VICTIM BLAMING AND THIRD-PERSON EFFECT:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES

FOR REVENGE PORN AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

By

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Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communications

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

2015

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The past two years have whisked by so quickly, that it's hard to imagine that I am almost at the finish line. I never thought I would be researching revenge porn when I first entered the OSU Mass Communications master's degree program. My initial interest was in sexual violence prevention programming, and when I made the decision to research revenge porn, I got a lot of odd looks when I told people about my topic.

However, I came to this decision because of my personal interest and experiences with the topic as well as the many women I've met who have also had experiences with this issue and received blame instead of support. I thought, surely there has to be a way to change this line of thinking, and I decided one way I could help was to research it.

First, I'd like to thank my advisor Dr. Cynthia Nichols for all the hours she spent refreshing my knowledge of quantitative analysis tests and how to interpret them because, as she can attest, they were the bane of my existence - I don't want to think about repeated-measures ANOVAs for at least a few months! I also want to thank her for the humor, coffee and support during my final, and hectic, semester with the program. I also want to thank my committee members Dr. Danny Shipka, who gave me the confidence that I could do this process long before my first semester of thesis hours, and Dr. Lori McKinnon, who believed in me before I even entered the program, writing one of my recommendation letters that would help me be accepted.

I would like to thank my fiancée Ryan Hodges for his support, patience and ability to keep himself entertained over the past two years as I increasingly spent more time isolated at my desk or in my office working on my thesis.

I would like to thank my parents, Steven and Carlene Hadwin, who have supported me through my ups and downs on my journey to the end of this process and who are ready to support me as I move on to the next step.

I want to thank my fellow graduate students for staying in touch and for supporting each other as we all went through this journey together. And, finally, I want to thank my friend Heavin Taylor, who has been an inspiration for my research and in the advocacy for victims of revenge porn as well as a strong advocate for my success.

Name: JAMIE HADWIN

Date of Degree: MAY, 2017

Title of Study: VICTIM BLAMING AND THIRD-PERSON EFFECT: A

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES FOR REVENGE

PORN AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Major Field: MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Abstract: Over the past decade, awareness for sexual assault prevention and education has been raised through national media coverage and programming for college students by a growing number of universities nationwide. While this is an important step in combating sexual violence, the phenomenon of revenge porn is quickly becoming recognized as an emerging form of digital sexual violence as more people are having their private and intimate images shared publicly as their own online and digital activities increase. This thesis study sought to understand how the populations' current familiarity and awareness about the revenge porn phenomenon influenced the populations' perceptions about revenge porn and its victims. A total of 206 participants, including college students at a public Midwestern university and participants on social media platforms, responded to an online survey with a series of quantitative items examining knowledge levels, exposure to information, myth acceptance, and blameworthiness for revenge porn. Participant responses were analyzed through independent and paired-samples t-tests and analysis of variance tests. Consistent with examined literature, participants with lower knowledge levels and exposure to information about both revenge porn and sexual assault reported higher victim blaming attitudes and myth acceptance for both topics and vice versa. Blameworthiness and myth acceptance were also examined through a third-person effect perspective to determine if perceived influences for self and others regarding media effects for revenge porn and sexual assault affected victim blaming attitudes, and the results indicated that third-person effect had stronger effects regarding revenge porn over sexual assault, and those stronger effects correlated with higher levels of victim blaming and myth acceptance for revenge porn than with sexual assault. These findings suggest that increased awareness for sexual assault has been effective in reducing victim blaming attitudes for sexual assault, and with more awareness, victim blaming attitudes for revenge porn can see similar reductions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

 "The narratives we're listening to as revenge porn reaches mainstream news aren't just about victim blaming, they're about negotiating a new age of digital interactions and an ugly manifestation of how women are viewed and treated…When outspoken feminists use language we associate with sexual assault when discussing revenge porn, it is considered novel because we haven't yet caught up with ourselves. If news commentators discussed conventional sexual assault in the same way that they discuss revenge porn, they just wouldn't get away with it." (Wilson, 2016).

Over the last few years, a push for awareness about sexual assault, particularly among the U.S. college student population, has resulted in high-profile initiatives such as a White House task force to provide recommendations for identifying, preventing, and responding effectively to sexual assault on college campuses (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014), the release of Oscar-nominated documentaries like *The Hunting Ground* about sexual assault on college campuses (Ziering & Dick, 2015) and the proposal of several federal legislative bills such as the Campus Accountability and Safety Act (CASA) (Kingkade, 2016).

As the conversation around sexual assault gains national momentum, it opens the door to questions concerning other forms of sexual violence that are not being addressed as part of the overall picture of sexual violence. Nonconsensual pornography, or the distribution of sexual images (photos and video) of someone without the consent of the person in the images (Citron & Franks, 2014; Stroud & Henson, 2017) is becoming more prevalent among Millennials and the increasing number of users of online technologies and social media, especially with young women as victims (Citron, 2014). It is estimated that one in 25 people have been threatened with or experienced the posting of explicit images without their consent ("Nonconsensual Image Sharing", 2016). Nonconsensual pornography is a relevant part of the sexual violence discussion, yet little attention or research has been devoted to its role as a form of sexual violence.

Nonconsensual pornography is an emerging dimension of sexual violence because of its development over the past few decades through computer-mediated communication (CMC) channels like the internet, social networking sites and other forms of new media. Some victims of nonconsensual pornography have had sexual images taken of them without their knowledge. In 2010, ESPN reporter Erin Andrews was secretly recorded through her hotel room door's peephole while she was coming out of the shower nude. The individual who recorded the images, who was unknown to Andrews, had been stalking Andrews and had decided he could make money from selling a nude video of her. Even after he didn't receive any offers for the video, he still posted the video anyway.

Many other victims have had their images stolen, or "hacked", from personal computer servers or mobile phone devices. The 2014 hack of celebrity cloud accounts resulting in the sharing of private images of a sexual nature, dubbed "Celebgate" and the masturbation-referencing "The Fappening", brought international attention to the problem of nonconsensual pornography and how quickly it can be distributed over the internet (Massanari, 2015). Inclusion of images from high-profile actress Jennifer Lawrence and private images of model Kate Upton

and her boyfriend Justin Verlander, among others, were some of the examples used to iterate a serious violation of privacy. Lawrence was experiencing a high peak in her career at the time and was relatively well-liked by the international population for her laidback personality and portrayal of the underdog hero in the highly successful film series, *The Hunger Games*. Upton and Verlander represented a scenario that could happen to any young couple in love as they were both in a relationship when the images were taken, hacked and released and had clearly intended for the images to be kept between the two of them. "Celebgate" made people begin to question whether something like this could happen to them.

In February 2017, another round of hacked images of celebrities were publicly released, dubbed "Celebgate 2.0" (Ohlheiser, 2017). One particular person of note included in this recent released of hacked images was British actress Emma Watson, who, like Lawrence, is also well-liked internationally for her wholesome image and portrayal of strong-willed Hermoine Granger in the iconic *Harry Potter* film series, but has become a target of internet misogyny because of her passionate advocacy for women's rights and feminism (Hawkes, 2017). After the 2014 "Celebgate", a countdown clock targeting Watson was posted on the internet warning of an impending release of nude images of Watson, although the images never materialized. Three years later, the February 2017 images of Watson were from a magazine photo shoot and weren't nude or particularly scandalous, although some images were photoshopped to make them appear more revealing in an effort to tarnish Watson's image (Hawkes, 2017; Ohlheiser, 2017).

While these hacked images of celebrities have been receiving a lot of attention in the past few years, the concept of revenge porn, is unique among discussions of nonconsensual pornography and sexual violence because its victims typically have voluntarily taken and shared images of themselves usually to a former romantic partner or friend who, often after the end of the relationship, posts the images without the victim's consent in an attempt to humiliate or exact

revenge on the victim (Tarrant, 2015; Stroud & Henson, 2017; Citron & Franks, 2014; Fairbairn, 2015).

One of the first mainstream instances of nonconsensual pornography came from the release of sex tapes featuring socialite-celebrities Paris Hilton in 2004 and Kim Kardashian in 2007 (Beato, 2010). Although many Americans believe the tapes were a public relations stunt orchestrated (or at least endorsed) by both women (Kaplan, 2017), both Hilton and Kardashian have publicly maintained they were "humiliated" and "devastated" by the release of the tapes (Beato, 2010, p. 19). While Hilton and Kardashian knew of the existence of the sex tapes, both of their exes have admitted involvement with the release of the videos, with Kardashian's ex seemingly wanting to increase his own publicity through the video. Around the time of the February 2017 "Celebgate 2.0", actress Mischa Barton addressed rumors that a film of her engaging in sexual acts with a former partner was being shopped around to various pornography film companies for release. Barton claims that the video was recorded without her knowledge (Ohlheiser, 2017).

While the celebrity incidents receive international attention, the majority of revenge porn does not involve celebrities or hacked images. It is estimated that around 80% of revenge porn images are acquired through a voluntary sharing of images through a practice called sexting, or the sending of sexually explicit (nude or semi-nude) images and/or video through text message and social media (Henry & Powell, 2015; Meyer, 2016; Winkelman, Smith, Brinkley & Knox, 2014). The images are then later shared by the original recipients of the images. Several studies estimate that between 60-70% of college students engage in sexting through text messages or social media apps (McCue, 2016; Winkelman, Smith, Brinkley & Knox, 2014). One of the few national surveys on revenge porn done indicates that one in ten participants were threatened with the release of images by their former partners, and 60% of those former partners followed through on the threats (McAfee, 2013).

Over the past few years, revenge porn has been shown to have infiltrated some of our national institutions as many college fraternities have come under fire for a series of secret Facebook pages where fraternity members post and share sexual images, often of unconscious women, with the knowledge or consent of the young women. In 2015, Penn State's Kappa Delta Rho chapter maintained one of these secret Facebook pages, and of the nearly 150 members who knew about the Facebook page, only one person came forward (Dewey, 2015). The U.S. Marine Corps is in the midst of addressing a national scandal after it was revealed in March 2017 that a private Facebook group with more than 30,000 members called Marines United was sharing photos of numerous female Marines in various states of undress (Gibbons-Neff, 2017). On April 19, 2017, an announcement was made about the addition of Article 1168 to Navy and Marines Regulations, which bans revenge porn with further violations possible depending on the intent of the distribution (Koerner, 2017).

The harm caused to revenge porn victims often doesn't end at the hands of their former partner or the person who posted the images. Because the purpose of revenge porn is often to humiliate or denigrate the victim, it is not uncommon for identifying information to be posted along with the images, which can result in third parties contacting, harassing and even threatening the victim with physical harm (Citron & Franks, 2014). Revenge porn can also result in the loss of employment and of relationships - romantic, platonic, and familial. The psychological effects can also be detrimental including fear, depression, anxiety, and attempts of suicide. This harassment and subsequent psychological effects not only comes from internet strangers who stumble upon the images and contact information, but also from the victim's own social network in the form of public shaming (Fiedler, 2014).

Even though there are severe harmful effects for victims of nonconsensual pornography, an unpublished study (Criminology student conducts study on revenge porn, 2016) indicates that despite nearly 70% of college students having sent nude or sexual images to a partner, 45.2% of

them believed that if someone took and shared a sexual image of themselves, they held some responsibility if it was shared publicly, even without their consent. This line of thinking is often referred to as victim-blaming, which involves society finding instances within the victim's own behavior to hold the victim, in the very least, partially responsible (Hayes, Lorenz, & Bell, 2013). By having shared an image with someone they trusted, an individual seems to lose credibility as a victim.

Using the theory of third-person effect, this study seeks to further explore the connection between knowledge of and experience with revenge porn and how these factors influence how individuals react to revenge porn and its victims. The study attempts to add to the emerging literature on revenge porn and an understanding of how it fits into the overall discussion of sexual violence.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Revenge Porn

A basic definition of revenge porn as the posting of nude or semi-nude images without the consent of the person featured in the images in an attempt to humiliate or exact revenge on that person (Tarrant, 2015; Stroud & Henson, 2017; Citron & Franks, 2014; Fairbairn, 2015). However, as this literature review progresses, the definition of revenge porn will be seen to be much more complex.

McCullough et al. (2001) defines revenge as a voluntary act of aggression performed against another individual or entity because of a perceived offense or transgression by that individual or entity. The "revenge" aspect of revenge porn is easier to identify because authentic revenge porn, as opposed to simulated revenge porn or the broader spectrum of nonconsensual pornography, is often uploaded by former romantic partners of the victims in the images, usually along with identifying information about the victim in order to embarrass or humiliate them for perceived wrongs, i.e. cheating, lying, ending the relationship (Citron & Franks, 2014).

When it comes to the "porn" aspect, the term "pornography" is itself still in somewhat of a gray area in terms of definition, so revenge porn, too, finds itself in a gray area because of its association with pornography (Levendowski, 2014b). The "I know it when I see it" approach to determining if an image or artifact is pornography has largely dominated the narrative of pornography in western culture (Andrews, 2012). Most definitions involve some type of sexual explicitness in the images or artifacts and usually include some kind of intent to arouse sexual desire, a long-running association with pornography (Marcus, 1964; Andrews, 2012). This conflicts with the intent of most revenge porn because an individual posting the images of his or her former partner doesn't typically do so to become sexually aroused but rather to obtain retaliation or a sense of power over the victim (Henry & Powell, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015, p. 232).

Franks (2016) argues that the reason "porn" is included in the term is that revenge porn takes private images and turns them into public sexual entertainment. These images also find their way onto pornographic websites where a primary purpose of the websites' visitors is to seek out images intended to sexually arouse. In fact, a few years ago, it was not uncommon to find revenge porn subcategories on many pornographic websites containing both user-uploaded and simulated images (Levendowski, 2014b). The Sexualitics project, a team of sociologists, computer scientists and demographic experts who analyze big data from porn sites, found a sharp increase in the amount of images and videos tagged with "revenge" beginning in the year 2011 (Roy, 2014). As opposed to traditional porn websites, revenge porn specific sites have a different purpose. Many visitors to these sites are seeking out to participate in the humiliation of the victim in the images.

Many scholars debate the choice of the words "revenge" and "porn" because of cultural associations with both words, especially "porn", which can skew the public's perceptions of the issue (Stroud & Henson, 2017; Franks, 2016; Burns, 2015). Despite the term "revenge porn" being controversial and attention-getting, many argue that it is not representative of all

nonconsensual (or involuntary) pornography and is therefore misrepresentative when used as the phrase to describe all nonconsensual pornography (Burns, 2015).

What Constitutes Revenge Porn?

Stroud and Henson (2017) provide an extensive breakdown of how one might determine if an act of nonconsensual pornography is revenge porn. Nonconsensual pornography can be examined through a four-dimensional lens: (1) looking at the source of the posted content, (2) the consent status of the images, (3) the intent of the source or agent doing the posting, and (4) the identifying features or information associated with the material.

The source of nonconsensual pornography can either be "poster-created", "other-created" or online content (p. 10). Poster-created content involves images that are created and shared publicly by the source and are of the source, i.e. selfies, images taken in a mirror, etc. Other-created content is usually provided to the source by someone else, i.e. a romantic partner, or the source takes (or sometimes hacks) the images of someone else, with or without their consent. With online content, the images were already posted online and were found and reposted by the source. Revenge porn often originally results from other-created content, sometimes shared once on one site or channel and other times deliberately shared across multiple sites or channels. However, rapid distribution of these images across the internet comes from individuals (often times not related to the original poster or victim) finding the content online and indiscriminately sharing.

Consent and nonconsensual pornography is often approached from the perspective of whether consent was given in terms of the images being posted, or, in some cases, if the images were originally obtained or taken with the consent (or knowledge) of the individual in the images. Regarding revenge porn, "other-created" images often are the most common and do not come with a discussion of explicit consent about the sharing of the images beyond the two parties.

Instead these situations of sharing other-created images with a someone usually involve tacit (or implied) consent (p. 17). However, once these images do make their way online, Stroud and Henson (2017) note that when the public come across these images found online, consent often cannot be ascertained simply through the image alone. In this case, it would then be difficult to hold the re-poster accountable for his or her actions because, like so many times before with so much other online content, the re-poster shares without much thought of the consent status of the image because it is not included.

The third dimension of Stroud and Henson's (2017) analysis looks at the intent behind the posting of the material. Regarding a general examination of nonconsensual pornography, motives usually range from retaliation and shaming of another individual, some motives involve entertainment, and in the case of many revenge porn site owners, the motive can be a financial one. In some rarer instances, some nonconsensual pornography can be posted to praise the individual in the images; however, of these intentions, retaliation and shaming are uniquely associated with the posting of revenge porn.

As the dimensions become more narrow, Stroud and Henson (2017) include a fourth dimension more specific to revenge porn and that is the inclusion of identifying and contact information with the posted images, known as "doxing" (Citron, 2014). Harm regarding revenge porn, which will be discussed in further detail later in the review, extends beyond the embarrassment of having private images shared on the internet. When identifying information accompanies those images, the individuals in the images often becomes the victims of online harassment, stalking and rape and death threats (Bloom, 2015; Citron & Franks, 2014). The effects can often extend into the victims' personal lives as many victims of revenge porn have lost their jobs and relationships, as well as experienced severe psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, fear and suicidal thoughts. Attaching these "known identifiers" in the hopes

of increasing harm against victims is unique to revenge porn (Stroud & Henson, 2017, p. 12; Citron & Franks, 2014).

Stroud and Henson (2017) recognize that the integration of revenge porn into social media muddies the waters regarding consent, identifying information and the changing legal environment regarding the criminalization of the posting of revenge porn. The majority of studies of revenge porn look at the posting of revenge porn as an issue between the victim and the alleged perpetrator; however, as more people are becoming involved with the viewing and sharing of online content, random social media users can contribute to the identifying information, even if the poster originally included no known identifiers with the images. The participation in identifying and humiliating the victim becomes somewhat of a group activity, and research suggests that watching pornography that demeans others often occurs within groups (Foubert, 2017). Does this group participation influence how websites allow and encourage for identifying information to be posted below the images? Commonly visitors to these sites are encouraged to post when they recognize the person in the image or find identifying information in the image itself, like a unique tattoo, an address, or a name of the victim in the background.

Brief History of Revenge Porn

The concept of "revenge porn" entered the mainstream in 2012, when an FBI investigation against Hunter Moore, the founder of the website *IsAnyoneUp.com*, exposed the site's posting of sexual images (photos and videos) of individuals, often accompanied by identifying information, obtained without their consent (Morris, 2012; Greenhouse, 2014; Levendowski, 2014a). In 2010, Moore had used his website *IsAnyoneUp.com* as a way to share nude images of his girlfriend among his circle of friends. After the images garnered more than 14,000 hits in a single day, Moore switched the focus of his website to nonconsensual pornography with identifying information about the individuals in the images. Despite the

discovery that a majority of the images had been illegally hacked by Moore's associate and not uploaded by angry exes, the vengeful nature of many of the website's posts and Moore's own admissions of revenge on women as a primary motivation for the site established the term "revenge porn" (Morris, 2012; Levendowski, 2014a).

While the now defunct *IsAnyoneUp.com* is reputed to be the first revenge porn website, the practice of posting sexual images of someone without their consent was not a new practice. In the 1980s, *Hustler* magazine was the subject of controversy when a lawsuit revealed that many images of women in the magazine's monthly "Beaver Hunt" feature had been submitted without the women's consent (Dennis, 2009; Tsoulis-Reay, 2013; Levendowski, 2014a). With the advent of the internet, Italian researcher Sergio Messina began noticing a trend of what he dubbed "realcore pornography" where men were sharing sexual images of their ex-girlfriends in internet bulletin boards (Tsoulis-Reay, 2013).

Because revenge porn has emerged as a computer-mediated phenomenon, one can also use computer-mediated methods to track its history. According to Google Trends, since the major search engine went public in 2004, a significant peak for the term "revenge porn" in Google searches occurred in October 2008. This correlates with the timeline when in 2008 several internet porn sites announced they had received complaints about nonconsensual pornography hosted on the sites, but due to its rising popularity, several sites also emerged around this time focusing specifically on authentic and simulated revenge porn (Tsoulis-Reay, 2013).

In April 2012, when the FBI announced their investigation into Hunter Moore and *IsAnyoneUp* was shut down, "revenge porn" experienced another peak in Google searches (Greenhouse, 2014). Following this, the next highest peak in Google searches for "revenge porn" occurred in January 2013, when Moore was indicted. In December 2013, Google searches for "revenge porn" peaked with another indictment against Oklahoma resident Kevin Bollaert,

founder of the revenge porn website *UGotPosted.com*, by the state of California where revenge porn was illegal at the time (Zabala & Stickney, 2015).

In June 2015 and August 2015, Google searches for "revenge porn" peaked at their second most and highest peaks, respectively, following the June 2015 announcement by Google that it would remove revenge porn links upon request (Cueto, 2015) and the August 2015 announcement that lawmakers were working on the introduction of the Intimate Privacy Protection Act, a proposed amendment to the Title 18 of the Code of Laws of the United States, that would make revenge porn and nonconsensual pornography a federal crime (Goldsworthy, Crowley, & Raj, 2015; Nelson, 2015). The Intimate Privacy Protection Act was formally proposed to the U.S. Congress by Rep. Jackie Spier (D-CA) in the summer of 2016 and is pending congressional approval (Nelson, 2016). 2016 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had promised to make revenge porn illegal as part of her platform, but now the fate of the amendment is up in the air following the 2016 presidential election (Avila, 2016).

Existing Studies

As a relatively new and sensitive area of research, many of the existing studies on revenge porn have focused on gathering data about behaviors and outcomes in order to get a sense of the pervasiveness of revenge porn. Very few national studies have been done on the subject, and a recent report ("Nonconsensual Image Sharing", 2016) by the Data & Society Research Institute and the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, provides one of the first national perspectives of the prevalence of nonconsensual pornography conducted by an academic or governmental institution. The report details that roughly 10.4 million Americans (4% of U.S. internet users) have been threatened with or experienced the posting of explicit images without their consent.

Until this latest study, two other oft-cited non-academic national surveys, produced conflicting results, making revenge porn research even more complex and divisive and the need to produce more research on the subject imperative. One of the more publicized findings of the first study, gathered through an opt-in survey on the website for the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, indicates that nearly 25% of the population have been victims of revenge porn and an estimated 90% of the victims of revenge porn are women (Franks, 2016). However, results from the second study, conducted by McAfee (2013) using a national stratified sample, indicate men were slightly more likely to be threatened with revenge porn and having those threats carried out.

These two studies highlight the focus of gender as a central factor in the conversation around why revenge porn should be more seriously addressed. Critiques of the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative survey include that the survey was posted as an opt-in survey on a website that predominantly received female website visitors thus causing the participants' gender to be skewed toward female (Stroud, 2014). Many critics of the revenge porn as a "woman's issue" narrative believe that studies that support the idea that victims of revenge porn are overwhelmingly female, like the CCRI survey, use these skewed and misleading results in order to create an issue for the feminist agenda to fight (Citron, 2014, p. 12). Other critics believe that while revenge porn is a relevant and important social problem, these studies are not looking at the full picture (Stroud, 2014).

Criticisms of the McAfee study (2013) include that the study didn't distinguish well enough the differences in harassment experienced by men and women, as men and women are more equal in terms of being on the receiving end of generalized online harassment (Pew, 2013), but gender-based harassment and cyberstalking is more likely to be experienced by women. Another oft-cited study to support that men are harassed online more than women, conducted by the British think tank Demos (2014), has also been criticized for not fully distinguishing the differences in the types of harassment being studied as well as the for using a small sample of

Twitter accounts of British journalists, politicians and celebrities (Citron, 2014a). The recent Data & Society report supports that men (4%) and women (6%) face similar rates of having images shared online, yet young women are at higher risk (10%) of having the threat of the posting of images used against them as a form of coercion, control of intimidation ("Nonconsensual Image Sharing", 2016).

Because gender plays such a large role in many of the most discussed and cited sources regarding the study of the revenge porn phenomenon, it comes as no surprise that many of the existing research studies focusing on revenge porn approach the topic from a gendered perspective in an attempt to either prove or disprove the narrative that revenge porn victims are predominantly female. Legal scholars and leading anti-revenge porn activists Mary Anne Franks and Danielle Citron regularly reference statistics of the disproportionate effects of revenge porn against woman in their efforts to reform criminal and civil law for revenge porn victims. Numerous books have been written to examine the ways women have had to strategically learn to navigate the internet and online spaces in an attempt to avoid harassment and online abuse.

This review and study is not intended to argue against or discount the role of gender moving forward with revenge porn research. Gender is an important and interesting factor in the study of revenge porn and is likely to continue playing a large role within the narrative of revenge porn research for years to come. However, this study recognizes that because gender has become one of the dominant approaches of argument in relation to the importance of studying revenge porn, that other factors have been overlooked, such as race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, online and social media usage effects, etc. This review and study, while likely to address gender, focuses more on bridging the gap within some of those more neglected areas of research.

Sexting and Revenge Porn

Besides gender, sexting is another more heavily researched component of revenge porn because this is often where other-posted revenge porn images originate. Sexting is defined as the sending or receiving of sexually explicit images or video through cell phones or online technologies, i.e. social networking sites (Jaishankar, 2009; Winkelman, et.al., 2014; Dir, Coskunpinar, Steiner & Cyders, 2013).

Advances in mobile phone and internet technology over the last decade have allowed people to create and share user-generated content easier than ever before (Goldsworthy, Crowley, & Raj, 2015). Millennials and college students who have grown up with technology integrated into their daily lives are increasingly susceptible to becoming victims of revenge porn because of the amount of content they share, often without thought, through text messaging and social media apps (Dodge, 2016). While studies on the prevalence of revenge porn among certain populations seek to establish revenge porn as a societal problem, studies on sexting and revenge porn seek to examine the origins of revenge porn images.

Using an expectancies theory perspective, Dir, et.al. (2013) examined what they refer to as "sextpectancies", or expectancies of sexting outcomes and how they influence sexting behaviors. Negative "sextpectancies" were more commonly reported by females and single individuals and were influenced by factors such as self-esteem and self image as well as the risks associated with sexting, including the risk of the images being shared with others (p. 572). Higher levels of these negative "sextpectancies" led to decreases in sexting activity, and much of the revenge porn research concerning sexting looks at preventative methods to decrease sexting behavior. However, many researchers argue that this preventative approach to decrease sexting activity is not the ideal approach because as more young people enter the digital public sphere, stifling sexting also stifles digital sexual autonomy (Steeves, 2015). Instead, the focus should be on decreasing the amount of the sharing of those sexted images beyond the original recipient.

Digital online abuse has remained steady and in certain situations has increased over the past decade. From 2009 to 2013, a 5% increase occurred among youth and young adults reporting having had embarrassing images of them posted online without their permission as well as an isolated increase in digital dating abuse from 2011 to 2013 (MTV, 2009; MTV, 2011; MTV, 2013). Given that at the time of the MTV surveys, the term "revenge porn" was still relatively new, it is not surprising that the surveys don't specifically mention or use the term (or nonconsensual/involuntary pornography). However, the increase of sharing embarrassing images without someone's permission closely aligns with the rise of nonconsensual pornography, and it can be reasonable to assume that at least many of these images were likely sexual in nature.

Nearly two-thirds of smartphone users store personal and intimate information on their mobile devices, including sexual images of themselves, and 13% of those surveyed had personal content shared without their permission; however, 94% of those surveyed believed their private information to be safe in the hands of their partners (McAfee, 2013). Studies estimate the number of college students sending sexually suggestive messages (text or messages) through mobile or digital means at nearly two-thirds (65%), and 69% had received sexual images from another person through similar means (Winkelman, et.al., 2014). More men (23%) had sent a sexual image to another person versus 11% of women, so this could be a possible explanation for why McAfee's study (2013) saw men reporting higher levels of threats to share their images.

College students are a more vulnerable population to be victims of revenge porn. Individuals aged 18-24 are slightly more at risk than teenagers for online digital abuse (MTV, 2009; MTV, 2011; MTV, 2013), and sexting was occurring among 20% of teens and 33% of young adults aged 20-26 (Willard, 2010, p. 542). "Sexts sent to other people", meaning beyond the original and intended recipient, was the most commonly occurring situation (12%) for undergraduates who reported having negative experiences with sexting (Dir & Cyders, 2014). Holly Jacobs, founder of the nonprofit End Revenge Porn, became a victim of revenge porn

herself while she was a graduate student and claims the majority of other victims who reach out to her for help are also college students (Jedra, 2013).

Legal History of Revenge Porn in the U.S.

In addition to research trying to determine the prevalence of revenge porn and behaviors that affect the likelihood of becoming a victim of revenge porn, much of the existing literature on revenge porn comes from a legal perspective as scholars and experts try to determine what is the best legal course of action to prevent and penalize revenge porn postings. The beginnings of the legal history of revenge porn emerge through privacy laws, which before 2013, were some of the few laws in the U.S. remotely structured to deal with an invasion of sexual privacy, although not explicitly (Franks, 2016). As sexting and nonconsensual pornography became more prevalent, the legal focus shifted first to addressing concerns about protecting children and teenagers from becoming involved with situations of child pornography. However, as sexting and revenge porn increased among adults, the majority of child protection laws did not adequately cover the emerging phenomena (Fiedler, 2014).

Because there is currently no federal act to offer explicit protections to victims of revenge porn and laws vary by state, legal action sometimes has to take creative approaches, often placing undue burdens on the victims of revenge porn. This, in a way, becomes a sort of legal victim blaming in itself. Between 2012 and October 2016, 34 states and the District of Columbia had passed legislation to criminalize revenge porn, with revenge porn being a felony in six of those states ("36 states + DC", 2016). Several more states are currently working on revenge porn legislation with the help of the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (Franks, 2016). However, because laws differ from state to state, there is inconsistency among what is enforced and what is not.

For example, the 2004 Video Voyeurism Prevention Act did not cover photos taken by the victim or shared by the victim, which constitutes the majority of revenge porn postings.

Stalking and harassment cases involve some form of persistence, and often times the original poster has only posted the images once or twice to a few sites where they are then distributed by other people on the internet. An early version of a proposed Florida revenge porn law would have required that identifying information about the victim be released in order to seek prosecution (Fiedler, 2014). Early versions of a California revenge porn law would have failed to protect 80% of revenge porn victims because it did not cover other-created content (i.e. selfies or images obtained through consensual sexting). Other versions excluded hacked images. (Fiedler, 2014; Franks, 2016). Some state laws focus on intent versus consent, and intent is not always easy to establish or is not admitted (Bazclon, 2013). Prosecution also differs across state lines with some states making the posting of revenge porn a misdemeanor and other states making it a felony (Fiedler, 2014).

Advocates for legal reform to address revenge porn find themselves in a constant battle to afford more protections for victims of revenge porn while balancing freedom of speech concerns. The 1996 Communications Decency Act, Section 230 essentially determined that websites were not liable for the content that third-party visitors to the website posted (Fiedler, 2014; Bloom, 2015; D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015, p. 32). For this reason, websites that host revenge porn had no legal obligation to help victims take down their images. In 2011, *Sarah Jones v. Dirty World Entertainment Recordings, LLC* successfully saw a revenge porn victim sue a website for defamation where her images were being hosted (Levendowski, 2014b, p. 429-230). It was ruled that because this particular website solicited the posting of the images from its visitors, it violated Section 230 (Fiedler, 2014).

Disagreement among scholars and legal experts on how to best address revenge porn keeps legislation against it in limbo. Some argue for stronger civil protections, which could result in higher monetary compensation but less confidentiality (Fiedler, 2014). Others argue that strengthened criminal reform would lead to more overcrowded prisons. For now, copyright law is

emerging as a possible solution as it can provide victims with course of action but while also encouraging consensual production and dissemination (D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015). The 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act states that websites can have protection from copyright liability if they respect takedown notices for infringement (DMCA, 1998; D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015, p. 27). However, copyright law currently would most likely apply only to images taken by the person in the image as copyright belongs with the picture taker, which is around 80% of revenge porn, so it would make a dent but not fully cover all forms of revenge porn. Copyright proof and lawsuits can also be time-sensitive, time consuming and expensive, and sometimes involve the traumatizing process of victims having to take more nude images of themselves in order to copyright their bodies (Fiedler, 2014, p. 188; Levendowski, 2014; D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015, p. 27-28).

Ultimately, many scholars argue that federal legislation would send a strong message: 1) that posting revenge porn is deplorable, 2) there is a commitment to stronger investigations and perhaps most importantly, 3) it could shift the stigma from revenge porn victims to revenge porn posters (Fiedler, 2014, p. 173-174), although many argue this could result in an overreach by the federal government. One area scholars and legal experts agree is that there can be more done to discourage the posting of revenge porn through market reform. Although Google publicly announced that they would assist people requesting for the removal of revenge porn images (Cueto, 2015), many suggest the company could take a step further and also take a look at its algorithms, which may promulgate revenge porn images that have fallen through the cracks. Another suggestion is for credit card companies to not work with fee-for-removal revenge porn sites (Fiedler, 2014, p. 186). Market reform sends a message to the public that market leaders are not willing to stand for revenge porn, and it also keeps content exposure to a minimum. When the major porn site Pornhub announced it would make the process easier for victims of revenge porn to get their images taken off its site and affiliate sites, Pornhub vice president Corey Price said,

"If other sites stood up in public condemnation and put in place similar deterrents, we could effectively curb the practice by a great deal" (Beusman, 2015, paragraph 3).

Revenge Porn as Sexual Violence

While revenge porn is still not collectively referred to as an occurrence of sexual violence, to understand how revenge porn fits in the realm of sexual violence, it is important to understand the history of how sexual violence itself came into the national spotlight and has evolved in the public eye. The history of how sexual violence was acknowledged and addressed as a social issue closely mirrors the emergence of revenge porn in modern culture.

The second wave feminist movement (1960s-1980s) is largely credited with bringing attention to sexualized and gender-based violence disproportionately faced by women such as sexual assault, domestic violence and marital rape (Haag, 1996; Smith, 2004). Until the late 1960s, these instances of violence were often dismissed, and in cases involving spousal abuse, were often accepted as a part of marriage. Sexual harassment was considered "universal natural behavior" when the term for the behavior first entered the public consciousness. Evidence requirements were much higher for the victim, often requiring the victim to obtain a witness and clear evidence they tried to resist the act of sexual violence or harassment (Citron, 2009). This is paralled with revenge porn today as victims of revenge porn have inconsistent and unsatisfactory legal options for pursuing recourse against the revenge porn perpetrator (Fiedler, 2014).

Laws to protect victims from domestic violence were not enacted until the 1980s (Bloom, 2015). Even with new protections under the law, victims faced many stigmas by their peers and were often treated poorly by law enforcement officers and the courts (Citron, 2009). It was not uncommon for a victim to file a complaint about domestic violence that was not taken seriously and the victim later ending up dead at the hands of the person she was trying to escape or file charges against; this is a situation Mahoney (1991) deemed "separation assault" (p. 6). Cases of

sexual violence, such as rape, were also not prosecuted as vigorously when the rape had come at the hands of a romantic partner versus if it was perpetrated by a stranger. This was influenced by a combination of multiple factors, the two most common being: 1) keeping private affairs private and 2) consent (or lack of) was harder to prove in cases involving romantic partners or spouses (Bloom, 2015, p. 247). These social systems still perpetuate present-day myths about stranger-rape as more serious and likely to occur than acquaintance-rape even though research indicates most sexual assaults are committed by acquaintances (Bates, 2016).

More than 20 years later, there is still a stigma associated with being a victim of domestic violence and sexual assault and victims sometimes are unable to find the protections afforded to them. As recently as November 2016, the National Football League came under fire for its mishandling of domestic violence cases despite having created a national campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence and having promised to be more responsive to the problem within its own organization ("The NFL's response", 2014; Laird, 2016). After college students raised awareness about the mishandling of Title IX investigations into sexual assault at U.S. universities, a movement to raise awareness and prevent sexual assault on U.S. college campuses was backed by the White House (Hess, 2014). Despite a national platform, many victims of domestic and sexual violence are still treated as the responsible party for their own abuse, facing questions about why they "tolerated" the behavior, or what they did to provoke the violence, a situation known as victim blaming (Hayes, Lorenz, & Bell, 2013).

Similar stigmas exist for victims of revenge porn, as emerging laws are still not known or fully understood by the public, members of law enforcement or the courts, and victim blaming attitudes, such as asking why the victim shared the image with her former partner, are higly prevalent with revenge porn (Zaleski, Gunderson, Bayes, Estupinian, & Vergara, 2016). Similarly, the occurrence of revenge porn often happens after a relationship ends, or as Mahoney (1991) described as "separation assault" in the case of domestic violence victims.

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Similar to the cultural changes occurring in the 1960s-1980s, nonconsensual pornography and revenge porn emerged due to cultural and technological changes in the 1990s with the introduction of the internet. And similar to the reaction toward sexual and domestic violence, victims of revenge porn are, too, often left confused and powerless in an evolving legal landscape and are also often susceptible to victim blaming. Law scholar Mary Anne Franks (2013) argues that this new era of victim blaming with revenge porn is another way to limit the freedom of marginalized groups to live their lives because of a fear of punishment for engaging in activities for which dominant groups are often praised or minimally reprimanded.

Harms of Revenge Porn

Rape culture was first described by Susan Brownmiller (1975) as way to "promote and propagandize" the notion of rape as a crime of "irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust" in order to excuse or overlook sexually aggressive behaviors in the average teenage boy or man (p. 439). Rape culture myths and behaviors, including victim blaming, open the door to excuse, normalize and, in some instances, expect sexual violence (Smith, 2004). Like some of the myths and victim blaming attitudes involved with perpetuating rape culture, there are several assumptions and myths specific to revenge porn that place the burden of responsibility on the victim to prevent their own harassment and abuse (Fairbairn, 2015). These involve statements such as "just don't do it", "you should have known better", "just delete your social media profile", "change your phone number/email", etc. While not always poorly intentioned, these statements come from a reactive approach, i.e. once the harassment or incidents of revenge porn have happened, versus a proactive approach, which seeks to prevent the harassment and incidents of revenge porn from being perpetrated in the first place (Henry & Powell, 2015).

While revenge porn is largely viewed as an online phenomenon, tangible, offline harms can occur with its victims. Bloom (2015) discusses three main types of these tangible harmful

effects for victims of revenge porn: 1) problems with career and workplace, 2) depression and suicidal thoughts, and 3) threats by third parties and their former partners (p. 240). Online searches can prevent someone who has been a victim of revenge porn from getting a job, even if the employer is aware of the situation leading to the posting of the images (Beusman, 2015; Citron, 2009). Being associated with revenge porn images can result in being let go or fired, especially in cases involving teachers, and can negatively impact the victim's business, or create an environment where the victim feels forced to resign out of shame or fear of reprisal (as cited in Bloom, 2015, p. 241-242; D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015; Citron 2014, pp. 5-7).

The 2013 Cyber Civil Rights Initiative survey indicates that 51% participant of survey respondents who identified themselves as a victim of revenge porn had experienced suicidal thoughts due to being a victim (Franks, 2016). Being a victim of revenge porn has very similar effects as being a victim of an act of sexual violence, including PTSD and suicidal thoughts (Bates, 2016). In one particularly disturbing case involving revenge porn, a woman was drugged and raped by her husband and another man who filmed the rape. Her husband distributed the video at the school she worked, and she was immediately fired after having spent 25 years building her career as a teacher. The woman admits she was suicidal as she felt she had lost everything in a short period of time (her marriage, career, her financial security), which left her feeling "very, very worthless" (Bates, 2016, p. 11).

The third area of tangible harm Bloom (2015) addresses involves the external threats by third parties and their former partners. One of the participants in Bates' (2016) study reveals how her former partner would pretend to be her online and give her address to complete strangers, which led to an incident where a man broke into her home and attacked her (p. 11).

Numerous other intangible harms exist for victims of revenge porn because of the pervasiveness and permanence of the nonconsensual images that can cause them to exist

seemingly forever online. The psychological harm that results from the feeling of being unable to escape the online images can limit the victim's online participation and change his or her online behaviors, often because the victim loses his or her online anonymity (Dodge, 2016). In a time when victims need support, they will instead cut themselves off from their support system by choosing to disengage from social media (Bates, 2016; Henry & Powell, 2015). Victims often struggle with a new and unwanted, sexualized identity, loss of trust in others, depression, anxiety and fear, and loss of privacy (Bates, 2016; Bloom, 2015, p. 244-245; D'Amico & Steinberger, 2015). Revenge porn has also become highly profitable for many websites that charge for the removal of images of the victims, with many taking advantage of legal loopholes and anonymity to do so (Fletcher, 2014; Hern, 2016). Even if the images are not shared publicly, even the threat of the release of the images can result in individuals being blackmailed into harmful behaviors (i.e. financial or sexual extortion) in order to keep the images from being leaked (Bloom, 2015, p. 243-244; Hinduja, 2016).

The harms mentioned above are of particular concern for Millennials, as the CCRI survey shows that 68% of revenge porn victims were between the ages of 18-30 and 27% were between 18 and 22 (Franks, 2016). A little more than half of the victims in the CCRI survey reported difficulty focusing on work or school, and 26% reported having to take time off from work or reduce their course load at school. Almost half the victims reported having to explain the situation to professional or academic supervisors, coworkers or colleagues, and a little under 10% of victims did end up leaving school or their jobs (Franks, 2016). Because Millennials been immersed in smartphone technology from a young age, it can sometimes cause a distortion of the reality of harms and consequences that can occur offline. As a technology-facilitated form of sexual violence, revenge porn is an opportune method of humiliation because it has the capability of being posted and spread quickly and without much planning (Sirianni, 2015).

Victim Blaming and Online Environments

Cyber harassment has been around as long as the internet and is argued to be more harmful than in-person harassment because anonymity makes harassment easier to target and avoid prosecution. Cyber harassment reaches a larger audiences and higher rates of dissemination online. The permanence of images online and a sense of "virtual captivity" follows victims (Bloom, 2015, p. 245-247)

Citron (2014) examines the phenomena of cyber harassment and cyber stalking, both of which share characteristics with the posting of revenge porn. Citron notes there are clear differences between the two online behaviors and their impacts on victims. Cyber harassment involves a persistent "course of conduct" of online behavior, as opposed to isolated incidents, that is intended to inflict emotional harm (p. 4). Cyber stalking narrows the definition to online harassment that causes a person to fear for his or her safety. The distinguishing characteristics of these terms are important when parsing through some of the existing research on revenge porn because, while used interchangeably, they carry far different implications, as some of the critiques of the 2014 Demos Twitter abuse study point out.

Unfortunately, the frequency of cyber harassment does not appear to be decreasing, especially among teens and young adults. College students, predominantly female, reported increasing levels of online sexual harassment (Kennedy & Taylor, 2010); however, given how quickly the social media and online environments have changed since then, studies from just a few years ago can be useful for establishing baselines for more recent studies.

Several of the more recent cyber harassment and cyber stalking surveys show an increase in this type of behavior over the past few years, with an emphasis on females between the ages of 18 and 30 being the predominant victims of cyber harassment and cyberstalking (WHOA, 2013; National Center for Victims of Crime, 2012). While many of the studies for cyber stalking and revenge porn research focus on gender as a primary factor for revenge porn victimization, there

have been relatively few studies primarily devoted to exploring other factors. A 2009 study of undergraduate students that showed women of color were at a higher risk of becoming victims of cyber harassment (Reyns, Henson & Fisher, 2011). Emerging research finds that members of the LGBT community face an even higher risk ("Nonconsensual Image Sharing", 2016; Citron, 2014, p. 15). Online abuse toward men often targets and questions their sexual orientation. Other studies positively correlate increases in the amount of cyber harassment and cyber stalking received by a victim with the amount of time the victim spends (or is exposed) online (Reyns, Henson & Fisher, 2011).

Just as with traditional bullying, recent research suggests that moral disengagement also occurs among individuals who participate in cyber harassment and cyberstalking behaviors, and it can result in an increase in victim blaming behaviors (Zaleski, et.al., 2016; Robson & Witenberg, 2013). Moral disengagement involves an individual not taking responsibility for his or her actions, instead finding ways to justify his or her behavior (p. 213; Bandura, 1996). One of Bandura's (1996) eight practices of moral disengagement includes "attribution of blame" where an individual can blame their victims for bringing the situation on themselves. Bandura (1975) also details the practice of "dehumanization" where perpetrators disassociate victims of their human qualities in order to avoid empathy with them. Studies on the brain patterns of people viewing of pornography indicate that the person's brains associate people within the images as objects, thus dehumanizing the people within the images (Foubert, 2017).

While moral disengagement was measured at lower levels for online bullying than with traditional bullying, this could be due to the fact that online perpetrators are further removed from the consequences of their actions because they do not have to see what happens to their victims in person (Pornari & Wood, 2010). Therefore, online perpetrators of bullying, harassment and stalking do not have to work as hard to morally disengagement themselves. In fact, technology may be seen as more of a form of entertainment, so instead of a moral disengagement, it may be

more of a reality disengagement that causes them to believe their online actions are not as serious as those that happen in real life (Pornari & Wood, 2010), or as the technology savvy like to call it, IRL. This reality disengagement, in turn causes individuals to discount the IRL experiences of victims of negative online behaviors like revenge porn. Recent research has suggested that victim blaming is emerging as a prominent theme in online sexual violence and rape culture (Zaleski, et.al., 2016), and victim blaming is especially influenced by the online commentary nature of social media with victim blaming statements often receiving more response.

Theoretical Framework: Third-person effect

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Davison's third-person effect theory (1983). The main concepts driving this theory stem from an overestimation of mass media messages' effects on others and an underestimation of mass media messages' effect on themselves. This in turn leads to behavior to counteract the message influence including boosts in self-esteem for not being influenced by the media and distancing from others perceived to be influenced by the mass media (Shen, Palmer, Mercer-Koller, & Comer, 2012; Andager & White, 2007, p. 92). Third-person effect theory is an appropriate framework to examine college student perceptions of revenge porn and victim blaming because a stigma is attached to being a victim when, in reality, a large percentage of Millennials are engaging in the same sexting behaviors as the victims and are therefore at as much risk of becoming victims.

One of the main features of third-person effect actually lies in the effects caused by how a person will anticipate they will not be affected by the message and how others will, and that person will react accordingly to their own perceptions and not to the message itself (Davison, 1983). To support his theory, he conducted four small-scale studies where participants self-reported their perceptions on how they would be affected by a particular mass media message and how others would be affected. With all the studies, participants reported higher estimates of

others being affected by the mass media message than they felt they would be affected (Davison, 1983).

Of the two major factors argued to be most influential within third-person effect, whether the message was desirable is argued to have the greatest impact (Sun, Pan, & Chen, 2008). When person perceives a message as undesirable, such as a violent or hateful message, he or she typically believes it has more effect on others and less effect on his or her self, and the third-person effect is greater (Andager & White, 2007). This is opposed to when the person perceives a message as desirable, and he or she will often display what Perloff (2009) calls the reversed third-person effect where the individual perceives they will be perceived more favorably by adopting a desirable message. This desirability factor also affects another significant third-person-effects component involving the social distance an individual puts between his or herself and others. The more social distance one places between his or herself and others, the larger the third-person effect (Andager & White, 2007).

One particular explanation of third-person effect involving victim blaming behaviors involves a biased optimism. Biased optimism involves an individual believing he or she is more likely to have positive experiences whereas others are more likely to have negative things happen to them (Perloff, 2009; Andager & White, 2007, p. 18). Third-person effect also examines the differences between perceptual and behavioral components of the theory. As the term implies, perceptual effects have more to do with how people perceive the effect of media influence. Perceptual effects are influenced by two factors: cognitive and motivational (Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009). Cognitive explanations explore the naivety of the individual, but for the purposes of studying revenge porn, motivational explanations may be more applicable.

Motivational explanations examine the message receiver's own self-serving needs as influencing perceptions of media influence. A person may therefore believe that they are less

likely to experience negative events and more likely to experience positive events than others as a self-enhancement strategy (Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009; Andager & White, 2007). In regard to revenge porn, as Perloff (2009) suggested, being associated with revenge porn is undesirable, and therefore an individual will likely want to distance his or herself from associations with revenge porn. This is a motivational (or self-serving) reaction intended to make the individual appear as though they are not likely to be influenced by revenge porn and those who do become victims likely brought it on themselves, even unconsciously (Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009).

The behavioral component of third-person effect looks at how media influence causes people to act or behave. Censorship is a prevention strategy for a behavioral effect, and content that produces what is perceived as a strong negative effect typically receives more support for censorship of that content (Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009). Revenge porn (and nonconsensual pornography in general) is stuck in limbo right now as more people have begun to view the phenomenon as having strong negative effects, which can be seen as more states pass laws banning it. However, as some legal minds and politicians have moved toward trying to prevent revenge porn, there are many more people who simply do not even have revenge porn on their radars; therefore, they do not have opinions formed on whether posting revenge porn is a "bad" thing. It is this second group of people with which this study is concerned.

Summary and Conclusions

From the review of the literature, it is apparent that there is much left to explore regarding research for revenge porn. It is an issue that affects people of all genders, ages, races and socioeconomic and education statuses, yet due to its association with pornography and sexual violence and its online and digital nature, the population tends to take it less seriously as a legitimate social issue and, thus, discounts the credibility of a victim of revenge porn. Because there is not a lot of existing research measuring the victim blaming aspect of revenge porn, it

could be vital to identify myths and blaming attitudes that perpetuate the stigma of being a victim in order to flip the culture to one that is less accepting of the perpetrators of revenge porn versus one that is less accepting of the victims.

Research Questions

Third-person effect emerges from the communications and media effects theory that people tend to underestimate the influence of mass media on themselves and overestimate the influence on others (Davison, 1983). One element of the third-person effect theory posits that messages that are stigmatized or undesirable cause individuals to distances themselves from being associated with that message. In the case of revenge porn, being associated with a victim of revenge porn comes with a stigmatization that causes individuals to distances themselves from a victim of revenge porn by isolating, blaming, and shaming a victim. Third-person effect can also cause an individual to underestimate the effects of likelihood of being affected by revenge porn because the person believes they are more media-savvy than the average person, and especially more so than people who actually do become a victim of the phenomena (Perloff, 2009; Tal-Or, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2009). The research questions examined in this study seek to expand on the existing revenge porn research by contributing an examination of knowledge levels about revenge porn, victim blaming behaviors and attitudes toward victims of revenge porn, and third-person perceptions about revenge porn. The questions also seek to provide a comparison to sexual assault, a closely related and more thoroughly researched area of sexual violence, to establish a connection between revenge porn and sexual violence as well as to provide some perspective on how to address revenge porn.

RQ1: What is the population's familiarity with revenge porn?

RQ2: What are the population's perceptions of sexual assault?

RQ3: How do general perceptions of revenge porn compare to perceptions of sexual assault?

H1: Participants will have higher familiarity, knowledge levels and exposure to information about sexual assault than revenge porn?

H2: Participants will have higher levels of victim blaming and myth acceptance for revenge porn than sexual assault.

RQ4: How does exposure to information about revenge porn influence victim blaming attitudes and behaviors of participants toward victims?

H3: Participants with lower knowledge levels about revenge porn will have greater victim blaming tendencies than those with more exposure to information about revenge porn.

H4: Participants with less exposure to information about revenge porn will have higher rates myth acceptance than those with more exposure to information about revenge porn.

RQ5: How do third-person perceptions influence victim blaming attitudes and behaviors of participants toward victims?

H5: Participants will be more likely to believe that revenge porn will have a greater effect on others than themselves.

H6: Participants with lower levels of third-person effect for self will have greater victim blaming attitudes and myth acceptance.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to understand how the public understands and perceives

revenge porn as a form of sexual violence and, thus, how it responds to victims of revenge porn.

As discussed in the literature, revenge porn academics tend to describe the phenomenon as a form

of sexual violence, while the public often views it as an unfortunate, but avoidable, risk of online

culture. Literature debates the elements of revenge porn that qualify it as a form of sexual

violence, but research on public perceptions and attitudes of revenge porn as sexual violence is

limited, possibly because revenge porn is still somewhat of a taboo and misunderstand

phenomenon. This research seeks to address the gaps between academic and public perceptions of

revenge porn through a quantitative survey that will provide a comparative analysis of attitudes

toward revenge porn and its victims and the more highly recognized phenomenon of sexual

assault and its victims.

As college students are a more vulnerable population to becoming victims of revenge

porn, another goal of the research is to examine through a third-person effect perspective how

college students assess their own likelihood of becoming victims of revenge porn based on levels of exposure to educational and preventative programming about revenge porn, levels of personal or vicarious experiences with revenge porn, and the emergence of revenge porn as a computer-mediated phenomenon compared to other members of the population at large.

Sample

An online survey administered through the survey platform Survey Monkey was distributed among a convenience sample of college students aged 18 and older at an accredited Midwestern university. Academic faculty in the researcher's department as well as other faculty members at the university with whom the researcher is colleagues were approached to determine if the survey could be administered to their students. The survey was also shared on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The survey went live during the month of February 2017 and was closed in March 2017.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique because it allows the researcher to gather participants subjectively as opposed to probability (random) sampling which allows for more generalizable results. However, convenience sampling does allow the researcher to worry more about focusing on the complexity of the topic instead of generalizability (Weathington, Cunningham, & Pittenger, 2010). This research uses convenience sampling because of the time it would take to gain access to probability sampling lists to which to distribute the survey.

Participants were primarily recruited from undergraduate communications courses at a public Midwestern university. The survey was also shared with advisors of student organizations to distribute among the student email lists for those organizations. Finally, the link to the survey was shared online through the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. All together, 205

people completed the survey in its entirety. The researcher acknowledges that the results from this survey may not be representative of the population and may be subject to inherent biases.

Survey Instrument

The online survey questions were designed to measure the external and internal factors that influence the perception of revenge porn as a form of sexual violence and reactions toward revenge porn victims. Several existing scales were used to measure the participants' attitudes and perceptions of revenge porn as a form of sexual violence and attitudes toward its victims. Some of the scales were slightly revised to better reflect the topics of the study.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) is a comprehensive and defined model that provides a better understanding and more accurate representation of rape myths (Payne, Lonway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). The original 45-item IRMA scale was measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale. IRMA's developers also created a 20-item short form of the IRMA scale, which has shown good reliability and validity and (Banyard, 2007; Payne, et al., 1999). An updated 22-item version of this short-form was used for this survey (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). As there is no existing scale measuring revenge porn myth acceptance, the researcher modified the IRMA scale to reflect wording representative of revenge porn myths, while remaining as close in context as possible to the wording of the original IRMA scale. The researcher also modified the scale to reflect a 5-point Likert-type scale for consistency.

Blameworthiness Scale. The concept of a "blameworthiness scale" is frequently used for measuring juror perceptions of victims, and it is also used to measure perceptions of blame toward sexual assault victims. While no definitive scale exists, many researchers seem to modify

a general set of questions measuring perceptions of victim blame. The researcher found an 8-item "blameworthiness scale" used to measure perceptions of blame toward victims of sexual assault (Piatak, 2015) that was adapted from another scale used to measure victim blame in date rape scenarios (Transgurd, 2010). The researcher modified the Piatak (2015) scale to remove the vignettes and to reflect consistency on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The researcher also removed two items from the scale that did not fit in with the purpose of the study. Blameworthiness was measured for both victims of sexual assault and victims of revenge porn.

Third-person perception. In order to measure third-person effect toward victim blaming, the researcher adapted items from a Health Belief Model measuring perceptions of severity, susceptibility, benefits of taking action, barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy for intimate partner violence to reflect answers for sexual assault and revenge porn (Burke, 2015). The 30-item scale was reduced to 5-items related to measuring self-efficacy, severity of, and susceptibility regarding sexual assault and revenge porn for the participant and for the participant's peers (others) and was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Independent Variables

Familiarity with Revenge Porn and Sexual Assault. The researcher created a 7-item scale to measure knowledge levels of revenge porn and sexual assault and exposure to information about both revenge porn and sexual assault. All items were asked once for knowledge of sexual assault and again for knowledge of revenge porn. These fourteen items were measured through a 5-point Likert-type scale and involved familiarity with the terms sexual assault and revenge porn, confidence in describing sexual assault and revenge porn, and conversations about sexual assault and revenge porn. The researcher also included a text box encouraging participants to try to provide their own descriptions for both sexual assault and revenge porn. The items also asked about both sources of information for sexual assault and sources of information for revenge porn.

Three of the items measured potential sources: university, self-discovered or through another type of source (i.e. a conference, presentation, special event, etc.) The fourth item asked the participant to evaluate the university resources as informative and useful. For both sexual assault and revenge porn, a fifth item was added by the researcher, which allowed the participant to write in a text box what he or she felt had been the most useful source of information for both topics. If the question was not applicable to them or they didn't know, the question suggested answers of "don't know" or "N/A".

Participation. The researcher developed a series of dichotomous items that asked participants to indicate whether the participant had experienced or performed any of the items described and if the participant had one or more friends who had experienced or performed any of the items described. The items were related to sexting, sharing someone else's sexual images without consent, having sexual images shared without consent, and sexual assault victimization. Because questions were of a sensitive nature and participants may not feel comfortable answering truthfully, the researcher did provide a "prefer not to answer" option on these items.

Demographics. A demographics section was included in the survey to gather information about the participants' age, identified gender, sexual orientation, race, year in school, and extracurricular status. At the top of the demographics page, participants were once again asked to confirm that they were 18 years of age or older followed by a question further narrowing their age group.

Quantitative Survey Research

Quantitative research centers on the measurement and statistical analysis of data through polls, questionnaires, and surveys. Typically, numerical data is gathered through a sample to attempt to generalize it across a population. On the other end, qualitative research differs from quantitative research because its findings are often not conclusive enough to make generalizations

(Qualitative and Quantitative Research, 2016). Quantitative research achieves its more generalizable findings is that it gathers information through the form of highly structured surveys, questionnaires or polls. By narrowing the selection of responses, as opposed to qualitative research which typically uses open-ended questions, quantitative research allows the researcher to focus on specific elements of the topic of interest.

Quantitative research through online surveys has many advantages including the ability to gather real-time results, reduction of time spent distributing the survey, and translating the results into a statistical analysis program. As such, they are a rapidly growing means of collecting research data. However, online surveys do not come without their disadvantages. According to the AAPOR Report on Online Panels, response rates are an issue with non-probability samples. Respondents to non-probability online surveys are usually white, younger, and more educated than the general population (Torangeau & Plewes, 2013).

Institutional Review Board

The researcher's university is committed to and guided by the ethical principles regarding all research involving human subjects as set forth in the report of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research entitled, Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research, often referred to as the Belmont Report. A research proposal was first sent to the university's IRB in January 2017 for review. After receiving some comments to elaborate on data storage methods, the researcher received IRB approval and began distributing the survey in February 2017 and closed the survey four weeks later.

Before agreeing to take the survey, participants were informed that the survey had IRB approval. Participants were informed that the survey was voluntary, that they could end the survey at any time, and that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential. In order to

continue taking the survey, participants would have to confirm their voluntary participation and that they were over the age of 18 by choosing 'yes' that they understood their participation rights and agreed to continue taking the survey. Choosing 'no' would direct participants to a page thanking them for their time, which they could then close.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection period ended, the researcher downloaded and imported the data from SurveyMonkey.com to an Excel document. The researcher imported the Excel file into SPSS to process and analyze all data. An independent samples *t*-test was used to measure the differences in responses for sexual assault and revenge porn on the two independent variables, the IRMA scale and the blameworthiness scale. The researcher used paired-samples *t*-tests to compare the mean scores between responses about perceptions of revenge porn and sexual assault. The researcher used ANOVA tests to measure the relationships between the two independent variables and the dependent variables.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and external validity is supported by using techniques based on previously established research as well as using the survey instruments. Internal validity is supported by a direct relationship between the questions and the response items in the instrument and the independent and dependent variables being studied.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to expand on the knowledge surrounding perceptions of revenge porn as a form of sexual violence.

Participants

A total of 205 participants completed the survey. Of the 205 respondents who reported their gender, 158 (77.1%) of the respondents were female and 47 (22.9%) of the respondents were male. No respondents chose the options of 'other' or 'prefer not to answer' on the survey. Almost 40% (n=79) of respondents were within the age range of 21-23 years old, 57 respondents (27.8%) were between 27-36 years old, 17.6% (n=36) were 18-20 years old, 7.8% (n=16) were between 37-50 years old, 6.3% (n=13) were 24-26 years old, and eight respondents (2%) were over the age of 50. The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (n=180), 7.8% (n=16) identified as bisexual, 3.9% (n=8) identified as gay/lesbian, and one respondent chose the 'prefer not to answer' option. Nearly a third (n=65) were seniors in college, 28.8% (n=59) were not in college, 15.1% (n=31) were sophomores in college, 12.7% (n=26) were graduate students, 9.3% (n=19) were juniors in college, four respondents chose the 'other' option, and one respondent was a

freshman in college. Nearly 50% (n=102) of respondents identified as a traditional student, 22% (n=60) identified as a member of the Greek community, 21.2% (n=58) respondents were not students, 17 respondents (6.2%) identified as non traditional students, seven respondents (2.6%) identified as student athletes, four respondents identified as international students (1.5%), and four respondents (1.5%) chose the 'other' option regarding student identification. Regarding ethnicity, nearly 85% respondents (n=174) identified as Caucasian/white, eight respondents (3.9%) identified as African-American/Black, seven (3.4%) identified as Asian or Asian American, six (2.9%) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, five (2.4%) identified as multiracial, four (2.0%) identified as Hispanic/Latino, and one respondent chose the option 'decline to answer'.

Results

RQ1: What is the population's familiarity with revenge porn? In order to establish a better understanding for subsequent research questions about revenge porn, the first research question examined the familiarity of the population toward revenge porn. This was gauged by examining knowledge levels and exposure to information about revenge porn. Independent sample *t*-tests were run against these scales regarding gender, and one-way ANOVA tests were run against these scales regarding age, orientation, college status, and ethnicity.

Knowledge Levels, Exposure, Revenge Porn

Gender

Because 'female' and 'male' were the only options chosen by participants, an independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean score of participants who identified as female to the mean score of participants who identified themselves as male against knowledge levels of revenge porn. No significant difference was found *(t(202) = -.311, p > .756)*. Revenge porn

knowledge levels of females ($m = 3.22$, $sd = 1.13$) had no statistically significant difference from men ($m = 3.28$, $sd = 1.03$).

An independent samples *t*-test was also calculated comparing the mean score of participants who identified as female to the mean score of participants who identified themselves as male to measure exposure to information about revenge porn. Although it was approached, no statistically significant difference was found ($t(202) = -1.801$, $p > .073$) between female ($m = 2.12$, $sd = .85$) and male ($m = 2.38$, $sd = .96$) participants for exposure to information about revenge porn.

Age

Next the researcher tested the dependent variables of age, sexual orientation, year in college, and ethnicity through a one-way ANOVA analysis for age and knowledge levels. A statistically significant difference was found among age ($F(5,197) = 3.30$, $p < .007$) for knowledge levels about revenge porn. Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants who identified as 21-23 years old had statistically significant lower knowledge levels about revenge porn ($m = 2.94$, $sd = 1.20$) than participants who identified as 27-36 years old ($m = 3.66$, $sd = 1.01$). Participants in the other age groups of 18-20 ($m = 3.12$, $sd = .92$), 24-26 ($m = 3.54$, $sd = 1.01$), 37-50 ($m = 3.11$, $sd = 1.00$), and over 50 ($m = 3.43$, $sd = 1.07$) did not have statistically significant differences between the other age groups.

A one-way ANOVA test was also used to compare age and exposure to information to revenge porn. A statistically significant difference was found among the age variable ($F(5,198) = 2.28$, $p < .048$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages, and although the ANOVA test indicated a significant difference between subjects, no significant differences were reported with the post-hoc results. See Table 1 for a complete

breakdown of categories. The standard deviation indicates wide ranges of exposure levels

between categories.

Table 1

Age and Exposure Levels to Revenge Porn

		Exposure	
	n	*μ*	*SD*
18-20	36	2.069	0.620
21-23	79	1.987	0.971
24-26	13	2.365	0.795
27-36	56	2.339	0.909
37-50	16	2.516	0.649
Over 50	4	2.813	1.143

Note. *Significant at the .05 level.

Orientation

A one-way ANOVA was used to compare sexual orientation to knowledge levels of

revenge porn. A statistically significant difference was found among the sexual orientation

variable ($F(2, 200) = 4.81$, $p < .009$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the

differences between orientations, which revealed that participants who identified as

heterosexual/straight had statistically significant lower knowledge levels about revenge porn ($m =$

3.17, $sd = 1.20$) than participants who identified as bisexual ($m = 4.03$, $sd = .96$). Participants who

identified as gay/lesbian ($m = 3.00$, $sd = 1.02$) were not statistically significantly different from

either of the other two groups.

The means of participants for sexual orientation and exposure to information about

revenge porn were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No statistically significant difference

was found ($F(2, 201) = 1.95$, $p > .145$) among sexual orientation and exposure to information

about revenge porn. Participants who identified as bisexual had the highest exposure to

information about revenge porn ($I = 2.56$, $sd = .65$), followed by heterosexual/straight participants

($m = 2.16$, $sd = .90$), and then by participants who identified as gay/lesbian ($m = 1.97$, $sd = .72$).

Year in College

A one-way ANOVA test was used to compared year in college to knowledge levels of revenge porn. A statistically significant difference was found among year in college ($F(6, 196) = 2.93$, $p < .018$) for knowledge levels of revenge porn. Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the difference. This analysis revealed that participants who identified as seniors had statistically significant lower knowledge levels about revenge porn ($m = 2.89$, $sd = 1.19$) than graduate students ($m = 3.73$, $sd = .98$). There was no statistical significance among the remaining sophomores ($m = 3.13$, $sd = .95$), juniors ($m = 3.23$, $sd = 1.17$), not in college ($m = 3.38$, $sd = 1.03$), and participants who identified as 'other' ($m = 3.75$, $sd = 1.16$).

The means of participants for year in college and exposure to information about revenge porn were compared using a one-way ANOVA. A statistically significant difference was approached but not reached ($F(5, 198) = 2.05$, $p > .073$) among year in college and exposure to information about revenge porn. Participants who identified as 'other' had the highest exposure to information about revenge porn ($m = 2.60$, $sd = 1.10$), followed by graduate students ($m = 2.56$, $sd = 1.02$), then by not in college ($m = 2.24$, $sd = .74$) and juniors ($m = 2.24$, $sd = .98$), followed by sophomores ($m = 2.09$, $sd = .62$), and then seniors ($m = 1.97$, $sd = .98$).

Ethnicity

The means of participants for ethnicity and knowledge of revenge porn were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No statistically significant difference was found ($F(5,196) = 1.18$, $p > .320$) among ethnicity and knowledge levels of revenge porn. Participants who identified as other ($m = 4.43$, $sd = .38$) had the highest knowledge levels of revenge porn, followed by Native American ($m = 3.46$, $sd = 1.27$), then by Caucasian/white ($m = 3.22$, $sd = 1.13$), followed by

African-American/Black (*m* = 3.06, *sd* = .72), then by Asian (m = 2.96, *sd* = .91), and then by Hispanic (*m* = 2.93, *sd* = .80).

A one-way ANOVA was also used to compare ethnicity and exposure to information about revenge porn. No statistically significant difference was found (F(5,197) = .364, *p* > .873). Native American (*m* = 2.50, *sd* = .99) had the highest exposure to information about revenge porn, followed by African-American/Black *(m* = 2.41, *sd* = .55), then by Hispanic (*m* = 2.31, *sd* = .94) , Caucasian/white (*m* = 2.17, *sd* = .89), Asian (*m* = 2.07, *sd* = 1.08), and then by other (*m* =1.95, *sd* = .69).

RQ2: What is the population's familiarity with sexual assault? Because revenge porn is still a relatively unexplored area of study, the researcher wanted to compare perceptions of revenge porn against the more well-known area of sexual assault. This was done by also examining knowledge levels and exposure to information about sexual assault. Independent sample *t*-tests were run against these scales regarding gender, and one-way ANOVA tests were run against these scales regarding age, orientation, college status, and ethnicity.

Knowledge Levels, Exposure, Sexual Assault

Gender

Because 'female' and 'male' were the only options chosen by participants, an independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean score of participants who identified as female to the mean score of participants who identified themselves as male against knowledge levels of sexual assault. No significant difference was found *(t*(202) = .821, *p* > .413*)* for sexual assault knowledge levels between females (*m* = 4.48, *sd* = .53) and males (*m* = 4.41, *sd* = .51).

An independent samples *t*-test was also calculated comparing the mean score of participants who identified as female to the mean score of participants who identified themselves

as male to measure exposure to information about sexual assault. No statistically significant difference was found ($t(202) = .891, p > .374$) for exposure to information about sexual assault between females ($m = 3.74, sd = .57$) and males ($m = 3.65, sd = .70$).

Age

Next the researcher computed a one-way ANOVA for age and knowledge levels of sexual assault. A statistically significant difference was found among the age variable ($F(5,198) = 3.72, p < .005$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants who identified as 18-20 years old ($m = 4.23, sd = .56$) had statistically significant lower knowledge levels of revenge porn than participants who identified as 27-36 years old ($m = 4.68, sd = .43$). Participants in the other age groups of 21-23 ($m = 4.43, sd = .51$), 24-26 ($m = 4.42, sd = .43$), 37-50 ($m = 4.41, sd = .63$), and over 50 ($m = 4.56, sd = .55$) had no statistically significant difference from any of the other age groups.

A one-way ANOVA test was also used to compare age and exposure to information to sexual assault. No significant difference was found among the age variable ($F(5,198) = .355, p > .973$). Participants who identified as 24-26 ($m = 3.81, sd = .54$) had the highest levels of exposure to information about sexual assault, followed by 27-36 ($m = 3.75, sd = .57$) and 21-23 ($m = 3.75, sd = .55$) and over 50 ($m = 3.75, sd = .65$), then by 18-20 ($m = 3.64, sd = .63$), and then by 37-50 ($m = 3.61, sd = .93$).

Orientation

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine sexual orientation with knowledge levels of sexual assault. No significant difference was found among the sexual orientation variable ($F(2, 201) = .850, p > .429$). Participants who identified as bisexual had the highest knowledge levels ($m = 4.63, sd = .44$), followed by heterosexual/straight ($m = 4.45, sd = .53$), and then by participants who identified as gay/lesbian ($m = 4.41, sd = .53$).

Sexual orientation and exposure to information about sexual assault was also examined using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F(2, 201) = .528$, $p > .591$) among sexual orientation and exposure to information about sexual assault. Participants who identified as bisexual had the levels of exposure to information about sexual assault ($m = 3.86$, $sd = .43$), followed by heterosexual/straight ($m = 3.71$, $sd = .61$), and then by participants who identified as gay/lesbian ($m = 3.63$, $sd = .74$).

College Status

A one-way ANOVA test was used to compare year in college to knowledge levels of sexual assault. A significant difference was found among year in college ($F(5, 197) = 3.51$, $p < .005$) and knowledge levels of sexual assault. Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. Participants who identified as sophomores has the lowest knowledge levels about sexual assault ($m = 4.22$, $sd = .54$), followed by seniors ($m = 4.39$, $sd = .52$), then juniors ($m = 4.43$, $sd = .56$), then those not in college ($m = 4.58$, $sd = .51$), and then grad students ($m = 4.65$, $sd = .43$).

The means of participants for year in college and exposure to information about sexual assault were compared using a one-way ANOVA. A statistically significant difference was found ($F(5, 198) = 2.39$, $p < .039$) among year in college and exposure to information about sexual assault. Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. Participants who identified as sophomores the lowest exposure to information about sexual assault ($m = 3.56$, $sd = .64$), followed by not in college ($m = 3.57$, $sd = .63$), the seniors ($m = 3.82$, $sd = .57$), then juniors ($m = 3.84$, $sd = .50$), and then grad students ($m = 3.87$, $sd = .57$).

Ethnicity

The means of participants for ethnicity and knowledge of sexual assault were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F(5,197) = 1.53$, $p > .183$)

among ethnicity and knowledge levels of sexual assault. A one-way ANOVA was also used to compare ethnicity and exposure to information about sexual assault. No significant difference was found ($F(5,197) = .453$, $p > .811$). Both ANOVAS indicated ethnicity was not a significant factor in knowledge levels and exposure to information about sexual assault.

RQ3: How do overall perceptions of revenge porn compare to perceptions of sexual assault? Sexual assault has been studied much longer than the newer phenomenon of revenge porn and has received much more attention than revenge porn in recent years. Paired-samples *t*-tests were run against the overall mean scores from two related samples, revenge porn and sexual assault, for familiarity, myth acceptance, and blameworthiness scales.

Familiarity, Myth Acceptance, Blameworthiness

Familiarity

A paired-samples *t*-test was calculated to compare familiarity with revenge porn and sexual assault. A statistically significant difference ($t(249) = 19.243$, $p < .001$) between the higher knowledge levels for sexual assault ($m = 4.45$, $sd = .52$) over revenge porn ($m = 3.21$, $sd = 1.10$) was found (see Figure 1). A statistically significant difference was also found ($t(239) = 25.177$, $p < .001$) between the higher exposure to information for sexual assault ($m = 3.69$, $sd = .64$) than revenge porn ($m = 2.21$, $sd = .88$). Both of these findings support H1, which predicts that the population will have higher knowledge levels and exposure to information about sexual assault compared to revenge porn.

Myth Acceptance

Next the researcher computed a paired-samples *t*-test for myth acceptance with revenge porn and sexual assault. H2 predicts that due to greater familiarity with sexual assault compared to revenge porn, that participants would have higher levels of myth acceptance for revenge porn

compared to sexual assault. A statistically significant difference was found ($t(214) = -6.724, p <$ .001) between the higher levels of myth acceptance for revenge porn ($m = 1.81, sd = .60$) over levels of myth acceptance for sexual assault *($m = 1.64, sd = .56$)*, thus supporting H2.

Blameworthiness

The researcher used a paired-samples *t*-test to compare blameworthiness with revenge porn and sexual assault. H2 predicts that due to greater familiarity with sexual assault compared to revenge porn, that participants would have higher levels of victim blaming for revenge porn compared to sexual assault. A statistically significant difference was found ($t(212) = -9.140, p <$ .001) between the higher levels of blameworthiness for revenge porn ($m = 2.01, sd = .91$) over sexual assault ($m = 1.57, sd = .57$), thus supporting H2.

RQ4: How do knowledge levels and exposure to information influence victim blaming attitudes and behaviors toward victims of revenge porn and sexual assault? Before running the results for research question 4, the participants' responses to questions on a 5-point Likert scale about knowledge levels and exposure to information were split into variables of low, medium, and high. The participants' answers were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA.

Victim Blaming, Familiarity

First, a one-way ANOVA was calculated comparing blame levels in relation to knowledge levels of revenge porn using a high, medium, low split. A statistically significant difference was found ($F(2, 210) = 3.781, p < .024$) between groups with low knowledge levels ($m = 2.31, sd = 1.07$), medium knowledge levels ($m = 1.94, sd = .83$), and high knowledge levels ($m = 1.79, sd = .94$) for revenge porn victim blaming. These results indicate that the lower knowledge levels of revenge porn, the higher the victim blaming. Results were statistically significant between all levels of knowledge except for between medium and high.

A one-way ANOVA was also calculated comparing blame levels in relation to exposure to information about revenge porn using a high, medium, low split. A statistically significant difference was found ($F(2, 209) = 10.082$, $p < .001$) between groups with low exposure to information ($m = 2.31$, $sd = 1.08$), medium exposure to information ($m = 2.06$, $sd = .87$), and high exposure to information ($m = 1.43$, $sd = .10$) for revenge porn victim blaming. These results indicate that the lower the exposure to information about revenge porn, the higher the victim blaming. Results were statistically significant between all levels of knowledge except for between low and medium.

Myth Acceptance, Familiarity

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to examine knowledge levels for revenge porn through a high, medium, low split with myth acceptance for revenge porn. A significant difference was found ($F(2, 212) = 17.82$, $p < .001$). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences. Participants with high levels of knowledge of revenge porn had the lowest rates of myth acceptance ($m = 1.32$, $sd = .27$), followed by medium levels ($m = 1.85$, $sd = .60$) and low levels ($m = 2.08$, $sd = .61$). Results were significant across all levels of knowledge except between low and medium. These results indicate that the lower the knowledge levels of revenge porn, the higher the myth acceptance.

A one-way ANOVA was also calculated comparing exposure to information about revenge porn with myth acceptance for revenge porn. A significant difference was found ($F(2,213) = 7.470$, $p < .001$). Participants with high levels of exposure of revenge porn had the lowest rates of myth acceptance ($m = 1.49$, $sd = .60$), followed by medium levels ($m = 1.80$, $sd = .58$) and low levels ($m = 2.03$, $sd = .62$). Results were significant across all levels of exposure except between low and medium. These results indicate that the lower the exposure to information about revenge porn, the higher the myth acceptance.

RQ5: How do third-person perceptions influence victim blaming attitudes and behaviors toward victims of revenge porn and sexual assault? Before running the results for research question 5, the participants' responses to questions on a 5-point Likert scale about third-person effect (self, other) split in low, medium and high values as well as blameworthiness and myth acceptance being split into low, medium, and high values. The participants' answers were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with third person effects (self, other) as a within-subjects factor and between-subjects factors for blameworthiness and myth acceptance. The researcher also included the variables of gender and age when running the results as these two variables had showed significance in earlier tests.

Third-person effect, Revenge Porn, Sexual Assault

Paired-samples t-tests were initially run to compare third-person effect for self and others over revenge porn and sexual assault. A statistically significant difference was found ($t(208) = 5.706$, $p < .001$) between the higher reported effects for revenge porn for others ($m = 3.21$, $sd = .53$) over and effects for revenge porn for self ($m = 2.98$, $sd = .64$). This supports H5 that participants would report higher third-person effect for others than self. However, no significant difference was found ($t(208) = -1.436$, $p > .152$) between reported levels of effects for others for sexual assault ($m = 3.60$, $sd = .48$) and effects for self ($m = 3.65$, $sd = .58$). Interestingly, reported effects for self were higher than reported effects for others, which counters the accepted premise behind third-person effect theory.

Third-person effect, Victim Blaming, Revenge Porn

A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was calculated comparing third-person effect (self, others) for revenge porn and blameworthiness for revenge porn. Main effects indicated that there was a significant interaction ($F(2, 206) = 4.26$, $p < .02$, $R^2 = .040$) among revenge porn blameworthiness and third-person effect for revenge porn. Significance was found between

groups $(F(2, 206) = 6.04, p < .003)$ for revenge porn blameworthiness low split $(m = 2.21, sd = .07)$ and both the medium split $(m = 1.97, sd = .04)$ and high split $(m = 1.91, sd = .07)$, but not between the medium and high splits (as seen in Table 2). Thus, supporting H6.

Table 2

Interaction Revenge Porn and 3rd Person Effect on Victim Blaming

		Self		Other		Total	
	n	*μ*	*SD*	*μ*	*SD*	*μ*	*SD*
Low Blame	38	2.184	0.082	2.237	0.083	2.211	.068
Medium Blame	132	1.932	0.044	2.008	0.045	1.970	.036
High Blame	39	2.026	0.081	1.795	0.082	1.910	.067
Total	209	2.047*	0.041	2.013*	0.042		

Note. *Significant at the .05 level.

Third-person effect, Victim Blaming, Sexual Assault

For comparison, a one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was calculated comparing third-person effect (self, others) for sexual assault and blameworthiness for sexual assault. Main effects indicated that there was not a significant interaction $(F(1, 207) = .80 , p > .37, R^2 = .004)$ among medium $(m = 1.99, sd = .03)$ and high values $(m = 1.80, sd = .07)$ of sexual assault blameworthiness and third-person effect for sexual assault.

Third-person effect, Myth Acceptance, Revenge Porn

A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was then calculated comparing third-person effect (self, others) for revenge porn and myth acceptance for revenge porn. Main effects indicated that a significant within-subjects effect was approached $(F(2, 201) = 2.57, p > .08, R^2 = .025)$ but not reached, which does not support H6. However, a significant between-subjects effect $(F(2, 201) = 4.26, p = .02)$ was found for low $(m = 2.17, sd = .07)$ and medium $(m = 1.96, sd = .04)$ values for revenge porn myth acceptance.

Third-person effect, Myth Acceptance, Sexual Assault

Finally, a one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was calculated comparing third-person effect (self, others) for sexual assault and myth acceptance for sexual assault. Main effects indicated that there was a not significant interaction ($F(2, 204) = .78$, $p > .46$, $R^2 = .008$) among low ($m = 2.25$, $sd = .08$), medium ($m = 1.97$, $sd = .04$) and high values ($m = 1.71$, $sd = .07$) for sexual assault myth acceptance and third-person effect for sexual assault.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study used the theory of third-person effect, which posits that people will perceive the media to have a greater effect on others than themselves. Third-person effect also allows for explanations for why victim blaming is more likely to occur when someone does fall victim to media effects. Individuals who feel they know better than to be influenced by the media distance themselves from people who are affected because the distinction serves as a sort of ego boost or validation that they were able to outsmart the media. In the case of revenge porn, emerging studies show that a large number of members of certain age cohorts are engaging in behaviors that can increase their chances of falling victim to having their sexual images shared publicly without their consent. However, if they have yet to become a victim or are not educated or literate with the topic of revenge porn, they may be more likely to engage in victim blaming behaviors.

In an effort to more directly tie third-person effect to this victim-blaming phenomenon, this study studied the link between third-person effect and victim blaming, as well as providing a comparison of these effects to sexual assault, a more well-known, more thoroughly researched

and more spotlighted form of sexual violence. This was achieved through a series of quantitative research questions aimed to gauge familiarity, perceptions and behaviors of a population toward both revenge porn and sexual assault. A cluster and random sampling of 205 participants, including students at a large public Midwestern university and participants from social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, was gathered over a period of four weeks between February and March 2017.

Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements in an online survey measuring their levels of agreement to items regarding familiarity, myth acceptance, blameworthiness, third-person effect, and experience with revenge porn and sexual assault as well as demographic information. Items regarding familiarity were created by the researcher to gauge whether the participants were comfortable describing or defining revenge porn and sexual assault and what type of information participants had been exposed to about revenge porn and sexual assault and from what sources. Items measuring myth acceptance of revenge porn and sexual assault were adapted from the Illinois Rape-Myth Acceptance (IRMA) scale. The 22-item scale measures the degree to which an individual agrees or disagrees with common myths about sexual assault. Because no myth acceptance scale exists for revenge porn or nonconsensual pornography, the researcher adapted items on the IRMA scale to reflect likely myths about revenge porn. To measure blameworthiness, the researcher used items from a blameworthiness scale used to measure blameworthiness among jurors (Piatek, 2015). To measure third-person effect, the researcher used and adapted items from a Health Belief Model scale intended to measure the likelihood of being affected by intimate partner violence (Burke, 2015). The final portion of the survey gathered demographic information about the participants including gender, age, sexual orientation, year in college, and ethnicity.

Discussion

This study posed the challenge of examining a topic, revenge porn, that does not have much established in the area of research. Therefore, the researcher established a baseline of perceptions about revenge porn and compared them with a more well-known, yet closely related, form of sexual violence for perspective and reference. The researcher chose to compare perceptions of revenge porn with perceptions of sexual assault due to its high-profile nature, decades of established research, and current relevance with the target audience. These baseline perceptions of participants' familiarity with revenge porn formed the basis of research question 1 and were needed to move forward with the research.

Not surprising were the below average levels of familiarity and awareness with revenge porn by participants. Interestingly, given the attention placed on gender with previous revenge porn research, neither gender nor race/ethnicity had any significance regarding knowledge levels and exposure to information. However, a statistically significant difference was found within the variables of age, orientation and year in college. Within age, participants aged 21-23 had significantly lower results for knowledge of revenge porn than participants aged 27-36. In 2017, the generally agreed upon range for Millennials is 20-36 (Fry, 2016), so this would indicate that the difference lies between the youngest and the oldest of the Millennial generation. This is interesting because Millennials toward the older end of the cohort's defined age range often identify with the previous generation, Generation X, more so than they do with the Millennial generation (Pew Research Center, 2015). Perhaps this inconsistency between an assigned generational cohort and generational identity explains the significant gap between the two age groups.

Emerging research suggests that the LGBT population may be at higher risk of being threatened with and having images shared than members of a heterosexual orientation ("Nonconsensual Image Sharing", 2016; Citron, 2014, p. 15). Participants identifying as bisexual had statistically significant higher knowledge levels about revenge porn than participants

identifying as heterosexual, but there were no significant differences with participants identifying as gay or lesbian for knowledge levels. Out of 16 participants who identified as bisexual, 14 were women. Research indicates that bisexual women experience more microaggressions about their sexual orientation than heterosexual or lesbian women (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014), so this might explain why this group, who may be at higher risk of being a victim of revenge porn due to gender and orientation, would be significantly more knowledgeable on the topic.

Significance was also found for knowledge levels about revenge porn within the year in college variable. College seniors had a statistically significant lower mean score than graduate students for knowledge levels. Some research suggests that graduate students score higher in areas such as achievement, harm avoidance, understanding, and desirability (Illovsky, 2010). Understanding involves having an intellectual curiosity and wanting to understand things, and desirability involves a tendency to present oneself positively and favorably. These factors could be why graduate students have statistically significant higher scores in knowledge levels than their closest undergraduate counterparts.

Research question 2 then examined the perceptions of sexual assault familiarity through knowledge levels and exposure to information. The researcher did this to compare perceptions of revenge porn with perceptions of sexual assault and results needed to be measured consistently across similar items. As with the questions about knowledge levels and exposure to information about revenge porn, gender and race/ethnicity had no significance with familiarity for sexual assault. Similar to the results for knowledge levels of revenge porn, a statistically significant difference was found regarding age and knowledge of sexual assault between younger and older Millennials, but this time the difference existed between the lower mean score of 18 to 20-year old participants to the higher mean score of 27 to 36-year old participants. Again, this could be due in part to the generational identification gap between younger and older Millennials.

Year in college also showed statistically significant results for exposure to information about sexual assault between sophomores and graduate students and those not in college. This may also correlate with the significance with age for both revenge porn and sexual assault familiarity, as sophomores would likely fall into the 18-20 age range if they are in college versus graduate students or participants who have graduated who are more likely to fall within the 27-36 age range.

With baseline perceptions for familiarity with revenge porn and sexual assault established, the two forms of sexual violence could be compared through paired-samples *t*-tests of the mean scores for all answers. The comparison between perceptions of revenge porn and perceptions of sexual assault formed the basis of research question 3. As Hypothesis 1 predicted, participants were significantly more knowledgeable and more exposed to information about sexual assault than revenge porn. This is likely due to the increase in sexual assault prevention and education programming at U.S. universities nationwide as well as high-profile media attention the topic has been receiving over the past few years. Higher levels of myth acceptance and blameworthiness for revenge porn myths compared to sexual assault were also found, which also supports Hypothesis 2.

Research question 4 focused on knowledge levels and the amount of exposure to information about revenge porn participants reported and how that affected myth acceptance and blameworthiness for revenge porn victims. Hypothesis 3 predicted that lower levels of knowledge for and lower exposure to information about revenge porn would result in higher levels of revenge porn victim blaming, which was supported by the results. Hypothesis 4 predicted that lower levels of knowledge for and lower exposure to information about revenge porn would result in higher levels of revenge porn myth acceptance, which was also supported by the results. Interestingly, both revenge porn victim blaming and myth acceptance levels were significant across all levels of knowledge and exposure to information except medium to high, which

indicates that there might be a minimum threshold level of knowledge or exposure that significantly affects victim blaming and myth acceptance.

Finally, research question 5 examined third-person effect and whether they affected victim blaming attitudes for myth acceptance and blameworthiness. An initial analysis comparing third-person effect between other and self for revenge porn and then within sexual assault, revealed that reported effects for other for revenge porn were significantly higher than reported effects for self, which supports Hypothesis 5. However, a comparison of third-person effect between other and self within sexual assault showed higher reported effects for self, which counters the third-person effect theory. Further research may be needed to test whether this result is an anomaly or reflects a trend of third-person effect within the topic of sexual assault.

After examining the interactions for third-person effect against victim blaming and myth acceptance, H6 was supported when main effects between revenge porn third-person effect and revenge porn blameworthiness were significant, and main effects between revenge porn third-person effect and revenge porn myth acceptance approached significance. However, comparisons of third-person effect for sexual assault and blameworthiness and myth acceptance for sexual assault did not have similar significant effects, which, given the higher levels of third-person effect and self with sexual assault, may indicate that third-person effect and sexual assault needs further research.

Implications

Although the results of this study may not be generalizable to the entire U.S. population, there is much valuable information to be taken from this study, especially given that the research on revenge porn is still relatively new. As an increase in knowledge levels and exposure to information about sexual assault correlates with lower levels of victim blaming and myth acceptance for sexual assault and lower knowledge levels and exposure to information about

revenge porn correlates with higher levels of victim blaming and myth acceptance for revenge porn, a significant implication is that with more knowledge raising and exposure to information about revenge porn, further research may see drops in the levels of victim blaming and myth acceptance regarding revenge porn. The results of this study also indicate that the theory of third-person effect may be influenced by increased exposure to information about the topic or increased knowledge levels on the topic. According to Perloff (2009), a reversed third-person effect can occur when a message becomes more desirable to be associated with or determined to be more relevant by the audience. This is supported by research where undergraduate students report traditional third-person effect for cigarette ads, but reversed third-person effect for anti-smoking and anti-drunk driving messages (Meirick, 2005). Perhaps the increased attention given to sexual assault by the media and educational and preventative training provided by U.S. universities is causing a reversed third-person effect as the subject of anti-sexual assault becomes less taboo and more desirable to agree with. This study provides support that similar tactics with anti-revenge porn messages could help reverse the negative stigma associated with revenge porn and its victims.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in this study and should be considered when analyzing the results and expanding upon research beyond the study.

Population

This study used random, cluster sampling with students at a Midwestern university and participants who found the survey link through distribution on social media platforms. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the U.S. population. While the literature does support some of the results and the study does add to the growing literature for revenge porn and sexual violence research, the results should be restricted to a Midwestern population. In future studies, a larger

and national stratified sample would be ideal to obtain a better representation of the U.S. population as a whole. Also, while more than 270 individuals began the survey, 75.75% (n = 206) actually completed the survey in its entirety. Future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples, if not nationally, then at least within their own institutions.

Survey Design

The survey was designed to address multiple, yet critical, subtopics of the study's main focus. Limited research exists on perceptions the general population has about revenge porn. As such, it was important for the researcher to establish the populations familiarity and awareness about the subject as well as its perceptions of the subject of revenge porn. The researcher also attempted to further validate the findings about revenge porn by including comparison results for a more established and more thoroughly researched area of sexual violence that was also relevant to the target audience – sexual assault. These factors led to the inclusion of nearly 100 items, including two 22-item scales for myth acceptance, for participants to answer. This is not typical of an online survey, and likely took around 15-20 minutes to complete.

Extended survey length may affect the quality and validity of responses in two ways: (1) participants begin skimming the items instead of taking time to think about what the question or statement is prompting and (2) participants may begin selecting responses indiscriminately. The majority of the questions were also 5-point Likert-type scales, which could have resulted in some misleading results if participants indiscriminately began choosing responses regardless of how they actually felt about the statement(s) or questions.

Future Research

This study was primarily interested in establishing a baseline for current perceptions about revenge porn and to examine more specifically how reported third-person perceptions interact with victim blaming attitudes and behaviors. Future research should further expand on

other factors and variables that can influence revenge porn victim blaming attitudes and behaviors. For example, the study briefly touched on the interaction of age and year in college as consistently significant factors regarding knowledge levels and exposure to information; however, knowledge levels, exposure to information, and third-person effect were more thoroughly covered than demographics regarding influence for blameworthiness and myth acceptance. Future research might also focus on an experimental design using a pre- and post-study regarding exposure to a news article or an educational or awareness raising event for revenge porn and how that influences perceptions and victim blaming attitudes and behaviors. The researcher had originally intended to use an awareness raising event for revenge porn as a control measure in the study, but due to low turnout at the event, the control variable was eliminated from the study.

Conclusion

The results of this study support that third-person effect, especially paired with low familiarity with the topic, may influence how people react to revenge porn and, thus, how they react to victims of revenge porn. Although weaker effects were found with sexual assault familiarity, third-person effect and victim blaming attitudes and behaviors, this supports that the last decade of strategies to address sexual assault prevention and education messaging may have resulted in weaker victim blaming attitudes and behaviors and a change in perception of how sexual assault can affect participants. This is exciting because it suggests that a similar future could lay in wait for revenge porn if there is a concerted effort to raise awareness and educate the population on the phenomenon and healthy ways to react to revenge porn and its victims.

The main findings of this study indicate that higher knowledge levels and higher exposure to information about revenge porn and sexual assault influences third-person effect and decreases victim blaming attitudes and behaviors within both areas. This is important because it

provides consistent correlations across two separate but similar topics and can provide a starting point for future research and strategies to continue raising awareness for the lesser known area of revenge porn within the population. It also suggests that sexual violence prevention messaging has seen success with sexual assault awareness initiatives and may see success with increasing the incorporation of messaging about revenge porn.

The current study extends the existing literature on revenge porn by approaching the topic from a victim blaming and media effects perspective, which as far as the researcher knows, has not been explored much, if at all. Further exploration of this issue through a media effects perspective may allow researchers to replicate supporting findings and explore other avenues to combat the negative stigma and victim blaming attitudes associated with revenge porn. As actress Emma Watson recently stated on Twitter after photos of her changing in and out of clothes during a photo shoot were stolen and leaked online, "Even worse than seeing women's privacy violated on social media is reading the accompanying comments that show such a lack of empathy" (Ohlheiser, 2017). The results of the study provide hope for changing victim blaming attitudes and behaviors for revenge porn and the negative perceptions about this recent phenomenon and those who are personally affected by it.

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APPENDICES

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, February 27, 2017

IRB Application No   AS1719

Proposal Title: Victim blaming and third-person effects: A comparative analysis of attitudes toward revenge porn and sexual assault

Reviewed and   Expedited
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 2/26/2018

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                              316-A Paul Miller

Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix F - Informed Consent "Cover Letter" for Online Survey

<u>INVESTIGATORS</u>
Jamie Hadwin, Graduate Student, School of Media & Strategic Communications
Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Associate Professor, School of Media & Strategic Communications

Victim blaming is a common area of research regarding sexual violence. The purpose of this study is to examine factors that influence victim blaming attitudes for sexual assault and revenge porn. You are being asked to participate in this survey because we would like to learn about your attitudes toward sexual assault and revenge porn.

Participation in this research study includes completing a survey on victim blaming, which should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

<u>RISKS OF PARTICIPATION</u>
There are no risks that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Some of the questions may make you feel uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or stop participation in the study.

<u>BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION</u>
The anticipated benefit of participation is to provide insight into factors involving victim blaming behaviors for revenge porn.

<u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u>
Participation is completely anonymous and voluntary. Your survey answers will not be connected to you or your name in any way. You will not be asked to give your name or any identifying characteristics. Survey records will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office, and only the researchers will have access to these records.

This survey is distributed through the SurveyMonkey platform. Review SurveyMonkey's privacy policy here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/

<u>PAYMENT</u>
There is no payment for completing the measures within the study.

<u>CONTACT</u>
If you have any questions concerning the research project, interviews or observation, please contact the principal investigators, Jamie Hadwin or Dr. Cynthia Nichols.

Jamie Hadwin, MS Mass Communications graduate student
School of Media & Strategic Communication, Oklahoma State University
jamie.hadwin@okstate.edu, (405) 744-1914

Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Associate Professor
School of Media & Strategic Communication, Oklahoma State University
206A Paul Miller Building, Stillwater, OK 74078, Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu, (405) 744-6354

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this survey.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements.

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older
Yes
No

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.
Yes
No

Appendix G - Survey Instrument (and debriefing statement)

PAGE 1 – KNOWLEDGE LEVELS

We would like to you answer a few questions about your knowledge levels of sexual assault and revenge porn. Please be honest. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

[Created Scale]

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your level of agreement with the following statements.

The lower the number you choose, the more you disagree with the statement. The higher the number you choose, the more you agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

I am familiar with the term sexual assault.

1	2	3	4	5

I would be able to accurately describe what sexual assault is to someone else.

1	2	3	4	5

I have had conversations about sexual assault with others.

1	2	3	4	5

Celebrities who "grab women by the pussy" are committing sexual assault.

1	2	3	4	5

Optional:

To the best of your knowledge, please write in the text box below what you believe to be an accurate description of sexual assault. There are no wrong answers.

_____

I am familiar with the term revenge porn.

1   2   3   4   5

I would be able to accurately describe what revenge porn is to someone else.

1   2   3   4   5

I have had conversations about revenge porn with others.

1   2   3   4   5

Celebrity sex tapes (i.e. Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton) are revenge porn.

1   2   3   4   5

Optional:

To the best of your knowledge, please write in the text box below what you believe to be an accurate description of revenge porn. There are no wrong answers.

_____

PAGE 2 – SOURCE INFORMATION

We would like to you answer a few questions about where you get your information about sexual assault and revenge porn. Please be honest. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

[Created Scale]

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your level of agreement with the following statements.

The lower the number you choose, the more you disagree with the statement. The higher the number you choose, the more you agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

I have been exposed to information about sexual assault through my university.

1	2	3	4	5

My university's resources on sexual assault are informative and useful.

1	2	3	4	5

I have been exposed to useful information about sexual assault through other channels (i.e. television, church, conference, special event, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5

I have sought out information on my own about sexual assault to learn more about it.

1	2	3	4	5

Please write in the text box below where you feel you have received the most useful information about sexual assault. If you do not know, you can put "don't know" or "N/A".

_____

I have been exposed to information about revenge porn through my university.

1   2   3   4   5

My university's resources on sexual assault are informative and useful.

1   2   3   4   5

I have been exposed to useful information about revenge porn through other channels (i.e. television church, conference, special event, etc.)

1   2   3   4   5

I have sought out information on my own about revenge porn to learn more about it.

1   2   3   4   5

I attended the February 16, 2017, panel on revenge porn on the OSU campus.

Yes   No

Please write in the text box below the place you feel you have received the most useful information about revenge porn. If you do not know, you can put "don't know" or "N/A".

_____

PAGE 3 – MYTH ACCEPTANCE (Payne, Lonway & Fitzgerald, 1999; McMahon & Farmer, 2011)

We would like to you answer a few questions about myths involving sexual assault and revenge porn. Please be honest. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your level of agreement with the following statements.

The lower the number you choose, the more you disagree with the statement. The higher the number you choose, the more you agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

Sexual Assault

If someone is raped while they are drunk, they are at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.

1	2	3	4	5

When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.

1	2	3	4	5

If a someone goes to a room alone with another person at a party, it is their own fault if they are raped.

1	2	3	4	5

If a girl acts like a slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble.

1	2	3	4	5

When someone is raped, it's likely because the way they said "no" was unclear.

1	2	3	4	5

If someone initiates kissing or hooking up, they should not be surprised if the other person assumes he or she wants to have sex.

1   2   3   4   5

When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex.

1   2   3   4   5

People don't usually intend to force sex on someone else, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.

1   2   3   4   5

Men cannot be raped because men naturally want sex all the time.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone is drunk, they might rape someone unintentionally.

1   2   3   4   5

It shouldn't be considered rape if the person is drunk and didn't realize what they were doing.

1   2   3   4   5

If both people are drunk, it can't be rape.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone doesn't physically resist sex – even if protesting verbally – it really can't be considered rape.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape.

1   2   3   4   5

A rape probably doesn't happen if the person doesn't have any bruises or marks.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it rape.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If a person doesn't say "no", they can't claim rape.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A lot of times, people who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at someone else.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A lot of times, people who say they were raped often led the other person on and then had regrets.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A lot of times, people who claim they were raped just have emotional problems.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People who are caught cheating on their partners sometimes claim that it was rape to avoid getting in trouble.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Revenge Porn **(Adjusted to reflect revenge porn myths, consistent with sexual assault - Payne, Lonway & Fitzgerald, 1999; McMahon & Farmer, 2011)**

If someone sends nude (or semi-nude) images to someone else, they are at least somewhat responsible if the images are shared with others.

1   2   3   4   5

When someone take pictures of themselves wearing little to no clothes, they are asking for trouble.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone hooks up with another person he or she just met at a party, it is their own fault if nude or semi-nude photos are taken and shared with others.

1   2   3   4   5

People should just know better not to take or share nude (or semi-nude) images of themselves.

1   2   3   4   5

When someone has nude (or semi-nude) images shared without their consent, it's often because they weren't clear enough that they didn't want those images shared.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone initiates sexting and sending nude (or semi-nude) images, they should not be surprised if the other person assumes it's OK to share the images with others.

1   2   3   4   5

When guys post revenge porn online, it is usually because they have a natural obsession with porn.

1   2   3   4   5

People don't usually plan to share nude (or semi-nude) images of their exes online, but sometimes they just get carried away.

1   2   3   4   5

Men cannot be victims of revenge porn because it is not as embarrassing for a man to have his sexual images shared with others or online.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone is angry enough, they may post nude (or semi-nude) images of their ex online to make themselves feel better.

1   2   3   4   5

It shouldn't be considered wrong to post revenge porn if the person didn't realize that posting the images could negatively effect their ex.

1   2   3   4   5

If two people have been sending nude (or semi-nude) images to each other, then either person can do whatever they want with the images.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone doesn't make sure their ex has deleted all nude (or semi-nude) images of themselves, they can't be surprised when those images appear on the internet.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone doesn't fight to get all their nude (or semi-nude) images removed from a website, then they can't really complain that her images being online upsets them.

1   2   3   4   5

It's not really revenge porn if the person's face isn't in the nude (or semi-nude) images.

1   2   3   4   5

If someone posts their ex's nude (or semi-nude) images online once, it's not really revenge porn.

1   2   3   4   5

If a person doesn't tell the person they shared nude (or semi-nude) images with not to share, then they can't be upset if the images are shared.

1   2   3   4   5

A lot of times, people who say they are victims of revenge porn were flattered when they got compliments on their nude (or semi-nude) images.

1   2   3   4   5

Revenge porn accusations are often used as a way of trying to get an ex in trouble.

1   2   3   4   5

People who say they are victims of revenge porn often led the other person to believe that they liked how they looked in the images and therefore wouldn't mind if they were shared online.

1   2   3   4   5

A lot of times, people who claim they are victims of revenge porn are just seeking attention.

1   2   3   4   5

People who are caught cheating on their partners deserve to have their nude (or semi-nude) images posted online.

1   2   3   4   5

PAGE 4 – BLAMEWORTHINESS (Piatek, 2015)

We would like to you answer a few questions about blameworthiness regarding incidents of sexual assault and revenge porn. Please be honest. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your level of agreement with the following statements.

The lower the number you choose, the more you disagree with the statement. The higher the number you choose, the more you agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

Sexual Assault

A victim of sexual assault has control over the events leading up to the assault.

1	2	3	4	5

Carelessness is a factor for someone becoming a victim of sexual assault.

1	2	3	4	5

The victim's behavior leading up to the assault is responsible for the assault occurring.

1	2	3	4	5

A victim of sexual assault is at fault for the assault.

1	2	3	4	5

A victim of sexual assault is to blame for the assault.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Overall, a victim of sexual assault is responsible for his or her assault.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Revenge Porn

A victim of revenge porn has control over the events leading up to the sharing of his or her images.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Carelessness is a factor for someone becoming a victim of revenge porn.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The victim's behavior leading up to his or her images being shared is responsible for the sharing of his or her images.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A victim of revenge porn is at fault for the sharing of his or her images.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A victim of revenge porn is to blame for the sharing of his or her images.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Overall, a victim of revenge porn is responsible for the sharing of his or her images.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PAGE 6 – THIRD-PERSON PERCEPTION (Burke, 2015)

We would like to you answer a few questions about perceptions toward sexual assault and revenge porn about yourself and about your peers. Please be honest. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your level of agreement with the following statements.

The lower the number you choose, the more you disagree with the statement. The higher the number you choose, the more you agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

Others

My peers have a chance of experiencing sexual assault.

1	2	3	4	5

My peers need to learn about sexual assault resources in their community.

1	2	3	4	5

If one my peers were experiencing sexual assault, I am confident they could resolve the situation.

1	2	3	4	5

My peers worry a lot about experiencing sexual assault.

1	2	3	4	5

My peers would seek help if they experienced sexual assault.

1   2   3   4   5

My peers have a chance of having sexual images of themselves shared without their consent.

1   2   3   4   5

My peers need to learn about resources about having sexual images of themselves shared without their consent.

1   2   3   4   5

If sexual images of one of my peers were being shared without their consent, I am confident they could resolve the situation.

1   2   3   4   5

My peers worry a lot about having sexual images of themselves shared without their consent.

1   2   3   4   5

My peers would seek help if they had sexual images of themselves shared without their consent.

1   2   3   4   5

Yourself

I have a chance of experiencing sexual assault.

1   2   3   4   5

I need to learn about sexual assault resources in my community.

1   2   3   4   5

If I were experiencing sexual assault, I am confident I could resolve the situation.

1   2   3   4   5

I worry a lot about experiencing sexual assault.

1   2   3   4   5

I would seek help if I experienced sexual assault.

1   2   3   4   5

I have a chance of having sexual images of myself shared without my consent.

1   2   3   4   5

I need to learn about resources about the nonconsensual sharing of sexual images.

1   2   3   4   5

If sexual images of myself were being shared without my consent, I am confident I could resolve the situation.

1   2   3   4   5

I worry a lot about having sexual images of myself shared without my consent.

1   2   3   4   5

I would seek help if I had sexual images of myself shared without my consent.

1   2   3   4   5

PAGE 7 – PARTICIPATION

We would like to you answer a few questions about your and your friends' experiences with sexual assault and revenge porn. We understand questions in this section are of a sensitive nature.

We would like to encourage you to answer honestly and to remind you that any answers you provide are completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Please answer 'yes' or 'no' for the following statements about your friends.

At least one of my friends has sent nude or semi-nude images through text message or online to their partner.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has sent nude or semi-nude images through text message or online to someone they casually dating.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has had nude or semi-nude images that were sent privately to someone shared with others without their consent.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has had nude or semi-nude images that were sent privately to someone shared publicly online without their consent.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has had nude or semi-nude images of themselves hacked and shared publicly online without their consent.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has shared nude or semi-nude images of someone without that person's consent with others or online.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has viewed revenge porn on a website.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has experienced sexual assault.

Yes   No

At least one of my friends has committed sexual assault (intentionally or unintentionally).

Yes   No

Please answer 'yes' or 'no' for the following statements about yourself. Remember your answers are anonymous.

I have sent nude or semi-nude images through text message or online to my partner.

Yes   No

I have sent nude or semi-nude images through text message or online to someone I was casually dating.

Yes   No

I have had nude or semi-nude images that were sent privately to someone shared with others without my consent.

Yes   No

I have had nude or semi-nude images that were sent privately to someone shared publicly online without my consent.

Yes   No

I have had nude or semi-nude images of myself hacked and shared publicly online without my consent.

Yes   No

I have shared nude or semi-nude images of someone without the person's consent with other people or online.

Yes   No

I have viewed revenge porn on a website.

Yes   No

I have experienced sexual assault.

Yes   No

I have committed sexual assault (intentionally or unintentionally).

Yes   No

PAGE 8 - DEMOGRAPHICS

Please answer the following questions about yourself. This is for classification purposes; you will not be identified.

Sex: Male_____   Female_____

What is your age group?

    a) 18-20
    b) 21-23
    c) 24-26
    d) 27-36
    e) 36-50
    f) Over 50

What is your sexual orientation?

    a. Straight

    b. Gay

    c. Lesbian

    d. Bisexual

    e. Prefer not to answer

    f. Other

Please indicate your school status:

    a) Freshman
    b) Sophomore
    c) Junior
    d) Senior
    e) Graduate Student
    f) Not in College
    g) Other _____

Please check all that apply:

    a) Traditional Student
    b) Member of Greek Community
    c) Student Athlete
    d) Nontraditional Student
    e) International Student
    f) Other _____

What is your ethnicity? (Please select the one answer that best represents you)

    _____ African-American / Black

_____ American Indian or Alaskan Native

_____ Asian or Asian American

_____ Caucasian/White

_____ Hispanic/Latino

_____ Pacific Islander

_____ Multi-racial

_____ Other (please specify): _____

_____ Decline to Answer

Thank you for participating in this study on victim blaming for sexual assault and revenge porn. Your answers will contribute to the body of knowledge on this subject. If you have questions or concerns about this project or survey, please ask the principal investigators, Jamie Hadwin (jamie.hadwin@okstate.edu) at 405-744-1914 or Dr. Cynthia Nichols (cynthia.nichols@okstate.edu) at 405-744-6354.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Again, thank you and have a nice day.

VITA

Jamie Hadwin

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: VICTIM BLAMING AND THIRD-PERSON EFFECT: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS OF REVENGE PORN AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Mass Communication
at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Strategic
Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May,
2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of University Studies at Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2010.

Experience:
Intern, OSU Office of Student Conduct Education and
Administration: January 2017 – May 2017

Program Coordinator, OSU High Performance Computing Center:
November 2015 – May 2017

Communications Assistant, OSU College of Arts & Sciences:
March 2014 – November 2015

Professional Memberships:
Association for Women in Communications – August 2015 – May
2017