Chapter 1
The Malevolent Side of Revenge Porn Proclivity:
Dark Personality Traits and Sexist Ideology

Afroditi Pina
University of Kent, UK

James Holland
University of Kent, UK

Mark James
University of Kent, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a novel study, exploring a form of technology facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) known as revenge porn. Despite its emerging prevalence, little is known about the characteristics of revenge porn perpetrators. In the current study, a revenge porn proclivity scale was devised to examine participants' behavioural propensity to engage in revenge porn. One hundred adults, aged 18-54, were recruited online from a community sample. The correlational relationship between revenge porn proclivity and the self-reported endorsement of the Dark Triad, sadism, and ambivalent sexism was examined. Additional proclivity subscales of revenge porn enjoyment and revenge porn approval were also created. The study's main findings revealed a positive correlation between a greater behavioural propensity to engage in revenge porn and higher levels of the Dark Triad and ambivalent sexism. Moreover, endorsement of psychopathy was found to be the only Dark Triad trait that independently predicted revenge porn proclivity. The results suggest that perpetrators of revenge porn may have distinct personality profiles. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in modern technology have enabled public access to a breadth of knowledge, facilitated by widespread communication that can reach both national and international audiences (Taylor, Fritsch, & Liederbach, 2015). However, the integration of communication technologies in our daily lives and intimate relationships (Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014) also provides additional opportunities for sexual exploitation and criminal victimization (Roberts, 2008). This is an emerging phenomenon of societal concern that has sparked research interest with a focus on the ethical dimension of technological advancement. The multidisciplinary domain of Technoethics is concerned with the study of moral, legal and social issues involving technology (Luppicini & Adell, 2008). One of these social and legal phenomena involving technology is that of 'revenge porn,' otherwise known as non-consensual pornography, currently sparking increasing media interest (BBC, 2016; Guardian, 2015). Whilst there exists a wealth of literature on perpetrators of traditional acts of sexual violence (Greathouse, Saunders, Matthews, Keller, & Miller, 2015), little is known of the characteristics of those who endorse and display revenge porn behaviour. An in-depth understanding of the psychological profiles of these individuals could benefit preventative and rehabilitative methods for reducing the prevalence of this crime (Gerhart, Ronan, Russ, & Seymour, 2013; Voller & Long, 2010). This paper examines the relationship between aversive personality traits and the behavioural propensity to engage in revenge porn behaviours.

THE GROWING PROBLEM OF REVENGE PORN: ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

Revenge porn is the act of sharing intimate, sexually graphic images and/or videos of another person onto public online platforms (e.g. Facebook) without their consent (Burris, 2014; Citron & Franks, 2014). These images are often either produced non-consensually (e.g. by means of surveillance or hacking) or consensually (e.g. by the victim in the context of either a private relationship or courtship) (Citron & Franks, 2014; Stroud & Henson, 2016). This is largely motivated by the malicious intent to harm and humiliate the victim, who is often the perpetrator's previous romantic partner (Burris, 2014; Citron & Franks, 2014). Not all acts are perpetrated for revenge, and can instead be committed as a means of blackmail, coercion, or for the enjoyment of causing torment upon others (Henry & Powell, 2016). For the purposes of this paper we will name all these acts revenge porn due to the intent behind the instigation of such events. However, the term non-consensual pornography is also frequently used in the literature to encompass all different facets of these behaviours (Citron & Franks, 2014).

Although revenge porn can affect individuals of all ages, sexuality and gender, it is predominantly perpetrated against, and severely negatively affects women (Citron & Franks, 2014; Poole, 2015; Salter & Crofts, 2015). Researchers have acknowledged that revenge porn reflects larger issues over women's social and interpersonal status, and can be seen as a form of hostility towards female autonomy (Citron & Franks, 2014; Poole, 2015) and policing women's sexuality, with large online communities (of males in their majority) enforcing the "bounds of appropriate femininity" by means of ridicule and harassment (Salter & Crofts, 2015, p.1). As Noah Berlatsky states: "the web has made it possible to crowdsource misogyny […] and stalking" (2013, www.digitalethics.org).

While most people would consider sharing intimate images of themselves or other people online, without their consent, unethical, there are certain processes at play that make the perpetrators rationalize the act. These processes make the act seem more acceptable, and in some cases justified; such as

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