perpetration first. For example, if someone read the victimisation questions first, they may have then been less likely to share perpetrator behaviours as it could be more apparent the questions are about a form of sexual violence. To overcome the potential issues with response bias, half of respondents received questions on IBSA victimisation followed by perpetration, and the other half received questions on IBSA perpetration followed by victimisation.

Further to this, designing the survey so it collected sufficient information to explore the data from a gendered perspective was important given the focus of this thesis. Sexual violence surveys have been criticised by feminist researchers for not including sufficient questions to contextualise findings (particularly in relation to gender). This was discussed in section 2.2. Government survey statistics on sexual violence in particular may contribute to the increased governing of gender found under neoliberalism, as such statistics are often not situated within the broader gendered context of sexual violence (Bumiller, 2008; Crocker, 2010). This use of statistics is generally not aligned with feminist approaches to sexual violence as they typically focus on individual accountability to not be victimised instead of looking at the broader issues of power focused on by feminists. The fact that survey research can often be removed from the context of the issue being examined has meant that survey findings can be used to develop increasingly neoliberal policies, or to misrepresent the gendered nature of sexual violence (Crocker, 2010; Johnson,

2011). In the case of sexual violence research, survey findings removed from the wider context can lead to policies and methods to address sexual violence treating such occurrences as a series of one-offs, rather than looking at underlying patterns.

In this instance, contextual information refers to details such as: detailed information on the type of IBSA; whether someone had experienced other types of sexual violence, domestic violence or online abuse; personal characteristics; the impacts of IBSA; relationships to perpetrators; broader attitudes and opinions on IBSA. This could have been expanded on further, for example to establish chronology of events, repeat instances of IBSA, and other information relevant to exploring the gendered dynamic of IBSA amongst other things. However, this was not incorporated due to the need to balance the number of questions with the time taken to complete the survey, particularly as this could negatively impact survey completion rate if it became too long.

The broader information added to the survey also meant that the validity of the data could be improved, as studies that do not contain sufficient contextual information can lead to incorrect conclusions being drawn. For example, Hearn (1996) reviewed a study that showed women were more likely to be violent towards their partners than men. When looking at this in conjunction with data on the type, severity and impacts of the violent incidents, they found that women were overstating their violence against their partner compared to men who were likely to underreport their violence against their partners. This means that looking at information such as prevalence rates for types of sexual violence will not necessarily show the reality of gendered sexual violence. To address this within this thesis, particular attention was paid to the terminology used and the types of questions to build a full and accurate picture of experiences of IBSA. This can be seen in the typology of IBSA presented in the next chapter, which used this information to categorise different types of victimisation.

In addition to this, it was important to consider the wording that should be used throughout the survey to capture the intended responses to the survey questions. One issue commonly cited in sexual violence literature is that many victims and survivors of sexual violence do not necessarily identify themselves in this way. Asking individuals to self-identify as victims of forms of sexual violence such as rape

or image-based sexual abuse can therefore be problematic, and risk missing responses from those who do not align their experiences with that of a victim. Previous research suggests that there are certain predictors as to how likely someone is to identify as a victim of sexual violence. For example, if the characteristics of the sexual assault fit with the idea of what a 'typical' rape is, it is more likely to be acknowledged by the victim (or perpetrator) as rape (see section 2.2). For this reason, asking about behaviours or specific experiences rather than using terms like 'rape' or 'sexual assault' is considered best practice in measuring sexual violence victimisation (Koss, 1993; Schuster et al., 2020; Dufour et al., 2023).

In the context of this survey, it was perhaps more likely that victims or perpetrators of revenge pornography, which is a more well-known example of image-based sexual abuse, would identify themselves as such. However, where forms of image-based sexual abuse are lesser known, victims and perpetrators may have been less likely to self-identify. Because of this, respondents were asked whether they had either experienced or engaged in certain types of behaviours, each relating to a form of IBSA. Terms relating to victimisation, perpetration and sexual abuse were generally avoided within the survey to improve the disclosure rates and accuracy or responses from participants. Importantly, these definitions were the same as those used in previous studies of IBSA meaning there was the possibility to compare findings across studies (this is explored later in the chapter). By asking participants whether they had experienced a certain type of behaviour using standard descriptions of IBSA, the thesis was also better placed to explore gendered experiences of sexual violence by comparing similar experiences of men and women.

Taking a feminist approach to researching sexual violence meant that ethics and the experience of respondents was of importance to my survey development. Further details on this can be found in section 3.6.

Question development

As much of the current research on IBSA makes use of survey methodology, the starting point for question development was to review previous IBSA surveys and decide which survey questions or scales would be appropriate to replicate for this thesis. As well as having the benefit of already being developed and piloted, using questions from previous studies meant that the results could be compared to

previous research. This thesis made particular use of questions from Powell et al's (2019) survey research on IBSA carried out in Australia. Where possible, questions were directly taken from the survey but some were adapted slightly to ensure the language used was culturally appropriate for the U.K. Based on Powell and Henry's previous research (Henry and Powell, 2016; Powell et al, 2018; Powell et al, 2019), the survey focused on three main forms of IBSA: nude or sexual photos or videos being taken without a person's knowledge; **threats** to share nude or sexual photos or videos; and sharing nude or sexual photos or videos without permission.

A full explanation of how questions were developed for each section of the survey, including where questions were adapted from previous studies, can be found below.

Section A - Demographic questions

Demographic questions were included so the relationship between personal characteristics and victimisation, perpetration and attitudes towards image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) could be analysed. Including comprehensive questions on respondent demographics aligned well with feminist epistemology. It meant that the data collected could be interrogated in an intersectional way, taking into account how certain key characteristics, and in particular gender, may impact on someone's experience of sexual violence. This was one of the key strengths in using quantitative methods, as the effect of personal characteristics could be explored through survey data. It also meant that, whilst the survey was ongoing, it was possible to review the characteristics of participants to see if any groups were underrepresented. Where this was the case, the survey could then be targeted to certain groups, such as LGBTQIA+ respondents through relevant university societies.

Section B – Online behaviours

The frequency with which people use technology or access the internet has been linked to an increased risk of being victim to forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry and Powell, 2016). For this reason, the second section of the survey focused on frequency and types of technology used by respondents, including use of social media. Respondents were also asked about online dating behaviours and the taking of sexual self-images. These questions were taken from Powell et al. (2018)

and aim to establish whether individuals have previously used technology whilst dating and taken nude or sexual photos or videos of themselves.

Having this section was essential to fully understand how online behaviours interacted with IBSA perpetration or victimisation. One finding from Powell et al's (2018) study was that women, despite generally engaging less in sexual self-image taking, were still more likely to be victims of IBSA – without questions on online behaviours this impact of gender would not be fully understood. These questions also helped explore the relationship between technology, sexual violence and gender further. As discussed in the literature review, there is already clear evidence of the effect of patriarchy and gender in the experience of women online. Incorporating these questions meant data collected was better able to explore this aspect of IBSA, in line with the feminist stance of this project.

Section C – Perpetration

The perpetration section asked about three forms of IBSA perpetration, as mentioned previously. These were taking a nude or sexual image of someone without their knowledge; threatening to share a nude or sexual images of someone without their consent; sharing a nude or sexual image of someone without their consent. This section draws on Powell et al's (2019) survey on IBSA perpetration. The section also collects information on who the victim was in the incidents reported and what the motivations of the perpetrator were.

Section D – Victimisation

The victimisation section focused on the same three forms of IBSA victimisation as detailed in the perpetration section. The first part of this section was informed by Powell et al's (2019) survey on IBSA. If the respondent had not experienced any type of IBSA victimisation, they were automatically directed to the next section of the survey. Accompanying the questions on IBSA victimisation, there were questions exploring the perceived motivations, the perpetrator and the victim's relationship, and perpetrator gender. By collecting this information, the survey findings could be considered alongside what is known about other types of gendered sexual violence as discussed in the literature review.

Following this, the victimisation section goes on to ask respondents about the impacts of their experience of IBSA. This includes impacts on mental health, university studies, and relationships with others. It was important to include a comprehensive list of possible impacts to fully understand the consequences of IBSA for different types of victimisation, including whether these differed depending on gender. Asking this range of questions meant it was possible to consider the severity of the abuse. As discussed in section 2.2, previous studies have found that it is important to explore the impacts of sexual violence within survey research, and that this can be particularly important when exploring experiences between men and women (Bumiller, 2008; Johnson 2011). Including this section allowed me to see if similar differences could be found when looking at technology-facilitated sexual violence. Respondents were also asked about their experience of domestic abuse, sexual violence and online forms of harassment which provides further context to IBSA victimisation disclosed. As noted previously, sexual violence surveys that lack information on impact and severity have been criticised for not accurately reflecting the gendered nature of sexual violence (Bumiller, 2008; Hester, Donovan & Fahmy 2010).

Further to this, the victimisation section of the survey also included a free text box which allowed respondents to add information about their experience of IBSA if they wanted to. As discussed, this allowed respondents to have a greater level of control in what information they could share through the survey.

Section E – Attitudes

The questions in this section were adapted from Powell et al's (2019) IBSA survey. It made use of the Sexual Image Based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale items, which includes a series of statements that focus on either minimising or excusing IBSA or victim blaming. The statements focused on victim blaming and minimising or excusing of IBSA can be linked to other rape myths discussed in section 2.2, such as 'real rape', the 'ideal victim' or other sexual scripts. In this section, respondents can choose their answers from a Likert scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale is similar to other rape myth acceptance scales, such as those discussed in chapter 2, but with a focus on IBSA.

When choosing to incorporate this section it was important to consider the use of standardised survey scales, which, although commonly used in sexual violence research, do have some limitations. There were several reasons why the use of SIAMA scale was beneficial to this research. Rather than being specifically developed by the researcher for the project being undertaken, survey scales are typically pre-established and used across multiple studies. In the context of sexual violence research, the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) developed by Burt (1980) and the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) scales developed by Mary P Koss (1985) are two of the most commonly used scales. One of the benefits of using survey scales is that they help to produce comparable data across a range of studies. The scales are also repeatedly tested, both at point of design and then as studies continue to use the same scale – this can be useful to researchers with finite time and resources (such as PhD researchers) who may be less able to develop their own research tools. By using survey scales previously employed in Powell et al's (2019) study, comparative data was generated in this study which was particularly useful given the lack of research on attitudes towards image-based sexual abuse. Similarly to the questions on victimisation and perpetration, the SIAMA statements were also focused on behaviours, such as sharing an image of someone, rather than using words such as consent, abuse or sexual violence. This has been found to be important in previous research on attitudes. For example, 16% of male participants agreed with the statement 'Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real turn on'. However, when the same cohort of men were asked whether 'Many women secretly desire to be raped' only 4% of men agreed (Edwards et al., 2011). This highlights the importance of using subtle language where responses are less likely to be affected by 'social desirability' bias.

However, survey scales have drawn criticism. As endorsement of rape myths has become less socially acceptable, studies using rape myth acceptance scales may struggle to measure attitudes accurately, particularly where scale items are not sufficiently subtle (Thelan and Meadows, 2022). McMahon (2007) for example found that participants did not usually blame the victim outright in an instance of sexual assault, but that they would endorse more subtle victim blaming by attributing things such as revealing clothing or alcohol consumption as precursors to rape. Further to

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this, Suaraz and Gadalla's (2010) review of 37 studies using rape myth acceptance scales found that those who were more likely to act in socially desirable ways (as measured by the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding) were likely to have lower overall agreement with RMAs. Survey scales are also not always sufficiently adapted to the context of the study and the fact they are often responded to in different ways by men and women, which has particularly strong implications when carrying out research with a focus on gender (Johnson, 2011). Deming et al's (2013) study for example found that when comparing responses to vignettes and survey scale items, the discussion of vignettes tended to elicit a greater level of victim blaming which would not have been detected through the survey scales. This was particularly the case for female participants, who tend to have lower levels of agreements with rape myth acceptance scales (ibid).

There is also evidence of survey scales being successfully incorporated in feminist studies. For example, in Hester et al's (2010) study, they take one such survey scale and adapt it for use in a feminist study on same-sex domestic violence by incorporating additional information on types of abuse and other contextual factors (such as impacts of violence, motivation for violence). Although the use of survey scales in some studies can be flawed, by adapting them to the specific context of the study and using contextual information in the analysis of survey scale items such criticisms can be at least partially alleviated. For this research, using a survey scale that has been designed by researchers who have a strong focus on the role of gender in forms of abuse such as IBSA was likely to provide useful information on gendered attitudes. The remainder of the survey questions could be used to add context and strengthen the validity of the responses to the attitudinal survey scales.

Finally, vignettes were incorporated as an additional way to explore attitudes towards IBSA, and to address some of the shortcomings of the use of standardised survey scales.

Section F – Vignettes

The final section involved participants being randomly presented with one of four vignettes, which all related to IBSA. More information on the vignettes can be found in the next section.

The survey ends with a section on vignettes, with each respondent being randomly shown **one** of a possible four vignettes. Vignettes are short scenarios which can be used in both quantitative and qualitative forms of research, and can be particularly useful as a research tool as they allow the researcher to control the design in such a way to examine specific research aims (Puzanova et al., 2017). The vignettes in this survey were designed to assess respondent's perception of different forms of image-based sexual abuse, based on the extent to which the scenario took place in the digital world, and what the likely 'embodied' repercussions for the victim would be. As mentioned previously, online harms are often not seen as causing the same level of harm as those that occur offline. Using this approach meant that respondents' attitudes to the scenario could be compared as each vignette became incrementally more 'digital'. By only showing each respondent one of the vignettes, they would not have known that this aspect of the research was interested in the perceptions of online versus offline harms. Additionally, the questions used could also add additional insight on victim blaming attitudes more broadly. The use of vignettes allowed the survey to examine the complex processing of a scenario whilst controlling for internal validity (Taylor, 2006).

Vignettes also have an advantage over some of the questions used throughout the survey, in that it is often more difficult to respond to a vignette in the perceived socially desirable way. In contrast, asking respondents directly about whether they thought online abuse was more or less serious than abuse that occurs offline is likely to yield a response that the respondent believes is the preferred answer by the researcher or wider society. Although considerable thought was given to how to capture individual's views and experiences in a reliable way for the survey questions, it is likely that when responding to attitudinal questions those completing the survey could have been influenced by other factors. It can also be difficult for respondents to know exactly what their attitude to a topic is when it is removed from any context; using vignettes is one way to address this. Vignettes are also commonly used in research on sensitive topics, and there has been a variety of studies that use vignettes to specifically explore attitudes relating to sexual violence (Nason et al., 2019; Schuller et al., 2000; Black & Gold, 2008). By removing the need for respondents to disclose personal information and making it less clear what the

socially acceptable response to a scenario may be, vignettes can be well placed to explore issues such as IBSA (Hess et al., 2016).

When designing vignettes, it was important to consider how they could be developed in a way that would ensure internal, external and construct validity (Finger & Rand, 2005). To ensure the internal validity of the vignettes, the differences between the vignettes needed to be designed in a way that could elicit responses that could answer the question being examined. In this case, the question focused on whether TFSV is viewed differently to other forms of sexual violence depending on the extent to which it occurred online based on some of emerging IBSA attitudes literature that was discussed in chapter 2 (see Flynn et al., 2022c for example). With this in mind, the four vignettes were identical in regards to the relationship of the individuals in the scenario and with the focus on image-based sexual abuse, however they differed in relation to how the image taken without consent was shared and, in one vignette, the type of image based sexual abuse. The man and woman in the vignettes are both university students, as previous studies have found that it is important to match the vignette scenario to the participant groups and in this case the survey respondents will be students (Weisman and Brosgole, 1994; Hughes and Huby, 2004). The scenarios themselves were based on literature around IBSA. They also involved a gendered dynamic where the man in the scenario is the perpetrator of the IBSA and the woman is the victim. In order to produce results from the vignettes that had external validity, the number of scenarios was kept at 4 and other variables (such as gender of perpetrator/victim) were controlled for and not examined in conjunction with perceptions of online/offline abuse. This meant I received sufficient responses to carry out a full analysis of respondents' views on sexual abuse that takes place online.

Each vignette was followed by a set of questions, designed to assess what the respondents believe the likely harms to the victim will be and what kind of response is needed from institutions (such as the police and the university the students in the scenario go to).

Vignette 1 – The video is taken non-consensually and shared by being physically shown to others

Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. After the night out, Daniel shows a group of his friends the video on his phone. One of the friends who is shown the video recognises that it is Charlotte and tells her about it.

Vignette 2 – The video is taken non-consensually and shared by being uploaded to a well-known pornography site

Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. After the night out, Daniel uploads the video to a well-known online pornography site. Someone who knows Charlotte sees the video online and tells her about it.

Vignette 3 – The video is taken non-consensually and is shared by being uploaded to a group chat

Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. Daniel uploads the video to a group chat with people from Charlotte's university course, naming Charlotte as the person in the video. Someone in the group chat tells Charlotte about the video that has been sent.

Vignette 4 – A photo of someone's face is non-consensually photoshopped onto a pornographic image

Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. Daniel photoshops an image of Charlotte's face that he finds on the university website onto a pornographic image. Charlotte does not initially know that Daniel has done this. Daniel uploads the photoshopped image to a group chat with people from Charlotte's university course. Someone Charlotte knows screenshots the chat and sends it to her.

Survey pilot

In order to ensure the survey would accurately capture what it was designed to capture, it was important to test the survey prior to its administration, although it is worth noting that the questions adapted from previous studies (as discussed previously) had already undergone testing. Despite this, testing the questions again was important to ensure they still worked for this thesis and when used in a different survey format. For this study, a combination of two methods were used to assess the survey's reliability and validity; these were the Questionnaire Appraisal System and cognitive interviews. Previous research into pre-testing surveys suggests that the most effective way to ensure the survey's reliability is to use multiple testing methods (Willis, 2005; Yan, Kreuter and Tourangeau, 2012). In Maitland and Presser's (2018) review of different question evaluation methods, it was found that using two methods to test survey questions almost always yielded more accurate results than when one method was used. In this review, it was also found that cognitive interviews and expert reviews gave the best predictions in identifying issues in survey questions, followed by QAS (ibid). The best combination of methods may therefore be cognitive interviews and expert review, however due to the resource intensiveness of cognitive interviews and expert reviews, I combined cognitive interviews with a less intensive method, QAS. Combining an ex-ante method (QAS) with an empirical method (cognitive interviews) is an efficient way of improving the results of the survey testing (Maitland & Presser, 2018).

The Questionnaire Appraisal System (QAS) was used to identify and correct potential issues that could arise when respondents completed the survey. The QAS helps researchers to systematically appraise survey questions by guiding them through a series of appraisal stages designed to assess common issues in the wording or structure of survey questions (Willis & Lessler, 1999). This allows researchers to efficiently and pre-emptively correct any potential problems before the survey is administered. Examples of some of the amendments made to the survey at this stage included adding examples for certain terms (such as types of disability) and recoding the attitudes questions so a response of 'strongly disagree' did not always signify low IBSA myth endorsement. Although some of the issues identified were corrected at this stage, other issues were flagged to be asked about in the cognitive interviews. In particular, certain terminology used in the demographics

section and some of the complex wording to describe IBSA behaviours. This was particularly useful where, as the researcher, I was unsure on how the respondent was likely to interpret the question.

Following this, cognitive interviews were conducted with three student participants to identify further issues with construct validity and reliability and ensure high quality survey data was produced. Cognitive testing is often used in survey research as way to check whether the survey is measuring what it intends to measure and the overall validity of the survey as a research tool (Ryan et al, 2012). During cognitive testing, a respondent goes through the survey and explains their answers to each of the questions with the interviewer. Cognitive interviews therefore allow the researcher to understand a respondent's reasoning behind their survey responses and assess whether this is aligned with how the survey results will be interpreted (ibid).

For this study, there were two main considerations in relation to administering the cognitive interviews, the first of which was the conditions the survey and interview were administered in, and the second was which cognitive interviewing technique is most appropriate to use. In relation to the first issue, previous research has suggested that to generate the most accurate results, cognitive interviews should be administered in a way which replicates survey conditions as closely as possible. The survey being tested was therefore coded into Qualtrics so that it would be as similar in look and design to the final survey as possible. Participants were also required to read the survey questions themselves, rather than have the questions asked to them, as this is how respondents will complete the survey in future.

The two types of cognitive interview techniques most commonly used are the think aloud approach (TA) and verbal probing (VP). In the TA approach, participants are asked to talk through their thought process as they answer each survey question. When using a TA approach, the researcher does not interject with any probes and is generally more passive in the interview. Following the interview, the researcher then reviews the transcript and uses it to identify any problems with the survey questions. In comparison, the researcher takes an active role in the VP approach and will use different types of probes to elicit further information from the participant. This approach arose from researchers needing to gain more information than could be gained from relying solely on a TA approach (Beatty & Willis, 2007). In recent

research, verbal probing has become more commonly used due to criticism of the think aloud approach. The most frequent critique of TA is that some participants may struggle to accurately convey their thought process in relation to answering a survey question. Verbal probing overcomes this issue, however cognitive interviews that use VP are also more likely to be subject to interviewer effects (Ryan et al., 2012).

For these reasons, I used a mixture of 'think-aloud' and verbal probing approaches, in order to gain the most possible information from participants (Beatty and Willis, 2007). This meant that I started by asking the participant to talk through their thought process when answering a survey question, but also had scripted probes to follow up on any specific issues, such as checking what is understood by a specific term (for example, what do you understand by 'deepfake'). Some of these probes were identified at the QAS stage of the survey testing. Probes were also used where participants seemed uncertain on what the right amount of information to give, which helped participant gain confidence in their responses and become more comfortable with the think-aloud approach as the interview went on.

The cognitive interviews were extremely insightful, both for identifying minor issues with the survey questions (such a clarifying wording or phrasing) and for getting an insight into what individuals understood by IBSA and how they explained the reasoning behind their responses. The cognitive interviews emphasised the grey areas around IBSA and the complex thought process behind some of the survey answers. For example, when discussing the question 'Has anyone ever taken a nude or sexual photo of you without your knowledge', one participant selected yes but explained that, to them, the situation occurred in a humorous setting and that they wouldn't view it as a form of abuse. They also stated that if the question has been worded differently, they would have answered in a different way:

Participant 1: *'…yeah I don't know because if the wording said 'without consent' I wouldn't select yes… I have had a photo taken without my knowledge but it wasn't like a thing and they told me straight away…'.*

Discussing the same questions, another participant shared a similar experience:

Participant 3: *'My partner once sent a photo of me in the bath on snapchat, but you couldn't see anything and it was just to friends… so it wasn't in a sexual way it was just taking the mick'*

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Participants also raised instances where they had a friend or acquaintance who had been victim of a form of IBSA. Although not a replacement for hearing directly from victims of IBSA, these experiences still offered insights into the types of abuse happening and what people's understanding of them were. By exposing what the survey was unable to capture, the cognitive testing pushed me to incorporate a qualitative element in the thesis to further explore the social construction of IBSA.

3.3.3 Development of interviews

Interview aims

As discussed, as well as carrying out a survey aimed at increasing understanding of image-based sexual abuse, there were additional aims to this research which could be better addressed via qualitative interviews. This included gaining a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of IBSA victimisation, as well as further exploring the reasoning behind participants' attitudes towards IBSA. Part of the reason for this thesis taking a mixed-methods approach was also to further align the project with feminist epistemology as interviewing is often seen as the feminist researcher's preferred method for multiple reasons, as will be discussed within this section.

Interviews in social research have also been considered as having the potential to be therapeutic for participants when carried out to a high standard, a perspective that has been supported by empirical research (Rossetto, 2014). Sharing experiences with a researcher in this way can be cathartic, and offer participants the chance to reflect and raise self-awareness (Weiss, 1994) which is of particular importance when discussing either personal experiences of or attitudes towards forms of sexual violence. Carrying out research in an empowering and ethical way is a key part of feminist research. However, although the interview aspect of the research was intended to empower participants, it was challenging to remove the power imbalance between researcher and participant. To reduce the power imbalance the interview topics were partially led by the participant and what they wanted to discuss, although there was still an interview script that guided the conversation and interviewees were prompted by the researcher where it seemed they might be able to expand on a topic. This meant that the research was to an extent being done 'on' participants rather than with them through equal co-production, as is preferred in feminist research – this is reflected on in section 3.6.

The interviews were semi-structured and made use of an interview script to guide the discussion. Although the interview topics needed to be roughly the same across interviews for themes to be drawn out, the exact aspect of the topic that was focused on was guided by the participant and their experiences. In practice, the interviews were heavily guided by what the participants wished to discuss, with questions from the interview script being used to guide or prompt where appropriate and ensure the discussion did not move too far from the research area. This approach allowed participants to share their thought process and the ways in which they constructed meaning and negotiated social norms. Given the constructivist nature of the research, letting the interview be guided by the natural flow of the conversation provided insightful data on how participants construct meaning in relation to IBSA.

The interview script was developed to mirror and expand on the IBSA survey that the participants had completed. It therefore contained questions on; technology use, IBSA victimisation, IBSA perpetration, attitudes towards IBSA, and thoughts on disclosure and the criminal justice response to IBSA. Interviews started with a discussion of the participants' use of digital technology, including how they use technology in dating or intimate relationships. As well as gathering important information on participants' views on sexting and sending sexual self-images, opening the interview by discussing less sensitive areas of technology use helped ease participants into talking about more sensitive topics.

The ordering of the questions was altered depending on whether the participants had been a victim or perpetrator of IBSA, and what naturally arose in the conversation. For those who had not had direct experience of IBSA, the interviews focused more on their views and attitudes towards sexual self-image taking and image-based abuse. Interviewees were also asked about their awareness of IBSA which prompted several participants to disclose having friends or acquaintances who had been victims of IBSA, something that had not been covered in the initial survey. For those who had been victims of IBSA, the interview involved discussing their experience and views of what had happened in much greater detail than could be captured through the survey research.

3.4 Sampling, recruitment, and fieldwork

3.4.1 Sampling and recruitment

This section provides an overview of how participants were sampled and recruited for both the survey and interview aspects of the research. As will be expanded on, the sampling focused primarily on students in HE settings and a variety of recruitment and dissemination techniques were used to engage a range of different students.

Survey sample

The final survey sample comprised of 521 respondents, of which 429 were used in the analysis. Overall, 312 (72.7%) of respondents were women and 310 (72.3) were current university students. The required sample size and ideal demographics for the survey data were established prior to the survey going live and monitored throughout the fieldwork period, as will now be discussed.

To establish the sample size for the study, Cochran's formula was used which gives the ideal estimate based on the margin of error, confidence interval and the estimated proportion of the population that has the attribute being measured. In this study, the accepted margin of error was 5%. The most established literature on IBSA has suggested that around 1 in 5 people (20 per cent) are victims of IBSA. For this reason, the estimated proportion of the population which has the attribute being studied is 0.2. The total population size was based on HESA statistics of the undergraduate student population (1,776,540 students in 2017/18) as the survey was initially aimed specifically at university students. The Cochran formula is:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

In this formula, p is the estimated proportion of the population that have the attribute being measured (in this case IBSA victimisation) and q is 1 – p. The value of e is the margin of error, in this case 0.05. There are three potential options for the Z value (or confidence level) which are 1.64 (90%), 1.96 (95%) and 2.58 (99%). This placed the ideal sample size at 426 or over. The table below shows the sample size estimates by confidence interval.

Table 1: Sample size requirements for different confidence intervals

Confidence interval	Sample size
90%	172
95%	246
100%	426

In addition to establishing a sample size based on the study population, there also needed to be sufficient survey responses to allow for statistical analysis, particularly comparing those who had or had not experienced IBSA, with some breakdowns by characteristics. The aim was therefore to receive roughly 500 survey responses which were as representative of the student demographics in the UK as possible. Based on previous literature, this was likely to include a sufficient number of responses from those who had experienced IBSA. The demographics of students in the UK in comparison with the survey respondent characteristics can be found in table 2. Of particular importance was having high enough numbers of men and women respondents in the sample to make comparisons by gender possible and this is something that was monitored throughout the fieldwork period, the challenges of receiving sufficient responses from men is reflected on later in the chapter.

Table 2: Demographic information on university students[1]

	Gender		Race		Disability	
	Female	Male	BAME	White	Yes	No
University	57%	43%	24%	76%	15%	85%
Survey	73%	22%	11%	89%	19%	78%

As can be seen from the table, there were significant differences between the survey sample and the characteristics of university students overall. This was considered in the analysis and had implications for the generalisability of the findings.

Survey sampling method

Developing a survey sampling method was a lengthy and challenging process. Much of the survey research carried out in the UK on forms of sexual violence, particularly within university settings, has been reliant on convenience sampling meaning there are limitations on what the research can show, particularly for questions that require a generalisable sample (O'Connor et al., 2021b). This has implications on whether the findings from sexual violence research will create impact, given results can often be dismissed due to the limitations of the sampling approach. Because of this, I initially pursued sampling approaches that were more robust and would lend weight to the findings of this thesis. Initially, my focus was on HE settings and as I was studying at Cardiff University it seemed that this would be the best place to focus my research. I reached out to various contacts in the university who could assist in having the survey disseminated to an all-student mailing list. It took several months of back and forth with the university to eventually be told they would not be able to help disseminate the survey through any official channels or through university courses. At the time this was disheartening, particularly as the research had the potential to be beneficial to the students who attended the university. This also reflects a broader conflict for universities that need to be seen to addressing sexual violence on campus, whilst also not seeking to promote the fact that instances of

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[1] *This data is from the academic year 2019/2020, when the majority of fieldwork was carried out (HESA, 2021). HESA does not collect statistics on student sexuality.*

violence are likely to occur at their institution. This is a common challenge for sexual violence research looking at the role of institutions.

Had this survey been sent to all students at Cardiff University, this thesis could have provided the university with information on the nature of IBSA at the university and been used to provide better support to students going forward both in their institution and others. The challenges to the sampling approach also meant that some early focuses of the thesis, such as the prevalence of IBSA and the focus on HEIs, had to be changed as it would not be possible to get reliable measures using different sampling methods. Again, this felt like a significant setback given one of the initial aims of the thesis was to partially address the lack of robust data on the prevalence of IBSA.

At this stage, it was necessary to change my approach to convenience sampling. I had developed an alternative approach that made use of convenience sampling whilst still in discussions with Cardiff university; this meant that I was able to change approaches quickly and meant that the sampling was carried out in the most robust way possible. My strategy involved disseminating the survey both via university gatekeepers, such as course administrators and student representatives, and also directly to student groups through the use of social media. I had a clear list of both university gatekeepers and social media groups developed which meant I was able to rapidly disseminate the survey after the decision was made to use convenience sampling. The benefit of convenience sampling was that it allowed easy access to relatively large groups of respondents with low levels or resource and financial incentives required. As is discussed in the next section, I carefully considered and monitored survey dissemination to ensure the sample was a robust as possible despite using a less robust sampling framework.

Other methods of sampling were considered but ultimately these were not feasible within the timeframe of the study. For example, carrying out stratified or cluster sampling of specific university courses was also considered. This would have been done by going to a specific course lead and then asking to randomly sample students from the course. However, it was likely that this approach would lead to similar issues with access to personal data required to carry out sampling and conversations with university administrators had suggested that using any university

mailing list would not be possible. Similarly to my initial approach, it would also have relied on gatekeepers agreeing to disseminate the survey on my behalf which had proven to be extremely time consuming. With more time and resource, I would have pursued this option but ultimately the time constraints and likelihood of facing further barriers with access meant that I decided to move forward with using a convenience sample and adapted some of my research questions to fit with this, as previously discussed. Interviews were also brought in to partially help with addressing this limitation, as a method of triangulation for the survey findings.

There were several limitations to the use of convenience sampling which were considered during the fieldwork and analysis stage of the thesis. These are discussed and reflected on further in section 3.6, and again in the discussion chapter and conclusion.

Survey dissemination

A variety of methods were employed to disseminate the survey to respondents. The most effective method involved targeting student groups on social media. This method led to the most substantial increase in numbers of survey responses. Initially the survey was shared via Facebook and Instagram. The majority of respondents recruited via this method were women. To try and increase the proportion of male respondents, the survey was also disseminated via Reddit pages, as Reddit is associated with a higher number of male users. In addition to disseminating the survey via social media, I also contacted a range of student representatives and administrators who were able to share the link directly with students in their school or course. This was a useful method to employ when trying to recruit a diverse range of students, as I was able to target representatives for courses with different types of students.

Finally, several domestic and sexual abuse charities in Wales were approached to help with dissemination of the survey link. Welsh Women's Aid and New Pathways both disseminated the survey via their social media platforms and also sent an email regarding the research to their mailing lists. The support from both charities helped recruit a wider range of respondents, including those who had experienced other forms of domestic or sexual abuse. I was also able to get feedback on the survey,

including the ethics of the research, from Welsh Women's Aid and New Pathways (expanded on in section 3.6).

I aimed to disseminate the survey to as wide a range of people as possible to ensure that people from a diverse range of groups had the opportunity to share their experiences. Survey methods have the advantage of sometimes being more accessible to a greater range of people, meaning that a more diverse range of respondents may feed into the research. This is partly because the time requirements and level of input to respond to a survey is less intensive for the respondent than if they were taking part in an in-person interview, for example. Despite this, it is worth noting that those with limited access to technology or internet access are less able to take part in survey research which now typically takes place online. In the context of this thesis, where the majority of respondents were students, access issues were less of a concern. When disseminating the survey via the mailing lists of domestic and sexual violence charities, it was also possible to take part in an interview without completing the survey which gave people who were not able to complete the online survey the option to be included in the research.

Interview sample and recruitment

The interview sample consisted of a mixture of participants, including those who had direct experience of IBSA and those who did not. The sample included participants who were mostly were female students.

Participants were recruited via completion of the survey, which contained an option for survey respondents to leave contact details if they were interested in taking part in an interview. This option was given to those who **had** and **had not** experienced either IBSA victimisation of perpetration according to their survey response. Initially, everyone who had left their contact details was invited to take part in an interview, however as the research process continued this approach was adapted to focus on recruiting types of participants who were underrepresented in the research (such as male participants or those with direct experience of IBSA).

In some instances, it was more appropriate to recruit participants separately to the survey or have a more in-depth discussion with them prior to their taking part in the research. Whilst liaising with local charities that supported victims of IBSA and other forms of abuse, we discussed concerns around the specific vulnerability of this group

of participants, and therefore a slightly different approach was taken to explain what the research was about and participants (although encouraged to complete the survey) could also solely partake in an interview. This was done to reduce the risk of 'triggering' or creating self-blame for individuals who may have experienced IBSA. Although this option was offered, all interview participants were recruited via the survey with no one asking to take part without completing the survey first.

3.4.2 Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this thesis took place between 2020 and 2021, starting with dissemination of the survey aspect of the research in March 2020 before progressing to interviews. This section gives an overview of the fieldwork period, including how the research was carried out in an ethical way.

Survey fieldwork

The survey was in field between March 2020 and July 2020. The survey could be kept open for a longer time amount of time as I was undertaking the PhD on a part time basis and so was not under the same time constraints as found in some PhD research. This was beneficial in ensuring that the survey received a sufficient number of responses, as it allowed me to monitor the responses and send out targeted dissemination to underrepresented groups. In this timeframe, there were three rounds of survey dissemination. The first round of survey dissemination obtained the highest number of responses (just under 300), however dissemination that took place after this helped me to diversify my sample.

An ongoing issue during the survey fieldwork was trying to recruit a sufficient number of men to complete the survey, and this is something that can be seen in the disproportionate number of responses from women in my survey sample. Although the final sample of survey responses still had an unequal proportion of responses from men and women, this was somewhat mitigated by adapting my dissemination approach to specifically recruit men. For example, as well as disseminating the survey through channels that have a higher proportion of male users, such as Reddit, I also disseminated the survey to university students who were on course that typically have a higher proportion of men (such as STEM subjects) to improve the response rate.

As discussed, doing research on sexual violence that involves university settings can lead to tensions with any universities whose students are likely to be involved with the study. On disseminating the survey in Cardiff University student social media groups, I was asked to take down a post that included an online poster with the Cardiff University logo on as the university did not want to be associated with the study. This was despite the fact that the survey itself made it clear that this was a PhD project being carried out at Cardiff University. Being unable to use my university logo to make the dissemination materials look official may have impacted on the response rates for the survey.

Interview fieldwork

The fieldwork period for the interviews took place following the initial dissemination of the survey, as this was the main way in which participants were recruited. In total, 9 interviews were carried out with research participants. Each interview lasted roughly 30-45 minutes and most took place via Zoom rather than over the phone or instant messenger. The interviews occurred in real time (synchronous) to ensure that participants did not overthink their answers (as can be the case during asynchronous interviewing) and were structured in a way that mirrored the IBSA survey, as discussed in section 3.3. Prior to beginning the interviews, an additional ethics form was submitted and approved by Cardiff University SOCSI ethics committee (see section 3.6 for further details).

Although interviews taking place online initially raised some ethical concerns (see section 3.6), the change to carrying out online interviews allowed greater flexibility in the format and timing of the research. As mentioned, interview participants were all able to choose what medium they would prefer the interview to be carried out in. As most of the participants in the research were between the age of 18-24 years old, technology required for the interview was accessible for most. Although the option of a face-to-face interview when the Covid-19 restrictions lifted was given, this was not requested by any of the participants.

The online options for the interviews lent themselves well to some aspects of the research. Due to the sensitive nature of the discussions, online interviews allowed participants greater anonymity as they could turn their cameras off. As most of the interviewees were Cardiff University students, the extra anonymity may have been

reassuring as they knew I would not recognise them if we saw each other on the university campus. In addition, online interviewing meant there was less travel and time constraints for the researcher and participant. Again, due to the sensitivity of the interview subject, this too could have benefits for the participants. Travelling to an interview can increase stress for participants, and the researcher needs to invest considerable thought into the interview setting and how to make the participant as comfortable as possible. The online interviews meant that participants were able to choose their preferred location for the interview. All participants were informed before the interview that they would likely want to be in a private space where they could not be overheard. In this instance, I believe the use of online methods helped increase participation in the research and made it more accessible to a range of participants. Further reflections on the online nature of the interviews can be found in section 3.6.

As with other aspects of my methodology, the way interviews were conducted was informed by my feminist approach. In particular, I focused on: reducing the power hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee; paying close attention to and engaging with interviewee emotions; and using the interview as a way to educate and inform people about IBSA. The extent to which these aims were achieved is reflected on in section 3.6. To reduce the power hierarchy, all interviewees were given time to ask any questions which I provided answers to; participants could do this before, during or after the interview. These questions could be about the interview, the wider study, or more personal questions where they arose. In addition, as referenced previously, all participants were provided with a list of support services and information on IBSA. As well as to help safeguard participants, this was a way to educate participants on the nature of IBSA and what can be done if you or someone you know is a victim. During the interview, I ensured I had prepared information on IBSA and sexual violence which I could share if needed, including information on the legality of certain forms of IBSA and the criminal justice process more broadly as I anticipated this could be something I was asked about by participants. Following the interview, participants were also given the option to provide feedback on how they found the interview and what, if anything, could be changed. A follow-up interview was also offered and participants were encouraged to get in touch if they wanted to share anything else that they feel was missed in the interview.

3.5 Data analysis

Due to the mixed-methods nature of the research, data analysis needed to incorporate quantitative and qualitative approaches. To ensure that the analyses reflected the mixed-methods nature of the study, consideration was given to how these approaches could be brought together under an overarching analytical framework to fully answer my research questions. Details of these approaches and how they were aligned to feminist epistemology will now be explored.

Much of the feminist discussions on data analysis have been embedded within wider discussions around methodology which can make it hard to pinpoint what feminist data analysis should look like (Maynard, 2013). Despite this, it is clear that (as with other aspects of the research process) feminist data analysis should be reflexive, ethical and seek to minimise power imbalances between researcher and participant. For my data analysis to be reflexive, I needed to reflect on how my own views and experiences affected the analysis. In terms of ethics, it was important to consider how my analysis might be used and whether this could have negative outcomes for victims of sexual violence (see section 3.6 for further detail).

3.5.1 Quantitative analysis

My analytical framework for the survey data involved univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses. Prior to conducting analysis, the data was cleaned and any responses that were mostly incomplete were removed from the dataset. This led to a reduction of around 100 responses. At this stage composite variables were also created from the survey data, for example an overall victimisation variable that included all respondents who had experienced any type of IBSA was created. Although the analytical framework set out what analysis would be carried out prior to reviewing the data, it was used flexibly and adapted as findings emerged from the univariate and bivariate analyses. Bivariate analyses were particularly used to explore the relationship between gender and key variables, such as IBSA victimisation or perpetration. The multivariate analysis was used to build typologies of IBSA and explore which variables were most strongly associate with victimisation and perpetration. The types of analysis carried out reflected the non-probabilistic nature of the sample. This meant that p-values were not reported on in the findings chapter and descriptive rather than inferential statistics were used.

It was important to ensure that the quantitative analysis was grounded in feminist theory; this meant going beyond using gender as the main independent variable against which bivariate and multivariate analysis was carried out. To do this I developed an *a priori* approach to gender and IBSA which is shown by the analytical framework presented in chapter 2, in line with feminist research practice (Leung et al., 2019). As noted by Leung et al. (2019) it was also important to report on a range of analyses to explore the relationship between gender and IBSA fully. As p-values were not used in the analysis due to the limitations of the survey sample, reporting on data using a range of non-parametric tests allowed me to situate the findings within the broader gendered context of IBSA.

The use of categorical variables, particularly demographic characteristics, within analysis has been critiqued by feminist researchers as they can be used to present overly simplified findings that do not fully account for the complexities of people's experiences (Chanfreau, 2017; Leung et al., 2019; Inhorn and Whittle, 2001). In particular this was considered in relation to the gender variable. Other variables were used to aid understanding of gendered experiences of IBSA – for example, looking at how characteristics (such as race and sexuality) as well as previous experiences of sexual violence interacted with the gender of respondents. In addition, the analysis went further than simply comparing the responses of men and women in the surveys. Gendered attitudes, which can be held by both men and women, were explored and cluster analyses were also used to build a more nuanced picture of what IBSA victimisation involved for both men and women. This aligned with social constructivist nature of the research as discussed in section 3.2. The interpretation of the results, as will be demonstrated in chapter 4, was also informed by the feminist approach to sexual violence discussed within the literature review.

Two-step cluster analysis

One of the key methods used in the quantitative analysis was two-step cluster analysis. This method was used to create similar groups of respondents that have large between group variations, but small within-group variation (Everritt, 2011), for example grouping respondents into those who have and have not experienced IBSA victimisation. Cluster analysis provided empirical evidence on natural groupings in the data which allowed me to reduce larger number of variables into meaningful analytical variables. This method works by firstly carrying out a pre-clustering step,

where Euclidean and log-likelihood distances are used to decide whether each case can be added to the initially formed sub-cluster, or whether a new sub-cluster should be started (Schiopu, 2010). The second step then groups the initial sub-clusters into the desired number of clusters using an agglomerative hierarchical method that automatically deduces the most appropriate number of clusters (ibid).

This method of grouping and reducing variables was used for several reasons. Two-step cluster analysis has the benefit of working with a range of variables, meaning categorical and continuous variables, or a mixture of the two, could be used in the analysis. Unlike other cluster analysis methods (such as factor analysis), two-step cluster analysis can specifically deal with binary categorical variables as it uses a likelihood-based measure to model distances between categorical variables (Everritt, 2011). This meant two-step analysis was more appropriate than other forms of hierarchical clustering as many of the survey variables were coded as binary categorical variables (typically referring to a yes/no survey response).

As discussed, the two-step cluster analysis procedure can automatically detect the most appropriate number of clusters from the sample. It was also possible to manually alter the number of clusters generated by SPSS which allowed for different numbers of clusters to be explored based on the literature and assumptions around types of IBSA victimisation (explored in greater detail in the next chapter). Both of these methods were used at various points in the analysis. When producing clusters, SPSS gives a silhouette measure of cohesion and separation which is a simple way to assess the quality of the models. The silhouette measure works by comparing the distance between within group and between group means (Subasi, 2020). Silhouette coefficients can range in value between -1 (very poor quality) through to +1 (very good quality), with a value +0.5 or greater generally being accepted as an indication of 'good' quality. This approach was used to cluster respondents based on IBSA victimisation, engagement with sexual messaging and other forms of victimisation. One critique of two-step cluster analysis is that clusters need to be interpreted by researchers and this could result in bias within the analysis (Everritt, 2011). A strong understanding of the literature underpinning this analysis was important for these reasons.

Logistic regression models

Regression models were also used in the analysis to explore the relationship between a set of predictor variables and likeliness of experiencing any form of IBSA victimisation. Binary logistic regression was chosen, as the dependent variable (IBSA victimisation) was a binary categorical variable. Checks were performed to ensure the suitability of the logistic regression model, further details on this can be found in appendix E which gives details on how variables were selected and how a final model was decided on. A further multinomial logistic regression model was built to explore the relationship between the predictor variables and different types of IBSA victimisation. Each model was built following Hosmer, Lemeshow and Studivant's (2013) seven-step purposeful selection building process to ensure a robust final model was selected for all regression analyses.

Other analytical tests

In addition to two-step cluster analysis and logistic regressions, several other analytical tests are drawn on in the findings chapter. This includes k-means cluster analysis, Mann Whitney U and Kruskall-Wallis tests. These tests were used in bivariate analyses relating to IBSA victimisation and attitudes. The Mann Whitney U tests were used when carrying out bivariate analysis with a binary variable that measured IBSA victimisation, whereas Kruskall-Wallis was used when using a categorical variable that captured different types of IBSA victimisation. As these tests were nonparametric, they could be used to analyse my non-probability sample of survey responses. Furthermore, both tests can be used when data is not normally distributed which was useful in analysis as many of the variables were not normally distributed. K-means cluster analysis was also used when analysing the survey scale items, namely the Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale. This is because k-means cluster analysis is suited to the analysis of interval data, particularly where results are relatively homogenous which they were for the scale items in this thesis. This allowed for a more nuanced analysis of attitudes towards IBSA compared to just looking at mean scores. One limitation of this approach is that the number of clusters must be specified in advance. To overcome this, similarly to in the two-step cluster analysis, the silhouette score was used to establish the strength of the value of K (meaning the number of clusters) and identify the most appropriate approach for the analysis.

3.5.2 Qualitative analysis

Following the interviews, notes were made on initial reflections and thoughts that could support future analysis. I transcribed interviews manually, which had the benefit of allowing me to further familiarise myself with the data and start to draw out some initial recurring themes. During this process I was able to continue reflecting on how the questions asked and my style of interviewing may have affected what participants shared with me. The style of transcribing was not totally naturalistic, however where a pause, laughter or hesitation seemed important to the meaning of the speech I made the decision to include this in the transcript. From a reflexive standpoint, it is possible that choices I made when transcribing the interviews reflected my own views around what was important and what I expected to hear, and this was something I considered during analysis.

Based on the survey analysis and initial reflections from carrying out and transcribing the interviews, I developed a broad coding framework that included some of the potential themes and sub-themes, such as victimisation, victim blaming and sexual messaging. The coding framework was designed in a way that would help me manage and analyse the large amount of data generated from my interviews, but was not so detailed as to make the coding process overly time consuming. As I analysed the interviews using the initial coding framework, the themes were refined and further themes were identified. As this process went on, the themes went from being mostly descriptive (such as 'sexual messaging') to more interpretive, such as 'safety work during sexual messaging'. This iterative process meant interviews were revisited and recoded as analysis progressed. Analysis was carried out using NViVo software.

As with the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis was underpinned by feminist epistemology. This meant that when developing the themes for the analysis, gender was a key component in the coding framework. It was also important for the analysis to be a reflexive process where I considered both how subjectivities may affect the way interviewees responded to questions and how my own personal views may have affected my interpretation of what was shared. This is referred to as 'double subjectivity', and highlights the need for different interpretations to be considered in interview analysis (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). More broadly, the analysis was situated within the wider context of gendered power which aided the

interpretation of experiences and views shared by interviewees. I chose to use thematic analysis to identify and analyse patterns across the interviews. Thematic analysis has the benefit of being 'theoretically flexible' meaning it can be used as an analytic method within in a range of theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). However, thematic analysis can have weaknesses particularly with regards to how themes are robustly identified. The approach described here therefore broadly followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-step approach to analysis which includes: familiarisation; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining themes; and then writing up findings.

3.5.3 Bringing together quantitative and qualitative analysis

As noted in the introduction, this thesis aimed to address three main research questions:

1. How is IBSA experienced?

2. What are societal attitudes towards IBSA and how do these relate to other forms of sexual violence?

3. To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?

Given that each of these questions could be informed by the survey and interview aspect of the research, it was important to consider how the quantitative and qualitative insights gained from the data could be combined. Brannen and O'Connell (2015) note several different frameworks for integrating data depending on the methodological approach. The framework that most applied to this thesis was *elaboration or expansion* which refers to how qualitative data analysis was used to exemplify and triangulate certain findings from the quantitative data leading to a more nuanced understanding of the topic at hand. For this reason, as discussed, quantitative analysis was carried out prior to qualitative analysis. Where possible within the qualitative analysis, themes were coded in a way that were clearly linked to the survey analysis. This meant that, at write up, qualitative evidence could be drawn on to help support and explain quantitative findings. Quantitative and qualitative findings were grouped under certain research questions helping to build a cohesive evidence base around IBSA.

3.6 Implications of my research process: Reflections, ethics, and limitations

3.6.1 Reflections

Researchers can be drawn to topic areas for a variety of different reasons, however when I first became interested in sexual violence as an area of research I did not reflect greatly on where my interest stemmed from. Throughout this research, it became important to think about how my personal views and experiences affected me as a researcher. Reflexivity is an important aspect of feminist research, this involves examining how a researcher has affected or transformed their research (Finlay, 2002). Although often associated with qualitative research, I found it important to examine how my choices as a researcher affected the quantitative aspects of my research design as well as the qualitative, in addition to how my views may have impacted the fieldwork and analytical stages of the thesis.

One way in which feminists engage in reflexive practices is to explore what Maynard (2013) refers to as their 'intellectual autobiographies'; for me, this meant thinking about my own background and the role this played in the construction of my research. One of the reasons I have personally been drawn to research sexual violence is because of my lived experience growing up as a woman in the UK and experiences of sexual violence either first-hand or through the experiences of friends and family – these experiences meant that I could not have approached the research in a completely neutral, objective way and nor did I think that trying to repress my personal experiences would benefit my research, in line with my feminist approach. It was also important to consider how my experiences as a woman have been affected by other parts of my background, including my class, sexuality and education, how this made me approach the research, and particularly how I related to research participants. At times it felt uncomfortable to be acutely aware of my own person and how it related to the research I had designed – particularly at stages of the research where I felt my approach may have limited the study (see section 6.3) – however despite this being a challenge it also enhanced how I approached both the survey and interviews elements at certain points due to my personal connection with the research area and ability to bond with research participants. Although this research cannot be considered truly objective, the thesis does fully explore the context in

which knowledge was produced and the impact this might have on what is perceived as a material reality in line with other feminist work (Maynard, 2013).

Another aspect of my reflexive process was acknowledging the roles of emotions, including my own, throughout the research. This is something I had to work to become more comfortable with, particularly because emotions are often seen as antithetical to robust research. Hubbard et al (2001), taking a feminist standpoint, state that emotionally-sensed knowledge can be an indispensable part of research in the field of sociology. As a woman, researching an area that disproportionately and systematically affects women was an inherently emotional endeavour. To say that there is not a place for emotion in research would exclude women or those affected by sexual violence from carrying out research in this area. The feminist approach I took meant I could fully acknowledge these emotions and how they may affect the knowledge being produced, whilst also using these emotions to strengthen the research, as will be expanded on throughout my reflections. Sadness, anger and frustration were three particular emotions that I felt whilst carrying out both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this thesis. Game (1997) argues that emotion is a way of knowing the world, and therefore an essential part of carrying out research is using emotions to make sense of the phenomena being researched. When we close down or avoid emotions in research, we are missing out on a way of building knowledge (Hubbard et al., 2001). I therefore tried to use these emotions throughout the research as a way to empathise with those who had been affected in some way by gendered sexual violence.

As well as becoming better at understanding the roles of emotions in my research, being reflexive throughout my PhD also helped me to fully explore how my own views on sexual violence affected the research. Sexual violence research can be difficult to carry out because it is hard to remain neutral and objective as sexual violence researcher, two qualities often seen as essential to producing high-quality research based on traditional, positivist methods. This is part of the reason why a feminist epistemology was used, as it acknowledges research is value laden and not politically, nor morally, neutral (Collins, 1994; Mohanty, 2013). Reflecting on this fully meant I was able to understand the ways in which my positioning affected the research I produced and use this to fully understand my findings.

The following sections contains detailed reflections on the survey and interviews aspects of my thesis.

Reflections on survey research

Whilst the survey was in field and after starting to look at survey responses, there were aspects of the fieldwork that were challenging. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the inability to disseminate the survey to a representative group of students was a setback that was, on a personal level, very frustrating to deal with. Although I made efforts to disseminate the survey to certain groups this proved challenging, and there were a lot of emails to various groups of students and organisations that went unanswered. It was often hard to tell whether this was because the survey had not been disseminated by these groups or whether it had been disseminated but the person contacted had not confirmed this with me. Although I did ask people to confirm if they shared the survey with their network, it is likely that on some occasions people forwarded the email link on without letting me know. During the pandemic, this type of dissemination also had to be carried out virtually (mostly via email and social media) which added to the difficulty of getting the survey to a wider, more representative group of people. Overall, this made getting the representative type of survey responses that I wanted for the survey very difficult to achieve and this is something that needed to be considered fully during the analysis.

When reviewing survey responses, I was also struck by the fact that having interviews to follow up on survey responses was going to be essential to fully explore the themes arising in the survey. The responses in the free text boxes were also very insightful and, on reflection, I would have included more of these in the survey to allow those who were not able to take part in an interview to add further context to their opinions and experiences.

Reflections on interviews

As discussed, interviews were carried out online via Zoom (a video conferencing app) due to the Covid-19 pandemic which meant meeting in person was not possible. This was not the initial approach planned for the interviews, and the shift to online led to both advantages and disadvantages when carrying out the research. In particular, the online methods affected the accessibility of the research, building

rapport with interviewees, and the reading of emotions and language during interviews.

Building rapport both prior to and during the interviews was something that I carefully considered due to the sensitive nature of the research and the fact that the interviews were being carried out online. Surprisingly, I did not find the shift to online methods following the Covid-19 pandemic to be as large a barrier as I had initially expected. In fact, as the interviews took place during the start of the first lockdown this served to form a common ground with all interviewees. I also reviewed participant's survey responses prior to the interview; this both gave me the opportunity to decide which interview topics to focus on and allowed me to prepare myself if it was likely that the participant would be talking about their experience of IBSA or other forms of abuse. Although participants may disclose abuse in the interview that wasn't noted in their survey response, and I took the approach to treat all interviewees as potential victims of sexual violence, preparing in this way allowed me the space to think about how to approach the interview and how to make it an empowering experience, particularly for victims of IBSA or other forms of domestic and sexual abuse.

I kept my camera on during the interviews, although asked participants if they would rather I turned it off. The participants themselves were able to choose whether to turn their cameras on. I found that although the majority of participants put their cameras on, those who had direct experience of IBSA sometimes kept their cameras off which may have been to protect their anonymity as the majority of those I interviewed lived in the same city as me and attended the same university. The use of online methods for interviewing victims of sexual violence had advantages and drawbacks. As noted, participants could protect their anonymity by turning off their camera which may in some instances encourage victims or survivors to come forward to share their experiences. However, it was harder to gauge someone's feelings and emotions when they did not have their cameras on, which impacted on how well I was able to support these participants during the interviews, and had implications for safeguarding participants. Feminist sexual violence researchers often talk about the small gestures that can be made to support victims of sexual violence during interviews such as offering tissues, taking time to comfort those that are upset, and using body language or physical touch to demonstrate this (Campbell

et al., 2010). In an online setting, much of this was not possible to achieve. This could have resulted in a shift in the way interviews were carried out with participants, as it was harder to pick up on emotional cues and adapt my interview style to this.

My feminist epistemological stance also impacted on how the interviews were carried out. As discussed, this involved aiming to reduce the power hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee, allowing room for emotions during interviews and providing information to participants on IBSA and sexual violence. Of these, the most challenging to achieve was reducing the power imbalance between interviewer and participant. One way of addressing this was to encourage an open discussion where participants felt like they could ask questions and where I was willing to answer them and talk about some of my own experiences where appropriate without worrying about creating bias. This is a common way for feminist researchers to engage with participants, as discussed by Oakley (2015) who found that in her study on motherhood many women either wanted to ask questions about pregnancy or about her own experiences of motherhood. From a feminist perspective, it was important to answer such questions to maintain the ethical standards of the research, but this also needs to be balanced with the effect it may have on what participants choose to disclose. In my own research, I received questions on whether certain types of behaviour were abusive or could be considered IBSA, as well as questions on why I was researching this area. I chose to answer these questions as fully as possible, whilst also using the discussion to prompt interviewees to answer certain questions. In some instances, it was most appropriate to return to the question at the end of the interview to avoid deviating too far from the interview topic or introducing substantial bias. Further to this, I repeatedly and frequently made it clear to participants that it was up to them what they wanted to share and that they were in control of the interview process. Campbell et al. (2010) found in their study on feminist interviewing that this technique made their participants (who were victims of sexual violence) more comfortable during the interview and sometimes resulted in additional information being disclosed.

Despite the fact that it was not possible to completely remove the power hierarchy between interviewer and participant, as the interviewer I felt like the conversations I had with participants appeared to be relatively natural and, for most interviews, it did not feel challenging to encourage participants to share their views with me. It is

important to note that this may be at least partly due to all but one of the interview participants being young women, and these women often sharing a similar background to me. In addition, participants were aware that I was carrying out a PhD which may have made them more at ease than if I was an experienced professor, for example.

As well as reducing the power imbalance between researcher and researched, sharing information and answering questions during the interviews also helped me to meet another feminist principle in research. As noted previously, feminist research is political and aims to address the oppression of women. Providing information on sexual violence to research participants has the potential to empower participants through gaining an understanding of a form of abuse which continues to oppress all women. For victims of sexual violence, providing information can act to reassure participants that they are not alone and that their experiences are valid (Gorelick, 1996). During my interviews, when speaking about their own experiences of sexual violence or abuse I often heard participants hesitate and say things such as '*I'm not sure if this counts?*' or '*It could have been worse*'. In these instances it felt important to tell the participant I was sorry to hear what they had gone through and that their experience was valid, as well as to share information and services with them. In Campbell et al's (2010) study it was found that this was one way in which participants could benefit from taking part in research, and know that others had been through similar situations.

It was relatively straightforward to provide information and support to those who had either experienced sexual violence or who were open to a feminist interpretations of sexual violence. Despite this, I did have instances where those I was interviewing held opinions which differed from my own and providing information to these participants was more challenging. In these cases, it was important to consider how to respond from an ethical, feminist perspective whilst also maintaining the integrity of the research. This meant balancing challenging views that could be seen as antifeminist or promoting attitudes associated with sexual violence, but doing so in a non-judgmental way that would not make interviewees uncomfortable.

Taking a feminist epistemological stance helped me to feel more comfortable with my emotions during the interviews, and rather than trying to ignore or suppress these

feelings I felt able to use them to better empathise with those I spoke to. It is important to note, however, that I did not interview anyone who disclosed perpetrating any form of sexual and domestic violence and if this had this come up, it would have been particularly challenging to me as a researcher. During interviews with participants, I used my own emotions to help gauge the meaning of what was being shared with me – for example, frustration at hearing the poor interactions some people had with the criminal justice system helped me to be aware of the fact that this was a common occurrence for victims and something which I had heard repeatedly, giving rise to my own feelings of frustration for the participant's situation. This highlights the use of emotions in both connecting with participants and as a tool in interpreting the knowledge that has been shared (Wilkins, 1993). Despite this, there were times where it felt difficult to manage my emotions particularly after one interview where a participant had not only experienced image-based sexual abuse but had also been let down by multiple institutions. Following this interview I felt upset, particularly by the experiences this person had with multiple institutions failing to support them. Although I had heard similar stories before and felt well aware of institutional failings, hearing about their experience in a one-to-one interview setting felt different. There is evidence that shows that those carrying out sexual violence research can experience emotional harm (Williamson et al., 2020; Herman, 2015; Klein, 2012), so it was important to have a support network and engage in other activities that helped my wellbeing as the researcher.

During the interviews I paid careful attention to how the interviewee appeared, both through what they were saying and through any emotions they showed, although this was more challenging for the minority of participants who had their cameras off, and let this help guide what topics were discussed. For example, if someone appeared uncomfortable with a certain topic of discussion then I would probe less on these questions and let the interview move to another topic, occasionally returning to the topic if interviewees seemed more comfortable later on in the interview. Despite this, with interviews taking place online it is possible that emotional cues could have been missed. When participants disclosed something about themselves that was sensitive in nature, I gave them space to express their emotions and also allowed myself to express emotions. For example, when a participant was telling me about a bad experience reporting abuse to the police, it felt important to share my emotions and

empathise with the unfairness of the situation. Although only two participants had experienced IBSA, several others had experienced other forms of sexual abuse and so this was something that occurred in the majority of the interviews. In many ways, I felt this strengthened the interviews and led to participants sharing more openly with me as they hopefully felt I understood and acknowledged their experiences, a strength noted in other sexual violence research (Campbell et al., 2010; Gorelick, 1996). It is important to note that although taking an emotionally sensed approach in the interviews was beneficial and aligned with feminist epistemology, being guided by what participants felt comfortable to discuss may have impacted on the type of data collected. For example, participants who did not have direct experience of sexual violence may have felt more able to openly discuss their attitudes and feelings towards it. This is one reason why the triangulation of interview findings with my survey findings was an essential part of this research.

On a more practical note, I found that the interviews went best when I was able to schedule one a day at most. Due to the emotional intensity of the topic, I found it useful to spend the remainder of the day reflecting on discussions and initial reflections that arose either during or after the interview. I also kept a notebook to help with this, with the intention to use it as a way to process the interview and minimise the potential for harm to my own mental wellbeing. This was a cathartic process, which also proved useful when revisiting the interview transcripts at a later date. As my PhD was completed part time, it gave me the ability to space out interviews perhaps more than would be possible on a full-time schedule and so I could avoid carrying out multiple interviews in the same day. Following the interviews, I transcribed the conversations without using transcription software to assist in early coding, as discussed in section 3.5. I was also able to combine the transcripts with my notes following the interviews and other thoughts I had whilst transcribing. This helped to build up a fuller picture of the interview than if using a transcript alone.

3.6.2 Ethics

Due to the sensitive nature of researching sexual violence, it was extremely important to maintain high ethical standards throughout the study to safeguard participants. A trauma-informed approach was taken throughout the research, meaning the research sought to empower participants through offering choices

around participation, a trustworthy and safe environment, and sharing sufficient information about the nature of the research. This approach reflects the feminist nature of the research, which often focuses on how research can be made more inclusionary and adaptive to people's needs.

An ethics form was submitted to the Cardiff University School of Social Science Ethics Board in March 2019, and the research was granted ethical approval in April 2019. The initial ethics form contained information on the survey and the pilot study for the survey. Following this, a second ethics form was submitted detailing information on the interview stage of the research which was approved by Cardiff University's ethics board in March 2020. The remainder of this section details how the main ethical considerations for study design, fieldwork and analyses were addressed.

Study design

In terms of the ethics of my study design, survey research has the benefit of being accessible to a larger number of people and so allows more people to share their experiences. Although this may be in less detail than through qualitative research, evidence suggests taking part in survey research can be cathartic particularly for those who have experienced sexual violence (Edwards et al., 2009).

When designing the survey for this thesis there were several ethical considerations. In line with Anne Opie's (1992) key ways to empower participants through research, I ensured that a sufficient range of topics were included to allow survey respondents to fully disclose their experiences and views in a way where they could contribute to the topic at hand (broadly speaking, digital technology in relationships) and have the option to reflect on their experiences. As mentioned, one way of doing this within the survey was to ensure there were open text boxes where respondents could expand on their survey answers, so people did not feel disempowered if their personal experience didn't fit within the options in the survey.

In addition, content warnings were also added ahead of survey sections that asked potentially distressing questions, including those on IBSA victimisation and previous experiences of sexual violence, and it was also possible to pause the survey and come back to it at a later point. The aim of this was to ensure that respondents could decide on **how** they wished to complete the survey; for example, having content

warnings made it easier for victims of sexual violence to engage in the research as they were able to choose whether they wanted to complete this section of the survey at a later time or not at all. It was also possible to skip questions in the survey by answering 'prefer not to say'. Although this could have an impact on the number of responses to certain questions, the 'prefer not to say' option was included throughout to ensure that survey respondents could choose how to engage with the research.

Further to this, the mixed methods nature of the research meant that this study better aligned with a feminist approach to ethics. Respondents who took part in the survey all had the option to take part in an interview if they wanted to share their experience in more detail. The interviews themselves took a semi-structured approach, but there was flexibility built into the interview script so that participants could guide the conversation and focus on areas that they most wanted to discuss.

Fieldwork

To maintain ethical standards and protect respondents, informed consent was extremely important for both the survey and interview research. For the survey, clear information was given to all respondents on the nature of the survey and the types of topics that would be covered. It was highlighted that taking part in the research was entirely voluntary and that respondents could choose to withdraw from the survey at any point. Respondents were given contact details for a range of national and Welsh specific support services that they could contact, either if they needed support following the survey or if they wanted to report an experience to the police. These details were presented at the start of the survey, as well as at the end. I also included specific details for Cardiff university support services at the start and end of the survey. The information sheet included details on how respondent data would be anonymised, protected and stored during the research. Finally, my contact details were also given at the start of the survey so if respondents had any questions about whether to take part they could discuss directly with me. Following this information, respondents were explicitly asked if they consented to take part in the research based on the details in the information sheet.

I received feedback on the survey, including on the ethics of the research, from Welsh Women's Aid and New Pathways which was extremely valuable to the project. Incorporating the views of experts in the area of violence against women

was one way in which collaboration was used in a feminist way to ensure that those who had been victims of domestic or sexual violence could participate in the research in a safe and ethical way. This meant that, based on feedback from the charities, I adjusted the wording in the section at the end of the survey that explained IBSA to more explicitly highlight that IBSA was a criminal offence. Although there was a chance that this would mean those who had disclosed perpetration may change their answers, I hoped that the anonymity of the survey and only sharing this information at the end of the survey, would mean respondents still disclosed perpetration. It also aligned with the feminist nature of this work to prioritise the safety of victims and educating respondents about the nature of IBSA by adding in clearer statements around the criminality of IBSA. Having a clear definition of this form of abuse embedded in the survey may have been beneficial to victims who have not been able to label their experience previously and it may also have acted as an educational tool to highlight this specific form of sexual abuse and the harm it causes. My contact details were also given again at the end of the survey in case respondents wanted to provide any feedback.

As with the survey, interview participants' wellbeing was protected through an in-depth information sheet and a document with details of support organisations they could contact. This information was reshared with participants in a follow-up thank you email after the interview. Further to this, I liaised with participants via email prior to the interviews to ensure they had the information they needed and the option to ask any questions in advance. At the start of the interview, I verbally reconfirmed the details of the research that were given in the information sheet and checked that the participants understood what the interview would involve. Participants were given the option to ask any questions, and it was emphasised that they could choose not to answer a question or withdraw from the interview at any point, without giving a reason. They were also informed that if they disclosed any criminal activity (such as IBSA perpetration) this may need to be reported to the policy. Before starting the interview, participants were asked to verbally confirm that they consented to take part in the interview and that they were happy for the interview to be recorded. During the interview, I paid close attention to the participant's wellbeing and was prepared to pause the interview or take a short break if a participant became distressed (although this was not needed in any of the interviews). A follow-up email

was also sent to participants, thanking them for taking part and reminding them of the support available to them.

Interview recruitment took place during the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that interviews had to take place online rather than face-to-face, as was initially planned, which led to additional ethical considerations around how to maintain informed consent and safeguard participants against experiencing harm as a result of their participation in the study. As highlighted by many domestic abuse charities at the time, the lockdown period was linked to an increase in domestic violence, and it was important to be mindful of this when interviewing participants (ONS, 2020). Extra care needed to be given to safeguarding interview participants as they would now be completing the interview in their own homes rather than in a safe and private location set-up by the researcher. As noted, all participants were given details of the interview topic prior to the interview to ensure it was safe for them to take part and make sure they were comfortable with discussing the interview topics; these details were verbally repeated at the start of the interview. Participants were also offered a range of options for the format of the interview including Zoom/MS Teams, phone and instant messaging. In addition, participants could ask to be recontacted when interviews could take place face-to-face if this was their preferred option. By offering alternatives, the interviews were made accessible to a range of participants, including those who did not have a private home setting and those who did not have access to some forms of technology.

When researching a topic as sensitive as sexual violence it was important not to become complacent about the fact that those taking part in the research could be doing so at risk to their own wellbeing – even with a well-considered ethical approach, asking someone to discuss their experiences of IBSA in particular could re-trigger trauma from the abuse. Previous literature suggests that although many find engaging in sexual violence research to be a positive and rewarding experience, there are also reports of negative impacts on wellbeing for those completing surveys on sexual violence (Walker et al., 1997; Yeater et al., 2012; Labott et al., 2013). In survey research, this can in some ways be more difficult to address as the researcher is not present when the respondent completes the survey and can't offer support in the same way as they would during in-person research. Even when discussing less sensitive aspects of the research such as attitudes towards IBSA for

those who had not experienced victimisation, the research could raise consciousness for participants on areas linked to IBSA without giving them the corresponding tools for dealing with this knowledge and creating action from it.

As discussed, I attempted to address this through providing all respondents with comprehensive information on image-based sexual abuse and support organisations, as well as using content warnings. I hoped that through considering this, survey respondents including those who had experience sexual violence would feel empowered by contributing to the research (Walker et al., 1997). Similarly for the interviews, information was shared in advance of the interview and all participants were given opportunity to ask questions. In case a participant became significantly distressed during the interview, I had the details for university support services as well as other services for victims of sexual violence to hand to ensure they were appropriately safeguarded.

Analyses

In terms of ethics, it was important to consider how my analysis might be used and whether this could have negative outcomes for victims of sexual violence or women more generally. The removal or lessening of power imbalances in data analysis was also important and meant I needed to consider how and why I was making certain interpretations in my analysis (contributing to the reflexive approach taken). As expanded on in the limitations of this study, reducing the power imbalances in analysis was a challenging area to address due to certain methodological choices including the limited levels of coproduction.

On a more practical level, it was important to keep the analysis anonymous throughout. This was a particular consideration for the qualitative aspect of the research. I ensured that identifying details (such as names or place names) were removed from transcripts, and kept a log of quotes being used in the research to ensure that the details included in the thesis write-up would not be disclosive.

3.6.3 Limitations

There were two key limitations in the methodological approach for this thesis; the first of these relates to how successfully the approach aligned with feminist epistemology, and the second relates to creating a robust survey sample and sampling approach.

As discussed throughout this chapter, this thesis aimed to explore IBSA from a feminist epistemological position. One of the main ways I hoped to achieve this was through using feminist methods, however there were aspects of this study that did not fully align with feminist methodology, and this had implications for the study as a whole. One of the main issues focused on by feminist researchers is the unequal power dynamics often created within conventional research methods between the researcher and those involved in research. Such methods are often seen as reproducing the patriarchal social order which feminists strive against (Coleman and Rippin, 2000). Because of this, there is a strong focus on collaborative methods in feminist research which allow research to be co-produced between the researcher and researched – this is a way to involve people with knowledge that is being created by or about them (Harding, 2020), essentially moving from doing research *on* people to doing research *with* them. For example, in the case of sexual violence research, this could involve bringing those with personal experiences of sexual violence into the research to fully collaborate and produce research about their experiences as opposed to acting solely as a participant in a pre-designed research project. Action and participatory methods are commonly used by researchers who are concerned with democratising the research process as such methods are explicitly designed to incorporate direct collaboration with those who have experience of the phenomena being researched (Janes, 2016). Although a range of research methods can be incorporated as part of participatory research, to be truly participatory the control in decision-making must be shared equally across all groups participating in the research (Wilson et al., 2017). This includes being involved in the initial design and set up of the research, as well as in how the research will be disseminated and used (ibid).

Although this approach can strengthen the research design and impact, it is also challenging for researchers to achieve a truly collaborative piece of work. This is particularly the case for PhD researchers who typically have limited time, resources and connections when carrying out their research. At an early stage of developing my methods, I decided to not pursue fully collaborative methods (such as participatory research) partly because of the survey approach which was the initial focus of the research and partly because of time and resource constraints. This has implications for the extent to which this research can be seen as 'feminist'. I used

several methods to try to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participants in my work. For example, I sought feedback on the methods I had developed, through cognitive survey testing with participants (expanded on in section 3) and discussing my work with organisations that supported victims of sexual violence. It is important to acknowledge that compared to fully participatory projects this was a more surface-level approach to empowering and collaborating with participants, and this has implications for the findings of this research. As this piece of work was not completed collaboratively with participants, the researcher's views and subjectivities are likely to have had a greater effect on the research design and set-up. There was also a clear power hierarchy in the fieldwork and analytical stages where the researcher had the majority of control over what information was shared and how this was understood. This was one reason why it was important to fully reflect on how I, as the researcher, impacted the data collected and ensure these considerations were present in the discussion of the research findings.

The second key limitation of this study involves the sampling framework and final survey sample. As discussed, the preferred sampling approach of distributing the survey using student mailing lists at Cardiff university could not be achieved which meant convenience sampling was used instead. Convenience sampling has several limitations which impacted on the nature of the thesis. Findings from a convenience sample cannot be said to be representative of the total population and therefore findings from this thesis will not necessarily be generalizable. This also meant that parametric tests and significance testing was not used in the data analysis, which meant that tests with less statistical power were used instead. This will need to be taken into consideration when using survey findings to answer the research questions posed. Triangulation with interview findings will also help assess the robustness of findings from the convenience sample. Some of the issues around representation will be mitigated by providing data on the student population alongside results, and highlighting where survey respondents differ from this.

Following from the sampling approach, the final survey sample also had issues in terms of the unequal distribution of male and female respondents, with the majority of responses coming from women. Given the main focus of the data analysis is the comparison of survey responses from men and women, this is likely to have an effect on the robustness of the analysis as the responses from men may be less

representative than the larger sample of women. However, despite this, there were still sufficient number of survey responses from men to allow for analysis of responses by gender. The ways in which sampling limitations affected the analyses is revisited in chapter 4.
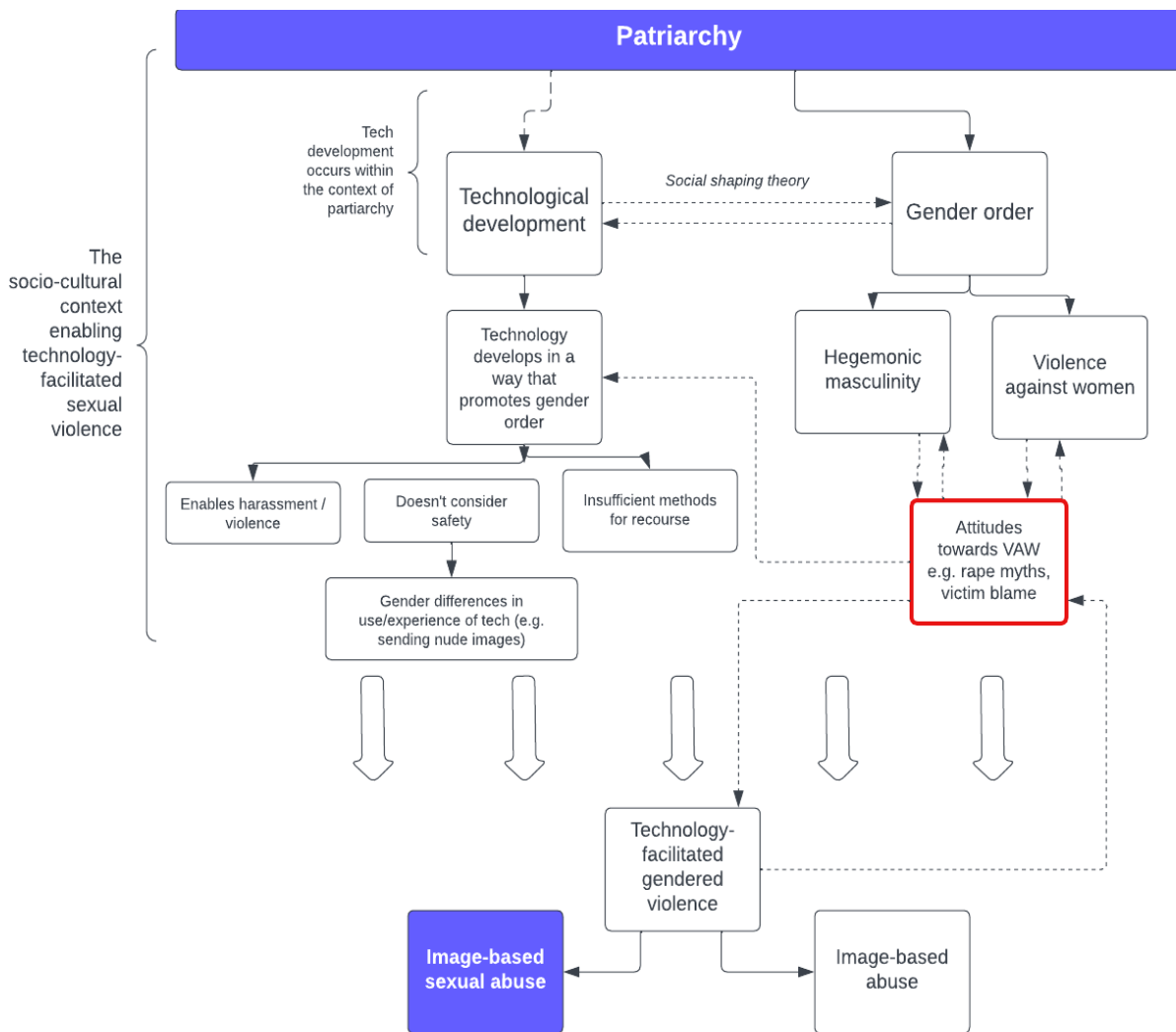
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Framework of Image-Based Sexual Abuse

As discussed in the literature review, violence against women is one way in which patriarchy is maintained in society. Alongside this, the notion that technology develops independently from society is strongly refuted by social shaping theory and evidence of the many ways technology can feed into inequality between men and women. Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) can be seen as the result of systemic violence against women coupled with technology that allows and facilitates acts of abuse. The ease in which violence against women can now be perpetrated via technology has led to multiple forms of TFSV, including Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) which is the focus of this thesis. This is what the literature review as well as figure 4 below seeks to demonstrate.

The findings presented in this chapter contribute to the framework below (figure 4) in three key ways. Firstly, in section 4.2, they show how attitudes towards IBSA fit in with attitudes towards VAW more broadly and how this may impact experiences of IBSA. In section 4.3, the analysis then turns to the empirical evidence on how IBSA is experienced and in particular how IBSA differs from experiences of what has been coined **image-based abuse** (or IBA) in this thesis. Finally, across the chapter, it is demonstrated that attitudes towards IBSA as well as perpetration of IBSA are gendered with some emerging evidence around how the analytical framework below may help interpret these findings.

Figure 4: Analytical framework of IBSA - Version 2

4.1.2 Overview of sample

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the analysis of 429 responses from a non-probability survey sample and the thematic analysis of 9 interviews.

As discussed in chapter 4, this survey made use of convenience sampling and as a result it is important to consider the characteristics of the survey sample before exploring other aspects of the analysis.

Demographics

The survey asked all respondents (n=429) to detail a range of demographic characteristics, including: gender; sexuality; ethnicity; disability; student status. As can be seen in the table below, respondents most frequently reported they were female (72.7%), were current university students (72.3%), identified as heterosexual or straight (70.4%) and that their ethnicity was white (89.5%)

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of survey sample[2]

		N	%
Gender	Female	312	72.7
	Male	96	22.4
	Other	5	1.1
Student status	Student	310	72.3
	Non-student	117	17.7
Sexuality	Heterosexual	302	70.4
	Lesbian	15	3.5
	Gay	14	3.3
	Bisexual	62	14.5
	Other	19	4.4
Ethnic group	White	384	89.5
	Asian / Asian British	18	4.2
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	5	1.2
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	17	4.0
	Other	5	1.2
Disability	Yes	81	18.9
	No	334	77.9

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[2] Where responses are lower than 100%, this is due to respondents answering 'prefer not to say'. Where responses total slightly over 100%, this is due to rounding.

Given the importance of gender to the analysis in this thesis, it was important to consider how the smaller proportion of male respondents (22.4%) may impact on the findings. Further bivariate analysis was carried out to see how comparable the group of male and female respondents were. A similar proportion of male and female respondents were students (70.5% and 74.6% respectively), heterosexual (70.8% and 72.4%), from an ethnic minority background (12.5% and 10.3%) and disabled (16.8% and 19.0% respectively). This suggests that although the groups are different sizes, male and female respondents who completed the survey are broadly comparable in terms of personal characteristics.

The survey was overrepresented in terms of those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other groups, with 29.6% of respondents falling into these groups. This is greater than the estimated percentage of LGB+ individuals in the UK (3.1%, ONS 2021) although other organisations believe that the proportion of LGB+ individuals in the UK is higher than this (Stonewall, 2022). In contrast, those from ethnic minority groups are underrepresented in the sample, with 10.5% of respondents identifying as black, Asian, mixed heritage or 'other' which is lower that for the UK population as a whole (14%, ONS 2020) and significantly lower than the student population (24%, HESA 2021). This may partially be due to a significant amount of survey recruitment occurring in Wales, where the proportion of people from an ethnic minority group is lower, at 5.1% (StatsWales, 2022). The proportion of those identifying as disabled in the survey was similar to the UK population (17.8%) and the student population (15%) at the same time period (ONS, 2023c; HESA, 2021).

For the interviews, 8 out of 9 participants were women. The majority were undergraduate students (7 out of 9) and the remainder were postgraduate students. This is likely to have affected the types of experiences discussed in the interviews.

Technology use and online relationships
Survey respondents generally reported high use of technology and the internet. Of the 429 respondents, 93.5% used the internet multiple times a day and 93.0% used a smartphone multiple times a day. Further to this, 99.8% of respondents owned a smartphone and 94.2% owned a laptop or computer. In terms of social media, the most commonly used platform was Instagram, with 68.9% of respondents using this regularly, followed by Facebook which was used regularly by 60.2% of respondents.

Women generally reported higher social media use than men within the sample, with the only form of social media used roughly equally by men and women being Twitter.

Respondents were asked about 9 behaviours linked to online dating and 11 types of sexual messaging. Out of the 9 options, respondents had on average taken part in 4.91. Overall, 60.1% of respondents had used a dating website and/or dating app (n=429). Just under half (46.3%) of respondents had gone on a date with someone they met through a dating app or website.

The survey also asked respondents about 'sexting', including the sending and receiving of sexual self-images and messages. The findings indicate that there is a high use of nude and sexual images within sex and relationships, with 60.0% of respondents saying they had sent a nude or sexual photo or video to a current partner and 35.7% saying they had asked someone to send them a nude or sexual image.

A two-step cluster analysis was carried out using variables relating to technology use in dating and sexual relationships. The only analysis that provided robust enough groupings using these variables was a cluster analysis based on consensual sexting behaviours which was made up of 6 of the 11 sexual messaging variables. I used this cluster analysis to create three groups which could be interpreted as having high, medium and low experience of using technology in sexual relationships. The silhouette measure of cohesion and separation for this analysis was 0.5, which is the minimum score required for a 'good' quality cluster.

Table 4: Two-step cluster analysis of sexual messaging variables

Cluster	Cluster size		Description
Cluster 1	N=127	31.6%	Did not engage in any forms of sexual messaging
Cluster 2	N=196	48.8%	Engaged in some forms of sexual messaging
Cluster 3	N=79	19.7%	Engaged in many forms of sexual messaging

This shows that, of the 402 respondents who answered these questions, 68.4% had engaged in at least one of the six consensual sexual messaging behaviours with the

remaining 31.6% not engaging in sexual messaging. Analysis showed that a similar proportion of both male and female respondents fell into each cluster, suggesting that both groups engaged in sexual messaging to a similar degree.

Table 5: Gender and sexual messaging

		Level of sexual messaging (%)		
		Low	Medium	High
Gender	Female	32.5	47.6	19.9
	Male	32.6	50.6	16.9

Although male and female respondents engaged in similar levels of sexual messaging, when looking at the specific types of sexual messaging it was possible to see some variation by gender. Women and men were roughly equally likely to have sent a nude/sexual image to someone they were in a relationship with (60.6% and 58.3%) and to have made a nude or sexual video with a partner (25.5% and 24.6% respectively). However, men more frequently reported sending a nude or sexual image to someone they met online compared to women (25.0% and 18.9% respectively). This might suggest that men in this sample were more likely to engage in 'riskier' sexual messaging. In addition, of the male respondents 52.1% had asked someone to send a nude or sexual image compared to 28.6% of women. A higher proportion of women also reported that they had let a partner/date take a nude or sexual image of them (29.8%) compared to men (19.8). This could suggest that although male and female respondents engage in similar levels of sexual messaging, their reasons for doing so may be different, with women being more likely to be explicitly asked for nude images compared to men. This can also be linked back to the analytical framework which, based on the literature around technology and gender, suggests that these types of gendered differences in technology use are likely to occur within patriarchal societies.

Summary

Analysis in this section has shown the survey sample has several characteristics that should be considered when interpreting results throughout this chapter. The majority of survey respondents were female (72.7%), however further analysis showed that male and female respondents were comparable in terms of other characteristics. There was also a high level of representation in responses from people identifying LGB+.

Survey respondents had high levels of digital literacy and engagement with social media, particularly for women. There was also a high proportion of respondents who had used online dating sites and shared nude or sexual images at some point. There were differences between how men and women in the sample had engaged in sexual messaging, such as men being more likely to ask someone to send nude or sexual images compared to women.

4.2. Attitudes towards IBSA

4.2.1 Introduction

This section seeks to explore experiences of victimisation, focusing on two research questions:

RQ2. *What are societal attitudes towards IBSA and how do these relate to other forms of sexual violence?*

RQ3. *To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?*

There is a substantial body of evidence that explores how attitudes can impact on violence against women, suggesting is it important to understand attitudes towards IBSA to further understanding of IBSA victimisation (see section 2.2). As discussed in the literature review and shown in the analytical framework, social shaping theory suggests that technology and society are mutually constitutive, with technological development partially determined by society and vice versa (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). This suggests that, as technology has developed under a patriarchal society, it will reflect and uphold patriarchal attitudes becoming a tool to promote a gender order where women remain in a subordinate position. Pre-existing social and cultural attitudes towards gender and sexual violence are therefore highly relevant when exploring the rise in technology-facilitated sexual violence. Attitudes towards rape have also long been conceptualised as a key part of maintaining a rape culture and upholding patriarchal values, as discussed in section 2.2. Examining the extent to which similar attitudes towards IBSA are forming is therefore essential to understanding IBSA from a feminist perspective.

The attitudes being measured as part of this thesis can all be classed as different forms of rape myths. Rape myths, as defined by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994:133), are 'attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women'. The myths explored in this thesis can be grouped into three main categories: victim blaming, 'real' rape and perpetration myths. Overall, the evidence discussed here explores the extent to which patriarchy-influenced attitudes towards sexual violence are found in attitudes towards IBSA. In particular, it looks at the prevalence of common IBSA myths, the relationship between victim blaming and online safety

work, and key differences in the attitudes of men and women in relation to IBSA perpetration.

Measuring attitudes

The analysis presented here draws on three main areas of evidence. Firstly, there is the Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale which measured survey respondents' attitudes towards victim blaming and minimising/excusing of IBSA. There is also a series of vignettes which were used within the survey to explore attitudes towards different forms of image-based sexual abuse, particularly focusing on whether people's attitudes change when looking at more 'online' forms of IBSA. Finally, there are a series of insights from the interviews. These particularly focus on attitudes towards technology use in intimate relationships, managing risks and attitudes towards victims.

Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance scale

The SIAMA scale consists of 12 questions regarding minimising or excusing IBSA and 6 questions regarding victim blaming. Variables were recoded so each score was equivalent, for example a score of 1 or 2 always signified lower myth acceptance whereas a score of 4 or 5 signified higher myth acceptance. Once the variables were recoded, two average scores were calculated that measured whether, on average, respondents minimised or excused IBSA perpetration and whether they endorsed victim blaming statements. As the likert scales sought to measure a particular characteristic when combined (such as victim blaming or minimising behaviour) it was appropriate to use means and standard deviation to assess groups of questions that were part of the SIAMA scale. K-means cluster analysis was also used to find groups of respondents who had responded to the scale in a similar way (more information on this can be found in the methodology chapter).

Vignettes

Survey respondents were randomly allocated one of four vignettes, each of which involved a slightly differing type of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Each vignette can be broadly classified as follows:

Vignette 1 – A video is taken non-consensually up the victim's skirt and shared by being physically shown to others.

Vignette 2 – A video is taken non-consensually up the victim's skirt and shared by being uploaded to a well-known pornography site.

Vignette 3 – A video is taken non-consensually up the victim's skirt and is shared by being uploaded to a group chat which includes people who go to university with the victim.

Vignette 4 – A photo of the victim's face is non-consensually photoshopped onto a pornographic image and uploaded to a group chat which includes people who go to university with the victim.

Following the random allocation of one of these vignettes, respondents answered a series of six likert-scale questions about the scenario. These covered several topics, including victim blaming, criminality and interventions, and impacts for the victim. These are drawn on throughout the chapter to explore overall attitudes to IBSA and attitudes towards different forms of IBSA.

Interviews

Interviews were carried out with 9 participants and covered topics including perceptions of IBSA, thoughts on responses to IBSA and the use of technology in dating and intimate relationships. Responses from participants further contextualise some of the quantitative findings and show greater nuance in relation to how IBSA is understood.

4.2.2 Overview of attitudes towards IBSA

*Prevalence of victim blaming and minimising/excusing attitudes*

Overall, the majority of survey respondents viewed IBSA as a serious incident which had consequences for victims. Looking at the average response to the Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance scale (SIAMA), there was generally low agreement with the statements that minimised and excused IBSA. The average score given by respondents was 1.3 out of a maximum of 5, where 1 signifies no minimising/excusing and 5 signifies high levels of minimising/excusing. Data was also collected on respondents' views on the impacts of IBSA as part of the vignette exercise. The majority of respondents agreed that the scenario was likely to have caused fear (97.4%) and mental harm (94.0%) to the victim which suggests respondents understood that, at a high level, IBSA negatively impacts the victim. A K-means cluster analysis used to group respondents based on their responses to the

18 SIAMA survey scale items also suggested that the majority of respondents (68.8%) did not endorse victim blaming statements, although respondents were more likely to endorse victim blaming statements compared to minimising and excusing statements.

Despite the fact that most survey respondents did not endorse IBSA myths, there was a consistent minority across all data types who did. For example, when looking at the minimising and excusing SIAMA statements, 1.9% of respondents thought that women exaggerated the impacts of IBSA, 2.2% believed that if a woman shared a photo of a partner it showed she was proud of him, and 0.8% thought it was 'no big deal' or 'only natural' for men to share images of their intimate partners with friends. There was also some evidence that victim blaming is present in attitudes towards IBSA. The average score given for victim blaming statements by respondents was 2.7, on a scale where 1 represents low victim blaming and 5 represent high victim blaming. This suggests there was moderate endorsement of victim blaming statements, and that respondents were more likely to hold victim blaming attitudes compared to those minimising or excusing IBSA. A K-means cluster analysis showed that just under a third of respondents (31.2%) had agreed with at least one of the victim blaming statements. This will be discussed further in section 4.2.4.

The vignettes used in this study aimed to explore whether attitudes towards IBSA changed depending on how much of the scenario took place 'online'. Generally, sexual violence that occurs alongside other physical acts of violence is often seen as more legitimate or a form of 'real rape'. Given that IBSA occurs at least partially in the digital world, it was hypothesised that the absence or reduction in physical violence may affect attitudes towards IBSA. As can be seen in the graph below, attitudes towards IBSA were relatively similar regardless of the extent to which the scenario occurred in the digital world.

Figure 5: Percentage agreement to survey questions by vignette
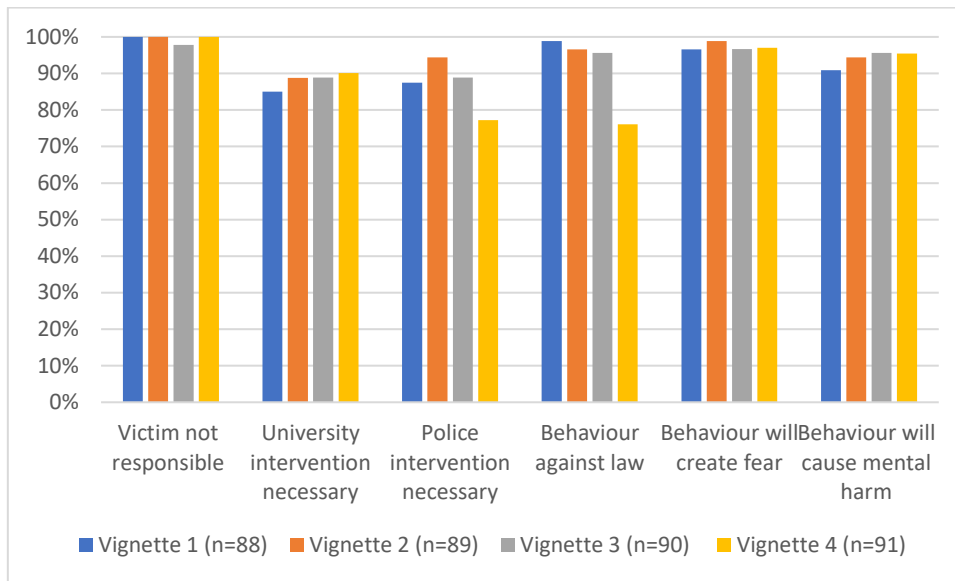
There was one vignette which elicited different responses from participants. Vignette 4 involved a 'deepfake' scenario where the victim's face was imposed on a pornographic video. For this scenario, participants were less sure on whether police intervention was necessary (77.2%) or whether the behaviour was against the law (76.1%), although these percentages still remain relatively high. This may relate to the fact this scenario took place predominantly in the digital world, which would reflect endorsement of the 'real rape' myth. However, it is also possible this may be because the use of 'deepfakes' in IBSA had not received as much public attention at the time of the fieldwork and legislation specifically addressing deepfakes was not brought in until 2024 (GOV.UK, 2024). This will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

It is also important to highlight that many of these findings were reliant on survey scale items. These can be affected by respondents perceiving a correct or socially preferred response to the question (for example, that they should not excuse IBSA perpetration). Whether this reflects what respondents would think if this situation occurred in their life is unclear. This is returned to in the discussion and conclusion chapters which critique the use of survey scales in sexual violence research.

Personal characteristics and attitudes towards IBSA

The following section explore how attitudes may differ depending on personal characteristics of research participants. Previous literature has found a strong

relationship between personal characteristics and responses to rape myth statements. Most commonly using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, studies have typically shown that men are more likely to agree with statements promoting rape myths (Flood and Pease, 2009; Pinciotti and Orcutt, 2021). Women are less likely to support rape myths, but there are still a substantial minority who uphold them (ibid). As discussed in chapter 2, continuation of the patriarchy relies on the complicity of women as well as men, and therefore attitudes such as victim blaming, or the excusing of sexual violence can be common across groups.

The relationship between attitudes towards IBSA and gender was explored using the SIAMA scale, with the table below showing the average scores for men and women across different scale items.

Figure 6: Mean scores for IBSA myth acceptance by gender
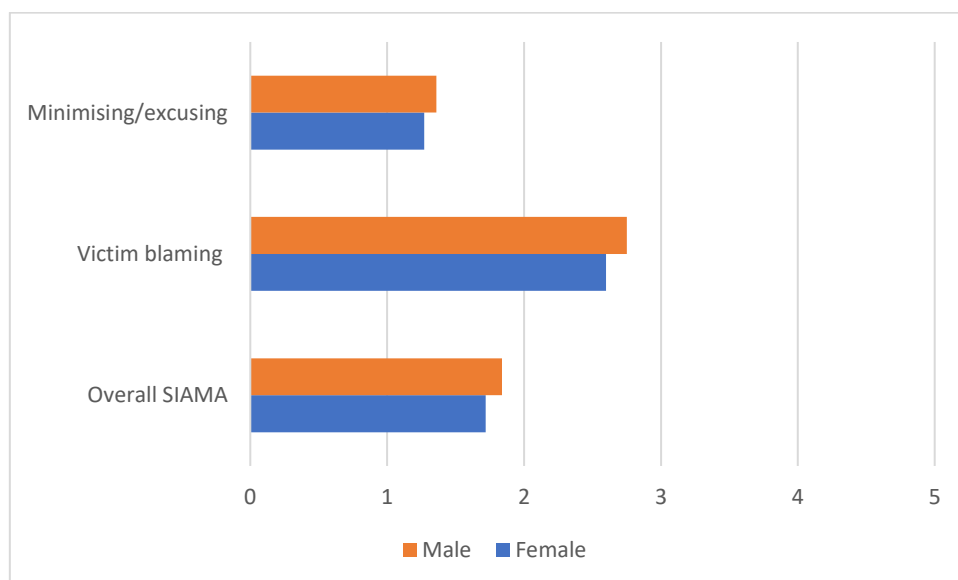
Men were slightly more likely to endorse IBSA myths compared to women, however, as can be seen in Figure 6, the differences found were small. The largest difference was in victim blaming attitudes, with the averages scores being 2.75 for men and 2.6 for women. This finding was replicated using a Mann-Whitney U test which compared the average SIAMA score with gender. This showed that female respondents had an average rank of 151.38 whereas male respondents had an average of 191.10. The higher rank suggests that men on average had greater levels of agreement with IBSA myths and victim blaming.

As mentioned, a K-means cluster analysis was used to group respondents based on their responses to the SIAMA scale, and a description of the three groupings can be found in the table below. There was a relatively equal proportion of male and female respondents across all groupings (for female and male respondents, 2.8% and 3.1% respectively were in group 1, 31.6% and 32.3% were in group 2 and 65.6% and 64.6% were in group 3).

Table 6: K-Means Cluster Analysis of SIAMA scale responses

Group	Number of respondents	Description
1	11	Respondents in this group were more likely to endorse myths or respond 'neither agree or disagree' to both victim blaming and minimising/excusing statements.
2	106	Respondents in this group often endorsed victim blaming myths, but had lower levels of endorsement minimising/excusing IBSA.
3	219	This is the largest group and includes respondents who were least likely to endorse any of the IBSA myths in the survey scale.

Other characteristics proved to be stronger predictors of a respondent's group membership. For example, those who had experienced 'relationship retribution' IBSA (see victimisation chapter for a definition) were less likely to endorse victim blaming myths (22.8%) compared to those who had not experienced IBSA (33.2%) and those who had experienced what will be termed image-based abuse, referring to ISBA outside of intimate relationships (33.3%).

When looking at responses to individual statements in the SIAMA scale, there were some interesting differences between the responses from men and women which demonstrated situations in which men may be more likely to victim blame, minimise instances of IBSA and excuse perpetrators. This was particularly apparent when looking at whether respondents 'somewhat disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the SIAMA statements.

For example, similar levels of men and women agreed with the statement *'People should know better to take nude photos in the first place, even if they never send*

them to anyone' (25.4% and 20.7% respectively). However, only 26.8% of men strongly disagreed with this statement compared to 47.5% of women. In addition, 32.0% of men agreed with the statement that *men don't mean to pressure a partner into sending nude pics, but sometimes they get to sexually carried away.* In contrast, only 14.6% of women agreed with this statement. This could suggest that men are more likely endorse the myth that men have irrepressible sexual urges and to believe this is an excuse for perpetrating forms of sexual violence.

Other personal characteristics that had a relationship with attitudes was levels of sexual messaging respondents engaged in. This was particularly the case when looking at consensual sexual messaging, where respondents who had not engaged in many forms of sexual messaging were far were more likely to endorse the IBSA myths compared to those who had engaged in more forms of sexual messaging. Overall, 44.0% of respondents who did not engage in sexual messaging were part of the group that had endorsed victim blaming statements to a greater extent[3]. Previous literature has found that individuals who report higher levels of sexual messaging and sharing intimate images are also more likely to perpetrate IBSA (Powell et al., 2022). Attitudes and sexual messaging may both be predictors of IBSA perpetration, as will be explored further in section 4.3.

4.2.3 Narratives of 'real' IBSA

As was discussed in chapter 2, a key rape myth is the notion that there are certain types of rape which are more 'real' or legitimate than others. 'Real rape' (Estrich 1987) or 'perfect rape' (Adler, 1987) both refer to what the public perceive rape to be, and the type of rape which institutions are likely to take most seriously, with instances of sexual violence that do not meet these characteristics being more likely to be minimised and excused (see chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion). There was emerging evidence through both the interview and survey analysis that attitudes towards IBSA could be seen to mirror the notion of 'real' rape with the narrative of 'revenge porn' being used as an example of 'real IBSA'. Similar to 'real rape', public discussions of revenge porn tend to follow a strict narrative; it happens during the breakdown of a relationship, with an ex-partner sharing a photo or video of the victim

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[3] A multinomial logistic regression was also run to explore this relationship, this endorsed findings from the bivariate analysis.

(often uploading to a pornography site), and with revenge being seen as the main motivation. This was reflected particularly during discussions with interviewees. Incidents of IBSA and other forms of TFSV that did not follow this narrative were often spoken about differently, with many behaviours being seen as commonplace occurrences that people just had to get on with. This has implications both for how IBSA is perpetrated and how victims of certain forms of IBSA are likely to respond. It is important to note that much of this section is based on a small number of interviews, and therefore further work is needed to corroborate the emerging findings discussed here.

During interviews, participants showed a good understanding and knowledge of 'revenge porn' as a form of IBSA. The term 'revenge porn' itself was frequently used by participants and it was clearly seen as a harmful form of abuse, which could have significant impacts on victims.

'I think of it as coming around at the end of relationships, when things have gone a bit sour…it's another way for them to have power and control over this person…' – Interview participant

'It would be really scary to know [the photo] is just out there and there's nothing you can do about it' – Interview participant

Types of IBSA that did not align with this were often spoken about differently by participants. Although still seen as a problem, some forms of IBSA and other types of online harassment seemed to represent more of a 'grey area' to some and something that would not necessarily be perceived in the same way as 'revenge porn' either by the participant or by others. Evidence through the interviews and surveys suggested this may particularly be the case where images are shared in person or over group chats, compared to when they are uploaded to pornography sites with the aim of controlling or harming.

'I hate the term grey area especially in respect to sexual type stuff… but I don't know about going to the police, I don't think that they'd do anything [about online harassment]' – Interview participant

'I think people think revenge porn and think it's 'I've uploaded my ex's photos onto pornhub'…. But I'm not sure people are thinking about [sharing photos in] these group chat type things [as being IBSA].' – Interview participant

This theme was triangulated with the vignette data. As discussed previously, the responses to vignettes were relatively similar regardless of scenario. Although there were high levels of agreement with whether police intervention was needed across all scenarios, when looking at the proportion of 'definitely yes' versus 'probably yes' responses it is possible to see some slight differences in the interpretation of scenarios. Notably, for vignette 2, where an image is uploaded onto a pornography site, respondents were most confident that this incident warranted police intervention. For instances where the photo was shared in-person (vignette 1) or in a group chat (vignette 3), there was less confidence in whether police intervention was definitely required. Vignette 4 involving the deepfake had the most variation in responses, likely because at the time of fieldwork the scenario was less well-known or common to descriptions of revenge pornography.

Figure 7: Is police intervention needed in the scenario
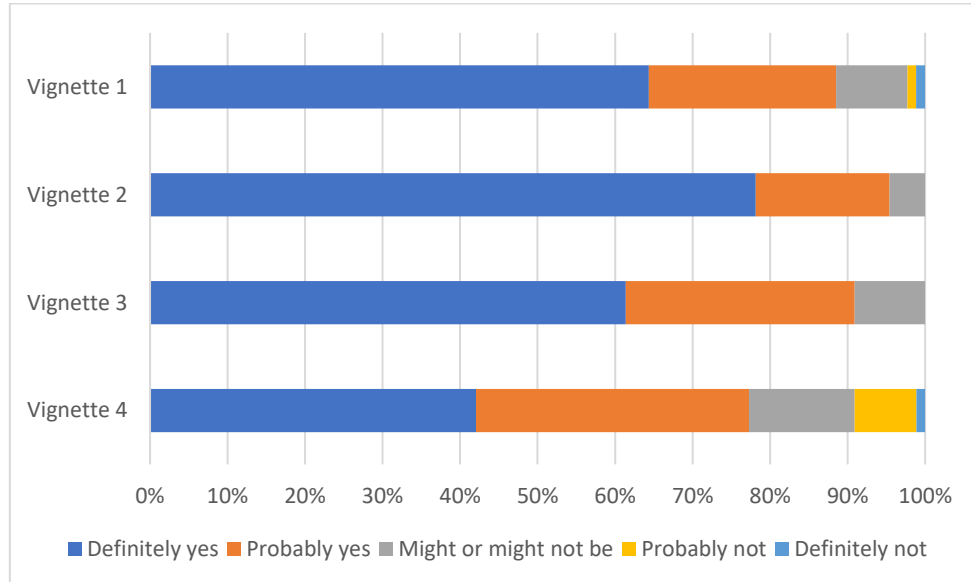
Similarly, for whether the vignette described a behaviour that would be illegal, respondents were most confident the description in vignette 2 (photo uploaded to pornography website) would be illegal. They were somewhat less certain about legality when images had been shown in-person, and substantially less certain when asked about deepfakes (vignette 4).

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Figure 8: Is the behaviour in the scenario illegal
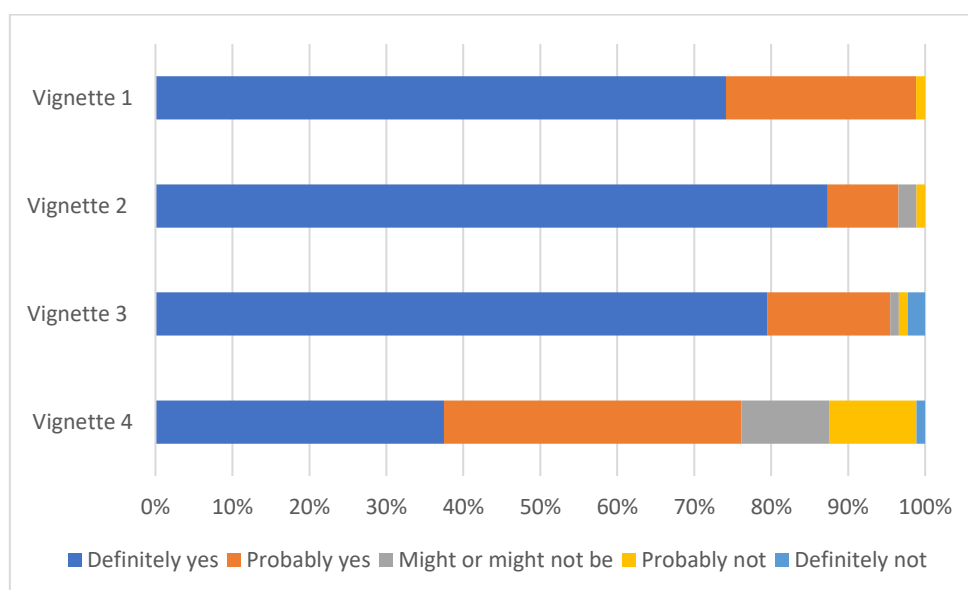
Although these findings alone do not show whether respondents would take certain forms of IBSA more seriously than others, and it is important to note that all forms of IBSA in the vignettes were seen as harmful to the victim, what this does show is that certain forms of IBSA are better understood than others, and that this might impact on how attitudes towards types of IBSA that are not clearly 'revenge porn' develop. Given 'revenge porn' has received a lot of media attention in recent years, with initial legislation to address IBSA being established in 2015, respondents may be better informed about this type of IBSA, both from a legal perspective and according to mainstream public attitudes. One potential benefit from legal reforms to sexual offences is the accompanying reporting on and education around the behaviour. Even if the conviction rates for IBSA remain low, the fact that the law reform has brought greater awareness to some forms of IBSA may stop people from perpetrating similar forms of abuse, suggesting legal and educational responses to IBSA could be key to changing attitudes and behaviours.

In comparison, other forms of IBSA and online harassment seemed more normalised by interview participants, described as something they had to deal with or as an 'everyday' behaviour that they try to ignore, as shown in some of the earlier quotes. Notably, several participants, all of whom were women, commented that they had been experiencing these types of behaviours since they were 12 or 13 years old.

'Although I don't think anybody deserves it, I think when you put things online you have to expect that that photo could be used in ways you don't know' – Interview participant

'When I was younger… loads of boys would want pictures and I would just send them photos of random girls that I found online… There was a lot of pressure... I would have been around 12, 13, 14' – Interview participant

Online harassment was sometimes disclosed by interview participants but usually only after they were prompted and this seemed to be seen as part of being a woman online and something participants 'just got on with', which is perhaps unsurprising given many had been having such experiences since they were in their early teens. Certain instances of someone taking or sharing photos without consent were also likened to bullying rather than sexual abuse.

'[Talking about friend whose photo had been shared in a group chat] so I think she just tried to forget it had happened' – Interview participant

'I hate using the term grey area to describe sexual stuff, but…' – Interview participant

'I know someone who got catfished by two lads trying to have a joke with him, they were pretending to be a girl and had him [perform a sexual act] on webcam' – Interview participant

Other forms of technology-facilitated abuse such as receiving unsolicited 'dick pics' were described more as an annoyance rather than harmful.

'I think most of them just think it's funny… I don't think they have real ill intent behind it, it's just toilet humour isn't it, like drawing penises on things' – Interview participant

This also corresponds with responses to the question on perpetrator motivation which was part of the vignette section of the survey. Here, a free-text response was used to collate respondents' views on what the motivations of 'Daniel', the perpetrator, were. For the scenarios where Daniel had shared the photo either in-person or through a group chat the main motivations were seen to be things such as peer support, 'banter' and showing off. In comparison, when the photo was uploaded to a pornography site people were more likely to say Daniel wanted to control or harm the victim.

'Maybe he found Charlotte attractive, but it's probably more likely he wanted to gain respect or attention from other lads, given he's in first year, he's trying to make more friends.' – Survey respondent discussing vignette 1

'Probably to have a video to use for himself and share online, maybe to embarrass her or just to feel power over her that he can do that' – Survey respondent discussing vignette 2

Further to this, there was a theme across the interviews and qualitative survey responses of perpetrators not intending to cause harm to victims in some circumstances, as demonstrated in the quotes below.

'Not everyone has really malicious intent behind it, but it's not the right thing to do' – Interview participant

This was particularly the case where the incident did not follow the 'revenge porn' or 'real IBSA' narrative, as the two quotes from those who had experienced having nude photos taken of them without their consent show below. In these instances, both participants felt their experience was not intended to cause harm.

'I wouldn't have said it was 'non-consensual' but he did take a photo without my knowledge' – Interview participant

'Any pictures taken by me or of me when people were passed out drunk as a joke or entertainment to be looked back upon. They have not been maliciously shared to anyone' – Survey respondent

These understandings of what may (or may not) have been the intent of taking and sharing intimate images show that respondents may be willing to give the 'benefit of the doubt' to perpetrators. The following section shows that the same level of empathy is not always provided to victims of IBSA. As discussed in the literature review, one of the more common ways that the 'real rape' myth appears in current public discourse is linked to the idea that sexual violence occurs as a result of miscommunication or misunderstanding. The quotes above suggest that some types of IBSA are seen a being perpetrated unintentionally or without malice. The notion of IBSA being carried out as a 'joke' and not as a form of abuse will be returned to in the IBSA victimisation typology, in particular exploring how attitudes may vary depending on the type of IBSA experienced.

Overall, there is emerging evidence that the revenge porn narrative can be used to establish what is or is not 'real' IBSA. Forms of IBSA where a photo is distributed in a group chat or shown in-person and where the perpetrator motivation is not clearly linked to control or revenge can be seen as a 'grey area'. This is particularly explained by the fact that IBSA and TFSV are routinely experienced, particularly by women, which can lead to certain behaviours becoming seen as 'everyday' and less serious than others. This draws parallels with some forms of street harassment, where it has been argued that regular occurrences of street harassment become perceived as a normality by women (Stanko, 1985; Vera-Gray, 2016). Discussions from female participants suggested that they often experience a multitude of intrusions in their experiences online and, as will be further explored, they are used to taking a proactive approach to protecting themselves. Since technology has become more prevalent in day-to-day life, this has become a normality. This will be returned to in the following section on victimisation, as well as in the discussion chapter.

4.2.4 Victim blaming and 'safety work' online – Two sides of the same coin

'A victim status is not fixed, but socially constructed, mobilized and malleable'

(Daly, 2014, p.378)

The notion of victim blaming and the ideal victim in relation to IBSA was explored in both the survey and interview analysis. As discussed in Chapter 2, victim status is socially constructed and influenced by common societal views, with evidence showing that victim blaming is correlated with perpetration of sexual violence, greater harms to victims and institutional responses (Flood and Pease, 2009; see section 2.2 for further details).

The survey analysis showed victim blaming statements were the most commonly endorsed form of IBSA myth by survey respondents, although the majority of respondents (78.8%) did not endorse any victim blaming. Overall, just under a third of respondents (31.2%) had endorsed at least one of the victim blaming statements. This finding was driven by certain victim blaming statements receiving particularly high levels of agreement from respondents. For example, over half (54.8%) of respondents felt that the victim had some responsibility for images ending up online if they had sent a nude or sexual image to someone. This aligns with prior studies on

IBSA that have shown victims who had consensually shared images were more likely to be blamed for victimisation (Flynn et al., 2022c).

A further finding that supports this, was the greater levels of endorsement of the statement, '*People should know better than to take nude selfies in the first place, even if they never send them to anyone*'. Overall, 22.5% of respondents agreed with this statement and a further 13.2% neither agreed nor disagreed suggesting that a significant minority of respondents may assign partial blame to someone who experiences IBSA if they had initially taken the photo themselves or shared a photo consensually. This also bears similarities to the responses for the statement '*celebrities and well-known media personalities who take sexy images of themselves should expect that those images will remain private*' which 18.8% of respondents disagreed with. Based on the Fiske et al's Stereotype Content Model, it could be theorised that celebrities experience 'envious prejudice' when they are victims of sexual violence and this affects the level of empathy they may receive.

Despite the finding that just under a third (31.2%) of survey respondents endorsed at least one victim blaming statement, the responses to the victim blaming question in relation to the vignette scenarios were extremely uniform. All but 4 respondents agree the victim in the scenarios was not to blame for what happened. In the vignettes, the victim can be seen to fall partially into the 'ideal victim' category, as she was a young female university student out with course mates. The image in the scenario is also taken without the victim's knowledge, which may have encouraged respondents to see the victim as blameless in the scenario and invoked 'paternalistic prejudice' where the victim is seen to need protection and is pitied (Fiske et al., 2002). Although this may be seen as preferential to outright blame, such attitudes still perpetuate the attitude that women need to be protected for their own good. The uniformity in responses to this question might also suggest that most respondents knew that there was a correct or socially preferred response to the question (for example, that they should not blame the victim) and answered this question accordingly, as will be reflected on further at the end of this chapter.

Overall, it was clear that survey respondents felt that IBSA victims held at least some responsibility if they had consensually shared photos initially, and that those who share nude or sexual images consensually are not viewed as aligning with 'ideal'

victim status. As discussed in the literature review, patriarchal views of sexuality are linked to 'heterosexual scripts' where men are seen as active and women as passive in heterosexual relations. Women choosing to send photos may be seen as flouting these sexual scripts, reducing empathy towards the victim, despite the fact this study suggests that male partners in heterosexual relationships are more likely to ask for nude or sexual images.

The presence of victim blaming narratives in relation to IBSA was evidenced in two further ways through the interviews. Firstly, there was the discussion of online 'safety work' across interviews with female participants and secondly the relationship between victim blaming and police and educational responses to IBSA. In this thesis, the term 'safety work' comes from the literature on gendered street harassment (Vera-Gray, 2016). Here, the term is used to explain how women protect themselves from harassment in public spaces, often on a daily basis. It was clear from the discussions with interview participants that there is now a new form of safety work women need to regularly engage in, *online* safety work. According to Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020), women regularly need to adapt themselves to ensure their safety is maintained; it is argued here that this is also the case for those who wish to use digital technology.

Online safety work spoken about by participants typically involved things such as removing identifying features (such as their face or tattoos) from any photos they wanted to share; being extremely cautious about who they chose to share nude photos with; having high levels of security settings across social media; not sharing any personal details with someone they had only met online. This was seen to minimise the risk of engaging in the digital world, and particularly online dating. It is clear that this is a common discourse in relation to IBSA, as show in the quotes below.

'I'd never put my face in them, that's something I'm always very careful not to do… I've also got tattoos and I'm always quite careful not to get the tattoos in pictures either so it can't like come back to me' – Interview participant

'Sometimes people want to call [for an online date] over snapchat, but I don't like that cos I think they might send a dodgy photo' – Interview participant

Participants who had only sent photos to long-term intimate partners were clear that they had to build a lot of trust with someone before they would feel confident in sending nude images. In contrast, participants who had shared photos with people they only knew online often seemed aware that this is something that may be viewed negatively by others as they may have put themselves at greater risk.

'I trust the people that I send the photos too, I'm very selective… but it's just like to protect myself… I'm aware that once I've sent a photo it's out of my control' – Interview participant

I'm very wary so I'd have to have a strong baseline of trust before [sharing photos] with someone' – Interview participant

'In hindsight, I really shouldn't have had my face in the photo…' – Interview participant

Participants seemed aware of the negative consequences that might follow if they did not engage in online safety work, and also demonstrated an awareness of how this linked to victim blaming. Sometimes, when speaking about friends who had experienced IBSA, there was acknowledgement of the fact that the person had not engaged in sufficient online safety work.

'I don't want that to be traced back to me, uploaded to social media or sent to my employer' – Interview participant

'I think you'd end up being slut shamed' – Interview participant

'[Talking about a friend who was a victim of TFSV] Her whole Instagram is like full of photos of her in bikinis and going out and stuff and then recently someone took all of the photos…' – Interview participant

'Although I don't think anybody deserves it, I think when you put things online you have to expect that that photo could be used in ways you don't know' – Interview participant

Although the narrative around needing to constantly monitor and modify behaviours and engage in online safety work likely in part arises due to the need for women to protect themselves in online spaces, it can also be seen as directly linked to the victim blaming narratives discussed earlier in this section where, in particular, those

who have shared nude photos consensually are not given 'ideal victim' status and are more likely to be blamed. The fact that those who had engaged in perceived 'riskier' forms of IBSA, such as using personally identifiable photos, seemed to be aware of this narrative and expressed a level of embarrassment and regret suggests that those who do not engage in the 'right' kind of image sharing may be blamed if they go on to be victims of IBSA. This could be seen as a form of moral typecasting, where actively engaging in sexual messaging is seen as lessening an individual's moral agency and thus feelings of empathy towards them are reduced. Also important to note is that safety work has previously been linked to a reduction in women's freedoms, and the choices around online safety discussed by participants here suggest that women are sacrificing online freedom to protect their own safety.

All participants who discussed online safety work were women as there was only one male interview participant. To strengthen the notion of online safety work further, it would be important to interview men who engaged in online dating and sexting in future research to see if they had comparable concerns around privacy and image sharing.

Survey responses corroborated the idea of online safety work, and suggested that this may be something that women do more frequently than men. Despite a similar proportion of women and men reporting sharing nude images overall, there were some important differences between each group of respondents. Women, for example, were less likely to send nude photos to someone they only knew online compared to men (18.9% and 25.0% respectively) perhaps reflecting a greater consideration of risk. Women were also substantially less likely to have asked anyone to send them a nude or sexual image compared to men who did this frequently (28.6% of women compared to 52.1% of men). However, a higher proportion of women reported that they had let a partner/date take a nude or sexual image of them (29.8%) compared to men (19.8%). This links to the fact that women were more likely to report being pressured to send nude images or sending nude images when they really did not want to. One interview participant discusses this and the challenges of balancing online safety with gendered expectations, particularly in sexual scenarios, in the quote below.

'…the other thing with online dating is that you often get people asking you for this kind of stuff and even if you say no they keep on forcing and asking and trying to change your mind which is very frustrating and it can be quite upsetting…' – *Interview participant*

The presence of victim blaming in relation to IBSA, as well as the notion of personal accountability through online safety work had implications in terms of how participants discussed both policing and educational responses to IBSA. Victim blaming was experienced by one IBSA victim when she reported her experience to the police. The participant had spoken about sending nude images regularly, including to people she had only met online. When she reported her photos being shared non-consensually, she recalled a negative experience with two police officers:

*'I felt like they were not as understanding, I think because they were around my age and it was sort of like '**well you shouldn't have put your face in it**' or something and 'you just need to be careful with who you trust' and like it was a bit patronising'* – *Interview participant*

Other participants who had not experienced IBSA directly expressed doubts over whether they would go to the police if they were to experience IBSA in future, partly because of the fear that they might be blamed. Related to this, many had not received any prior education on IBSA and those that had felt that it could fall into victim blaming, where the focus is on how to avoid victimisation rather than to stop perpetration.

'There's way to talk about the risk that isn't so ostracizing. Like the idea that you're wrong for doing these things is completely unhelpful' – *Interview participant*

'In general the sex education I had…. I pretty much remember it being the biology of it and consent never seemed to come into it. I don't remember being taught about the importance of consent in sex, definitely not for the technology side of things' – *Interview participant*

Ultimately, the forms of online safety work discussed by interview participants may or may not protect women online. Although, as shown in this thesis and in previous literature, women engage in less 'risky' behaviours online (Powell et al., 2019) and

are more likely to be asked or pressured to share nude or sexual images, this does not stop them being blamed when their images are shared non-consensually. This highlights a double standard between men and women. The levels of online safety work also highlight the everydayness of IBSA and other forms of online harassment, as was discussed in the previous section. Victim blaming attitudes towards IBSA and the promotion of online safety work are both highly gendered, as highlighted by the evidence presented here, and aligning with the analytical framework presented at the start of the chapter.

4.2.5 IBSA perpetration and male peer support

In addition to the substantial minority of survey respondents endorsing victim blaming statements, there was also evidence that common sexual violence perpetration myths were also present in attitudes towards IBSA for a significant minority. Myths around men who perpetrate sexual violence can take various forms. Some assume that perpetrators are 'deviant' social outcasts, others suggest that men who perpetrate sexual violence act out of uncontrollable sexual urges, or that sexual violence is the result of unintentional miscommunication (Jackson, 1995; McMahon and Farmer, 2011). Jackson (1995) speaks about sexual scripts, which establish men as the active dominator and women as the passive recipient in heterosexual relationships, as discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, which promotes the idea of men being sexually aggressive with uncontrollable sexual urges.

Two statements from the SIAMA scale were relevant to perpetration myths. The first relates to the myth that men have uncontrollable sexual urges:

'Men don't usually mean to pressure a partner into sending nude pics, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away'

Overall, 18.2% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. Although the majority did not agree with the statement, this finding suggests around 1 in 5 endorsed this myth. When looking at responses to the statement by respondent gender, nearly a third (32.0%) of men agreed with this statement, compared to 14.6% of women. The fact that almost a third of male respondents believed that IBSA was caused by getting sexually carried away suggests that not only are gendered rape myths common in the survey responses, but that gendered attitudes

around perpetration are more likely to be held by men. Given the evidence suggesting men more commonly perpetrate IBSA than women, these attitudes may enable perpetration of IBSA.

Survey respondents were also asked to give their views on what motivated the perpetrator of IBSA in the vignette they were presented with. Sexual gratification was one of the most common reasons respondents believed the perpetrator had engaged in IBSA, further endorsing the myth that men have irrepressible sexual desires that leads to the perpetration of violence against women. Although this does not necessarily mean people think male sexual desire justifies perpetrating sexual violence, it could suggest that at minimum they believe this to be the cause of violence against women, showing similarities between IBSA myths and rape myths.

'[The perpetrator] probably fancied [the victim] and that is why he focused on her, however he still videoed her without her consent' – Survey respondent

The second SIAMA scale item of relevance focused on the role of male peer support in IBSA perpetration:

'A man's reputation is boosted amongst his mates if he shares nude pics of a sexual partner'

As shown in the chart below, 24.7% of participants agreed with the statement, whilst 48.2% disagreed. Although those who agreed with the statement do not necessarily think this excuses IBSA perpetration, it is interesting that almost a quarter of respondents perceive sharing images as something that would be positively endorsed by men, and that less than half of respondents disagree with this statement. If 1 in 4 respondents believe that perpetrating IBSA improves a man's social standing, it is likely that this could explain some of the motivations behind perpetration as theorised in the literature review. It is also a further way in which IBSA bears similarities to attitudes to other forms of gendered sexual violence.

Figure 9: A man's reputation is boosted amongst his mates if he shares nude pics of a sexual partner
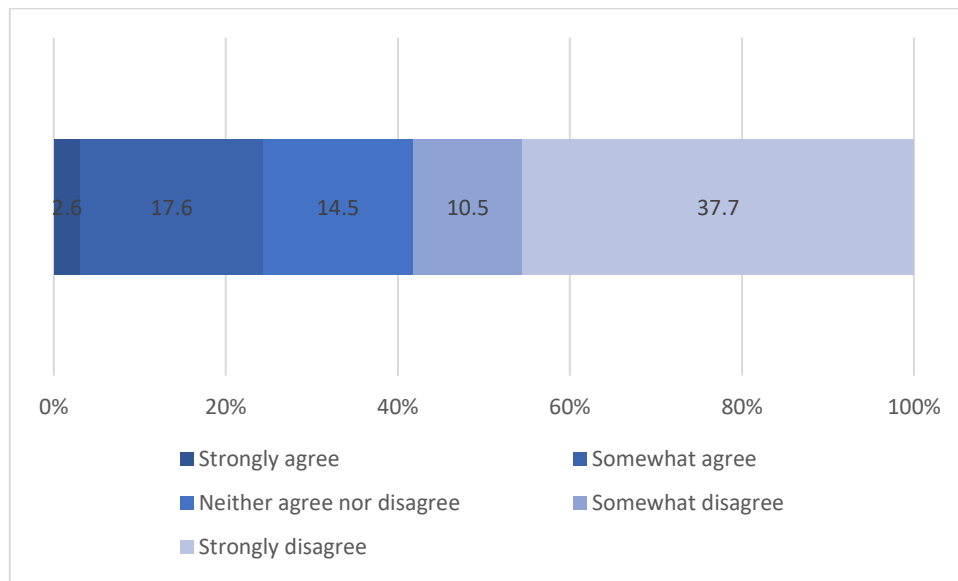
This finding was further evidenced in responses to the vignettes, where respondents were asked about the perpetrator's motivations. A strong theme in the responses to this question was that that the perpetrator could be trying to impress their peers or to make a joke. A common perception from respondents was that this kind of behaviour can help men build peer groups and help them to be seen as 'cool' or 'funny', even where the respondent themselves 'disagreed' with this kind of behaviour.

'[T]o be funny and have a joke but it went wrong' – Survey respondent

'Bragging rights' – Survey respondents

'Maybe he found [the victim] attractive, but it's probably more likely he wanted to gain respect or attention from other lads, given he's in first year, he's trying to make more friends' – Survey respondent

To summarise, two key attitudes relating to perpetrators were explored with analysis showing a significant minority of survey respondents endorsed the myth that perpetrators are motivated by sexual attraction and that **men** who perpetrate IBSA will receive positive responses from their peers. Although more data is needed to fully explore these findings, they do suggest the importance of male peer support theory in understanding IBSA perpetration and attitudes towards IBSA, similarly to DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (2016) work highlighting the correlation between male peer support and IBSA.

4.2.6 Summary: Gendered attitudes towards IBSA

At a high-level, the findings discussed here suggest that only a minority of those in this cohort endorsed IBSA myths. Despite this, a sizeable minority of survey respondents endorsed victim blaming attitudes towards IBSA (31.2%) and this finding was further corroborated by interview participants discussing the types of online safety work they engaged in, and sense of personal responsibility to prevent themselves being victimised. Although only a minority of people may engage in victim blaming, the interviews suggested that there was a common societal narrative around who is to blame in instances of IBSA which affects how women act online and whether they choose to report abuse. These findings are particularly interesting when considering the gendered sexual scripts that are replicated in online spaces. For example, findings from this study showed that men are more likely to request photos from or take photos of their partners. It can be difficult for women to say no to these requests, as highlighted in interviews, but this pressure has to be balanced with the fear of victim blaming and other forms of online safety work. This replicates similar sexual scripts found in the physical world, as discussed in chapter 2. The presence of victim blaming in relation to IBSA is therefore extremely gendered, similar to other rape myths.

Further to this, the discussions of 'real' IBSA and online safety work both highlighted the prevalence and everyday nature of many types of IBSA and TFSV that women, in particular, experience. The sense of normalcy to experiences such as receiving unsolicited nude or sexual photos, being pressured to share photos or having images taken without consent in discussions with interview participants was indicative of how everyday these behaviours had become and the constant state of vigilance many felt was needed when engaging online. In many ways, this seemed to mirror women's experience of public sexual harassment (Vera-Gray, 2016). This also had implications for what is understood as IBSA victimisation, and whether those who experience IBSA perceive it to be a form of abuse or something to be expected in day-to-day life. This will be discussed further in the following section.

The importance of male peer support in the perpetration of IBSA was also highlighted in the analysis. Around 1 in 4 respondents believed that sharing a nude photo of their partner could boost a man's reputation within his peer group. Respondents also highlighted banter and camaraderie as being key motivators of the

IBSA perpetrator in the survey vignettes. This could suggest that IBSA can be one way that men perform masculinity with their peers, particularly through the sharing and exchanging of nude images of their female partners with friends. Again, this will be further explored in the following section on victimisation.

Overall, these findings support what was proposed under the framework of image-based sexual abuse at the start of this chapter. The literature review demonstrated how attitudes towards VAW develop under patriarchy, and how attitudes can be a tool in upholding patriarchy (Walby, 1989) and violence against women. This thesis has added to the knowledge base by exploring how pre-existing rape myths are influencing attitudes towards image-based sexual abuse, and how such rape myths are changing to incorporate forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence. These findings demonstrate how IBSA myths, and rape myths more broadly, can uphold male dominance and act to punish women who do not meet the expectation of their 'gender role' (Connell, 1987). Pervasive attitudes such as these can keep women, regardless of whether they have been directly victimised, in a state of subordination and prevent those who have experienced IBSA from taking action due to fear of victim blaming. Th relationship between attitudes towards IBSA and perpetration of IBSA is returned to in section 6.4.

The findings also have implications for how IBSA should be responded to, and suggest that wider societal attitudes, in addition to perpetrators and victims of IBSA, should be focused on if IBSA is to be prevented. I will return to how this might affect policy, legal and educational responses to IBSA in section 6.5.

Triangulating the SIAMA data with the interview findings and broader literature suggests that some of the survey measures have not fully captured attitudes towards IBSA. This suggests a potential limitation in the use of the survey scale items in sexual violence research. Given the subtle and nuanced attitudes displayed in interviews, the SIAMA scale may work more effectively if it was able to detect some of the more subtle myths about IBSA, similar to the work McMahon and Farmer (2011) did with regards to the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale. This will be returned to in Chapter 6.

The following section will explore IBSA victimisation, including how attitudes and experiences of IBSA are interlinked.

4.3 Victimisation

4.3.1 Introduction

This section seeks to explore experiences of IBSA victimisation, focusing on two research questions:

RQ1. *How is IBSA experienced?*

RQ3. *To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?*

The analysis presented here adds to existing literature on image-based sexual abuse (see chapter 2), with a particular focus on how gender intersects with victimisation and the extent to which this can be linked to patriarchy, as shown in the analytical framework (Figure 4). Most of the analysis is based on quantitative survey findings, however qualitative findings from interviews and qualitative survey responses are also drawn on. Two of these interviews involved participants who had directly experienced IBSA, and these are drawn on as case studies throughout the chapter. Other participants who spoke about IBSA victimisation that involved friends or acquaintances are also included here. Combining findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the analysis concludes by presenting a typology of victimisation.

One of the key contributions in this section is the introduction of a new term*, image-based abuse*, which has important differences compared to image-based *sexual* abuse. This term will be fully introduced under the victimisation typology, with the next section focusing on presenting an overview of victimisation. A further key contribution, linked to the findings of the typology, is to demonstrate through feminist research how IBSA is a gendered form of abuse despite the similar levels of victimisation reported in this survey as well as in some of the previous literature (Lenhart et al, 2016; Powell & Henry, 2016).

4.3.2 Overview of victimisation

The following section gives an overview of IBSA victimisation based predominantly on survey findings, aiming to paint a broad picture of IBSA experiences which will then be explored in greater detail under the typology in section 4.3.3.

The survey and interviews similarly explored whether participants had experienced IBSA, the form this took and their relationship to the perpetrator. What emerged from

the research was that IBSA victimisation is varied, from behaviours respondents perceived to be a *'joke'* with little impact on their life, to behaviours that aligned with forms of domestic abuse or sexual exploitation.

What does IBSA involve?

The survey and interviews focused on three main forms of image based sexual abuse (IBSA) victimisation which were:

1. Having a nude or sexual photo or video taken without knowledge

2. Having someone threaten to share a nude or sexual photo or video

3. Having someone share a nude or sexual photo or video without consent

Overall, 27.3% of survey respondents (n=117) reported experiencing at least one of these forms of IBSA, with the remaining 72.7% (n=312) not reporting any form of IBSA. The most commonly reported forms of IBSA victimisation by respondents were **having a nude or sexual image taken without their knowledge**, which a fifth of all respondents (20.0%) reported experiencing. Having someone threaten to share or share a nude or sexual photo was less common for respondents in this sample, with 8.6% and 7.5% of all respondents reporting experiencing these types of IBSA respectively. Participants who had experienced IBSA were also grouped into victimisation types using a two-step cluster analysis (as discussed in section 3.5). The chart below shows how respondents were grouped. It is important to note that being part of one IBSA type does not mean the respondent did not experience other forms of IBSA (for example, those who were in the multiple/severe IBSA group may have experienced threats to share image or images being taken without their consent). The groupings are further explored and interpreted in the following section.

Figure 10: IBSA victimisation
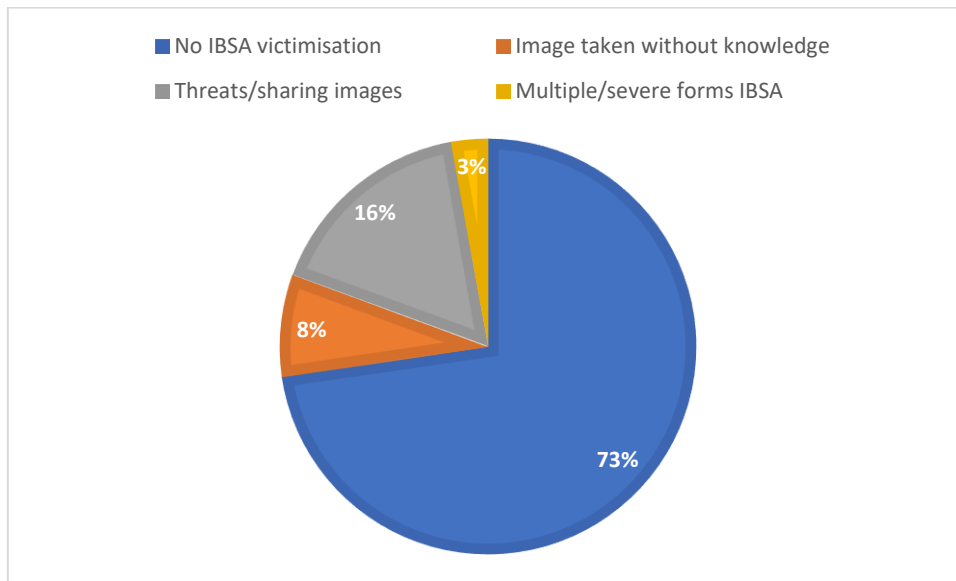
Of the respondents who had someone threaten to share a nude or sexual image, the perpetrator went on to share the photo in just over a quarter (27.3%) of cases. The majority of respondents said the nude or sexual image that they were threatened about had initially been taken consensually (69.4%), however a significant minority (30.6%) reported the photo or video had also been taken non-consensually. Respondents who had reported having a nude or sexual photo or video shared without their consent (n=32) were also asked further questions on their experience. Analysis showed that cases varied on whether the initial image had been taken consensually, with 18 of the respondents saying the image was initially consensual (60.0%) and 12 respondents (40.0%) saying the image had been taken without their consent. The mixture of consensual and non-consensual images suggests that there is significant variation in the ways IBSA is experienced.

For those who had an image shared without their consent, there were three main ways in which images had been shared: through physically showing the photo (46.9%, n=15), through WhatsApp (34.4%, n=11) and through social media sites such as Twitter or Facebook (31.3%, n=10). This is important to note, given the discussion in the previous section which suggested that forms of IBSA where photos are physically shown or shared via WhatsApp may be less well understood, compared to instances where photos are uploaded to pornography sites. To their knowledge, respondents reported the photo or video had been most commonly shared with the friends of the person who had shared the photo (71.9%, n=23).

Again, this may also be relevant to the fact that people regularly reported that male peer support was likely to be a motivator for perpetration in section 4.2. Similar numbers of respondents reported the photo had been shared with their own friends or family (n=6), acquaintances of the person who shared the photo (n=7) and strangers (n=6). The fact that physically showing the photos to others was the most common way to share the images suggests that responses to IBSA may need improving. As discussed in the literature review, much of the policy responses to IBSA are focused on cases where photos are disseminated online, rather than in-person. This will be further reflected on in the conclusion.

Who are the victims?

Victim characteristics

Victims' personal characteristics were explored in relation to experiences of IBSA. In this sample, respondents were generally similarly likely to have experienced IBSA regardless of gender, sexuality and disability. However, there were some differences that aligned with previous literature on sexual violence, such as the increased likelihood of experiencing sexual violence for black and ethnic minority women and for gay and bisexual men.

Gender is of particular relevance when exploring how IBSA fits within a broader spectrum of violence against women. As noted, men and women reported similar rates of IBSA victimisation (25.0% and 28.2% respectively). This is in line with some previous studies that found victimisation rates to be relatively equal across genders (Powell et al., 2019; Reed et al., 2016; Henry and Powell, 2016). Interestingly, this finding bears similarities to previous work that has used the same survey measurement of IBSA victimisation, such as Powell et al (2019) and Henry and Powell (2016). As discussed in the literature review, there are mixed findings on the relationship between gender and victimisation rate (Gamez-Guadix et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2015). As this study relies on a convenience sample, it is not possible to say whether the equal victimisation rate between men and women would be replicated at a societal level.

This finding leads to two further questions. Firstly, if men and women in this sample are equally likely to have experienced IBSA does this contradict the idea that IBSA is a form of gendered sexual violence, and secondly are there any other findings

relating to gender that could shed light on whether there were any differences in men and women's experiences. When breaking down the analysis by type of IBSA generated through the cluster analysis, there were gendered differences in the types of IBSA experienced by men and women. Male respondents were more likely to have experienced having a photo taken without their knowledge and have showering/toileting or bathing as the form of nudity in the image (14.6 of male respondents compared to 5.4% of female respondents). In comparison, female respondents were more likely to have experienced someone threatening to share a nude or sexual image or forms of 'relationship retribution' (19.6 compared to 8.3%) which may indicate women experience more severe forms of IBSA. These findings suggest that although there is a similar overall victimisation rate for men and women, the types of IBSA remain gendered. Further gendered differences between victimisation experiences will be highlighted throughout this section.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents experiencing IBSA victimisation by type and gender
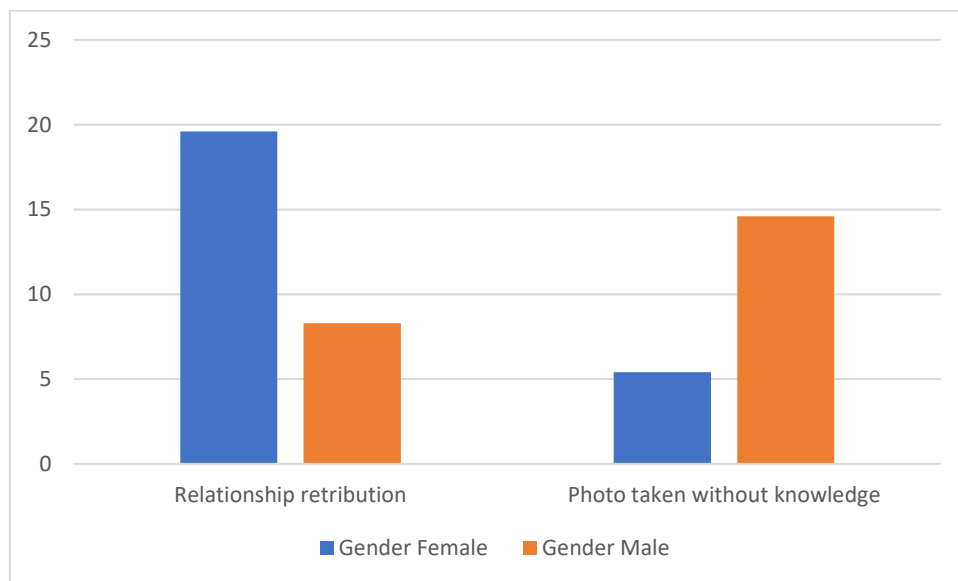
It is also important to consider the relationship between sexuality, gender and IBSA victimisation. Heterosexual women in this sample were somewhat more likely to have experienced IBSA compared to lesbian, bisexual or other sexual minority women, but this difference was small (29.2% compared to 25.0%). A greater difference was found when looking at the victimisation rates of heterosexual and sexual minority men. In total 37.0% of men who identified as a gay, bisexual or another sexual minority group had experienced IBSA compared to 20.3% of

heterosexual men. This suggests that being LGB+ was only a predictor of IBSA for men in this sample, whereas for women there was not a clear relationship between sexuality and likelihood of being victimised.

Interestingly, when comparing the IBSA victimisation rate of only **heterosexual** men and women, there was a clearer relationship between gender and victimisation, with 20.6% of heterosexual men having experienced IBSA (20.6%), compared to 29.6% of heterosexual women. Although this provides evidence of heterosexual women being more likely to experience IBSA, it is important to note that a fifth of heterosexual men had still experienced some form of IBSA indicating that, at least within this sample, levels of IBSA exceed those of other forms of sexual violence including sexual harassment (ONS, 2023b). The similarities and differences in men and women's experiences are further explored with the typology of IBSA. The relationship between gender and sexuality will also be returned to in section 4.4.

The survey also suggested that victims of IBSA were more likely to be from ethnic minority backgrounds (35.6% of ethnic minority respondents had experienced IBSA, compared to 26.3% of white respondents). When looking at ethnicity, gender and IBSA victimisation, analysis showed that this difference was particularly driven by **women** from an ethnic minority background being more likely to be victims of IBSA compared to white women (40.6% of ethnic minority women compared to 26.8% of white women). This is a substantial difference and further research is needed to explore whether this difference is upheld in a representative sample. In comparison, men were similarly likely to have experienced IBSA regardless of ethnicity. Due to the small sample size, it is not possible to provide robust analysis of specific ethnic group's experiences of victimisation, but this would also be an avenue for future research. The increased rates of victimisation for ethnic minority women is something that has been found both within the IBSA literature, and in broader literature on sexual violence (Lenhart et al, 2016; Langlois & Slane, 2017; Dodge, 2020; Powell et al., 2020). This also demonstrates the importance of intersectionality when exploring IBSA, a point which will be returned to in the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Victims of IBSA were more likely to have used online dating and engaged in consensual sexual messaging compared to non-victims. In total 42.7% of victims

were identified as frequently using technology in dating and sexual messaging, compared to 19.9% of other respondents. When looking at the relationship between ISBA victimisation and sexual messaging, there were differences depending on the gender of the respondent. Interestingly a higher proportion of men who had experienced IBSA victimisation reported low levels of sexual messaging (37.5%) compared to high levels of sexual messaging (29.2%). For women, however, those who were victims of IBSA had generally engaged in higher levels of sexual messaging (45.5%) compared to lower levels of sexual messaging (22.7%). This could indicate that men and women are experiencing different types of IBSA, with women's experiences of IBSA more likely to occur within an intimate relationship which involves sharing of sexual self-images at some stage. This also reflects the finding that the most common type of IBSA for men to experience was having a nude or sexual photo taken without their knowledge, which does not necessarily occur in the context of sexual messaging. Given women who engage in sexual self-messaging are substantially more likely to experience IBSA than women who do not, this may explain why the female interviewees in this study frequently spoke about precautions they took when sharing images online, even when this was not prompted. It may also help explain why IBSA was often viewed as an everyday experience or to be expected for those who engaged in things such as online dating, as discussed in section 4.2.

IBSA victims were also more likely to have experienced other non-consensual forms of sexual messaging, including being pressured to send nude images, receiving unsolicited nude images, and in the use of pornographic deepfakes. Three-quarters of those who had experienced IBSA had experienced high levels of non-consensual sexual messaging, compared to 42.0% of those who had not experienced IBSA. Looking at specific forms of non-consensual messaging, receiving an unsolicited nude or sexual image was particularly highly reported by all respondents, but particularly those who had experienced IBSA (78.6% compared to 44.9% of those who had not experienced IBSA). IBSA victims were also more likely to have sent someone a nude or sexual image when they really didn't want to (50.4%) or have been pressured into sending a nude or sexual image when they didn't want to (32.5%), compared to those who had not experienced IBSA (9.9% and 21.8% respectively).

Similarly to the relationship between gender and consensual sexual messaging, experiences of non-consensual messages were more common for women who had experienced IBSA compared to men. Of the women who had experienced IBSA, 84.1% had also experienced high levels on non-consensual sexual messaging compared to 45.8% of men who had experienced IBSA. This reflects the fact that women were more likely overall to receive non-consensual sexual messaging, but also may suggest that women's experience of IBSA may be more likely to fall into a pattern of abusive behaviour compared to men (as will be explored in the typology of IBSA).

The majority of those who had experienced IBSA also reported experiencing other types of victimisation (80.3%) including domestic abuse, sexual violence and online abuse. Experiencing these forms of victimisation was more common for IBSA victims, however those who had not experienced IBSA still reported high levels of other victimisation (62.2%). When looking at the specific types of victimisation, those who had experienced IBSA were particularly likely to have experienced both domestic and sexual violence (41.9%). This suggests that IBSA co-occurs with other forms of abuse, and that victims of IBSA are likely to have experienced polyvictimisation. In comparison, only 13.1% of those who had not experienced IBSA had experienced both sexual and domestic violence. When looking at the relationship between gender, IBSA and other forms of victimisation, both men and women who had experienced IBSA were more likely to have experienced other forms of victimisation. However, men who had experienced IBSA were substantially less likely to have experienced other forms of abuse compared to women who had experienced IBSA (41.7% of men had experienced no other forms of abuse, compared to 14.8% of women). This may suggest that IBSA more frequently occurs as an isolated act for men, compared to women.

Predictors of victimisation

Based on the analysis of victim characteristics, a logistic regression model was built to explore what predicted IBSA victimisation. The final iteration of the model retained five predictor variables: gender; ethnicity; consensual sexual messaging; non-consensual sexual messaging; domestic and sexual abuse. More detail on the

analysis carried out can be found in appendix E. Overall, these variables could account for 21.7% of the variation in whether someone had experienced IBSA.

Experiencing sexual and domestic violence and receiving non-consensual sexual messages were the biggest predictors of whether a participant had experienced IBSA. Engaging in consensual sexual messaging also meant participants were more likely to experience IBSA. With regards to gender, being male meant you were slightly less likely to experience IBSA victimisation compared to female respondents. Similarly, ethnicity had a small effect on likeliness of being a victim of IBSA, with respondents from ethnic minority groups more likely to have experienced IBSA compared to white respondents.

Who perpetrates IBSA?

Across all incidents of IBSA, the most common perpetrator was an ex-partner (37.6%). Other common types of relationships between IBSA victims and perpetrators included friends (26.5%), partners (17.9%) and acquaintances (14.5%). Depending on the type of IBSA experienced, victims reported differing types of perpetrators both in terms of relationship and gender as can be seen in the chart below. Full explanations of the different types of IBSA can be found in the victimisation typology in the following section. A further limitation that will be returned, is respondents being asked to classify their perpetrator using these pre-established groupings which may not fully reflect modern relationships and dating patterns.

Figure 12: Perpetrator by type of IBSA victimisation
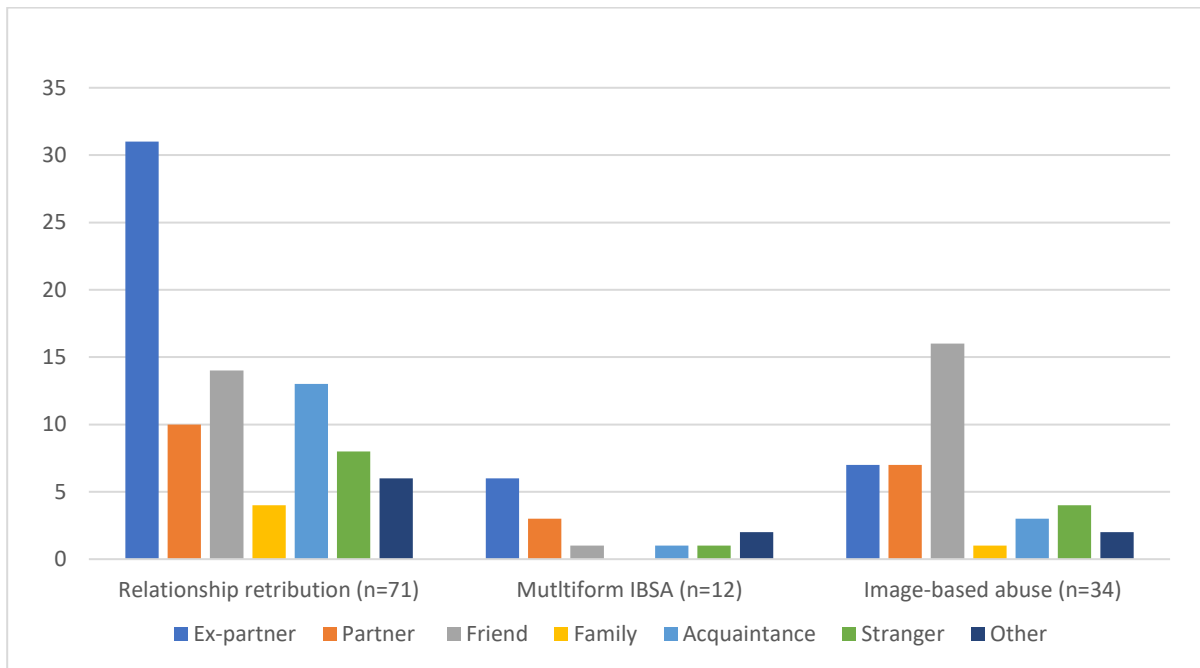
There were differences in perpetrator types depending on the victim's gender. Men were most likely to report the perpetrator was a friend (45.8%), whereas women were most likely to report that the perpetrator was an ex-partner (42.0%). Looking at the relationship between perpetrator gender and victim gender showed that female respondents were most likely to say the IBSA perpetrator was male (80.7%) whereas male respondents were most likely to say the perpetrator was a mixed group of males/females (33.3%). Women were least likely to say the perpetrators were a mixed gender group (8.0%). Where men identified the IBSA perpetrator as a single gender, they were more likely to be male (37.5%) than female (20.8%). These findings show that in this sample women were more likely to experience abuse from male ex-partners and men more likely to have experienced abuse from mixed gender groups of friends. When looking at the relationship between IBSA type, gender and perpetrator, analysis showed regardless of IBSA type a roughly equal proportion of women said the perpetrator was an ex-partner. Women who had a photo taken without their knowledge were more likely to say the perpetrator was a friend than for women who had experienced other types of IBSA, however they were still less likely to say that the perpetrator was a friend compared to men who had experienced the same form of IBSA.

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When asked about the gender of the perpetrator, for 67.5% of cases the perpetrator was male, for 12.5% of cases the perpetrator was female and 10.6% involved a mixed group of males and females. There were also cases where the respondent did not know the gender of the perpetrator (7.5%). The fact that men were the sole perpetrators in 67.5% of cases demonstrates that IBSA is a gendered phenomenon, regardless of the proportion of men and women who are victims. This is similar to previous studies of IBSA which found that men were more commonly perpetrators of IBSA (Hall and Hearn, 2017; Garcia et al., 2016). For example, Powell et al. (2019) found that men had 78% greater odds of perpetrating IBSA compared to women. Despite this, more than 1 in 10 instances of IBSA captured in the survey were perpetrated by women. Although a comparatively small group, the analytical framework put forward in Chapter 2 that focuses on the role of patriarchy in IBSA perpetration may struggle to explain this proportion of female perpetrators. This will be returned to in the typology.

The survey also asked respondents whether they had ever perpetrated any forms of IBSA, and 5.4% (n=23) of respondents shared that they had either taken a photo without someone's knowledge (n=16), threatened to share a nude or sexual image of someone (n=1), or shared a nude or sexual image of someone without their consent (n=7). Interestingly, over half of those who were classified as perpetrators of IBSA had also been classified as victims of IBSA within the survey (n=15, 65.2% of perpetrators), which also makes up 12.8% of those classified as victims within this survey sample (n=117). This is a relatively common finding across studies on IBSA, suggesting that there is potentially more of a blurred line between victimisation and perpetration than for other forms of sexual violence. This corresponds with previous findings in the literature, as discussed in chapter 2.

Men in the sample were more likely to report perpetrating IBSA (7.3%) compared to women (4.8%) however this difference is smaller than reported for other forms of sexual abuse. For example, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (ONS, 2023B) reports men as the perpetrators in 98% of cases involving assault by penetration. Looking at this in more detail, the respondents who had reported sharing a photo without consent were all women (n=7) and gave their reasons for sharing the photo as either bonding with friends (n=5) or for a joke or entertainment (n=2). These findings somewhat contradict the findings from the victimisation section of the

survey. For those who had been victims of IBSA, the majority of perpetrators were men and this proportion of male perpetrators tended to increase when looking at the most severe forms of IBSA, such as sharing photos. However, the findings that asked respondents about their own IBSA perpetration seem to show the opposite pattern. It is worth reiterating here that the survey sample included more women (n=312) than men (n=96) which may partially account for the discrepancy in the findings. Previous survey research on sexual violence has also found that men tend to minimise their perpetration of violence, whereas women do the opposite, and that this can impact on perpetration statistics (Johnson, 2011). This may similarly impact the findings reported on here. The discussion around how this finding impacts on the idea of IBSA being a gendered phenomenon resulting from the patriarchy and on defining IBSA victimisation and perpetration will be returned to within the discussion.

For those who had taken a nude or sexual image of someone without their knowledge (n=16), the main reasons for doing so were for a joke or entertainment (n=8) or sexual gratification (n=6). For the respondent who had threatened to share a nude or sexual image of someone, they reported this was done to a stranger in order 'to stop someone from doing something', similar to forms of sextortion which were identified in the IBSA typology discussed in chapter 2. Overall, the most common perpetration motivations reported were 'for a joke or entertainment' or 'to bond with friends'.

These findings were somewhat reflected in the interviews, which highlighted that IBSA perpetration is a complex phenomenon and although there are instances which involve ex-partners sharing photos as a form of relationship retribution, there can be many other reasons for someone sharing a photo non-consensually as is highlighted in the quotes below.

'Well I guess technically that's been me… I used a photo of a random girl online when I wasn't comfortable sending a photo myself. I've never really thought of it like that before which I guess is a bit bad but that was my motivation' – Interview participant

'They [men who perpetrate IBSA] think it's funny, it's like a status symbol…' – Interview participant

There was also a suggestion that although sharing photos for purposes of revenge was done to explicitly cause harm, some photo taking and sharing was not intended to be harmful:

'Not everyone has really malicious intent behind it, but it's not the right thing to do' – Interview participant

How does IBSA affect victims?

Those who were identified as having experienced IBSA victimisation were asked about the impacts of their experience. Respondents who had experienced IBSA victimisation reported a range of impacts on their mental wellbeing (n=104), the most common being low self-esteem (37.5%), anxiety (35.6%), loss of confidence (35.6%) and feeling afraid (33.7%). Although many respondents reported a range of mental health impacts, 42.3% reported no impacts on their mental health. When exploring impacts by type of IBSA, there were clear differences between groups. For example, those who had a photo taken of them without consent, commonly on the toilet or in the shower, were more likely to report no impacts on their mental health. This is another issue which is explored through the typology.

Figure 13: Types of impacts by IBSA type
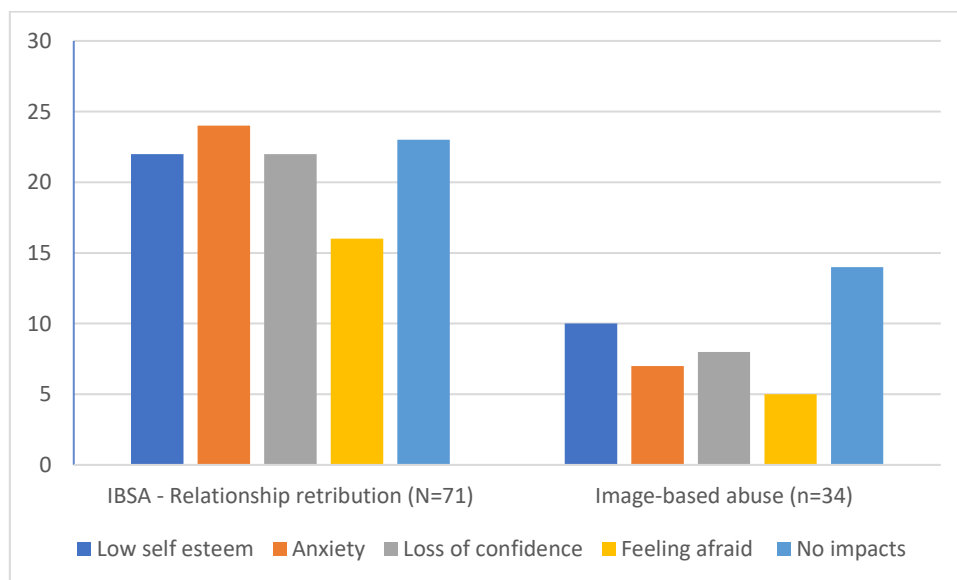
There were also different impacts reported by victims of IBSA dependent on their gender. Women tended to report a greater number of impacts on their mental health compared to male respondents. Overall, 45.8% of men reported no mental health impacts following the IBSA, compared to 34.1% of women. This could potentially be

due to women being more likely to experience severe forms of IBSA or receiving harsher societal judgment due to their gender (as discussed in chapter 2). Alternatively it could be because of the stigma around disclosing mental health issues for male respondents. Although some of these differences could be explained by differences in the type of IBSA women and men experienced, further analysis showed that the different impacts for men and women prevailed regardless of the type of IBSA experienced.

Similar impacts were reported by the two interviewees who disclosed experiences of IBSA, including feelings of fear and self-blame.

'I've calmed down now, but when it initially happened I was extremely nervous that he may do something nasty. I was like literally looking through websites to see where he might have uploaded the video and just try to report anything…' - Interview Participant

'I don't feel like it was entirely my fault now, I think there were things I should have done differently and I think erm at large it's mainly his fault… But I still feel like a little part of it was my own fault for being a bit reckless' - Interview Participant

Both the survey and interview responses highlighted that experiencing IBSA had impacts on personal relationships. Those who had experienced IBSA victimisation were more likely to report they had difficulty around trust in relationships (64.1%) compared to those who had not (49.7%). They were also slightly more likely to have experienced difficulties around intimacy (46.2% compared to 40.1%). When looking at these variables by gender, women were overall more likely than men to have experienced difficulties with trust (54.5% compared to 43.8%) and intimacy (44.6% and 28.1%).

'It made me very distrusting of people…' - Interview participant

Interview respondents who had experienced IBSA spoke about how it had impacted on their trust in future relationships and at some points made them withdraw from intimate relationships entirely. They also spoke about being more cautious around taking and sharing nude or sexual images and when dating online.

As has been found in previous literature on the impacts of IBSA, the ongoing nature of IBSA victimisation and the difficulties this causes for victims was raised in

interviews. There was a sense that the abuse was never-ending, with victims having to constantly check websites to ensure any images of themselves were taken down and the fear that images could resurface at any point. The police response to such incidents did not help with this, giving a sense that victims were responsible for finding their own images and requesting to have them taken down. This is something that websites were not always responsive to and may have taken more seriously had the police been involved. This is demonstrated by the quotes below.

'I managed to get the police involved after that but erm they never really did anything I sorted it myself because the person was selling more pictures of me sharing my phone number and my snapchat username erm so I managed to sort it all out myself but now erm I'm very hesitant about what I do…' - Interview participant

'I was like literally looking through websites to see where he might have uploaded the video and just try to report anything' – Interview participant

Responses to IBSA

A small amount of information was collated on responses to IBSA by institutions, in particular by the police. One of the interview participants who had experienced IBSA had reported the incidents to the police. For them, this has been a negative experience where they had experienced victim blaming, as was discussed in section 4.2. The other participant had not gone to the police due to her perception that nothing would be done

'I think if he had published [the video taken without consent] I would have contacted sites to get it taken down but I don't think I'd go to the police because I don't think they would have done anything to take it seriously. Based on what he's told me, based on what police officers, friends have told me, unless there is physical assault, when it comes to just emotional and psychological violence in most cases it's there's rarely anything done unless it's very very severe' – Interview participant

Educational responses were also asked about during interviews. Many spoke about how there was little education when they were in school on the topic of technology-facilitated sexual violence, with some respondents feeling like they had missed the opportunity to learn about it as it was perceived to be less prevalent at times. The quote from the participant below shows how education can be empowering for those

who are victims of IBSA, in comparison to some of the aforementioned negative interactions with police.

'I was taking a media and law module last term in the autumn term and we actually covered this whole topic so when it happened I actually knew exactly which laws they were breaking erm like how long they could go to prison for so I think it was that particular module and university that helped me be a lot more aware' – Interview participant

Many in the interviews described their first experiences of IBSA or online sexual harassment as starting in secondary school, particularly around the ages of 12 and 13 years old. This suggests that educational institutions are likely to have an important role to play in responding to IBSA along with other forms of online sexual harassment, such as sending unsolicited nude photos.

Discussion

This analysis provides a starting point for understanding IBSA victimisation at a high level. Over a quarter of survey respondents had experienced some form of IBSA, with this being more highly reported by respondents who engaged in sexual messaging or who had experienced other types of victimisation. The strongest predictor of IBSA victimisation was experiences of other forms of sexual and domestic violence. Experiences of consensual and non-consensual sexual messaging was also associated with victimisation.

A key finding from this analysis is the variation in IBSA experiences. For example, the majority of perpetrators were described as ex-partners or partners (55.5%), however over a quarter were described as being a friend of the victim (26.5%), suggesting that IBSA had occurred in different settings. This was also true of the impacts reported by victims, with most citing a range of impacts to their mental health but a substantial minority (42.3%) reporting no impacts. The next stage of the analysis therefore sought to understand whether the differing experiences of IBSA could be grouped in a way that allowed a more nuanced understanding of different forms of victimisation.

A further contribution of this section is to begin to evidence the gendered nature of IBSA, and highlight similar patterns in experiences to other forms of sexual violence.

For example, women being most likely to report an ex-partner as a perpetrator, the high prevalence of male perpetrators, and the fact that black and minority ethnic women were more likely to have experienced IBSA than white women all parallel well-reported characteristics of other forms of sexual violence (see Chapter 2). Using the analytical framework to interpret these findings, a feminist approach would suggest that the presence of patriarchal social structures that promote a gender order and hegemonic forms of masculinity are likely to explain some of the gendered differences between men and women's experiences of IBSA. This will now be further explored through the use of a typology of victimisation.

4.3.3 Typology of victimisation

In the following section, I put forward two key types of victimisation based on the data collected through the survey and interviews[4]. These are broadly categorised as image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) and image-based abuse (IBA), with the distinguishing feature being that IBSA has a clearly gendered and sexual element, aligning with other forms of sexual violence, whereas instances of IBA do not always follow this pattern. There are several key distinctions between these behaviours that led to this distinction, particularly when looking at **IBSA type, perpetrator type, victim gender, other experiences of sexual and domestic violence and impacts of the abuse.** however there are also within-group differences that will be explored through the use of sub-categories. Table 7 below gives an overview of the key features for each type of victimisation, as well as the characteristics of those who did not experience IBSA or IBA. These categories provide further evidence on the relationship between gender and IBSA, as well as having implications for how the overarching findings presented in section 4.3.2 should be interpreted. Importantly, in using the feminist analytical framework presented earlier in the chapter (Figure 4) it is possible to connect the findings to gendered patterns in sexual violence and technology use.

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[4] The groupings presented are particularly based on a two-step cluster analysis. Although this analysis generated 3 clusters of IBSA victims, two of these clusters are presented under the 'Type 1 – IBSA' umbrella based on similarities between them, as well as further evidence from the interviews and analysis.

Table 7: Overview of victimisation types

	Image-based sexual abuse	Image-based abuse	No victimisation
Personal characteristics	• More likely for women to experience in this cohort.	• More likely for men to experience in this cohort.	• Roughly equal proportion of men and women • Ethnic minority respondents less likely to be in this group.
Sexual messaging	• Victims have often experienced consensual and non-consensual sexual messaging (e.g. sharing photos with a partner, receiving unsolicited nude photos).	• Less frequently reported engaging in any form of sexual messaging compared to IBSA victims.	• Least likely to have engaged in sexual messaging.
Type of abuse	• Often involves having someone threaten to share a nude/sexual image that was initially taken consensually • Sometimes photos are uploaded to pornography sites, either by the initial perpetrator or by someone else.	• Often involves having a nude or sexual image taken without the victim's knowledge. • Image is often taken in less sexual contexts, such as on the toilet, showering or bathing.	-
Impacts of abuse	• Victims likely to report negative impacts. • Feelings of fear and anxiety	• Victims experience fewer impacts to their wellbeing.	-
Perpetrator characteristics	• Typically 'ex-partners' or acquaintances. • Majority of perpetrators are men.	• Often 'friends' of the victim. • More likely to involve a group of perpetrators.	-
Perpetrator motivation	• Suggestion motivations are linked to control and revenge	• Abuse is often seen to be a 'joke' or not a form of sexual abuse by victims.	-
Other forms of abuse	• Likely to have experienced other forms of sexual and domestic violence.	• Less likely to have experienced other forms of victimisation than victims of IBSA.	• Least likely to have experienced any other forms of victimisation.

<u>Type 1 – 'Image-based sexual abuse'</u>

A two-step cluster analysis was used to establish the typology presented here. The type of IBSA being discussed in this section can broadly be classified as IBSA in the context of intimate relationships. Overall, 70.9% of IBSA victimisation reported in the survey can be classed as what is commonly understood by the term 'IBSA', frequently occurring within the context of intimate relationships or with a clear sexual element. Within the overarching 'IBSA' category, there were two sub-types identified. The first of these is relationship retribution (similar to 'revenge porn') and the second is multiform abuse, where IBSA is part of a broader pattern of domestic and sexual violence. Both of these types were identified through the use of cluster analysis. Relationship retribution was the most common form of IBSA identified within this sample. Comparatively, only a small number of respondents reported experiencing multiple forms of IBSA, sexual violence and domestic violence. The following section presents the analysis that underpins these sub-types.

Respondents who were classed as experiencing 'IBSA' were likely to be women, with 80% of women who had experienced IBSA falling into either the 'relationship retribution' or 'multiform abuse' sub-type. Respondents had also often experienced others forms of sexual and domestic violence as well as experiencing high levels of consensual and non-consensual sexual messaging. Perpetrators were typically ex-partners or acquaintances, and the majority were men.

<u>Relationship retribution</u>

This sub-type of IBSA is typically used in intimate relationships as a way to control or punish a victim by threatening to share or sharing nude or sexual images of them. Respondents who were part of this group were the most likely to have experienced threats to share images and were part of the most common victimisation group in the survey analysis (n=71). The analysis presented below uses this group of respondents as a basis for exploring experiences of 'revenge porn' by participants.

There are several key characteristics of this group which suggest it should be treated as a specific type. Respondents in this group often experienced a pattern of behaviour comparative to 'revenge porn' (here called relationship retribution) where images which are often initially taken or shared consensually are then used to coerce or control the victim. For example, for victims who had someone threaten to

share an image of them, 72.4% had initially shared the photo consensually with a partner. Additionally, in 29.6% of cases the person who had threatened to share the photo **did** go on to share it.

This type of IBSA was also the most common for women to experience, with 69.3% of all women who were victims falling into this group. In comparison, a third of all male victims (33.3%) had experienced this type of IBSA. In terms of perpetrator gender, 79% of perpetrators were men which is higher than for other types of victimisation captured in this study. The fact that ex-partners were particularly likely to be perpetrators for this type of abuse may also reflect the use of IBSA to control or punish the victim. In 43.6% of cases the perpetrator was classified as an ex-partner and in a further 14.1% of cases the perpetrator was classified as a partner, suggesting over half of cases involved an intimate relationship (see Figure 12). Overall, this builds a picture of a heavily gendered form of IBSA with parallels to other forms of gendered sexual violence.

Interestingly, victims were also more likely to class the perpetrator as an acquaintance compared to other IBSA types presented here (18.3%). This reflects the experience of one of the interviewees, who had someone she had met through a dating site, but would not class as a partner, share images of her when she did not want to take the relationship further. The higher proportion of perpetrators that were classed as acquaintances in this group may also reflect the limits of the survey measures, for example although the below participant was engaged in a sexual encounter with the perpetrator, she did not class him as being a partner or ex-partner.

'It was someone who I'd been talking to and they kept pressurising me to go out with them and I wasn't really looking for anything at that time' - Interview Participant

Another defining characteristic of those in this group was the likelihood to have engaged in higher levels of consensual sexual messaging (87.0%) as well as a particularly high level of non-consensual sexual messaging (81.7%), such as being pressured into sending nude or sexual images. Linked to findings discussed in section 4.2, as this IBSA type is most likely to be experienced by women, this may demonstrate the necessity of engaging in online safety work for women.

Negative impacts were common for victims in this group. Feelings of fear were commonly reported by victims of this type of IBSA (31.0%) alongside anxiety (33.8%), potentially linked to the fact the perpetrator had often threatened to share their photos. A participant who experienced this type of abuse spoke about how it had led to difficulties in trusting partners in new relationships:

'I've just been a lot less trusting of who I talk to and like even now if the guy I'm talking to ever asks for something like that [a nude photo] I tell them of my experiences and that I wouldn't want to engage in an activity like that until I really trusted you and that would take maybe a few months' - Interview Participant

Perpetrator motivation is a key element of this type of IBSA, although this was hard to establish through the survey data alone. One participant who had experienced this type of IBSA spoke about motives that aligned with so-called '*revenge porn*', where someone shares a photo to punish or control the victim, in this case because he felt that she had 'led him on':

'I did speak to the one who sent them out the first time and he said he just felt like I'd led him on even though I'd clearly told him from like the start I don't really want anything like I can be friends with you but nothing more but he kept pushing it' – Interview Participant

A further way in which this type of IBSA can be experienced is through the sharing and trading of images through online pornography sites, WhatsApp groups and Google drives, with the main purpose being financial or social gains and sexual gratification. Evidence from the interviews suggested this may be an important sub-category of what has been termed 'relationship retribution' here, although data on this was not collected through the survey. Often in such scenarios, the victim may not know (all) of the perpetrators or be aware that the image of them has been uploaded.

'There was moment in like Cardiff uni culture where if people were having like drunken casual [sexual] encounters the boys would film them having sex and then that would then do the rounds' – Interview participant

'A lot of people's boyfriends have group chats where they're sending around people's nudes' – Interview participant

The interviews highlighted that further evidence is needed on this form of IBSA. One interview participant shared her experience of having her photos uploaded to an online pornography site by an unknown perpetrator, which she only became aware of after someone recognised and informed her. What she, and other interviewees, shared suggests that this is a pervasive issue which pornography and other internet sites are not addressing:

'It was quite shocking even now after I've had it sorted I still think 'were there any more sites?' because it had only been up for a few days but I think like the number of people who had seen it were in their thousands... And I think what's worse is that whilst I was looking for my own pictures there were so many pictures of other girls who were underage or pictures that had definitely been uploaded without someone's consent and I think it's just a much wider problem that like pornography websites need to tackle themselves or the government needs to get involved and make stricter laws about this' – Interview Participant

Other participants spoke about knowing about friends or acquaintances where photos had been uploaded to pornography sites or organised Google drives. Despite not coming out strongly in the survey, this is clearly something distressing for victims and of concern for women who have not experienced IBSA directly as the quote below demonstrates. A common theme of these types of experiences was the organised nature of the sites where people could easily and anonymously share photos with each other. This could sometimes involve targeting specific groups of women, as in the examples below where photos were being shared of local women and also women from a particular university.

'At the time this happened there was a website online where people regularly shared photos of local girls in their area and asked other to do the same, all of the posters where anonymous so I kind of felt lucky at the time that mine had only been shared on WhatsApp rather than on this website' – Survey respondent

'We [a group of students] were all just scrolling through hoping not to find ourselves on there [google drive]…' Interview Participant

For the interview participant who had experienced this type of IBSA, one of the most distressing elements of their experience was the difficulty in getting the photo removed from the pornography site. Confusion around what had happened and what

to do was also spoken about by interviewees who had friends that had experienced this type of IBSA. Part of this seemed to stem from the fact this type of IBSA did not necessarily fit with the narrative of victims of revenge porn (arguably the most well-known form of IBSA) where victims often know who the perpetrator was, as was discussed in section 4.2.

Multiform abuse

The other type of abuse identified through the cluster analysis that can be categorised as IBSA, is best described as IBSA that occurs alongside multiple forms of abuse. The analysis presented here is highly descriptive due to the small number of respondents within this group (n=12). One interviewee also shared their experience of IBSA which aligned with this group. Further research is needed to fully establish this type of IBSA.

Of the 12 survey respondents in this group, nine respondents had experienced a mixture of domestic and sexual violence in addition to IBSA, and only one respondent reported experiencing no other forms of abuse. In terms of the types of IBSA experienced, respondents were also likely to have experienced multiple forms of IBSA (including severe forms such as sharing nude or sexual images). Victims in this group were likely to have experienced high levels of non-consensual sexual messaging (n=10). Although from the survey it is not possible to tell which instances of abuse co-occurred, these victims can be seen as experiencing particularly high levels of abusive behaviours. For respondents who had experienced this form of abuse, the majority classed their perpetrator as a partner or ex-partner (n=9) and 75% of perpetrators were men. Based on the small numbers within this sample, there is some evidence of this being a more gendered form of IBSA with most victims being women (n=10) and most perpetrators being reported as men (n=9).

One interviewee discussed their experience of an abusive relationship which, amongst other behaviours, involved her ex-partner covertly recording her during sex. This was part of a wider pattern of abuse, as the quote below shows, and is indicative of the types of experiences those within this group may have.

'*He started off really nice but then it kind of built up and it was always this abusive cycle… [he'd] tell me like 'look at you, you're crazy, it's you doing this' and basically*

just like turning the tables and then suddenly become very nice and apologetic… it would happen over and over again.' - Interview participant

In terms of impacts, 9 participants reported experiencing a range of impacts to their wellbeing following the abuse. Particularly common were anxiety (n=5), feelings of fear (n=5) and low self-esteem (n=6). More severe impacts such as PTSD (n=3) were reported by people within this group. The fact that these participants had experienced multiple forms of abuse may explain the range of impacts they experienced. The quote below highlights the feelings of fear that come with experiencing ISBA within an abusive relationship.

'When it initially happened I was extremely nervous that he may do something nasty…' - Interview participant

Overall, this grouping suggests that some victim of IBSA will have experienced extremely high levels of abusive behaviours (either as part of or prior to the abuse). This type of repeat victimisation is important to consider when building an understanding of what contexts IBSA occurs within.

Summary

The experiences of victims of this type of IBSA broadly align with previous research on IBSA. In terms of experiences, the fact that the majority occurred in the context of intimate relationships, often alongside other forms of abuse, suggests that this form of IBSA also aligns with other forms of sexual violence, as was theorised based on Kelly's continuum of violence. This will be returned to in greater detail in the following chapter.

Type 2 – 'Image-based abuse'

The type of victimisation presented in this section has been renamed as 'image-based abuse'. Rather than being seen as a type of IBSA, this analysis suggests that the survey has also captured a range of behaviours that are better viewed as distinct to IBSA as they are less clearly sexual in nature. Respondents in this group were likely to have experienced having photos taken without their knowledge (based on the IBSA type cluster analysis) outside of intimate relationships. Perpetrators were often 'friends' of the victim, and often multiple perpetrators were involved in taking or distributing images. Men who were classified as experiencing 'IBSA' were most likely

to fall into this group. As will be shown in the qualitative analysis, men and boys may be victims of image-based abuse as a form of shaming or bullying, and some may not view this as a form of abuse at all.

This group was first identified using a cluster analysis of survey responses, which split those who had experienced IBSA into groups depending on their characteristics. For survey respondents in this group (n=34), analysis showed that their experiences often differed to the forms of IBSA discussed both in the previous section and in the broader IBSA literature. Further evidence for this grouping was found in the interviews, where participants spoke about experiences that aligned with the survey analysis.

In terms of victim characteristics, men who had experienced IBSA were most likely to fall into this group of survey respondents (58.3% of all male victims). Men were almost three times as likely as women to be in this category (5.4% of women compared 14.6% of men), although women still accounted for over half of the victims in this group of survey respondents (53.1%). This is an important distinction from the other victimisation types discussed in this section.

There were also several distinctive characteristics of the perpetrators for this group. Perpetrators were most commonly described as a 'friend' to the victim (47.1%) and were less likely to be an ex-partner compared to other types of IBSA (20.6% of cases, compared to 37.6% for all victims). The gender of perpetrators was more likely to be a mixed group of men and women (20.6%). Although the survey did not specifically ask about the number of perpetrators involved, the fact a fifth of respondents reported a mixed gender group were perpetrators suggests there is a specific type of image-based abuse (IBA) that is likely to occur within groups of friends, differing to IBSA that occurs within intimate relationships.

A further justification for the separation of this as a form of IBA is victims' experiences of other forms of victimisation for this group. Generally, experiences of non-consensual sexual messaging, as well as domestic and sexual abuse were lower for those who had experienced IBA compared to IBSA. A substantial portion of those who had experienced IBA had either not experienced non-consensual messaging or experienced this at a lower level (41.2%). This was particularly the case for male respondents in this group. A larger proportion (29.4%) of those in this

group had not experienced any other forms of sexual, domestic or online abuse, compared to those who had experienced IBSA. This suggests there is a victim group who experienced IBA in relative isolation from other abusive behaviours.

Finally, the impacts of IBA also appeared to differ from those for victims of IBSA, with 45.2% of respondents reporting no direct impacts from the IBA. The most frequent impacts on wellbeing were a low self-esteem (32.2%) and a loss of confidence (25.8%). Despite lower impacts on wellbeing overall, this group were more likely to report difficulties in relationships, such as having difficulties around trust (70.9%) and intimacy (54.8%). Some of the possible reasons for this are explored in the IBA sub-types below. Although further data is needed to properly establish these groups, the evidence from the surveys and interviews suggested that IBA experiences could be further classified as either 'banter and camaraderie' or cyberbullying.

'Banter' and camaraderie

It was clear from the qualitative analysis that some people who had photos taken without their knowledge did not always view this as abuse, or even harmful behaviour. In these instances, perpetrator motives were seen to have to joke or to bond with friends, reflecting the fact that the most common perpetrator type for this group was 'friend'. One male participant who had disclosed having a nude photo taken without his consent shared:

'*Any pictures taken by me or of me when people were passed out drunk as a joke or entertainment to be looked back upon. They have not been maliciously shared to anyone*' – Survey respondent

A further interview participant also shared that their partner had taken a photo of them in the bath which was then put on Snapchat, but this was not seen as being abusive or harmful to the participant, instead being viewed as something funny. These qualitative insights may help explain why those in this group were less likely to experience direct impacts from the IBA (45.2%). Although this may not have impacted respondents in the same way as forms of IBSA, using the analytical framework produced through the literature review it is possible to still connect the underlying causes of these behaviours to those for IBSA. In particular, the role of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity and how this affects men's relationships with one another. In some contexts, these behaviours may be seen as friendly or joking

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but they can also stray into the policing of masculinity and bullying, as will now be discussed.

Cyberbullying

A relatively large proportion of respondents in this group reported that the abuse involved a group of perpetrators, which could suggest it occurred in the context of bullying. In addition, where respondents reported impacts from the IBA, this was likely to involve a loss of confidence or self-esteem, with difficulties in relationships also commonly reported. This again could be linked to having experienced a form of cyberbullying, rather than IBSA.

Some evidence was captured in the interviews on the use of IBA as way to bully or harass someone:

'I know someone who got catfished by two lads trying to have a joke with him, they were pretending to be a girl and had him [perform a sexual act] on webcam' – Interview participant

Although further qualitative evidence is needed to explore experiences from the survey, this form of IBA would fit with the pattern of other forms of male victimisation, where men are particularly like to be victimised to encourage conformity with forms of hegemonic masculinity. Overall, analysis from both the survey and interview responses suggests that this is a useful conceptual group when looking at how IBSA is experienced, but that even within this group there appear to be different experiences of IBA as demonstrated by those in this group not reporting any impacts of the abuse (or viewing their experience as a joke) whereas others reporting impacts to their wellbeing.

Summary

The experiences of this group differ substantially to instances of IBSA discussed in the previous section, and this raises a broader question on whether all instances of 'IBSA' victimisation measured in the survey should all be classified as such.

Given that many of these instances do not appear to have involved sexual behaviour or a sexual act, an argument has been made to reclassify this type of behaviour as **image-based abuse**. The complex relationship between nude photos and sexual abuse is explored further in the discussion. Although this form of abuse differs from

other forms of sexual violence, it can still be linked back to the broader analytical framework and understood from a feminist perspective (see Figure 14).

It is important to note that this group of participants, generated by the cluster analysis, had some mixed characteristics. For example, some abuse occurred within intimate relationships and was more sexual in nature. However the survey findings have still demonstrated that within this group of participants there are victims who would be better categorised as experiencing image-based abuse, rather than the type of IBSA discussed in the previous section.

4.3.4 Respondents who did not experience IBSA

The majority (72.7%) of participants in this research had not experienced IBSA and this section briefly summarises key characteristics of this group. In terms of gender, 71.8% of female respondents and 75.0% of male respondents were classified as not having experienced IBSA. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds were less likely to be in this group (64.4%) compared to white respondents (73.7%), and as discussed previously this was particularly driven by women from ethnic minority backgrounds being more likely to experience IBSA.

In terms of consensual sexual messaging, those in this group less frequently engaged in high levels of sexual messaging compared to those in other groups (37%). This suggests that engaging in sexual messaging may increase chances of victimisation, which links to the fact that many images used in IBSA are initially taken or shared consensually. However, when breaking this finding down by gender, it appeared that men were more likely to be able to engage in sexual messaging without experienced IBSA. As has been discussed, this may indicate that sending sexual messages is more 'risky' for women than men, as a higher proportion of men were able to engage in sexual messaging whilst not becoming a victim of IBSA.

Over half of respondents in this group had received either no or low-levels of non-consensual sexual messages (58%). Although 42% had experienced high levels of non-consensual messaging, this was lower than for those who had experienced IBSA. When looking at this by gender, men in this group reported experiencing lower levels of non-consensual messaging compared to women. Overall, this suggests that this group experienced lower rates of technology-facilitated sexual harassment, but that this still depends on the gender of the respondent. Perhaps most importantly this

finding suggests technology-facilitated forms of sexual harassment are extremely prevalent across all groups.

Finally, when looking at other forms of victimisation like sexual and domestic violence, those who had not experienced IBSA less frequently reported experiencing other forms of abuse. Overall, 37.1% reported experiencing no other form of victimisation and only 13.1% were grouped as having experienced both sexual and domestic violence.

This analysis suggests there are key characteristics associated with not experiencing IBSA, including lower levels of consensual and non-consensual sexual messaging, fewer experiences of other forms of domestic and sexual violence and some personal characteristics including being male or white.

4.3.5 Attitudes and IBSA victimisation

Analysis was carried out to explore whether IBSA victimisation corresponded with attitudes towards IBSA. A Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to explore whether the average score for Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale was different for those who had and had not experienced IBSA. Interestingly, those who had experienced IBSA had a higher mean rank (172.35, n=95) than those who had not experienced IBSA (166.98, n=241). This means that those who had experienced IBSA were more likely to minimise the harms of IBSA and blame victims.

This finding could partially be due to the uniformity in responses to the SIAMA questions which meant that the averages were relatively similar across all groups. However, the results from a Kruskal-Wallis test in the table below suggest that the endorsement of IBSA myths is dependent on the specific type of IBSA victimisation. Those who have experienced types of IBSA such as relationship retribution or multiple types of IBSA were either similarly or less likely to endorse IBSA myths than those who had not experienced IBSA. Comparatively, those who had experienced what was broadly categorised as image-based abuse (IBA) had higher levels of agreement with IBSA myths and victim blaming.

Table 8: IBSA victimisation type by SIAMA mean rank

IBSA victimisation type	SIAMA Mean Rank	N
IBSA - Relationship retribution	163.62	57
IBSA - Multiform IBSA	142.95	11
IBA	202.74	27
No IBSA victimisation	166.98	241
Total		336

More men had been categorised as experiencing IBA compared to women and, as was shown earlier in section 4.2, men overall tended to endorse IBSA myths and victim blaming slightly more than women in this sample. This is likely to partially account for the higher SIAMA rank for those who had experienced IBA. However, when exploring the attitudes of women specifically, the Kruskall-Wallis test also showed that women who had experienced IBA were more likely to endorse IBSA myths (mean rank=165.57, n=14) when compared to women who had not experienced IBSA (mean rank=125.63, n=180), although it is worth noting the small sample size for this group. Along with the evidence discussed in the previous section, this provides further justification for treating this form of IBA and IBSA as different groups of behaviours.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there were 23 respondents who reported perpetrating some form of IBSA. Looking at the attitudes of this group, there was a greater endorsement of IBSA myths and victim blaming by those who had perpetrated IBSA (Mann-Whitney mean rank=205.74, n=21) compared to those who had not perpetrated IBSA (Mann-Whitney mean rank=166.02, n=315). As noted in chapter 2, literature on attitudes towards sexual violence generally has generally found that individuals who show greater levels of myth acceptance generally are also more likely to have perpetrated forms of sexual violence (Flood and Pease, 2009). This finding therefore aligns with previous research on attitudes towards sexual violence, although this finding is based on a small sample size.

4.4 Gender and Image-Based Sexual Abuse

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that IBSA can be seen as a gendered phenomenon in a similar way to other forms of violence against women. As shown in the analytical framework (Figure 14), IBSA is affected by broader cultural attitudes including patriarchal myths about sexual violence. The findings discussed in section 4.2 showed evidence of a societal narrative around IBSA that aligned with certain gendered views about sexual violence, including victim blaming, particularly towards those who had initially consensually shared photos, and the excusing of male perpetrators based on the notion that they either did not mean to or could not help perpetrating IBSA. Importantly this seemed to have an effect on whether individuals felt comfortable reporting instances of IBSA to the police, and on women in particular feeling pressure to avoid putting themselves at risk when online. There was also evidence on the role of male peer support in IBSA, with many viewing male bonding as a key motivation for perpetrating IBSA. Further to this, men were also particularly likely to believe that IBSA was carried out because men got 'sexually carried away'.

In addition to this, there was a clear relationship between gender and IBSA victimisation. Despite the fact there was a similar rate of overall victimisation for both men and women, the typologies discussed show that women were more likely to experience certain forms of victimisation, particularly those that involved intimate partner violence, coercion, and more severe forms of nudity. They were also particularly likely to report being victimised by a current or ex-partner. In comparison, men were more likely to experience image-based abuse (IBA) that occurred outside of intimate relationships, in less sexualised contexts. In addition to the different typologies, there were further insights from the data that suggest experiences of IBSA differ by gender. Of the women who had experienced any type of IBSA , 84.1% reported high levels of non-consensual sexual messaging, compared to 45.8 of men who had experienced IBSA. Women also frequently experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence and online abuse alongside the IBSA. Only 14.8% of women who had experienced IBSA reported no other forms of victimisation, compared to 41.7% of men and women were particularly likely to have experienced both domestic and sexual violence (45.5%) in addition to IBSA victimisation. This highlights the gendered context within which IBSA occurs, with women experiencing a greater variety of both online and offline forms of sexual violence.

The repeated intrusions women face in online spaces was also evidenced in this chapter, a further way in which IBSA reflects broader patterns of violence against women. As discussed in section 4.2, the constant forms of TFSV, ranging from online harassment to more severe forms of IBSA, had often affected the women who were interviewed since they were teenagers. This had led to many engaging in extensive online safety work to protect themselves when engaging online, particularly when on social media and in online dating. This has the potential to be 'patriarchy-enhancing' (Applin et al., 2022), as it makes it more burdensome for women to engage fully in online spaces.

There were also different impacts reported by victims of IBSA dependent on their gender. Women tended to report a greater number of impacts on their mental health compared to male respondents. Overall, 45.8% of men who had experienced any types of IBSA reported no mental health impacts, compared to 34.1% of women. This could potentially be due to women being more likely to experience severe forms of IBSA, although analysis showed that women were more likely to report mental health impacts across all types of IBSA. This could also be due to evidence that women tend to be judged more harshly than men for sharing nude or sexual photos (Salter, 2016) which can lead to victims of IBSA becoming isolated (Huber, 2023a), again reflecting the relationship between gender and IBSA. However, this difference may also be driven by the stigma around disclosing mental health issues for male respondents (Chatmon, 2020).

The gendered nature of IBSA will be discussed in more detail in the discussion, with implications of this for policy and interventions addressed in the conclusion.

4.5 Conclusion

The flowchart below displays what has been found through both the literature review and research carried out as part of this thesis. In addition to the analytical framework developed through the literature review, the findings from this thesis have linked common attitudes towards violence against women to IBSA. It has also established two key types of abuse that were captured through the survey research: image-based *sexual* abuse and image-based abuse. The next chapter will discuss these findings in more detail, including what they mean for how IBSA victimisation should be understood, the implications of gendered attitudes and how well these findings align with the analytical approach put forward in Chapter 2.

A key contribution of this chapter is to provide evidence on the gendered nature of IBSA, based on experiences of victimisation and societal attitudes towards IBSA (see section 4.4.). In addition to this, this chapter introduced a new term: *image-based abuse*. Image-based abuse and image-based sexual abuse were shown to have distinct characteristics which have implications for policy responses and support for victims. Although there were common characteristics to experiences within each typology, there were also sub-types identified both for IBSA and IBA, showing the varied nature of experiences. These within-group differences as well as limitations of the typology will be further explored in the discussion.

In terms of methodological implications, the analysis raises questions around how IBSA should be measured in survey research. As discussed, the experiences of some participants seemed better described as image-based abuse rather than IBSA. In order to accurately measure IBSA, more thought needs to be given to the complexities and nuances in defining this type of abuse. The SIAMA scale which measured attitudes towards IBSA myths also seemed to have limitations given the uniformity in responses, suggesting the tool may not be subtle enough to measure some attitudes. Finally, there are also questions around whether this type of survey research, common in studies on technology-facilitated sexual violence, is keeping pace with how younger people form 'intimate' relationships and use technology. Further consideration is given to these points within the discussion and conclusion.

Figure 14: Analytical framework of IBSA – Version 3
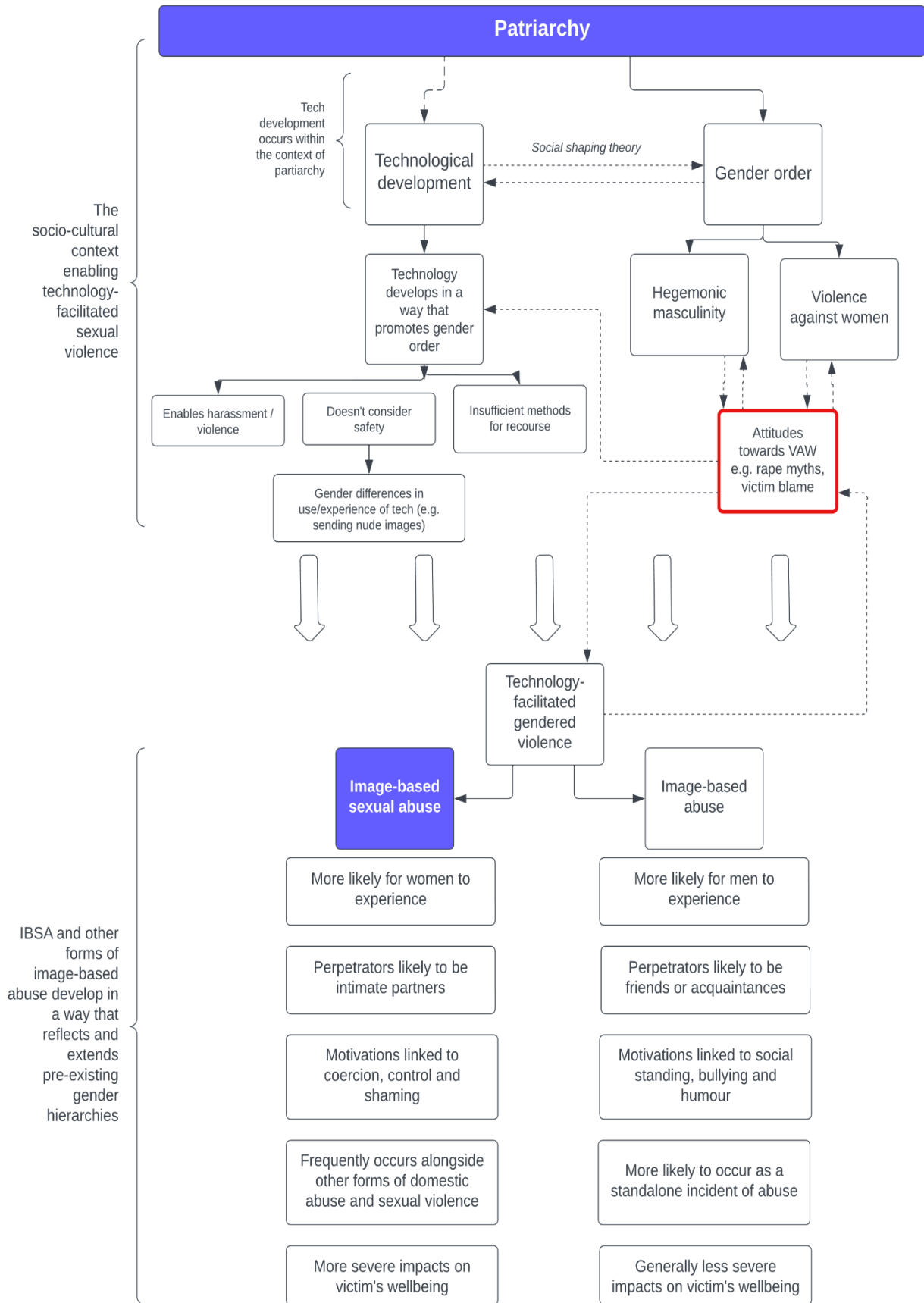
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw on the findings from the previous chapter to establish how IBSA should be understood and the extent to which this aligns with a feminist understanding of both sexual violence and technology. Although the previous chapter showed that both IBSA victimisation and societal attitudes towards IBSA are multifaceted, clear patterns in both also emerged. This chapter will examine three key themes from the research findings. Firstly, the construction of image-based sexual abuse versus image-based abuse, a key finding from the previous chapter, will be discussed in greater detail. This includes how both can be related to patriarchal values, including types of masculinity. Attitudes will also be linked to this. Following this, it will cover what is termed 'continuums of abuse'. This includes to what extent IBSA shares similarities with other forms of sexual violence, and whether it can be seen as being part of Kelly's continuum of sexual violence. Reflecting on the analytical framework developed in chapter 2 (see Figure 14), I will also consider whether IBSA can be linked to feminist understanding of patriarchy.

5.2 IBSA victimisation

This section will discuss three key findings relating to IBSA victimisation. Firstly, regarding how IBSA is constructed, it will be argued that IBSA and image-based abuse (IBA) are distinct forms of abuse, following from the IBSA typology presented in chapter 4 for details on the ISBA typology. It will also discuss whether IBSA and TFSV should be placed on Kelly's continuum of violence, and how continuum thinking more broadly can be applied to broaden the understanding of the many behaviours that may be classified as IBSA. Finally, the section will conclude by considering to what extent IBSA can be seen as the same as other forms of violence against women, being carried out via technology.

5.2.1 Construction of IBSA

Image-based abuse – A new categorisation of behaviours

One of the key findings in the previous chapter was that the types of victimisation disclosed by respondents could broadly be split into two categories: image-based sexual abuse and image-based abuse. The differing nature of the types of abuse

identified in this thesis suggests that the forms of abuse that occurred outside of intimate relationships and without a clear sexualised element (IBA) were ontologically distinct from other forms of IBSA. This raises some key questions, such as whether IBA should be classified as a form of sexual abuse or placed within the broader continuum of sexual violence, or be viewed as a different type of behaviour. Due to their differences, a further question is raised regarding whether IBSA and IBA have the same underlying causes (as put forward in Figure 14) and what this means for how IBSA is responded to. Finally, the section will reflect on how online abuse should be defined, including to what extent some of those who were identified as 'victims' through the survey in this thesis should actually be labelled in such a way.

Image-based abuse as defined in the typology (see section 4.3) had several distinguishing characteristics. This form of abuse typically involved nude or sexual photos being taken without consent, often by a 'friend' or a group of people. Most victims described themselves as partially clothed in these photos, rather than fully nude or with genitals showing. Victims were typically men, and the impacts of the abuse were generally less severe than for other forms of IBSA. Despite this, impacts such as feelings of fear and depression were still reported by some victims, and those who had experienced IBA were also likely to report having difficulties in their personal relationships. Interestingly, this group were the most likely to endorse IBSA myths, more so than those who had not experienced IBSA or IBA directly. Using insights from the survey and interviews along with previous literature on IBSA, this builds up a picture of different type of abuse compared to what is usually considered part of image-based sexual abuse. Instead of images being used to control a sexual partner, as a form of revenge or for sexual gratification as with other forms of IBSA, it seems that the main reasons for perpetrating this form of abuse was either a form of bonding or camaraderie, or else a form of bullying.

It is important to return to the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order to understand how IBA differs from other forms of image-based sexual abuse. In terms of behaviours, hegemonic masculinity typically involves men being aggressive and stoic or having other masculine qualities (Jewkes et al, 2015). This also ties in with sexuality, with men who are homosexual often being perceived as not holding up masculine ideals. For these reasons, homophobia can be used as a tool for men to signify that they belong to the 'hegemonic group' (Pronger, 1990; Anderson, 2009;

Oransky and Marecek, 2009). Previous research has found that certain behaviours may be carried out by men within peer groups to show they conform with hegemonic masculinity; I would argue that IBA could be linked to this. In terms of male bullying, research has found this can benefit men in two ways; firstly, it shows that they identify with masculine ideals particularly if they are seen to be aggressive or physically capable and secondly it puts distance between them and the person who is not conforming to masculine ideals. McDiarmid et al (2017) found that insults were frequently used in male friendships to indicate closeness or camaraderie, but also to assert dominance and masculinity. Furthermore, Rosen and Nofziger (2018) noted that in school settings, those who did not conform to hegemonic forms of masculinity were more likely to be bullied. There is evidence that male friendships are becoming more emotive and starting to include those who were traditionally marginalized by hegemonic masculinity, for example the role of homophobia has become more taboo in some social circles despite being associated with forms of hegemonic masculinity. However, research continues to show that in many male social groups the rules of hegemonic masculinity continue to be pervasive (Robinson et al., 2018; McDiarmid et al., 2017; Magrath et al., 2015; Rosen and Nofziger, 2018). There is little evidence specifically relating to the role of heterosexual men taking or sharing nude photos of each other in social contexts to date, however the previous research on hegemonic masculinity in male relationships could be used to understand IBA in the context of this study. However, further evidence is needed on IBA, particularly from men, in order to ascertain whether it support the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Male camaraderie has also been shown to be a motivation for forms of male violence against women. In this study, there were several references to IBSA being carried as a joke. This chimes with previous research by Clancy et al (2020) which found that men were more likely to perceive IBSA as improving an individual's social status and as 'funny'. It may be that this same form of male camaraderie affects the perpetration of IBA against other men, including friends. Sexualised cyberbullying has previously been described as a way to police and surveil gender, which links to the idea that individuals are socialised into performing gender in a way that contributes to gender inequality (Mishna et al., 2020). Men may use forms of IBSA within their friendship groups as a way to signify in-group solidarity whilst othering someone else. In this way, perpetrating image-based abuse could be seen as a way for men to 'do

masculinity', an idea coined by Messerschimdt (1993). Again, this was something that was raised anecdotally by interview participants in this study, particularly as occurring within a school context and where the man (or boy) was seen to not adhere to certain masculine standards. Although this differs from other forms of IBSA, it has similar repercussions in terms of controlling and policing gender.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been drawn on here to help interpret some of the findings relating to IBA, although it is important to note the limited empirical evidence collected as part of this thesis that can confirm whether this interpretation is correct (as will be reflected on in the conclusion and next steps for research). As mentioned in the literature review, it was also not possible within this thesis to tie the concept of how specific masculine traits directly link to the gender inequality, a common critique of hegemonic masculinity as a concept (Logan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2012). It is also possible that this discussion of hegemonic masculinity and masculine traits is overly simplistic, and it is not possible from this data alone to explore what masculine traits may or may not form part of a hegemonic masculinity that promotes perpetration of IBSA (Beasley, 2008). Overall, the limitations here are reflective of the incompleteness of studies on masculinity more broadly (Connell, 2007).

Male peer support theory also has relevance to IBA. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1993) discuss how in a patriarchal, rape-supportive culture, men who hold patriarchal views will form friendships with other men who then reinforce values that enable the abuse of women. Although this has been used to predominantly explain male violence against women, it could also be used to explain male violence against peers given what has been discussed about hegemonic forms of masculinity being preferred in such scenarios. Thus, similar to how men may perpetrate IBSA as way to police gender for women and enforce patriarchal views of gender, the same may be done when this occurs between men outside of intimate relationships. More work is needed to fully understand the relationship between male peer support and image-based forms of abuse, however this seems like a useful concept to better understand some of the forms of IBA that were identified through the survey (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016).

Although different from other forms of IBSA, as discussed in chapter 4, this type of image-based abuse can still be linked to the patriarchal social structures shown in the IBSA analytical framework (Figure 14). It is clear that technology is being used in a variety of ways to reinforce gender binaries, which aligns with other literature that suggests the internet and digital technologies are being used to revert progress that has been made in societal views of gender (UN Women, 2023; Barker and Jurasz, 2019). However, IBA does significantly differ from IBSA in relation to the 'sexual' element of the behaviour. A key part of IBSA is that it involves either a sexual or sexualised element, often in the context of intimate relationships, but this is not typically the case for IBA which appeared to be more related to bullying or establishing power within peer groups. These findings show that experiences which were categorised as **image-based abuse** under the typology should be viewed as a new and distinct type of behaviour from image-based sexual abuse. This does not mean image-based abuse cannot be explored from a feminist perspective, however it is important to acknowledge them as somewhat separate issues. Classing image-based abuse and image-based **sexual** abuse as similar experiences risks making the prevention and response to IBSA confused given the highly different characteristics involved in the two types of abuse.

It is important to distinguish the differences between these and other instances of IBSA. When looking at instances of IBSA that more closely align with forms of sexual violence, it is possible to see patterns that are hidden when image-based sexual abuse and image-based abuse victimisation is grouped together, as has been the case in previous research. Given this study uses measures that have been used in other IBSA research, it may be that the conflation of two quite distinct experiences has contributed to the often-differing nature of findings of IBSA research. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is hard to establish clear patterns in IBSA in relation to victimisation, personal characteristics and impacts. It also helps to explain why some of the findings in the qualitative literature feel quite different to those picked up in quantitative research, and suggests that more qualitative research on this type of image-based abuse needs to be carried out to better understand how it relates to IBSA.

Based on the typology discussed in the findings chapter, there were several key factors that may help define image-based sexual abuse in future. The survey demonstrated the broad range of ways in which IBSA could be carried out and experienced, as well as highlighting some of the key contextual information around victimisation. As discussed, some of the behaviours captured in the survey could be better described as image-based abuse however there were also a range of behaviours that seemed to constitute image-based sexual abuse. IBSA does not necessarily only occur in the context of intimate relationships, but there are some factors that need to be considered when distinguishing sexualised forms of abuse from those that just involve a level of nudity. From the typology discussed in chapter 4, there were some key features that could be seen across IBSA. There was a sexualised element to the images, meaning the abuse frequently occurred within intimate relationships, or was linked to motivations around sexual gratification or control. In addition to involving the non-consensual taking, sharing and threatening to share of nude or sexual images, what made the main difference between these forms of IBSA and image-based abuse was the intention being linked to either sexualised or gendered motivations. There was a general overlap between IBSA and other forms of sexual violence, which will be returned to in the next section. This is the main differential factor between IBSA that relates to intimate relationships, whether those relationships involved people who had only ever met online or those who had been in an intimate relationship for several years. Comparatively, in image-based abuse, the intention is generally not to sexualise or carry out gendered violence against women.

The findings of this thesis also have implications for the construction of IBSA victimhood more broadly, as was considered in Chapter 1. Victimhood and victim status can be seen as socially constructed, with factors such as personal characteristics, victim-perpetrator relationships, attitudes and the type of abuse or crime all affecting whether someone is perceived to be a victim. Findings from the attitudes chapter gave an insight into how IBSA has been socially constructed. As discussed, narratives that closely aligned with 'revenge pornography', where an ex-partner shares an intimate image for the purpose of getting 'revenge', were most frequently discussed by interview participants. Many seemed to know and

understand the term revenge pornography. However, this could mean that instances of IBSA that fall outside of this narrative are not seen as a form of IBSA. For example, an interview participant who had an image shared by someone she had not met before (so not an ex-partner but someone who she had an online sexual relationship with) did not use terms such as revenge pornography, IBSA, or sexual abuse more broadly to describe her experience. This participant also discussed reluctance to go to the police in case the incident was not taken seriously, which could also be linked to the idea that the socially constructed version of IBSA has become closely linked to 'revenge porn'. In comparison, another participant who had an image taken and shared non-consensually by a partner used terms that aligned her experience with both sexual and domestic abuse.

In addition to this, evidence from both the interviews and survey open text responses suggested that some of those who would be classified as having experienced IBSA through the survey measures would not see themselves as victims of abuse. Although the most severe forms of IBSA were often perceived as harmful forms of sexual violence, more everyday forms of image-based sexual abuse may not always be perceived in the same way, and this seems to lead to the notion of 'sexual grey areas' when it comes to forms of online abuse. There was some emerging evidence that the way in which an image was shared influenced this, with the sharing of images either through group chats or by physically showing an image being less well understood as a form of IBSA. It was clear in the themes from the interviews that there was a feeling of inevitability regarding IBSA for women. They went into online dating experiences with an awareness that they were likely to at the least receive nonconsensual nude images, but at worst potentially be victim of online abuse. Again, the everydayness of some of these experiences for women could explain why they may see some forms of IBSA as a sexual grey area and not align their experiences with victimisation.

Previous feminist research has critiqued the notion of victimisation and its connotations, particularly of weakness and powerlessness (Kelly et al., 1996; Gilson, 2016; Hansen, 2023; Gunnarsson, 2018). Not every victim of sexual violence may see themselves in this way and this might affect whether they conceive of themselves as a victim or seek additional support. It is argued that we need to move beyond the binary conception of victimisation as victim/perpetrator, active/passive

and feminine/masculine in order to truly understand the nuances around sexual violence victimisation. In addition to this, feminist research has also tried to tackle the defining line between what is rape and what is 'just sex'. As put by Gunnarsson (2018, p7), in heterosex 'there is both the sense that sex and violence are often difficult to distinguish in experience and the sense that the discursive scripting of hetero-sex and sexual violence overlap.'.

The findings of this thesis suggest that a more complex understanding of victimisation needs to be developed, that acknowledges the agency of many victims and the ambiguity in some scenarios that involve sexual violence. Ambiguity here does not necessarily mean these scenarios are unclear, but instead that they may involve a mixture of elements and different types of power which 'a conventionally dualist framework would typically set in opposition' (Gilson, 2016, p.80). This also means that although advocates may argue that there are no 'grey areas' in rape or sexual violence, this does not reflect the reality of victims' experiences (Hansen, 2023). The term grey area here is not intended to dismiss experiences of IBSA, but instead consider what is really meant when we talk about victimisation and move beyond overly simplistic conceptions. As discussed previously, Gavey's (2019) ideas around normative heterosexuality facilitating sexual violence are helpful to understand these findings on IBSA. Gavey (2019) argues that people can receive gratification for being 'good' sexual subjects and that we have sets of everyday norms that particularly lead women to expect sexual violence as part of their sexual relationships. Given the norms that interviewees spoke about in relation to online spaces, it is unsurprising that similar discourses are arising when trying to distinguish IBSA from online sexual relationships. It is also likely that perceptions of their being grey areas and not identifying with the label of victim is linked to IBSA myths, as will be returned to in section 5.3.

What the findings of this thesis suggest therefore is that there is a tension between experiences of IBSA and common societal discourses of IBSA, and that this has implications for how IBSA has been constructed to date (Gunnarsson, 2018). To better address IBSA it is likely that the hegemonic discourse around forms of TFSV needs to be broadened, potentially through the work of campaigns which draw attention to the commonalities of IBSA perpetration, rather than focusing on specific types of IBSA such as 'revenge porn' and, more recently, deepfake pornography. In

the findings chapter, it was apparent that the concept of 'revenge porn' was becoming dominant in discourses around IBSA and has the potential to turn into what Ryan (2011) calls a 'rape script'. In cases of revenge porn, there is often a very clear perpetrator and victim, and the scenario can be seen as black and white in public discourse, where there is a clear 'bad apple' who is the perpetrator and an innocent victim. The dominance of this discourse around IBSA has the potential to hide forms of IBSA that may be seen as more morally 'grey' and inhibit responses to IBSA at the societal and individual levels. Although the surveys have captured what are common characteristics of IBSA victimisation, it is important to acknowledge what might be missing or underreported based on the tension discussed above between experience and IBSA discourse.

5.2.2 Continuums of abuse

In her article exploring gender and violence, Boyle (2019a) argues that the use of continuum thinking can be beneficial to understanding sexual violence. This idea takes Kelly's notion of sexual violence being part of a continuum of behaviours and goes a step further by suggesting continuum thinking can be applied to a range of situations, such as placing abuse of women and children within a continuum, or creating a continuum of technology-facilitated sexual violence. Importantly, Boyle discusses the potential to move away from continuums solely based on women's experience, and argues that 'it can be equally useful to feminist analysis to think of men's behaviours (rather than women's experiences) on a continuum' (ibid, p.29). Thus, the use of 'continuum thinking' can help draw meaningful connections between multiple behaviours. In this section I will use continuum thinking firstly to position IBSA within Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence and then to explore what a continuum of IBSA, specifically, would look like. I will also draw on the idea of a continuum of male behaviours relating to sexual violence in relation to some of the findings discussed in Chapter 4.

Continuum of sexual violence

One of the key aims of this thesis was to understand if and how IBSA related to other forms of sexual violence. Powell and Henry (2017) cite Grabosky's (2001, p.243) description of 'old wine in new bottles' to suggest that crime only changes in terms of the medium. They suggest that technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) may be

conceptualised as 'old' forms of sexual violence being perpetrated through the 'new' medium of digital technology. As discussed in Chapter 2, Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence has been essential to feminist understandings of sexual violence prior to the development of TFSV. It connects multiple forms of violence women may experience, from the seemingly harmless, such as 'cat calling', to the most severe, such as rape and femicide. If IBSA is to be conceptualised as simply an 'old wine in a new bottle', empirical evidence needs to support its placement among the broader continuum of sexual violence. To be part of Kelly's continuum, IBSA needs to be shown to have two key qualities. Firstly, and most importantly, the abuse should be gendered in a similar way to other forms of sexual violence. Secondly, it should be a sexualised form of violence that overlaps in characteristics with other types of violence against women.

There was evidence of gender and IBSA intersecting in a way that parallels the forms of sexual violence that form part of Kelly's continuum. As discussed in the findings chapter, the experiences of IBSA can be viewed as gendered in multiple respects. At its simplest, IBSA seems to be experienced more frequently by women and perpetrated by men, similar to other forms of sexual violence (ONS, 2023b). It tends to cause greater levels of mental harms to women as a group suggesting as Maddocks (2019, p.353) points out, 'male privilege mediates victimisation'. Although this was not directly explored in this thesis, there is also evidence that men and women receive different responses when reporting abuse (Maddocks, 2019). The research also showed that IBSA victimisation intersected with other forms of abuse, including other forms of online harm like receiving unsolicited nude photos, and other types of sexual and domestic violence, particularly for women. The fact that similar attitudes are exhibited when looking at IBSA compared to other sexual violence also lends evidence to the idea that IBSA is simply a new form of sexual violence.

In addition to the gendered nature of IBSA, there are clear ways in which this can be seen as a sexualised form of violence, again suggesting that it fits with Kelly's (1988) broader continuum of violence against women. The types of images and videos involved in IBSA of women often had high levels of nudity or involved sexual behaviour. One of the key motivations given for perpetrating IBSA was sexual gratification. Even for instances of IBSA that may be less easily tied to sexual motivations, the fact that women's bodies are extremely sexualised and affected by

patriarchal views of femininity means that IBSA affecting women always occurs as a form of *sexualised* abuse. Because of the sexual double standards between men and women, as discussed in chapter 2, nude images of women in particular are highly sexualised compared to those of men. The fact that perpetrators of IBSA often upload photos or videos to either pornography sites or onto shared folders or drives so they can be accessed by others again suggests that this is a sexual harm.

As well as IBSA being shown to be both a gendered and sexual form of violence in this study, there was also evidence that it shared parallels with other forms of sexual violence. For women, the most common IBSA perpetrator was a current or ex-partner whereas for men this was a friend. This is similar to other forms of sexual violence, where women are generally more likely to experience sexual violence in the context of an intimate relationship (Westmarland, 2015). As well as being gendered, the impacts of IBSA have similarities to other forms of sexual violence particularly in relationship to the mental harms it causes (Bates, 2017). In addition, instances of IBSA often overlapped with other forms of sexual and domestic violence suggesting that IBSA is being used within other instances of sexual violence. As Henry and Powell (2016) discuss, this could involve things such as the videoing of a sexual assault or threating to share images as form of coercive control. The gendered and sexual nature of IBSA as well as the parallels between other forms of sexual violence demonstrated through this study indicates that it fits conceptually within Kelly's continuum of violence against women. It is now important to consider why this is useful and what it means for how IBSA is understood.

One of the main aims of Kelly's continuum was to move away from a crime-focused perception of sexual violence and instead include more everyday experiences of violence against women that may not be as easily conceptualised as criminal (Boyle, 2019b). The findings of this thesis suggest that IBSA, similar to other forms of sexual violence, includes more everyday forms of violence against women as well as those that may be more easily classified as criminal behaviour. When discussing everyday forms of IBSA, it was clear that these were often perceived as being part of a 'grey area' and not necessarily as a type of abuse. Placing IBSA on the continuum of sexual violence has the potential to improve understanding of IBSA by allowing 'grey area' forms of IBSA to be positioned in the broader context of gendered violence. Anitha and Gill (2009) highlight that binary ways of thinking about sexual violence

victimisation disadvantage women by not including experiences which may lie somewhere between violence and non-violence, but still contribute to the overall experiences of women. An example of this could be the interview participant who had a (nude) photo of her taken by her partner without her permission. When she learnt of the photo, it was treated as a joke. However, this is still relevant to experiences of sexual violence as it relates to an intrusion on women's bodies occurring within a broader patriarchal society as set out in the analytical framework. The fact that victims differed in how they viewed their experience also fits with one of Kelly's early aims for the continuum, that it can account for experiences that might be counted as rape by one person and an intrusion or miscommunication by another. The positioning of IBSA on the continuum of sexual violence therefore fits well with the feminist approach taken in this thesis. It allows for the centring of women's experiences, challenges binary views of victimisation and brings the idea of the harms of IBSA to feminist and hopefully public discussion.

Continuum of IBSA

As well as using the notion of continuums of violence to demonstrate that IBSA can be conceptualised as a form of sexual violence, evidence from the typology suggests that IBSA itself contains a variety of behaviours and experiences which continuum thinking may help to explore. As noted in the previous sections, the behaviours identified as IBSA in this thesis could broadly be split into two groups defined as image-based *sexual* abuse and image-based abuse. Each of these groups contains a continuum of relevant behaviours. The continuum of IBSA will first be defined, followed by how continuum thinking may also be applied to image-based abuse.

The findings of this thesis suggests that there are variety of different types of IBSA that can differ from one another quite substantially. Despite this, there are common characteristics when looking at IBSA victimisation as a whole which suggests that the term image-based sexual abuse should be used to capture a continuum of behaviours. As noted in the previous section, two of the key features of IBSA are that it is both a gendered and sexualised form of violence. It also involves the use of technology in some form, whether that be to photograph, video or share nude or sexual images. The defining conditions for an experience to be part of the IBSA continuum therefore are that:

I) It is gendered, either in regards to the victim-perpetrator relationship or in terms of how and why the abuse was perpetrated;

II) There is sexual imagery or a sexualised element to the abuse;

III) It involves the use of technology and images in some way.

Any experiences that meet these conditions can be classified as IBSA, showing that this is a much broader range of behaviours than terms such as revenge pornography suggest. This aligns with McGlynn et al's (2017) development of a continuum of IBSA, although they also state that IBSA should involve harms to fundamental rights of sexual autonomy and expression, as well as the dismissing of such harms in public discourse, law and policy. Although these are characteristics of many types of IBSA, I have chosen to differ the definition of IBSA from McGlynn et al (2017) in order to be inclusive of types of IBSA where victims may not feel that they were harmed and for areas of public discourse where IBSA is less dismissed, such as the discourse around the harms of revenge porn.

As was discussed in the findings chapter, there seems to be a strong public discourse around 'revenge pornography' as a form of IBSA. Whilst these experiences of IBSA are important to discuss and it is positive that they are now being spoken about more broadly, the hyperfocus on the revenge porn narrative can detract from other forms of IBSA, particularly where this can be linked to individual bad apples. A broader discussion of the online harms experienced by women becomes sidetracked by looking at specific cases where someone shares a photo with the motivation of retribution. Using a continuum moves the conversation away from whether an individual finds a certain form of ISBA harmful, threatening, annoying or desirable and instead focuses on the structural aspects of IBSA as a form of violence against women. By treating IBSA as a continuum of behaviours, the term can also be used more flexibly and easily encompass new ways in which IBSA is perpetrated, such as the more recent focus on the use of 'deepfakes' in creating non-consensual nude images. In their application of Kelly's continuum of violence to IBSA, McGlynn et al (2017) argue that viewing IBSA as a continuum of behaviours helps shift the focus from individual types of IBSA in public, legal and media setting and instead encourages the focus to be on IBSA as a whole.

Although continuum thinking is useful to understand IBSA and its relationship to other forms of sexual violence, it is important for this to not 'flatten' experiences of sexual violence, as it is put by Boyle (2019b). It is useful to conceive of these behaviours as relating to each other, but it is also important to not conflate all types of abuse, and appreciate the distinctive elements of them and the importance of context to experiences of each type of abuse. Having a typology of IBSA, such as the one put forward in this thesis, underpinning the idea that IBSA includes a continuum of behaviours is helpful as it still allows for but does not put these different types of IBSA in a hierarchy.

As discussed, there were also common characteristics to instances of 'image-based abuse' which suggest that these behaviours could also be viewed as a continuum. In terms of the key characteristics of IBA, the most important is that the behaviours are not clearly sexualised. Although they may involve nude photos, they are not sexualised in the same way as in IBSA. The behaviours can also be clearly linked to promoting or upholding gender order, and in particular forms of hegemonic masculinity. Finally, the experiences of IBA captured in the survey suggest that it typically occurs outside of intimate relationships – tying to the non-sexual nature of the abuse – and instead is more likely to be perpetrated by friends or peers. Therefore, the following conditions can be seen as necessary for a behaviour to be considered on the continuum of image-based abuse:

I) It is not clearly sexualised;
II) It can be linked to hegemonic forms of masculinity;
III) It occurs outside of the context of intimate relationships.

It is also interesting to consider how male behaviour can be observed on a continuum, from the 'typical' to the 'aberrant'. This has been raised through the idea of male peer support theory earlier in this chapter, where either the complicity or lack of challenge to certain forms of hegemonic masculinity can endorse or embolden individuals to perpetrate sexual violence. Thus behaviours which may seem relatively innocuous can tie into more severe forms of abuse. For example, men in this study were more likely to have asked a partner for a nude or sexual image. Although this may have occurred within a consensual relationship, this finding is likely to relate to the fact that women were also more likely to be pressured to share

nude or sexual images. Women were also more likely to receive nude or sexual images that they had not asked for, with interview participants talking about receiving 'dick pics' amongst other forms of unsolicited images. Although most people in the interviews did not seem overly affected by receiving such images, they do reflect a way in which some men cross boundaries in online spaces. Bringing these behaviours together is a useful way to highlight the gendered nature of IBSA perpetration by focusing on the broader patriarchal context within which IBSA occurs instead of focusing on men as individuals. This will be further discussed in the next section in relation to sexual scripts.

A further area that was not explored in this study was how IBSA relates to other forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence. It is likely that there is a lot of overlap between women's experiences of what could broadly be labelled gendered technology-facilitated abuse. Future research could explore the continuum of technology-facilitated abuse to take a more holistic approach to IBSA rather than focusing on it in isolation, as was done in this study.

5.3 Attitudes – A cultural scaffolding for IBSA?

One aim of this thesis was to explore if and how myths relating to IBSA are linked to IBSA perpetration, including whether they reflect dominant heterosexual scripts. In Gavey's (2005; 2019) work, she describes attitudes as being part of the 'cultural scaffolding' for rape and one way in which a rape culture is upheld. In particular she highlights two elements which are essential in creating a rape culture. The first is the gendered dominance-submission which provides a normative pattern for (hetero)sex. This creates the myth that male sexual agency and experiences of male sexual violence are the norm. The second element includes victim blaming and trivialisation of sexual violence. Together these two elements create attitudes that both justify and excuse men's violence against women. Evidence discussed in chapter 4 suggested cultural attitudes have formed around IBSA that are similar to attitudes towards other forms of sexual violence. This section will therefore argue that attitudes also act as a cultural scaffolding for IBSA, enabling perpetration and minimising the acts of gendered violence. This will be done by exploring how the two elements that underpin Gavey's idea of rape culture were evidenced in this study.

As discussed in the literature review, both victim blaming and minimisation of sexual violence are ways that sexual violence comes to be seen as inevitable in society. This study explored these attitudes in relation to IBSA. In terms of victim blaming, those who were interviewed were aware of the potential repercussions for IBSA victims that had consensually shared images of themselves. Echoing findings by Flynn et al. (2022c), interview participants in this study were aware that they would likely be held to a high standard and receive a greater portion of blame if they had consensually shared images. This fear is not unfounded, given previous research has found that victim blaming in IBSA is worse for women that have consensually shared images compared to others (Flynn et al., 2022c; Ringrose et al., 2013). Victim blaming narratives around IBSA help to cause a restriction on women's digital rights and increased the levels of online safety work they engaged in. Not only is it the fear of victimisation that prohibits women from acting freely online, but the fear of being victimised and then blamed for their experience. In some of the interviews, it felt like the safety work being done was more aimed at avoiding being blamed than avoiding victimisation itself which some seemed to view as inevitable. Victim blaming exacerbates the harms of IBSA victimisation, limits institutional responses and stops victims from getting the support they may need. In the interviews this was discussed by participants who had experienced IBSA. There was reference to police officers treating victims poorly, and a feeling from victims that they were 'silly' for including identifying features in the photos or because they shared a photo with the 'wrong' person. Those who had not directly experienced IBSA also spoke about their hesitation around whether they would report victimisation to the police. The levels of blaming experienced by IBSA victims obscures the perpetrators and changes the response from thinking about how IBSA can be prevented at a societal level to how individuals should be protecting themselves online, reflected by the education on IBSA some interview participants had received in school.

A further significant theme in survey responses and interviews was that instances of IBSA were often trivialised. When asked about possible perpetrator motivations in relation to the IBSA vignettes, many respondents suggested the perpetrator was trying to be funny, make a joke, or bond with peers. There were also instances of interviewees discussing how some instances of IBSA may have been perpetrated as a joke rather than with the intention to harm. This was also the most common reason

that IBSA perpetrators, identified through the survey, gave as their motivation. Although participants and respondents who spoke about IBSA as something humorous did not necessarily agree with the idea of perpetrating IBSA as a joke, they were clearly aware of the fact that it is trivialised in this way. Therefore, this is part of a discourse that minimises how IBSA is perpetrated.

Gavey (2019) also discusses how the dominance-submission binary in heterosexual scripts is linked to myths around male sexual urgency as the norm. This was also explored in relation to IBSA. As discussed in the literature review, (hetero)sexual scripts are closely tied to rape myths and attitudes towards forms of sexual violence. This can also be said to be true for instances of IBSA, which reflect common heterosexual scripts with sexually passive women and active or dominant men. Evidence that this attitude is linked to behaviours can be seen in the findings on forms of sexual messaging. Although men and women were similarly likely to have shared a nude or sexual image, men were more likely to have asked someone to send an intimate image and women were more likely to have felt pressured or coerced into sending an image. For example, 1 in 5 women reported sending a nude photo when they really didn't want to, compared to 1 in 20 men and 1 in 3 women had felt pressured to send a nude photo compared to around 1 in 7 men. Drawing out the reasoning behind this, gendered attitudes around sexual roles were evidenced in both the survey and interview responses. This unsurprisingly suggests that online behaviours are equally affected by sexual scripts. Similar to other forms of sexual violence, this might make instances of IBSA or TFSV more difficult to identify for victims. Again, this was reflected by the survey and interview responses including the fact that those interviewed who had experienced IBSA did not use terms such as abuse, assault or violence when discussing their experiences and with the notion of 'grey areas'. This also helped build on the theme that women's attitudes towards IBSA often viewed behaviours as 'everyday' or something to get on with.

In terms of the myths around male sexual urgency and uncontrollable desires, this was also raised by survey respondents and interview participants in this study. For example, almost a third of male respondents (32.0%) and 1 in 5 of the overall survey sample (18.2%) believed that men didn't mean to pressure their partners into sending nude photos, but rather this happened because they got 'sexually carried away'. This also came up as a theme in relation to the survey vignettes, where

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respondents often thought that the perpetrator had acted based on sexual desires. These types of attitudes mean that when IBSA occurs, it may be dismissed or minimised as a normal part of sexual relationships, or excused due to men being perceived as more sexual compared to women. The literature review suggested that myths around sexual violence being caused by 'miscommunications' were becoming more prevalent (McMahon and Farmer, 2011); these myths around male sexuality in relation to IBSA could be categorised as one way in which sexual violence can be dismissed and minimised. The minimisation of IBSA through these myths contributes to seeing some forms of IBSA as an 'everyday' experience, making it harder for women in particular to question harmful sexual behaviours.

Overall, this suggests that gendered societal attitudes and sexual scripts are now contributing to attitudes towards IBSA in a similar way to other forms of sexual violence. This suggests that the cultural scaffolding around rape (or societal attitudes) means that any new forms of sexual violence are likely to be affected by similar types of attitudes. Given the evidence that attitudes around rape facilitate sexual violence perpetration at the societal level, it is likely that these attitudes towards IBSA will also facilitate new forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Flood and Pease, 2009). Some evidence to support this was found in this thesis, as those who had perpetrated IBSA tended to endorse IBSA myths at a greater rate than those who had not. However, further research is needed to fully establish this relationship. The attitudes towards IBSA have implications both for the analytical framework of IBSA, discussed in the following section, and for how IBSA should be responded to, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

5.4 Assessment of the analytical framework

This section will explore the extent to which the analytical framework established through the literature review can be linked to the research findings. Although empirical evidence on the relationship between patriarchy and IBSA was not collected in this study, it is important to consider how the findings relate to the relationship between technology, gender and sexual violence within a patriarchal society. In particular, this section will look at how experiences of victimisation and attitudes can be linked to gendered power dynamics and the development of technology as shown in the framework. This thesis has taken a feminist approach to

sexual violence throughout, however there are potential gaps and limitations in this approach that may not explain all aspects of IBSA.

Gavey (2019) and DeKeseredy (2020) both note that patriarchy as an analytical tool has become less prevalent as sexual violence research became depoliticised through the 2000s. Some of this critique was also levelled at the fact some radical feminist work on patriarchy involved unsubstantiated generalizations and at times leant into biological essentialism (Quek, 2019). However recently work on sexual violence has returned to the use of patriarchy as a concept. Within this thesis there is not scope to explore the historical development of patriarchy in full, however it is important to note that through using patriarchy as an analytical tool this thesis is not intended to argue that men have a biological or inherent urge to subordinate women. Rather what this section aims to achieve is to assess to what extent an analytical framework with a focus on patriarchy can help develop understanding of IBSA as a form of violence against women. I also hope to address some of the criticism around the gender essentialism involved in some feminist work by exploring how masculinity interacts with male IBSA and IBA victimisation. It is also important to highlight that, as discussed in chapter 2, violence against women is conceived of as one of several ways in which patriarchy is upheld. Although it is the focus of this thesis, it is not the only or most important patriarchal societal structure, and work on the relationship between gender and work, family and the state are all essential to feminist work that aims to understand patriarchy. This is somewhat examined by looking at how the patriarchal development of technology interacts with the notion of violence against women, rather than seeing violence against women as existing separately from other facets of society. As a reminder, the IBSA analytical framework developed through the literature review is shown below:

Figure 15 - Analytical framework of IBSA - Version 1
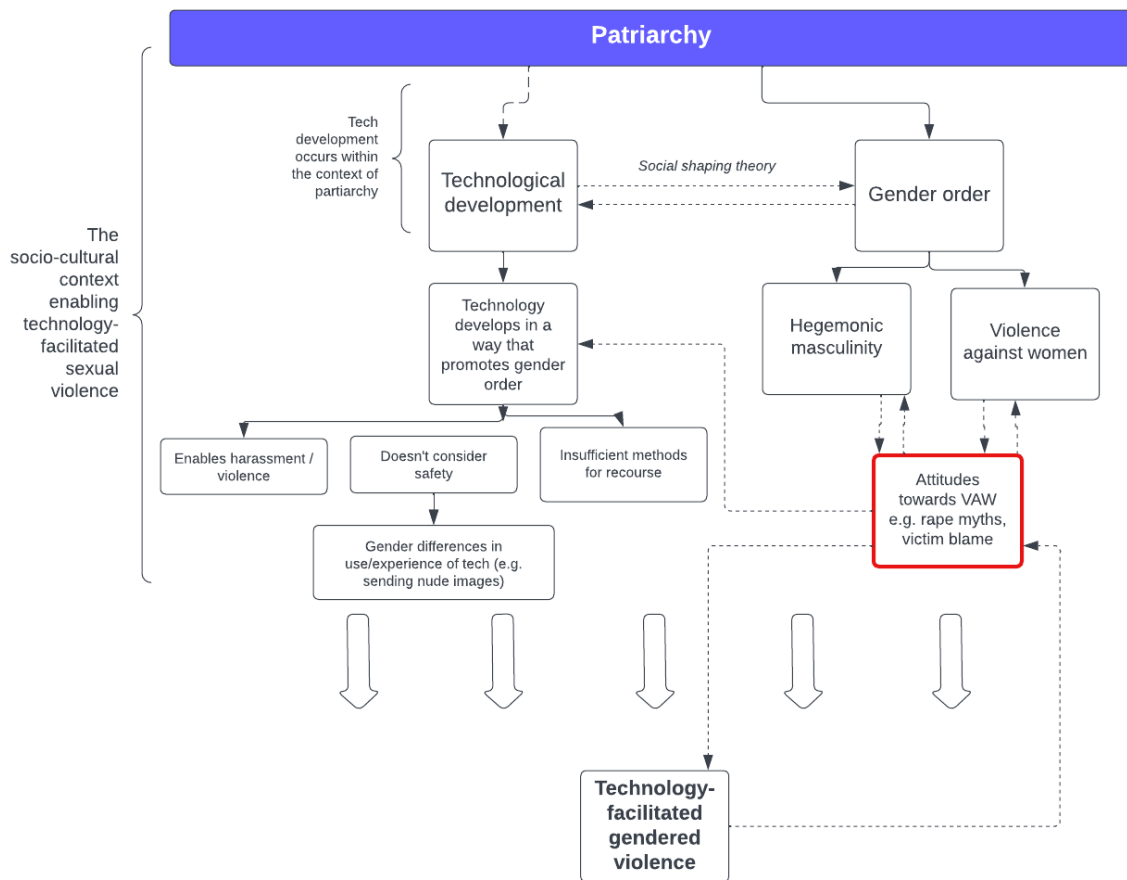
Despite their differences, it is clear from this research that both image-based sexual abuse **and** image-based abuse can be better understood by considering how patriarchy may affect both violence against women and the development of technology. This thesis has consistently argued that a feminist approach, incorporating patriarchy as an analytical tool, is essential to IBSA research and the following sections will explore this in further detail.

5.4.1 The role of attitudes

As discussed in the literature review, attitudes are important to feminist analyses of sexual violence as they are one way in which sexual violence against women becomes perceived as inevitable or everyday (Buchwald et al, 1993). They are linked to how people understand what constitutes rape and other forms of sexual violence, and can influence how society responds to instances of violence against women (Burt and Albin, 1981). The initial framework developed from the literature review suggested that attitudes were important to understanding IBSA for two

reasons. Firstly, it suggested that prevalent rape myths were likely to be applied to IBSA as a new form of gendered sexual violence. Based on previous literature, this is likely to affect how IBSA is perceived both by victims and wider society, and how it is (or is not) responded to. In essence, within the analytical framework it's shown that attitudes shape the social construction of what is understood by IBSA. The framework also suggested that the relationship between attitudes and IBSA was not one-way, and that as public attitudes towards IBSA developed this was likely to feed into how rape myths and victim blaming are used in cases of gendered sexual violence.

The first aspect of the framework to be assessed is whether previously existing rape myths affected IBSA myths. Overall, there was evidence that common rape myths which have been established in research since the 1980s affected attitudes towards IBSA. Victim blaming of rape victims has been well documented over several decades of feminist research (see section 2.2.). As discussed, this study suggested similar discourses of victim blaming were now being used in relation to IBSA, which particularly pushed the responsibility of preventing IBSA onto female victims. One of the prevalent themes in the interviews was around risks of sharing photos and the safety work carried out by women in order to allow themselves to participate in online dating in a way that felt comfortable to them. This is similar to narratives around other forms of sexual violence which puts pressure on women to not put themselves in 'risky' situations, such as through going outside after dark or engaging in casual sex. Similarly, the minimisation of the harms of sexual violence which Gavey (2019) argues is essential to upholding a rape culture was also evidenced in relation to IBSA. There was also evidence of attitudes towards rape changing; in particular, some of the common 'minimising' attitudes were less prevalent in this research, with a greater focus on IBSA perpetration being linked to miscommunication and the idea that perpetrators did not 'intend' to harm their victims. This has been highlighted in previous literature as a way that rape myths are changing (Flynn et al., 2022c). Similarly, some of the more traditional rape myths around things such as alcohol consumption or other behaviours that are seen as not being aligned with feminine values seemed to be less present in attitudes towards IBSA. For example, in the discussions about the vignettes there was little blame placed on the victim for being on a night out when the IBSA took place. This suggests that, as proposed by the

framework, attitudes towards violence against women are not static, which has implications for how gendered forms of sexual violence should be addressed.

A further assumption of the framework was that attitudes facilitate sexual violence. In terms of evidence that supports this view of the roles of patriarchal attitudes in the perpetration of IBSA, on an individual level those who had disclosed perpetrating IBSA (n=23) were generally more likely to endorse IBSA myths than those who had not. This may suggest that holding patriarchal views on sexual violence increases the likelihood of IBSA perpetration, although this is based on a small number of respondents. Men also generally engaged in greater levels of victim blaming than women and were also more likely to believe that men perpetrated IBSA as a result of getting too sexually carried way, similar to other forms of sexual violence. Given that endorsement of rape myths has been linked to holding patriarchal values (Ryan, 2011) this may suggest that patriarchal norms are particularly influencing men's perception of IBSA although further research is needed to support this claim.

A further assumption of the analytical framework is the role of attitudes in the development of technology. Given the minimisation of IBSA evidenced through the surveys and interviews, it is likely that this may impact how and when technological development addresses the fact that digital technology in its current form can enable the abuse of women and other minority groups. As discussed, there is an attitude that women should protect themselves online rather than focusing on how institutions could prevent abuse by forming better systems to identify and remove abusive content. Revenge pornography was one type of IBSA that seemed to be less minimised in this study. This is also an area where an increasing amount of work has been done on how to identify and remove 'revenge porn' online. It is likely this indicates that as attitudes towards forms of IBSA become more progressive, more action is taken to address them. Again, this reaffirms the importance of attitudes to the analytical framework.

5.4.2 Gendered nature of IBSA

The framework makes clear that IBSA is underpinned by patriarchal gender norms. Rather than existing in a vacuum, IBSA as a form of sexual violence has developed from and reflects the broader gender order. To assess whether this framework is supported by the findings of the study, characteristics of IBSA victimisation and

perpetration should be clearly gendered. For example, under the analytical framework women would be more likely to be victims of IBSA and men more likely to be perpetrators. It was also suggested that the concept of hegemonic masculinity needed to be integrated into the model in order for it to account for the varied experiences of men.

The findings in this thesis suggested that the relationship between gender and IBSA victimisation was more nuanced than the universalist idea that men are always perpetrators and women are always victims of sexual violence. In the survey findings a roughly equal proportion of men and women were classed as victims of IBSA. Although the majority of perpetrators in these instances were men (67.5%), it is important not to overlook the fact that in 12.5% of cases the perpetrator was a woman. The instances of IBSA perpetrated by a woman included those perpetrated by a current or ex-partner, although in just under half of cases (43.8%) the female perpetrator was described as a friend. Women were therefore involved in the perpetration of image-based *sexual* abuse and image-based abuse. Despite the fact that women were shown to perpetrate IBSA and men were shown to be victims of IBSA in this study, there was still evidence that IBSA was a gendered form of abuse, as the analytical framework suggests.

The typology of IBSA discussed in the findings chapter shed greater light on how men and women may experience IBSA differently, with women being more likely to experience IBSA and men being more likely to experience IBA (see section 5.1 for further details). Regardless of the type of abuse, male victims tended to report less severe impacts compared to their female counterparts which might reflect that, within patriarchal societies, women's bodies are both sexualised and politicised, sometimes leading to more severe outcomes from TFSV (Huber, 2023a; Salter, 2016).

In interviews, one of the most frequent topics of discussion by women was the need to manage risk when online and in online dating. It is important to note that the majority of these women had not experienced IBSA directly, but had heard stories about friends, acquaintances or friends of friends who had images taken or shared non-consensually. Importantly, IBSA seemed to be another way in which interviewees learnt to expect male violence in their lives. Similar to forms of abuse such as catcalling and groping, women conduct safety work to avoid victimisation

whilst simultaneously often downplaying the serious nature of intrusions in their day to day lives which are now carried out even more easily and pervasively through the use of technology. Again, this links how IBSA victimisation or the threat of victimisation can result in restrictions on women's day to day lives, and in this case particularly their ability to be digital citizens. Although further evidence is needed to support this, this could be seen as 'patriarchy-enhancing' if it restricts women's abilities to engage in online spaces (Applin et al., 2022).

As mentioned, around a fifth of male respondents have experienced IBSA victimisation. Although on the surface it may appear that this cannot adequately be explained by the framework, the distinction between image-based sexual abuse and image-based abuse as well as the role of hegemonic masculinity can be used to explain male victimisation under patriarchy. Instances of abuse differed for men and women due to the gendered context in which it occurred. This meant that men were less likely to experience *sexual* harms compared to women. One possible explanation for this, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is that this type of abuse is often carried out within a social setting with perpetration being linked to the policing of masculinity. Further evidence is needed to confirm whether this is a correct interpretation on the limited data available in this thesis. The term hegemonic masculinity is used in the framework to account for the fact that men are not a uniform group and dependent on context they may either be helped or hindered by patriarchal social norms, although it is important to note that hegemonic masculinity as a concept has received criticism for being overly simplistic. It is useful to refer back to Hunnicutt's (2009) work on patriarchy again here. She argues that men's violence against women is the result of social structural conditions and that to fully understand this it is important to consider where men are situated within 'their own scheme of domination, particularly in relation to other males' (2009, p.555). A next step to support the framework further would be to gather empirical evidence on the experiences of male victims further to see if how well they align with the analytical framework.

To progress this analysis further, more work needs to be done to understand instances of female IBSA perpetration. As was discussed in the findings chapter, it may be that these instances of IBSA were carried out for different reasons, such as in retaliation after someone had previously shared a photo of them. This type of

behaviour has been found in previous literature exploring motivations for women who perpetrate violence (Sichel et al, 2020). It is important to note that the survey showed that of the 7 respondents who had reported sharing a nude or sexual without consent, all were women. This could cause challenges in how IBSA is linked to patriarchy, and it also goes against some of the findings on victimisation reported in Chapter 4. Further research exploring how and why women perpetrate IBSA will help understand whether this can be linked to patriarchal gender norms or if the theoretical framework needs revising. As Hunnicutt (2009) discusses, any analytical or theoretical framework of sexual violence needs to be able to account for how patriarchy may result in women perpetrating violence.

5.4.3 Technology and online spaces

The final area of the analytical framework to reflect on is the role of social shaping theory and the relationship between patriarchy and the development of technology. Social shaping theory suggests that patriarchal social structures will affect the development of technology (Wajcman, 2010). The findings of most relevant to this were captured through interviewees discussing their experiences online and the types of safety work they were required to engage in to avoid victimisation, as reflected on in the previous section.

The discussions in the interviews suggested that the onus of avoiding online victimisation was placed on individuals, particularly women, who had to take proactive steps to try and avoid harm. Sometimes this involved engaging less in social media, posting less photos, or avoiding online dating apps. This could suggest that there is not sufficient safeguarding in place to protect people online. Further to this, the interviews also suggested that online harassment had become a frequent and expected part of life for many, with parallels to forms of street harassment (Vera-Gray, 2018). Again, this could suggest that as technology has developed within patriarchal societies, it replicates experiences online that women have previously experienced in the physical world.

5.4.4 Reflections on and refinements to the theoretical framework

The analytical framework developed in Chapter 2 has proved useful for interpreting the data collected for this thesis through a feminist lens. Although the research did not seek to gather empirical evidence to establish the role of patriarchy in IBSA,

linking the findings presented in Chapter 4 to the broader patriarchal context is important to developing a feminist understanding of IBSA and other forms of technology-facilitated sexual findings.

Despite the overall usefulness of the analytical framework, there are several ways in which it could be developed. As discussed in Chapter 2, more work is needed to establish a robust theory of patriarchy that can be used within sexual violence research. The analytical framework provides a move towards this, but to develop further requires sufficient empirical evidence to demonstrate the relationship between patriarchy and technology-facilitated sexual violence. More work is also needed to establish whether the analytical framework could be used to understand female perpetration of IBSA and male victimisation. Evidence on the effect of attitudes on institutional responses to IBSA also needs to be collected to confirm the overall effects of victim blaming and IBSA minimisation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

There were three aims that this thesis aimed to address. Firstly, the most fundamental aim of the thesis was to situate image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) within the broader context of patriarchy. The second aim was to explore the role of gendered attitudes in relation to IBSA. Finally, the third aim was to produce empirical evidence relating to experiences of image-based sexual abuse. To explore these aims the following research questions were generated by a comprehensive literature review:

1. How is IBSA experienced?

2. What are societal attitudes towards IBSA and how does this relate to other forms of sexual violence?

3. To what extent can IBSA be seen as a gendered form of sexual violence?

To answer these questions, a mixed-methods approach was taken. A survey that aimed to explore both IBSA victimisation, perpetration and attitudes was developed and received over 500 responses, of which 429 were used in the research. Follow-up interviews with 9 participants were then used to explore some of the findings from the survey and help inform a more nuanced understanding of IBSA and attitudes towards it. In line with taking a feminist approach to sexual violence, I followed feminist methodological principles when designing the research, although there were some limitations to this as discussed in Chapter 3.

Quantitative analysis that aligned with the nature of the non-random sample was carried out, in particular making use of forms of cluster analysis to better understand how IBSA was experienced and to help group respondents. This helped to create a typology of IBSA. Further to this, the link between attitudes and IBSA victimisation was explored through using a mixture of attitudinal scales, vignettes and interviews. Based on this, an analytical framework of IBSA has also been developed (see Figure 14). This connects how patriarchal societal structures create an environment where IBSA is able to become an everyday experience for women, to the extent that it is not always conceived of as abusive unless it follows certain narratives, such as the revenge porn narrative that was discussed in the findings on attitudes.

The key findings from the research will now be explored, along with implications for responses to IBSA, areas for future research and final reflections on the thesis.

6.1 Summary of findings

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, this thesis has collated a considerable amount of information on experiences of IBSA and attitudes towards IBSA. The four key contributions of this thesis are detailed below.

Image-based abuse

Through the typology presented in Chapter 4, it was identified that two distinct types of behaviours had been measured through the IBSA survey. Some of these experiences aligned with what is typically understood by image-based sexual abuse however there was another category of behaviours which differed from this. This thesis introduces the term image-based abuse to describe this.

A comprehensive list of the differences between IBSA and IBA can be found in Table 7, however these can be condensed down into the key differences listed in the table below.

Table 9: Key characteristics of IBSA and IBA

Image-based sexual abuse	Image-based abuse
There is sexual imagery or a sexualised element to the abuse	It is not clearly sexualised
It is gendered, either in regards to the victim-perpetrator relationship or in terms of how or why the abuse was perpetrated	It can be linked to hegemonic forms of masculinity
Often occurs within intimate relationships	Typically occurs outside of the context of intimate relationships
It involves the use of technology and images in some way	It involves the use of technology and images in some way

IBSA as a form of gendered sexual violence

IBSA victimisation and perpetration was established as being highly gendered for the sample of respondents in this thesis. The typology showed that IBSA victimisation tended to affect men and women in different ways, with women being more likely to experience IBSA and men being more likely to experience IBA. This is important as IBSA is a more sexualised form of abuse, typically perpetrated by ex-partners and with lasting impacts for victims. This means that IBSA parallels other form of violence against women, positioning IBSA on the broader continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988). IBA was also affected by gender, but this was predominantly in relation to rigid gender norms and the notion of hegemonic masculinity.

The motivations behind IBSA and IBA perpetration also reflect the gendered nature of abuse. For those experiencing IBSA, this could often be linked to motivations around control or harm and sexual gratification. There were also suggestions that IBSA was perpetrated as a form of bonding, typically between men. Although further research is needed in this area, this findings also appeared relevant to IBA which often occurred in the context of friendship groups. Male peer support theory is particularly relevant to understanding these motivations, again highlighting the importance of gender to understanding IBSA.

Gendered attitudes that blame victims or minimise abuse further extended harms and allowed for IBSA to become perceived as unavoidable and unchangeable. Through the use of the IBSA framework, it has been theorised that IBSA stems from patriarchal social structures that promote gendered norms and allow for the development of technology which enables the abuse of women.

Everyday nature of IBSA

A further key finding from this study is that some forms of IBSA are becoming an 'everyday' experience for women, and viewed as something that is to be expected when engaging in technosocial spaces. Improved knowledge of 'revenge porn' seemed to be exacerbating this issue somewhat, as those whose experiences fell outside of this narrative were more likely to dismiss their experience of IBSA as not serious.

Women also frequently discussed the safety work they did in online spaces to ensure their safety and avoid either being victimised or receiving blame if they were victimised. The same script of not sending photos to someone you aren't in a relationship with, as well as not including your face and avoiding anything identifying in photos being shared was spoken about across interviews. Rather than being annoyed or angered by this, it was seen quite matter-of-factly as something that had to be done to engage in online spaces. Many had been experiencing forms of IBSA or online harassment since their early teenage years, contributing to the notion that it was an unavoidable part of digital life.

The attitudes identified here are important as they indicate that IBSA is becoming understood as an everyday intrusion typical to experiences of women online. This in turn is likely to enable greater levels of perpetration of IBSA and means that victims may not seek support as they feel what they have experienced is either their own fault, or will be viewed as not serious or humorous. Implications of these findings will be discussed in the response section.

Feminist analytical framework

The final key contribution of this thesis is the introduction of the feminist analytical framework of IBSA (see Figure 14). The first part of the framework was developed through the literature review, which brought together information on technology-facilitated and other forms of sexual violence, social shaping theory and technological development, and broader patriarchal social structures relevant to understanding IBSA from a feminist perspective. This was then added to using the findings discussed in Chapter 4. This analytical tool has been fundamental to exploring IBSA from a feminist perspective and has helped to connect the micro-level findings from this research to the broader patriarchal social and cultural factors.

6.2 Responses to IBSA

The findings discussed in the previous chapter have implications for how IBSA should be responded to in future. Findings of particular relevance here are that:

1. IBSA occurs in a gendered context;
2. IBSA should be seen as a new form of violence against women;

3. There is a continuum of IBSA, with some instances forming part of 'everyday' harms and others more severe. The continuum rapidly expands and changes due to the ongoing development of technology and changes to online spaces;

4. There is a further type of abuse (IBA) that typically occurs outside of intimate relationships and is less clearly related to violence against women.

Crucial to developing responses to IBSA is the first finding on the gendered nature of IBSA. As discussed throughout this thesis, the notion that IBSA can be tied to the patriarchal nature of society is fundamental to the feminist perspective of this thesis. Feminist responses to IBSA therefore need to address the fact that there are structural elements to IBSA and violence against women which will need to be addressed if IBSA is to be prevented in future, rather than taking an approach that only focuses on the individual or micro-level. In this way, interventions aimed at addressing cultural attitudes and understanding towards TFSV as well as challenging hegemonic masculinity need to be developed, rather than over relying on the criminal justice system which cannot address all forms of IBSA.

Realistically, the kinds of meaningful change that will help prevent IBSA and other forms of violence against women are unlikely to take place at the scale needed without radical societal and political changes. To have changes enacted at a structural level will require substantial campaigning and governments that are willing to enact more radical reforms that effectively challenge the gender order and perception of hegemonic masculinity. However, it is important to not fall into what is a common criticism of some feminist research where the problem (patriarchy) seems so insurmountable that realistic, actionable responses to violence against women are not developed. Because of this, the following sections will explore some micro- and macro-level responses to IBSA and TFSV more broadly. These will need to be enacted alongside more substantive changes, and a further area for research is looking at how approaches to addressing sexual violence may link to other elements of Walby's pillars of patriarchy (1989).

6.4.1 Digital sexual ethics

The technosocial world has expanded rapidly in recent years and is now an essential part of most people's lives, particularly in the western world. What has not kept pace with this change is a form of digital sexual ethics. Sexual ethics is a complex

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concept, and it is important to note that understanding of things such as sexual consent is still in a state of development, as reflected by the increased focus on consent in sex education in recent years (Jenkins, 2018). However, the addition of technology in day-to-day lives has particularly emphasised the importance of establishing sexual ethics that can ensure interactions online are not harmful, but instead enjoyable for all. One of the key findings from this thesis is the fact that IBSA is turning into a form of 'everyday' violence, which means that this form of response can be particularly useful as it has the potential to address the continuum of behaviours that constitute IBSA. This also aligns with the feminist framework of this thesis, which emphasises the role of public attitudes and understanding in the perpetration of sexual violence and, to take this a step further, upholding a patriarchal society. Changing attitudes towards IBSA is therefore an important way to respond to such behaviours. A digital sexual ethics refers to developing new moral and cultural expectations around online behaviours that encourages healthy digital sexual relationships and respect for women and other minority groups. From a feminist perspective, it is also important to have a broader range of digital ethics established that protect women from online abuse. Based on the IBSA framework developed as part of this thesis, online harms can be seen as caused by the interaction of sexual violence as a form of patriarchal violence with the patriarchal nature of the development of technology. There was further evidence that suggested that the harms from some forms of IBSA were not always well understood, although this was dependent on the specific type of IBSA.

To address gendered forms of IBSA through a digital sexual ethics requires work at the micro (individual), meso (organisational) and macro (societal) level (Henry and Powell, 2014). At the micro-level, educational programmes can be a good way for individuals to develop their sexual ethics. Examples of good educational programmes can be found in Australia, and there is evidence that these have helped to support young people develop their own sexual ethics, rather than simply telling them what they should and should not do (ibid). This thesis suggests that for these programmes to be effective, they need to take a gendered perspective to sexual ethics. Educational programmes should acknowledge the role that patriarchy plays in shaping attitudes and behaviours and seek to challenge this if they are to be effective.

At the meso-level, organisations can encourage ethical sexual behaviour online by seriously committing to supporting those who are harmed using or through their platforms. As discussed in the literature review, this has been overlooked by many organisations that develop forms of digital technology at least in part due to patriarchal social norms making protecting women from online abuse of low priority (Barker and Jurasz, 2020). Based on the findings from this thesis, one way in which organisations could help victims of IBSA is to have more robust processes for identifying and removing non-consensually shared images. IBSA does not exist in a vacuum, as discussed in the previous chapter, and overlaps with other forms of online abuse suggesting organisations need to take a multifaceted approach to dealing with all forms of TFSV to make a real difference.

Finally at the macro or societal level, there needs to be government policy in place which challenges rape culture and patriarchal attitudes. Without this element, the smaller scale responses at the micro or meso-level are unlikely to cause substantial changes to sexual violence and IBSA. The findings from this thesis suggest that gendered attitudes towards IBSA can be linked to IBSA myth acceptance. Based on this, the government needs to develop policy which sees sexual violence as relating to the social construction of gender rather than focusing on the characteristics of individuals (Quadara & Wall, 2012; Henry and Powell, 2014). The UK government's 2021 report on tackling violence against women and girls, for example, acknowledges that women are more likely to be victims of most forms of sexual and domestic violence (Home Office, 2021). However, in this document there are very few references to the fact that men are typically the perpetrators of violence against women – the language of violence against women allows the government to remain passive to the role of gender in sexual violence. Based on the analytical framework put forward in this thesis, effective policy would need to clearly address the patriarchal nature of IBSA and violence against women more broadly in order to be effective. Legislation also plays a role here, as will be discussed in the following section.

One of the key findings from this thesis was the concept of image-based abuse more broadly, which is not always linked to sexual violence in the same way as IBSA. What IBA does suggest however is that there is a wider societal problem regarding digital ethics that has not been properly addressed. Often respondents did not

conceive of their behaviours as harmful and it was heavily normalised to use IBA to bully others or as a form of humour, possibly paralleling the use of things such as homophobic 'jokes' that were used to create bonds in male peer groups whilst also reestablishing what is and is not an acceptable form of masculinity. This is essential to think about when responding to IBSA, as this thesis has demonstrated that IBSA and IBA can be seen as on the same continuum of behaviours, or as 'two sides of the same coin' through the analytical framework.

Based on this, micro-level educational programmes that aim to prevent perpetration of online harms should therefore also tackle how such harms may be perpetrated as a way to police masculinity. Organisations should also take this form of IBA seriously, for example schools could seek to challenge such displays of 'masculinity' and challenge behaviours which can be viewed as bullying those men or boys who do not conform. Again, policies that aim to address societal perceptions of gender roles could reduce the perpetration of IBA.

Table 10: Approaches to developing digital sexual ethics

Level	Type of response
Micro-level	Educational programmes, aimed at improving attitudes towards gender as well as sexual ethics Community-based interventions
Meso-level	Improving methods to identify and remove non-consensual images as well as related forms of TFSV Schools and universities challenging gender norms and roles, implementing coherent policies around this
Macro-level	Government policy which aims to tackle the different facets of gender inequality that underpin violence against women, IBSA and IBA Legislation which better supports victims of TFSV

6.4.2 The role of legal responses

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are a range of limitations to legislation around IBSA. The increase in laws in this area can often seem tokenistic, more of a gesture

to show that the government is now taking these types of behaviours seriously rather than one that will amount to the level of structural change needed to really make changes to the perpetration of IBSA and other forms of TFSV.

The findings on IBSA victimisation suggest that there are issues with the legislation as it stands. Firstly, an extremely wide range of behaviours and motivations were detailed by those who had experienced IBSA. Although these could be put into a typology, it was clear that there was not a single typical IBSA experience. This is something that the law in its current form will struggle to address, with its focus on 'revenge pornography'. As well as the limitations with the current laws, the findings can be used to make a more fundamental critique of the legal responses. Given the everyday nature of IBSA, there is a question as to whether legislation can ever properly support victims of IBSA. The findings of this study and others suggest there is a high level of IBSA victimisation, with around 1 in 5 people in this study's survey sample being classed as experiencing IBSA victimisation (Powell et al., 2022). The legal system is unlikely to be able to address this, and for many instances might not be the most appropriate response.

From the findings relating to the use of deepfakes in IBSA perpetration, it is clear that the rapid changes in technology makes addressing image-based sexual abuse through legal reform particularly challenging. This is just one new type of IBSA, and public attitudes and institutional responses to this form of IBSA have been slow to develop. This again points to an issue for legislative responses to IBSA and suggests that definitions used in legal reform needs to be broad enough to include future developments in how IBSA is perpetrated. Future-proofing legislation is essential for this type of response to IBSA and TFSV to be useful for victims. If this cannot be achieved, legislative responses will have limited suitability for addressing TFSV.

Despite these shortcomings, legislative responses can be important as they legitimise experiences of (some) victims and offer protection for certain types of victims. The campaign around legislative responses to TFSV has drawn a lot of media attention and high-profile cases, such as Stephen Bear being prosecuted for committing IBSA (BBC, 2023), can act as way to influence public attitudes towards IBSA and digital sexual ethics. To make this response more effective however, it is

clear from the research findings that laws need to be able to better adapt to new forms of IBSA and support victims who may experience the more 'everyday' or less severe (but still harmful) types of IBSA, where a criminal prosecution is not likely to be an appropriate outcome. Also given the different types of motivations behind IBSA and the masculine ideals that promote these behaviours, it is unlikely that criminalising many 'perpetrators' is likely to help the issue or be a proportionate response.

For this reason, restorative justice may be a more apt response for some victims and there is evidence that this can be helpful for victims of other forms of sexual violence (McGlynn et al., 2012). However, this would not work for those instances of IBSA which are perpetrated by someone unknown, which is particularly an issue for abuse that occurs online that can be perpetrated anonymously. This links with the idea spoken about in previous chapters of the importance of having a UK organisation, similar to that of NetSafe, who can support alternative forms of justice for IBSA victims. Ofcom will now be acting as an online regulator for IBSA, but will not address some of the issues that organisations such as NetSafe do in terms of supporting victims to get images taken down from websites and providing advice on options for recourse.

A further recommendation for the legal response to IBSA is that it should be categorised as a sexual offence. The findings chapter showed how IBSA overlaps with other forms of sexual violence, and IBSA often has similar impact on victims as other forms of sexual violence. For this reason, classifying IBSA as a sexual offence would mean that victims were better supported by the police and the criminal justice process more broadly. It was also clear that a priority for victims was to have help to get their images removed from various websites, so again this should be prioritised in the support offered to victims who report the abuse to police.

6.4.3 Summary

Given the 'everyday' nature of IBSA, responses need to be able to address harms that occur in a myriad of contexts. Insights from the interviews and surveys suggest that people believe there are a lot of 'grey areas' when it comes to online forms of abuse. Because of this, possibly the most appropriate response to IBSA is to create a digital sexual ethics at both the individual and societal level.

Any responses developed need to clearly understand the link between gender and IBSA, not simply in relation to who is more likely to be a victim or perpetrator, but also in relation to how the broader societal contexts affect how women's bodies are policed and shamed, and how the impacts of IBSA can differ for men and women because of this.

6.3 Limitations, methodological implications and areas for future research
6.3.1 Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The analytical framework generated in the literature review suggested that patriarchy was key to understanding image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). However, the research itself was focused on micro-level measures of IBSA specifically within the UK. To fully understand the relationship between IBSA and patriarchy, macro-level measures and cross-national research is needed to compare measures of gender equality and rates of IBSA victimisation. The research findings themselves are predominantly reliant on cross-sectional survey data which also limits the understanding they can offer on IBSA. Other research methods could further understanding of the subject, for example this study looked at overlap between different forms of sexual victimisation but did not measure the order in which they occurred or how they related to one another. Case study research or longitudinal research would offer greater insights on this.

In terms of the methodology of this study, one of the major limitations is the convenience sample that is relied on for much of the research. This has meant it is not possible to establish whether these findings would be mirrored at the population level. If completing the work again, I would more quickly adapt my approach to sampling rather than continuing to pursue a random sample of university students which took significant time and effort. If this approach was changed sooner, it may have been possible to develop a more robust approach that involved stratified or cluster sampling. Unfortunately, with the limited time and resource available to complete the project, convenience sampling was relied on. Despite this, triangulating the data with similar studies, collecting sufficiently detailed information on the type of IBSA within the survey, and carrying out follow-up interviews with respondents all strengthened the quality of my analysis.

It is also important to highlight the unequal proportion of responses from men and women in the survey sample. Given this thesis was particularly focused on gender, the fact that men were underrepresented in the sample is an important limitation which meant that some analysis relied on a small sample or could not be carried out due to the low sample size. This is also true of the interview participants, who were predominantly women. This helped me to build a good understanding of things such as how women manage risks in online relationships and how they may be affected by attitudes, either conscious or subconsciously, in terms of how they spoke about IBSA. However, there was not a group of male respondents that these responses could be compared with, so although they are indicative of gendered attitudes and how these impact women, the findings would be strengthened if men's views on topics such as sharing nude images and victim blaming in IBSA had been explored in similar detail.

There were also limitations in the attitudinal questions used in this survey. Some of the responses to these questions felt like they reflected socially preferred answers rather than a true representation of people's views, particularly due to the high-level of uniformity in responses. This made it harder to establish the attitudes people held in relation to IBSA and led to a more complex approach to analysis being taken where findings from survey scales, vignettes and the interviews were combined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings. This again is linked to methodological choices, as will be further reflected on in the following section.

One limit of the feminist approach and focus on gender within this thesis is that important intersectional aspects of IBSA victimisation have not been explored in detail. Black, Asian and ethnic minority women were substantially more likely than white women to have experienced IBSA in this study, however from this research it was not clear what the reasons for this were. Much of the research to date has shown that women of colour experience IBSA at higher rates than white women, however generally the research, including this thesis, has only reported this at a high level and not detailed whether this difference is the same for all women in this group, or whether prevalence and experiences of IBSA differs between ethnic groups. For example, is the difference between white and ethnic minority women being driven by the higher levels of abuse often experienced by black women, as shown in other sexual violence research. IBSA is experienced at higher rates by those who are

LGBT+, as shown by this thesis and in previous literature (Powell et al., 2022). The work presented on the role of masculinity in IBSA perpetration is one way in which patriarchy as a theoretical tool could be applied to the perpetration of IBSA within male same-sex relationships, however this is not as effective when trying to understand perpetration of IBSA in female same-sex relationships.

6.3.2 Methodological implications

Survey research on sexual violence

This research has implications for the use of survey research in relation to sexual violence, and particularly for those conducting feminist research. As touched on previously in this chapter, there were significant limitations to how IBSA victimisation and perpetration was measured through the survey and without the additional contextual information that was collected, a misleading image of what IBSA victimisation typically involves could be created. For example, there have been several studies, including this one, which suggest that men and women experience IBSA victimisation to a similar degree (Lenhart et al, 2016; Powell & Henry, 2016). Within this thesis, without the use of additional contextual information and cluster analysis the gendered nature of IBSA may have been overlooked. Therefore, if research in this area relies too heavily on simplistic survey measures, this could have implications for the effectiveness of responses and preventative measures developed based on research findings.

One of the aims of the survey was to measure IBSA victimisation and perpetration. Using survey research to decide who has been a victim of image-based sexual abuse has some flaws. As the analysis shown in this thesis suggests, not all who were categorised as experiencing IBSA victimisation had an experience which looked like image-based sexual abuse as understood through the literature. This is also relevant when looking at findings from other IBSA research. For example, it has been shown that there is a significant overlap between IBSA victimisation and perpetration (Hood & Duffy, 2018; Walker, 2019; Powell et al., 2022; Sparks et al., 2023), but this may overlook the different motivations behind and types of IBSA. This was also found within this research, which shows the complexities involved in deciding who is or is not a victim or perpetrator of IBSA.

The additional qualitative data collated through the interviews was particularly beneficial in developing understanding of the survey responses, particularly the notion that some forms of IBSA that may be captured through the survey would not be viewed as harmful by the victim. As discussed in the methods chapter, feminist research has a complicated history with surveys. Initially qualitative research was generally favoured by feminist researchers, however recent years have shown a swing in the opposite direction with survey-based research on sexual violence gaining significant traction particularly in the US and UK. The advantages of survey research are numerous, but the findings from this thesis suggest that they can easily be misinterpreted and are reliant on robust, well communicated analysis. Bringing in interviews to follow-up on survey questions and understand how respondents arrived at their answers allowed the findings to be much better understood than they would have been through the quantitative data alone. A key recommendation from this study is therefore to ensure that surveys are designed to collate sufficient information to properly contextualise IBSA, use open response questions, or to use mixed-methods research to improve understanding of what the survey results show.

Measuring attitudes

A further methodological implication from this thesis includes how to accurately measure attitudes towards forms of sexual violence. There was uniformity across the vast majority of responses to the attitudinal survey scales and vignettes used in the survey, with some questions having 100% of respondents either strongly agree or strongly disagree with the statement. Although this could suggest that there were low levels of victim blaming or myth endorsement within the sample, a more likely reason for the uniformity in responses is that they were not sufficiently nuanced and so most respondents knew that there was a correct or socially preferred response to the question (for example, that they should not blame the victim).

This issue was somewhat improved by the use of both positive and negative statements within the survey scales. Generally, the statements taken from the Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale (developed by Henry and Powell, 2016) that had been rewritten so they did not endorse victim blaming (such as, 'people should expect nude photos will remain private') received a greater variation in scores compared to those statements that clearly endorsed an IBSA

myth. This suggests that the score a respondent gives a statement does not fully reflect their views on the myth. For example, having respondents strongly disagree with the statement 'if a person shares a nude photo, they are responsible for this ending up online' does not necessarily mean that respondents would strongly agree with the statement 'if a person shares a nude photo, there are **not** responsible for this ending up online' based on the responses to this survey.

Although the statements in the SIAMA have been tested across multiple studies, this suggests that flaws in the statements may have impacted the data analysed here. Generally, the SIAMA analysis presented in this thesis suggests that more nuanced methods are needed to fully explore attitudes towards IBSA and other forms of sexual abuse. The vignette responses for example showed slightly more promise in understanding how attitudes towards IBSA may vary, and these could be used in future research to explore how people's attitudes vary by different situations. This aligns with previous research on the use of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale, which found that more nuanced measures were needed and that myth acceptance scales should be continuously updated to improve validity as myths change over time (McMahon and Farmer, 2011).

6.3.3 Next steps for research

There were several areas for future research identified throughout this study. Firstly, there remains a need for further research on IBSA victimisation and perpetration that uses robust sampling methods, so representative statistics on areas such as prevalence can be developed. Although the evidence base for IBSA is rapidly expanding, this is still a substantial gap. This potentially reflects the fact that there is a lack of funding for sexual violence research, which has an effect on the development of more robust surveys which typically require greater levels of funding and access. Alternatively, there could be more robust qualitative research developed on IBSA. There has now been a substantial amount of survey research on IBSA, however what the interviews in this thesis added to the survey was a much better understanding of the complexities and nuances of many forms of IBSA. In particular, the interviews demonstrated the everyday nature of IBSA for women in a way that was not as apparent from the survey findings alone. Image-based abuse in the contexts discussed in this thesis has previously been neglected in the literature, with little information on how predominantly heterosexual men may take or share nude

images of each other as a way to police gender and masculinity. The idea that image-based abuse should be conceptualised as a new, separate form of online harm requires further exploration and validation. In addition to this, the survey findings and previous research have suggested that black, Asian and ethnic minority women experience IBSA at higher rates than white women. Although this has been found across multiple studies, there is an extremely limited amount of research that focuses on the experiences of women of colour in a meaningful way.

In terms of attitudes, one of the key areas for future research is to better explore how attitudes change depending on the specific type of IBSA or TFSV. This was somewhat explored in the thesis, but there were limitations to the analysis. Carrying out further analysis in this area would help to develop understanding of how victim blaming and rape myths apply to TFSV. Further to this, the model to understand attitudes that was put forward in Chapter 2 (see Figure 1) could be further tested. In particular, this thesis did not explore attitudes of those with institutional roles (such as police officers). Exploring this in more detail would lend weight to the argument that institutional responses are connected to attitudes. Attitudes could also be better linked to understanding of what constitutes IBSA or abusive behaviours more broadly. Again, this would strengthen the argument that attitudes are a key way in which IBSA and other forms of violence against women are socially constructed.

Finally, this thesis makes an attempt to develop the use of patriarchy as an analytical tool through the analytical framework (see Figure 14). As discussed in Chapter 2, patriarchy as a concept is under-theorised and feminist work does not always clearly link to a theoretical approach. The analytical framework developed in this thesis aims to link IBSA to broader feminist theory, however this needs to be further established and refined, moving towards a theoretical framework for IBSA. Further research on sexual violence should seek to build a more comprehensive theory of sexual violence that can be properly tested against. Theoretical work still needs to catch up to where the sexual violence evidence base has got to, and without more work in this area there is a risk that sexual violence research becomes separated from its political and feminist roots.

6.4 Concluding remarks and final reflections on research

This research makes several original contributions to the topic of image-based sexual abuse. The typology allows for a more nuanced understanding of IBSA victimisation as well as proposing a new category of online abuse – image-based abuse. It also builds on previous evidence that demonstrates attitudes towards IBSA and other forms of sexual violence are similar, and that these attitudes create conditions at the micro, meso and macro level that enable perpetration of IBSA. Through the development of an analytical framework of IBSA, this thesis also links experiences of IBSA to broader feminist theory. Through the use of the framework, this thesis highlights the crucial role of patriarchy in the development and continuation of violence against women.

This thesis was described as a feminist *exploration* of IBSA to acknowledge that it is a starting point for research and therefore attempts to answer a broad range of questions relating to IBSA. Because of this, the thesis contains several areas of interest that future IBSA research could address. Further testing of the analytical framework proposed in this thesis, and further qualitative analysis of the different forms of IBSA identified in the typology are particularly crucial to developing understanding of image-based sexual abuse.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval forms

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
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31 March 2020

Our ref: SREC/3661

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Grace Ablett

PhD Programme

SOCSI

Dear Grace,

Your project entitled *'Image-Based Sexual Abuse'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers)

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Professor Alison Bullock
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Cc:
Kirsty Hudson

THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
For Higher and Further Education
2013

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

QAA
Cymru
UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD
School of Social Sciences
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16 April 2019

Our ref: SREC/3230

Grace Ablett
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Grace,

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project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

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3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alison Bullock

Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Kirsty Hudson, Amanda Robinson

Victimisation survey

Q95 Please read the following information sheet before beginning the survey.

General Information: Technology Use in Intimate Relationships Study

The aim of this study is to better understand how technology is being used in intimate relationships and dating.

We appreciate your interest in participating in this online survey. Please read through these terms before agreeing to participate. You may ask any questions before taking part by contacting the researcher (details below).

We are broadly investigating how technology is used within relationships and dating. The survey will ask about your online behaviour generally, as well as in the context of dating and relationships. There is a focus on how photos and videos are used in intimate relationships, meaning you will be asked some questions about your sexual life.

Some sections in the survey ask about experiences of sexual abuse, which some people may find distressing. If at any point you are not comfortable with one of the questions, it is possible to either skip the question or end the survey entirely if you do not wish to continue. If you exit the survey it will automatically save your progress so you can return to it at later time should you wish to.

During the survey you will be given a series of questions to answer, and then a short scenario to read and answer questions on. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. No background knowledge is required.   The information shared in the survey will be used as part of a PhD research project at Cardiff University.

Do I have to take part?

Please note that your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any point during the questionnaire for any reason, before submitting your answers, by closing the browser. Alternatively you can submit an incomplete survey response if you do not wish to carry on completing the survey.
How will your data be used?

Your answers will be completely anonymous, and we will use all reasonable endeavours to keep them confidential.

Your data will be stored in a password-protected file and may be used in academic publications. Your IP address will not be stored. Questions are either optional or include a 'Prefer not to say' option for if you prefer not to answer a particular question. Research data will be stored for a minimum of three years after publication or public release.

Who will have access to your data?

Qualtrics is the data controller with respect to your personal data and will share only fully anonymised data with Cardiff University, for the purposes of research. We would like your permission to use your anonymised data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public. Responsible members of Cardiff University may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure we are complying with guidelines, or as otherwise required by

law. This questionnaire is for a PhD project. The principal researcher is Grace Ablett, who is attached to the School of Social Science at Cardiff University. This project is being completed under the supervision of Dr Kirsty Hudson and Professor Amanda Robinson. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee (SREC/3230).

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to the researcher, Grace Ablett (ablettge@cardiff.ac.uk), or their supervisor Kirsty Hudson (hudsonkj@cardiff.ac.uk), who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at SOCSI-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk. The Chair will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner.

Q96 Prior to starting the survey please confirm the following

☐   I confirm I am 18 years of age or over (1)

☐   I have read the information and consent to take part in this survey (2)

End of Block: Information sheet

Start of Block: Demographic information

Q90 Are you currently enrolled at a University or Higher Education Institution (HEI)? You are still considered to be enrolled at a university if you are a student who:
- Is on a leave of absence;
- Is completing a year abroad;
- Is completing a work placement; or
- Has completed their final year but not yet graduated.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q4 If Are you currently enrolled at a University or Higher Education Institution (HEI)? You are still c... = No

----

Q1 What university do you attend?

_____

Q91 What type of student are you?

   ◯ Undergraduate (1)

   ◯ Postgraduate (2)

   ◯ Prefer not to say (3)

Skip To: Q92 If What type of student are you? = Postgraduate

Q2 What type of course do you study?

▼ Please select a course type (1) ... Social sciences (24)

Q3 What is your year of study?

   ◯ 1st year (1)

   ◯ 2nd year (2)

   ◯ 3rd year (3)

   ◯ 4th year (4)

   ◯ Prefer not to say (7)

Q92 Are you a:

○ Masters student (1)

○ PhD student (2)

○ Other, please specify: (3) _____

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q101 Are you a:

○ Home student (i.e. a UK citizen) (1)

○ International/Overseas student (i.e. not a UK citizen) (2)

○ Not sure (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q4 What is your gender?

○ Female (1)

○ Male (2)

○ Non-binary (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

_____

Q102 Is your gender identity different to that which you were assigned at birth?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not sure (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q5 What is your sexual identity?

○ Straight (heterosexual) (1)

○ Gay/lesbian (2)

○ Bisexual (3)

○ Pansexual (4)

○ Asexual (5)

○ Other, please specify (6) _____

○ Prefer not to say (7)

○ Unsure (8)

Q6 What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

○ English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British (1)

○ Irish (2)

○ Gypsy or Irish Traveller (3)

○ Any other White background, please describe: (4)

_____

○ White and Black Caribbean (5)

○ White and Black African (6)

○ White and Asian (7)

○ Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, please describe: (8)

_____

○ Indian (9)

○ Pakistani (10)

○ Bangladeshi (11)

○ Chinese (12)

○ Any other Asian background, please describe: (13)

_____

○ African (14)

○ Caribbean (15)

○ Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, please describe: (16)

_____

○ Arab (17)

○ Any other ethnic group, please describe: (18)

_____

○ Prefer not to say (19)

Q7 Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long term illness or health condition?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not sure, please give details if you wish to: (3)

_____

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q8 What type of disability or condition do you have? (Select all that apply)

☐ Mental health (examples include depression, PTSD, anxiety) (1)

☐ Physical (this includes any disability/condition that affects your physical capacity and/or mobility) (2)

☐ Learning (examples include dyslexia, ADHD) (3)

☐ Sensory (examples include autism, visual/hearing impairment) (4)

☐ Not sure, please describe if you wish to: (5)

_____

☐ Prefer not to say (6)

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Q9 Are you in receipt of a Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) grant?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not sure (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q10 Have you ever experienced the following mental health issues (please select all that apply):

☐ Anxiety (1)

☐ Bipolar disorder (2)

☐ Depression (3)

☐ Drug or alcohol misuse (4)

☐ Eating problems (5)

☐ Panic attacks (6)

☐ Personality disorder (7)

☐ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (8)

☐ Phobias (9)

☐ Self-harm (10)

☐ Sleeping problems (11)

☐ Suicidal thoughts (12)

☐ Other, please give details if you wish to: (13)

_____

☐ Prefer not to say (14)

☐ Unsure (16)

☐ None of the above (15)

Q99 Politically, do you view yourself as:

○ Left wing (1)

○ Centrist/moderate (2)

○ Right wing (3)

○ Other, please specify: (5) _____

○ Don't know (4)

○ Prefer not to say (6)

Q11 Roughly how regularly do you use the internet?

○ Multiple times a day (1)

○ Daily (2)

○ Weekly (3)

○ Monthly (4)

○ Less than monthly (5)

○ Never (6)

○ Prefer not to say (7)

Q12 How regularly do you use a smartphone?

○ Multiple times a day (1)

○ Daily (2)

○ Weekly (3)

○ Monthly (4)

○ Less than monthly (5)

○ Never (6)

○ Prefer not to say (7)

Q13 Which of the following devices do you own? (Select all that apply)

☐　　Smartphone (1)

☐　　Tablet (2)

☐　　Laptop / computer (3)

☐　　None of the above (4)

☐　　Prefer not to say (5)

Q14 How often do you use the following:

	Very often (1)	Often (2)	Occasionally (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)	Prefer not to say (6)
Facebook (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Twitter (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Snapchat (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Instagram (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
WhatsApp (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q97 The following sections contain questions on sensitive topics. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question you can select 'prefer not to say' or come back to the survey at a later time (your progress will be automatically saved).

Q15 Have you ever:

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know (3)	Prefer not to say (4)
1) Flirted with someone online (1)	○	○	○	○
2) Asked someone out for a first date (2)	○	○	○	○
3) Asked someone out by sending them a text or instant message (3)	○	○	○	○
4) Used the internet to maintain a long-distance romantic relationship (4)	○	○	○	○
5) Used an online dating website (5)	○	○	○	○
6) Used a dating or hook-up app on your phone (e.g. Tinder, Bumble, Grindr) (6)	○	○	○	○
7) Asked someone you first met online to meet up for sex (7)	○	○	○	○
8) Gone on a date with someone you met through an online dating website or app (8)	○	○	○	○
9) Sent someone a flirty or sexy text or chat message (9)	○	○	○	○

Q16 Have you ever:

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know (3)	Prefer not to say (4)
1. Sent a nude or sexual photo or video of yourself to a current sexual partner (1)	○	○	○	○
2. Sent a nude or sexual photo or video of yourself to a person you only knew online (2)	○	○	○	○
3. Sent someone you just met a nude or sexual photo or video to flirt with them (3)	○	○	○	○
4. Let a sexual partner or date take a nude or sexual photo or video of you (4)	○	○	○	○
5. Asked someone to send you a nude or sexual photo or video (5)	○	○	○	○
6. Made a nude or sexy video with a sexual partner (6)	○	○	○	○
7. Sent someone a nude or sexual photo or video when you didn't really want to (7)	○	○	○	○

8. Felt pressured to send a nude or sexual photo or video when you really didn't want (8)	○	○	○	○
9. Received a nude or sexual photo or video of another person when you hadn't requested it (not including spam) (9)	○	○	○	○
10. Received a photo or video of someone's genitals when you hadn't requested it (not including spam) (10)	○	○	○	○
11. Discovered that an image was drawn, 'photoshopped' or manipulated to represent you in a sexual way (11)	○	○	○	○

Q17 Have you ever had a photo or video taken of you without your knowledge:

☐ Where you are partially clothed (1)

☐ Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible (2)

☐ Where you are completely nude (3)

☐ Where your genitals are visible (4)

☐ Where you are engaged in a sex act (5)

☐ Where you are showering, bathing or toileting (6)

☐ Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to (7)

☐ Which is up your skirt (e.g. 'up-skirting') (8)

☐ Which is of your cleavage (e.g. 'down-blousing') (9)

☐ Prefer not to say (11)

☐ I don't know (12)

☐   None of the above (10)

Q18 Who took the photo or video without your knowledge? (Select all that apply)

☐   Partner (1)

☐   Ex-partner (2)

☐   Friend (3)

☐   Family member (4)

☐   Acquaintance (5)

☐   Stranger (6)

☐   Other, please specify: (7) _____

☐   Prefer not to say (9)

☐   Don't know (8)

Q19 Was the person who took the photo or video without your knowledge:

- ○ Male (1)

- ○ Female (2)

- ○ Mixed group of male and females (3)

- ○ Prefer not to say (5)

- ○ Don't know (4)

Q20 Was the person who took the photo or video without your knowledge studying at the same university as you?

- ○ Yes (1)

- ○ No (2)

- ○ Prefer not to say (3)

- ○ Don't know (4)

Q21 When did someone take a photo or video of you without your knowledge? (If you have experienced this behaviour multiple times, please select the most recent occurrence)

○ Within the last 3 months (1)

○ Within the last 6 months (2)

○ Within the last year (3)

○ Within the last 2 years (4)

○ 2 or more years ago (5)

○ Prefer not to say (7)

○ Don't know (6)

Q22 Was the photo or video taken without your consent since you joined university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Don't know (3)

End of Block: Photos taken without knowledge

Start of Block: Threatening to share

Q23 Has anyone threatened to share a photo or video of you without your permission:

☐ Where you are partially clothed (1)

☐ Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible (2)

☐ Where you are completely nude (3)

☐ Where your genitals are visible (4)

☐ Where you are engaged in a sex act (5)

☐ Where you are showering, bathing or toileting (6)

☐ Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to (7)

☐ Which is up your skirt (e.g. 'up-skirting') (8)

☐ Which is of your cleavage (e.g. 'down-blousing') (9)

☐ Prefer not to say (11)

☐ None of the above (10)

Q24 Did the person who threatened to share the photo or video go on to share it?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Don't know (3)

Q25 Had the photo or video someone threatened to share originally been taken with your permission / knowledge?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Don't know (3)

Q26 Who threatened to share the photo or video without your permission? (Select all that apply)

☐   Partner (1)

☐   Ex-partner (2)

☐   Friend (3)

☐   Family member (4)

☐   Acquaintance (5)

☐   Stranger (6)

☐   Other, please specify: (7) _____

☐   Prefer not to say (8)

☐   Don't know (9)

Q27 Was the person who threatened to share the photo or video

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Mixed groups of males and females (3)

○ Prefer not to say (5)

○ Don't know (4)

Q28 Was the person who threatened to share the photo or video studying at the same university as you?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (3)

○ Don't know (4)

Q29 When did someone threaten to share the photo or video of you without your permission? (If you have experienced this more than once, please select the most recent time it has happened)

○ Within the last 3 months (1)

○ Within the last 6 months (2)

○ Within the last year (3)

○ Within the last 2 years (4)

○ 2 or more years ago (5)

○ Prefer not to say (6)

○ Don't know (7)

Q30 Did someone threaten to share the photo or video without your consent since you joined university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (3)

○ Don't know (4)

Q31 Has anyone ever shared a photo or video of you without your permission:

☐ Where you are partially clothed (1)

☐ Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible (2)

☐ Where you are completely nude (3)

☐ Where your genitals are visible (4)

☐ Where you are engaged in a sex act (5)

☐ Where you are showering, bathing or toileting (6)

☐ Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to (7)

☐ Which is up your skirt (e.g. 'up-skirting') (8)

☐ Which is of your cleavage (e.g. 'down-blousing') (9)

☐ Prefer not to say (11)

☐ None of the above (10)

Q32 Had the photo or video that was shared initially been taken with your permission?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Don't know (3)

Q33 Who shared the photo or video without your permission? (Select all that apply)

☐ Partner (1)

☐ Ex-partner (2)

☐ Friend (3)

☐ Family member (4)

☐ Acquaintance (5)

☐ Stranger (6)

☐ Other, please specify: (7) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (8)

☐ Don't know (9)

Q34 Was the person who shared the photo or video:

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Mixed group of males and females (3)

○ Prefer not to say (5)

○ Don't know (4)

Q35 Was the person who shared the photo or video studying at the same university as you?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (3)

○ Don't know (4)

Q36 How was the photo or video shared? (Select all that apply)

☐ Social media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat), please specify: (1)
_____

☐ Messaging service (such as WhatsApp) (2)

☐ Email (3)

☐ Physically shown to other people (e.g. by showing a phone screen or printing photos to distribute) (4)

☐ Other, please specify: (5) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (7)

☐ Don't know (6)

Q37 To your knowledge, who was the photo shared with? (Select all that apply)

☐ Your friends or family (1)

☐ Friends of the person who shared the photo (2)

☐ Acquaintances of the person who shared the photo (3)

☐ Strangers (4)

☐ Other, please specify (5) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (7)

☐ Don't know (6)

Q38 When did someone share a photo or video of you without your consent? (If you have experienced this more than once, please select the most recent time it has happened)

○ Within the last 3 months (1)

○ Within the last 6 months (2)

○ Within the last year (3)

○ Within the last 2 years (4)

○ 2 or more years ago (5)

○ Prefer not to say (7)

○ Don't know (6)

Q39 Was the photo or video shared without your consent since you joined university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Don't know (3)

End of Block: Sharing photos or videos

Start of Block: Perp - photos taken without consent

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Q40 Have you ever taken a photo or video of someone without their knowledge:

☐   Where they were partially clothed or semi-nude (1)

☐   Where the person's breasts, including their nipples, are visible (2)

☐   Where they were completely nude (3)

☐   Where the person's genitals were visible (4)

☐   Where they were engaged in a sex act (5)

☐   Where they were showering, bathing or toileting (6)

☐   Which was up their skirt (e.g. 'up-skirting') (7)

☐   Which was of their cleavage (e.g. 'down-blousing') (8)

☐   Prefer not to say (10)

☐   None of the above (9)

Skip To: End of Block If Have you ever taken a photo or video of someone without their knowledge: = None of the above

----

Q41 What was your relation to the person in the photo or video?

○ Partner (1)

○ Ex-partner (2)

○ Friend (3)

○ Family member (4)

○ Acquaintance (5)

○ Stranger (6)

○ Other, please specify (7) _____

○ Prefer not to say (8)

Q42 Did the person you took a photo or video of go to the same university as you?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (3)

Q43 What were your reasons for taking the photo or video? (Select all that apply)

☐ Because you were annoyed or angry at the person (1)

☐ To punish the person for something (2)

☐ To show or to bond with friends (3)

☐ For sexual gratification (4)

☐ For a joke or entertainment (5)

☐ For financial gain (6)

☐ Other, please specify: (7) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (8)

Q44 When did you take the photo or video?

○ Within the last 3 months (1)

○ Within the last 6 months (2)

○ Within the last year (3)

○ Within the last 2 years (4)

○ 2 or more years ago (5)

○ Prefer not to say (6)

Q45 Did you take the photo or video since you joined university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

○ Not sure (3)

Q46 Have you ever threatened to share a photo or video of someone without their permission:

☐ Where they were partially clothed or semi-nude (1)

☐ Where the person's breasts, including their nipples, were visible (2)

☐ Where they were completely nude (3)

☐ Where the person's genitals were visible (4)

☐ Where they were engaged in a sex act (5)

☐ Where they were showering, bathing and toileting (6)

☐ Which was up their skirt (e.g. up-skirting) (7)

☐ Which was of their cleavage (e.g. down-blousing) (8)

☐ Prefer not to say (10)

☐ None of the above (9)

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Q47 Did you eventually share the photo or video you had threatened to share?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

◯ Prefer not to say (3)

Q48 What was your relation to the person in the photo or video you threatened to share?

◯ Partner (1)

◯ Ex-partner (2)

◯ Friend (3)

◯ Family (4)

◯ Acquaintance (5)

◯ Stranger (6)

◯ Other, please specify: (7) _____

◯ Prefer not to say (8)

Q49 What were your reasons for threatening to share the photo or video? (Select all that apply)

☐ Because you were annoyed or angry at the person (1)

☐ To punish the person for something (2)

☐ To make someone do something (3)

☐ To stop someone from doing something (4)

☐ Other, please specify: (5) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (6)

Q50 When did you threaten to share the photo or video of the person?

○ Within the last 3 months (1)

○ Within the last 6 months (2)

○ Within the last year (3)

○ Within the last 2 years (4)

○ 2 or more years ago (5)

○ Prefer not to say (6)

Q51 Did you threaten to share the photo or video since joining university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not sure (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q52 Have you ever shared a photo or video of someone without their permission:

☐ Where they were partially clothed or semi-nude (1)

☐ Where the person's breasts, including their nipples, were visible (2)

☐ Where they were completely nude (3)

☐ Where the person's genitals were visible (4)

☐ Where they were engaged in a sex act (5)

☐ Where they were showering, bathing or toileting (6)

☐ Which was up their skirt (e.g. 'up-skirting') (7)

☐ Which was down their skirt (e.g. 'down-blousing') (8)

☐ Prefer not to say (10)

☐ None of the above (9)

Q53 What was your relation to the person in the photo or video?

○ Partner (1)

○ Ex-partner (2)

○ Friend (3)

○ Family member (4)

○ Acquaintance (5)

○ Stranger (6)

○ Other, please specify: (7) _____

○ Prefer not to say (8)

Q54 How was the photo or video shared? (Select all that apply)

☐ Social media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat) (1)

☐ Messaging service (such as WhatsApp) (2)

☐ Email (3)

☐ Physically shown to other people (e.g.by showing on a phone screen or printing photos to distribute) (4)

☐ Other, please specify: (5) _____

☐ Prefer not to say (6)

Q55 What were your reasons for sharing the photo or video? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Because you were annoyed or angry at the person (1)

- ☐ To punish the person for something (2)

- ☐ To show or to bond with friends (3)

- ☐ For sexual gratification (4)

- ☐ For a joke or entertainment (5)

- ☐ For financial gain (6)

- ☐ Other, please specify: (7) _____

- ☐ Prefer not to say (8)

Q56 When did you share the photo or video?

- ○ Within the last 3 months (1)

- ○ Within the last 6 months (2)

- ○ Within the last year (3)

- ○ Within the last 2 years (4)

- ○ 2 or more years ago (5)

- ○ Prefer not to say (6)

Q57 Did you share the photo or video since joining university?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not sure (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Display This Question:

   If Have you ever had a photo or video taken of you without your knowledge: != None of the above

   Or Has anyone ever shared a photo or video of you without your permission: != None of the above

   Or Has anyone threatened to share a photo or video of you without your permission: != None of the above

Q58 Has the behaviour you experienced led to any of the following (select all that apply):

☐   Anxiety (1)

☐   Panic attacks (2)

☐   Depression (3)

☐   Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (4)

☐   Suicidal thoughts or feelings (5)

☐   Self-harm (6)

☐   Low self-esteem (7)

☐   Feelings of fear (8)

☐   Alcohol or substance misuse (9)

☐   Loss of confidence (10)

☐   Feelings of isolation (11)

☐   Sleeping or eating difficulties (12)

☐   Other issue not listed, please specify: (13)
_____

☐   None of the above (14)

☐   Prefer not to say (15)

Q59 Have you ever experienced the following in your relationships with others (select all that apply):

☐ Difficulties around trust (1)

☐ Difficulties around intimacy (2)

☐ Difficulties in making friends or forming relationships (3)

☐ Prefer not to say (5)

☐ None of the above (4)

Q60 Since joining your university, have you ever experienced any of the following (select all that apply):

☐ Frequently missed or avoided going to classes (1)

☐ Experienced a loss of motivation (2)

☐ Experienced difficulties maintaining your usual standard of university work (3)

☐ Considered leaving your course temporarily (4)

☐ Considered leaving your course permanently (5)

☐ Prefer not to say (7)

☐ None of the above (6)

End of Block: Impacts

Start of Block: Poly-victimisation

Q94 The following section contains questions about sexual violence and domestic abuse. If you find these questions distressing you can either skip the question or return to the survey at a later time.

Q61 Have you ever been in a relationship where:

☐ Someone has regularly put you down, humiliated you or made you feel worthless (1)

☐ Someone has punched, slapped, hit or used other forms of physical violence towards you (2)

☐ Someone has used force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts (3)

☐ Someone has controlled elements of your everyday life, such as what you do, where you can go or who you can see (4)

☐ None of the above (5)

☐ Prefer not to say (6)

☐ Don't know (7)

Q62 Have you experienced any of the following when you did not consent:

☐ Sexual contact (including kissing, touching or molesting) (1)

☐ Attempted sexual intercourse (when someone has tried to have oral, vaginal or anal sex with you, but has not been successful) (2)

☐ Assault by penetration (this means someone intentionally penetrating your vagina or anus with a part of their body or anything else) (3)

☐ Sexual intercourse (this means someone putting a penis in your mouth, vagina or anus) (4)

☐ Other unwanted sexual experience, not described in the examples above (5)

☐ None of the above (6)

☐ Prefer not to say (7)

☐ Don't know (8)

Q63 Have you ever experienced the following

☐   Online sexual harassment - This includes any unwanted sexual attention that occurs online, such as someone communicating their sexual desires or intentions towards you when you do not want them to. (1)

☐   Online gender or sexuality-based harassment - This involves any unwelcome remarks or insults relating to your perceived gender or sexuality. An example could include either chauvinistic or homophobic jokes that are directed to you. (2)

☐   Cyberbullying - Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place online or through smartphones and other electronic devices. (3)

☐   Cyberstalking - This is a form of stalking carried out using electronic means. It typically involves someone repeatedly harassing you, intruding in your online spaces, or threatening you either online or using electronic technology, such as phones or computers. (4)

☐   Pressure to engage in sexting or send nude images of yourself when you did not want to. (5)

☐   None of the above (6)

☐   Prefer not to say (7)

☐   Don't know (8)

End of Block: Poly-victimisation

Start of Block: Any other information

Display This Question:

If Have you ever had a photo or video taken of you without your knowledge: != None of the above

Or Has anyone ever shared a photo or video of you without your permission: != None of the above

Or Has anyone threatened to share a photo or video of you without your permission: != None of the above

Q64 If you would like to add any additional information relating to the experience you have shared in the survey, please do so below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q65 To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Prefer not to answer (6)
Women should be flattered if a partner or ex-partner shows nude pics of her to some close friends (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
A woman should share a nude image of herself with her partner, even if she doesn't really want to, for the good of the relationship (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a guy shares a nude or sexual pic of his partner with his friends when he's drunk, he can't really be held responsible (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
A man shouldn't get upset if his partner sends nude pics of him to others (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find it a turn-on for a guy to share nude photos of her with his mates (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
A woman shouldn't get upset if her partner sends nude pics of her to others (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○

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If a woman shows her friends a nude or sexual image of her partner, it just shows how proud she is of him (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's only natural for a guy to brag to his mates by showing them a nude or sexual image of his partner (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a woman is willing to send a nude or sexual image to a man she's just met, then its no big deal if he goes a little further by showing it to his mates (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women tend to exaggerate how much it affects them if a nude or sexual image of them gets out online (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○
A man's reputation is boosted amongst his mates if he shares nude pics of a sexual partner (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Men don't usually mean to pressure a partner into sending nude pics, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q66 To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Prefer not to say (6)
A woman who sends a nude or sexual image to her partner, should not be surprised if the image ends up online (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a person sends a nude or sexual image to someone else, then they are not responsible if the image ends up online (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Celebrities and well-known media personalities who take sexy images of themselves should expect that those images will remain private (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a man sends a nude or sexual image to someone he just met, he should not be surprised if the image ends up online (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
People should know better than to take nude selfies in the first place, even if they never send them to anyone (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a man sends a nude or sexual image to a partner, he can expect that it will remain private (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q98 The final question contains a scenario that some may find distressing. Please remember that you can exit the survey and return to it at a later point or skip this section if you wish.

Participants randomly allocated one of the four vignettes

Q67 Please read the following scenario:
Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. After the night out, Daniel shows a group of his friends the video on his phone. One of the friends who is shown the video

recognises that it is Charlotte and tells her about it.

Q68 Once you have familiarised yourself with the above scenario, please answer the following questions:

	Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Might or might not (3)	Probably not (4)	Definitely not (5)	Prefer not to say (6)
To what extent do you think Charlotte is responsible for what happens in the scenario? (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe intervention by the university Daniel and Charlotte attend is necessary in this scenario? (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe police intervention is necessary in this situation? (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think what Daniel did is against the law? (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think Daniel's behaviour will create fear or apprehension for Charlotte? (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think Daniel's behaviour will cause mental harm to Charlotte? (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q69 What do you think Daniel's motivations were in the scenario?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Vignette 1

Start of Block: Vignette 2

Q70 Please read the scenario below:

Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. After the night

out, Daniel uploads the video to a well-known online pornography site. Someone who knows Charlotte sees the video online and tells her about it.

Q71 Once you have familiarised yourself with the above scenario, please answer the following questions:

	Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Might or might not (3)	Probably not (4)	Definitely not (5)	Prefer not to say (6)
To what extent do you think Charlotte is responsible for what happens in the scenario? (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe intervention by the university Daniel and Charlotte attend is necessary in this scenario? (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe police intervention is necessary in this situation? (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think what Daniel did is against the law? (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think Daniel's behaviour will create fear or apprehension for Charlotte? (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think Daniel's behaviour will cause mental harm to Charlotte? (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q72 What do you think Daniel's motivations were in the scenario?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q73 Please read the scenario below:
Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. On a course night out, Daniel takes a video up Charlotte's skirt. It is possible to see Charlotte's face in certain parts of the video. Charlotte initially doesn't know this video has been taken. Daniel uploads the video to a group chat with people from Charlotte's university course, naming Charlotte as the person in the video. Someone in the group chat tells Charlotte about the video that has been sent.

	Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Might or might not (3)	Probably not (4)	Definitely not (5)	Prefer not to say (6)
To what extent do you think Charlotte is responsible for what happens in the scenario? (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe intervention by the university Daniel and Charlotte attend is necessary in this scenario? (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe police intervention is necessary in this situation? (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think what Daniel did is against the law? (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think Daniel's behaviour will create fear or apprehension for Charlotte? (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○

| Do you think Daniel's behaviour will cause mental harm to Charlotte? (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q75 What do you think Daniel's motivations were in the scenario?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q76 Please read the following scenario:
Daniel and Charlotte are in their first year of university. They are both on the same course, but do not know each other well. Daniel photoshops an image of Charlotte's face that he finds on the university website onto a pornographic image. Charlotte does not initially know that Daniel has done this. Daniel uploads the photoshopped image to a group chat with people from Charlotte's university course. Someone Charlotte knows screenshots the chat and sends it to her.

Q77 Once you have familiarised yourself with the above scenario, please answer the following questions:

	Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Might or might not (3)	Probably not (4)	Definitely not (5)
To what extent do you think Charlotte is responsible for what happens in the scenario? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe intervention by the university Daniel and Charlotte attend is necessary in this scenario? (6)	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you believe police intervention is necessary in this situation? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think what Daniel did is against the law? (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think Daniel's behaviour will create fear or apprehension for Charlotte? (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Do you think Daniel's behaviour will cause mental harm to Charlotte? (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q89 What do you think Daniel's motivations were in the scenario?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Vignette 4

Start of Block: End statement

Q66 If you would be happy to be contacted about participating in a further interview relating to this survey, please leave a method of contact below.

◯ Yes, I would be happy to be contacted regarding an interview. My contact details are: (1)

_____

◯ No, I would not like to be contacted regarding an interview (2)

Q64

Thank you for your participation.

If you have any questions about the survey or the wider research project, please contact Grace Ablett at ablettge@cardiff.ac.uk

Some of the behaviours discussed in this survey can be a form of abuse and constitute a criminal activity. This includes:
- Taking a nude or sexual photo or video of someone without their consent
- Threatening to share a nude or sexual photo or video of someone without their consent
- Sharing a nude or sexual photo or video of someone without their consent.

If you have experienced any of the above, or if this survey has caused you any distress, please find a list of support services you may wish to contact below.

More information on online and digital abuse can also be found
here: https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/onlinesafety/

Welsh services

Cardiff University Disclosure Response Team
Email: disclosureresponseteam@cardiff.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0)2920 781410

New Pathways
Phone: 01685 379 310
Email: enquiries@newpathways.org.uk

Cardiff Women's Aid
Phone: 029 2046 0566
Email: reception@cardiffwomensaid.org.uk

South Wales Police
Phone: 101
Email: publicservicecentre@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

Live Fear Free Helpline
Phone: 0808 80 10 800
Text: 07860077333
Email: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

UK wide Services

Revenge Porn Helpline
Phone: 0345 6000 459
Email: help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales
Phone: 0808 802 9999

Survivors Trust
Phone: 08088 010818

Information sheet

Interview topic

I appreciate your interest in participating in this online interview. Please read through the following information before making a decision about your participation. Feel free to get in touch via email if you have any questions (my contact details can be found below).

The purpose of the interview is to discuss how technology is used within relationships and how it may facilitate abusive behaviour (for example, 'revenge porn'). Some parts of the interview will involve discussing experiences or perceptions of sexual abuse, which some may find distressing. If at any point you are not comfortable with one of the questions, you can ask to move on or take a break from the interview.

It is anticipated that the interview will take roughly 30-45 minutes. The information shared in the survey will be used as part of my PhD research project which is being carried out at Cardiff University.

Format of interview

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews will take place online rather than in person. For the duration of the interview, I would recommend finding a private setting where no one can overhear you due to the nature of the interview topic. Alternatively, if a quiet, private space is not available to you currently the interview could take place via instant messaging if you would prefer – please let me know before the interview if this is your preference.

The interview will take place via Microsoft Teams and you will be sent instructions on how to join the interview beforehand.

Nature of participation

Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. If at any point you would like to withdraw your consent to participate, please contact me at ablettge@cardiff.ac.uk. If at any point during the interview you decide you do not want to continue with your

participation, the interview can be ended immediately and information you may have shared will not be used in any subsequent analysis.

Further to this, should you decide following the interview that you no longer want your information to be used in the study, you can withdraw your consent **up until the point of data analysis**. Once your interview has been analysed, it will not be possible to remove it from the overall findings.

Before deciding whether the current time is right for you to participate in this interview, please consider the following to ensure your personal wellbeing is maintained:

- Is it safe for you to participate? Are you currently residing somewhere safe where you would be able to take part in an interview?
- Is participating in an interview likely to have a greater impact on your mental wellbeing, given the current pandemic?
- Are you able to contact any support you may need following an interview during lockdown? (A list of online support services will be provided to all participants).

How your information will be used

The information you share during the interview will be used in a PhD thesis within Cardiff University's School of Social Science (SOCSI).

Your responses will be completely anonymised, and we will use all reasonable endeavours to keep them confidential.

Your data will be stored in a password-protected file and may be used in academic publications. Information that you may have shared in the survey you completed prior to the interview will be stored separately to the recording of your interview, and the only person who will be able to link the information will be the principal researcher.

Who will have access to your data?

Responsible members of Cardiff University may be given access to anonymised data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure we are complying with guidelines, or as otherwise required by law.

What if there is a problem?

This interview is part of a PhD project. The principal researcher is Grace Ablett, who is attached to the School of Social Science at Cardiff University. This project is being completed under the supervision of Dr Kirsty Hudson and Professor Amanda Robinson.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee (SREC/3661).

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, you can contact me, Grace Ablett (ablettge@cardiff.ac.uk), or my supervisor Kirsty Hudson (hudsonkj@cardiff.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. My supervisor and I should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how we intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at SOCSI-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk. The Chair will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably efficient manner.

If you have read the information above and agree to participate with the understanding that the data (including any personal data) you submit will be processed accordingly, please sign and check the relevant box below.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

☐ Yes, I agree to take part

Appendix D: Interview script

Themes and key questions	Questions/Prompts
1. Technology use in intimate relationships These questions will be used to get a better idea of how people use technology in their intimate relationships. It will also explore the considerations given before engaging in certain types of behaviour (e.g. how well would the participant need to know someone before sending certain messages)	How do you use technology in your personal relationships? (Friends and with intimate partners) What do you think about the role of sexting/sending nude or sexual photos? Generally, when would you consider sexting or sending photos to someone? How well would you want to know them? What do you think the positives of using technology in relationships are? What about the negatives? For participants who have used online dating apps/sent sexual self-images: What are your experiences of using dating apps? How do you decide whether to sext/send nude or sexual photos to someone? For those who don't use dating apps or send sexual self-images etc. Why don't you do X? What consideration led you to that decision?
2.a) Participants who have experienced victimisation These questions will expand on the victimisation questions in the survey. It will also seek to establish whether	Has anyone ever taken a nude or sexual photo of you without your knowledge? Has anyone ever threatened to share a nude or sexual photo of you?

participants have knowledge of other experiencing victimisation.	Has anyone ever shared a nude or sexual photo of you without your consent? How did they share it? What was your relationship with the person who shared the photo? Could you tell me more about your experience of [X type of IBSA] Was this a one off incident or part of a larger pattern of behaviour such as: - Multiple incidents of IBSA - Other forms of tech abuse (abusive messages, cyberstalking) - Sexual abuse (not just physical, coercive and manipulation) - Emotional abuse General prompts: Can you tell me more about what happened? Did you tell anyone what had happened? Why/why not? How did what happened affect other aspects of your life? E.g. other relationships, university studies, mental wellbeing. Did you consider what happened to be a form of sexual abuse? What do you think was the motivation of the [perpetrator/person who did X]
2.b) Participants who have not experienced victimisation	Do you know anyone who has: • Had a photo taken without consent • Photo shared without consent

	• Threatened to share photo without consent Could you tell me more about what happened? What did you think about the situation? How do you think it impacted the person?
4. Participants who have perpetrated Questions around why certain people perpetrate IBSA. These questions also try to examine what people consider to be forms of perpetration and what they think motivates perpetrators, to compare how accurate their thoughts are with academic definitions of IBSA	Have you ever: taken a nude or sexual photo of someone without their knowledge; threatened to share a nude or sexual photo of someone; shared a nude or sexual photo of someone without their consent? Could you tell me more about your experience of [X type of perpetration]? What was your relationship to the person who you took/threatened/shared a photo/video of? What were your motivations in this scenario? How did it make you feel? Do you consider your actions to have been harmful? Do you think this was illegal?
4.a) Victims of IBSA on reporting/disclosing IBSA This theme will gather more information on when participants would report an incident of IBSA, who they would report to and why.	Did you report or disclose [X INCIDENT]? Who did you report the incident to? How did you make the decision of whether or not to report the incident? If you did not report to the police, why not? If you had reported to the police, how do you think they would deal with it?

4.b) Participants who have not experienced IBSA attitudes towards reporting	If someone was to experience [X] do you think the incident should be reported? Who the incident should be reported to? If the participant was in this situation, how would they decide whether to report the incident? For those who have not completed the survey, discuss scenarios from survey and ask the same questions. If you would not report to the police, why not? If you would report to the police, how do you think they would deal with it?
5. Attitudes towards IBSA These questions will focus on victim blaming, consent and how attitudes are affected by technology	How would you feel if you found out that someone had shown a photo of you to other people? What about if they had uploaded it to a website? How would you feel if you found out that someone had taken a nude/sexual photo of you without your knowledge? In situations where someone shares a nude or sexual photo of another individual, who do you think is responsible? Why do you thinks it's their responsibility? Would you expect this type of behaviour to be illegal? Why do you think that? How do you think this [revenge porn] compares to other forms of sexual violence, such as physical assault or rape? Similarities/differences?

	What would you do if your friend did X/or experienced X?
6. University support These questions will assess what students know about university support and what the barriers would be to reporting an incident of IBSA	Do you know what support is available to you at university if you were to experience a form of sexual violence? FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VICTIMISATION: Did you use any of the support available at your university? Would you tell the university if someone shared or threatened to share a nude or sexual photo of you? What more can universities do to support students who are victims of IBSA (or other forms of sexual violence)? Do you think there is enough education around forms of image-based sexual abuse, such as revenge pornography?

Appendix E: Logistic regression model

Logistic regression models were used to predict the likelihood of experiencing any type of IBSA as these models aimed to predict a binary outcome (victim or non-victim). The first stage of developing these models was to carry out bivariate analysis looking at the relationship between IBSA and the predictor variables, the findings from which were presented in section 3.3. This allowed me to identify the variables in the table below to include as predictor variables. The second stage was to carry out collinearity diagnostics, which would check whether the predictor variables were correlated with one another. Having non-related predictor variables is a condition for carrying out logistic regression.

Table 11: Variables used in regression models

Variable	Description	Categories	%
Gender	Whether respondents identify as male, female or another gender identity	Male	72.7
		Female	22.4
Ethnicity	What ethnicity respondents identified as	White	89.5
		Ethnic minority	10.5
Student status	Whether a respondent is currently in higher education or not	In HE	72.3
		Not in HE	27.3
Sexual messaging cluster	Whether respondents had engaged in high or low levels of sexual messaging	High	64.1
		Low	29.8
Other victimisation cluster	Other types of victimisation respondents might have experienced, including domestic abuse, sexual violence and online abuse	Domestic and sexual abuse	21.0
		Domestic abuse only	15.6
		Online abuse	30.5
		No abuse	32.9
Non-consensual messaging	Whether respondents had experienced high or low levels of non-consensual sexual messaging	High	51.0
		Low	49.0

Mental health conditions	Whether a respondent had disclosed any mental health conditions	Yes	70.6
		No	29.4
SIAMA cluster	Level of IBSA myth endorsement	High levels of myth endorsement	2.6
		Some victim blaming	24.7
		Low levels of endorsement	51.0

To confirm whether there was multicollinearity within the variables selected, collinearity diagnostics were run for the predictor variables listed above. Variables with variance inflation factor (VIF) scores of greater than 5 have significant levels of correlation that might affect the reliability of a regression model. All VIF values for the predictor variables fell between 1.006 for ethnicity and 1.264 for 'other victimisation', suggesting that they are suitable for use in a regression analysis. Further to this, all variables had tolerance levels of above 0.4 which also suggests that there is not multicollinearity within the variable group.

The model presented is a binary logistic regression which seeks to predict whether a respondent is categorised as having experienced IBSA or not using a series of predictor variables. The variables in table 10 above were the independent, predictor variables for this model and the binary IBSA victimisation variable generated using two-step cluster analysis was input as the dependent variable. Thus the aim of this analysis was to see if these variables could account for which respondents had or had not experienced IBSA.

In the first step of the regression analysis, all predictor variables were added to the model and reviewed; the model had a Nagelkerke R score of 0.213 suggesting that the variables accounted for 21.3% of the change in the binary dependent variable. The Exp(B) values, also referred to as an 'odds value', for each variable were explored to understand what the predicted change in odds were based on a unit increase in the corresponding predictor variable. Based on this, several variables were removed from the model due to their limited impact on the dependent variable. This included whether a respondent was enrolled in HE (*Exp(B)=0.977*) and whether

they had experienced mental health problems (*Exp(B)=1.039*). The analysis also suggested that the only form of 'Other victimisation' that strongly affected the model was if respondents had experienced 'Domestic and sexual violence'. Due to this, in the next iteration of the model only this form of 'other victimisation' was included, and a new variable was input that excluded those who had experienced only domestic abuse or online abuse due to their low Exp(B) values (see table X for further detail). Both gender and ethnic minority variables were retained at this stage, although they had a lesser affect than some of the other predictor variables in the model. Due to the survey sample being a convenience sample, P values were not used when making decisions around which of these variables to include.

For the next iteration of the model, the Nagelkerke R score increased by 0.005 to 0.217, suggesting just over a fifth (21.7%) of variation in the dependent variable was accounted for in this iteration. The odd values for the predictor variables showed that experiencing sexual and domestic violence increased the odds of being a victim of IBSA the most (*exp(B) 3.218*) followed by experiencing non-consensual sexual messaging (*exp(B) 3.217*), and consensual sexual messaging (*exp(B) 2.099*). With regards to gender, being male meant you were slightly less likely to experience IBSA victimisation (exp(B) 0.647) compared to female respondents. Similarly, ethnicity had a small effect on likeliness of being a victim of IBSA, with respondents from ethnic minority groups more likely to have experienced IBSA compared to white respondents (exp(B) (1.521). Due to the smaller effects of gender and ethnicity, a further model was run which removed these variables. However this decreased the model's Nagelkerke R score to .201 (or 20.1%) meaning it accounted for less of the variation within the dependent variable. For this reason, these variables were readded to the final model. This meant that the final model included 5 predictor variables, ensuring the model was parsimonious without removing predictor variables of interest. The table below shows a comparison of the values from the first iteration of the model compared to the final iteration of the model.

Table 12: Summary of initial and final binary logistic regression models predicting IBSA victimisation

	Initial Model			Final Model		
	SE	**Exp(B)**	**95% CI**	**SE**	**Exp(B)**	**95% CI**
Gender	0.33	0.64	[.34, 1.22]	0.32	0.65	[.35, 1.2]
Ethnicity	0.37	1.56	[.75, 3.22]	0.37	1.52	[.74, 3.15]
Student status	0.29	0.98	[.56, 1.71]	-	-	-
Mental health conditions	0.3	1.04	[.58, 1.87]	-	-	-
Consensual sexual messaging	0.31	2.02	[1.1, 3.69]	0.30	2.1	[1.17, 3.78]
Non-consensual sexual messaging	0.29	0.32	[.18, .57]	0.28	3.22	[1.85, 5.6]
Other victimisation: Domestic and sexual abuse	0.38	0.29	[.14, 62]	0.29	3.22	[1.81, 5.72]
Domestic abuse	0.41	0.91	[.41, 2.05]	-	-	-
Online abuse	0.35	0.90	[.45, 1.78]	-	-	-
SIAMA	0.34	0.84	[.43, 1.63]	-	-	-

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