



“It makes it sound public; it makes it sound seedy and like the images have been created for a mass audience” –

An Explorative Study of Student Perceptions of Revenge Porn Terminology.

By

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A project supervised by Angie Neville

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Glossary of Acronyms and Nomenclature

CDM	Confirm, Deny, Modify
CRQ	Central Research Question/s
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IBSA	Image Based Sexual Abuse
IBSE	Image Based Sexual Exploitation
NCP	Non-Consensual Pornography
NCIS	Non-Consensual Image Sharing
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
RP	Revenge Pornography
RPH	Revenge Porn Helpline
SDB	Social Desirability Bias
SO	Sexual Offence
TFSV	Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence
UK	United Kingdom
V	Vignette

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc Criminal Justice and Criminology.

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed: Alan Robert Harrop (candidate)

Date: September 2019

Abstract

In recent years, the proliferation of digital technologies has generated a means for the creation of sexually explicit content. The non-consensual dissemination of such material has sparked an increase in online abuse and is an act better known by its embellished title, Revenge Pornography (RP). Whilst the label of RP was initially useful in highlighting widespread attention to a new and emerging social harm, academics have expressed concern that its continued use is problematic as it has become a convenient, media friendly term, that focuses on the assumed motivations of the perpetrators and therefore overlooks the harms suffered by victims (McGlynn and Rackley, 2017).

This study is explorative in nature and is centred on students' perceptions of the terminology of RP. The data that was analysed was collected from (n=8) semi-structured interviews that investigated participants views towards the term RP through a series of vignettes depicting different cases of non-consensual image sharing. To date, there has been minimal research undertaken with regards to the terminology of RP and this research advances the evaluation of this subject matter. The project had the four central research questions:

1. Do participants feel that RP is a term that can be applied to different examples of non-consensual image sharing?
2. Do participants feel that the term RP incites blame towards the victim?
3. Do participants feel that RP is a term that needs to be changed?
4. Do participants feel that RP should be reclassified from a communications offence to a sexual offence?

Despite a mixture in views towards the application of the individualised words, on the whole, participants recognised the negative and blaming connotations associated with the continued use of the term, RP. These findings reinforced a move towards its abolition; however, support was more varied for the recategorization of RP to a sexual offence.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation in the loving memory of my late father, Mr Robert Barker and my late mother, Mrs Sylvia Harrop who have both instilled me with the values that have made me who I am today and kept me inspired to complete this work by being my shining stars, my hope and my strength. I thank you both for opening my eyes to the world, for the endless sacrifices you made, but also, highlighting to me the importance of education. Your early guidance put me on this journey of continuous learning, and I could not have wished for two better mentors who showed me the courage necessary to seize every opportunity. I wish that I could share with you this moment, the completion of my MSc which is the most significant thing I have achieved thus far and something that at times I thought was impossible without you. For all that you have done for me, with all the love that I have, this is for you.

“Desire is the key to motivation, but it’s determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal – a commitment to excellence – that will enable you to attain the success you seek” – Mario Andretti

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I feel it is necessary to apologise to my immediate family who have been unduly neglected not just during the completion of this work, but throughout the whole of

my studies. I know that I have been somewhat invisible for the past two years and I have no doubt missed out on a lot, but I hope that you know I couldn't have completed this journey without your understanding and support, even if this was from a distance. I thank you for giving me my space and the freedom I needed to succeed. I hope that I have made you proud!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“The internet never forgets. And that permanent digital record, a blessing when it summons a moment we want to recall, can be a weapon in more sinister hands when it preserves ones we would like to forget”.

(Penney, 2013)

With the ongoing advancements in technology, smart devices and digital media, the words of Penney (2013) serve as a persistent reminder of the true exploitative power of the internet in today’s modern age. The growth of the sociotechnical world has summoned a range of new harmful behaviours which have found ordinary place within online dimensions (Maddocks, 2018), as well as challenged the conventional ways in which people can suffer victimisation (Uhl *et al.*, 2018). The term technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) has been coined to describe a series of undesirable, sexually aggressive behaviours which are perpetrated through the use of digital technology and covers a range of acts such as online harassment, sexual coercion and cyberstalking (Henry and Powell, 2016a). A branch of TFSV also extends to the non-consensual creation or sharing of intimate images, a social harm better known by its sensationalised moniker, Revenge Pornography (RP). The industry of RP is most commonly associated with the felonious Hunter Moore and his now defunct website, ‘Is Anyone Up?’, a platform that Moore used to encourage disgruntled individuals to upload explicit content of their former partners alongside their identifying information (Fairburn, 2015). Although Moore’s site was closed in 2012 and he was later prosecuted, RP would be propelled to the forefront of widespread media coverage again in 2014 after a series of sexualised images of a number of well-known celebrities began to appear online, many of which were available on a pay-per-view service (Hall and Hearn, 2018).

These high-profile events were just some of the many that attracted worldwide attention to this developing phenomenon. In the years that have followed, RP has evolved, and its perpetration is no longer exclusively contextualised to the online sphere as its perpetration is now featured within ‘real world’ settings (Citron and

Franks, 2014). Equally, the growth of RP has presented a social issue on an international scale as its prevalence has crossed the boundaries of developed nations and is now a common feature in many countries throughout the world (Hall and Hearn, 2018). In the United Kingdom (UK), rising allegations of RP generated cross-party political support to incorporate its criminality into statute law due to the link between the disclosure of private images and forms of abuse (Pegg, 2018). Given the exponential backing from frontline politicians, the introduction of the amended *Criminal Justice and Courts Bill Act* in April 2015 condemned the disclosure of private sexual content without the consent of the individual featured and where it is done so with the intention to cause that individual distress. Other countries have also recognised RP as a criminal offence but perhaps one country that has altered the landscape of RP in their criminalisation is Australia, who have opted to use the term 'Image Based Sexual Abuse' (IBSA) (see Henry *et al.*, 2017). Such a variation has been considered a landmark change given the fact that RP has “...become a well-used term in contemporary media, discourse and society” (Hall and Hearn, 2018: viii).

Australia's approach raises crucial questions about the term RP and whether its continued use can minimise the impact of the offence or fail to capture the full extent of the behaviours exhibited by perpetrators. Although the collection of research relating to RP is slowly expanding, little primary research has been undertaken with regards to understanding perceptions about the term RP and whether there are negative connotations associated with its use. Therefore, this explorative study will concentrate on students' perceptions of the terminology of RP. In doing so, this study presents a novel opportunity to bridge the gap in the literature whilst attempting to confirm, deny or modify (CDM) the limited data that already exists. In order to achieve this, this study has the following Central Research Questions (CRQ):

1. Do participants feel that RP is a term that can be applied to different examples of non-consensual image sharing (NCIS)?
2. Do participants feel that the term RP incites blame towards the victim?
3. Do participants feel that RP is a term that needs to be changed?

4. Do participants feel that RP should be reclassified from a communications offence to a sexual offence (SO)?

Following this brief introduction, the remainder of this study is separated into a series of chapters:

Chapter Two is a systematic review of the empirical literature relating to RP. By highlighting the current research, the aim of this chapter is to provide a degree of context to the main aims of this study, as well as provide a rationale for this study by evidencing the gaps within the existing literature.

Chapter Three provides a transparent overview of the selected methodology, drawing attention to how the study was both designed and implemented. The focus of this chapter is on outlining the practical details relating to the study, as well as addressing the limitations associated with the chosen methodology.

Chapter Four details the analysis stage of this study, presenting the data from the semi-structured interviews undertaken with research participants. In this chapter, the projects findings are critically discussed whilst being compared and contrasted against the existing literature identified in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five is the overall conclusion where the main aims of the study are revisited. In addition to reinforcing the key findings this study, attention is also given to recommendations for further research and avenues of enquiry.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise the existing literature relating to RP. Just as societal awareness of RP has grown, academic understandings have developed through international research with recent studies exploring professionals' perceptions (Bond and Tyrrell, 2018; Maddocks, 2018) the characteristics associated perpetration (Hall and Hearn, 2017; Pina *et al.*, 2017), the legislative and policy responses (Crofts and Kirchengast, 2019; Goldsworthy *et al.*, 2017) as well as the impact upon victims (Henry *et al.*, 2017; Bates, 2016). Whilst identification of such literature is necessary to provide a more in-depth insight into the breadth of RP, it would not be possible to cover all of the potential literature within the remit of this review. As such, the literature presented within this chapter is featured because of its relevance to the projects CRQ's. The review will aim to be as comprehensive as possible and will be structured as follows:

Section 2.2 will concentrate on situating RP within contemporary society, focusing upon the different definitions as well as the current prevalence of RP.

Section 2.3 will discuss the concept of revenge and its desired outcomes. The word revenge will also be explored in the context of RP, highlighting the limitations of its use.

Section 2.4 will explore pornography and it's use in the phrase, RP. The role of consent in pornography is also explored as well as the possible implications of its use.

Section 2.5 will provide an overview of RP within a legal framework, focusing upon the importance of terminology in criminalising behaviours.

Section 2.6 will highlight victim blaming attitudes for those subject to SO's and explore how this can extend to victims of RP.

Section 2.7 will conclude the chapter by summarising the key literature reviewed as well as provide insight into how these findings added value to this study.

2.2 Situating and Defining RP

Due to its recurring presence across various news outlets, there is often a commonplace misconception that RP is an entirely new phenomenon. The first instances of RP actually date back to the 1980's and a special "Beaver Hunt" edition of *Hustler Magazine*, where readers were encouraged to supply nude images of women, some of which were submitted and later published without the consent of the women featured (Pollard, 2019). Since then, RP has evolved with the times, and what exists now a wider availability of platforms in which to inflict greater sexual and psychological harm. For instance, Roffer (2017: 937) contends that "...instead of hard-copy photographs, images are now disclosed via the internet...". A similar view is put forward by McGlynn *et al.*, (2017), who hold that the availability of smart phones and access to the internet has made the misuse of images an act easy to perpetrate. The latter point is of significant importance as a recent technological trend among adults and young people is the act of 'sexting'; which is described as the "...creating, sharing, sending or posting of sexually explicit messages or images via the internet, mobile phones or other electronic devices" (Henry and Powell, 2015: 107). Whilst on the surface sexting is not considered a criminal offence (unless the images are of someone under the age of 18) and can be considered a means of maintaining intimacy between partners (Walker *et al.*, 2019), it has been suggested that sexting can present a risky behaviour, since the images being transmitted form part of an indefinite digital footprint where the images can be further disseminated (Drouin *et al.*, 2015). What is apparent is that communication technologies, whether old or new, have always been of interest to those wishing to pursue sex and sexuality (Hall and Hearn, 2018).

The growth of RP in the UK has been encapsulated by the Revenge Porn Helpline (RPH); an initiative implemented by the government to support victims of RP. Statistics reveal that in the period between its creation in February 2015 and December 2018, reported cases of RP have increased by 40% year on year, with an anticipated 1,500 new cases in 2019 (Worthington, 2019). In terms of victimisation, of the 1,300 new cases in 2018, 60% identified as female, 30%

identified as male and 10% did not disclose (Worthington. 2019). Only in cases of sextortion, the act of threatening to “...*expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, engage in sexual activity or agree to other demands*” (Wolak *et al.*, 2018: 72) are gender figures reversed and men are highlighted as the primary victims (Worthington, 2019). On an international front, a study by Henry *et al.*, (2017) focusing upon over 4,200 Australians experiences of IBSA found that 1 in 5, 16 – 49-year olds had experienced a form of IBSA. However, a stark difference in comparison to the UK is that both men and women were equally likely to report being a victim of IBSA. In a smaller study conducted in New Zealand with 1,001 participants, 5% revealed that they had personally experienced IBSA online, with the sharing of intimate images committed by either a former partner or a stranger (Pacheco *et al.*, 2019).

Attempting to define RP presents a complex issue, for there is no one universally accepted definition. Chemaly (2016: 132) defines RP as “...*disgruntled ex-sexual partners misappropriating and abusively sharing...intimate images, sexually explicit photographs or videos*”. Such a definition holds validation, especially since in 2018, the RPH attributed an average of 57% of cases reported to them as involving an attempt to embarrass a former partner through the distribution of intimate images (Sharp, 2018). Whilst these figures demonstrate that RP does generally occur within the context of intimate relationships, the definition by Chemaly (2016) fails to acknowledge that there are other instances in which RP can occur. For Henry and Powell (2016b), coercion and blackmail are factors that also need to be considered. These actions are indeed central to the debates surrounding RP since not only did the earlier statistics from the RPH highlight that men are disproportionately more likely to be victims of sextortion, but also because the National Crime Agency (2016) have advised that sextortion is becoming a popular tool in RP. Cases of sextortion are slowly on the rise in the UK as they made up 11% of all cases reported to the RPH in 2017 and 13% in 2018 (Worthington, 2019). Whilst this is the case in the UK, Thakkar (2017) implies that this is more prevalent in other countries where the shame for breaching social and cultural norms can be exploited. Research also suggests that RP can also occur where there is no prior connection between individuals. An early study by Laird (2014) found that monetary gain was behind some instances of RP. The research found that victims had their personal

computers hacked and their private images stolen which were then uploaded online where website administrators would request payment in exchange for the removal of the images. Given that a prior relationship is not a precursor for RP, Pina *et al.*, (2017) more succinctly define RP as the act of sharing sexually explicit images of others onto public forums without their consent.

2.3 The Psychology of Revenge

On the surface, revenge is a term that is easy to define since according to McCullough *et al.*, (2013), there is an agreed consensus that the notion of revenge is to inflict harm in retaliation to a perceived violation or infliction of harm by another. In supporting this viewpoint, Aquino *et al.*, (2001: 53) conceptualise revenge as “...an action in response to some perceived harm or wrongdoing...that is determined to inflict damage, injury, discomfort or punishment...”. The observation of Gollwitzer *et al.*, (2011: 364) however, is that such definitions fail to account for the moral aspects of being harmed and therefore seeking to deliver harm, adding that “...harmful events not only elicit vengeful reactions, they imply an intentional violation of fairness norms...or...a violation of the general norm of respectful treatment”. This considered, the enactment of revenge can be seen as something that is interpersonal and has been associated with an extension of coping mechanisms when an individual suffers feelings such as shame, loss, disappointment or conflict (Yoshimura, 2007). Understandings of revenge are typically framed around the assumption of justice and the idea that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). In this sense, the extent of revenge is viewed as a means of seeking equitable retribution, but also a degree of satisfaction (Eadeh *et al.*, 2017). These desired outcomes for avengers sheds light on important questions regarding their motivations, but research has tended to suggest that avengers view their actions as being of a similar severity to the preceding offence, whilst the individual on the receiving end is likely to view the behaviour as an immoderate act (Elshout *et al.*, 2017). Although revenge can take many forms, it has been categorised as an act of aggression, not only because of the direct response with the intention to harm, but also the way in which it is used to restore the perpetrators self-esteem. (Strelan *et al.* 2014). Such a view ties in with Barton’s (1999) explanation of the pleasure in revenge, since he argues that pleasure is not gained

in the suffering of any individual, but in the suffering of an individual that has harmed another.

Within the phrase RP, the notion of revenge is not so well-defined. It is clear that the earlier discussion of revenge directs it towards a particular wrongdoing that needs to be avenged, but the accuracy of this for all instances of RP is questionable. As suggested by some of the earlier literature, the term RP can be left open to misinterpretation since revenge is not always considered a driving motivator for NCIS. It is important to not overlook that the earlier statistics have already alluded to the fact that RP does occur within intimate relationships, but as Sebastian (2017: 1109) notes, to assume this is the only situation in which this behaviour takes place is “...*heteronormatively limiting*...”. In this framework, Stroud (2014) argues that the concept of revenge must be altered in order to account for the individuals who seek pleasure in harming individuals where there is no previous connection. Similarly, even where there is a connection, some academics have expressed concern with the use of the word revenge and the possible connotations. For instance, a key issue with the word revenge for Maddocks (2018) is that it reduces the impact by placing the offence within a jilted ex-partner narrative, therefore, implying that perpetrators are acting out of personal vengeance, which in turn fuels victim blaming attitudes. A similar view is held by MyGlynn *et al.*, (2017) whose standpoint is that the use of the word revenge places emphasis on the alleged justifications of the perpetrator and therefore overlooks the other instances in which the sharing of images occurs. One example they pose is the notion of male bonding. Salter (2017) draws attention to this by recalling a study where women were said to be both frustrated and angry at male friends bonding over sharing nude images of other females. It has been argued that in these instances, perpetrators attempt to evade responsibility by relying on the fact they are looking at or sharing images and did not initially cause the harm to the person featured in the image (Hall and Hearn, 2018).

The old saying tells us that revenge is sweet, but there is research that suggests enacting revenge can actually make people feel worse (Lambert *et al.*, 2014). There is little available literature about this in relation to RP perpetrators, but Maddocks (2019) suggests that those who share material without consent are able to do

so without overwhelming feelings of guilt because of existing social norms that encourage victim blaming. For instance, Maddocks (2019) argues that guilt is evaded by perpetrators because the content being shared is considered 'real' and so blame is attributed to victims for allowing the content to be taken. To date, only limited research exists that looks at factors associated with RP perpetration. A key study by Hall and Hearn (2017) utilised a discourse analysis to examine RP and manhood acts. A number of themes emerged from their work which underpinned men's accounts of NCIS including concepts of masculinity and perceived emasculation, the sexualisation of women and loss of control. Manhood is an interesting status and other research has linked men's behaviour, including revenge, to men attempting to prove their status, but also as a way of them mitigating concerns about their status being threatened (Bosson and Vandello, 2011). In many of the cases examined by Hall and Hearn (2017), it was found that men positioned themselves as the victim, justifying their actions as a form of interpersonal revenge which allowed them to downplay their capability within the online sphere. Whilst the accounts of the perpetrators studied by Hall and Hearn (2017) had revenge at the forefront of their actions, Franks (2016) refutes the term RP as she maintains that not all perpetrators are motivated by revenge, with some seeking entertainment, profit or notoriety.

2.4 Exploring the 'Pornography' in RP

Due to the difference of opinion among proponents and opponents, reputable definitions of pornography are not easily stumbled across. In her work, Easton (2005: x) summarises that "*Pornography is...hard to define but easy to recognise*". It is difficult to discredit such an observation, since the industry of pornography is a large-scale, profitable business (Jensen, 2007) and a recent study in the UK found that 77% of male respondents and 47% of female respondents had viewed pornography within the last month (BBC, 2019). Conversely, pornography is now seen as a visible part of western society since adult film actors author books and provide advice to readers through lifestyle magazines (Hall and Hearn, 2018). In terms of academic understandings of pornography, Attwood (2005) notes that research has typically tended to concentrate on men's engagement with pornographic material and the search for a possible correlation to acts of violence. Descriptions of pornography are much more widely available through feminist

literature, where it has been labelled as offensive, disgusting and degrading (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009). Feminist perspectives of pornography have circulated for decades and one of the first ground-breaking definitions was introduced by MacKinnon (1987: 176) as “...*the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures or words...*”. This has carried through and for feminists a vital argument is that pornography humiliates women and suppresses their role in society (Pegg and Davies, 2016). Historically, a main counter has been that there is pornography that depicts the subordination men by women (Feinberg, 1987) and more recently, the feminist critique has been criticised for failing to consider that there are female pornographic film directors who create content for a female audience (Achola, 2014).

The literature in the preceding section highlighted that most academics tend to agree that the use of the word revenge is problematic. However, the use of the term pornography presents a more dividing issue. On the one hand, there are those who argue that RP is a form of pornography. Delaney’s (2017) view is that RP is instigating a new trend in cyber-pornography and Hall and Hearn (2018) agree that RP is another branch in online pornography. Both Delaney (2017) and Hall and Hearn (2018) are not entirely incongruous in their analysis, especially since Whisnant (2016: 3) states that “*In pornography, women are not only humiliated; their humiliation is documented, and that documentation is widely distributed*”. With this evaluation, it is clear to see the link between pornography and RP, especially since RP is an act that can be motivated by a desire to humiliate as seen earlier in the literature. On the other hand, a central theme is disregarded and that is role of consent in pornography. Wall (2017) perceptively confirms that the vast majority of internet-based pornography features consenting adults and labelling RP as pornography implies consent and similar arguments have been ongoing with respect to the term ‘Child Pornography’ for a number of years (see Quayle and Taylor, 2003; Davidson and Martellozzo, 2008). With this in mind, Gillespie (2011) claims that presumed consent is what makes many believe that the use of the term ‘Child Pornography’ is incorrect. Cusak (2015: 14) verifies this standpoint by upholding that the term “...*mischaracterises the word pornography*”. Such views are validated, and it has already been established that images can enter the hands of strangers without consent. Even where images have been sent with consent, those

in favour of RP take consent out of context and use it as permission to further distribute images to a wider audience (Citron and Frank, 2014).

Whilst some academics have expressed that RP is a form of pornography, these views are far outweighed by those who hold that pornography is not an accurate representation. In addition to those already cited, other academics who refute this term are McGlynn and Rackley (2016), who are concerned that the use of the term pornography may be distracting governments by suggesting that not only must images first be pornographic before they can be considered unlawful, but also that perpetrators must be motivated by a desire for sexual gratification. For Maddocks (2019) the use of the term pornography blurs the lines of content that was created privately, with sexual material that was created for mass availability. To some extent, this view is supported by Franks (2016: 15) who states that “...*creating explicit images...in the context of a private, intimate relationship...is not equivalent to creating pornography*”, though adds that the image becomes pornographic in cases of RP because it transforms from something private to a form a public entertainment. However, these pornographic narratives carry connotations of commercialism (Worthington, 2019) and forces a new identity upon victims as professional actors (Maddocks, 2019). In order to demonstrate that RP is not a form of entertainment, victims have sought to remove their content from the internet as a means of reclaiming their real-online identities (Maddocks, 2019). Although the literature that has been explored in this section is primarily opinion based, arguments lean more towards the need for a change in language in order to alter the cultural understandings. In her work, Sebastian (2017) identifies how initially the RP label was effective in gaining the attention of media outlets and legal prosecutors, but in order to be symbolically helpful, calls for the term to better reflect the issues of consent and privacy.

2.5 RP in a Legal Framework and the Importance of Language

Currently, RP in the UK is categorised as a communications offence and not a SO, meaning victims who report their experiences have no automatic right to anonymity (*The Independent*, 2019). This has presented issues in prosecuting RP since figures released in June 2018 revealed that 1 in 3 cases were dropped before making it to court, emphasising that the lack of anonymity is a barrier to victims

seeking appropriate justice (RPH, 2019). This view is further reinforced by a recent study conducted by McGlynn *et al.*, (2019) in which they interviewed 25 survivors of RP and found that a lack of anonymity would restrict them from reporting their experience to the police. As referenced in the project's main introduction, legislation to criminalise RP has been a fairly recent development, but what exists at present is a series of ongoing campaigns to amend this on the basis it is "...*inconsistent, outdated and confusing...*" (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019: 12). Other academics, in particular Bloom (2014) have previously spoken about the need for RP to be considered a SO due to its similarities to sexual offending including aspects of harassment, power and control. In taking this view further, the connection between RP and SO's is examined by Bates (2016) who summarises that men who expose intimate images of women enjoy the power they are able to exert. These arguments are familiar with feminist perspectives of sexual abuse, since such a theory would argue that the abuse is directed towards the needs of men to control women. This can be applied in the context of RP, since as Gillespie (2015) confirms, RP removes the right for a woman to control her own body, since the images emphasise the sexual identity of the victim. These debates are applicable to the wider discussions about RP terminology, especially since a survivor made use of the term 'cyber rape' to describe her experience.

The standpoint of some researchers that view RP as a form of sexual abuse has directed many scholars to consider substitute definitions in their work. An early alternative in terms of vocabulary was Image Based Sexual Exploitation (IBSE) (Powell, 2010). One further example which has already been referred to in the scope of this work is the phrase IBSA, a term preferred by McGlynn and Rackley (2017) whilst Franks (2016) has made use of the term Non-consensual Pornography (NCP). According to Maddocks (2018), both IBSA and NCP aim to cover the same range of social harms but differ in their emphasis on the offence since IBSA is focused on the effects upon victims whilst NCP is concerned with the product itself, i.e. 'pornography'. The introduction of these alternative vocabularies has not just been for research papers, but to be instrumental in legal reform. In Australia and New Zealand, the term IBSA is used much more predominately than the well versed, RP (Pacheco *et al.*, 2019) and work continues to introduce this term in the UK (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). The use of language is seen as an important factor

in criminalising behaviours, since as McGlynn and Rackley (2016) note, “...*the law can only achieve...[its]...purpose if the label applied to the crime is the right one*”, further adding that in their opinion, RP, is the wrong one. A similar view is shared by Sebastian (2017) who has highlighted the need for neutral language in criminal offences since not only can language cause an obstruction to justice, but it can also have a negative impact upon victims. In concentrating specifically on RP, Sebastian (2017) alludes to the fact that the use of the word revenge brings with it a set of assumptions, which can inaccurately express that an individual has gained revenge through the distribution of non-consensual images. Recently, it has been announced that the UK will review the existing legislation with a view of providing better rights to victims of RP (BBC News, 2019).

2.6 Victim Blaming in SO's

Victim blaming in SO's has been transpiring for decades and stems from assumptions about the correct societal conduct for women. Although blame towards victims is often categorised as either characterological or behavioural (van der Bruggen and Grubb, 2014) it is the latter which is most applicable to those who have been a victim of sexual offending. Behavioural blame is associated with how a victim has behaved within a particular situation (Sleath and Bull, 2010). For instance, in discussing rape, Perilloux *et al.*, (2014: 81) say that “*Victim-blaming is...associated with victim behaviours such as prior willingness to have a consensual romantic contact with the victimizer, wearing revealing clothing or accompanying one's date to his home*”. The relevance of this to RP is emphasised by Pina *et al.*, (2017), who summarise that victims of RP may be susceptible to the same stereotypical myths that surround rape victims. An area of particular interest here is the hysteria surrounding sexting, an activity which Murray (2016) says has meant a large proportion of individuals have in their possession, images of others in a sexualised manner. Ling and Bertel (2013) would consider this problematic, since they argue that it is easy for the person featured in the image to lose control of its distribution. Even Delaney (2017) warns that individuals who have sent, or have given thought to sexting should consider RP as a possibility and this view was more recently echoed by a Conservative Minister who suggested that the safest way to avoid RP was to not share intimate images (*The Mirror*, 2019). As it is predominantly women who are more likely to be victims of RP (Worthington, 2019),

it has been suggested that these views represent a double standard, where emphasis is placed on women to alter their behaviour (Hill, 2015).

In elaborating on this point, Hill's (2015) position is that the advice not to send sexualised images is an inadequate solution, since it subdues women's sexual independence but also reiterates gender imbalances. A similar view is evidenced by Wood *et al.*, (2015), who draw attention to a study whereby women were said to be labelled as sluts for sending explicit images whereas men could be expected to receive status among their peers. They add that these views represent society's gender-bias towards women and the way in which they should behave sexually. Such a culture of victim blaming fails to recognise statistics that suggest women are not prone to sending sexually explicit images carelessly, choosing to consider the risks or wait until a level of trust had been established (Samimi and Alderson, 2014). Moreover, a study by Drouin and Tobin (2014) found that over half of the participants had felt pressure to engage in sexting with intimate partners. Further investigation suggests that sexting has created a sorority of victim blaming for those affected by RP. For instance, in a passage in their book, Garcia and Hoffmester (2017) claim that opponents of RP criminalisation argue that any harm is self-inflicted, since victims initially permitted the images to be taken. For Fairbairn (2015), these outlooks condone a sense of blaming, where women are held accountable for their own victimisation. Attributing blame to the victim in cases of RP can be seen as a way for perpetrators to justify their actions. A central contention by Hall and Hearn (2018) is that this is related to the viewing of mainstream pornography and the way in which men come to view women as sexual objects. They argue that men condone their actions, as they assert that their means in humiliating someone is no worse than what already exists on the internet.

2.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to highlight the existing literature relating to the terminology of RP. As demonstrated throughout, there is a growing body of literature on the subject matter and while the literature presented can partially answer the projects CRQ's, a fundamental drawback is that some of these insights have typically appeared in journals as academic commentary, neglecting to address if such views are represented by a wider sample. This study is novel in that it has

the potential to add value by CDM these existing views via a qualitative means. In summarising this review, a number of key themes have been established from the literature:

Firstly, what constitutes RP is no longer based upon the typical relational scenarios and there are shared understandings among researchers that RP can appear in many forms and is an act that is not always motivated by a desire for revenge.

Most academics agree that the use of the term revenge is problematic due to the different motivations, but the use of the term pornography is contested and tends to divide opinion.

Some academics have unpacked the use of language in criminalising certain behaviours, arguing how the term RP can be obstructive to those seeking justice. Equally, there is ongoing work in the UK to have RP reclassified as a SO.

Finally, academics have drawn attention to the proposed solutions to combat RP which they argue can incite victim blaming due to the emphasis on restricting sexual autonomy.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the projects methodological approach, drawing attention to the preferred research methods and sample selection, as well as highlighting the chosen processes for data collection and analysis. Due to the sensitive and intrusive nature of conducting research around the topic of 'pornography' (Peter and Valkenburg, 2016), this chapter is also concerned with addressing the ethical considerations and possible limitations of undertaking such research. With these research components in mind, the proceeding literature will detail each of these in turn, providing an in-depth rationale for the chosen methods. Since it has been suggested that social research is centred around the "*...philosophical aspects of epistemology and ontology*" (Walliman, 2016: 12), this chapter appropriately begins with an exploration of the methodological stance of the researcher. In this first section, the researcher will argue their selected research paradigm, making reference to the guiding principles that upheld a purely qualitative approach to answering the CRQ. The second section will concentrate on how the researcher achieved access to the desired sample number (n=8), but also draw conclusions about the reliability of any possible generalisations. The third section will evidence the moral dilemmas of conducting criminological research, but equally show how the research project achieved compliance with ethical guidelines. The fourth section is structured around the use of the data collection tools elected by the researcher (vignettes; semi structured interviews), the procedure undertaken with research participants, before finally leading onto a discussion of the systematic method for data analysis. Throughout this chapter, the researcher will seek to embed the strengths and drawbacks of each method within each individual overview.

3.2 Research Strategy

Within social research, paradigms are used to refer to particular frameworks for thinking about and studying the social world (Thomas, 2017). It is therefore unsurprising that the chosen research philosophy in any study is said to underpin what the researcher perceives to be truth, reality and knowledge (Ryan, 2018).

More typically, these components are often referred to as epistemology and ontology. According to Walliman (2016), epistemology relates to what can be regarded as acceptable knowledge within a given discipline, whilst ontology relates to what exists to be investigated in the social world. The nature of these standpoints is likely to differ between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, since as Bryman (2012) indicates, these methods have different epistemological foundations. Bryman (2012) expands on these fundamental research methods, highlighting that quantitative research relies on a natural scientific approach, whilst qualitative research is concerned with understanding the individuality of humans. In the context of this study, qualitative research methods were applied with an interpretivist stance due to the researcher's ontological perspective that reality can only be understood through individual perceptions of the social world. Consequently, through the use of one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, the researcher sought to obtain understanding of the participants reality towards RP as well as explore their perceptions of the possible connotations of the term. Given that a main focus of this study is to extract rich data that seeks to explain how and why within a certain context, quantitative research methods would have been inapt for this study since the researcher did not have a desire to elicit statistical data for the purpose of formulating generalisations. The use of qualitative research methods will be explored further in the proceeding section.

Opposite to the positivist approach, which emphasises that knowledge is derived from a set of static natural laws (Della Porta and Keating, 2008), interpretivists hold that knowledge exists everywhere and is therefore a socially constructed concept (Thomas, 2017). In that sense, interpretivists refute the positivist notion that reality is observed in the same way by everyone, arguing that individual experiences and perceptions means that there can be no single shared reality (Ryan, 2018). The researcher's epistemological stance follows the interpretivist standpoint because the study is focused on investigating participants perceptions of RP within certain contexts through the use of vignettes, as well as exploring the subjective meaning and application of the individualised words. The researcher therefore agrees that there is a difference between the natural and social sciences and a need for data collection methods that are linked to the participants being studied (Grix, 2010). There are, however, some recognised limitations of utilising an interpretivist stance.

According to Dudovskiy (2016), interpretivism can be open to researcher bias and data collected cannot be considered generalisable. It has already been discussed that generalising findings was not a purpose of this study since it is explorative in nature, but in terms of bias, the researcher did have to consider their own views and how these may impact on the chosen methodology and the interpretation of the research findings. This is what is referred to as being reflexive and its use is considered an integral part of being “...*honest and ethically mature in research practice...*” (Ruby, 1980: 154).

3.3 Why Qualitative Research?

In his work, Kankam (2019) stresses that researchers who give consideration to the interpretivist paradigm have to be aware that interpretivism relies upon data collection methods such as interviews or observations and is therefore closely linked to qualitative research due to its focus on words, as opposed to numbers. In her work, Campbell (2014) suggests that the use of qualitative methods develops the researcher’s strengths in fostering relations with project participants that are both humanistic and interactive, the ability to extract emerging data as well as allowing them to become interpretive in their approach. A main objective of this study is to explore student’s perceptions of the term RP and whilst the preceding literature review confirmed that this is becoming an area of growing interest, most of this literature appears in print as opinion pieces, with little exploration of societal views. Given the unique elements of qualitative enquiry and the standpoint that it is typically useful for discovering data where not much exists (Campbell, 2014), it further reinforced the researcher’s adoption of the qualitative approach. In addition, as many of the recent studies relating to areas of RP have followed a quantitative approach (see Walker *et al.*, 2019; Bond and Tyrrell, 2018; Pina *et al.*, 2017) the researcher has sought an opportunity to bridge the gap in the literature by researching RP from a qualitative position.

According to Bernard (2011), methods do not belong to particular disciplines, rather, the questions posed may change, but ultimately, methods belong to all researchers. In exploring this theme further, qualitative studies are concerned with answering the ‘what, why and how’ questions, as opposed to the ‘how many or how much’ questioning preferred by quantitative researchers (Tuffour, 2017). Consequently, it

is widely agreed that qualitative research is different from quantitative research (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). Qualitative research as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016: 7) is based on the “...*pursuit of understanding the ways that people see, view, approach and experience the world...*”. Therefore, the researcher felt that qualitative methods could offer value in terms of generating rich textual data that could be explored for perceptions, narratives and shared understandings. Traditionally, quantitative research has been considered the dominant method because of the ease in applying scientific rigor to the process (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). However, more recently, qualitative researchers have sought to validate the integrity of their work through various means including credibility, consistency, trustworthiness and applicability, therefore ensuring rigorous analysis (Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016). While it can be seen that qualitative research is much more difficult to validate because of the absence of numerical boundaries, the researcher aimed to overcome this by conveying an accurate account of participants perceptions and reaching plausible conclusions from the data collected (Caulfield and Hill, 2014).

3.4 Sample and Access

Having opted to utilise qualitative methods, the researcher gave consideration to how to access a sample through which appropriate data could be obtained to meet the objectives of the study. Initially, before the project's aims were formally agreed, the researcher envisaged utilising their professional role of working within the National Probation Service to interview frontline practitioners to understand their perception of RP. A similar study has since been undertaken with regards to police officers (Bond and Tyrell, 2018), however, the HMPPS Research Committee advised that ethical approval would not be granted for an MSc level project. The researcher switched their focus to recruiting participants from a university student population, particularly because of existing research that has sought to determine the prevalence of online sexual activity among young adults (see Englander, 2015; Branch *et al.*, 2017; Shaughnessy *et al.*, 2017). As the study is not calling for a specific professional group, the researcher felt that a convenience sample would be a suitable approach for this study. In essence, a convenience sample involves the selection of research participants because of their availability to the researcher. The use of convenience sampling is typically a favoured

approach in purposive sampling because of its aid in overcoming barriers to research, given that it is both cost and time effective (Taherdoost, 2016). Whilst the use of convenience sampling allows an ease to conducting research, a major disadvantage is that researchers are unable to claim that their findings are representative of a population (Etikan *et al.*, 2015). Although the researcher acknowledges this limitation, the strengths in convenience sampling for this study is based on the assessment that this type of method provides an appropriate starting point for a study where little research exists (Loiselle *et al.*, 2010).

Given the decision to use a convenience sample, it was anticipated that participants would in some way be connected to the researcher which meant acknowledgement that bias may be a limitation of this study (Etikan *et al.*, 2015). Due to the possibility of pre-established relations and the sensitive subject matter, the researcher further acknowledged another form of bias; social desirability (SDB). SDB refers to the tendency of participants to respond to questions in a way that they feel is socially desirable in order to obtain the approval of others (King and Bruner, 2000). In order to reduce this form of bias, the researcher acted in accordance with findings that suggest anonymity and confidentiality must be adhered to, but also by ensuring that participants were made aware of the consequences to data validity by providing inaccurate responses (Tripodi and Bender, 2010). As a further defence to reduce bias, an exclusion criterion was imposed on this study that restricted the direct experiences of either RP perpetrators or RP victims. Despite the limitations associated with the use of convenience sampling, its use is appropriate for this study given that it is qualitative in nature and “...*the aim is not to make statistical generalisations to a wider population*” (Newburn, 2017: 1009). The researcher undertook (n=8) in-depth, semi-structured interviews which was in line with the desired sample number when the researcher established the project. Even though the researcher did not have an aim of generalising their findings, they did attempt to improve the representativeness of the sample by stratifying it (Thomas, 2017). With this in mind, both undergraduate (n=4) and postgraduate (n=4) students were recruited from a number of academic disciplines including History, Psychology and Architecture, from across a number of institutions including the University of Lincoln (n=3), the University of Derby (n=2), the University of Nottingham (n=1), Sheffield Hallam University (n=1) and the University of St Andrews (n=1). The researcher

also aimed for and achieved a gender balance of male (n=4) and female (n=4) participants.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

According to Cowburn (2017), any given approach to data collection will highlight ethical considerations which must be explored in order to ensure that research participants are respected and treated fairly. With this in mind, this study was conducted in conjunction with the University of Derby's Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2013), the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and direction was also sought from the British Society of Criminology's Code of Ethics (2015).

The first ethical consideration of relevance to this study is that of informed consent, a factor that constitutes a fundamental aspect of conducting most primary research (Caulfield and Hill, 2014). Before obtaining informed consent, each participant was provided with a covering letter [Appendix A] developed by the researcher which summarised key information relating to the study, highlighted any possible risks as well as verified that participation was optional and on a voluntary basis. The purpose of the covering letter was to demonstrate the additional steps undertaken by the researcher to protect participants from undue pressure, harm or coercion (Chamberlain, 2013). Once the information within the covering letter had been agreed with, participants were presented with an informed consent form [Appendix B] which was developed by the researcher in line with the characteristics of consent set out by Finch and Fafinski (2016). In addition to providing further information about the study, the informed consent form also provided participants with their unconditional rights to confidentiality and anonymity and included the stipulations regarding data withdrawal. In practice, this translated into the individual assignment of a unique identifier code to participants which would aid the researcher in actioning any data withdrawal requests prior to the project's formal submission and the option for participants to have a pseudonym assigned to further protect their real identity, which has been suggested can ensure the reliability of collected data (Sibinga, 2018). Following interview, participants were sent debriefing material [Appendix C] which reinforced their individual rights, defined how collected data would be managed and made a requirement for participants to further consent to

their responses being put forward for analysis and therefore possible inclusion in the final draft of the study. For the participants who agreed, they were reminded that this would not impact on their right to anonymity. Since Mason (2018) highlights the complexities in interpreting when full informed consent has been received, the researcher felt that the use of debriefing material was crucial in ensuring a rigorous ethical process.

Another ethical consideration of relevance to this study is that of participant confidentiality, since it has been suggested that the “...*reassurance of water-tight confidentiality is arguably the make or break of sensitive research*” (Davies and Francis, 2018: 216). Each interview undertaken took place between the researcher and the participant, with no third parties present. Interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of transcribing at a later date and following interview, these were transferred to a personal, password protected computer at the first possible opportunity. The transcribing process was undertaken solely by the researcher, which was done in an appropriate location, ensuring that sensitive information could not be viewed by third parties. During transcription, information that could lead to the identification of participants was redacted and on successful transcription, the audio files were deleted. Electronic copies of the transcribed interviews were stored on a personal, password protected computer, with back-up copies saved on a separate, password protected computer attached to the university server. Hard copies of transcribed interviews were stored in a private, lockable cabinet, with the researcher taking care to ensure that these were kept separate from the signed consent forms to further protect the participants identity. Collected data was processed only for the purpose of this study and was not shared with any third parties. Equally, access to data was restricted to only the researcher and the assigned Supervisor of the project. Prior to interview, participants were made aware of instances where the researcher may need to breach confidentiality, i.e. the possibility of harm or the disclosure of unreported offences, since the confession of such information would place an obligation on the researcher to inform the relevant authorities.

Finally, it is important to consider harm and risk in relation to this study, since social researchers must be sensitive to the potential effects of their work (Caulfield and

Hill, 2014). With this in mind, the researcher took appropriate steps to ensure their own safety and the safety of the participants during the data collection stage. Given that the sample in this study were used for convenience and were in some way known to the researcher, no physical risks were envisaged in undertaking this study. The interviews were undertaken in a place of comfort and safety for the participants, with the majority of the data collection taking place on university campuses. Although the relative risk of physical harm was not of concern in this study, the researcher did acknowledge the sensitivity of the subject matter and given that the vignettes described various instances of NCIS, there was the possibility of emotional distress. In order to mitigate emotional harm, the language used in the questions posed to participants were explorative in nature but were not framed around the participants individual experiences. As such, participants were not required to divulge sensitive or upsetting personal information, since the study was concerned with seeking out their perceptions only. Furthermore, participants were reminded before the interview began that they were not required to answer any questions which they were uncomfortable with, but also their right to a break at any point during the interview. As a final measure, the debriefing material distributed following each interview contained information on various avenues of support for participants, such as the Samaritans, the RPH and the University of Derby Student Wellbeing Service.

3.6 Data Collection

During the initial stages of project development, the original methodology proposed the use of vignettes in focus groups. Focus groups as explained by Wincup (2017) are becoming a common tool in data collection and the researcher's inclusion of vignettes was underpinned by findings by Brondani *et al.*, (2008), which found they supported group participation, removing the need for facilitators to be concerned with attempting to engage individual participants. In social research, vignettes are described as *"...short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond"* (Finch, 1984: 105). The researcher acknowledged that there are possible implications for data collection in using vignettes, since investigation by Hughes and Huby (2004) stressed that vignettes which are too hypothetical can impact on participants responses, since they are more likely to respond as someone they

know would, as opposed to imparting their own attitudes or beliefs. As a means of challenging this, Finch (1987) recommends that vignettes should be as realistic as possible and in following this guidance, the researcher created three vignettes based upon the current literature surrounding RP [Appendix D], with each depicting a different example of NCIS. Following a review of the main aims of this study, the researcher made the decision to alter the methodology and obtain primary data collection through the use of vignettes in semi-structured interviews, largely because it was felt that group settings would not allow the scope to explore individual viewpoints, potentially jeopardising the quality of data collected. While the use of focus groups would have been beneficial in terms of collecting a vast amount of data over a short period of time, research by Smithson (2000) explored the possible limitations, with themes such as dominant participants and normative discourses emerging. As semi-structured interviews are recognised for enhancing the knowledge building dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee (Brinkmann, 2014), the researcher felt comfortable that this approach would meet the aims of the study.

The data collection stage began with two informal pilot studies which allowed the researcher the opportunity to refine the approach in preparation for the main study. In her work, Wincup (2017) holds pilot studies as an integral part of semi-structured interviewing, as these provide the researcher with a safe space to assess the appropriateness and order of the questions being posed to participants. After a review of this process, the researcher elected to revise the schedule of questions in order to extract data more aligned with the projects CRQ's and this schedule was subsequently approved by the project supervisor. As part of the official data collection, interviews began with a series of general questions relating to RP and the participants understanding of the individual terms. The first vignette was then read, and participants were asked a series of questions about the terminology of RP and whether they felt that was a term that could be applied to the case they had just heard. This process continued until all three vignettes had been explored and interview closed with some further questions about RP. The duration of interviews ranged from between 45 minutes to over 1 hour and the researcher found that the semi-structured approach provided the flexibility to deviate from the predetermined questions. This was particularly useful in probing during points of interest to gain a

greater insight, offering prompts where participants required further clarification, but also in allowing participants “...to say *what they really feel*” (McNeill and Chapman, 2005: 38). Whilst there are limitations with the use of semi-structured interviews, the most distinct shortcoming that impacted upon the researcher was the issue of time. For instance, Bryman (2012) reports that transcription is a lengthy process and five to six hours are required to transcribe just one hour of audio. The researcher found this estimation to be an accurate representation in their own transcribing. Although this process felt somewhat repetitive, it did engross the researcher in their own data, providing an opportunity to verify exactly what was said (Walliman, 2016).

3.7 Data Analysis

Just as quantitative data which has been collected requires systematic analysis in order to identify distinct trends, the same also applies to qualitative data sets, although it is recognised that this type of analysis is based upon different ideas (Braun *et al.*, 2014). While it is held that there is no single, correct means of analysing qualitative data (Mortensen, 2019), one of the most commonly used among researchers is thematic analysis (Caulfield and Hill, 2014). In discussing thematic analysis, proponents Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) describe it as “...*a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data*”. It was this view of thematic analysis which the researcher used to underpin their own analysis of the data collected from undertaking a series of semi-structured interviews in order to establish patterns among participants perceptions. The researcher felt that this mode of analysis was best aligned with the aims of the study since thematic analysis has an advantage of being theoretically flexible (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In the context of this study, the researcher felt that this was of significant importance as since a specific hypothesis was not being tested, an inductive thematic analysis could be undertaken which allows coding and themes to be developed by the data (Braun *et al.*, 2014). The researcher also gave consideration to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, however, this method was not implemented due to its focus on subjectivity, as opposed to concentrating on participants objective accounts (Flowers *et al.*, 1999). In their work, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-stage framework for conducting a thematic analysis:

familiarisation; initial coding; identify themes; review themes; define themes and the final write-up.

As it has already been stated, the researcher connected with their data through the transcription of recorded interviews, meaning that the researcher became familiar with the transcribed data and was able to identify prospective themes early on. As some of the interviews were longer than others, the researcher found that the data needed to be condensed and this is where the application of the initial coding was useful. The researcher manually utilised line-by-line coding and used coloured highlighting to distinguish between codes. Once all transcripts had been coded, the researcher moved onto step three and the process of generating themes. As the researcher wanted the data to suggest themes, recurring comments or topics as well as similarities or differences in responses were of interest to develop. Although the researcher sought a balance of participants in relation to gender and level of study, this was not done so that these could be developed into themes. In order to review themes, some researchers promote the use of analysis software such as NVivo (see King, 2004). However, the researcher opted to maintain a manual approach to their analysis. While this meant that additional themes could have been overlooked, it has been suggested that NVivo can further remove the researcher from the context of their data (Zamawe, 2015). In manually reviewing the themes, the researcher followed the guidance provided by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) and looked for whether there was sufficient data to justify certain themes and whether any themes overlapped and therefore needed to be separated. Finally, the researcher defined themes by undertaking further analysis in order to establish the 'essence' of each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92).

3.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to guide the reader through the purpose of the research, demonstrating how a thorough study was designed, constructed and implemented in order to address the projects CRQ's. Throughout, the researcher has comprehensively referenced their own stance, the methodological approach as well as provided a succinct overview of the data collection tools utilised and the method used for data analysis. Given that a principle component in conducting research is the need to highlight any limitations with transparency (Chasan-Taber,

2014), the researcher has also sought to identify these constructively, evidencing how such barriers were overcome. The researcher believes that this study presents a novel approach to researching RP due to its focus upon utilising qualitative methods, since quantitative methods appear to have been the preferred approach in previous studies. More recently, the researcher found that vignettes had been used as part of a study exploring perceptions of victim blaming in cases of RP (see Bothamley and Tully, 2018), but given that this study also utilised a quantitative approach, the study did not explore why these views were held. Therefore, the researcher holds that this study will bridge the gap and add to the growing literature on RP by providing rich data exploring individual perceptions on the terminology of RP. Although students were not initially the desired sample, the ease of access to this population meant that the project was completed without complications or the need for additional ethical considerations or approvals. Whilst the sample size is small ($n=8$) and not considered representative, the researcher is confident that this study will create a foundation for further, more in depth research.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this work, the researcher has highlighted that the central aim of this study is to explore students' perceptions of the term, RP. As outlined in Chapter Three, the researcher felt that the most appropriate means in achieving this would be through the use of qualitative methods. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasise the findings from the (n=8) semi-structured interviews that the researcher undertook with participants, but also analyse the data in order to CDM the literature set out in Chapter Two.

4.2 Identification and Categorisation of Themes

As aforementioned in Chapter Three, the researcher utilised Braun and Clarke's (2006) process for the identification and categorisation of themes. This section is therefore comprised of the analysis of three main themes; *Interpretations of RP*; *Is it Really RP?* and *The Problem with the Term RP*, which were derived from the data collected and therefore reflect the participants views towards RP terminology. The researcher selected these particular themes for analysis due to their frequency but also the relevance to the project's CRQ's. The first theme is based on participants perceptions of the general notion of RP, but also their definitions of the individualised words. The second theme developed from participants views towards the perpetration of RP and the application of the individualised words in relation to the vignettes developed by the researcher. The final theme to be analysed was informed by participants remarks on the problems with the term, RP. The remainder of this chapter will carefully deliberate these findings, providing an academic analysis.

4.3 Theme One: Interpretations of Revenge, Pornography and RP

After reviewing the project's CRQ's, the researcher felt it was appropriate to begin this analysis with an exploration of how the research participants understood RP, but also their interpretations of the individualised words. This theme is therefore separated into three subthemes; (a) Definitions of RP; (b) Definitions of Revenge and (c) Definitions of Pornography.

Subtheme One: “The publishing of sexually explicit images”: Definitions of RP

The participants interviewed were forthcoming with their own understanding of RP. In some way, all (n=8) participants recognised RP as the dissemination of sexualised images of another:

“...the distribution of personal and sensitive images” (Sean, L3)

“...the posting or publishing of sexually explicit images or videos...” (Adam, L2)

In delving further into analysing the initial responses, only (n=4) participants made reference to the absence of consent in the distribution of sexualised images, a component considered crucial in the criminalisation of RP (McGlynn and Rackley, 2017). Whilst this figure could show a lack of understanding of RP among participants, comparison with national statistics demonstrates that understanding is limited. In a study by Bond and Tyrell (2018) looking at police perceptions of RP, 39.5% of 783 respondents revealed that they had significant gaps in their knowledge. All (n=8) participants felt that RP should be a criminal offence and a recurring notion was the need for consequences for perpetrators:

“...you shouldn’t be able to just humiliate someone like that...” (Lisa, L25)

“...there should be consequences for ‘stealing’ something that is essentially private” (Jane, L33)

Why there had to be consequences brought a shared theme among participants relating to the invasion of privacy and RP being a form of abuse:

“...you allow people to prey upon vulnerable individuals and invade people’s privacy...” (Emily, L16)

“...publication of those images is often to cause harm, so it can be a form of assault on somebody...” (Adam, L23)

These findings firstly support the view of Citron and Franks (2014), who hold that sexual privacy is a fundamental right in order to protect sexual autonomy, and secondly, McGlynn and Rackley (2016), who have long argued for RP to be

recognised as a form of abuse. Despite participants views leaning towards support for RP criminalisation, only (n=4) participants were able to confidently say if RP was currently a criminal offence in the UK. Although awareness has been raised via government strategies (Ministry of Justice, 2015), this finding could indicate a need for more attention in this area.

Although portrayals of RP often set a scorned ex-partner narrative, only (n=1) participant specifically made reference to RP as occurring within intimate relationships when they presumed it was committed by a “...former partner...” (Adam, L3). (N=1) participant felt that there would need to be a connection between people for RP to occur due to the interpersonal nature of the term: “...you have to know the person in order to enact revenge on them...” (Emily, L6). This has been a problem with the label elsewhere, as in research undertaken by McGlynn *et al.*, (2019), a victim found she was unable to pursue a case of RP, as the police felt that her experience was not fuelled by a desire for revenge. On the opposite to this, participants were able to recognise other instances in which RP can occur, including hacking (n=8) sextortion (n=2) and fakeporn (n=1), demonstrating an understanding that RP can and does occur outside of intimate relationships.

Subtheme Two: “Revenge can be something that is reactionary...but it can also be irrational”: Definitions of Revenge

A subtheme that the researcher identified from the data surrounded participants perceptions of the notion of revenge. All (n=8) participants offered a description of their understanding of revenge, with a shared consensus among the majority that revenge was an action in response to a perceived wrongdoing:

“...it means getting back at someone...to get some form of satisfaction”

(Catherine, L35)

“...it is trying to hurt someone...you believe to have done you wrong in some way”

(Emily, L22)

These views typically uphold the more general description of revenge as being a personal response to a form of unjust treatment (Gollwitzer and Denzler, 2009). Whilst it is clear that participants felt revenge had an element of retribution, (n=1)

participant emphasised that revenge didn't "...always have to be something...reactionary" (Alec, L38), while (n=1) participant felt the original offence could have been "minor...but perceived to be much bigger" (Lisa, L37). A further (n=1) participant placed emphasis on the perceived element, suggesting that interpretations of personal offence are subjective (Adam). This could be connected to the role of emotions, which have been recognised as a factor in the desire to retaliate against others (Gollwitzer *et al.*, 2011). From the participants responses, only (n=2) initially described revenge as something that is developed from emotion:

"...you're doing it out of some form of emotion..." (Jane, L42)

"It's an emotional response to a past event in which you have felt harm..." (Adam, L30)

However, when considering cases of RP, other participants reflected on emotion and felt that it could serve as a motivation for perpetration:

"He was hurt, upset, she had left him" (Catherine, L77)

"...he was experiencing some emotions; anger, upset" (Alec, L76)

Although motivations will be explored in more detail under a different theme, what can be seen is the formulation of views that coincide with the perpetrator's accounts of "...creating an inner sense of restored...justice" (Hall and Hearn, 2018: 46). It was noted from the literature in Chapter Two that revenge is often sought to re-establish balance, but when considering the desired outcomes of enacting revenge in general, perceptions were shared among participants as being for; humiliation (n=2), control (n=2), embarrassment (n=2) and the infliction of harm (n=2).

Subtheme Three: "It is imagery with the intention of stimulating sexuality": Definitions of Pornography

The participants responses to questions around definitions of pornography informed this final subtheme. From the data collected, the researcher inferred that participants felt that pornography could be described as sexually explicit material:

“...anything that is sexually explicit, so whether that is literature, photographs, videos or audio” (Emily, L25)

“...it has to depict people engaging in a sexual way” (Alec, L47)

Typically, general definitions of pornography extend beyond it just capturing bareness and a defining factor of something being pornographic has been whether it can be used as a source of sexual arousal (Rea, 2001). In some way, all (n=8) participants emphasised this point in distinguishing something as pornographic, which led some of the participants to give consideration to context and draw distinctions between something that is sexually explicit and something that is graphic:

“...a woman giving birth could be graphic, but it is not pornographic because there is no sexual element to the situation” (Jane, L51)

“...there is...nude paintings and photographs that clearly aren't pornography because the intention is not to stimulate something sexually” (Sean, L38)

In association with this, (n=1) participant felt that pornography could *“...cover just about anything that people find arousing...”* (Alec, L45), however, this view overlooks the cultural position of pornography. Bell (2007) identifies that all cultures have expressions that can be considered pornographic, but underlines that this can differ between cultures. Only (n=1) participant made reference to pornography being something that can be culturally defined, distinguishing between African Tribes where women's breasts are exposed as they are not regarded as sexual and the representation of breasts within Western societies (Adam).

Mainstream pornography is seen as a commercial genre of human sexuality (Hardy, 2008), which was a point made by (n=1) of the participants when they associated a link between pornography and sexuality (Sean). The commercialism of pornography was outlined in Chapter Two, but only (n=1) participant referred to pornography as an 'industry' when they spoke of the *“...manufacture and distribution...”* of sexually explicit content (Adam, L35). In what was equally surprising, only (n=2) participants initially discussed the role of consent in defining pornography, with both upholding the view that non-consensual forms of

pornography can exist. Particularly within the context of RP, these views hold weight since Powell and Henry (2017) would argue it is difficult to differentiate between what is consensual and what is non-consensual material on pornography websites.

4.4 Theme Two: Is it Really RP?

The characteristics of what participants felt constituted RP were found throughout the data and this theme is concerned with analysing participants views towards the vignettes. The three vignettes depicted; (1) the disclosure of sexual images of a female on social media by a male following a relationship breakdown (V1); (2) the showing of a sexualised image of a female by a male to group of friends (V2) and (3) the threat to release a sexualised video of a male by a criminal gang following cybersex (V3). The data from this theme fell into three distinct subthemes; (a) Labelling RP; (b) Is it Always Motivated by Revenge? and (c) Is the Content Really Pornographic?

Subtheme One: “He did it after they broke up”: Labelling RP

On the surface, all (n=8) participants felt that V1 could be considered an example of RP, with a recurring theme from (n=7) participants focusing upon the intimate relationship:

“...because she has broken up with him...then he has gone and published something online” (Catherine, L70)

“...because he was hurting from the end of the relationship...” (Adam, L63)

As seen from some of the responses, participants placed emphasis upon the status of the relationship in determining whether V1 was a case of RP. This was interesting given that only (n=1) participant had previously made reference to an intimate relationship when defining RP, however, it is possible that the scenario evoked participants perceptions of what is regarded as the more ‘typical’ case of RP (Smartt, 2017). Although the relationship was stressed by participants, reference to the legislation in the earlier chapters identified that this is not a prerequisite for IBSA to occur.

When considering the other reasons for the RP label, it is important to note that only (n=1) participant made reference to the distribution of images without consent:

“...even though they were sent to Ben with consent...he has taken that out of context...” (Alec, L73)

Given the limited identification of non-consensual sharing as a defining factor, this finding would support academic arguments for the need for more attention to be placed on perpetrators actions (McGlynn and Rackley, 2016).

With regards to V2, (n=6) of the participants were of the view that it could not be an example of RP because there was no element of retaliation:

“...I don't think that there was a revenge element as it's not like Sally hurt Dan...”
(Catherine, L197)

“...no element of that is really revenge...it hasn't been done in reaction to anything” (Sean, L173)

Such views highlights one of the problems with the term RP as referred to in Chapter Two. Although emphasis was mainly placed upon the absent motivation of the perpetrator, the (n=6) participants did not justify the actions of the perpetrator, stressing that a sexualised image was to some degree, circulated without consent. (N=1) of the participants however felt that the image was not put *“...into the public sphere in a permanent way...”* (Jane, L193) and therefore reported a difference in the severity when compared with V1. Despite this, Ringrose and Harvey (2017) hold that this type of behaviour feeds into the heteronormative performances that create conquering masculinity. Unlike with V1, only a small number of participants (n=2) felt that the term RP could be applied, which was based upon the breach of trust (Alec) and the sharing of the image without consent (Adam). As outlined in Chapter Two, some academics have sought a move away from the term RP, however, the latter views would be supported due to the need to condemn the actions that ignore the rights of women for the rituals of 'male bonding' (O'Neill, 2018).

When considering V3, none of the (n=8) participants felt that the term RP could be applied, with the participants drawing connections between the vignette and other criminal offences such as blackmail or coercion:

“...it sounds more like blackmail...” (Emily, L219)

“...it is closer to other crimes such as exploitation or blackmail...” (Sean, L311)

This was not an unusual find as literature has tended to suggest that sextortion is only a case of RP if it involves individuals whom have been in an intimate relationship (Brandl, 2019). However, an early study found that this can be common among people who have met online (Wolak and Finkelhor, 2016), as V3 depicted. However, given the responses upholding relationships as a determining factor with regards to V1, it would have been noteworthy to compare if views had altered if V3 depicted the non-consensual sharing within the context of an intimate relationship.

Notwithstanding these findings, (n=2) of the participants did feel that V3 could have some shared characteristics with RP. In examining these views, (n=1) participant felt that the sexualised video had been obtained one way and then used against the expressed intent (Sean), whilst (n=1) suggested that the failure to comply with demands could stimulate retaliation through the sharing of the video (Lisa). These views support the wider literature, in particular the research from McGlynn *et al.*, (2019: 3) which calls for more understandings that NCIS is just one form of IBSA and that victims can also have *“...images taken, threatened and shared without their agreement”*.

Subtheme Two: “There can be a range of motives”: Is it Always Motivated by Revenge?

Despite all of the (n=8) participants labelling V1 a case of RP, revenge was not considered the primary motive among participants as control emerged from the data set as the most common motive:

“...they broke up and he was no longer in control...” (Alec, L77)

“...he was probably trying to exert control one last time...” (Jane, L101)

This motive was highlighted by (n=6) participants and when (n=2) of these participants were asked if control was the same as revenge, the participants were unable to assign a correlation. The researcher acknowledges that control may have been the most dominant motive due to V1 depicting the male as having controlling tendencies, however, research by McGlynn *et al.*, (2019) found that survivors of RP perceived control to be prime reason for their abuse. The remaining (n=2) participants indirectly made reference to the motive being revenge, however, none of the (n=8) participants felt that the victim had done anything wrong in ending the relationship, or sending intimate images as seen in the below extract from (n=1) respondent:

“...we shouldn’t be passing judgements on what she should or shouldn’t have done” (Jane, L110)

Although most academics would disagree with the label of revenge as referenced in the literature from Chapter Two, removing the focus of the victim’s actions would be welcomed, since it has been argued that criminalisation should not extend to the consensual taking of images (Nair, 2019).

The majority of participants were clear that V2 was not an appropriate case for the application of the RP label, which is reflective in participants perceptions towards motivations. The most common motive emerging from this vignette related to a form of chauvinist mentality:

“...acting in line with preconceived notions about what it is to be a ‘man’...”
(Adam, L145)

“...he obviously thought what he was doing was entertaining...” (Catherine, L203)

On some level, all (n=8) participants were of a similar view that there was a *“...show and tell nature...”* (Sean, L187) to the perpetrator’s actions. In the literature, these findings are endorsed by Male Peer Support Theory (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2013), which suggests that men are likely to associate with men who share the same dominant beliefs, including beliefs that support the abuse of women, which creates a masculine discourse encouraging women to be seen as sexual objects.

Of the (n=4) male participants interviewed, (n=0) reinforced the actions of the perpetrator, however, (n=1) participant did honestly express that if he witnessed something similar he would not feel compelled to intervene as he would not find such behaviour to be malicious (Sean). Such bystander attitudes have been linked to popular culture which accepts sexual violence towards women and a way of implicating bystanders has been to extend their behaviours to the continuum of sexual abuses (Maddocks, 2018). It is possible that the other (n=3) male participants were of a similar way, but as they were known to the researcher, SDB may have impacted upon their responses. Of the (n=4) male participants, (n=2) did postulate that such behaviour operates both ways, with (n=1) participant disclosing that on occasions in university, “...girls would...show their friends pictures of their boyfriend’s dicks” (Alec, L172). Such views should be legitimised, since not all RP is perpetrated against women (Stroud, 2014).

With regards to V3, the scenario alluded to a desire for financial gain by the perpetrators, which was reflected in the motives offered by all (n=8) participants:

“They wanted money from him...” (Catherine, L313)

“They were being guided by the fact that they could get that through blackmail”

(Lisa, L231)

Given that V3 depicted an organised crime group, all (n=8) participants were of the view that the offence was not specific towards the victim, which left many feeling that the word revenge was not applicable. Of the (n=5) participants who were asked if there was a connection between revenge and blackmail, (n=4) were able to separate the two with revenge being seen as reactionary and blackmail being done for a particular gain, whilst (n=1) participant felt that blackmail could be a tool in enacting revenge. In exploring V3 with participants, there was a greater tendency to concentrate on the individual actions of the victim than when compared with V1 or V2. Although the findings were not leaning towards the attribution of blame, (n=7) of the participants felt that the victim had behaved in a way which was naïve by engaging in cybersex with an unknown individual, but all (n=7) described feeling some degree of empathy.

Subtheme Three: “It is someone stimulating a sexual act”: Is the Content Really Pornographic?

When considering the content across all three vignettes, the majority of participants (n=6) felt that the material being shared/at threat of being shared could be considered pornographic. The reasoning for this typically focused upon the sexual nature of the content:

“He is performing something that you see on pornographic websites” (Catherine, L328)

“It’s sexually explicit and it’s in a sexual context” (Jane, L307)

“I would say the context in which it was sent makes it pornographic” (Alec, L178)

Correspondingly, there was also a tendency for participants to focus upon the content being linked to the potential for it to create sexual arousal in the intended audience:

“...the actions were to create sexual arousal and...believe the video would be perceived that way” (Sean, L343)

“The video is him sexually pleasuring himself to a woman doing the same” (Jane, L306)

These views on why participants felt the material was pornographic resonates with the earlier definitions of pornography set out under the first theme. The literature in Chapter Two identified that are some who hold that images shared without consent are not pornographic since they have little in common with images created for mainstream distribution (Henry *et al.*, 2019). In taking this view further, a survivor of RP expressed that *“...there is nothing wrong with being a porn star, but we’re not consenting to that”* (Gallagher, 2019). Despite the vignettes depicting material that was shared non-consensually, this did not dramatically alter the stance of all participants when they further questioned about this:

“I would still hold that a sexually explicit image is pornographic no matter how many people can access it” (Sean, L214)

There appeared differences between something being pornographic and something being considered pornography among participants responses. (n=1) participant who opposed of labelling the material pornographic said:

“...it’s pornographic in the sense that it is sexually explicit, but I wouldn’t say it is pornography as it wasn’t intended for anyone else to view...It wasn’t consensual...” (Lisa, L106)

Even in a recent study, a survivor of RP acknowledged that her images could be regarded as pornographic (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019), further placing the question at hand in turmoil. What can be taken away from participants responses in this subtheme is that RP is in a sense, pornographic material.

4.5 Theme Three: The Problem with the Term RP

This final theme developed from participants perceptions towards some of the problems with the term, RP. Findings from the data are headed under three different subthemes; (a) Negative Connotations for Victims; (b) Support for Changing the Term RP and (c) Views on Making RP a SO.

***“It’s viewed as this non-reality or that it is staged”*: Negative Connotations for Victims**

When exploring how the individualised words may impact upon victims, all (n=8) participants were able to recognise that victims may be treated negatively due to the connotations of the phrase, RP. In beginning with revenge, some participants expressed that it emphasised the actions of the victim:

“I think by calling it that we make people look at the actions of the victim” (Alec, L316)

“...it makes it sound like it was the persons fault...and makes people concentrate on the actions of the victim” (Lisa, L323)

The impression that the use of the word revenge emphasises the actions of the victim was raised by a further (n=2) participants which, particularly in the context of intimate relationships, fuels a narrative that the ending of the relationship was

acrimonious (Daniels, 2014), or suggests that the victim has behaved in a way which could be considered wrongful (Salter and Crofts, 2015). These (n=4) participants all agreed that the use of the word revenge resounded with their own perception of revenge and gave an inaccurate impression that the perpetrator was acting out of a “...*personal vendetta...because the girl did something wrong*” (Catherine, L404), as put by (n=1) participant. According to Maddocks (2019), each time the word revenge is used, it connotes blame to victims and covers the actions of perpetrators. Furthermore, (n=1) participant spoke about the label of revenge lacking any transparency: “*Using an emotion to define a crime doesn’t give it the seriousness or clarity that it needs*” (Jane, L390). This view is supported by the literature since a survivor spoke of her experience in comparison to other crimes: “*It’s not a revenge mugging or burglary or revenge murder*” (Gallagher, 2019), calling for an end to the accentuating of the assumed motive. Research has already alluded to the fact that there is no single motive for perpetration (McGlynn and Rackley, 2019) and as expressed by (n=1) participant, revenge has a lucidity to it which cannot be applied to all situations (Adam). These views resound with the existing literature, where terminology should move away from the assumed motives of the perpetrator (McGlynn *et al.*, 2017).

Despite the popular view among participants that the material shared in cases of RP could be considered pornographic, all (n=8) participants were able to perceive potential problems with its use. For instance, (n=1) participant said: “*Now I have thought about it, I can see the complications...*” (Sean, L398).

In all, (n=3) of the participants associated pornography with negative judgements from society:

“...*there is a lot of stigmatisation around porn...*” (Ricardo, L406)

“*With pornography there is a massive amount of judgement...*” (Catherine, L412)

In reaffirming a view from Chapter Two, Franks (2016) holds that the creation of sexualised context within the confines of a private environment should not be considered the same as creating pornography. It is this view which is relevant to the next set of understandings which emerged from the data:

“Porn is almost viewed as this non-reality...or staged. But what is being shared is very real...” (Jane, L385)

“When you think of pornography, you think of hardcore porn...it is giving people the wrong perception of the actual situation” (Catherine, L415)

As it can be seen, another common view from participants when considering the negative effects of the pornography label was that it had the potential to blur the lines between *“...what is staged...and what is real”* (Alec, L321). These views would support the argument of Maddocks (2019), who similarly holds that the use of the word pornography conflates private consensual media with media for mass consumption.

In considering if the term RP can incite victim blaming, (n=4) of the participants were asked a specific question with regards to this which generated a shared feeling that it could:

“...I can see how it could...it gives an impression that someone has reacted to someone else’s behaviour...” (Emily, L309)

“I think that it gives a perception that they have behaved in a way that made them worthy of having their images shared” (Sean, L441)

As such, the views expressed by participants suggested that the use of the term RP could provoke a sharing of blame between both the perpetrator and the victim. This view was further expanded on by (n=1) volunteer:

“...who would want to go to the Police and say that you have been a victim of RP”
(Ricardo, L302)

This view was based upon how the term RP could alter the victim’s perception of themselves in light of treatment they may receive from professionals. In a recent study by the North Yorkshire Crime Commissioner (2018), almost half of the respondents expressed a feeling that they may be blamed if they were to report their experience to the police.

***“It’s very media sounding”*: Changing the Term RP**

As seen from the previous subtheme, all (n=8) participants identified concerns with the individualised words which could in turn be seen to generate support for a change in the term, RP. Notably, all (n=8) participants expressed that the term is incredibly complex:

“You see a lot that is categorised as RP that once you get thinking actually isn’t”
(Alec, L324)

“...in needs to be defined as something more widespread than just revenge or pornography” (Emily, L286)

An argument emerging from the data related to participants views towards to the application of RP, which participants felt was being stretched to cover a wide array of offences. These views are summarised by McGlynn *et al.*, (2017) who state that the term RP is too narrow and applied too widely. It was mentioned in Chapter Two that the RP moniker emerged as a way to grab headlines and this sensationalised approach was noted by (n=1) participant:

“...it’s very media sounding...it’s a good sound bite for a story...” (Jane, L372)

In a similar view to this, (n=1) participant voiced that he was unsure why we still used this, stating it was *“exploitation”* in whatever form it appears (Sean, L377). It was noted in Chapter Two that the literature has encouraged the use of appropriate language in criminalising offences (Sebastian, 2017) and all (n=8) participants expressed that the term RP should be changed but were unable to formulate alternative terminology. When provided with examples of different definitions used elsewhere, support was evenly split between NCIS (n=4) and IBSA (n=4). The perception of the participants was the need to recognise the different contexts but also the harms:

“I think that NCIS is a more accurate description...it would have a more positive outcome for victims too” (Catherine, L421)

“We need to move away from RP. It makes it sound public...seedy and like the images have been created for a mass audience” (Jane, L383)

Points have been elaborated about the term RP and the potential for it to mislead both policy makers and the public (Maddocks, 2018). The support for a change in the term RP would be supported by the literature since McGlynn and Rackley (2016) hold that the changing of the language in RP would be an important step in challenging sexual coercion. Participants were unsure of how to change the label of RP, with (n=1) participant stating: *“If you were to do a documentary on RP, it would be much more appealing than one on NCIS. Sadly, that term is not click bait”* (Jane, L372)

***“Right now, I don’t think it should be”*: Making RP a SO**

Despite there being overwhelming support for the renaming of RP, support for the recategorization of RP into a SO was more divisive. When participants were asked if RP should remain a communications offence or be re-established as a SO, only (n=4) supported a change in the legislation. Of these (n=4) participants, (n=2) participants stressed the importance of the content being private:

“...it is something that relates to personal and private content” (Jane, L400)

“...it is sexual and private content that is being shared...” (Emily, L291)

For these participants, it was necessary to acknowledge that the content which is being shared is autonomous to people’s bodies, which provided an interesting contrast to the earlier labels of the material being considered pornographic. In addition to this, (n=2) participants felt that the role of consent should be taken into consideration in the same way it is with other offences:

“...if you share sexualised images of children, you can be prosecuted because of the rightly held view that children can’t give consent...but the same should apply for adults in these cases...” (Alec, L302)

“Consent plays...a part in sexual abuse, so it should in the distribution of images also” (Catherine, L427)

Despite the fact that only (n=2) participants discussed consent, this response corresponds with a report from the Women and Equalities Committee (2018) which

has called for the government to impose a new law which criminalises RP as a SO based on the victim's lack of consent.

Another (n=1) proponent of RP being made a SO referred to there being a need for victims to be seen as victims and not being seen as “...*people who should have known better...*” (Lisa, L341). Through this response, it was articulated that RP becoming a SO would hopefully reduce victim blaming. Whilst a main argument for RP to be a SO relates to improving rights for victims (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019), there is no available evidence to suggest that this would alter societal attitudes towards victims, particularly when considering the literature explored in Chapter Two.

The remaining (n=4) participants appeared critical of the ongoing campaigns to introduce laws to make RP a SO. For instance, (n=1) participant expressed a need to keep online offences separate from contact offences:

“...it would be under an umbrella with offences like indecent assault and rape...I think a real complication is the physical element of it” (Adam, L286)

Some of the literature in Chapter Two alluded to how victims were incorporating words such as rape to define their experience, but as Maddocks (2018) notes, this term was criticised for potentially softening the impact of physical rape. (N=1) participant felt that in order for RP to be a SO, it would need to be motivated by a desire for sexual gratification:

“I think a problem with it becoming a SO is that it isn't sexually motivated”
(Ricardo, L276)

However, as the literature in Chapter Two outlined, not all SO's are committed for sexual need and sexual offending can share many characteristics with coercive behaviour such as control, power and harassment (Bloom, 2014).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The main aim of this study has been to establish students' perceptions of RP terminology. Although this study has evidenced the problems with this term, the researcher utilised the phrase throughout for the purposes of continuity. Qualitative methods were utilised in order to address the following research questions:

1. Do participants feel that RP is a term that can be applied to different examples of NCIS?
2. Do participants feel that the term RP incites blame towards the victim?
3. Do participants feel that RP is a term that needs to be changed?
4. Do participants feel that RP should be reclassified from a communications offence to a SO?

5.1 Overview of Analysis and Findings

This study has generated empirical data regarding perceptions of RP, an area that has been highlighted as receiving limited scholarly attention. On that basis, this study has offered novel data in order to advance understandings of RP. In analysing the data, the researcher found that participants responses were related to the projects CRQ's, however, some of the data obtained went further in answering more of the questions than others.

With regards to CRQ 1, the findings suggest that participants did not feel that RP was a term applicable to various examples of non-consensual image sharing. The findings indicated that participants were only comfortable in assigning the term where there was a distinct motive which underpinned the actions of the perpetrator. Although participants did not attribute blame to the victim in V1, the case where the term RP was applied, participants did feel that the behaviour of the perpetrator was reactionary to a particular situation. The absence of such a catalyst in V2 and V3 meant that participants did not assign the term RP. Nonetheless, the tendency of participants to concentrate upon the perceived motives of the perpetrator confirms what many academics consider a fundamental problem with the term, RP, since not all perpetration is motivated by a desire for revenge i.e. male bonding, sextortion,

fakeporn (McGlynn *et al.*, 2019). These findings would confirm the literature that advises RP does not adequately cover all forms of IBSA.

In relation to CRQ 2, the findings suggest that participants were of the view that the term RP can incite blame towards victims because the phrase can give a false impression on how the victim has behaved by implying that the actions of the perpetrator were a necessary reaction. However, the scheduling of questions meant that a specific question addressing this was only posed to (n=4) of the participants. Whilst all shared the view that there were blame implications for victims by using the term RP, validity of responses could have been strengthened by conducting follow up interviews in order to address this CRQ. Nevertheless, elements of this CRQ can be answered by participants views towards the problem with the term, RP, in which all (n=8) participants felt that there were negative connotations of both revenge and pornography for victims. Therefore, responses to this CRQ would confirm the existing literature which argues focus upon the perceived revenge masks perpetrators behaviour and the labelling of the material pornographic blurs two different types of media (Maddocks, 2019).

In considering CRQ 3, the findings suggested overwhelming support for the term RP to be rephrased. Despite views among some of the participants that the material disseminated non-consensually could be considered pornographic in nature, all (n=8) respondents were able to identify weaknesses with labelling the offence, RP, which in turn could have negative connotations for victims. These views confirmed the literature in Chapter Two that advocates for the term RP to be changed because its use neglects to address the harms caused to victims as the terminology implies what has occurred is not a form of abuse (Henry *et al.*, 2019).

As a final point with CRQ 4, the findings suggested that participants views were equally split with regards to making RP a SO. Of those who supported a change in legislation, their view was underpinned by the need to recognise consent, the abuse suffered by victims and the rights of victims. Conversely, opponents highlighted the motivations of perpetrators as well as the need to have different categories of offending. Due to the focusing of this question, it did not elicit any responses which referenced anonymity for victims, a driving factor being the reframing of the law

(McGlynn et al., 2019) As the findings from this section did not ultimately lean towards acceptance or rejection of RP becoming a SO, the findings of this study did not confirm the literature set out in Chapter Two.

From the findings of this study, participants perceptions have generally supported academic views that indicate the naming of RP is problematic. Although the majority of participants did not agree with RP being reclassified as a SO, participants did support alternative vocabularies, a move towards addressing the shortcomings of RP. Whilst support was garnered for the use of NCIS or IBSA, a fundamental question remains on how to leave behind a sensationalised moniker for a term that better reflects the harms suffered by victims.

5.2 Limitations and Identifying Avenues of Further Enquiry

As with all empirical research, it is necessary to note the limitations as well as direct researchers to avenues of further enquiry based on this project's findings.

Whilst qualitative studies are renowned for attracting small sample sizes, a strength of this method is in highlighting the individuality of participants interviewed (Willig, 2013). As mentioned in Chapter Three, a common limitation with this type of method is that the results are unable to be generalised to a wider population, however, the researcher was clear in identifying that this was not an aim of this study. Instead, the researcher was concerned with establishing a starting point for further research by undertaking an explorative study looking at students' perceptions of RP terminology. In terms of further research, it is possible that the current study could be replicated with a much larger sample, or alternative population. For instance, a future direction could be to explore professionals' views of RP terminology and its impact on their approach to working with victims and perpetrators. Given the results of this study, a further avenue of enquiry could explore stakeholder views on the best means to alter RP terminology.

The researcher noted in Chapter Three the importance of reflexivity in both the interviewing of participants and the analysis of data. The researcher recognises that their own personal stance is supportive of a change in the term, RP and whilst steps were undertaken to ensure that this view was not imparted to participants or

translated through to the analysis of data, subjectivity may have played a part in the identification and presentation of the key themes. As such, future research could benefit from a collaborative transcription and data analysis process by researchers with differing epistemological stances in order to reduce the potential for bias. Furthermore, the researcher made reference in Chapter Three to the fact that the coding and categorisation of themes was undertaken freely, without the use of specialist qualitative software. It is therefore important to acknowledge that this may have impacted on the generation of themes and use of software may have either further reinforced these themes or established a new series of themes which the researcher may have overlooked.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Cover Letter

Cover Letter and Information Briefing

Dear Research Participant,

My name is Alan Harrop and I am conducting this research as part of my MSc Independent Study project at the University of Derby.

What is this study about?

The aim of this research is to establish perceptions about the nature and characteristics of Revenge Porn.

Why am I being asked to participate?

You have been approached to participate as this study aims to look at general views of Revenge Porn and does not call for a specific professional group to participate (i.e. Police, Probation, etc.).

Am I required to participate?

No, participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. You should read the following information sheet to determine whether you give your informed consent to participate.

What will I be expected to do should choose to participate?

This study is qualitative in nature and will utilise a series of vignettes in interviews. Vignettes are described as “...*short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances...*” (Finch, 1984: 105). As such, should you give your informed consent you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher where you will be asked to read a series of small vignettes before being asked questions regarding your perceptions on what you have just read.

Can I be identifiable from the responses I give?

Any personal information you provide is confidential. All collected data will be anonymised and you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your real identity. Interviews will be audio recorded to aid in the creation of transcripts. Once the interview is over, these will be uploaded to a password protected personal computer. Any hardcopy information will be kept locked away and your signed consent form will be kept separate from your interview transcript to further protect your identity. Creation of your transcript will be anonymised by removing any personal information and again, this will be kept on a password protected personal computer. Some of your responses may appear in print, but your name will not be attached to this and so will not affect your right to anonymity. There are some exceptions to confidentiality. If some of what is disclosed during an interview gives the impression you, or someone else is at significant risk of causing or receiving harm, I may need to break confidentiality and inform the project supervisor of this.

What will happen to my responses?

Should you give informed consent to participate, your responses will be analysed and may be reported in the final copy of this study. Some of what you have said

may appear in print and the final copy may be submitted for publication in a series of academic journals. This will not impact on your right to anonymity.

Are there any risks involved?

The researcher is not aware of any risks to your physical health. However, Revenge Porn can be a devastating crime and you will be asked to read a series of vignettes describing a number of non-consensual image sharing scenarios. Should you feel affected by your participation in this study, you will be provided with details on a number of organisations who can offer support.

Are there any payments, rewards or incentives?

No. Participation in this study is purely voluntary. Therefore, the researcher is not offering any payments, rewards or incentives for participation.

I've participated in the study; can I withdraw my data?

Yes. You are entitled to withdraw your data at any time from this study prior to projects formal submission. After that time, **it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data.** Should you wish to withdraw your data, please contact the named researcher, Alan Harrop, on the email address at the bottom of this letter quoting your unique identifier code. You are not required to give a reason on why you wish for your data to be withdrawn.

Has this study had approval?

A full ethics application has been submitted and been approved by the University of Derby Ethics Committee. More information on the Ethics Committee can be found here:

<https://www.derby.ac.uk/research/uod/researchethicsandintegrity/researchethics/committees/>

Where can I find more information about this project?

Should you wish for more information on this study, please contact the named researcher, Alan Harrop, on the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Complaints:

Should you have any complaints about the way this study is being conducted or have an issue you wish to raise, you are directed to address this to the assigned project supervisor, Angie Neville at the postal address below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this participant information sheet.

Sincerely,

Mr Alan Harrop
a.harrop1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

C/O Angie Neville, Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences, College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS), University of Derby, One Friar Gate Square, Derby DE1 1DZ, United Kingdom.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

This form is intended to obtain your informed consent for you to participate in a study conducted by Alan Harrop (a.harrop1@unimail.derby.ac.uk) as part of his Master of Science (MSc) Independent Study (dissertation) research project.

This work is being conducted under the auspices of the Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences within the College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS) at the University of Derby. The project will be conducted in full compliance with the University Research Ethics Policy and Code of Practice, including that data collection involving human participants must have prior written approval and authorisation from the relevant ethics committee.

Participants who have questions or concerns about the project should, in the first instance, contact the researcher noted above. Where additional information may be needed, participants may contact the assigned Supervisor for the research project: Angie Neville on the following email: a.neville@derby.ac.uk.

The focus of the research is as follows:

The aim of this research is to establish perceptions of the nature and characteristics of Revenge Porn.

You have been approached to participate because to date, limited research exists on the terminology of Revenge Porn. Research on Revenge Porn has tended to concentrate on perpetrators or be concerned with legal challenges and as such, it is hoped that this research will add to the growing literature in this field. You are invited to participate in an interview, where you will be asked a series of questions based upon a number of small vignettes that you will be asked to read that are derived from the literature relating to Revenge Porn.

The signature of the participant and the researcher on this form affirms that informed consent has been provided to participate in the research project under the terms indicated below.

The participant has been given the opportunity to ask questions and receive further information about the research before signing, and participation is voluntary and without payment or incentives. Participants may decline to answer any question(s), and they may withdraw from the study at any time by providing their unique identifier number and expressing their wish to withdraw themselves and their data from the study (withdrawal is possible up to project completion).

It is understood that this project will be conducted in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. This includes the understanding that the name or personal data of all participants will not be disclosed to third parties, and that all personal data will be destroyed upon completion of the project. Organisational permission will be obtained prior to acquiring access to members or clients.

It is understood that the researcher will anonymise all the information collected from participants for any presentation or use in the research. The words of participants may appear in academic or professional research outputs, but participants will at all times remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms (false names) or generic categories.

It is understood that the researcher may retain the aggregated/anonymised data indefinitely for further research.

It is understood that the participant agrees to participate in the research and that both the participant and the researcher will be provided with a signed copy of this form.

Date:

Name of Participant:

Name of Researcher:

Mr Alan Harrop

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Researcher:

Mr Alan Harrop
a.harrop1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Department of Law, Criminology and
Social Sciences
College of Law, Humanities and
Social Sciences (LHSS)
University of Derby
One Friar Gate Square
Derby DE1 1DZ
United Kingdom
C/O Angie Neville

Appendix C: Debriefing Material

Dear Research Participant,

I would like to use this opportunity to thank you for the interview that you recently undertook with me. This interview was in relation to my MSc Independent Study project. I have now transcribed the interview and have attached a copy with this letter. I would advise that you read through this to ensure that you are happy to consent to this information being put forward for analysis.

The purpose of our interview was to gain your perceptions on a number of scenarios depicting different areas of non-consensual image sharing and to understand to what extent you felt the term revenge porn attributed blame, but also if that term was applicable to the scenarios detailed.

I would like to remind you that all of your personal information will be kept confidential and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Once the research project has ended, it is anticipated that all information will be destroyed. Some of your responses may appear in the final print of this dissertation that may be put forward for submission to a number of academic journals. You are reminded that this will not impact on your right to anonymity.

If you have any questions or complaints about the way in which this study was conducted, you are directed to refer these to Angie Neville, the assigned Supervisor of this project at the address at the bottom of this letter. If you feel that you have been affected by your participation in this study, the issues discussed or would like to know more about revenge porn and its effects, the following organisations will be able to offer additional support:

Revenge Porn Helpline

T: 0345 6000 459

E: help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk

W: revengepornhelpline.org.uk

Samaritans

T: 116 123

E: jo@samaritans.org

W: www.samaritans.org

Victim Support

T: 0808 1689 111

E: n/a

W: www.victimsupport.org.uk

If you are a student of the University of Derby that has participated in this research, you can access support through the Wellbeing Service:

Student Wellbeing, B Block, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 1GB.

T: 01332 593000

E: studentwellbeing@derby.ac.uk

If you consent to the transcript being analysed, please complete and sign both copies of the consent form and return one to me and retain one copy for yourself. Should you wish to withdraw your participation at a later date, you can do this by contacting me via the email address below and quoting your unique identifier code. You have only until the projects formal submission to do this, after this time, it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data.

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Mr Alan Harrop

a.harrop1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences
College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS)
University of Derby
One Friar Gate Square
Derby DE1 1DZ
United Kingdom
C/O Angie Neville

Appendix D: Vignettes Depicting Non-Consensual Image Sharing

Vignette 1:

Ben and Vicky had been in a relationship for 6 months when it started to change. Ben had started to become controlling of Vicky. Ben began attending Vicky's property unannounced, appearing on nights out with her friends uninvited as well as calling and texting her hundreds of times a day. Their partnership was becoming a classic example of an abusive relationship, but Vicky loved Ben and convinced herself this behaviour would soon stop. A few months passed and Vicky decided she was no longer happy and after several attempts, she finally told Ben the relationship was over. Frustrated, Ben began deleting images from his phone of him and Vicky together when he came across a series of sexually explicit images that Vicky had sent him during the course of their relationship. Within hours of ending their relationship, Vicky received a call from a mutual friend to say that Ben had uploaded several naked photographs of her onto Facebook, with her closest friends and family members tagged, meaning the majority of her contacts could potentially see these images.

Vignette 2:

Adam is friends with Dan and Amy, Adam's partner is friends with Sally. They decide to introduce their friends to one another as they are both single and head out on a double date. Things are going well but Dan expresses to Sally he is not looking for anything serious as he hasn't long separated from his ex-partner. Sally is happy with this and before the night ends, the two exchange numbers and agree to stay in touch. The pair communicate frequently over the following weeks and Dan asks Sally to send him a picture of her breasts. Sally is reluctant, but Dan reassures her she can trust him. Sally sends the picture as she feels a connection with Dan. The following day while at football practice, Adam sees Dan passing his phone round to the rest of the team, the majority of which are cheering. Adam catches a glance of Dan's phone and sees a picture of Sally with her breasts exposed. Adam informs Amy of what he has just witnessed and she in turn tells Sally. Sally contacts Dan who tells Sally it was just lads being lads.

Vignette 3:

Carl is 18 and is a frequent user of Skype, instant messenger-based software that allows contacts to call, text and video call. Carl uses Skype to mainly communicate with his relatives abroad but has also engaged in consensual cybersex. Carl received a contact request from a female that he had never spoken with, though he adds her anyway. After communicating for a few hours, she invites Carl to watch her perform sexual acts on camera. Carl agrees and whilst watching his new contact, agrees to show himself on his camera. The following day, Carl receives a video from his new contact which shows him masturbating. Carl becomes aware he has been scammed by a large criminal gang. They threaten to share the video online unless Carl makes a payment of £2000. Not having that amount of money and fearing that his family and work colleagues could see the video, Carl contacts a friend for help.

Appendix E: Schedule of Questions

Revised Schedule of Questions for Participants

In your own words, please define Revenge Porn.

Should Revenge Porn be a criminal offence?

Is Revenge Porn a criminal offence?

When considering this scenario, would you say that this is an example of Revenge Porn?

How would you describe revenge?

In your opinion, what was motivating **Ben/Dan/The Anonymous Hacker** in this scenario?

When considering this scenario, how would you describe the photo or video relating to **Vicky/Sally/Carl**?

How do you feel about **Vicky/Sally/Carl** in this scenario?

Vicky/Sally/Carl would be considered a victim of Revenge Porn under current legislation. How do you feel about **her/him** now?

How do you feel about **Ben/Dan/The Anonymous Hacker** in this scenario?

Ben/Dan/The Anonymous Hacker would be considered a Revenge Porn perpetrator under current legislation. How do you feel about **him/them** now?

If the term Revenge Porn was not attached to this scenario, would you label this Revenge Porn, or do you think it should have an alternative name?

Why do you think that academics have expressed concern with the term Revenge Porn?

Do you think that Revenge Porn is a term that needs to be changed?

What do you think can be done to prevent Revenge Porn?