

Chapter for: *Sexualities, transnationalism, and globalization: New perspectives*, edited by Y. Rachel Zhou and Christina Sinding, Routledge.

The transnationalization of online sexual violation: The case of ‘revenge pornography’ as a theoretical and political problematic

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Abstract

The growth, and popularity, of the Internet is unprecedented. The rise of Internet usage has coincided with rising of a variety of transnational online sexual abuses and violations. In this chapter, we examine the relatively recent phenomenon of ‘revenge porn’, as an example of online sexual violation, and a site of transnational dispersions of sexualities, violences and sexual abuse/violations, and as an interconnected theoretical/conceptual and political/policy problematic. This text/image-based sexual abuse is an urgent problem, posted online very largely by men. The impact on victims/survivors is profound regarding physical and psychological health and well-being with reports of some taking their own lives. We discuss transnational approaches to the analysis, theorizing and politics of this phenomenon – its production, consumption, interventions to counter it, and indeed its very existence as a new online-offline configuration – and how, in turn, ‘revenge porn’ assists rethinking transnational and online processes.

Introduction

The growth, and popularity, of the Internet is unprecedented. Internet World Stats (2019) reports that more than 57 percent of the world's population has access to the World Wide Web, and the Real Time Statistics Project (2020) Internet Live Stats shows there are now more than 1.7 billion websites worldwide. According to the Internet safety website, Enough is Enough (2019), around 30 percent of Internet content is pornography, and around 88 percent of that contains violence against women. Whilst such numbers might be contestable, there is no doubt that online pornography has mushroomed and online violence against women is endemic (Kyriak et al. 2018; Mihajlov and Vejmelka 2017).

Online sexual abuse and violation concern matters of *sexuality and violence*, through the medium of new *information and communication technologies* (ICTs). In this

chapter, we approach this nexus through attending to the phenomenon of what has come to be called ‘revenge pornography’, which, as we shall shortly discuss, is better conceptualized in rather different terms. Indeed, one of the more recent consequences of the relationship between pornography and the development of Internet and mobile technologies has been the *borderless* spread of various forms of online harassment, humiliation, abuse and violation, along with invasion of privacy and loss of reputation.

In keeping with the theme of the book, we examine online sexual abuse and violation, and specifically so-called ‘revenge porn’, in relation to its transnational production, consumption, interventions to counter it, and its very existence as a new online-offline configuration. We consider the transnational dispersions of sexualities, sexual abuse and sexual violations, and how global and transnational approaches can inform analysis, theorizing, and politics related to these phenomena. In turn, critical attention to ‘revenge porn’ as a theoretical and political problematic can assist rethinking transnational processes more broadly.

The phenomena of ‘revenge porn’ and non-consensual sharing of sexual text and images online more generally can in some ways be characterized as bringing ‘new’ features in terms of their transnational, borderlessness, and difficult-to-control nature. At the same time, however, they continue well-established, ‘old’, established, hegemonic sexual/gender relations and dynamics, specifically as a form of gendered violence. These ‘old’ features could be said to be complicated, even entrenched, in and through these ‘new’ online configurations, with their global/transnational dimensions, dispersals and reach. Thus, a necessary question is: what happens when this form of gendered violence goes online, and also transnational?

The term, ‘revenge porn’, is the most well used to describe the phenomena and actions in question within contemporary popular culture. While we use the term ‘revenge porn’, we do so, in a sense, in inverted commas, as the cultural reference that it has

become, not as a distinct analytical or political category. Perpetrators may be a current or ex-partner, acquaintances, strangers, hackers, purveyors of ‘spycamming’ or ‘upskirt’ images, and their online forum posts may thus be directed to known others, such as (ex-)partners, and celebrities in the public realm, such as Jennifer Lawrence, Tulisa Contostavlos, and the Duchess of Cambridge. The overwhelming majority—probably over 90 percent—of revenge porn is enacted by men (McAfee 2013; Hall and Hearn 2017b). Moreover, ‘revenge porn’ overlaps with other forms of online violation, such as cyberbullying and cyberstalking, and so we use the term especially when focusing on websites and practices that are organized around vengeance. However, the term ‘revenge porn(ography)’ is itself open to telling critiques, as made clear by Franks (2016), in showing how, though widely used, it is misleading in two respects:

First, perpetrators are not always motivated by vengeance. Some act out of a desire for profit, notoriety, or entertainment, or for no particular reason at all. Perpetrators include not only bitter ex-partners but also people who are complete strangers to their victims. Second, the term ‘revenge porn’ is sometimes interpreted to mean that taking a picture of oneself naked or engaged in a sexual act (or allowing someone else to take such a picture) is pornographic. (p. 2)

With easy access to technologies, creating explicit images within private, intimate relationships is increasingly common across the world. In a 2014 survey of 1100 New Yorkers, for example, nearly half (45%) reported that they had recorded themselves having sex (New Yorkers reveal ... 2014); and yet this is certainly the not the same as creating pornography. On the other hand, ‘disclosing a private, sexually explicit image to someone other than the intended audience can be described as pornographic in the sense that it transforms a private image into public sexual entertainment’ (Franks 2016, p. 2) and also

into a possible commodity for further use. For these reasons, and with these complications, there is a strong case for using such terms as ‘non-consensual pornography’, or more accurately still ‘online sexual violation by non-consensual sharing and distribution of sexual images and texts’.

Another set of arguments dispute the specificity of ‘revenge porn’ and argue that all pornography is ‘revenge porn’ because consent is questionable. Firstly, women’s continued economic, political, social and sexual inequality contributes to a form of cultural coercion into online, borderless porn production. Secondly, sexual violence and abuse against women in all forms of porn is common. And, finally, the porn industry rests on the worldwide sexual objectification of women. Thus, at a more general level of gender and economic class structures, all porn can be potentially understood as gendered revenge porn because men, as a class, benefit, collectively, at the expense of women, rather than in more conventional framings of ‘revenge porn’ where it is presumed that an individual man benefits at the expense of an individual woman (Tyler 2006). More importantly, these gender power relations are now transnational, with transnational collective, and not only interpersonal, gender relations constitutive of transnational patriarchies.

Furthermore, some feminists and gender activists argue against both labels: ‘revenge pornography’ and ‘pornography’. For example, in the project on online violence against women organized by the Women's Rights Association in Iceland, the survivors of ‘revenge porn’ opposed the use of the very words, as they felt it was degrading to talk about or describe such acts of violence as pornography (see Rúdólfsdóttir and Jóhannedóttir 2018), arguably obscuring or neutralizing their nature as gendered violence. This suggests that the very labelling and naming itself elaborates and extends transnationally the violating actions initially into language use, and then beyond into further social degradation. Moreover, the fraught issue of naming, and indeed defining, complicates both research and policy development in this field.

Non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit images and texts can clearly have negative psychological, emotional and reputational implications, as with other forms of gendered violence and abuse, and sexual assault. The impacts can be significant and profound, in terms of physical and psychological health and well-being, as is with many other forms of more direct and immediate violence and abuse. Victims/survivors of revenge porn report a host of negative effects, such as experiencing humiliation, shame and embarrassment with intimate partners, family, friends, work colleagues and in public; sexual shame and sexual problems; body image issues; education and employment disruptions; concern for personal safety; reputational damage; paranoia, hypervigilance, and trust issues; and some have even taken their own lives (Hall and Hearn, 2017a; Hearn and Hall, 2019b; Lichter 2013).

There is, however, an additional complication with online sexual violation and ‘revenge porn’ that, in some cases at least, there is an element of *not knowing*, or perhaps knowing much later, what has been done, where the images or text have been placed and replicated and by whom, and who has seen them. Some posting is done to be viewed by the victim and the postee, while some is directed more to friends and acquaintances, or even a more diffuse, unknown and imagined audience (Hall and Hearn, 2017b; Lacey 2007; Whisnant 2010). Indeed, such non-consensual sharing may be enacted *at a distance, and transnationally and virtually*, but is still experienced *immediately, negatively, in the body, and in one’s own personal space*.

The contexts of transnational processes and ICTs

The many and varied impacts of global and transnational processes, that move concerns beyond the immediate to beyond even the specific national, societal and cultural contexts, are now widely recognized. Much of this debate has been under the rubric of ‘globalization’, subsequently refined as ‘glocalization’ (Robertson 1995). In this, it is assumed that specificities of place are becoming transcended through economic, political

and cultural linkages. Many commentators, from diverse positions, have questioned the theoretical usefulness and empirical accuracy of the conventional notion of globalization, for example, in terms of uneven global effects, and the continuing power of nation-states. Indeed, transnationalization, that is the powerful presence and impacts of transnational processes, often seems a more useful concept than globalization (Hearn 2004, 2015), along with many other aspects of the transnational, such as transnational spaces, transnational identities, transnational cultures.

A transnational perspective foregrounds two key elements: first, the *nation* or *national boundaries*, and, second, ‘*trans*’ (across) relations, as opposed to ‘inter’, ‘supra’ or ‘intra’ relations (Hearn 2004). Thus, *the nation is simultaneously affirmed and deconstructed*. Moreover, the second element of ‘trans’ in transnational can be understood as referring, initially at least, to both *moving between* nations, as in hosting and posting ‘revenge porn’ in one country and viewing it another, but also in the sense of *moving beyond* the nation-state, as in new or changing transnational sexual cultures and sexual violations that move beyond national borders and in some make those borders redundant. Both these interpretations are highly relevant for understanding online sexual violation and attempts to counter it. A third meaning of the transnational concerns the formation of *new transnational social configurations and phenomena* (Hearn and Blagojević 2013): in this context, new transnational violating configurations work online-offline simultaneously. Thus, such online-offline configurations are integral to transnational processes in transnational circulation and consumption of ‘revenge porn’ and other online violations, and transnational mobilization and reproduction of patriarchal power and heterosexual norms.

As with ICTs more generally, ‘revenge porn’ can be understood through different analytical processes: transnational production, hosting of ‘revenge porn’ sites, and posting; transnational consumption, diffusion and normalization of the phenomenon, including more immediate and specific practices and experiences of men and masculinities; and

various transnational interventions to counter the phenomenon. While these aspects are analytically differentiated, they are also intimately interconnected.

A fundamental issue in analysing transnational processes is the dispersion, transfer and deployment of a variety of both material resources – finance, people, things – and virtual resources. In the latter case, dispersion is often reproduced symbolically, through and in the contexts of ICTs, with complex and evolving forms of virtualization.

Transnational processes thus concern both the physical, material movement of people and bodies, as in migration, and goods and services, as in trading, and also virtual, immaterial movements of money, data, cultural references, messages, and visual images. While sexualities are typically thought of as embodied, online sexualities, sexual cultures and sexual violations also entail national and transnational movement of text and images.

Transnational processes enable the cross-border extension of patriarchal relations from a given society or nation-state towards what can be called transnational patriarchies (Hearn 2015), comprising transnational structures and processes of many actors across national borders, and strengthening (some) men's solidarity as collective groupings across borders. In terms of the transnational movement of text and images, ICTs are a key aspect and actor, or actant, of transnational change, and a taken-for-granted element of transnational hegemonies, notably the hegemonic power of certain groupings of men within transnational patriarchies. ICTs use multiple complex technologies characterized by instantaneousness, asynchronicity, time-space compression, reproducible image production, creation of virtual bodies, blurring of the 'real' and the 'representational', (Hearn and Parkin 2001), broader bandwidth, wireless portability, globalized connectivity, and personalization (Wellman 2001).

ICTs have multiple impacts on sexuality, violence and abuse, such as through the reproducibility of image, and transnationally connected and personalized online sexual practices. Although such features have, in quantitative and commercial terms, been beneficial for the porn industry, they have also contributed to the stagnation or decline of

some sectors of commercial pornography. In recent years, for example, there has been an explosion of ‘amateur porn’, often taken on mobile recording devices and shared on online platforms that allow user-generated material, such as YouPorn, Xvideos, and Cliphunter (Forrester 2016), which can be viewed locally or transnationally. These transnational developments are part of more general ‘mainstreamification’ of pornography (Empel 2011), and the pornographization (Attwood 2009) and more general cultural sexualization (Paasanen *et al.* 2007, Dines 2010, Paasanen 2011), contributing to commercialization of sex and enforcement of dominant male heterosexual practices, representations and ideologies, and extending patriarchal relations transnationally. Indeed, from our own research we note how the mass of online revenge porn seems to be strongly based in binary, heteronormative gendered positionings. Despite the wider potentialities of virtual sexualities, revenge porn appears another site for the performance of gender hegemony: revenge (porn), it seems, is not (yet) very queer or gender/sexually-diverse (Hearn and Hall 2019b; cf. Hearn *et al.* 2013).

Transnationalization of violence and abuse is also facilitated by the Dark Web (or Net), an encrypted network of secret websites, making it much more difficult to control, police or even know the extent to the problem. Sexualized images, especially child porn, are widely shared via the Dark Net (Chertoff and Smith 2015). Whilst victims/survivors of revenge porn might become aware of the reposting of their images on the surface web, they may be more extensively posted and used/manipulated on the Dark Web.

Transnational production, hosting and posting

Online abuse and violation are produced in two main ways, by those posting and via online platforms and technologies, in some cases those purpose-built for ‘revenge porn’. Once on the Web, posts can then be accessed from anywhere in the world: the global digital public space. Incipient globalization or transnationalization of sexualities and sexual violations through ICTs can be produced through local, globalized and glocalised social practices.

Posting of ‘revenge porn’ can be done in one country, via a site hosted in another country, that is (in principle) subject to the law of a third, and then the post is viewable across the world.

The ability to upload ‘amateur porn’ has resulted in various forms of online sexual violences and violations, largely targeted at women and girls, such as revenge pornography, sexual happy slapping, spycamming, ‘upskirting’, ‘downblousing’ (see Hearn and Hall, 2019a for more on new technologies, image distribution and cyber abuse). There are now specialist websites for content on ‘upskirting’ and ‘downblousing’, ‘revenge porn’, non-consensual images of wives and partners, and sexual ‘deepfake’ applications (apps) that allow images of people to be superimposed onto another body, appearing ‘real’. Recent developments in artificial intelligence mean sexual ‘deepfake’ ‘apps’ users can ‘undress’ images they have taken of someone (Mahdawi 2019; Bishop 2020).

Arguably, ‘amateur porn’ has been fueled in part by the explosion of ‘sexting’ (DoSomething.org n.d., Teenage sexting statistics 2015, Hasinoff 2015). The Internet security company McAfee (2013) found more than half of adults shared sexually explicit material through their mobile devices, about half also said they stored these images online, and 16 percent said they had shared sexually explicit images and videos with complete strangers. The distribution of sexualized images in this way risks images and videos being shown to non-intended audience such as others in the perpetrators’ and victims’/survivors’ social circles via electronic devices.

Websites hosting ‘revenge porn’ and similar activities set up for violation in the name of revenge are to be found throughout the world. Those using or viewing them may well be in different jurisdictions to those where the sites are hosted. Our own discourse analytical study (Hall and Hearn 2017b) of about 12,500 posts on MyEx.com (closed in 2018 by US legislators) showed about 90 percent of victims/survivors were female aged from teens to mid-thirties. According to the site’s location data, both victims/survivors and perpetrators typically reside in Europe, North America and Australasia, particularly the

USA and the UK. This was not surprising given the website was hosted in English, presumably primarily for English language consumers (Steinbaugh 2014). There is also strong activity and interest in, for example, South Korea, with translation of our own critical work there. Revenge porn can be found for those reported as living in Asia, South America and Africa: for example, Armenia, Belize, Bahrain, Ecuador, Guam, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand and South Africa (Hall and Hearn 2017b).

Transnational consumption, homosociality and normalization of abuse

In discussing transnational consumption in this section, we focus, as an example of online violation, on the case of revenge porn, involving purported vengeance on another, usually from a man to a woman because she has been alleged to have done something wrong. This entails engagement with the readership and audiences, usually very largely of men with other men who may be friends, acquaintances, other known men or strangers, and may be local, national or transnational.

The operation of revenge porn can be compared to other male-dominated and patriarchal (of fraternal), transnational homosocial, solidaristic spaces and imagined audiences, such as those of incels (an online community of typically younger men who consider themselves unable to attract women sexually, often with hostile attitudes to sexually active [wo]men), and the far right (Ging and O'Higgins 2016). The phenomenon of revenge porn is both virtual and indirect, and embodied and direct in its effects. Objectification and commodification of women's bodies in posting revenge porn work to establish it as, for some men at least, 'acceptable' forms of revenge and homosocial exchange between men (Whisnant 2010), masking the violence of posting non-consensual images.

Our research on tailor-made sites set up specifically for revenge porn (Hall and Hearn 2017b) has shown how posting, whilst often a form of interpersonal revenge and a means, strategy or tactic for dealing with negative emotions of those who feel wronged

(Berkowitz and Cornell 2005), can be situated in many further ways. In analysing the contents of the website MyEx.com, which appears to have been the largest dedicated revenge porn website, we found that posters frequently positioned themselves as victims, then used that space to abuse women in terms of intimate relationship control, infidelity, sexualization, control of money, control of children, and so on (Hall and Hearn 2017b). In (inter)personal terms, revenge porn provides a man the opportunity to both exert power and domination and position himself as vulnerable and victimized, while simultaneously maintaining homosocial status amongst men.

‘Revenge porn’ and its consumption can easily enhance the normalization of sexually abusive, misogynist online hate speech and public space (Kendall 2002, Olson 2012, Hall and Hearn 2017b, 2019) that spans nations and operates transnationally. In this way, the consumption of ‘revenge porn’ can act as an arena of homosocial exchange (Whisnant 2010) within a local, national or g community of interest. These sites appear to be a space of solidarity among men who feel wronged by their ex-partners and want revenge, and as such one example of the elaboration of transnational, solidaristic patriarchal relations.

These are typically instances of techno-masculinities, sexualities and violences, in which the boundaries of consumer/producer are sometimes blurred. ICTs thus provide many means to extend the possibilities of transnational patriarchal processes of power, and indeed surveillance, for certain groups of men, and reduce some men’s sense of individual and collective non-responsibility for their actions (Boyle 2010; Whisnant 2010). Indeed, a greater propensity and power to insult and abuse has been shown to occur when less facial or eye contact is present (Lapidot-Lefler and Barak 2012). Violent patriarchal masculine culture seems to ache for an alternative, outsourced space to be ‘publicly’ violent without having to confront law, social values or responsibility (Lewis *et al.* 2013).

Through ‘revenge porn’, expressions of rage, anger and misogyny become embedded and made visible in online text/image productions that are transnational in several ways. First, most obviously, postings made in one place on a platform located elsewhere are then available for transnational transfer, consumption and homosocial audiences and exchange. Second, the effects of revenge porn can be transnational, with reputational damage and pressures for hypervigilance not just local but extending across national borders and sexual cultures. Third, an important, if still largely unexamined, issue concerns the intersectional diversity of members signed in on these homosocial ‘revenge porn’ platforms, their location, race and religion, and of their targeted victims, and how this connects with the content generated, nationally and transnationally. For example, some forms of non-consensual sharing and distribution of sexual images and text clearly invoke (transnational) exoticization, orientalism and racism.

A relevant case here is that of Mia Khalifa, a Lebanese US American. While her former career in the pornography industry was short-lived, with her most famous scene showing her performing sex acts whilst wearing a hijab, after leaving the industry images of her became and remain widely circulated, and she herself campaigns against their use and against pornography more generally (BBC 2019). Subsequently, this process attracted condemnation, especially from women, and titillation, especially for some men, transnationally, in both Islamic and non-Islamic regions.

Such violations are accompanied by further transnational violations, notably the means of accumulation of men’s access to ‘more information’ online about women and transnational encyclopaedic sexual evaluation of women, across national boundaries (Hearn, 2006), and local languages superseded by transnational visual referents.

Transnational processes of patriarchal power work through intersections of not only gendered but also racialized, intersectional violence and commodification.

Transnational policy, interventions and governance

ICTs contribute to fundamental change in forms of control, privacy, autonomy and democracy, with the technology for both decentralized TAZs (temporary autonomous zones) and strong centralized surveillance. Global capitalism, ICTs and virtuality challenge historical constructions of nation-state and hegemonic politics of space. In political and policy terms, interventions to counter revenge porn need to be both local/national and transnational, and include legislative/policy frameworks to curb it, corporate social responsibility and technological responses, awareness-raising, victim/survivor support, perpetrator re-education, and social movement, especially feminist, activism that contests the phenomenon (Hall and Hearn, 2017b, 2018).

Legal and technological challenges

Tackling online sexual abuses poses several challenges. Despite the existence of domestic regulations in some countries (e.g. UK, Germany, Japan; see Lyons *et al.* 2016 for country specific details), international laws do not yet exist. But given the transnational dimension of these forms of abuse and violations, there is clear need for viable laws and regulations at transnational and global levels. Indeed, differences in legal frameworks for online sexual abuses and violations between countries means it is difficult for victims/survivors to bring prosecutions where a crime is committed in another country. For example, the ex-boyfriend of the YouTube musician Chrissy Chambers recorded secret non-consensual sexual videos of her. The videos were recorded in the USA where she lives but posted online in the United Kingdom. Even though the offence took place in the USA, she had to

pursue the case under UK law, because that was where the videos were posted. A four-year legal battle eventually secured a conviction (Kleeman 2018).

Criminal justice prosecutors may also be hindered by the ease of how such abuses and violations cross national borders. Before the former revenge porn specific internet site MyEx.com was closed down by the US Federal Trade Commission (2018) and the state of Nevada, it was reported to be operated by anonymous individuals in the US in coordination with colleagues in the Philippines, and hosted by Web Solutions B.V. in the Netherlands, and where there was no specific revenge porn law, even while the site had global reach (Steinbaugh 2014). This meant that almost anyone, in most countries around the world apart from where the Internet is partially blocked, could anonymously upload non-consensual explicit images and videos without fear of prosecution because of differences in national legal frameworks. Combined with the anonymity and deceptions employed by cyber criminals, attribution is impeded as is interrogation of suspects and apprehension of offenders.

Internet service providers and social media platforms need to take more responsibility for material posted across national borders. Currently, there is no requirement for social media platforms, such as Facebook, to be proactive in stopping the posting of sexually explicit non-consensual images, only a requirement for the removal of such images within a reasonable period of time. The onus is on others reporting these images to social media platforms. However, the time difference between posting, reporting, and removal can mean that images are distributed further afield. Although Facebook has algorithms to identify and block child abuse images, these are not infallible. In 2016, a 14-year-old aimed to sue Facebook in Belfast's High Court after naked photos of her were posted on the platform as an act of revenge. Although Facebook removed the images when notified, the images had already been republished multiple times by individuals on other platforms and porn sites (England 2016).

Those internet organizations providing platforms for posting revenge porn might face future civil actions in which victims/survivors claim for damages to reputation, health impacts, and so on. Arguably, stronger civil laws should be in place so that victims can sue perpetrators for damages. Without laws on cross-border ‘revenge porn’, pursuing perpetrators and those who facilitate these crimes has been, and is likely to be in the future, very difficult (Topping 2016).

Tackling perpetrators

Criminalization of ‘revenge porn’ may act as a deterrent for some, but not all (Hall and Hearn 2017a, Hearn and Hall 2019a). Where legislation does not act as a deterrent, investigators can use software, such as *EnCase*, to produce an image of the alleged offender’s hard drive to see deleted computer files, such as cache files, swap files, temporary files, unallocated space or slack space, and left traces of their browser history, address books, date and time stamps to use as admissible evidence (Widup 2014). Once convicted, and punished, re-education intervention may be one possible way forward for offenders. However, caution is needed, as meta-analyses of evaluations of such interventions in stopping violence in other contexts show mixed effectiveness (for example, Arias *et al.* 2013).

Since ‘revenge porn’ is one of the many forms of gender- and sexuality-based violences, key lessons from offender interventions should be taken up, for example, feminist re-education group treatment focusing on (largely male) power and control (Eckhardt *et al.* 2013). Preventive interventions against violence and sexual violence that address gender power relations may be more effective. Such approaches could be modified in relation to ‘revenge pornography’ and related violations. Methods developed in anti-pornography workshops and campaigns, showing the damaging effects in making and consuming pornography, and normalizing gendered violation, can be adapted, including through online education, locally and transnationally.

In tackling violation by sexual image distribution, and cyberabuse generally, stronger national criminal and civil laws are necessary so that victims can sue perpetrators for damages. These can, however, only be effective to limited extent without more transnational co-operation in law and criminal proceedings, and between technology companies. Through transnational, action-orientated, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral responses, the stigma and trauma this crime causes can be reduced.

Victim/survivor support and empowerment services

Many programmes to support victims of gender and sexuality-based crimes tend to focus on how to reduce the risk of revictimization (Eckhardt *et al.* 2013). But once images are posted it is almost impossible to retract them because of the speed of dissemination in e-space by others (Lichter 2013). Current support programmes also deal with the legal process of bringing offenders to court and removal of the images (Levendowski 2014). Specialist support services need to be strengthened to include supporting victims/survivors with the impacts of sexual abuses. Indeed, Chrissy Chambers commented in a BBC (2018, p. 1) interview on the posting of non-consensual sexually explicit videos of her by her ex-boyfriend: “It has affected my life in every way imaginable and I'm sure it will continue to for the rest of my life.”

Work at the University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre, Slovenia, in conjunction with project partners at University of Trieste (Italy), Isonomia (Spain), University of Aalborg (Denmark), University of Vienna (Austria) and local actors (2015) suggest that specialist support services and protocols of cooperation between relevant authorities facing non-consensual online sharing of sexually explicit images should be strengthened locally and transnationally. These would include: mapping specialist support services, sharing best practices, and promoting cooperation and multidisciplinary

networking among national authorities, non-governmental organizations for safe internet use.

Education, support and campaigns

Gender and sexual violences have been reported to be widespread among young people (Lundgren and Amin 2015), which makes them vulnerable to a lifelong trajectory of violence, as victims or perpetrators; thus robust responses are required. Given the transnational dimensions to gender and sexual violences, such as ‘revenge porn’, ‘upskirting’ and ‘sexual happy slapping’, there is clear need to raise global awareness, including how risks can be both nearby/immediate and geographically/transnationally distant. One method of doing so is to include this on the sex and relationship curriculum (Martellozzo *et al.* 2016).

Although sex and relationship education are compulsory in countries such as the UK (HM Government 2000, 2016b), this is not mirrored around the globe (United Nations Population Fund: UNPF 2015). Even in countries where sex and relationship education are compulsory, the primary focus is generally on sexuality, health, and what constitutes a healthy relationship; this should include how to deal with, and act appropriately and ethically, when relationships end. Key issues include emotion dysregulation, cognitive distortions, and relationship skills deficits. Problem-solving, relationship skills training and emotion regulation could be included in sex education (Eckhardt *et al.* 2013).

Charities, educational groups and institutions, and campaigns more generally report that many teenagers are not being taught about issues like sexting, online pornography, sexual consent, and equal relationships (NSPCC 2016, Taylor 2014, BBC 2014). School-, education- and campaign-based interventions should address such issues as non-violent conflict resolution, communication skills, help-seeking, unequal gender

norms, power and control in relationships, and normalization of sexual violences (Wolfe *et al.* 2009).

Campaign work, often initially local or national, is increasingly needing to become transnational and online, with link-ups in real time and longer-term collaborations, including sharing resources as ways forward. Moving to transnational campaigning and globalization of mutual support amongst activists is vital. Feminist campaigns include Crash Override network, Gadgette, Women, Action and the Media (WAM), TrollBusters (see Alexander 2016), #HerNetHerRights, and CONSENT (Williams 2017). Transnational feminist perspectives are a major driver of opposition to cyberabuse, drawing on lessons from other transnational feminist campaigns (Carr 2013; Jane 2017).

Concluding remarks: new transnational online-offline configurations

‘Revenge porn’ and related online sexual violations present an important theoretical and political problematic, operating locally, nationally and transnationally, that also assists rethinking transnational processes more generally. As noted, ‘the transnational’ invokes two elements: the nation or national boundaries, and ‘trans’ (across) relations, as opposed to ‘inter’ relations or ‘intra’ relations. Online sexual violation involves practices of *moving data, messages, visuals across* national boundaries creating transnational divergences between the web hosting base, the posting, and the viewing/consumption of that posted, and the need for transnational legal, regulatory controls and interventions. They also entail *moving beyond* nations or national boundaries, as with transnational consumption of revenge porn, and the creation of transnational, homosocial, and male-dominated sexually violating cultures, where national boundaries are no longer so important. Transnational interventions have to operate on both these dimensions, both between and beyond countries in countering transnational ‘revenge porn’ sexual cultures.

However, transnational processes do not only operate in these two ways; they also, thirdly, *create new social configurations and phenomena*, that is, intensified transnational, or to different degrees, de- or re-territorialized entities (Hearn and Blagojević 2013, p. 9). In this case, the very existence of transnational online-offline, both physical/in-the-flesh/In Real Life and virtual sexual violence and abuse, should be viewed as a newly configured historical phenomenon. ICTs are not disembodied technologies or text but exist within and further create material-discursive social-sexual relations. They facilitate organizations and organizing, including for online abuse, that work transnationally across nations, locales, bodies, sexualities and sexually violent subjectivities (Hearn 2006). However transnational in its spread ‘revenge porn’ may be, it is posted and performed in the fingers of the poster and felt in the body of the postee, amongst others; it is in effect a new bodily/transnational material-discursive configuration, operating online-offline, with transnational virtual representational realities intertwining with and reconfiguring bodily, psychic and social effects. In this chapter, we have sought to contribute to understanding the relationship between sexualities, globalization and transnationalism, in terms of the dynamic between borderless internet/e-spaces and the transnationalization of cyberabuses, seen through the example of ‘revenge porn’. First, the *normalization of sex* on the internet, via sexual selfies, sexting, sexual posting and cyberintimacy, all *provide multiple resources* for further non-consensual harassment, bullying, exploitation, violation and revenge porn in borderless e-spaces: “... with each new tech development – such as the option to live-broadcast on social media – comes the possibility of new forms of cyber violence.” (Williams 2017). Second, *blurring and co-occurrence* of offline and online means there is a greater potential for (sexual) violence, abuse and harassment to occur together, online-offline. And, third, the *publicness of previously private spaces* has the potential for multiple impacts, often repeatedly, where victims/survivors have less opportunity to defend themselves against or hide from what may exist in perpetuity. These new configurations involve complex

intersections of online sexual violations and abuses with direct physical violation. The theoretical and political problematic of online sexual violation assists rethinking transnational processes more generally, and in multiple ways – *in production, consumption and interventions, between and beyond nations, and in the creation of new configurations and phenomena online-offline.*

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Tigist Shewarega Hussen for earlier discussions on diversity and intersectionality, and our editors, Y. Rachel Zhou and Christina Sinding, for many helpful and constructive comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

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