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# The Role of Objectification, Rape Myth Acceptance, Situational Context, and Gender in Individual's Perceptions of Image-Based Sexual Abuse Victims and Perpetrators

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**The Role of Objectification, Rape Myth Acceptance, Situational Context, and Gender in Individual's Perceptions of Image-Based Sexual Abuse Victims and Perpetrators**

By

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**ABSTRACT**

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is an under-researched yet common form of violence against women. Victims of this form of violence are often blamed for the violence they endure, which influences their likelihood to seek help. The current study used an experimental vignette design and multiple regression analyses to understand the influence of the context of IBSA, gender, and objectification on individuals' attributions of blame and responsibility to a victim and perpetrator of IBSA, as well as their empathy towards a victim of this form of violence, while controlling for rape myth endorsement. Results showed that participants placed more blame and responsibility on the victim and displayed less empathy toward the victim when the victim took their own explicit photo. Participants also displayed lower empathy to the victim of IBSA who earned a monetary reward for an explicit photo, and blamed the perpetrator of IBSA less when they took an explicit photo off a subscription-based website. On average, women reported more empathy towards the victim of IBSA compared to men, and individuals of any gender who endorsed rape myths to a greater degree placed more blame and responsibility on the victim of IBSA. Finally, when individuals objectified women to a greater degree, they displayed less empathy towards the victim of IBSA. This study is a first step in understanding the ways in which individuals view victims and perpetrators of IBSA, and findings provide important information for prevention and education efforts.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Thomas, whose unconditional love and support has brought me this far. This work would not have been possible without you.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

One of the most pressing human rights issues in Canada presently is sexual

violence against women. Statistics show that as many as one in three Canadian women

will experience sexual violence at least once in their lifetime (Government of Ontario,

2020), and globally, estimates show that about 35% of women will experience some form

of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2017).

The World Health Organization (2017) defines sexual violence as "any sexual act,

attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using

coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting"

(WHO, 2017, p. 5). Sexual violence encompasses a continuum of different types of

behaviours, including verbal harassment, intimate partner violence, and rape, and

includes both offline acts and online forms of sexual violence and harassment (Henry &

Powell, 2018; Kelly, 2012). Recently, researchers have begun to investigate online forms

of sexual violence, known as technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). Research on

TFSV remains relatively new and underexamined, specifically with regard to factors

predicting perpetration and understandings of social views of victims and perpetrators of

TFSV.

With both offline and online forms of sexual violence, there is a social tendency

to blame victims of sexual violence (Hayes et al., 2013; Powell et al., 2018; Pedersen &

Strömwall, 2013; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012). The amount of blame that one attributes to

a victim of sexual violence can depend on the context in which the violence occurred, the

relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the individual characteristics of the victim and perpetrator (Frese et al., 2004; Yamawaki, 2007). Research has also found that the context in which sexual violence occurs can also impact the amount of empathy that one feels towards a victim of sexual violence, with different contexts eliciting different amounts of victim empathy (Sprankle et al., 2018). Despite the extensive research available on the contextual influences of victim blame and victim empathy for offline instances of sexual violence, there are presently only a few studies that have examined victim blame and victim empathy for online sexual violence (Henry et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2018; Salter, 2016), and there is a major shortage of research specific to contextual influences of victim empathy and victim blame for TFSV.

The present study focused on one specific form of TFSV for which research is lacking, which is the non-consensual creation and distribution of explicit photos, known as imaged-based sexual abuse (IBSA). The present study sought to understand how individuals view victims and perpetrators of this form of violence and what contributing factors influenced their views and understanding of victims and perpetrators of this type of violence. More specifically, the current study assessed how the context of IBSA influenced individuals' placement of responsibility and blame on a victim and perpetrator of this form of violence, and how the context of IBSA influenced levels of empathy towards victims. This study contributes to the small body of literature on TFSV by understanding how this type of violence is viewed in society by young adults, as well as contributing knowledge for future studies and prevention efforts.

**Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence**

Technology has drastically influenced today's society, social interactions, and different social contexts. Recent research suggests that 67% of Canadians who have internet access are using social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter (Statistics Canada, 2019). Young adolescents use social networking and mobile devices to connect with their peers and maintain a sense of belonging, making social networking an important part of identity formation (Walsh et al., 2009). As well, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, technology is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our daily lives, as many employment positions and educational institutions have switched to online platforms (Ting et al., 2020).

Although technology and social networking have provided individuals with many benefits, they have also led to new forms of violence and harassment online, including technology-facilitated sexual violence. TFSV has been defined as sexual violence which occurs online and can be categorized under five main terms: image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), gender and sexuality-based harassment, online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, and the use of a website to locate individuals and perpetrate sexual assault (Henry & Powell, 2018). In the present study, IBSA was studied as it is a frequent issue in North America (Garcia et al., 2016). IBSA can include two different types of behaviours. The first type of IBSA is sexting coercion, which occurs when someone pressures another individual into sending sexual photos, videos, or text (Henry & Powell, 2018). The second type of IBSA is the non-consensual creation, use, and distribution of sexually explicit photos (Henry & Powell, 2018). IBSA can be perpetrated in a variety of different settings, one of which is through sexting. Sexting occurs when one person creates sexual

material of themselves and shares this material with other individuals via technology such as cellphones or online messaging (Henry & Powell, 2018). To understand how contexts such as sexting may influence individual's understandings of IBSA, the current study focused on the second form of IBSA, which is the non-consensual creation, use, and/or distribution of explicit photos.

The majority of research on TFSV and IBSA has been conducted in Australia, with some studies finding that as many as 62% of participants had experienced at least one form of TFSV in their lifetime (Powell & Henry, 2016). In the study conducted by Powell and Henry (2016), researchers surveyed of 2,956 Australian adults with a new 21-item measure of TFSV which found significantly higher reports of this form of violence compared to other studies. However, research on TFSV outside of Australia is considerably lacking. Moreover, even fewer studies have examined IBSA, although some research has suggested that this is a common and concerning problem. For example, in one European study, researchers found that 42% of female adolescents had their explicit photos shared by someone else without their consent (Wood et al., 2015). Additionally, in a study of 5,805 single American adults, researchers found that one in five participants had reported sharing a "sexy" photo of someone else without their consent (Garcia et al., 2016). These results suggest that IBSA is a major problem worldwide, and it is necessary for researchers to examine how and why this type of victimization occurs.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence can cause a myriad of negative and harmful consequences for victims. For example, when explicit photos are shared without one's consent, it can lead to embarrassment, distress, emotional suffering, damage to one's reputation, damage to relationships, and future harassment (Lippman et al., 2015).

Research also suggests that IBSA may be more harmful for women and girls then for

men and boys, and IBSA can lead to more negative effects for women and their

relationships than for men (Powell & Henry, 2016). Considering the negative

consequences of IBSA, it is imperative that more research is conducted to understand the

ways in which individuals view perpetrators and victims of this form of violence, and to

develop programs aimed at reducing this type of violence. Therefore, the present study

focused on understanding individuals' views towards victims and perpetrators of IBSA to

contribute to the scientific literature on this type of violence.

**Perpetrators and Victims of IBSA**

Research shows that violence and abuse against women extends to online spaces,

as women cannot escape sexism, misogyny, or gender-based violence in digital spaces.

Research on real-world cases of IBSA has shown that women are disproportionality

targeted by this form of violence, making online spaces unsafe for women and girls

(Wood et al. 2015). In one interesting study, Hall and Hearn (2017) examined a website

on which non-consensual explicit photos were uploaded to seek revenge on ex-partners,

known as "revenge porn websites," and researchers found that the overwhelming

majority of photos on this website were of women. The researchers also examined the

comments on these photos and found that the majority of photos were taken by men who

sought revenge on their female ex-partner (Hall & Hearn, 2017). Furthermore, most of

the comments were centered around normative masculine identities, in which users were

attempting to display themselves as "real men" (Hall & Hearn, 2017). In another study,

Uhl and colleagues (2018) conducted a content analysis of 134 photographs from seven

different "revenge porn websites," which found that 92% of victims on these websites

were women. Research has also found that men were more likely than women to take photos of others and share them non-consensually (Strassberg et al., 2014), and men were also more likely to forward an explicit photo compared to women (Johnson, et al., 2018; Madigan et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2012; Strassberg, et al., 2014). For all forms of TFSV, research has found that perpetrators are most commonly men (Powell & Henry, 2016), and victims are most commonly women (Citron & Franks, 2014; Rollins, 2015; Wood et al., 2015). These results suggest that women may be disproportionality targeted in IBSA perpetration, and men may purposefully perpetrate IBSA as a method used to assert their masculinity.

A small number of studies have also examined IBSA perpetration through hypothetical scenarios. For example, in a study done by Hudson and colleagues (2014), researchers gave participants hypothetical scenarios and found differences between males and females in attitudes toward sending and receiving explicit photos of individuals without consent. Researchers found that men had more favorable attitudes than women towards sexting, and men also had higher intentions of sending explicit photos without consent compared to women (Hudson et al., 2014). Moreover, Pina and colleagues (2017) found that both men and women who had higher levels of sexism, Machiavellianism, and narcissism were more likely to have shared an image without consent and were more likely to approve of sharing a photo without consent. This research shows that both women's and men's attitudes and personality traits are associated with their likelihood to approve of IBSA, but given that the studies in this area have been limited in scope, it is important to continue research on the different types of attitudes and traits that may influence acceptance and perpetration of IBSA.

Little is known about TFSV or IBSA rates among individuals who identify outside of the gender binary. This may be due to the fact that these individuals represent a very small proportion of the larger population (Statistics Canada, 2022). As such, recruiting large enough samples of participants who identify outside of the gender binary, even in large studies, is often very difficult and these groups are commonly excluded from analyses (Lund & Ross, 2016). One study assessed digital sexual harassment of gender diverse individuals and found that individuals who identified as transgender were more likely to report that someone sexually harassed them online compared to female and male students (Powell et al., 2020). However, more research is needed to understand prevalence rates of TFSV and IBSA for gender diverse individuals.

**Contexts Where IBSA Occurs**

Although technology-facilitated sexual violence is not a new phenomenon, it has been increasing dramatically since the rise of technology and the internet in the 21st century (Powell & Henry, 2016). As technology has created new ways to easily transmit and post information, photos, and videos, sending explicit material online or via text has become extremely common among adolescent and adult populations (Barrense-Dias et al., 2017; Klettke et al., 2014). Reports on sexting vary widely, with studies finding that sexting has a prevalence rate of 53% to 57% for adults, and a prevalence rate as high as 60% for adolescents (Barrense-Dias et al., 2017; Klettke et al., 2014). As sexting has increased, TFSV has also increased (Powell & Henry, 2016), which may be due to the fact that individuals in society often believe that sharing photos without consent is a normal part of sexting (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011). This research suggests that sexting may be a common context by which IBSA occurs, and more research needs to be done to

fully understand individuals' thoughts and attitudes about victims and perpetrators of IBSA occurring through sexting and other similar contexts.

In addition to sexting, researchers have also begun to examine comparable situations that involve the uploading or sharing of explicit photos online. One new type of context that involves uploading explicit photos or performing explicit acts online has recently gained significant attention by researchers and the public, and is known as online sex work (Jones, 2015). Online sex work involves the use of the internet to exchange sexual commodities or services and can include a variety of different acts such as webcam modelling or pornographic acting (Jones, 2015). Research has found that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, online sex worker profiles have increased dramatically; from May to August of 2020, new online sex worker profiles increased by 35.6%, and visits to online sex worker profiles have increased by 55.1% (Callander et al., 2020). Notably, research suggests that webcam models frequently experience different forms of TFSV perpetration, such as non-consensual filming of their erotic performances (Jones, 2015). In addition to online sex-worker profiles, profiles on new platforms called subscription-based websites, such as "OnlyFans," have increased dramatically (Gowland, 2020). Subscription-based websites allow users to create a page where they can post photos, explicit or non-explicit, and charge other users a subscription fee to access these photos (Gowland, 2020). The majority of users on these websites post photos of themselves that are explicit, in order to receive higher amounts of money from consumers (Gowland, 2020), and logically, it seems possible that the availability of these platforms may also contribute to higher rates of IBSA.

To date, no research has examined prevalence rates of IBSA on subscription-based websites, and no researchers have examined individuals' views towards victims of IBSA who also earn money from subscription-based websites. Similar to subscription-based websites, in-person sex workers also earn money for performing sexual acts, and research has been conducted to understand the ways in which individuals in society think about in-person sex workers who are victims of sexual assault. This research has suggested that individuals who are sexually assaulted, but who also gain money for offline sexual acts, are blamed more often for the sexual assault that they endured (Sprankle et al., 2018). This could also be occurring for individuals who use subscription-based websites, but this has not yet been studied. To understand why certain individuals who earn monetary rewards for sexual acts may be more likely to be blamed for sexual assault that they endure, despite sexual violence perpetrators being entirely responsible for their actions, the just world theory can provide useful insights on this social phenomenon.

**Just World Theory**

Social psychologists have theorized that individuals tend to view their world as a safe and just place, and they tend to make moral decisions and attributions of blame based on their idea of a just world (Lerner, 1980). According to the just world theory, one's idea of a just world may be challenged when an individual appears to be a good person but has been victimized. This can cause cognitive dissonance for someone who witnesses another person being victimized, and to resolve this dissonance, they may attribute blame towards the victim of violence to restore their belief in a just world. Individuals in society often find it comforting to believe that people in an unfortunate

situation somehow earned their circumstances, while ignoring the unsettling reality that misfortune is random (Silver et al., 2015). Therefore, when an individual sees someone being victimized, they often believe that the victim's own choices or behaviours are partially or wholly responsible for their victimization. Individuals may place more blame on sex workers because they believe that sex workers behave in risky or dangerous ways, whether or not this is actually true (Silver et al., 2015). Research supports this theory, as it has found that individuals tend to show more empathy and less blame towards victims of human trafficking compared to victims of sexual assault who are also sex workers, because they believe that sex workers chose to engage in risky behaviours but that victims of human trafficking did not (Silver et al., 2015). When individuals are asked why they placed blame on victims of sexual assault who are also sex workers, they often use rape myths to justify their beliefs (Sprankle et al., 2018). Rape myths are false beliefs about rape, the perpetrators of rape, and the victims of rape, and often blame the assault on the victim while excusing perpetrator's behaviour (Burt, 1980; Edwards et al., 2011; Loh et al., 2005). In previous research, scholars have used feminist theory to help explain why rape myths and violence against women occurs in society (Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1989), and in addition to the just world theory, this theory may also be used to fully understand the social context in which IBSA occurs.

**Feminist Theory of Sexual Violence**

Many researchers and theorists have attempted to understand how and why sexual violence occurs, and a feminist theory of sexual violence is commonly employed by scholars to explain why sexual violence occurs and why it continues to occur in society (Brownmiller, 1975). Feminist theory asserts that men and women are treated unequally

in society, which can then be seen in the ways that men and women interact sexually (Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1989). From the time they are born, the majority of men in Western societies are socialized to be aggressive and dominant (Price, 2005), and in many countries including Canada, it is a social expectation for men to be powerful (Graham & Wells, 2001). Feminist theory of sexual violence asserts that men are not born dominant and violent, but instead there are learned gender roles which are prescribed to men from the time they are born (MacKinnon, 1989; Price, 2005). Male and female sexual behaviour and expectations are also learned as a part of these roles; throughout their lives, men learn that to be sexual is to also be dominant, and females learn that to be sexual is to be passive.

This idea that male sexuality means domination and aggression is deeply embedded in Western society, to the point where sexual violence is often considered to be a normal part of male sexuality (MacKinnon, 1989; Price, 2005). This can be seen in the ways in which society punishes individuals who perpetrate sexual violence, by giving perpetrators minimal sentences or no sentence at all (Mont et al., 2007). When a man is accused of committing sexual assault, individuals in society often dismiss this accusation by using the common phrase "boys will be boys" to assert that it is not a man's fault for acting aggressively or violently. This phrase shows that individuals believe that sexual assault and aggression are a natural part of "being a boy" when in fact, men chose to act aggressively to display these learned masculine roles (Murnen et al., 2002).

Although sexual violence is often believed to be a normal part of male sexuality, female sexuality is held to much different standards. Throughout history, women were only respected if they did not engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, and any form

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of sexual behaviour that was contrary to these social expectations was considered promiscuous and unacceptable (Gavey & Senn, 2013). Perpetrators of sexual assault were only prosecuted if a victim had completely resisted, and female victims who engaged in any type of sexual behaviour that was opposing to these societal expectations were often blamed for their victimization (Backhouse, 2008). Although the just world theory is useful in explaining why individuals often blame victims of violence, it is important to understand this theory through a critical feminist perspective, because not every type of victim is blamed for violence. Female victims who step outside of their prescribed gender norms are blamed more than victims who do not, because of the dominant patriarchal social norms which give men more power and freedom (Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1989). Additionally, individuals in society often use phrases such as "she was asking for it" against women who are victimized, to make the argument that women who behave outside of patriarchal social norms are somehow inviting trouble (Price, 2005).

Feminist theorists have labelled these false ideas about sexuality and sexual assault as a construct called rape myths, which are then often used to justify men's violent and aggressive behaviour towards women (Price, 2005). Researchers have examined the association between rape myth acceptance and perpetration of sexual assault (Edwards et al., 2011; Loh et al., 2005). By examining individuals' acceptance of common rape myths, we can begin to understand how sexual violence continues to be supported across different contexts in society (Edwards et al., 2011; Loh et al., 2005).

**Rape Myths and IBSA**

Research evidence supports the arguments from feminist theory that one important contributor to the occurrence of sexual aggression is the acceptance and

perpetration of rape myths (Edwards et al., 2011; Loh et al., 2005). Although rape myth

acceptance is not the only contributing factor for sexual violence, it is nonetheless an

important factor to consider when researching and preventing sexual violence (Ryan,

2011). Rape myths reinforce the false societal idea that men can assault women without

consequences, and when individuals accept these false beliefs, they are less likely to

punish offenders of sexual assault, and if they are men, are more likely to perpetrate

sexual assault themselves (Edwards et al., 2011; Loh et al., 2005). Research has

consistently found that men are more likely to accept rape myths (Hammond et al., 2011;

Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) compared to women. Fewer studies have been conducted on

rape myth acceptance of gender diverse individuals, but one study did find that cisgender

women and transgender women endorsed rape myths at a lower rate compared to

cisgender men and transgender men (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021).

  The majority of research on rape myth acceptance has examined offline sexual

violence, although a few researchers have begun to examine rape myth endorsement in

relation to online forms of sexual violence (Hall & Hearn, 2017; Henry et al., 2017;

Powell et al., 2018; Salter, 2016). Previous researchers have often used the Illinois Rape

Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; Payne et al., 1999) to measure rape myth acceptance for

offline sexual violence. Recent researchers have also begun to develop a measure for

online sexual violence perpetration (Powell et al., 2018). In the study conducted by

Powell and colleagues (2018), researchers examined 4,053 Australian individuals and

their acceptance of rape myths that were specific to IBSA. The questionnaire designed by

Powell and colleagues (2018) is one of the first to measure rape myths that are specific to

IBSA, and findings show that individuals often endorse these myths at similar rates compared to general rape myth acceptance.

Similar to associations found between rape myth acceptance in offline contexts, research on rape myths and technology-facilitated sexual violence has found that rape myths are disproportionately targeted against female victims, which is also consistent with feminist theory (Hall & Hearn, 2017; Henry et al., 2017; Salter, 2016). In a study by Salter (2016), when shown examples of sexting and IBSA perpetration, participants placed more blame on the female victim, and less blame on the male perpetrator, reporting that they viewed the male's actions as a normal part of the sexual behaviour of men (Salter, 2016). In addition, research has also found that individuals often believe that sharing and sending explicit photos of celebrities is a normal part of males' sexual behaviour, and that the public is entitled to viewing celebrities' explicit photos even when they have been shared without the consent of the celebrity. These myths encourage the false belief that men are entitled to women's bodies, including female celebrities, and these types of myths increase the likelihood that women will be victimized by violence (Marwick, 2017).

Although only a small number of studies have examined rape myth acceptance and victim blame for online contexts, an abundance of studies have analyzed offline situations involving sexual assault, and have found that female victims are blamed more than male perpetrators (Hammond et al., 2011; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). These findings suggest that the broader social context which supports violence against women in offline situations may also support violence against women in online situations, and highlights the need to include measurements of rape myth

acceptance when considering perspectives of victims and perpetrators for online contexts of sexual violence.

As mentioned previously, in a study by Hall and Hearn (2017), researchers analyzed "revenge pornography" websites by examining the comments that accompanied photos and found that the majority of comments were linked to victim blaming and were attempts to mitigate the posters' responsibility for posting the photo. In fact, researchers have emphasized how the term revenge porn itself actually contributes to victim blaming and rape myth acceptance, as this term insinuates that the victim has incited the perpetrator in some way and has done something to deserve an act of revenge (McGlynn et al., 2017). In another study conducted by Henry and colleagues (2017), researchers asked participants to what extent they agreed with myths that blamed victims of assault and found that 62% agreed with a statement that read "If a person sends a nude or sexual image, then they are at least partly responsible if the image ends up online." Results from these studies show that rape myths for instances of online sexual violence may be commonly accepted by individuals in society. Given that this research suggests that there is a connection between rape myth endorsement for IBSA and the amount of blame placed on victims of IBSA, rape myth endorsement was examined in the present study as a covariate. To fully understand the broader social context which supports sexual violence against women, another type of feminist theory known as objectification theory, explains other ways in which women are viewed and mistreated in society. Taken together, feminist theories of sexual assault and objectification theory can be used to understand why violence against women in online contexts occurs and continues to be supported in society.

**Objectification Theory**

According to the objectification theory, women are sexually objectified in society, or seen and treated as objects instead of people (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This theory explains that in society, a women's sexual parts are often separated out from her person and treated as just mere instruments for male pleasure. When a man treats a woman's body parts as objects for his pleasure, it is easier to ignore the woman's uniqueness and humanity, which then could lead a man to degrade and sexually assault that woman. As such, objectification theory helps to explain why men who sexually objectify women are more likely to support and perpetrate violence towards women, because victims are seen as lacking humanity and being deserving of the sexual assault they endure (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Research evidence supports this theory, which has found that higher rates of objectification of women is associated with more acceptance of sexual violence against women (Bernard et al., 2015; Galdi et al., 2014; Loughnan et al., 2013; Wright & Tokunaga, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have also found that men who endorse more objectifying views of women report more sexual violence perpetration (Gervais et al., 2014).

Objectification of women is not only done by men in society. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggest that women tend to internalize observer's perspectives of their bodies, which leads women to objectify other women and to self-objectify. MacKinnon (1989) theorized that that women often attempt to deal with the objectification that they endure by trying to meet the male standard, and they tend to measure their self-worth based on the degree to which they meet this standard. Taken together, as men objectify women, and as women objectify themselves to deal with this, a culture of female

objectification is produced, creating a societal norm that is accepting of violence towards women.

Research on gendered violence has found that objectification of women by both men and women has been connected to rape myth endorsement. In one study, Lanis and Covell (1995) found that male and female participants who were exposed to an advertisement which sexually objectified a woman had increased rape myth beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence compared to those in the control group, which suggests that exposure to objectification may influence rape myth endorsement and acceptance of violence. In another study done by Bleecker and Murnen (2005), researchers found that fraternity men who displayed objectifying photos of women in their bedrooms were more likely to endorse rape myths compared to men who did not display objectifying photos. Taken together, the studies done by Lanis and Covell (1995) and by Bleecker and Murnen (2005) suggest that men who engage in objectification are more likely to endorse rape myths and vice versa for offline contexts of sexual assault. Although this research is important, it is also necessary to consider how objectification is related to rape myths for online contexts.

Whereas the majority of research on objectification has examined offline or in-person contexts, a growing body of literature has also begun to examine objectification occurring online. For example, Davis (2018) examined 600 Instagram posts from college lifestyle accounts and discovered that men frequently post objectifying and non-consensual photos of women onto social media platforms. Men also frequently used a hashtag called "ShackerSunday" where they would engage in IBSA by posting non-consensual, objectifying photos of women with this hashtag which refers to women who

stay overnight at a male's house after having sexual intercourse. Many of these posts showed evidence of objectification, such as photos of women with their heads cut off from the photo, with the focus of the photo on their sexualized body parts rather than on their faces. Many were posted without the permission of the woman in the photo. Furthermore, research on non-consensual photography has also documented that women are often sexualized and objectified online, and individuals who engage in objectification online are also more likely to engage in slut-shaming and victim blaming in online posts (Dodge, 2016). Taken together, it is clear that objectification of women online is common and prominent, and online objectification and IBSA may occur simultaneously. Further, research has also shown that objectifying views of women may be associated with decreased levels of victim empathy and increased amounts of victim blame (Loughnan et al., 2010). Importantly, lower degrees of victim empathy and higher degrees of victim blame are associated with unsupportive responses to survivors (Johnson et al., 2002). Therefore, in order to understand why some individuals are more likely to dehumanize and blame victims online (Dodge, 2016), it is essential to examine the context of IBSA and propensity to engage in objectification.

**Victim Blame and Responsibility**

Oftentimes, one's individual characteristics and the context in which sexual assault occurs can lead someone to attribute more or less blame, or greater or lesser responsibility to one victim than to others. Within this field of research, some researchers make the assumption that responsibility and blame both measure the same construct, and they are therefore used interchangeably in some studies (Richardson & Campbell, 1982; Richardson & Hammock, 1991). Other investigators believe that responsibility and blame

are different constructs, and should be examined separately (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Calhoun & Townsley, 1991; Critchlow, 1983; Shaver & Drown, 1986). Although these two terms may be different constructs, the distinction between the two is subtle, and both seem to rest on the same underlying dimensions; that an individual acted voluntarily and with intention, and therefore should be held accountable for an event (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). The difference between responsibility and blame is that when one attributes responsibility to a person, they are saying they believe a person's deliberate behaviour contributed to the outcome, and when one assigns blame to a person, they are also saying that a person's deliberate behaviour contributed to the outcome, but that a person is also deserving of punishment for their behaviour (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Calhoun & Townsley, 1991). The distinction between responsibility and blame is relevant to the present study because although research shows that individuals tend to assign an equal amount of responsibility and blame to individuals who have committed a crime (Critchlow, 1983), other research suggests that individuals may assign a different amount of responsibility and blame to victims and perpetrators of sexual violence (Stormo et al., 1997). Therefore, both responsibility and blame were included in the study.

Research on individual differences in assigning blame to victims has recently begun to examine the influence of objectification on one's likelihood to assign blame to victims of sexual violence (Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan et al., 2013). This research suggests that the more an individual is objectified, the more that person is blamed for their victimization (Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan et al., 2013). In a study done by Loughnan and colleagues (2013), researchers examined the influence of objectification

on victim blame by randomly dividing both male and female participants into either an objectification condition in which they were given a photo of a woman who was dressed provocatively and focused on her sexualized body parts, or into the non-objectification/control condition in which they were given a photo of a women dressed non-provocatively and not objectified, followed by a story about the woman experiencing sexual assault. Results showed that participants in the objectification condition had less moral concern for the victim and expressed more victim blame compared to participants in the control condition. Moreover, research also indicates that individuals who endorsed rape myths for offline contexts were more likely to engage in victim blaming (Miller et al., 2011). Overall, gender-based studies have found that men are more likely to engage in victim blaming compared to women (Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Women may be less likely to blame victims of sexual violence because they are more likely to experience sexual violence than men (Breiding, 2014). Transgender individuals are also at a higher risk of sexual violence victimization (Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2016), and research has found that transgender women and transgender men are less likely to blame victims of sexual violence compared to cisgender men (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021).

Although research on victim blaming for instances involving image-based sexual abuse is relatively new, the research that has been conducted on IBSA shows that both men and women commonly blame victims of IBSA (Henry et al., 2017; Salter, 2016). Research has also found that men who blame victims of IBSA are more likely to commit IBSA (Powell et al., 2018). Considering the fact that propensity to blame a victim of sexual assault may be related to likelihood of committing sexual assault (Powell et al.,

2018), and to providing unsupportive responses to survivors (Johnson et al., 2002), it is necessary and important for research to examine how and why individuals assign blame to victims who have experienced IBSA.

**Victim Empathy**

A related concept to victim blaming is victim empathy, or the ability to understand the emotions, perspectives, and reactions of a victim of sexual assault (Deitz et al. 1982; Smith & Frieze, 2003). As with research on victim blaming, experimental studies have also shown that increased objectification can lead an individual to show a lower degree of empathy and reduced moral concern for victims of sexual violence (Holland & Haslam, 2013; Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan et al., 2013). Furthermore, studies have also found that men are more likely than women to show a greater degree of empathy for a perpetrator of sexual violence rather than the victim, and women are more likely than men to feel a greater degree of empathy for victims of sexual violence (Ching & Burke, 1999; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Smith & Frieze, 2003). Gender-based studies have found that cisgender women, transgender women, and transgender men often perceive themselves as being more similar to a victim of violence compared to cisgender men, and these populations are more likely to display empathy to victims of violence (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021). However, it has also been found that for both men and women, those who endorse rape myths are less likely to feel empathetic towards victims of sexual violence (Osland et al., 1996), although these patterns have not been studied with gender diverse populations. Researchers have found that individuals who have lower degrees of empathy for victims of sexual violence are less likely to provide supportive responses to survivors (Bongiorno et al., 2020). Research in this field also suggests that

lack of empathy for sexual assault victims is associated with a higher likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence (Deitz et al., 1982; Marshall & Moulden, 2001; Wheeler et al., 2002), and this relationship is likely bi-directional (Silva et al., 2020). In instances involving sexting and the non-consensual sharing of explicit photos, research has found that individuals who perpetrate IBSA show less victim empathy (Silva et al., 2020). Therefore, similar to victim blaming, victim empathy may also depend on the context in which sexual violence occurs as well as the type of victim, and there is a gap in research for IBSA about how social contexts influence victim empathy and victim blame.

**Current Study**

Taken together, results from previous research on violence against women generally, and research image-based sexual abuse in particular, shows that general rape myth endorsement may be associated with levels of victim empathy, victim blame, and perpetrator blame. It is important to understand whether rape myths focused on online contexts have different relationships with these outcome variables compared to rape myths focused on offline contexts, therefore a measure of rape myths for offline and online contexts was included. Although objectification has been found to be associated with degrees of victim empathy, victim blame, and perpetrator blame for offline contexts of sexual assault, it has not yet been examined for online contexts for IBSA, and therefore this was an additional focus of the present study. Furthermore, although most studies on victim blame tend to use the constructs of blame and responsibility interchangeably, it has been found that individuals sometimes assign differing degrees of responsibility and blame to victims of sexual violence (Stormo et al., 1997); thus, the present study examined these variables separately. Given that studies have found that

there are differences in degrees of victim empathy between male and female participants (Ching & Burke, 1999; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Smith & Frieze, 2003) the present study assessed the differences and interrelationships between genders in terms of victim empathy, victim responsibility, victim blame, perpetrator responsibility, and perpetrator blame for instances involving IBSA.[1] Additionally, research also suggests that individuals may be less likely to feel empathetic towards victims of sexual violence if they earn some type of monetary reward for sexual acts (Sprankle et al., 2018). Moreover, research shows that individuals place more blame on victims of sexual violence when they engage in self-objectifying behaviours (Loughnan et al., 2013). These outcomes have not yet been studied in an online context. Accordingly, the goal of the present study was to develop an understanding of how students view victims and perpetrators of image-based sexual abuse and determine if these judgements were influenced by whether the victim took the image herself, and whether the victim earned monetary reward for the explicit image.

 I recruited students instead of community members for the present study because research shows that sexual assault rates are the highest for young adults and university students (Fisher et al., 2000). By filling in the gaps of previous research, this study acts as a first step at identifying how individuals view victims and perpetrators of IBSA, with the goal of ultimately reducing this type of violence and increasing support for all victims.

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[1] For historical and statistical reasons, past research has only included students who identify as male and female, but the current study sought to recruit students of all genders. However, given the low rates of non-binary and transgender individuals in the population (Statistics Canada, 2022), non-binary and transgender students were combined with students who identified as female in the gender comparison. Non-binary and transgender students were combined with female-identified students in analyses because research has found that non-dominant groups, including women, transgender, and non-binary individuals, were more likely to perceive themselves as being similar to a victim of violence, and they have been found to respond to measures of victim blame and victim empathy in similar ways (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021).

*Research Question 1*

The first research question investigated whether the context in which IBSA occurs (i.e., through a subscription-based website, through sexting, or through non-consensual photography) produced differing degrees of victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, perpetrator blame, victim blame, and victim empathy, as reported by a sample of university students, over and above the influence of rape myth endorsement. Given the gendered nature of the phenomenon under study, this study also included gender as a quasi-independent variable to investigate whether there was a main effect and/or interaction between gender and the context of IBSA for the four dependent variables (victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, perpetrator blame, victim blame, and victim empathy). To examine this, the present study purposefully obtained an equal number of female/transgender/non-binary and male participants.

Based on past research which suggested that individuals are more likely to blame victims when the victim engages in self-objectifying behaviours (Loughnan et al., 2013), it was hypothesized that:

1. Individuals would display lower perpetrator responsibility, perpetrator blame, and victim empathy, and higher victim responsibility and victim blame towards individuals who took their own explicit photo (i.e., through subscription-based websites and through sexting), compared to individuals who had their explicit photo taken by someone else without their consent (i.e., through non-consensual photography).

Furthermore, given that previous research suggested that individuals who gain money or possessions from sex or sexual acts elicit lower victim empathy when they have

experienced sexual assault compared to non-sex workers (Sprankle et al., 2018), it was

hypothesized that:

2.  Individuals would display lower perpetrator responsibility, perpetrator blame,

    and victim empathy, and higher victim responsibility and victim blame when

    individuals' images were taken for subscription-based websites compared to

    when those images were obtained through consensual sexting or when images

    were obtained through non-consensual photography.

Lastly, given that previous research suggests that women tend to show higher

empathy and display lower blame towards other women who have experienced sexual

assault (Ching & Burke, 1999; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Sinclair & Bourne, 1998; Smith

& Frieze, 2003), it was hypothesized that:

3.  For any context of IBSA, women, transgender, and non-binary individuals

    would display higher empathy for victims and assign higher responsibility and

    blame to perpetrators of IBSA, and assign lower responsibility and blame to

    victims, regardless of contextual factors.

### *Research Question 2*

The second research question explored whether objectification predicted victim

empathy, victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, and perpetrator

blame over and above the context of IBSA while controlling for rape myth endorsement

for online and offline contexts. Given that both females and males have been found to

engage in objectification of women (Lanis & Covell, 1995), and that the experiences of

non-binary students have not previously been included in this field, gender was not

included for the second research question. Furthermore, given that trans/non-binary

students are estimated to represent 1-3% of the undergraduate population, exploration by gender identity beyond the binary was not possible.

Given that research has indicated that rape myth endorsement is a predictor of increased levels of victim blame for situations involving IBSA (Powell et al., 2018), rape myth acceptance for offline and online contexts were included as covariates in the analysis. Based on previous research which has shown that individuals who objectify women are more likely to engage in victim blaming and display lower victim empathy for offline situations involving sexual assault (Burgess & Burpo, 2012; Loughnan et al., 2013; Milburn et al., 2000; Miller et al., 2011; Osland et al., 1996) it was hypothesized that

4. Beyond the impact of rape myth acceptance, individuals who objectify women more would display lower perpetrator blame, perpetrator responsibility, and victim empathy, and display higher blame and responsibility towards victims who experienced IBSA, no matter what context IBSA occurred in.

## CHAPTER 2: METHOD

**Participants**

A sample of 149 male, female, and non-binary undergraduate students were recruited between December 2021 and February 2022 from the University of Windsor Department of Psychology participant pool. All participants were between the ages of 17 and 49 ($M = 21.84$ $SD = 4.96$) years. In total, 73 participants identified as female, 65 identified as male, 3 identified as transgender, and 7 identified as non-binary. The sample was predominantly Caucasian ($n = 94$, 63.5%) and heterosexual ($n = 117$, 78.5%). However, there was a large range of ethnicities and sexual identities present in the sample. Most participants were in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences ($n = 88$, 59.5%), with a broad range of years of study. Further demographic details can be found in Table 1.

**Experimental Manipulation of Context (Vignettes)**

Vignettes were designed based on Stolte's (1994) recommendations. Each vignette started by introducing the female character as a twenty-four-year-old living in the province, who had a sexually explicit image of herself saved by a male acquaintance and shared to his friends without consent. The IV manipulation was the context in which the photo was taken and how the man acquired the photo. In the first version, the female character took a photo of herself and sent the photo to the male acquaintance through sexting, and then the male saved the image and sent it to his friends without her consent (consensual self-produced, acquired privately). In the second version, the female character took a photo of herself and uploaded the photo to a subscription-based website

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographic Information*

| Variable | $n$ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Ethnicity/Race | | |
|   White | 94 | 63.5 |
|   Indigenous | 3 | 2.1 |
|   Black | 8 | 5.4 |
|   East Asian | 7 | 4.7 |
|   South Asian | 6 | 4.1 |
|   Middle Eastern | 16 | 10.8 |
|   Latin or South American | 3 | 2.1 |
|   Bi/Mixed/Multi Racial | 9 | 6.1 |
| Sexual identity | | |
|   Heterosexual | 117 | 79.1 |
|   Lesbian/Gay | 10 | 6.8 |
|   Bisexual | 14 | 9.5 |
|   Asexual | 1 | 0.7 |
|   Pansexual | 1 | 0.7 |
|   Queer | 3 | 2.0 |
|   Unsure | 2 | 1.4 |
| Year of study | | |
|   First year | 22 | 14.9 |
|   Second year | 33 | 22.3 |
|   Third year | 37 | 25.0 |
|   Fourth year | 45 | 30.4 |
|   Beyond fourth year | 11 | 7.4 |
| Faculty | | |
|   Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences | 88 | 59.5 |
|   Business | 4 | 2.7 |
|   Education | 2 | 1.4 |
|   Human Kinetics | 10 | 6.8 |
|   Science and Engineering | 40 | 27.0 |
|   Nursing | 2 | 1.4 |
|   Other | 2 | 1.4 |

(consensual self-produced, acquired privately through monetary exchange). In this vignette, the male character signed up to view her photos on the subscription-based website, and then saved her image and sent the photo to his friends without her consent. In the third version (the control vignette), the male character took a photo of the female character without her consent or knowledge, and then sent this photo to his friends without her consent (non-consensual production and acquisition). The stories in the vignettes were designed such that they describe acts by the man that are identical across the scenarios and are clearly non-consensual. All vignettes described an incident that fit the definition of IBSA but was not labelled as IBSA. Because research suggests that some individuals may falsely believe that IBSA experiences are not upsetting to victims (Powell et al., 2018), to remove any ambiguity, at the end of each vignette, one sentence described the female character as becoming upset when she found out that her photos were sent to other individuals without her consent. Vignettes were short to minimize extraneous influences. Vignettes can be found in Appendix C. To ensure that participants read and understood that the acts in the vignettes were non-consensual and had consequences for the victim, participants completed a manipulation check once they had finished reading the vignette (Appendix D).

**Manipulation Check**

To assess whether or not participants understood that the incident described in the scenario was non-consensual, participants responded to a yes/no/unsure question which asked: "Did Justin have Jenny's permission to save her image to his phone?" and, "Did Justin have Jenny's permission to send her image to his friends?" To assess the degree to which participants understood that the incident caused the female character distress,

participants responded to the following statement: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you think Jenny felt after finding out her photo was forwarded to someone else?" Participants responded to this question by using a scale that ranged from 1 (*very happy*) to 5 (*very upset*).

**Experimental Outcome Measures**

*Attributions of Blame and Responsibility*

Questions regarding attributions of blame and responsibility to the victim and perpetrator came from Stormo and colleagues' (1997) study. One question assessed responsibility, which read "Regardless of whether they could anticipate the consequences, out of a total of 100%, how much was each person responsible for the outcome of this incident?" A definition of responsibility followed this question before participants were asked to respond. Participants gave a percentage, out of 100%, of responsibility for this incident for both the male and female characters, which equaled 100%. If this percentage did not add up to 100%, participants received an error message informing them of the problem and asked them to correct it. Next, there were two questions to determine how much blame participants placed on the victim and on the perpetrator (Stormo et al., 1997). The first question read "How much is Jenny to blame for the incident occurring?" The second question read "How much is Justin to blame for the incident occurring?" A definition of blame followed before participants were asked to respond. Blame was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all blameworthy*) to 5 (*entirely to blame*). Higher mean scores indicated higher blame. Although the questions developed by Stormo and colleagues (1997) have been used

widely by researchers, there is no construct validity or test-retest reliability available for these questions. See Appendix D.

### *Victim Empathy*

One question assessing victim empathy was adapted from Anastasio and Costa's (2004) study. This question read "Regardless of whether she could anticipate the consequences, do you feel bad for Jenny in this situation?" The original question from the Anastasio and Costa (2004) study read "How badly did you feel for the victim?" This adapted question was rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher mean scores indicated higher empathy for victims. Although the question developed by Anastasio and Costa (2004) has been used widely by researchers, there is no construct validity or test-retest reliability available. See Appendix D.

### Attitudinal Measures

### *Image-Based Sexual Abuse Rape Myth Acceptance*

The Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance Scale (SIAMA) was developed by Powell and colleagues (2018) to measure image-based sexual abuse rape myth acceptance. Responses to this scale were used as a covariate for the present study. The SIAMA scale has been found to have two components, the first was the 'minimize/excuse' component which contains twelve items and has a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.94$ and the second was the 'blame' component which contains six items and has a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.86$. A sample item from the full scale is "Women should be flattered if a partner or ex-partner shows nude pics of her to some close friends." Some words in this scale were changed to represent more commonly used words in Canada, such as changing the word mates to friends. The full scale was used for the present study,

which was rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly*

*agree*). Higher mean scores indicated higher sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance.

In the current study, the full SIAMA scale had good reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

***General Rape Myth Acceptance.***

Questions regarding general rape myth acceptance for offline contexts came from

the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

This scale was modified by McMahon and Farmer (2011) to measure acceptance of

subtle rape myths. This modified scale contains 19 items with five subscales, which were

all updated by changing the language to capture subtle rape myths. The full scale was

used in the current study, which was rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly*

*disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Original scoring conventions were reversed to be more

intuitive, with higher mean scores indicated greater acceptance of rape myths. A

Cronbach's alpha of .87 with good criterion validity was reported for the full scale

(McMahon & Farmer, 2011). In the current study, the IRMA demonstrated excellent

reliability ($\alpha = .92$).

***Sexual Objectification.***

Questions regarding sexual objectification came from the Interpersonal Sexual

Objectification Scale Perpetration Version (ISOS-P). This scale was developed by

Gervais and colleagues (2018) to measure sexual objectification of women. This scale

can be used to assess sexual objectification perpetration by perpetrators of any gender. A

sample item is "How often do you whistle at someone while she/he/they are walking

down a street?" The present study used the full scale to maintain scale integrity; however,

only 6 of the 15 items were summed and used in analyses. The other 9 items in the

original scale involved the perpetration of sexual assault instead of objectifying views of

women, which were not relevant for the purpose of the present study. Items were rated on

a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Higher mean scores indicated

higher sexual objectification of women. The full measure has been shown to have

acceptable construct validity and acceptable internal validity (Gervais et al., 2018). The 6

items of the ISOS-P used in the current study had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .76$).

**Additional Demographic Measures**

*Social Media Use*

Questions regarding social media and technology use came from the Social Media

Questionnaire (Alloway et al., 2013), which were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 *never* to

7 *over 5 times daily*. Additional questions were created to assess the frequency of

technology and social media use, which can be found in Appendix E. Questions

regarding social media and technology use were asked for the purpose of describing the

sample and to understand if participants used social media and technology frequently.

*IBSA Experiences*

Questions regarding personal perpetration and victimization experiences of IBSA

came from Powell and colleague's (2018) study. These questions were adapted by

slightly changing a few words to fit the present study and by adding a question that

assesses IBSA perpetration and victimization through a subscription-based website

(Appendix E). A total of 16 questions were asked and participants responded in a (*yes/no*)

format. Questions regarding IBSA perpetration and victimization questions were asked

for the purpose of describing the sample and to understand if IBSA experiences are

familiar or unfamiliar to the sample.

**Procedure**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor. Advertisements for the study (Appendix H) were posted on the psychology department's Participant Pool, and students over the age of 16 who were eligible for the participant pool had the opportunity to sign up for the study. To access the department's Participant Pool, students had to first create an account through SONA systems and answer demographic characteristics which were then used to screen participants. To ensure gender balance, two identical advertisements were used. One version of the advertisement was only visible to female students, and the other was visible only to male students and students who identified as trans/non-binary (Appendix H). Once 75 female students had signed-up for the study, I removed the women's advertisement given that it took longer to recruit an equal number of men and trans/non-binary students for the study. The online study was titled "Thoughts and Feelings about Social Interactions" to reduce subject selection bias. The study was described as an online survey which focused on perceptions of interactions between people who are acquainted that happen online and/or in person. Participants were informed that they would be asked to read a short story and respond to a brief questionnaire. Participants were also informed that the stories they were asked to read could involve descriptions of sexual situations which may be unwanted by one person. Students were awarded with .5 bonus marks towards an eligible class for their participation in the study.

Once students had read the study description and clicked on the study link, they were presented with the consent form (see Appendix A). Once participants clicked on 'I agree' at the end of the consent form, participants were then asked to fill out the

demographic questionnaire which asked them about their age, ethnicity/race, sexual identity, gender identity, education level, and university program (Appendix B).

Participants were then presented with directions for reading and responding to the vignettes. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of three vignettes. After reading the assigned vignette, participants completed the manipulation check questions. Next, participants answered the victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, perpetrator blame, and victim empathy outcome questions. Then, participants responded to the objectification and rape myth endorsement measures in randomized order, followed by the final questions assessing social media use and IBSA experiences.

At the end of the study, participants were directed to a post-study information page and a list of local and online resources (Appendix F). Participants were able to download these pages to save to their computer. Lastly, students advanced a separate secure webpage that allowed them to submit their name and email for the purpose of obtaining their bonus point (Appendix G).

## CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

All analyses for the present study were performed with SPSS version 26 (Field, 2013). The present study obtained 149 participants which was deemed to be a sufficient size based on a power analysis from G*Power 3 software, for running an ANCOVA and multiple regression with with Cohen's $f^2 = .0625$, $\alpha = .05$, $(1 - \beta) = .8$, and 6 groups. The sample size was appropriate as it met the recommendations for both the analysis of covariance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis (Cohen et al., 2003; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). The first research question and subsequent hypotheses were tested using multiple ANCOVA analyses and planned a priori comparisons. The second research question and subsequent hypothesis were tested using eight hierarchal multiple regression analyses.

### Social Media and Technology Use

To understand participants' familiarity with social media and technology, they were first asked to report how frequently they used different social media platforms. Overall, most participants had access to social media sites ($n = 143$, 98.6%), and most participants frequently used both smartphones and computers ($n = 137$, 92.6%). The most common form of social media that participants used was Snapchat ($n = 121$, 83.5%), and the majority of participants used their smartphones more than 10 times a day ($n = 113$, 76.4%).

### Personal Experiences with Sexting and Subscription-Based Websites

Before assessing the main hypotheses, the participants' personal experiences with sexting and subscription-based websites were examined. Two-thirds of participants reported that they had received a nude photo from someone else through sexting at least

once in their lifetime ($n = 98$, 66.2%). Of these individuals, 64.6% of male, 64.4% of

female, 100% of transgender ($n = 3$), and 85.7% of nonbinary students ($n = 7$), reported

having received a nude photo of someone else through sexting at least once in their

lifetime. About half of the participants reported that they had shared a nude or sexual

photo with a current sexual partner ($n = 72$, 48.6%), which translated to 32% of male,

59.2% of female, 100% of transgender ($n = 3$), and 85.7% of nonbinary students ($n = 7$).

A smaller percentage reported sending a nude or sexual photo to someone they only knew

online ($n = 25$, 16.9%), which translated to 18.5% of male, 12.3% of female, 100% of

transgender ($n = 3$), and 28.6% of nonbinary students ($n = 7$). One participant who

identified as female reported that she had uploaded a nude or sexual image to a

subscription-based website ($n = 1$, 0.7%).

**IBSA Perpetration and Victimization Experiences**

Participants were also asked about their personal IBSA perpetration and

victimization experiences. Overall, most participants reported that they had not shared a

photo of someone else without the individual's consent ($n = 138$, 93.2%). There were

6.8% of students who had shared a photo without consent, which translated to 9.4% of

male, 1.4% of female, 100% of transgender ($n = 3$), and 100% of nonbinary students ($n =$

7). Only four participants had reported downloading a nude photo off of a subscription-

based website without consent ($n = 4$, 2.7%), and none of these participants reported

sending this photo to someone else. All of these participants identified as male, and this

percentage translated to 6.2% of male students in the sample.

With regard to IBSA victimization, 11% of the participants reported having a

nude or sexual image of themselves distributed without their consent ($n = 16$), which

translated to 4.6% of male, 15.5% of female, 100% of transgender ($n = 3$), and 28.6% of

nonbinary students in the sample ($n = 7$). Finally, 8.1% reported having their nude photo

taken by someone else without their consent ($n = 12$, 8.1%), which translated to 3.1% of

male, 8.5% of female, 100% of transgender ($n = 3$), and 57.1% of nonbinary students ($n = 7$).

**Preliminary Data Analysis**

*Missing Data*

Three participants had incomplete data. Two participants completed the

experimental outcome measures, and did not complete the SIAMA, IRMA, ISOS-P Short

Form, or the final demographic questions. One participant completed the experimental

outcome measures and the SIAMA, but missed the IRMA, ISOS-P, and final

demographic questions. These participants were only included in analyses which

included their complete measures. For the rest of the sample, missing value analyses

found a total of 10 missing values. However, less than 5% of data missing is generally

not a concern (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), and Little's test of Missing Completely at

Random (MCAR) was not significant, $X^2 = 289.54$, $df = 324$, $p = .92$, indicating that the

data in the study were missing completely at random. When each scale was summed,

scores were weighted to account for any missing values.

**Evaluation of Statistical Assumptions for Main Analyses**

*Outliers*

Univariate outliers were examined through standardized $z$ scores with a cut-off of

|3.29| (Field, 2013; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). Univariate outliers were analyzed for all

independent and dependent variables. Multivariate and influential outliers were assessed

using Mahalanobis' Distance and Cook's Distance. After these assessments, only one outlier was found, which was both a univariate and multivariate outlier. However, after running the analyses with and without this outlier, it was found that it did not influence the results of the study, and so it was not altered or removed.

*Normality and Linearity*

The normality of all dependent variables was assessed using Shapiro-Wilk tests. All four dependent variables had violations to normality and linearity, as Shapiro-Wilk tests were significant. Overall, the skewness and kurtosis values generally fell within |2| and |3|, respectively (Pituch & Stevens, 2016), except for kurtosis scores on victim responsibility, victim blame, and victim empathy for condition three, and for kurtosis scores on victim empathy for women, which were all larger than |3|. Given that it was expected that there would be more students reporting low levels of blame and responsibility toward the victim no matter what context or gender they identified with, higher levels of skewness and kurtosis were expected and not considered unusual, so no adjustments were made.

*Homogeneity of Variance and Regression Slopes, Independence of Observations, and Multicollinearity*

Significant correlations between the dependent variables and the covariates were found, and the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was met, so the covariates were included in the analysis. Independence of observations was assumed based on the design of the study. Levene's test indicated that homogeneity of variance was violated, $F(5, 140) = 13.18$, $p < .001$, but this was expected given that normality was also violated. Multicollinearity was violated, but prior to conducting the analysis, it was

expected that all four dependent variables would be highly correlated, and so no adjustments were made. Because both linearity and normality were violated, ANCOVAs were chosen for the current study instead of conducting a 2x3 MANCOVA, given that ANCOVAs allow for adjustments to the alpha level (Dr. Jackson, personal communication, March 15, 2022).

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Variables**

Before conducting the ANCOVA and multiple hierarchal regression analyses, internal consistency of all multi-item scales and subscales were first examined and deemed adequate. Means and standard deviations for experimental outcome variables are displayed in Table 2, and the means and standard deviations for attitudinal measures are displayed in Table 3.

To understand the relationships between outcome and attitudinal variables, correlations were tested before running the ANCOVA or multiple hierarchal analyses, and can be found in Table 4. As expected, attributional measures of blame and responsibility were significantly correlated for victim ratings ($r = .90$, $p < .01$) as well as for perpetrator ratings ($r = .83$, $p < .01$). Given that victim responsibility and perpetrator responsibility were rated from 0 to 100 and had to add up to 100, they were perfectly correlated. The subsequent analyses focus on victim responsibility as that is the main variable of interest. Ratings of blame for the victim and perpetrator were also correlated ($r = -.70$, $p < .01$). Victim empathy was correlated with all four outcome variables. Of the attitudinal measures, sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance (SIAMA) and general rape myth acceptance (IRMA) were correlated with each other and with the outcome variables. Interpersonal Sexual Objectification (ISOS-P) was correlated with the SIAMA

and with one outcome variable, victim empathy. Therefore, since the SIAMA and IRMA were highly correlated with the outcome variables, they were included in the ANCOVA and multiple regression analyses as covariates.

**Manipulation Checks**

*Did participants believe that the perpetrator had permission to save the victim's image to his phone?*

Almost all participants believed that the perpetrator did not have permission to save the image to his phone. Five participants failed this manipulation check. The analyses were run with and without the responses that failed the check, but since no significant differences were found when removing these responses, they were included in the final analyses. There was a significant effect of gender on this manipulation check, $\chi^2$ $(1, 147) = 9.88$, $p < .01$, where students who identified as female, transgender, or non-binary, were more likely to believe that the perpetrator did not have permission to save the image, compared to students who identified as male. The manipulation was effective across the three experimental groups (context), $\chi^2$ $(2, 147) = 1.22$, $p = .30$.

*Did participants believe that the perpetrator had permission to share the victim's image with his friends?*

Almost all participants believed that the perpetrator did not have permission to share the victim's image with his friends. One participant failed this manipulation check. The analyses were run with and without this response, but since no significant differences were found when removing this response, it was included in the final analyses. There was no significant effect of gender on this manipulation check, $\chi^2$ $(1,147) = 1.28$, $p = .26$, or context, $\chi^2$ $(2, 147) = 1.08$, $p = .34$.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Outcome Variables*

|  | Possible range | Actual range | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victim responsibility | 0 – 100 | 0 – 100 | 21.88 | 25.5 |
| Perpetrator blame | 1 – 5 | 2 – 5 | 4.41 | 0.70 |
| Victim blame | 1 – 5 | 1 – 5 | 2.06 | 1.20 |
| Victim empathy | 1 – 5 | 1 – 5 | 4.44 | 0.84 |

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Individual Difference Measures*

|  | Possible range | Actual range | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SIAMA | 1 – 7 | 1 – 4.11 | 1.98 | 0.73 |
| IRMA | 1 – 5 | 1 – 3.37 | 1.51 | 0.54 |
| ISOS-P Short Form | 1 – 5 | 1 – 3.33 | 2.02 | 0.50 |

*Notes*. SIAMA= The Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance Scale, IRMA= Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, ISOS-P= Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale Perpetration Version Short Form

**Table 4**

*Intercorrelations Among Variables*

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Victim responsibility | - | 1.00** | 0.90** | -0.83** | -0.48** | 0.54** | 0.37** | 0.02 |
| 2. Perpetrator responsibility |  | - | -0.90** | 0.83** | 0.48** | -0.54** | -0.37** | -0.02 |
| 3. Victim blame |  |  | - | -0.70** | -0.50** | 0.56** | 0.40* | -0.06 |
| 4. Perpetrator blame |  |  |  | - | 0.51** | -0.47** | -0.28** | 0.05 |
| 5. Victim empathy |  |  |  |  | - | -0.36** | -0.25** | -0.21* |
| 6. SIAMA |  |  |  |  |  | - | 0.73** | 0.17* |
| 7. IRMA |  |  |  |  |  |  | - | 0.13 |
| 8. ISOS-P Short Form |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | - |

*Notes*. SIAMA= The Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance Scale, IRMA= Updated Illinois

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, ISOS-P= Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale Perpetration

Version Short Form

*p* < .05, **p* <.01.

*Did participants believe that the victim was upset after finding out her photo was forwarded to someone else?*

All participants believed that the victim was upset after finding out that her photo had been sent to someone else. Given that all participants scored above the midway point, no participants failed this manipulation check. There was no significant effect of gender on this manipulation check, $\chi^2$ (1,147) = 2.48, $p$ = .12. However, there was a significant effect of context, $\chi^2$ (2, 147) = 25.72, $p < .01$, in which individuals in the subscription-based website condition ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.82$) believed that the victim was less upset after finding out her picture was forwarded to someone else, compared to the sexting condition and the control condition.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question sought to examine whether gender and the context in which IBSA occurs produced differing degrees of victim empathy, victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, and perpetrator blame, while controlling for rape myth acceptance of online and offline contexts. To test the first research question and the first three hypotheses, I conducted a 2 (gender: female/transgender/non-binary, male) x 3 (context: IBSA occurring through sexting, a subscription-based website, and non-consensual photography) between-subjects univariate analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) for each of the four outcome variables. Post-hoc tests were then used to test the first two hypotheses related to differences in context for the three outcome variables. The third hypothesis was assessed by examining the results of the ANCOVA.

Between-subjects ANCOVAs for each outcome variable can be found in Table 5. The overall models showed a main effect of context for victim responsibility, $F(2, 139) = 30.88$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .31$; victim blame, $F(2, 139) = 33.24$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .32$; perpetrator blame, $F(2, 139) = 24.03$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .26$; and victim empathy $F(2, 139) = 20.80$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$ while controlling for rape myth acceptance. A main effect of gender was also found for ratings of victim empathy $F(1, 139) = 3.82$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, but not for ratings of victim responsibility $F(1, 139) = 0.21$, $p = .65$; victim blame $F(1, 139) = 0.30$, $p = .59$; or perpetrator blame $F(1, 139) = 3.37$, $p = .07$, while controlling for rape myth acceptance. Additionally, the interaction between condition and gender was significant for ratings on victim empathy $F(2, 139) = 3.17$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, but not for ratings of victim responsibility $F(2, 139) = .1.53$, $p = .22$; victim blame $F(2, 139) = 1.80$, $p = .17$; or perpetrator blame $F(2, 139) = 1.15$, $p = .32$.

The first hypothesis predicted that when a perpetrator downloaded a photo he received through sexting and shared this photo without consent (Condition 1), and when a perpetrator downloaded a photo off of a subscription-based website and shared this photo without consent (Condition 2), participants would judge the perpetrator less harshly and place more responsibility and blame on the victim, and display less empathy toward the victim, compared to participants in the control condition (Condition 3), beyond the influence of rape myth acceptance. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to assess which contexts differed.

The pairwise comparison results supported the first hypothesis for all outcomes. When comparing the first two conditions to the control condition, participants in the sexting condition ($n = 49$, $M = 30.65$, $SD = 23.50$; $M_{difference,} = 22.99$, $p < .001$, 95% CI

[13.85, 32.13]) and subscription-based condition ($n = 47$, $M = 33.09$, $SD = 28.60$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= 27.90$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [18.71, 37.09]) placed more responsibility on the victim than those in the control condition ($n = 52$, $M = 3.48$, $SD = 9.04$). Participants in the sexting condition ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.14$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= 1.21$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.80, 1.63]) and subscription-based website condition ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.25$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= 1.22$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.80, 1.63]) also placed more blame on the victim than those in the control condition ($M = 1.17$, $SD = 0.51$). Participants in the sexting condition ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.64$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= -0.49$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.76, -0.22]) and subscription-based website condition ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.79$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= -0.76$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.04, -0.49]) placed less blame on the perpetrator than those in the control condition ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.35$). Finally, participants in the sexting condition ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.65$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= -0.38$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.73, -0.03]) and subscription-based website condition ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.11$; $M_{\text{difference}}$, $= -0.93$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.28, -0.58]) displayed lower victim empathy than those in the control condition ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.32$).

The second hypothesis predicted that participants in the sexting condition (Condition 1), would report lower levels of victim blame and victim responsibility, and higher levels of perpetrator blame and victim empathy, compared to individuals in the subscription-based website condition (Condition 2), beyond the influence of rape myth acceptance. To test this, I conducted post-hoc univariate contrasts between the conditions, which found partial support for the second hypothesis. The results indicated that perpetrator blame was significantly different between the sexting and subscription-based website condition. Participants in the subscription-based website condition reported lower perpetrator blame ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.79$) compared to participants in the sexting condition

($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.64$; $M_{difference}$, $= 0.27$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.54). The hypothesis was

also supported for victim empathy; participants in the subscription-based website

condition displayed lower empathy towards the victim ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.11$) compared

to participants in the sexting condition ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.65$; $M_{difference} = 0.55$, $p < .001$,

95% CI [0.20, 0.90]). However, the hypothesis was not supported for victim

responsibility ($p = .65$) or victim blame ($p = .59$).

The third hypothesis predicted that regardless of the context of IBSA, after rape

myth acceptance was controlled, women and individuals who identified as transgender or

non-binary would display more empathy for victims, more blame to perpetrators of

IBSA, and less responsibility and blame to victims compared to individuals who

identified as male. Support for this hypothesis was found only for victim empathy;

students who identified as male reported lower victim empathy ($n = 65$, $M = 4.17$, $SD =$

0.96) compared to students who identified as female, transgender, or non-binary ($n = 81$,

$M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.67$; $M_{difference}$, $= 0.25$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .27$, 95% CI [0.00, -0.50]), The

hypothesis was not supported for victim responsibility ($p = .65$), victim blame ($p = .59$),
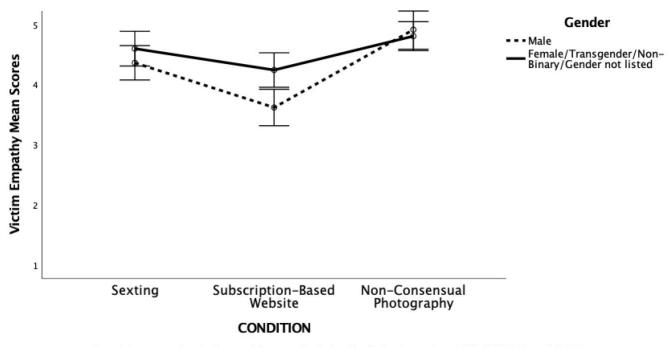
or perpetrator blame ($p = .07$).

To assess the interaction of context and gender on victim empathy, I examined

pairwise comparisons. Interestingly, the third hypothesis predicted that gender would

influence empathy over and above the context of IBSA, and although gender was

significantly related to reports of victim empathy across conditions, the interaction in

Figure 1 showed that, in fact, within genders, there were different patterns of victim

empathy by condition. More specifically, the interaction analysis showed that students

who identified as male were strongly affected by the context, with those who were in the

subscription-based website condition reporting lower levels of victim empathy ($M = 3.50$,

$SD = 1.14$), compared to males who were in the sexting condition ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.66$;

$M_{\text{difference}}$, $= 0.74$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.34, 1.14]; SE $= 0.20$) or in the control condition

($M_{\text{difference}}$, $= -1.29$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [-1.73, -0.85]; SE $= 0.22$). Males in the sexting

condition also had significantly less empathy compared to males who were in the control

condition ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 0.32$; $M_{\text{difference}} = -0.55$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [-0.98, -0.12]; SE $=$

0.22).

The pattern for students who identified as female, transgender, or non-binary, was

different in two important ways. Empathy for victims was higher than for men overall

and decreases in empathy were only found between the subscription-based website

condition ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.96$) compared to the control condition ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.67$;

$M_{\text{difference}} = -0.56$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [-0.93, -0.20]; SE $= 0.19$) Female, transgender, and

non-binary students did not differ in their reports of victim empathy between the sexting

($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.57$) and subscription-based website condition ($p = .08$), or between the

sexting and control condition ($p = .27$).

**Figure 1**

*The Interaction Effect of Condition and Gender on Victim Empathy*



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: TOT_IBSAMyth = 1.9817

Error bars: 95% CI

**Table 5**

*Between-Subjects ANCOVAs*

| Effect | df1 | df2 | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victim responsibility | | | | |
| Context | 2 | 139 | 30.88 | .00 |
| Gender | 1 | 139 | 0.21 | .65 |
| Context x Gender | 2 | 139 | 1.53 | .22 |
| Perpetrator blame | | | | |
| Context | 2 | 139 | 24.03 | .00 |
| Gender | 1 | 139 | 3.37 | .07 |
| Context x Gender | 2 | 139 | 1.15 | .32 |
| Victim Blame | | | | |
| Context | 2 | 139 | 33.24 | .00 |
| Gender | 1 | 139 | 0.30 | .59 |
| Context x Gender | 2 | 139 | 1.23 | .17 |
| Effect | df1 | df2 | F | p |
| Victim empathy | | | | |
| Context | 2 | 139 | 10.04 | .00 |
| Gender | 1 | 139 | 1.85 | .05 |
| Context x Gender | 2 | 139 | 1.53 | .05 |

**Research Question 2**

The second research question assessed whether objectification predicted the four outcome variables over and above the context of IBSA while controlling for rape myth endorsement for online and offline contexts. To examine this research question, I used eight hierarchal multiple regression analyses to assess the relationship between objectification (predictor) and two covariates (context and rape myth endorsement), on each of the four criterion variables: victim empathy, victim responsibility/perpetrator responsibility, perpetrator blame, and victim blame. It was hypothesized that beyond the impact of rape myth acceptance, individuals who objectified women more would display lower victim empathy and perpetrator blame and higher blame and responsibility towards victims. Because the previous analyses suggested that the context in which IBSA occurs predicts differences in the outcome variables, context (dummy coded) was the first variable entered into the equation. In Step 2, rape myth endorsement for general contexts was entered. Given that little research has explored rape myths for online contexts and because rape myth endorsement for online contexts was of more interest in the present study, this was entered into the third step. Finally, in Step 4, objectification was entered, to assess if it had a unique contribution to the prediction of the outcome variables beyond rape myth endorsement and context.

*Victim Responsibility*

Results of the first hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that Step 1 was significant (as expected based on results from RQ1), $R^2 = 0.19$; $F(1, 143) = 32.69$, $p < .001$, with context accounting for 19% of the variance in victim responsibility. Scores on general rape myth endorsement at Step 2 increased the prediction of variation in

victim responsibility by 12%, $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(2,142) = 31.97$, $p < .001$. Inclusion of rape myth endorsement for online contexts in Step 3 contributed an additional 11% of the variance in victim responsibility, $R^2 = 0.42$; $F(3, 141) = 34.22$, $p < .001$. The addition of interpersonal objectification at Step 4 did not improve the model, $R^2 = 0.42$; $F(4, 140) = 25.58$, $p < .001$. In that final model, context, $t(140) = -5.24$, $p < .001$, and rape myth endorsement for online contexts, $t(140) = 0.20$, $p < .001$, maintained their significance as predictors. General rape myth acceptance ($p = .94$) and interpersonal objectification ($p = .64$) did not significantly predict victim responsibility when other variables were controlled. A summary of the hierarchal regression for victim responsibility can be found in Table 6.

### *Perpetrator Blame*

Results of the next hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that Step 1 was significant (as expected based on results from RQ1), $R^2 = 0.12$; $F(1, 143) = 19.84$, $p < .001$, with context accounting for 11% of the variance in perpetrator blame. Scores on rape myth endorsement for offline contexts at Step 2 increased the prediction of variation in perpetrator blame by 7%, $R^2 = 0.19$; $F(2,142) = 16.91$, $p < .01$. Inclusion of rape myth endorsement for online contexts in Step 3 contributed an additional 12% of the variance in perpetrator blame, $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(3, 141) = 20.58$, $p < .001$. The addition of interpersonal objectification at Step 4 did not improve the model, $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(4, 140) = 15.34$, $p < .001$. In that final model context, $t(140) = 3.79$, $p < .001$, and rape myth endorsement for online contexts, $t(140) = -4.68$, $p < .001$, maintained their significance as predictors.

**Table 6**

*Summary of Hierarchal Regression for Victim Responsibility*

| Variable | B | 95% CI for B | | SE B | β | R² | ΔR² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | LL | UL | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | 0.18 | .19*** |
| Context | -13.02 | -17.53 | -8.52 | 2.28 | -0.43*** | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | 0.31 | .12*** |
| Context | -12.49 | -16.65 | -8.32 | 2.11 | -0.41*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 16.25 | 9.90 | 22.60 | 3.21 | 0.35*** | | |
| Step 3 | | | | | | 0.42 | .11*** |
| Context | -10.60 | -14.50 | -6.70 | 1.97 | -0.35*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.33 | -8.92 | 8.26 | 4.35 | -0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | 16.93 | 10.49 | 23.36 | 3.26 | 0.50*** | | |
| Step 4 | | | | | | 0.42 | .00 |
| Context | -10.47 | -14.41 | -6.52 | 2.00 | -0.35*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.35 | -8.97 | 8.27 | 4.36 | -0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | 17.14 | 10.62 | 23.66 | 3.30 | 0.50*** | | |
| Objectification | -1.55 | -8.10 | 5.01 | 3.32 | -0.03 | | |

*Note*: *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

* *p* <.05, ** *p* <.01, ***p* < .001

General rape myth acceptance ($p = .36$) and interpersonal objectification ($p = .87$) did not significantly predict perpetrator blame in the full model. A summary of the hierarchal regression for perpetrator blame can be found in Table 7.

### *Victim Blame*

Results of the next hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that Step 1 was significant (as expected based on results from RQ1), $R^2 = 0.23$; $F(1, 143) = 43.37$, $p < .001$, with context accounting for 23% of the variance in victim blame. Scores on rape myth endorsement for offline contexts at Step 2 increased the prediction of variation in victim blame by 14%, $R^2 = 0.37$; $F(2,142) = 40.94$, $p < .001$. Inclusion of rape myth endorsement for online contexts in Step 3 contributed an additional 10% of the variance in victim blame, $R^2 = 0.47$; $F(3, 141) = 41.93$, $p < .001$. The addition of interpersonal objectification at Step 4 did not improve the model, $R^2 = 0.47$; $F(4, 140) = 31.23$, $p < .001$. In that final model, context, $t(140) = -6.38$, $p < .001$, and rape myth endorsement for online contexts, $t(140) = -5.23$, $p < .001$, maintained their significance as predictors, while general rape myth acceptance ($p = .88$) and interpersonal objectification ($p = .94$) did not significantly contribute to victim blame. A summary of the hierarchal regression for victim blame can be found in Table 8.

**Table 7**

*Summary of Hierarchal Regression for Perpetrator Blame*

| Variable | $B$ | 95% CI for $B$ | | $SE\ B$ | $\beta$ | $R^2$ | $\varDelta R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | LL | UL | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | 0.12 | .12*** |
| Context | 0.29 | 0.16 | 0.42 | 0.07 | 0.35*** | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | 0.19 | .07*** |
| Context | 0.28 | 0.16 | 0.41 | 0.06 | 0.34*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.34 | -0.53 | -0.15 | 0.10 | -0.27** | | |
| Step 3 | | | | | | 0.31 | .11*** |
| Context | 0.23 | 0.11 | 0.35 | 0.06 | 0.27*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.12 | -0.14 | 0.39 | 0.13 | 0.10 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.47 | -0.67 | -0.28 | 0.10 | -0.50*** | | |
| Step 4 | | | | | | 0.31 | .00 |
| Context | 0.23 | 0.11 | 0.35 | 0.06 | 0.28*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.12 | -0.14 | 0.39 | 0.13 | 0.10 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.47 | -0.67 | -0.28 | 0.10 | -0.50*** | | |
| Objectification | -0.02 | -0.22 | 0.18 | 0.10 | -0.01 | | |

*Note*. $CI$ = confidence interval; $LL$ = lower limit; $UL$ = upper limit

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

**Table 8**

*Summary of Hierarchal Regression for Victim Blame*

| Variable | B | 95% CI for B | | SE B | β | R² | ΔR² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | LL | UL | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | 0.23 | .23*** |
| Context | -0.69 | -0.90 | -0.48 | 0.11 | -0.48*** | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | 0.37 | .14*** |
| Context | -0.66 | -0.85 | -0.47 | 0.10 | -0.47*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.80 | 0.51 | 1.08 | 0.15 | 0.37*** | | |
| Step 3 | | | | | | 0.47 | .10*** |
| Context | -0.58 | -0.75 | -0.40 | 0.09 | -0.40*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.03 | -0.36 | 0.42 | 0.20 | 0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.78 | 0.49 | 1.07 | 0.15 | 0.49*** | | |
| Step 4 | | | | | | 0.47 | .00 |
| Context | -0.58 | -0.76 | -0.40 | 0.09 | -0.40*** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.03 | -0.36 | 0.42 | 0.20 | 0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.78 | 0.49 | 1.08 | 0.15 | 0.48*** | | |
| Objectification | 0.01 | -0.29 | 0.31 | 0.15 | 0.01 | | |

*Note. CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

* *p* <.05. ** *p* <.01. ****p* < .001.

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### Victim Empathy

Results of the final hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that Step 1 was significant (as expected based on results from RQ1), $R^2 = 0.05$; $F(1, 143) = 7.63$, $p < .01$, with context accounting for 5% of the variance in victim empathy. Scores on rape myth endorsement for offline contexts at Step 2 increased the prediction of variation in victim empathy by 6%, $R^2 = 0.11$; $F(2,142) = 8.36$, $p < .01$. Inclusion of rape myth endorsement for online contexts in Step 3 contributed an additional 5% of the variance in victim empathy, $R^2 = 0.16$; $F(3, 141) = 8.66$, $p < .001$. Interpersonal objectification was added in the final step (Step 4), and accounted for an additional 3% of the variance in victim empathy, $R^2 = 0.19$; $F(4, 140) = 8.05$, $p < .001$. The final model predicted 19% of the variance in victim empathy, in which context, $t(140) = 2.52$, $p = .01$, rape myth endorsement for online contexts, $t(140) = -2.58$, $p = .01$, and objectification $t(140) = -2.33$, $p = .02$, were significant predictors. General rape myth acceptance was the only variable that did not significantly predict victim empathy ($p = .96$) when online rape myth acceptance was accounted for in the model. A summary of the hierarchal regression for victim empathy can be found in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Summary of Hierarchal Regression for Victim Empathy*

| Variable | B | 95% CI for B | | SE B | β | $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | LL | UL | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | 0.05 | .05** |
| Context | 0.23 | 0.07 | 0.40 | 0.08 | 0.23** | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | 0.11 | .06** |
| Context | 0.22 | 0.06 | 0.38 | 0.08 | 0.21** | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.37 | -0.61 | -0.12 | 0.12 | -0.23** | | |
| Step 3 | | | | | | 0.16 | .05** |
| Context | 0.18 | 0.02 | 0.34 | 0.08 | 0.17* | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.01 | -0.34 | 0.37 | 0.18 | 0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.39 | -0.65 | -0.12 | 0.13 | -0.33** | | |
| Step 4 | | | | | | 0.19 | .03* |
| Context | 0.20 | 0.04 | 0.36 | 0.08 | 0.20* | | |
| General Rape Myth Endorsement | 0.01 | -0.34 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.01 | | |
| IBSA Rape Myth Endorsement | -0.34 | -0.61 | -0.08 | 0.13 | -0.30* | | |
| Objectification | -0.31 | -0.58 | -0.05 | 0.13 | -0.18* | | |

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

* $p <.05$. ** $p <.01$.  ***$p < .001$.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study is the first to present data that show the influence of context, gender identity, rape myth endorsement, and objectification on individuals' views of victims and perpetrators of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). There were four main objectives for the current study: (a) to understand whether the context in which IBSA occurs (through sexting, through a subscription-based website, or through non-consensual photography) produces different degrees of victim empathy, victim/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, and perpetrator blame over and above the influence of rape myth endorsement, (b) to understand how gender influences degrees of empathy, blame, and responsibility for IBSA victims and perpetrators over and above the influence of rape myth endorsement, and (c) to understand whether objectification predicts degrees of victim empathy, victim/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, and perpetrator blame, over and above the context of IBSA and rape myth endorsement. To accomplish these goals, this study included an approximately equal number of male students with female, transgender, and non-binary students, from a range of ethnic backgrounds and diverse sexual orientations. This study was the first to develop and administer an experimental design with established measures to examine an understudied form of victimization known as image-based sexual abuse. By examining the just world theory, feminist theory, and objectification theory, and the connections between these theories, the present study was able to develop a strong theoretical grounding and formulate hypotheses to study individuals' perceptions of victims and perpetrators of IBSA. To contextualize the findings, I will first discuss the participants' experiences with sexting and subscription-

based website use, as well as their experiences and familiarity with IBSA victimization and perpetration.

**Victimization and Perpetration of IBSA**

Before evaluating the main hypotheses of the current study, the participants' familiarity and experiences with sexting was assessed. A large percentage of participants reported having engaged in sexting (sending or receiving explicit photos or text through cell phone or social media messaging), with 65.8% reporting that they have received a nude of someone else through sexting, 48.3% reporting that they have sent a nude or sexual photo to a sexual partner, and 16.8% reporting that they have sent a nude or sexual photo to someone they only knew online. Of these individuals, 64.6% of male students and 67.5% of female/transgender/nonbinary students reported having received a nude photo of someone else through sexting at least once in their lifetime. These findings are slightly higher than results from a recent meta-analysis which found that among young adults, 38.3% have sent a sext at least once in their lifetime, 41.5% have received a sext, and 47.7% have engaged in reciprocal sexting (Mori et al., 2020). This research also found that although both men and women engage in sexting at similar rates, men were found to receive sexts at a higher rate than women (Mori et al., 2020). Research shows that sexting is becoming a normative aspect of adults' romantic development (Lenhart, 2009) as well as an accepted way to express their sexuality with romantic and nonromantic partners (Anastassiou, 2017). However, sexting can become problematic when individuals are put under pressure to produce and send explicit photos of themselves, and when one's explicit photos are sent to others without the consent of the individual in the photo (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016).

Participants' reports of subscription-based website use (uploading and viewing creators' photos on platforms that require a subscription to access) was also assessed and found to be less frequent then sexting, with only one participant reporting that they have uploaded a nude or sexual image to a subscription-based website. Given that this is a newer form of social media, no empirical studies to date have assessed the popularity of these platforms. Although most participants may not have used subscription-based websites, it is still likely that participants were familiar with these platforms given that these types of websites are commonly discussed in music, television, and social media.

To understand if participants had experienced IBSA victimization or had perpetrated this form of violence themselves, the present study assessed their responses to questions regarding IBSA perpetration and victimization across different contexts. With regards to perpetration, the present study found that 6.8% of participants (9.2% of male students) reported having shared an explicit photo without the individual's consent. Some studies on IBSA perpetration rates have found slightly higher reports. For example, Mori and colleagues' (2020) meta-analysis study of young adults found that 15% of participants reported having shared an intimate image of someone else without consent, a rate that Henry and colleagues (2020) warn is continually rising with increased use of technology and social media. Some studies have found higher perpetration reports of 20% (Garcia et al., 2016) but this may be due to the fact that the researchers studied a large community sample with individuals who identified as single. These rates have also been replicated internationally in Australia, where researchers found that 11.1% of adults had reported engaging in one or more IBSA perpetration behaviours in their lifetime (Powell et al., 2018), which is similar to the results found in the present study.

Additionally, the present study also asked participants if they had engaged in IBSA perpetration on subscription-based websites, and found that only one participant reported having downloaded a nude photo off of these types of websites without consent. However, it is difficult to interpret IBSA prevalence rates on these websites, as there are no other studies that have assessed these reports.

For victimization rates, 11% of participants in the current study (15.7% of female/transgender/non-binary students) reported that they have had a nude or sexual image distributed without their consent at least once in their lifetime. Additionally, 8.1% of participants (12% of female/transgender/non-binary students) reported that they had been photographed (nude photo) by someone without their consent. Some studies from the United States have found similar rates of IBSA victimization; for example, in a convenience study of young adults in the United States, researchers found that about 12% of participants had experienced having their image shared without their consent at least once in their lifetime (Dir & Cyders, 2015). However, reports of IBSA victimization have varied widely across studies, which may be due to the methodology or sample obtained. For example, in one European study, researchers studied over a thousand participants and found that between 8% and 32% had experienced IBSA victimization at least once, and when these results were broken down by gender, this number increased to 42% of female adolescents studied (Wood et al., 2015). With the large range of victimization rates found in the literature, more research is needed to understand true prevalence rates of IBSA. However, findings from the present study suggest that a large majority of participants have had experience with sexting, and some have perpetrated or been victimized by IBSA

themselves, which suggests that the participants are familiar with the concepts in the present study, and they are likely representative of the larger population.

**Factors Influencing Perceptions of IBSA Victims and Perpetrators**

*IBSA Context*

The first aim of this study was to assess whether blame, responsibility, and empathy for an IBSA survivor was affected by how her image was obtained. Participants were randomly assigned to read a vignette which differed based on the context in which IBSA occurred. The first vignette described a situation in which a woman captured a nude image of herself and sent that photo through sexting which was then saved and distributed by a male acquaintance without her consent; the second vignette described a similar scenario in which the woman took her own nude photo but uploaded it to a subscription-based website which was then saved by a male acquaintance and distributed without her consent; and the third vignette was used to describe a situation in which the male took a nude photo of the woman and distributed that photo without her consent.

Findings showed that context mattered. When the survivor took her own image and made it available to someone else, either through sexting or a subscription-based website, participants placed more blame and responsibility on the victim, had lower degrees of perpetrator blame, and expressed less empathy to the survivor, compared to a situation in which the image of the victim was obtained by the man taking the photo without her consent. As previous research has shown repeatedly (Hammond et al., 2011; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014), rape myth beliefs were related to judgements about victims. However, in the present study, context mattered more than the degree to which the participant endorsed rape myths. No matter how much

a participant believed rape myths to be true, they still placed more blame and responsibility on the victim of IBSA, and displayed less empathy to her, in contexts in which the photo was originally provided by her. These prejudicial attitudes, found in the current study, are consistent with past research of offline sexual assault, which found that participants placed more blame on victims when the victim had engaged in a self-objectifying behaviour (Loughnan et al., 2013). In the present study, both the sexting and subscription-based website condition involved the victim taking the photo herself which many believe to be self-objectifying, whereas the non-consensual photography condition involved the victim's photo being taken by someone else without her consent.

Feminist theories of sexual violence explain that within a patriarchal society, individuals often think about victims of violence as either 'good' or 'bad' victims, where they falsely believe that some victims have provoked a perpetrator to behave violently towards them, who are then labelled as 'bad' victims. Historically, in North America, sexual activity was only morally acceptable for women if it occurred during marriage, and any female sexual behaviour outside of marriage was deemed to be corrupt and unacceptable (Gavey & Senn, 2013). These widely held beliefs created a dichotomy of female sexuality in which any application of female agency in sexual relationships was considered to be inappropriate, and women were only respected if they were sexually 'pure.' Sexual assault was only prosecuted if a woman had resisted, and any application of agency other than total resistance was falsely believed to be consenting (Backhouse, 2008). Although sexual assault laws in North America have since changed, these beliefs have still endured to the present day, such that female victims of sexual violence who step outside of their prescribed sexual roles are blamed for the violence they endure

(Gavey & Senn, 2013). Therefore, although victims of violence are never responsible for their victimization, victims who are labelled as 'promiscuous,' or who engage in self-objectifying behaviours, are often blamed for the violence and said to have provoked the perpetrator. The dangerous remnants of these attitudes can explain the results of the present study, as female victims who took their own explicit photo were blamed more compared to victims whose photo was taken by someone else. These findings take past research and feminist theories one step further by showing how women who step outside of prescribed sexual roles in online contexts are also blamed more for violence, in similar ways as victims who experience offline sexual violence.

The present study was also designed to determine whether sex work stigma occurs online. To understand this, this study assessed whether blame, responsibility, and empathy would be different for survivors of IBSA who earned a monetary reward for a sexual act compared to those who had not. Findings showed that receiving a monetary reward for a nude photo influenced individuals' empathy to victims of IBSA, and the amount of blame they placed on perpetrators. Additionally, women, transgender, and non-binary participants had more empathy for victims compared to males, but were still influenced by this stigma. These results are consistent with past research which has found that participants had lower empathy towards sex workers who were victims of offline sexual violence compared to victims who were not sex workers (Sprankle et al., 2018). Additionally, these findings are also consistent with a study conducted by Zvi (2022), who found that police officers placed more blame on a perpetrator of sexual assault when the victim was not a sex worker compared to a perpetrator who sexually assaulted a victim who was a sex worker. As mentioned, within a patriarchal society, female victims

who step outside of their prescribed sexual roles and behave in sexual or 'promiscuous'

ways are believed to be inviting trouble, and they are blamed for sexual violence,

whereas perpetrators are held less accountable. These beliefs are often applied strongly to

sex workers, as individuals tend to believe that sex work is impure and taboo particularly

for women, and there is a false belief that sex workers are less deserving of protection

from sexual violence because of their actions (Sprankle et al., 2018). Therefore,

perpetrators who commit sexual violence against sex workers are often absolved for their

crimes because people falsely believe that perpetrators could not control themselves

when a sex worker was somehow 'provoking' them to behave violently. Results from

past research, as well as those from the present study confirm these theories of sexual

violence, as the findings suggests that perpetrators of sexual violence are blamed less

when the victim was a sex worker. Additionally, the current findings extend these

theories by showing how this phenomenon also occurs online.

However, some inconsistencies arise with the present findings and past research

for participant ratings of victim blame. Sprankle and colleagues (2018) found that

participants attributed more blame to victims of offline sexual assault when the victim

was a sex worker compared to non-sex worker victims. In the current study, this was true

for participants of all genders when comparisons were made between blame of IBSA

victims whose photos were produced for sex work, compared to non-sex worker victims

whose photos were captured by a male perpetrator and shared without their consent, but

not compared to victims who had sexted. Therefore, the results from the present study

were only partially consistent with Sprankle and colleagues (2018) study. However, the

absence of a significant difference in victim blaming between the sexting (no monetary

reward) and subscription-based website (monetary reward) conditions suggests more nuance in interpretation is required. Findings were consistent with Zvi's (2022) study, as this study also found that overall, offender blame was high and victim blame was low, and male and female ratings of victim blame were not different for victims engaged in sex work compared to victims who were not. Future research should attempt to replicate this study with the addition of a qualitative component to understand why students attribute equal amounts of blame to victims of IBSA who are victimized through subscription-based websites and through sexting.

Results from the present study are significant for the field of sexual assault because they are the first to show that biases against survivors of sexual violence extend to situations involving online contexts, and suggest that individuals reduce the culpability of perpetrators of sexual assault when the victim earned some type of monetary reward for online sexual acts. Research shows that individuals in society often believe in the misconception that sex workers are always consenting to sexual activity, which suggests that these individuals are "unrapable." These misconceptions serve to disqualify victims' reports of sexual violence, and minimize the consequences of assault (Randall, 2010; Sullivan, 2007), when, in fact, sex workers are at greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence and experience the same consequences of trauma-related symptoms and suffering as any victim (Zvi, 2022). Therefore, educational efforts need to focus on changing attitudes and prevailing myths towards victims of sexual assault regardless of their characteristics or occupations, to increase the public's empathy towards victims, and to ensure that all perpetrators of violence are prosecuted equally.

### *Rape Myth Acceptance*

Findings from the current study showed that participants attributed differing degrees of blame and responsibility to victims and perpetrators of IBSA and expressed different degrees of empathy for victims depending on the context in which IBSA occurred. However, it is important to consider how these differences in blame, responsibility, and empathy were based on the context in which IBSA occurred, regardless of the degree to which the respondent endorsed rape myths. Past research has shown that individuals who endorse rape myths are more likely to engage in victim blaming and less likely to have empathy for victims of offline sexual violence (Miller et al., 2011; Osland et al., 1996), but these studies have only examined general rape myth acceptance. In the study done by Powell and colleagues (2018), researchers created the Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance (SIAMA) scale which was used to assess rape myth endorsement specifically for online contexts involving TFSV and IBSA. This study found that endorsement of these rape myths predicted IBSA perpetration, but researchers did not examine how these myths might influence one's perceptions of victims and perpetrators of IBSA. Findings from the current study revealed that IBSA rape myth endorsement was correlated with all four outcome variables: victim/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, perpetrator blame, and victim empathy, and unsurprisingly, IBSA rape myth endorsement was more strongly correlated with these dependent variables than general rape myth endorsement. However, when rape myth endorsement was taken into account, IBSA context continued to play a large role in young adults' accounts of victim/perpetrator blame, victim responsibility, and victim empathy. Therefore, the current study offers new information by demonstrating that although rape

myth acceptance does predict the degree to which one engages in victim blaming or victim empathy, the circumstances in which IBSA occur, and particularly whether a victim is considered to be 'innocent' or is criticized for their sexual behaviour, affects peoples' judgements to a greater degree than rape myth endorsement.

It is important to note that across all image-based sexual abuse contexts presented in the current study (sexting, subscription-based website, and non-consensual photography conditions), victim blame was relatively low and perpetrator blame was relatively high, which is consistent with research that has shown that victim blame is much lower than it has been over the past decade or more. For example, Stromwall and colleagues (2013) found that across different scenarios (such as the perpetrator as a stranger, acquaintance, or romantic partner), victim blame was relatively low and perpetrator blame was relatively high. These findings suggest that although individuals blame victims less than in earlier decades, negative judgements of victims still continue to be an issue within society. Results from the present study showed although participants blamed victims less, they continued to hold perpetrators less responsible in certain circumstances, which suggests that negative judgements towards victims are still a problem. Ratings of perpetrator blame are implicitly or explicitly based on how people think about victims. Furthermore, although ratings of victim blame in the present study were generally low, the subtle differences in ratings of victim blame are very important. Any kind of blame towards victims of violence is harmful and believing that one victim is slightly more to blame than another victim is also very harmful for a victim's recovery (Stromwall et al., 2013). Therefore, although the present study found that victim blame

was relatively low, the findings are nonetheless extremely important for research and practice.

### *Gender*

Research has consistently found gender differences in attributions of blame in situations involving sexual violence, such that men tend to have more negative views and less empathy towards victims of offline sexual violence compared to women (Ching & Burke, 1999; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Sinclair & Bourne, 1998; Smith & Frieze, 2003). Research has also found that transgender women and transgender men also express more empathy towards victims of sexual violence compared to cisgender men (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021). The current study replicated and extended these findings by determining how gender predicted individuals' attributions of blame and responsibility on victims and perpetrators of online sexual violence and how gender predicted their empathy for victims. The findings from the present study showed that once rape myth endorsement was taken into account, gender remained predictive of one's degree of empathy towards victims of IBSA. Given that female, transgender, and non-binary individuals are more often targeted by sexual violence than men, these individuals tend to be more understanding of victims and they are more likely to identify with victims of sexual violence, which results in female, transgender, and non-binary individuals having more empathetic responses to victims (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021; Osman, 2011; Smith & Frieze, 2003). The majority of research on gender differences in victim empathy has not examined whether or not rape myth endorsement influences these relationships, and no research to date has examined this for situations involving online sexual violence. The present study therefore strengthens past research on gender differences given that the

results show that the gender differences in empathy for victims of sexual violence is not due to differences in rape myth acceptance alone. Instead, these results show that regardless of an individuals' degree of rape myth acceptance, women still express more empathy toward victims of sexual violence compared to men. Additionally, although the present study was not able to make gender comparisons with individuals who identified outside of the binary separately, the inclusion of the perspectives of these participants in the analyses likely increases the generalizability of the findings.

To further understand the relationship between gender and empathy, the current study examined the role that context played in this relationship, that is, in the interactions between context and gender. The interaction analysis showed that students who identified as male were more strongly affected by the context, such that males were less likely to display empathy when the victim took her own explicit photo compared to when the victim's photo was taken by someone else without her consent, and males were also less likely to display empathy towards victims when the victim earned a monetary reward for her explicit photo compared to victims who did not. Students who identified as female, transgender, and non-binary had less empathy for victims who earned a monetary reward for their explicit photo compared to victims whose photo was taken by someone else without their consent. However, these students did not differ in their displays of empathy when the victim engaged in sexting compared to victims who used a subscription-based website, or when the victim engaged in sexting compared to victims whose photo was taken by someone else without their consent. These findings may be due to the fact that female, transgender, and non-binary students in the present study were more likely to engage in sexting compared to men, and these students may express similar degrees of

empathy for women who engaged in sexting compared to women who engaged in subscription-based websites or who have had their photo taken without their consent, because they see themselves as being similar to the victim in these scenarios. However, although female, transgender, and non-binary students were more empathetic towards victims of violence than men in the present study, the findings show that there are still situations where these individuals are less empathetic towards victims, specifically, when the victim took their own photo and simultaneously earned a monetary reward for that photo, compared to victims whose photo was taken by someone else without their consent. The current study also shows that overall, male students, unlike female, transgender and non-binary students, tend to have less empathy towards victims of violence, and the amount of empathy they express is more strongly influenced by the context in which IBSA occurs.

In addition to victim empathy, the present study also sought to determine whether ones' gender was related to their assignments of blame and responsibility towards victims and perpetrators of IBSA. Past research has consistently found that men tend to engage in victim blaming more than women and transgender individuals (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014), whereas the present study found contradictory results. Men and women did not significantly differ in the amount of blame or responsibility they placed on victims and perpetrators of IBSA. However, this is very likely explained by the influence of rape myth endorsement. By including rape myth endorsement as a covariate in the present study, I eliminated differences between people of different genders based on rape myth acceptance. The results showed that individuals who had higher levels of rape myth endorsement, regardless of gender, reported higher

victim responsibility and blame, and lower perpetrator blame. One previous study that has assessed the influence of rape myth endorsement and gender on ratings of victim blame found that rape myth endorsement was a greater predictor of victim blame than gender for offline instances of sexual assault, which is consistent with findings in the present study (Kopper, 1996). In their study, no significant differences were found for ratings of victim blame by gender, but men and women who were low in rape myth acceptance attributed less blame to the victim and more blame to the perpetrator who committed offline sexual assault. Results from the present study strengthen these findings by showing that IBSA rape myth endorsement is a stronger predictor of victim blame, perpetrator blame, and victim responsibility compared to the influence of gender, for situations involving online sexual violence.

### *Objectification*

The final goal of the present study was to assess the influence of individuals' likelihood to engage in objectification on their attributions of blame and responsibility for victims and perpetrators of IBSA, and their displays of empathy toward victims. Because the context of IBSA and both types of rape myth endorsement were important factors in predicting attributions of blame and responsibility, as well as empathy towards victims, I was specifically interested in understanding whether objectification made contributions over and above the context of IBSA and rape myth endorsement. Findings partially supported my hypothesis. Objectification played a small but significant role when context and rape myth endorsement were taken into account for individuals' expressions of victim empathy. It did not, however, have any influence on attributions of blame or responsibility to perpetrators or victims. These results suggest that objectification of

women is primarily relevant to empathy, with those who objectify women more displaying less empathy towards victims compared to those who objectify women less. These findings are also partially consistent with research conducted by Loughan and colleagues (2010) who found that objectifying views of women were associated with decreased victim empathy and increased victim blame for offline sexual assault. It is not clear why objectification's role in victim blame was not found in the current study. This could represent a historical change in the last decade, or it may just be the case that rape myth endorsement for online contexts is a better predictor of blame and responsibility attributions towards victims and perpetrators of IBSA, compared to objectification. This research as well as the findings from the current study suggests that an individual's tendency to objectify women predicts their expressions and feelings of empathy towards victims of IBSA, but that other traits, such as rape myth endorsement, influence an individual's attributions of blame or responsibility to victims of IBSA.

**Implications**

Findings from the current study have several important theoretical and practical implications for the field of violence against women. The present study shows that feminist theories developed to explain sexual violence can also be used to understand sexual violence that occurs online. A critical feminist analysis was employed to understand the reasons why individuals place more blame on victims in certain contexts, which showed that similar to situations involving offline forms of sexual violence, individuals placed more blame on a victim when the victim engaged in sexual behaviour outside of prescribed gender expectations (by taking her own explicit photo), compared to having her photo taken by someone else without her consent. These results are

important, as they help to support feminist theories of sexual violence, which suggest that women who engage in sexual behaviours that are outside of the traditional sexual expectations of women experience more blame when they are victimized by sexual violence, and they are believed to have suffered less from sexual violence. When individuals have diminished moral concern for victims, this impacts legal decisions. More specifically, women who are sexualized and blamed for their victimization are less likely to have their cases treated seriously by law enforcement because officers are less likely to believe that a perpetrator is at fault when the victim has engaged in a behaviour outside of the traditional sexual expectations of women (Zvi, 2022). In addition, sexualization and consequent victim blaming can reduce the likelihood that a victim will seek resources for rehabilitation and support. When women are sexualized and seen to suffer less than other victims, they may be afforded less support from friends and family, which in turn can lead to further mental suffering (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Combined, the current findings highlight the circumstances in which women may receive bias and unfair treatment from the public, which may interfere with the victim's successful recovery.

Furthermore, findings from the present study also have important implications for sexual violence research and prevention efforts, as they help to show that victims of IBSA who are sex workers may receive less empathy from others, and the findings suggest that perpetrators of online sexual violence may be blamed less when the victim earned monetary rewards for sexual images which were later used against her. Again, these results support feminist theories of sexual violence which demonstrate how sex workers are believed to be asking for trouble by stepping outside of traditional female

roles. Just world theory also explains this phenomenon, by demonstrating how individuals tend to place more blame on sex workers compared to human trafficking victims, because individuals falsely believe that sex workers choose to engage in risky behaviours whereas human trafficking victims do not. The present study has important theoretical implications, as results from the current study support both feminist theory and just world theory, by demonstrating how individuals tend to express less blame to perpetrators of IBSA and less empathy towards victims of IBSA when the victim earned monetary rewards for sexual acts online and when the victim engaged in sexual behaviour outside of prescribed gender norms.

Victims of IBSA already face barriers in reporting and prosecuting their perpetrators as this is a newly recognized form of violence, and findings from the present study reveal that these victims may face an even larger barrier in reporting and seeking help when they have earned some type of monetary reward for their explicit photo or sexual act. Sex workers are often at an extremely high risk of being victimized by sexual violence, but their reports of sexual assault are at greater risk of not being taken seriously enough by the police (Sullivan, 2007). Assuming that their claims of victimization are heard at all, the current findings indicate that sex workers who disclose IBSA victimization may face discrimination and blame from the public and the justice system. Additionally, although sexting is becoming increasingly common for men and women (Barrense-Dias et al., 2017; Klettke et al., 2014), females who engage in sexting and who experience IBSA are also at a higher risk of experiencing blame and discrimination. These findings highlight the importance of providing both the public and individuals in the justice system (police, victim service professionals, judges, lawyers, etc.) with

informative and educational programs that will help change attitudes and undermine prevalent myths regarding sexual assault and sexual assault victims. This type of training will not only help to challenge myths and prosecute sexual assault perpetrators, but it will also encourage individuals to take a more empathetic approach towards victims.

In addition, the current study also employed a gender-based analysis, which showed how female, transgender, and non-binary individuals were more empathetic towards female victims of IBSA compared to male respondents, which may be due to the fact that female, transgender, and non-binary individuals are more likely to experience victimization, and therefore express more empathy towards other individuals who have been victimized. However, this analysis also revealed that no matter what gender an individual identified with, those who endorsed rape myths to a larger degree placed more blame and responsibility on victims of IBSA and less blame on perpetrators. These results have important implications for two reasons. Firstly, the findings show that educational efforts need to focus on increasing men's empathy towards victims of IBSA. Although men may be less likely to experience victimization and may be less likely to understand the experiences of individuals who have been victimized (Diamond-Welch et al., 2021), programs have nonetheless found that it is possible to increase men's empathy towards victims, which has also been shown to reduce sexual violence perpetration over a four-month period (Gidycz et al., 2011). Secondly, these findings also show that educational programs should focus on reducing rape myth endorsement for both online and offline contexts to decrease victim blame and increase empathy for victims. Evidence from sexual violence prevention programs, such as an intervention called RealConsent has found that changing attitudes and normative beliefs about sex, rape, and masculine

gender roles were effective in decreasing sexual violence perpetration and increasing positive bystander responses. This program specifically focused on reducing rape myth acceptance, gender role ideology, and normative beliefs, and found that participants had less rape myth acceptance, more empathy towards victims, and less hostility to women, as well as a range of other positive outcomes (Salazar et al., 2014). However, these interventions and others across North America fail to incorporate rape myths that focus on online contexts, such as IBSA rape myth acceptance. The results from the present study suggest that IBSA rape myth acceptance predicts individuals' tendencies to place blame and responsibly on victims of IBSA and their likelihood to have empathy for these victims, over the influence of general rape myths, and therefore, it is necessary that educational programs also focus on critiquing IBSA rape myths and incorporate specific education about IBSA into their programs.

Findings from the present study highlight the importance of creating interventions designed to increase individuals' empathy towards victims of sexual violence. In the current study, participants' empathy towards the victim of IBSA was dependent on the context in which IBSA occurred, and whether the victim's behaviour was contrary to traditional gender roles of women. Additionally, participants who objectified women more displayed less empathy towards the victim of IBSA. These findings are important because they show that although victim empathy, victim blame, victim responsibility, and perpetrator blame are correlated, they have different predictors with some overlap. This information is key for education, policy, and prevention efforts, because it can help give specific directions for these efforts. For example, if a program wanted to increase individuals' empathy towards victims of IBSA, the present research suggests that

professionals should focus on reducing objectification and undermine traditional gender roles and associated sexual expectations of women to teach individuals that all victims suffer from IBSA regardless of the context in which it occurs. Further, programs design to increase victim empathy should focus on recruiting men into their programs given that men have been found to display less empathy to victims of IBSA in the present research and in research conducted on offline violence (Ching & Burke, 1999; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Smith & Frieze, 2003). If a program wanted to decrease victim blame and increase perpetrator blame, our research suggests that professionals should focus on reducing rape myth acceptance for both offline and online contexts, and teach individuals that all perpetrators are responsible for committing IBSA, not victims, regardless of the context in which it occurs.

Not only are the findings in this study useful for education efforts for individuals who have not experienced victimization, but they may also be useful for victims themselves. More specifically, creating educational programs that focus on increasing awareness of what IBSA is, the context in which IBSA occurs, and the harms of IBSA would not only result in more positive perceptions of victims and reduce occurrences of victim blame, but they may also help individuals identify when such an experience happens to them, which may increase their likelihood to seek help. Research shows that when victims disclose their assault experiences to service providers, family, and/or friends, they often receive negative reactions, are blamed for the assault, or are questioned about whether or not their actions could have caused the assault. These reactions serve as a silencing function, leading many sexual assault survivors to avoid future disclosures completely (Ahrens, 2006; Hassija & Gray, 2012; Ullman et al., 2007;

Ullman & Najdowski, 2011). Additionally, when victims are blamed for their assault from service providers, family, friends, and/or the public, they often begin to blame themselves and question whether their experiences qualify as rape, which decreases their likelihood to seek help (Ahrens, 2006). Therefore, results from the current study are important because the information gained can be used to create educational programs and interventions designed to reduce the public's tendencies to engage in victim blame and increase empathy towards victims of IBSA, which in turn can help to reduce self-blame in victims, increase their likelihood to disclose, and increase their likelihood to receive the support they need.

The present study also has methodological implications for the scientific study of sexual violence. Overall, very few studies in sexual violence literature have examined sexual violence occurring online, and the present study highlights the importance of continuing this research. Additionally, studies that have assessed victim blame often avoid studying victim responsibility or they may study these two variables interchangeably. Many studies also exclude perpetrator blame from their studies, and instead focus on assessing the amount of blame given to victims of sexual violence. The present study shows that it is necessary and important to study victim responsibility, perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, and perpetrator blame as separate variables, given that these variables elicit different responses from individuals even though they are related. For example, perpetrator blame influences ones' likelihood to agree with punishment for that offender, which is related to the ways in which the legal system prosecutes perpetrators of sexual violence (Zvi, 2022). Contrastingly, victim blame influences ones' likelihood to provide a victim with positive and helpful support.

Although an individual may not blame a victim, they also might not blame the perpetrator, and this distinction is important for research and practice. Although participants' ratings of responsibility and blame were relatively similar in the present study, it is nonetheless important to assess them as different constructs. When one attributes responsibility to a person, they are saying that they believe a person's deliberate behaviour contributed to the outcome, and when one assigns blame to a person, they are saying that a person's deliberate behaviour contributed to the outcome, and that person is also deserving of punishment for their behaviour (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Calhoun & Townsley, 1991). Given that these distinctions are different, future research should study both constructs as separate but related variables.

Finally, the present study has important implications for the prevention of IBSA. First, research has shown that propensity to blame a victim of IBSA may be related to likelihood of committing IBSA (Powell et al., 2018), and given that the current findings show that individuals often endorse IBSA rape myths and have stereotypical judgements of women's behaviours, this demonstrates the importance that future researchers and practitioners educate the public about the harms of victim blaming and IBSA rape myth endorsement, to prevent IBSA from occurring. Furthermore, research has also found that a lack of empathy for victims of sexual violence was associated with a higher likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence (Deitz et al., 1982; Marshall & Moulden, 2001; Wheeler et al., 2002), and given that the present research also found that individuals who endorse rape myths and who objectify women may be less likely to have empathy for victims of IBSA, it is important for educators to include programs that are specifically designed to reduce objectification and rape myth endorsement, which may increase victim empathy

and ultimately prevent this form of violence from occurring. This could also be done by teaching individuals that all forms of IBSA are harmful to victims no matter what context it occurs in, which will hopefully increase empathy for victims of IBSA and assist in prevention efforts.

**Limitations**

Despite the sample being diverse in race/ethnicity and sexual identity, and despite efforts made to ensure adequate representation of women, men, and gender diverse students, the results cannot be generalized to community members. This study used a convenience sample of university students through a psychology participant pool at a mid-sized university. Given that university students are offered courses which may discuss violence and victims, these students may be less likely to engage in victim blaming compared to individuals who have not attended university, as research suggests that students who have taken courses that study victims of violence are less likely to engage in victim blaming (Fox & Cook, 2011). However, students in the sample were not asked to report the types of courses they had taken, and therefore it is unclear if the courses they had taken influenced their responses. Further, research suggests that North American university students may be more likely to have liberal points of view, and because of this, their responses to questionnaires may be different from those in the community (Bailey & Williams, 2016). Despite these limitations, the study did obtain participants from a variety of different academic majors, and the sample was diverse in other demographic characteristics. About one-third of the participants identified as being a student of colour and about 20% identified as being a part of the LGBTQ community, which may increase the generalizability of the results to other student populations.

Given that the present study used self-reports of objectification and rape myth endorsement, students may have responded in ways that are socially desirable, which could have resulted in lower reports of both rape myth endorsement and objectification. Self-reports of rape attitudes have been found to be less accurate than behavioural measures (Widman & Olson, 2013), which could have been an issue for the present study. However, the current study used measures of rape myth endorsement and objectification that are empirically supported by past research, which will hopefully increase the reliability and generalizability of these results. Additionally, this study used a measure of rape myth endorsement for online contexts which found high rates of endorsement among students despite being a newly developed self-report measure (Powell et al., 2018), and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) has been shown to be a useful measure that is not affected by social desirability (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

Additionally, the study did not examine the relationships between demographic variables, such as student status, political ideologies, income level, type of peers/social support, or country of residence, and specific tendencies to engage in victim blame, perpetrator blame, victim empathy, rape myth acceptance, or objectification. Therefore, the study is unable to provide any insight related to the association between ones' life experiences and beliefs about victims, perpetrators, or attitudinal factors such as rape myth acceptance or objectification. Some researchers have shown that certain life experiences may influence individuals' tendencies towards victim blame. For example, Thomae and Pina (2015) suggest that social norms in an individual's peer group may influence the degree to which they blame victims of sexual violence, but research in this

area is minimal. Given that there is a lack of studies that have examined the relationship between life experiences and likelihood to blame victims or perpetrators of IBSA, future research should focus their efforts on understanding these relationships.

Lastly, the current study used a vignette design, as well as single item measures of victim/perpetrator responsibility, victim blame, perpetrator blame, and victim empathy, instead of responses to real-world situations, which could limit the generalizability of the results. Participants who encounter victims of IBSA in real-world situations may respond differently than how they responded to the vignette in this study. However, real-world studies of victim blame and empathy would be ethically challenging if not impossible, and the present study still offers important information about how participants think and feel about victims and perpetrators of IBSA, which is useful for policy and education efforts.

**Future Research**

Researchers could replicate this experimental study with community participants, to determine if individuals in the community respond differently to the vignettes compared to student responses. Additionally, given that most research on IBSA has examined student populations in North America or Australia, future researchers could replicate this study with student and community populations in other non-Western countries to understand how individuals in other countries think about and respond to the variables in this study. Researchers should also replicate the study with purposeful or prolonged recruitment of individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary, or another gender outside of the male-female binary, to assess whether gender diverse individuals

have unique perspectives or are appropriately included with other non-dominant gender (female) individuals for research on these topics.

Results from this study suggested that individuals may place equal amounts of blame on victims of IBSA who were victimized through sexting and those who were victimized through subscription-based websites, but that they placed more blame on perpetrators who committed IBSA through sexting compared to those who committed IBSA through a subscription-based website. Although one study has found similar results, in that individuals did not differ in victim blame but placed more blame on a perpetrator of sexual violence when the victim was not a sex worker compared to a situation when victim was a sex worker (Zvi, 2022), the reason for this phenomenon is still unclear. Therefore, future research should replicate this study with the addition of a qualitative component to understand why students attribute equal amounts of blame to victims of IBSA who are victimized through subscription-based websites and through sexting.

As mentioned, one major limitation of the present study was that it assessed participants' responses to a vignette, instead of assessing participants' responses to real world situations involving victims and perpetrators of IBSA. It could be possible that when a participant encounters a victim or perpetrator of IBSA in their daily life, they may assign different degrees of blame or empathy to these victims and perpetrators than they would have in the vignettes used in the present study. Therefore, future studies could attempt to understand how individuals view victims and perpetrators of IBSA in real world scenarios. One way of conducting this type of research could be done by recruiting victims and assessing the types of responses that victims have received when they have

disclosed their experiences of IBSA. This research could also be conducted by asking participants to share a story about a situation in which a victim disclosed their experiences to them, and their subsequent thoughts and feelings about that victim. Although these types of studies may contribute additional information to this field, they would not be experimental, and therefore they may not necessarily be an improvement of the present study.

Lastly, the results of the present study show the importance for future researchers and practitioners to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce victim responsibility/blame, rape myth acceptance, and objectification, and increase victim empathy. By creating and evaluating educational programs designed to reduce prejudicial beliefs about victims of IBSA, and improve empathetic responses to victims, practitioners will be able to increase the likelihood that victims disclose their experiences and seek help.

**Conclusions**

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a form of gender-based violence that impacts women across North America. Victims of IBSA are often blamed for the sexual violence they endure, and this blame directly impacts their likelihood to seek help and recover from their victimization. Although research has examined victim blame for offline forms of sexual violence, few researchers have examined this phenomenon for instances involving IBSA, highlighting a gap in the research. The current study bridged this gap by examining how the context of IBSA, gender identity, objectification, and rape myth endorsement influenced individuals' attributions of blame and responsibility to victims

and perpetrators of IBSA, as well as their empathy towards victims of this form of violence, using an experimental vignette design with university students in Canada.

Findings suggested that when individuals read a vignette about a victim of image-based sexual abuse who had acted outside of prescribed gender roles for women, they expressed less empathy towards this victim, assigned more responsibility and blame to this victim, and assigned less blame to the perpetrator who had committed a crime against this victim. Additionally, when individuals read a vignette about a victim of IBSA had earned some form of monetary reward for their explicit photo, they displayed less empathy towards this victim, and assigned less blame to the perpetrator who committed this crime, compared to individuals who had not been paid for the explicit photo. Analyses of gender influences suggested that although male students were generally empathetic towards victims of IBSA, they were less empathic toward victims compared to students who identified as female, transgender, or non-binary. Individuals who held higher acceptance of rape myths also assigned more blame and responsibility to victims of violence, displayed less empathy to these victims, and assigned less blame to perpetrators. Finally, results suggested that individuals who objectified women more were less empathetic to victims of IBSA.

These findings have many important implications, as they help to support feminist theories of sexual violence, objectification theory, and the just world theory, they extend past research by showing how this phenomenon occurs in online contexts, and they provide important information for law enforcement, policy makers, educational programs, and prevention efforts.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Consent Form**



**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Title of Study: **Thoughts and Feelings about Social Interactions**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jewels Adair under the supervision of Dr. Charlene Senn, from the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Jewels Adair at adair3@uwindsor.ca or Dr. Charlene Senn by email csenn@uwindsor.ca or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 2255). The results from this study will form the basis of a Master's thesis research project.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how people perceive and understand online and offline interactions between acquaintances.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to read and respond to an online survey which begins with some questions about your background. Next, you will be asked to read a short description of an interaction between two acquaintances. You will answer some questions about the interaction and then provide your views and beliefs more generally on several other questionnaires. Then you will be asked about your own experiences briefly. Some content in the study describes sexual behaviour or situations where the behaviour was unwanted by one person.

Participation should take no more than 30 minutes and you will be compensated with .5 bonus points from the participant pool that you can apply to an eligible psychology course in which you are enrolled. You will not be contacted for follow-up sessions or subsequent related studies as this study only requires one session.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are minimal risks to participating in this study although you may have some mild positive or negative feelings in response to some of the things that you will be asked to

think about. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating in this study at any time without penalty. If you think that participating would be uncomfortable for you, please feel free to discontinue now. If at any time you want to talk to someone, resources are available on campus for this purpose, including The Student Counselling Centre (519-253-3000 ext. 4616) and Health Services (519-973-7002). Additional resources in the community and online will be provided at the end of the survey.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no specific benefits to your participation in this study beyond your knowledge that you are contributing to our understanding of students' perceptions of interpersonal and social interactions. In addition, you may learn about the research process during your participation in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants who complete the study will receive .5 bonus points for 30 minutes of participation towards the psychology participant pool, if registered in the pool and enrolled in one or more eligible courses.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. All of the information that you reveal in the study will be kept private and will only be accessed by researchers directly involved with the study. The information collected will be stored in an electronic database on a secure server which is password protected. Your name and email will be required for compensation, but it will be destroyed once the bonus marks have been assigned and semester grades have been verified. The results of this study may be published at a later date but only group information, and not personally identifying information, will be discussed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. The responses you have submitted up until that point will be retained.  You may choose not to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study, however, if you close your browser before you get to the incentive page, we will not be able to provide you with the incentive. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be able to review results online at the University of Windsor's Department of Psychology website. These findings will be available by December 2022, when the research has been completed, analysed, and summarized.

Web Address: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/
Date when results are available: December 2022
SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:  The Office of Research Ethics, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail:  ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand the information provided for the study **Thoughts and Feelings about Social Interactions** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this form for your own records.


○ I consent to participate in the study [directed to the first page of the survey]

○ I do not consent [redirected to a thank you for considering page and a reminder to cancel their participant pool sign up to avoid no show penalty]

**Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire**

**About you**
Please answer the following questions.

---

What is your gender?

○ Man

○ Woman

○ Transgender

○ Non-binary

○ A gender not listed here

---

*Display This Question:*
*If What is your gender? = A gender not listed here*

Please tell us how you identify:

_____
___

---

What was your age at your last birthday?

_____
___

[those who respond below 17 will be redirected to the following end-of-survey message]:

We're sorry, you are not eligible to participate in this survey because you are under the age of 17.

---

What faculty are you in?

○ Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

○ Business

○ Education

○ Human Kinetics

○ Law

○ Science and Engineering

○ Nursing

○ Other

○ Don't Know

What is your major?

_____
___

What university year are you in?

○ First

○ Second

○ Third

○ Fourth

○ Fifth or beyond

withdraw from study?

○ yes, withdraw

What is your current sexual identity?

○ Heterosexual (straight)

○ Lesbian/gay

○ Bisexual

○ Asexual

○ Not sure

○ Other identity not listed above

Please tell us your current sexual identity:

_____

\_\_\_

withdraw from the study?

○ yes, withdraw

Do you identify yourself as an Indigenous person (e.g., Metis, First Nations, Inuit)?

○ Yes

○ No

Which of the following categories best describes your racial/ethnic background?

○ White or European-Canadian

○ First Nations or Indigenous or Inuit or Metis

○ Black or African-Canadian or Caribbean-Canadian

○ East Asian or Pacific Islander or Asian Canadian

○ South Asian or South Asian Canadian

○ Middle Eastern or Middle Eastern Canadian

○ Bi/Multi-racial

○ Another racial/ethnic background not listed

---

*Display This Question:*
*    If Which of the following categories best describes your racial/ethnic*
*background? = Another racial/ethnic background not listed*

Please tell us your racial/ethnic background:

_____
\_\_\_

---

withdraw from study?

○ yes, withdraw

---

**Appendix C: Vignettes**

*Vignettes*

1. Jenny is a 24-year-old woman living in southern Ontario. One day, Jenny took a nude selfie and texted this photo to Justin, a guy she knew from school. Later that day, Justin saved Jenny's photo on his phone and then sent it to his friends. When Jenny found out that her nude photo had been shared without her permission, she was very upset.

2. Jenny is a 24-year-old woman living in southern Ontario. Jenny signed up for a website called OnlyFans, where she could post photos and charge viewers a subscription fee to view them. One day, Jenny took a nude selfie and posted this photo on the website. Justin, a guy who knew Jenny from school, signed up to see Jenny's photo. Later that day, Justin downloaded Jenny's photo and sent it to his friends. When Jenny found out that her nude photo had been shared without her permission, she was very upset.

3. Jenny is a 24-year-old woman living in southern Ontario. One day, Jenny was hanging out at her house with Justin, a guy she knew from school. While Jenny was getting ready in another room, Justin took a nude of her without her knowledge or permission. Justin then sent this photo of Jenny to his friends. When Jenny found out that a nude photo of her had been shared without her permission, she was very upset.

**Appendix D: Manipulation Check**

1. Did Justin have Jenny's permission to save her image to his phone? (Yes/No)

2. Did Justin have Jenny's permission to send her image to his friends? (Yes/ No)

Please respond to the following statement by clicking on a circle from from 1 (very happy) to 5 (very upset).

3. How do you think Jenny felt was after finding out her photo being forwarded to someone else?

| 1= Very happy | 2= Happy | 3= Neither upset/ nor happy | 4 = Upset | 5= Very upset |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Appendix E: Measures**

*Attributions of Blame and Responsibility (Stormo et al., 1997)*

1**.** Regardless of whether they could anticipate the consequences, out of a total of 100%, how much was each person responsible for the outcome of this incident??

(Responsibility is the extent to which each person's choices and/or actions, regardless of immediate awareness of potential consequences, contributed to the outcome of the incident.)

Please respond to this question by giving each character a percentage of responsibility, which should add up to 100%:

**Jenny is responsible for _____% of the event**

**Justin is responsible for _____ % of the event**

2. How much is Jenny to blame for the incident occurring? (Please respond by clicking one number below)

(Blame is a value judgment about the extent to which one should be held accountable for the outcome of an event and perhaps experience future consequences because of it.)

*Not at all blameworthy*            *Somewhat blameworthy*        *Entirely to blame.*

**1**                **2**                **3**                **4**                **5**

3. How much is Justin to blame for the incident occurring? (Please respond by clicking one number below)

(Blame is a value judgment about the extent to which one should be held accountable for the outcome of an event and perhaps experience future consequences because of it.)

*Not at all blameworthy*            *Somewhat blameworthy*        *Entirely to blame.*

**1**                **2**                **3**                **4**                **5**

*Victim Empathy (Adapted from Anastasio & Costa, 2004)*

1.  Regardless of whether Jenny could anticipate the consequences, do you feel badly for Jenny in this situation? (Please respond by clicking one number below from strongly disagree to strongly agree)

| *Strongly disagree* | *Disagree* | *Neither agree nor disagree* | *Agree* | *Strongly agree.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |

*The Sexual Image-Based Abuse Myth Acceptance Scale (SIAMA) (Powell et al., 2018)*

Please answer the following questions by clicking on the response that best corresponds with your view

| | 1 Strongly disagree | 2 Disagree | 3 Somewhat disagree | 4 Neither agree nor disagree | 5 Somewhat agree | 6 Agree | 7 Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Women should be flattered if a partner or ex-partner shows nude pics of her to some close friends | | | | | | | |
| 2. A woman should share a nude image of herself with her partner, even if she doesn't really want to, for the good of the relationship | | | | | | | |
| 3. If a guy shares a nude or sexual pic of his partner with his friends when he's drunk, he can't really be held responsible | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. A man shouldn't get upset if his partner sends nude pics of him to others | | | | | | | |
| 5. Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find it a turn-on for a guy to share nude pics of her with his friends | | | | | | | |
| 6. A woman shouldn't get upset if her partner sends nude pics of her to others | | | | | | | |
| 7. If a woman shows her friends a nude or sexual image of her partner, it just shows how proud she is of him | | | | | | | |
| 8. It's only natural for a guy to brag to his friends showing them a nude | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| or sexual image of his partner | | | | | | | |
| 9. If a woman is willing to send a nude or sexual image to a man she just met, then it's no big deal if he goes a little further by showing it to his friends | | | | | | | |
| 10. Women tend to exaggerate how much it affects them if a nude or sexual image of them gets out online | | | | | | | |
| 11. A man's reputation is boosted among his friends if he shares nude pics of a sexual partner | | | | | | | |
| 12. Men don't usually mean to pressure a partner into sending nude pics, but | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| sometimes they get too sexually carried away | | | | | | |
| 13. If a person sends a nude or sexual image to someone else, then they are at least partly responsible if the image ends up online | | | | | | |
| 14. A woman who sends a nude or sexual image to her partner, should not be surprised if the image ends up online | | | | | | |
| 15. If a man sends a nude or sexual image to someone he just met, he should not be surprised if the image ends up online | | | | | | |
| 16. Celebrities and well- | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| known media personalities who take sexy images of themselves should not expect that those images will remain private | | | | | | | |
| 17. People should know better than to take nude selfies in the first place, even if they never send them to anyone | | | | | | | |
| 18. If a man sends a nude or sexual image to a partner, he can't expect it will remain private | | | | | | | |

*Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) (McMahon & Farmer, 2011)*

Please read each of the following statements and select the option that indicates how true each is of your view:

| | 1 Strongly Disagree | 2 Disagree | 3 Neither agree nor disagree | 4 Agree | 5 Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control. | | | | | |
| 2. When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble. | | | | | |
| 3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped. | | | | | |
| 4. If a girl acts like a slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble. | | | | | |
| 5. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex. | | | | | |
| 6. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away | | | | | |
| 7. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control. | | | | | |
| 8. If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally. | | | | | |
| 9. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing | | | | | |
| 10. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. If a girl doesn't physically resist sex—even if protesting verbally—it can't be considered rape. | | | | | |
| 12. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape. | | | | | |
| 13. If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape. | | | | | |
| 14. If a girl doesn't say "no" she can't claim rape. | | | | | |
| 15. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it. | | | | | |
| 16. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys. | | | | | |
| 17. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped often led the guy on and then had regrets | | | | | |
| 18. A lot of times, girls who claim they were raped just have emotional problems | | | | | |
| 19. Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was a rape. | | | | | |

*Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale Perpetration Version (ISOS-P) (Gervais et al., 2018)*

Please respond to the following questions by clicking on the response that best represents your experience.

How often do you…

| | 1 Never | 2 Seldom | 3 Sometimes | 4 Frequently | 5 Almost Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Evaluate someone's physical appearance? | | | | | |
| 2. Stare at someone's body? | | | | | |
| 3. Make a rude, sexual remark about someone's body? | | | | | |
| 4. Stare at one or more of someone's body parts? | | | | | |
| 5. Make inappropriate sexual comments about someone's body? | | | | | |
| 6. Gaze at someone's body or a body part, instead of listening to what she/he is saying? | | | | | |
| 7. Make sexual comments or innuendos when noticing someone's body? | | | | | |
| 8. Make a degrading sexual gesture towards someone? | | | | | |
| 9. Whistle at someone while she/he is walking down a street? | | | | | |
| 10. Stare at someone's breasts/chest when you are talking to them? | | | | | |
| 11. Leer at someone's body? | | | | | |
| 12. Honk at someone when she/he is walking down the street? | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Touch or fondle someone against her/his will? | | | | | |
| 14. Perpetrate sexual harassment (on the job, in school, etc.)? | | | | | |
| 15. Grab or pinch someone's private body areas against her/his will? | | | | | |

*Social Media Usage Questions Adapted from the Social Media Questionnaire (Alloway et al., 2013).*

1. Do you have account (s) on social media sites such as Facebook and/or Instagram?

    ____ Yes

    ____ No

2. What device(s) do you own and use?

    ____ Smartphone

    ____ Computer (desktop, notepad, tablet)
    ____ Both
    ____ "Neither," I do not own a smartphone or computer

3. How frequently do you use smartphone devices?
    ____ More than 10 times a day
    ____ 6- 10 times a day
    ____ 3-5 times a day

    ____ 1-2 times a day
    ____ Less than once a day
    ____ 3-5 times a week
    ____ 1-2 times a week
    ____ Less than once a week
    ____ I rarely use smartphone devices

**How often do you use…**

|  | Never | Monthly | Weekly | Daily | 1-2 Times a day | 3-5 Times a day | Over 5 times a day |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4. A computer** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **5. A smart phone** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7. Text messaging** | | | | | | | |
| **8. . Facebook** | | | | | | | |
| **9. Twitter** | | | | | | | |
| **10. Instagram** | | | | | | | |
| **11. Pinterest** | | | | | | | |
| **12. YouTube** | | | | | | | |
| **13. Snapchat** | | | | | | | |
| **14. TikTok** | | | | | | | |
| **15. Other (Please Specify:_____ ___)** | | | | | | | |

16. On average, how much time do you spend using social networking sites at each session?

_____ Over an hour  _____ 30 minutes to an hour _____ 15 to less than 30 minutes _____ Less than 15 minutes

17. What is your main reason for browsing social networking sites? Choose one or more

_____  Responding and commenting between friends pages

_____  Uploading, sharing, and/or viewing photos

_____ Browsing for music, musicians, and/ or bands

_____ Marketing a personal or work related business page

_____ Connecting to a personal interest group or page (school events, apparel, games, etc.)

_____ Other _____

_____ I don't use social networking sites

*Final IBSA Victimization and Perpetration Questions (Adapted from Powell et al., 2018)*

Please respond to the following questions by clicking either 'yes' or 'no'

1. Have you ever received a nude of someone through sexting? (Yes/No)

2. Have you ever received a nude of someone though sexting <u>and</u> sent that nude to someone else without the consent of the person in the photo? (Yes/No)

3. Have you ever downloaded a nude off a subscription-based website (a website where users can post photos and charge viewers a subscription fee to view these photos, such as OnlyFans for example)? (Yes/No)

4. Have you ever downloaded a nude off a subscription-based website <u>and</u> sent this nude to someone else without the consent of the person in the photo? (Yes/No)

5. Have you ever taken a nude of someone without their consent? (Yes/No)
(If yes):
 <u>Did you </u>send this photo to someone else? (Yes/No)

6. Have you ever sent a nude or sexual photo or video of yourself to a current sexual partner? (Yes/No)

7. Have you ever sent a nude or sexual photo or video of yourself to a person you only knew online? (Yes/No)

8. Have you ever sent someone a nude or sexual photo or video when you didn't really want to? (Yes/No)

9. Have you ever felt pressured to send a nude or sexual photo or video when you really didn't want to? (Yes/No)

10. Have you ever received a nude or sexual photo or video of another person when you hadn't requested it? (not including spam) (Yes/No)

11. Have you ever discovered that an image was drawn, 'photoshopped' or manipulated to represent you in a sexual way? (Yes/No)

12. Have you ever had a nude or sexual image of yourself taken and distributed without your consent? (Yes/No)

13. Have you ever had a nude or sexual image of yourself taken and threatened to be distributed without your consent? (Yes/No)

14. Have you ever uploaded a nude or sexual image of yourself to a subscription-based website? (Yes/No)

(If yes):
Have you ever had a nude or sexual image of yourself from the subscription-based website <u>taken and distributed without your consent?</u> (Yes/No)

15. Have you ever had a nude photo taken of you by someone else without your consent? (Yes/No)

16. Have you ever had a nude photo taken of you by someone else without your consent <u>and</u> had this photo distributed without your consent? (Yes/No)

**Appendix F: Post-Study Information**

\*\* Do not forget to click NEXT at the bottom of this page to submit your incentive information \*\*

Thank you for your participation in this study!

One of the most pressing human rights issues in Canada is sexual violence against women. Statistics show that as many as 1 in 3 Canadian women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime (Government of Ontario, 2020). Globally, estimates show that about 35% of women will experience some form of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2017). Sexual violence includes a variety of behaviors, such as verbal sexual harassment in public and in private, sexual assault, and more recently, technology facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) (Kelly, 2012; Henry & Powell, 2018). Technology facilitated sexual violence includes image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), which occurs when an individual engages in the non-consensual creation, distribution, and/or threat of distributing sexual photos.

Image-based sexual abuse can happen to anyone and be committed by anyone, but research suggests that women are more likely than men to have their images used in non-consensual ways and men are more likely than women to be the perpetrators (Wood et al. 2015). There is still not much known about the image-based sexual abuse victimization experiences of individuals who identify outside the gender binary.

Oftentimes, image-based sexual abuse occurs through sexting, where one individual takes another person's nude photo through sexting and shares this photo with someone else, without the consent of the person in the photo (Henry & Powell, 2018). However, there are a variety of other settings where IBSA could take place (Hall & Hearn, 2017). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, profiles on subscription-based websites such as OnlyFans have increased dramatically (Gowland, 2020), allowing users to charge a subscription fee to view their explicit photos. While research has not been conducted on individual's experiences of image-based sexual abuse in contexts such as subscription-based websites, research has shown that non-consensual use of images in similar contexts has been reported and is distressing for victims (Hall & Hearn, 2017). No matter how images were obtained, image-based sexual abuse is harmful. Perpetrators of sexual violence, including image-based sexual abuse, are entirely responsible for their behaviour. Unfortunately, certain contexts have been shown to influence people's empathy for victims and their willingness to offer emotional support (Sprankle et al., 2018). For example, past research has shown that individuals are less empathic towards sex workers who are victims of sexual assault compared to women who are not sex workers (Sprankle et al., 2018), however, no research has examined if this is also the case for subscription website users who experience a form of sexual violence.

Within the sexual violence literature, research has found that rape myths, or false myths about sexual assault and survivors of sexual assault, can influence the ways in which individuals think about victims of sexual violence. Furthermore, research has also shown that individuals who endorse objectifying views of women, or views that treat women as objects instead of as people, are also more likely to endorse rape myths, and in turn they are more likely to be accepting of violence towards women (Seabrook, Ward, &

Giaccardi, 2019). Therefore, the present study was designed to determine if certain views (objectification) are related to one's degree of empathy and one's degree of blame towards victims who experience image-based sexual abuse

This study is a first step in understanding how students view the victims and perpetrators of these harmful behaviours and how other beliefs related to objectification and rape myths influence these perceptions. You were randomly assigned to receive a description of image based sexual abuse in one of three specific contexts: IBSA occurring through sexting, through subscription-based websites, and through non-consensual photography. This study is important for several reasons. First, victims/survivors of sexual violence need support and are most likely to tell their friends and family. If we can better understand the obstacles that get in the way of people providing that support, we can take action to remove these barriers. Second, we need to establish whether judgements of victims and perpetrators of image-based sexual abuse follow similar patterns to those in other more commonly researched sexual violence situations. Better knowledge provides more options for prevention of and response to sexual violence online.

Your contribution to this study is very much appreciated. Should you have any concerns or questions regarding this study, please contact either the lead researcher Jewels Adair at adair3@uwindsor.ca, or her supervisor Dr. Charlene Senn at csenn@uwindsor.ca.

Below you will find a list of campus and community resources if you find that you would like to talk to someone or are seeking support.

**On-Campus Workshops to Learn More:**

The University of Windsor Sexual Misconduct and Response and Prevention Office provides several workshops for students to learn more about healthy sexuality and sexual assault, including workshops on consent, sexual assault resistance, and responding to disclosures of sexual assault. [Please note that some of these services are currently unavailable due to COVID-19]

Email: svsupport@uwindsor.ca
Website: https://www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault/workshops

The UWindsor Bystander Initiative (BI) is a comprehensive, campus-wide approach to sexual violence prevention using a Canadian adaptation of an evidence-based program called *Bringing in the Bystander*$^{TM}$. Their approach, unique in Canada, is designed to produce a series of small but persistent changes in students' thinking and behavior.

Over time, our goal is to shift the campus climate, to build a community that looks out for each other and does not tolerate sexual assault. They offer a 3-hour sexual assault prevention workshop and two undergraduate courses to educate and train BI workshop leaders. This year only, 2-hour workshops are available online.

Email: bystander@uwindsor.ca

Website: https://www.bystanderinitiative.ca/ https://www.uwindsor.ca/bystander-firstyear/

**On Campus Support Services**

**Sexual Misconduct Response & Prevention Office (Sexual Misconduct Officer – Dusty Johnstone)**
Dusty can provide confidential support, information, and guidance, as well as resources and referrals. She can also provide information about the different reporting options and offer guidance and support through the complaint process.
Email: svsupport@uwindsor.ca
Website: http://www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault

**Student Counselling Centre**
The Student Counselling Centre (SCC) provides registered students free, confidential mental health counselling delivered by trained mental health professionals. They are currently offering appointments by phone and/or video conferencing. Email to book an appointment and they will contact you back within 24-48 hours.
Email: scc@uwindsor.ca
Website: http://www.uwindsor.ca/studentcounselling/

**Student Health Services**
Student Health Services (SHS) provides registered students confidential healthcare, including comprehensive medical care, counselling, and referrals. They are currently offering appointments by phone. Call to book an appointment.
Phone: (519) 973-7002
Website: http://www.uwindsor.ca/studenthealthservices/

**Off Campus Support Services**

**Sexual Assault Crisis Centre**
This Sexual Assault Crisis Centre (SACC) provides free crisis intervention and counselling services to victims of sexual victimization and violence. They are currently offering virtual appointments. Call their main office or toll-free number to book an appointment. You may also contact their *24-hour crisis line* for emotional support, problem solving, information, and referrals.
Phone: (519) 253-3100 (main office) or 1-844-900-7222 (toll free) 24-Hour Crisis Line: (519) 253-9667 Website: https://saccwindsor.net/

**Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Treatment Centre**
If you have recently been assaulted and want to seek medical attention and potentially have a rape kit done, the Sexual Assault Treatment Centre (SATC) provides 24/7 emergency care to women, children and men who have been sexually assaulted or who are victims or survivors of domestic (intimate partner) violence. Services include: emergency medical and nursing care, crisis intervention, collection of forensic evidence,

medical follow-up and counselling and referral to community resources. Location: Windsor Regional Hospital (Metropolitan Location), 1995 Lens Avenue (fourth floor)
Phone: (519) 254-5577 ext. 52234
Website: https://www.wrh.on.ca/SADVTC

**My Student Support Program**
MySPP provides free, 24/7 counselling services by licensed counsellors for all University of Windsor students. Service is available in many different languages.
Phone: 1-844-451-9700 (outside of North America: 001-416-380-6578)
Website: https://www.uwindsor.ca/studentexperience/500/my-student-support-program

**Good2Talk**
Good2Talk is a free, 24/7 confidential helpline providing professional counselling and information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to post-secondary students in Ontario.
Phone: 1-866-925-5454
Website: https://good2talk.ca/

For more information on sexual assault and sexual misconduct, visit:
http://www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault/

If you would like, you can save or print a copy of this page by clicking the link below. This will open the page as a PDF in another tab. You may save or print this PDF through your browser. [

Downloadable Study Information & Resources link]

**Please click the next arrow to provide your name and email address so that we may provide your bonus point through the Participant Pool.**

**Appendix G: Participant Pool Bonus Point Form**

Please provide your name and UWindsor E-mail address below so we can provide you with your incentive.

I choose to receive .5 bonus points towards eligible courses registered in the Psychology participant pool. I agree to provide my name and E-mail address to the researchers for this purpose. I understand my name and E-mail address as provided here will be stored separately from any responses I provided in this study. Bonus points will be awarded to me, if I am eligible, within 48 hours of the receipt of this information.

◯ Name: _____

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[*]

E-mail Address:

_____

-----

[*]

E-mail Address Verification:

_____

(If E-mail addresses do not match, you will receive an error message)

**Appendix H: Participant Pool Study Description**

Title: **Thoughts and Feelings about Social Interactions**

Researchers: Jewels Adair and Dr. Charlene Senn

Duration: 30 minutes

Credits: .5

Description: This is an online study which focuses on perceptions of interactions between people who are acquainted that happen online and/or in person. You will be asked to read a short story and respond to some questionnaires about it. Then you will answer a number of questionnaires about your attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to online an in-person interactions. The stories that you are asked to read, and some questions may involve descriptions of sexual situations which may be unwanted by one person.

Research Contact Information:
 Jewels Adair, Master's student, adair3@uwindsor.ca
 Dr. Charlene Senn, supervisor, csenn@uwindsor.ca

## VITA AUCTORIS

| | |
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