AN EXPLORATION OF REVENGE WITHIN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Background: Following interpersonal transgressions, some individuals have difficulty letting go of hostile feelings towards their transgressor, foregoing forgiveness and enacting revenge. Romantic revenge research has received less attention than other interpersonal relationship contexts (e.g. the workplace).

Aims and objective: This thesis explores romantic revenge, seeking to highlight current knowledge of this topic and determine areas requiring further exploration. It comprises a systematic review (consolidating our current understanding of romantic revenge), a psychometric critique (examining a measure – the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations inventory - used to explore unforgiving motivations, including revenge) and two empirical research studies (examining extra-legal factors that could influence public perceptions of a vengeful behaviour committed within romantic relationships - Revenge Pornography).

Overall findings: The systematic review identified variables (e.g. personality) that appear to influence perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge; a preliminary framework was developed to highlight the complex processes involved. The critique highlighted a need for the measure to be validated with offender samples (specifically, those who commit vengeful offences against romantic partners). The empirical research revealed there are extra-legal factors (e.g. victim-perpetrator gender) that appear to influence perceptions of revenge pornography in relation to victim blame and perceptions of harm; these were subsequently included in the preliminary framework developed within the systematic review. Implications and limitations are discussed.

Overview

Whilst revenge within interpersonal relationships is an area that has been explored through research, it would appear there has been less focus on revenge within the romantic relationship context compared to other interpersonal relationship contexts, such as the workplace. It could be argued that factors such as intimacy, sex and commitment to another's needs are unique to romantic relationships and so due to these differences, it is possible that revenge occurring within romantic relationships differ from revenge occurring within other relationship contexts.

This research thesis explores revenge within romantic relationships, with an aim to clarify our current knowledge of this phenomenon and identify areas that require further exploration through research in order to develop and improve our understanding of it. An overview of revenge is presented within Chapter One, which clarifies its definition and the construct in which revenge can be understood. Chapter One also provides the context for the vengeful behaviour – revenge pornography - that is explored within the empirical research studies presented in Chapters Four and Five.

The systematic review within Chapter Two provides a synthesis of the literature on romantic revenge to consolidate our current understanding of it and examine factors that could make revenge more likely within this relationship context.

Within Chapter Three, a critique of a measure (identified through the systematic review) used to assess unforgiving motivations (of which revenge is included) within interpersonal relationships is presented, with an aim to examine its psychometric properties and appropriateness for use in the context of romantic revenge (particularly for criminal offences that are committed against romantic partners with vengeful motivations, including the behaviour explored within Chapters Four and Five).

Chapters Four and Five extend the findings of the systematic review by presenting two empirical research studies examining whether extra-legal factors could influence perceptions of, and responses to, a recently recognised criminal offence (April 2015), which is often committed within the romantic relationship context, where revenge is identified as a motivation for this behaviour – Revenge Pornography.

Chapter Six presents a general discussion of this thesis, where the findings from each individual chapter are consolidated and implications for future research are explored. The limitations of this thesis are also discussed.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Within interpersonal relationships (e.g. with family members, friends, romantic partners, work colleagues, acquaintances), it is inevitable that transgressions (i.e. harmful conduct) occur (regardless of whether these are or are not intentional acts). In response to interpersonal transgressions, such as inconsiderate acts, betrayals or infidelity (in the context of a romantic relationship), the transgressed individual can forgive the transgressor. Forgiveness helps maintain and repair relationships (Fincham & Beach, 2002) and involves emotions, thoughts and communication behaviours. Waldron and Kelley (2008) defined forgiveness as:

> "A relational process whereby harmful conduct is acknowledged… the harmed partner extends undeserved mercy to the perceived transgressor; one or both partners experience a transformation from negative to positive psychological states… the meaning of the relationship is negotiated, with the possibility of reconciliation" (p. 19)

Essential to this transformation is that through choosing to forgive (which can occur over time), transgressed individuals no longer experience a negative psychological state or feel compelled to seek retaliation (Waldron & Kelley, 2008), where there is a shift towards "conciliatory courses of action" (McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997, p. 322). Forgiveness may not always involve reconciliation (i.e. it is possible to forgive without

reconciliation, or to reconcile without forgiveness) but what is pivotal is that the transgressed individual lets go of hostile feelings and negotiates the relationship with the transgressor (irrespective of whether reconciliation occurs; Waldron & Kelley, 2008). To understand what determines forgiveness towards a transgressor (or lack thereof), McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Height (1998) distinguished four variables: social-cognitive (how the transgressed individual thinks and feels about the transgressor and the transgression), offence (nature of the transgression), relational (nature of the relationship between the transgressor and the transgressed individual) and personality (aspects of personality that facilitate forgiveness); these will be explored in more detail within Chapter Two.

Transgressed individuals may not, however, respond with forgiveness (i.e. they are unable to let go of hostile thoughts and feelings) and instead, respond with revenge. Revenge has primarily been interpreted as a behavioural construct and is defined as a retaliatory act that inflicts harm following a perceived wrongdoing (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). It has also been considered a fundamental human passion (Frijda, 1994).

Efforts in psychological research have been made to explore precipitating factors that might result in revenge behaviour, where a summary of some of these approaches will be presented. One is the motivational approach. McCullough and colleagues (2001) discussed three motivations as a theoretical explanation of revenge behaviour, including the need to maintain equity in relationships ('get even'), seeking to teach the

perceived transgressor a lesson that their behaviour is unacceptable (behaviour modification), and saving face (preserving status and self-esteem). Comparisons have also been made with the much broader literature on aggression, where revenge could be understood as a form of instrumental aggression (which is calculated and carried out to serve a particular goal; Buss, 1961) but could also be considered a form of hostile aggression (where there is less premeditation and the goal is to harm) (for a review, see Young, 2010). One of the limitations of using the motivational approach, however, is that one still not may be clear regarding which motives have the most impact on revenge behaviour. Similarly, even if research could determine whether there are several motivations for revenge (which may carry equal or varied weights) or whether revenge is the product of one motivation, it does not consider what makes an individual more likely to experience these motivations.

Another psychological approach to understanding revenge is to consider attitudes. Stuckless and Goranson (1992) developed the Vengeance Scale to measure attitudes towards revenge and studies have found that revenge attitudes can predict a range of aggressive behaviour, including driver aggression (e.g. Hennessy & Wiesenthal, 2005) and spectator aggression at sports events (Hennessy & Schwartz, 2007). The difficulty is that this perspective assumes these attitudes will be explicit (i.e. individuals have an apparent awareness of them) but it is possible that some attitudes are more implicit (i.e. cannot be assessed using self-report measures). Another difficulty that attitude research has neglected somewhat is their temporal stability, where most studies have considered

revenge attitudes at only one time-point (Young, 2010). As such, one cannot determine if revenge attitudes can be changed (albeit McCullough and colleagues (2003) highlight that the passage of time is a basic aspect of psychological change and forgiveness so arguably, this could be the case for revenge too). Nonetheless, attitude research thus far offers limited insight into what factors might contribute to the modification of vengeful attitudes.

The final approach discussed here is considering revenge using personality. McCullough and colleagues (2001) suggested that some individuals might have a dispositional (and disproportionate) vulnerability to engage in revenge due to 'vengefulness'. This is where an individual possesses beliefs and attitudes regarding the righteousness of engaging in revenge behaviours (and endorsement of considering revenge as a legitimate means to solve interpersonal problems). It is considered that these individuals experience higher levels of negative affect but also experience difficulties in regulating their affect, thus making them more vulnerable to using revenge to regulate their negative affective states. Moreover, McCullough and colleagues (2001) demonstrated that vengefulness is associated with two of the Big Five personality factors: neuroticism (positively) and agreeableness (negatively). That said, a difficulty with this approach is that describing vengefulness as a mixture of these factors is too simplistic, where it is possible that whilst these may be essential for vengefulness, there may be individuals who are high in neuroticism and low in agreeableness who are not vengeful.

Regardless of which perspective is taken, it is clear that there are many processes involved that precipitate the revenge (as a behavioural construct) of a transgressed individual. McCullough and colleagues (1998) posited that when an individual is transgressed against, their perception of the transgression and transgressor can trigger two motivational systems: avoid the transgressor(s) or seek revenge against the transgressor(s). Avoidance refers to the motivation to avoid contact (both personal and psychological) with the transgressor(s) in response to feelings of hurt, and revenge corresponds to a motivation to see harm come to the transgressor(s) in response to a feeling of indignation. As such, within this thesis, revenge (i.e. a retaliatory act in response to a transgression in order to cause the transgressor harm) is considered as a behavioural construct (which is the result of likely interactions between various factors, including motivations, attitudes and personality).

Exploration of revenge (and foregoing forgiveness) through research (e.g. revenge inflicted by one individual against another, a group of individuals against one individual, or a group against another group) within various relationship contexts (including workplace, family, friendship and romantic) is necessary to understand: perceptions of revenge behaviour, motivations for revenge behaviour, behaviours involved in these retaliatory acts, and consequences these retaliatory acts have on individuals and their relationships. In addition to the motives discussed previously, other literature has identified a number of motives for why individuals enact revenge against a transgressor, including: a desire to eliminate perceived injustice (Solomon, 1994), to restore damaged self-

esteem (Baumeister, 1997), to restore equality (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998), to punish the individual(s) who caused perceived harm (Yoshimura, 2007), to escape pain (Frijda, 1994), to discourage future (perceived) offensive behaviour (Pinker, 1997), or to teach the transgressor a lesson (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick & Johnson, 2001). Within workplace relationships, for example, research has considered events that result in a desire to inflict revenge against a colleague (e.g. Bies & Tripp, 1996), types of revenge behaviours enacted against a colleague (e.g. Tripp & Bies, 1997), and consequences that revenge has had on an afflicted colleague and the workplace in general (e.g. Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Bies, Tripp and Kramer (1997), for example, identified that revenge within organisations occurs in response to one or two types of offence, including damage to an employee's sense of order (e.g. violations against the organisations' rules, structure or ethics), or undermining the employee's sense of power, identity or status (e.g. interpersonal attacks).

A greater understanding of revenge could potentially help to: recognise situations that are more likely to prompt an act of revenge, identify individuals who may be more vulnerable to engage in this behaviour (i.e. those who transfer from being a transgressed individual to a transgressor through committing revenge), develop interventions for those who have (or are more vulnerable to) enacted revenge to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence, and develop a better understanding of how this behaviour is perceived and responded to in order to support victims (of revenge) who have been harmed.

Despite the amount of research that has been conducted into revenge within interpersonal relationships, revenge within the romantic relationship context appears to have received less attention than other contexts, such as the workplace. Revenge does occur within romantic relationships and given the inherent and unique differences between romantic relationships compared to other types of relationships (such as exclusivity, intimacy, sex, commitment to the other person's needs), it could be argued that revenge within romantic relationships may differ to revenge within other relational contexts. As such, this thesis aims to explore revenge within romantic relationships. In order to begin to understand this, there is a need to systematically examine romantic revenge literature to consolidate our current understanding of this behaviour (and perhaps identify factors that make this type of behaviour more likely) and consider ways in which romantic revenge can be (and has been) measured (Chapters Two and Three).

Literature has identified that a number of revenge behaviours occur within the context of romantic relationships, including the silent treatment, engaging in behaviour to purposefully make a romantic partner jealous (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998) and infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005). More recently, so-called 'Revenge Pornography' [RP] has received substantial media attention and has been considered a vengeful behaviour (and criminal offence) that occurs within the context of a romantic relationship.

RP is considered "the practice of disclosing nude or sexually explicit images and videos, often along with identifying information, of former

romantic partners without their consent" (Bambauer, 2014, p. 2026) in order to cause the victim harm (often following a perceived wrongdoing). This behaviour was recognised as a criminal offence in the UK 2015 under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. Prior to the introduction of the Section 33 offence, victims of RP had to rely on various other existing legislation for prosecution against a perpetrator, such as Sections 2 and 4 of the Harassment Act 1997, Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, and Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 (Agate, 2017). It was felt, however, that the use of other legislation failed to capture the nature of the behaviour and so the Section 33 offence was introduced. Within this Section, it is considered an offence for an individual to disclose a private sexual photograph or film if the disclosure is made without consent of the individual who appears in the material and with the intention to cause this individual distress. It "applies both online and offline and to images which are shared electronically or in a more traditional way", including the uploading of images to the internet, sharing images by text and email, or showing an individual a physical or electronic image (UK Government, 2015a). It is imperative that both lack of consent and intent to cause distress are proven to result in a conviction and those found guilty could face a prison sentence of up to two years.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that there may be other motivations that underlie the behaviour described by Bambauer (2014) beyond that of revenge. As such, RP is considered to fall under the umbrella-term of non-consensual sharing (of intimate material, which could also include messages), where this term is considered to capture

the range of other motivations that underlie the non-consensual disclosure of this material, which could include coercion, blackmail, enjoying the torment of others, monetary gain, and social notoriety (Henry & Powell, 2015; Powell, Henry & Flynn, 2018).

The (consensual) sending of sexual material through mobile technology is considered a common behaviour amongst college students in romantic relationships (Drouin & Landgradd, 2012) and 'sexting' (the act of sending sexually explicit photos, videos or messages through mobile and internet technology) has become part of dating and frequently occurs within committed relationships (Delevi & Weisskirch, 2013). It has been considered, however, that advances in technology (e.g. the ease in which material can be produced/shared and the ease of access to the internet via smart phones) have expanded the way in which sexual violence can be perpetrated (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017). RP behaviour has thus been considered on the continuum of sexual violence (Powell, 2010) and can be understood as a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2015), although the current UK legislation recognises the offence can occur "in a more traditional way" (UK Government, 2015a) (e.g. the 'Revenge Pornography Helpline' website indicates that printed images have been placed on cars in the street).

Developing this further, it has been suggested that the term 'RP' fails to capture the harm caused to victims (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017), where 'image-based sexual abuse' is considered a more appropriate term that captures not only the behaviour involved with RP but various other

(recently recognised) technology-facilitated behaviours and the harms they cause victims, such as upskirting (non-consensual photographing/filming of a woman's underwear up her skirt), downblousing (non-consensual photographing/filming of a woman's breasts) and 'deepfake' pornography (manipulating pornographic material by superimposing someone's face onto it). One must also consider that the way in which material is (initially) produced and subsequently accessed may also be non-consensual; material could be produced in the context of trickery and coercion or during a physical act of sexual violence (and subsequently be used as a tool to treat, harass, control or intimidate) or could be accessed through stealing and hacking as opposed to the victim consensually sharing the material with a known individual on the basis that the material would not be distributed further (Powell et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is argued that image-based sexual abuse encapsulates the various motivations for the aforementioned behaviours described. For the purpose of this thesis, where the focus is specifically on revenge (and to remain consistent with the current UK legislation and existing literature), the term 'revenge pornography' is used.

At this point, a note on law is required. At present, Section 33 deems that an individual can only be convicted if they non-consensually disclose private sexual photographs and/or films of the victim and it has been proved that their intent was to cause distress. This does present a challenge to individuals who have been victims of (or have been threatened with) non-consensual sharing of intimate material or forms of image-based sexual abuse if the intent to cause distress was not the

motivation or cannot be proven. It has been argued that current laws leave these victims unprotected (e.g. Rackley, McGlynn & Johnson, 2019), although this discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Applying RP the construct of forgiveness, it has been suggested that RP generally occurs following a romantic relationship breakdown (Daswani and Pearson, 2014), although that is not to say that a relationship breakdown is the only transgression that could prompt such behaviour. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that perpetrators could also be other individuals known to the victim, such as family members or friends (Powell, 2018). In any instance, the RP perpetrator (who initially perceives themselves as a transgressed individual) foregoes forgiveness of the transgression by the victim (e.g. relationship breakdown) by sharing sexual images and/or videos (initially consensually shared between partners) without the victim's consent to enact revenge and cause harm.

There is a challenge in ascertaining the current prevalence of RP. In a systematic review into the current knowledge regarding RP and non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit media (the latter being where motivation for the behaviour is not clear or is not related to revenge), Walker and Sleath (2017) highlighted that a key challenge in synthesising knowledge was the variation in terminology and definitions that exist, which was related to various "questions/measurements used, definitions employed, time periods over which the behaviours were measured, and how prevalence was calculated" (p. 21). As such, the findings drawn are limited by these challenges. Of the 82 articles that were included in this

review (where only 5 came from the UK), 33 were empirical papers. Twenty-one empirical papers employed quantitative methods, where 18 focussed on prevalence of forwarding on sexually explicit material but the motivation for this behaviour was not considered (and so whilst the motivation for some of this behaviour could have been revenge, it could not be definitively stated that this was RP). Prevalence rates for both victimisation and perpetration of non-consensual sharing (without considering motivation) appeared higher in adolescent samples, which was possibly reflective of use of online and mobile technology amongst adolescents compared to adults (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Regarding gender, adult victimisation of non-consensual sharing ranged from 1.8-10.3% in males and 0.5-3.3% in females. Adolescent victimisation of non-consensual sharing ranged from 2.1-13% in males and 1.3-42% in females.

Of note, a major concern identified from the legal reviews (n = 29, the majority of which came from the USA) in Walker and Sleath's (2017) review related to using child pornography laws when prosecuting adolescents who non-consensually share. Within the UK, the guidelines on prosecuting the offence set out in Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act (2015) state that where the material was taken of a victim under the age of 18, consideration must be given as to whether offences under Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 or Section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 have occurred (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017). It is also noted that "whilst it would not usually be in the public interest to prosecute the consensual sharing of an image between two

children of a similar age in a relationship, prosecution may be appropriate in other scenarios…" and that prosecutors should consider the fact that children or "immature perpetrators" might not appreciate the potential harm and seriousness of their communication so factors such as age and maturity should be given weight, particularly if under the age of 18 (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017).

Another challenge faced when ascertaining the prevalence of RP relates to the fact that this depends upon individuals reporting the offence to authorities. A Press Release published on 23 August 2015 identified that a helpline dedicated to supporting victims of RP took over 1,800 calls within a 6-month period and indicated that whilst the majority of calls related to female victims, 25% of calls taken were male victims (UK Government, 2015b). Furthermore, within the first eight months of criminalisation in 2015, 1,160 reports of RP were received by police in England and Wales and 61% of these cases were not followed up as the victims did not want to pursue an investigation (BBC, 2016). Enquiries made by the authors in June 2018 with the 'Revenge Pornography Helpline' indicated that since the helpline started in February 2015, there have been 2,930 cases and the total number of contacts made (including phone and email) was 11,572; sixty-nine percent of clients identified as female, 23% identified as male and 8% were unknown (as the helpline was not provided with this information). Given that the helpline is a confidential advice line, clients are not pursued after they had received support from the service and so no information was available regarding how many victims decided to pursue a police investigation or how many perpetrators were successfully

prosecuted. Criminal Justice System statistics indicate that in 2018, 2 juveniles, 16 young adults and 165 adults were convicted under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (with 4, 25 and 195 proceeded against, respectively) (UK Government, 2019).

With regard to the RP prevalence statistics reported within the aforementioned paragraph, it is possible that these are an under-representation due to non-disclosure to authorities. There could be a number of factors that contribute to a victim's non-disclosure, including the lack of anonymity afforded to victims (Citron & Franks, 2014). Whilst there has been a significant amount of media coverage regarding RP and literature exploring RP from a legal perspective, there is currently a dearth of research that explores how it is understood and perceived (and responses to victims) by the public, particularly in relation to extra-legal factors that may contribute to these attitudes (and how they are formed) and the subsequent impact these could have upon victims (e.g. their disclosure). Research examining these perceptions is paramount given that the use of intimate material within romantic relationships is common (and so could be used in a vengeful manner). This shall be explored within Chapters Four and Five.

Overall, the aim of this thesis is to explore revenge within romantic relationships, aiming to clarify our current knowledge of this phenomenon (both in terms of why romantic revenge might happen and responses to it) and identify areas requiring further exploration in order to develop and improve our understanding of it. To achieve this, Chapter Two presents a

systematic review that consolidates our current understanding of romantic revenge (examining factors that could make revenge more likely within a romantic relationship). Within Chapter Three, a psychometric critique is presented of a measure – the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations inventory - used to examine motivations for revenge (identified through the systematic review). The critique also seeks to explore whether the identified measure is appropriate to use with individuals who engage in offences against a romantic partner. The exploration of romantic revenge in Chapter Two was also considered necessary given that the two empirical research studies presented in Chapters Four and Five explore responses to RP, where proving intent to cause distress (and where McCullough and colleagues define revenge as wanting to see harm come to a transgressor; 1998) is imperative for a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. Specifically, Chapters Four and Five examine extra-legal factors that could influence public perceptions of, and responses to, RP.

Chapter Two: Revenge Within Romantic Relationships – A Systematic Review

Abstract

Background: Revenge is a retaliatory act that inflicts harm following a perceived wrongdoing (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). There are unique differences between romantic relationships and other relationship contexts so revenge within romantic relationships might be different to revenge within other relationship contexts. A systematic review exploring what makes revenge more likely within romantic relationships has not been conducted to date.

Methods: ten electronic databases were searched (including hand searching). Inclusion criteria were applied to identified publications. Quality assessment was conducted on all included studies before undergoing data extraction and synthesis.

Results: searching yielded 1985 hits. 762 were duplicates (removed). 1150 were irrelevant and 51 did not meet inclusion criteria (excluded). 3 that met inclusion criteria were not accessible (excluded). 19 studies (cross-sectional) were included.

Discussion: a number of factors appear to influence perceptions of, motivations for, and likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge, which were organised into four variables (social-cognitive, offence, relational,

personality); variables do no influence revenge independently but rather, appear related to each other; a preliminary framework was developed to highlight the complex processes involved. Findings should be interpreted with caution due to quality assessment findings (where more high-quality research is needed) and generalisability of samples. Only 2 studies examined *actual* revenge behaviour; the majority focused on perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge following a hypothetical or real transgression (limiting external validity).

1. Background

When interpersonal transgressions occur, individuals may not respond with forgiveness towards their transgressor and instead, respond with revenge. As discussed within Chapter One, once a transgression has occurred, one of two (or both) motivational systems are triggered within the transgressed individual, where one is revenge (the desire is to see harm come to the transgressor; McCullough et al., 1998), which is considered to be a retaliatory act (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Revenge is also considered a destructive communication response (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006c) and can occur within all types of interpersonal relationships, including workplace, friendship, family and romantic.

Romantic relationships are considered "an important and enduring form of adult relationships and the source of many of life's greatest joys" (Boon, Deveau & Alibhai, 2009, p. 749). When difficulties within romantic relationships arise, such as transgressions, this can have a negative impact on the afflicted partner's health and wellbeing (Kiecott-Glaser &

Newton, 2001). Furthermore, problems arising within romantic relationships have been cited as a reason for why individuals seek psychological support and counselling (Pinsker, Nepps, Redford & Winston, 1985). Compared to other relationship contexts, romantic relationships often offer emotional security and intimacy, and individuals are driven to meet their partner's needs and welfare (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006). The exclusive commitment between romantic partners is a motivating factor for individuals to consider the well-being of their partner and to act selflessly (Murray & Holmes, 2011). Moreover, unique to romantic relationships are passion and sex (McDonald & Asher, 2013). It is argued that romantic relationships are more communal in nature (i.e. based on a sense of trust between individuals through shared obligation) when compared with other relationships (such as with co-workers or acquaintances, which tend to operate on exchange principles where individuals monitor each other's behaviour for reward cooperation and punishment of deviance to ensure fairness) (Clark & Waddell, 1985). It could thus be argued that romantic revenge may differ to revenge enacted within other relationship contexts (Rasmussen, Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016).

Research comparing likelihood of romantic revenge against other relationship contexts presents conflicting findings. Some studies found that likelihood of revenge is greater within a romantic relationship compared to a friend or roommate relationship (e.g. McDonald & Asher, 2013) whilst others have found that revenge against a romantic partner is less likely compared to revenge against a co-worker (e.g. Rasmussen,

Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016; study 3) (potential reasons for this disparity will be discussed at a later stage). Despite these conflicting findings, revenge does still occur within romantic relationships. Guerrero and Anderson (1998) identified a number of behaviours a jealous partner enacts in attempt to restore equality within the relationship (e.g. silent treatment, acts to purposefully make their partner jealous). Other studies found that sexual behaviour (e.g. rebound sex following a breakup; Barber & Cooper, 2014) and infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005) are committed with revenge motivations following a transgression. More recently, Revenge Pornography [RP], which falls under the umbrella term of non-consensual sharing of intimate/sexual material (e.g. images and/or videos) and is considered a form of Image Based Sexual Abuse, which can occur within romantic relatioinships has received substantial media attention, albeit this is a developing area requiring exploration through research. As discussed in Chapter One, there are many motivations for the non-consensual sharing of intimate/sexual material and image based sexual abuse but for a case to be considered RP in law, the perpetrator must have disclosed the private sexual material without the consent of the individual appearing in the material with the intention to cause them distress; this will result in a prosecution and conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015).

To date, romantic revenge literature appears to not be as well-established as other relationship contexts, such as workplace relationships. Moreover, this literature has not been examined systematically. Providing a descriptive base of what literature tells us about what influences romantic

revenge will consolidate our current understanding of this behaviour, including its motivations (e.g. Boon et al., 2009) and the personalities of those who may enact this behaviour (e.g. Brewer, Hunt, James & Abell, 2015). This would be also beneficial given that, as the current law stands, a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Court Act 2015 will only be given if it can be proven that the non-consensual disclosure of sexual material was committed with intent to cause distress (where revenge is considered a behaviour to cause an individual harm; McCullough et al., 1998), which is an area of research that is required to establish our understanding of it further (Walker & Sleath, 2017). Furthermore, exploring literature systematically will provide insight for professionals seeking to explore romantic revenge further through research, and for professionals working directly with its perpetrators and victims.

1.2 Specific objectives

1. Clarify evidence available and synthesise knowledge regarding what influences romantic revenge. Clarification will be made by a systematic review of the evidence base.
2. Identify what factors could be linked to greater likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge.

2. Method

2.1 Search methods

The search did not place a limit on publication date. Publications were sourced between 09 May 2018 – 28 June 2018 using the following:

2.1.1 Electronic databases

- Cochrane
- Campbell Collaboration
- The EPPI Centre
- SCOPUS
- MEDLINE
- PsychArticles
- PsychoInfo
- ScienceDirect
- Web of Science
- ProQUEST

2.1.2 Other methods

- Reference checking and hand searching
- Contacting individuals who have conducted research within this area
- Identifying data from conferences
- Identifying theses (e.g. Nottingham eTheses, ETHOS).

2.1.3 Search strategy

- The following search terms were used:

- "revenge AND intimate relationship", "revenge AND romantic relationship", "revenge AND sexual relationship", "revenge AND romantic partner", "revenge AND intimate partner", "revenge AND sexual partner"
- "vengeance AND intimate relationship", "vengeance AND romantic relationship", "vengeance AND sexual relationship", "vengeance AND romantic partner", "vengeance AND intimate partner", "vengeance AND sexual partner"
- "revenge pornography", "sexting AND revenge", "sexting AND vengeance"

2.2 Study Selection

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to publications identified from the search using a pre-defined inclusion criteria form (appendix A). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were as follows:

2.2.1 Inclusion criteria

i. Population – aged 18+, any gender, not restricted to UK population

ii. Exposure – situations where individuals engage in romantic revenge

iii. Comparator – situations where individuals do not engage in romantic revenge

iv. Outcome – factors related to romantic revenge

v. Study designs – cohort, case-control and cross-sectional

2.2.2 Exclusion criteria

- Studies with participants under the age of 18
- Studies not written in English
- Studies using qualitative methodology
- Studies not separating revenge from other aspects of forgiveness (e.g. avoidance) but combining these (e.g. into 'unforgiving motivations')
- Studies combining results for different relationship contexts (e.g. for co-workers and romantic partners)
- Studies only comparing whether revenge is more or less likely between different relationship contexts (and not investigating variables that might explain differences)

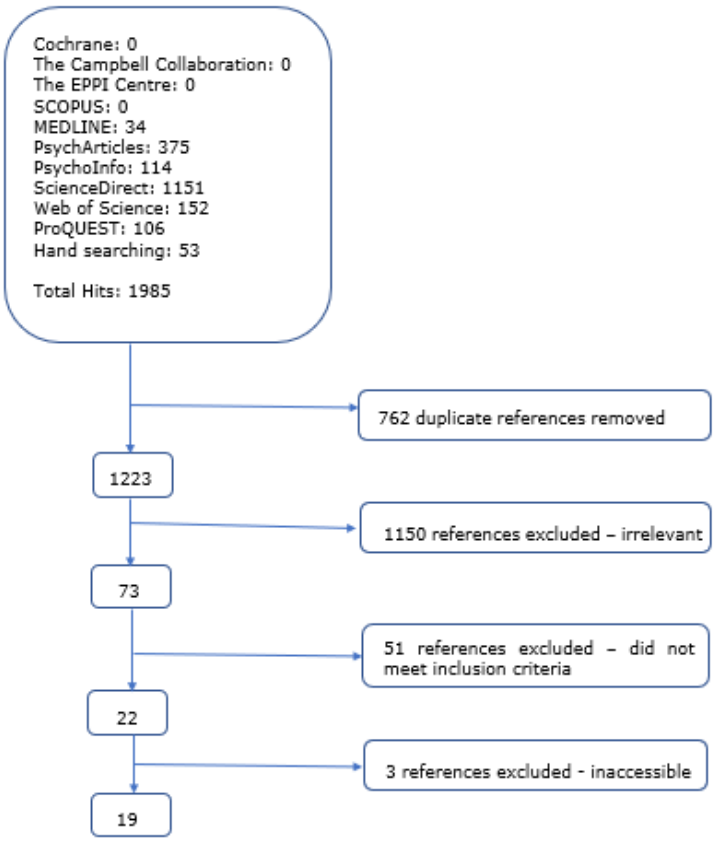
See figure one for the search strategy.

Given that individuals under the age of 18 were excluded from participating (and being depicted in scenarios) in the empirical research presented in Chapters Four and Five due to ethical and legal considerations (see 'participants' and 'vignettes' sections within each of these Chapters for explanations for this decision), participants under the age of 18 were excluded from the systematic review in order to maintain consistency throughout this thesis.

2.3 Quality assessment

Quality of included studies was assessed using an adaptation of The Critical Appraisal Skill Programme (CASP) checklists (CASP, 2013, 2017) for cohort and case control studies (appendix B). Using CASP (2013, 2017) checklists, a checklist was produced for use with cross-sectional designs (appendix B). Guidance for assessing quality was sought using CASP (2013, 2017) checklists and the National Institute of Health (2014). Quality was assessed by one reviewer (the author) and twenty-five percent of studies (n=5) were assessed by a second reviewer (trainee forensic psychologist) to aid with consistency in the quality assessment process. In cases of ambiguity, discussions were held until a final decision was made.

Figure 1: *Search Strategy flow diagram*



2.4 Data extraction

Data was extracted using a pre-defined data extraction form (appendix C). Form development was guided and adapted from the Cochrane Handbook (Higgins & Green, 2011). Data was extracted by one reviewer (the author) prior to synthesis.

3. Results

3.1 Description of studies

Searching yielded 1985 publications; 762 were duplicates (removed). 1150 publications were irrelevant and 51 did not meet inclusion criteria (excluded). 3 publications (dissertations) were not accessible despite access requests being made (excluded). 19 studies were included overall.

3.2 Characteristics of studies

All included studies employed a cross-sectional study design (see table 1 for a summary of included study characteristics). Number of participants across included studies was 4647 (3252 females, 70%; 2 participants did not disclose gender in one study; Pina et al., 2017). Participants were sampled from the USA (12 studies), Canada (4 studies), UK (2 studies) and The Netherlands (1 study).

For exposure (romantic revenge), ten studies provided participants with a vignette describing a transgression ('vignette'), three studies asked participants to think about actual romantic transgression experiences ('think about own experience of transgression'), and six studies asked

participants to consider their behaviour in romantic relationships ('think about own behaviour'). Two studies asked participants to think about motivations for a behaviour they engaged in.

The most prevalent outcome was motivations for revenge (11 studies). Attitudes towards, or perceptions of, revenge (5 studies) and likelihood of engaging in revenge (5 studies) were also outcomes.

Nine studies developed a tool to measure their revenge outcome. Other revenge outcome measures included the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory [TRIM] (McCullough et al., 1998, 2003) to assess motivations towards a transgressor (six studies), the Vengeance Scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) to measure attitudes towards revenge (four studies) and the Motives for Inducting Romantic Jealousy Scale (Mattingly, Whitson & Mattingly, 2012) (where revenge is identified as a motivation) (two studies). See table 1 for a summary of other measures used (unrelated to revenge outcomes, specifically).

Through assessing the characteristics of studies, it was noted that within the TRIM, 'revenge' is a subscale and so it was considered whether this would be an appropriate measure to use with individuals who non-consensually share intimate material to explore their motivation(s) for the behaviour. It was thus identified that critiquing this psychometric would be necessary for this purpose, which is presented in Chapter Three.

Table 1. *Characteristics of included studies (n=19)*

Reference	Sample (size) and demographics	Location (study method)	Exposure	Outcome	Measures	Quality score (clarity score)
Barber & Cooper, 2014	College students (170) – psychology course 58 male, 112 female Mean age 18.3 Relationship duration 1-42 months (M = 13.5 months) Breakup occurred <1-32 weeks before survey (M = 12.9 weeks)	USA (think about own behaviour)	Relationship breakup	Sexual motives and behaviours	Characteristics of relationship and breakup (created by authors) Negative feelings following breakup (including anger and desire for revenge) (created by authors) Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) Sex Motives Measure (Cooper et al., 1998; 4 additional items created by authors to assess revenge and rebound sex)	28/40 (2/20)
Barta & Kiene, 2005	College students (432) - one university in Texas (n = 246), one	USA (think about own behaviour)	Participant infidelity	Motivation for, and individual differences in, infidelity	Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) Big Five Inventory (John et al., 1991)	20/40 (4/20)

	university in Eastern Missouri (n = 205) 116 males, 316 females Heterosexual, not married Mean age 19 120 self-reported infidelity (32 male, 88 female) 90% European descent				Motivations scale (created by authors; based on motivations identified by Glass and Wright, 1988, and Prager, 1995)	
Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016	Community sample (160) 58 males, 102 females Mean age 38	USA (vignette)	Partner causing public humiliation Belief in a Just World Growth and destiny beliefs	Forgiveness, revenge and avoidance	Belief in a Just World scale (Lipkus et al., 1996) Implicit Theories of Relationships scale (destiny and growth beliefs) (Knee et al., 2003) TRIM (McCullough et al., 2003) Decision to Forgive scale (Davis et al., 2015)	17/40 (5/20)

					Emotional Forgiveness scale (Worthington et al., 2007)	
Brewer, Hunt, James & Abell, 2015 (study 2)	Heterosexual women (108) Aged 18-40 (M = 20.56) 57.4% in romantic relationship	UK (vignette)	Infidelity Dark triad	Likelihood of revenge and ending relationship	Direct experience of infidelity (yes/no) and whether this resulted in relationship dissolution Mach-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970) NPI-16 (Ames et al., 2006) Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (Levenson et al., 1995) Likelihood of seeking revenge (created by authors) Likelihood of seeking direct (e.g. shouting) or indirect (e.g. spreading rumour) revenge (created by authors) Likelihood of ending relationship (created by authors)	18/40 (6/20)
Davidson, Lozano, Cole & Gervais, 2015	Female college students (502) – one midwestern university Aged 17-38 (M = 19.89) White (88%),	USA (think about own experience of transgression)	IPV victimisation Dispositional forgiveness	Benevolence, revenge, avoidance	TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 1998) Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005) Abusive Behaviour Inventory (Shepard & Campbell, 1992)	27/40 (3/20)

	bi-racial or multi-racial (4%), Asian American (2%), Latino (2%), African American (2%), Native American (0.2%), other (0.2%)					
Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch & Adams-Curtis, 2005	College students (428) – one midwestern university 208 males, 220 females Male mean age 18.76, female mean age 18.59 83% European Americans	USA (vignette)	Transgression (infidelity; telling a secret) Ambivalent sexism Rape myth endorsement	Perception of dating violence Revenge endorsement	Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 2001) Rape Myth Scale (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995) Vengeance Scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) Perceptions of scenario (created by authors)	22/40 (2/20)
Guerrero & Bachman, 2010	College students (221) – communication class at one	USA (think about own experience of transgression)	Transgression (infidelity; partner being attracted to, dated or	Forgiveness or revenge motivation Communication	Partner reward value (Sprecher, 2000) Investment model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998)	24/40 (4/20)

	university 98 males, 123 females Aged 19-49 (M = 22.1) Relationship duration 2 months - 5 years, M = 10.2 months White (73.8%), Mexican/Hispanic (6.3%), Asian (5.5%), African-American (2.5%), other (11.7%)		flirted with third party; deception about something important)		Investment quality of alternatives measure (created by authors) Offence-related variables: Negative valence, partner uncertainty and perceived partner intent (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a) Degree of forgiveness (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b) TRIM – revenge seeking subscale (McCullough et al., 1998) Forgiving communication scale (Waldron & Kelley, 2005)	
Massar, Winters, Lenz & Jonason, 2017	Heterosexual individuals in romantic relationship >2 months (347) 103 males, 244 females Male mean age 31.16; female	The Netherlands (think about own behaviour)	Jealousy-arousing situation Psychopathy	Jealousy induction (practice and motive)	Self-Report Psychopathy Scale-III (Williams et al., 2007) Short-Form Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (Elphinston et al., 2011) Romantic Jealousy Induction Scale (Mattingly et al., 2012) Motives for Inducting Romantic Jealousy Scale (Mattingly et al., 2012)	23/40 (5/20)

	mean age 28 American (72%), Dutch (4.3%), German (4.3%), Belgian (2%), other (1.5%)					
McDonald & Asher, 2013	College students (157) 65 males, 92 females Aged 17-22 years (43.3% aged 18, 33% aged 19) 40% from ethnic minority groups	USA (vignette)	Relationship context (romantic partner; friend; roommate) Conflict issues (competing for resource; needing help; doing one's fair share; exclusivity; breaking a commitment)	Revenge goals	Likelihood ratings they would 1) make a variety of interpretations, 2) experience various emotions, 3) pursue a variety of goals, 4) endorse various strategies (created by authors) Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason et al., 1983) Social Provisions Scale (Cutrone & Russell, 1987)	20/40 (5/20)
Pina, Holland & James, 2017	Community sample (100) 16 males, 82 females (2 undisclosed)	UK (vignette; online survey)	Relationship breakup Dark personality traits	RP proclivity RP enjoyment RP approval	Ambivalent Sexism Inventory – short version (Glick & Whitehead, 2010) Short-D3 Scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) Comprehensive Assessment of	20/40 (4/20)

	Aged 18-54 (M = 25.81) British (87%)		Sexist ideology		Sadistic Tendencies (Buckels & Paulhus, 2014) RP Proclivity Scale (created by authors)	
Rasmussen, 2013	College students (199) – one university 76 males, 121 females 7% not in relationship, 3% in same-sex relationship White/European Canadian (56%), Chinese (14%), South Asian (14%), other (16%)	Canada (vignette)	Infidelity (emotional involvement conditions – high; low)	Likelihood of revenge	Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1998) Vengeance Scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) Social Conflict Goal Scale – modified by author (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997) Effectiveness and costliness measure (for revenge, direct communication, self-protection) (created by author) Likelihood of Engaging measure (created by the author)	22/40 (5/20)
Rasmussen, Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016 (study 3)	College students (292) – psychology course 63 males, 229 females	Canada (vignette)	Transgression - failing to drive participant to airport on time Relationship	Revenge motivation Attributions for offender's behaviour	TRIM – revenge subscale (McCullough et al., 1998) Interpersonal Trust in a Specific Other Scale (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982) Attributions measure (created by	22/40 (4/20)

	Mean age 20.54 45.2% in romantic relationship (mean length 23.34 months) 5 females in same-sex relationship		conditions (romantic partner; co-worker) Justification conditions (excuse; no excuse) Interpersonal trust		authors)	
Rasmussen, Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016 (study 4)	Community sample (98) 48 males, 50 females Mean age 20.54 European (73.5%), Latin American (9.2%), African American (7.1%), Chinese (7.1%) 88% in romantic relationship (10 same-sex)	USA (vignette)	Transgression (disclosure of incriminating photos; failing to drive participant to airport on time; failing to provide promised help) Relationship conditions (romantic partner; co-worker; close friend) Interpersonal trust	Revenge motivation	TRIM – revenge subscale (McCullough et al., 1998) Interpersonal Trust in a Specific Other Scale (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982) Relationship Closeness Inventory – Influence subscale (modified; Berscheid et al., 1989) Measure of task interdependence (modified; Pearce & Gregerson, 1991) Social desirability (not specified)	18/40 (4/20)

			conditions (trustworthy; untrustworthy Closeness conditions (highly interdependent; not interdependent)			
Rasmussen & Boon, 2013	College students (165) – psychology course 63 males, 102 females Mean age 20.81 White/European Canadian (60%), Chinese (13%), South Asian (12%), other (15%)	Canada (vignette)	Infidelity Dark Triad	Likelihood of revenge	Short-D3 Scale (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) Endorsement of Goals scale (adapted from Social Conflict Goal Scale; Ohnuchi & Tedeschi, 1997) Perceptions of revenge (effectiveness and costliness; created by authors) Likelihood of revenge (created by authors)	20/40 (3/20)
Sheppard & Boon, 2012	College students (130) – psychology course	Canada (think about own behaviour)	Transgression Agreeableness	Attitudes towards revenge	Vengefulness Scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) HEXACO-60 (Ashton & Lee, 2009)	19/40 (5/20)

	59 males, 71 females Aged 17-52 (M = 20.73) Caucasian (53%) or Chinese (26%) 67 in relationship		Honesty-humility Vengefulness		Costs and benefits of romantic revenge (created by authors)	
Simon, Kobielski & Martin, 2008	College students (494) 109 males, 385 females Aged 18-21 (M = 19.3) Relationship duration 3-84 months (M = 20.3 months) All heterosexual Caucasian (86%), African American	USA (think about own behaviour)	Conflict in romantic relationship	Conflict behaviour (negotiation, aggression, compliance)	Beliefs About Conflict Inventory (Simon & Kobielski, 2006) Goals for Intimate Peer Conflict Inventory (Simon & Martin, 2006) Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (Kurdek, 1994) Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (Wolfe et al., 2001) Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) Intimacy Questionnaire – Emotional Closeness, Respect, and Balanced Relatedness subscales (Shulman et al., 1997)	27/40 (4/20)

	(7%), Latino or Hispanic American (3%), Asian American (1%), Native American (0.5%), other (2.5%)					
Sirianni, 2016	College students (200) – one course at one university 116 males, 95 females	USA (vignette)	Transgression High provocation = infidelity (n = 100) Low provocation = broken promise (n = 100)	Perceived outcomes of Revenge Likelihood of sharing RP	Vengeance scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) Expected outcomes (partner-directed outcomes and self-directed outcomes) (Boon et al., 2009) RP sharing (yes/no response) Technological self-efficacy (created by author) Vicarious experience (created by author)	21/40 (5/20)
Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson & Tullett, 2017	College students (237) 71 males, 166 females Mean age 18.75	USA (think about own behaviour)	Narcissism	Propensity towards, and motivations for, inducing jealousy	NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988) Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (Hendin & Cheek, 1987) Pathological Narcissism Scale – narcissistic vulnerability dimension (Pincus et al., 2009)	20/40 (4/20)

					Mach-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970) Rosenburg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965) Romantic Jealousy Induction Scale (Mattingly et al., 2012) Motives for Inducting Romantic Jealousy Scale (Mattingly et al., 2012)	
Tsang & Stanford, 2007	Adult heterosexual couples (207) 75 males, 132 females (75 ppts in female sample in relationship with member of male sample) Male perpetrator of IPV, female victim of IPV <u>Males:</u> Aged 19-71 (M = 36.87) African-American	USA (think about own experience of transgression)	IPV (female victim, male perpetrator) Religiousness	Benevolence, avoidance, revenge	Personality Assessment Inventory (males) (Morey, 1991) Interpersonal Reactivity Index – Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales (females) (Davis & Outhout, 1987) Measure of sympathetic, empathic, concerned, moved, compassionate warm, soft-hearted and tender feelings towards partner (females) (created by authors) TRIM (females) (McCullough et al., 1998, 2003) Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation scales (Allport & Ross, 1967) Quest Religious Orientation Scale (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991)	22/40 (5/20)

		(69.3%), European-American (24%), Asian (2.7%) Native American (1.3%) Completed college (20%), high school diploma or GED (29%), some high school (39%), less than 9th grade (7%) Never married (43%), divorced (5.3%), separated (5.3%), living with partner (10.7%) <u>Females:</u> Aged 18-71 (M = 32.87) African-American (60.6%),		

	European-American (23.3%), Asian (2.3%) Native American (2.3%), bi-racial (4.5%), Latina/Hispanic (0.8%), other (1.5%) Relationship duration 5 months – 33 years Time elapsed since last abuse 1 day – 4.5 years	

3.3 Quality assessment

Each item was scored with either 2 ('yes'), 1 ('partial') or 0 ('no') points. A rating of 'U' (unclear) was given if not enough information was provided to determine a score. Quality scores ranged from 17-28 (Mean = 21.58; SD = 3.11; Maximum score = 40). Table 2 provides summarised outcomes of quality assessment (see appendix D for more detailed information on quality scores).

Table 2. *Quality Assessment Summary*

	Sampling & Selection Bias	**Measurement Bias**	**Statistical Bias**	**Attrition Bias**
Average Quality Score*	6.95 (max = 14)	10.52 (max= 16)	3.68 (max= 8)	0.42 (max = 2)
Quality Score (%)	49.6%	65.8%	46%	21%
Average Number of Unclear**	1.26 (max = 7)	2.11 (max = 8)	0 (max= 4)	0.79 (max = 1)
Unclear (%)	18%	26.4%	0%	79%

Max = Maximum
* higher score = better quality
** higher score = more uncertainty

The most common bias was attrition bias, followed by statistical bias. The least common bias was measurement bias, followed by sampling and selection bias. Recommendations for future research in reducing potential bias are discussed in the 'Discussion' section of this review.

3.3.1 Sampling and Selection Bias

This considers how much participants represent target populations, and how generalisable results are.

Ten studies (52.6%) collected data from 200+ participants. Satisfactory response rates were achieved in nine studies (47.4%). When examining response rates, scores of 1 or 0 were often given due to the sample size not being adequate (i.e. < 200). It should be noted, however, that no study reported whether power calculations had been conducted. It is thus possible that studies had adequate power to detect an effect with less than 200 participants.

Only five studies (26.3%) clearly described selection/recruitment procedures. Eight studies (42.1%) described sampling methods (e.g. opportunistic) but provided no information regarding study advertisement. Six studies (31.6%) did not report selection/recruitment procedures. Twelve studies (63.2%) provided clear definitions of their target sample. A score of 1 was provided if studies were clear in what they intended to measure within their sample but did not clearly define their target sample (n=5, 26.3%). Two studies (10.5%) did not provide clear definitions of their target sample. Regarding representation, no study received a score of 2; 13 studies (68.4%) recruited from a university (from one or two courses) and in general, participants were often young, white, heterosexual and majority female. A score of 0 was given for eight studies (42.1%) for representation (often because it was unclear who their target sample was meant to be). Participant demographics were clearly provided in four studies (21.1%), where the remainder provided much less information (e.g. missing age ranges, ethnicity, occupation status). Taken together, representation and generalisability of study results is likely lowered.

3.3.2 Measurement Bias

This considers whether participant classification and measurement tools are objective and reliable.

Eighteen studies (94.7%) clearly classified participants into exposure groups using the same procedure. Outcome(s) were clearly described in all studies and these were accurately measured (i.e. uniform to all). All studies used psychometric self-report measures, which inherently carry a higher risk of measurement bias. Measurement tools were clearly described in eight studies (42.1%) and within remaining studies, there was often missing or limited information (e.g. regarding interpretation of scores, why only certain items from established measures had been chosen, examples of items).

Measurement validity was not discussed in six studies (31.6%). Eleven studies (57.9%) discussed validity to some extent although this was limited (e.g. reporting validity for some tools but not others). Measurement reliability was considered in seventeen studies (89.5%) by examining internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). In the remaining two studies (10.5%), reliability for some measures was reported but not others. Fourteen studies (73.7%) did not report how missing data was dealt with and no studies discussed whether assessors were blind to exposure or outcome.

3.3.3 Statistical Bias

All studies clearly conducted statistical analyses and reported results appropriate to study design, although only four studies (21.1%) discussed data assumptions (e.g. normality). Reliability of results are compromised further by self-report data, where only four studies (21.1%) included social desirability measures and adjusted for this. As discussed in '*sampling and selection bias*', generalisability of results is limited by representation of participants. Furthermore, fourteen studies (73.7%) adjusted results for confounding variables, although eleven of these (57.9%) could have considered confounding variables further. Sixteen studies (84.2%) discussed findings in the context of other available evidence, where the remainder (15.8%) only discussed some of their findings in the context of available evidence.

3.3.4 Attrition Bias

Risk of attrition bias was high because the majority (n=15, 78.9%) did not report information on drop-out rates (or describe reasons for this).

3.4 Descriptive data synthesis

McCullough and colleagues (1998) distinguished four variables determining forgiveness (or lack thereof): social-cognitive, offence, relational and personality variables. Findings could be organised to reflect this framework.

3.4.1 Social-cognitive variables

Social-cognitive (or affective) variables refer to how transgressed individuals think and feel about the transgressor and transgression. Social exchange theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) posits that romantic partners constantly weigh costs and benefits of being in the relationship; actions incurring costs are avoided unless potential benefits outweigh costs. The utility hypothesis (Arrow, 1966) postulates individuals also make decisions based on probability the perceived consequence(s) will occur. Moreover, revenge behaviours are influenced by desires to obtain goals (Yoshimura, 2007). One study examined perceived effectiveness and costliness of revenge (Rasmussen, 2013), and three studies examined perceived goals of revenge (Rasmussen, 2013; Simon et al., 2008; Sirriani, 2016). See table 3 for a summary of results.

Table 3. *Results summary for perceived effectiveness, costliness and goals of revenge*

Authors	**Results**
Rasmussen, 2013	- Developed positive and negative consequence indices [PCI and NCI, respectively] from lists participants produced about perceived consequences of revenge following transgression. - Perceived effectiveness positively correlated with PCIs (and weakly negatively correlated with NCIs). Perceived costliness was positively correlated with NCIs (but was unrelated to PCIs). - Perceived effectiveness positively correlated with power and justice goals (and negatively correlated with direct communication strategies); power goals

	previously found to be related to more direct and violent forms of revenge (Yoshimura, 2007). - Anger and perceived effectiveness (but not costliness) predicted likelihood of taking revenge. Predictive effect of perceived effectiveness was not moderated by perceptions of costliness. Perceived costliness was related to decreased likelihood of revenge when effectiveness was perceived as low (but only among those high in anger).
Simon et al., 2008	- Explored beliefs, goals and behavioural strategies for conflict in romantic relationships. Knowledge about, and experience of, behaviour impacts how individuals process and respond to social situations (social information processing theory; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Heusmann, 1988); beliefs about conflict are influenced by direct and indirect experience. - Stronger beliefs about destructive nature of romantic conflict associated with lower endorsement of relationship-orientated goals (i.e. relationship preservation), greater endorsement of revenge goals (i.e. desire to hurt transgressor) and greater use of destructive conflict behaviour (including aggression). - Association between destructive conflict beliefs and use of aggression partially mediated by revenge and self-focussed goals (i.e. getting one's own way).
Sirianni, 2016	- Partner-outcome goals (i.e. revenge to cause change in romantic partner's attitudes, feelings or behaviours after transgression) but not self-focussed goals (i.e. revenge to alleviate negative feelings) predicted likelihood to share RP (comparable to previous research; Boon et al., 2009).

Individuals attempt to make sense of transgressions by evaluating the violation and transgressor, where an Expectancy Violations Theory [EVT] framework can explain how individuals interpret and respond (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). EVT comprises two main factors: violation valence (whether an act is evaluated positively or negatively; negative evaluations typically incur reciprocal negative communication; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon, Stern & Billman, 1995), and reward value (benefits a transgressor provides, such as prestige, physical and social attractiveness, and material resources; highly rewarding partners have more opportunity to break expectations; Le Poire & Burgoon, 1996). Two further factors are considered as part of EVT: uncertainty (ability to predict, explain and understand the transgression; Afifi & Metts, 1998; Knoblock & Soloman, 2005), and partner intent (whether the partner is perceived to have caused intentional hurt; individuals respond more negatively following perceived intentional hurt; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; Feeney, 2004). Two studies examined interpretations of transgression (Guerrero & Bachman, 2010; McDonald & Asher, 2013). See table 4 for a summary of results.

Table 4. *Results summary for studies exploring interpretation of transgression*

Authors	**Results**
Guerrero & Bachman, 2010	- Stronger motivations to seek revenge when individuals perceived partner hurt them intentionally.

McDonald & Asher, 2013	- In romantic context (compared to friend or roommate context), negative interpretations were more likely regarding the transgression and likely stability/longevity of their relationship, and individuals more likely to endorse hostile goals and strategies. - Revenge goals in all contexts positively related to interpretations of rejection, lack of caring, disrespect, betrayal, lack of relationship viability and judgements of wrongdoing. - Only in romantic context were disrespect and rejection interpretations independently related to revenge goals. - Revenge goals negatively related to optimistic interpretations of conflict being resolvable and perceiving partner as meaning no harm. - Males had greater endorsement of rejection, disrespect and betrayal interpretations (and more pessimism about viability of relationship).

Emotion has been considered a driving-force impelling revenge (Horney, 1948). Four studies explored the influence of the victim's emotional/affective experience(s) following a transgression (Forbes et al., 2005; McDonald & Asher, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013; Tsang & Standford, 2007). See table 5 for a summary of results.

Table 5. *Results summary for studies exploring victim's emotional/affective experience(s) following transgression*

Authors	**Results**
Forbes et al., 2005	- Anger considered a justified emotional response (for both sexual or non-sexual transgression).

McDonald & Asher, 2013	- Individuals more likely to experience anger and hurt following transgression by a romantic partner (than friend or roommate). - Whilst these emotions were correlated with revenge goals, only hurt uniquely contributed. - No gender differences in reports of anger and hurt. - Emotional reactions contributed less variance to revenge goals than disrespect and rejection interpretations.
Rasmussen, 2013	- Predicted perceived effectiveness and costliness of revenge would each be moderated by anger in likelihood of revenge. - Anger only associated with greater likelihood of revenge when it was high and when effectiveness was low and costliness was high (where it appeared to inhibit revenge).
Tsang & Standford, 2007	- Female IPV victims' empathy towards perpetrator correlated negatively with revenge; those feeling more empathic towards perpetrator were more forgiving and less vengeful.

The attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold may influence the way in which they interpret information and events, including transgressions. One study explored the impact of Belief in a Just World [BJW] and growth and destiny beliefs (Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016). One Study examined acceptance of aggression (Forbes et al., 2005). Two studies explored the impact of sexist beliefs and acceptance of rape myths (Forbes et al., 2005; Pina et al., 2017). Religiosity was considered in one

study (Tsang & Standford, 2007). See tables 6-9, respectively, for a summary of results.

Table 6. *Results summary for studies exploring BJW and growth and destiny beliefs.*

Authors	**Results**
Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016	- BJW theory (Lerner, 1980): individuals with a strong BJW believe good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, and individuals explain the world according to whether it is just for themselves (BJW-self) or others (BJW-other). - BJW-other marginally negatively related to revenge (Strelan & Sutton, 2011). BJW-self positively related to forgiveness. - Using implicit theories of relationship framework (see Knee, Patrick & Lonsbary, 2003), individuals view relationships in terms of whether they are idealistic (destiny beliefs) and realistic (growth beliefs; approach-orientated). - Destiny beliefs facilitated association between BJW-other and revenge (Finkel, Burnette & Scissors, 2007); a feature of strong destiny beliefs is unwillingness to give the benefit of the doubt and antisocial motivations. - Growth beliefs mediated association between BJW-self and forgiveness (Finkel et al., 2007); individuals with high BJW-self perceived transgression as an opportunity for relationship growth and maintenance.

Table 7. *Results summary for study exploring acceptance of aggression*

Authors	**Results**
Forbes et al., 2005	- Males perceived more justification for hitting and revenge following transgression (sexual and non-sexual). - For both transgressions, males and females perceived transgressed females had more right to hit than transgressed males. However, transgressed females were not perceived as more justified to get even than transgressed males. - Females perceived the anger of transgressed females as more justified than the anger of transgressed males. - A transgressed female's anger following sexual betrayal was more justified than non-sexual betrayal.

Table 8. *Results summary for studies exploring sexist beliefs and acceptance of rape myths*

Authors	**Results**
Forbes et al., 2005	- Sexism unrelated to females' perceptions of revenge. For males, there was association between increases in hostile (but not benevolent) sexism and justification for getting even and being angry. - Acceptance of rape myths associated with justification to get even for males and getting even (and right to hit) for females.
Pina et al., 2017	- Positive correlation between sexist beliefs and approval of RP. - Sexist beliefs and Machiavellianism explained 14% of

	variance in RP approval and 11% of variance for RP proclivity (Machiavellianism was the only independent predictor for both).

Table 9. *Results summary for study exploring religiosity*

Authors	**Results**
Tsang & Standford, 2007	- Religious participation in female IPV victims negatively related to revenge following IPV. - For those with at least a moderate interest in religion, those with higher extrinsic religious orientation (religion used as a means towards nonreligious goals, viewing religion as a means to an end) and quest orientation (an open-minded approach to religion with a search for truth) reported more revenge motivations than those with an intrinsic (devout) religious motivation.

Social-cognitive findings suggest that romantic revenge may be influenced by how effective or costly transgressed individuals perceive the behaviour (social exchange theory and utility hypothesis), where specific goal endorsement could influence perceptions of effectiveness or costliness (and subsequent response strategies). Furthermore, perceptions and goals could be influenced by beliefs about romantic relationship conflict (shaped by direct and indirect experience of this; social information processing theory). Interpretations of a transgression (and the transgressor) may also influence desired outcomes and response strategies (which could be understood by EVT). Interpretations of

rejection and disrespect could result in negative expectancies regarding the relationship (perhaps reducing revenge's perceived costs), influencing a vengeful response to obtain a desired goal. For example, disrespectful and rejecting interpretations made by the transgressed individual could result in vengeful behaviour to restore balance (McDonald & Asher, 2013). Similarly, research suggests individuals report more damage to the relationship (and less relationship satisfaction, which perhaps reduces revenge's perceived costs) when perceiving intentional hurt (Feeney, 2004; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Partner intent to cause harm has been strongly related to destructive conflict responses (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a).

Whilst emotional responses to a transgression were correlated with revenge goals in one study (McDonald & Asher, 213), only hurt uniquely contributed to revenge goals. However, this study found that emotional responses had a weaker influence on revenge goals compared to (disrespectful and rejecting) interpretations, suggesting interpretations have a stronger influence on revenge goals following a transgression. Within this study, there were no gender differences in reports of anger and/or hurt but they did differ in interpretations. It could thus be that gender influences revenge via interpretation. Furthermore, anger only influenced perceived effectiveness, costliness and likelihood of taking revenge in certain conditions (high anger inhibited revenge when perceived effectiveness was low and perceived costliness was high; Rasmussen, 2013). Whilst emotion is often considered a driving-force impelling revenge (Horney, 1948), it may be that emotions are, instead,

connected with reasoned decision-making (Frijda, 1994; Solomon, 1994). Results challenge the notion that angry and hurt individuals are compelled to enact revenge against their better judgement; internal desires (e.g. goals) and perceptions (e.g. effectiveness) also influence vengeful decisions. Interventions aimed at decreasing revenge should perhaps focus more on interpretations of transgressions rather than targeting emotion regulation alone.

Findings introduced that certain attitudes and beliefs an individual holds could influence revenge motivations, including BJW, growth and destiny beliefs, acceptance of aggression, sexist beliefs, acceptance of rape myths and religiosity, although more research is required. Regarding acceptance of aggression (Forbes et al., 2005), findings suggest gender differences. It could be that males perceive physical and psychological aggression in romantic relationships as more acceptable and perceive more justification for revenge following transgressions. Males and females also perceived transgressed females had more right to hit than transgressed males, which could reflect perceptions that physical aggression by women is more acceptable, or that betrayal towards a female is more serious. However, transgressed females were not perceived as more justified to get even than transgressed males; it is likely that results reflect that gender (of victim/transgressor) influences acceptability of physical violence rather than perceived seriousness. Furthermore, females perceived the anger of a transgressed female as more justified than a transgressed male, and a transgressed female's anger following a sexual betrayal was more acceptable than a non-sexual betrayal. Gender differences were also

found by McDonald and Asher (2013) in terms of how transgressions were interpreted, suggesting further that gender could influence revenge. Future research should explore this.

3.4.2 Offence variables

Offence variables refer to the nature of the transgression. Three studies explored perceived severity of the transgression (Forbes et al., 2005; Guerrero & Bachman, 2010; Sirianni, 2016). See table 10 for a summary of results.

Table 10. *Results summary for studies exploring perceived severity of transgression*

Authors	**Results**
Forbes et al., 2005	- Males and females perceived it was more acceptance for revenge following sexual betrayal than non-sexual betrayal.
Guerrero & Bachman, 2010	- Stronger desires to retaliate following sexual infidelity (considered the most serious transgression compared to when partner was attracted to, dated or flirted with third party, or deceived them about something important).
Sirianni, 2016	- Effect for self-outcomes (alleviating negative feelings) and likelihood to share RP was stronger following mild transgression (broken promise) compared to a more severe transgression (infidelity). - No differences in the effect between partner-outcomes (changing their partner's attitudes, feelings or

	behaviour) and likelihood to share RP across the two provocation groups.

Findings suggest sexual betrayals resulted in greater motivation (and justification) for revenge. Whilst studies did not explore specific reasons for why sexual betrayals were considered more serious, it is possible the hurt and uncertainty (considered within EVT) they cause (Afifi & Metts, 1998; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a, 2006b) make it more difficult to forgive. It is possible that *social-cognitive variables* influence interpretations of the transgression and its severity, resulting in a greater desire to enact revenge. Future research should examine this. Furthermore, transgression severity only influenced one condition in Sirianni's (2016) study, where the effect for self-outcomes and likelihood to share RP was stronger following a mild transgression. Anger was the only emotion explored within this study, which has been found to have a weaker influence on revenge goals compared to hurt (McDonald & Asher, 2013). Perhaps those within the mild transgression condition experienced a different emotion (such as hurt or humiliation) that influenced desire for revenge. Future research would benefit from examining a range of other emotions to consider whether these have an influence on revenge and are related to perceived severity.

3.4.3 Relational variables

Relational variables refer to the nature of the interpersonal relationship and can be understood within an Investment Model framework (IM; Rusbult, 1980, 1983) for considering forgiveness (or lack thereof). Four variables are considered: commitment (attachment to partner and

wanting to remain in relationship), satisfaction (meeting relationship expectations and consisting of more rewards than costs), quality of alternatives (whether one has options outside of relationship, such as another potential partner or being single), and investment (resources attached to relationship that would be lost if it ended). These factors are considered to predict constructive or destructive (e.g. vengeful and harmful) communication following transgressions (Guerrero & Bachman, 2008; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik & Lipkus, 1991), where perceptions of transgressions will (sometimes over time, given the temporal nature of forgiveness; McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003) be reframed in the context of relationship quality (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro & Hannon, 2002).

One study examined circumstances of the relationship ending (Barber & Cooper, 2014). Four studies explored relationship quality (Guerrero & Bachman, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2016, study 3; Rasmussen et al., 2016, study 4; Simon et al., 2008). One study explored the effect that (female) intimate partner violence [IPV] victimisation had on forgiveness (including revenge motivations) towards (male) perpetrators (Davidson et al., 2015). See tables 11-13 for a summary of results, respectively.

Table 11. *Results summary for study exploring circumstances of relationship ending*

Authors	**Results**
Barber & Cooper,	- For those whose partner terminated the relationship (compared to those who terminated the relationship),

2014	stronger feelings of distress and anger at 4-weeks post-breakup reported, with higher levels of revenge motives for sexual behaviour ('revenge sex'). - Those from longer-term relationships reported elevated levels of 'revenge sex' in the immediate aftermath of the break up (compared to shorter-term relationships).

Table 12. *Results summary for studies exploring relationship quality.*

Authors	**Results**
Guerrero & Bachman, 2010	- Stronger motivations to seek revenge when individuals had fewer relational investments with partner.
Rasmussen et al., 2016, study 3	- Greater desire for revenge against co-worker than romantic partner. - Explained through increased trust (which characterises romantic relationships). As trust increased, participants viewed actions of transgressor as less intentional (revenge motivations decreased as perceptions of intention decreased; Bies, Tripp & Kramer, 1997).
Rasmussen et al., 2016, study 4	- No differences in revenge between co-workers and romantic partners but participants perceived greater trust (in addition to closeness and interdependence) with romantic partner. - Moderate negative association between trust and revenge (with weak associations between closeness and interdependence and revenge) - Trust predicted vengeful desires when controlling for the other relational factors.

Simon et al., 2008	- Destructive romantic relationship conflict beliefs, revenge and self-focussed goals and strategies (e.g. aggression) associated with decreased intimacy and more conflictual relationships, as opposed to constructive conflict beliefs (related to relationship-orientated goals) and strategies (e.g. negotiation).

Table 13. *Results summary for study exploring IPV victimisation.*

Authors	**Results**
Davidson et al., 2015	- Positive association between experiencing IPV and revenge. No association between frequency of IPV and revenge. - No relationship between psychological IPV and revenge. - Positive relationship between physical IPV and revenge. No association between frequency of physical IPV and revenge.

Findings suggest that being 'dumped' and the termination of a longer-term relationship resulted in greater motivation for revenge; these individuals experienced greater distress and anger (*social cognitive variable)*, which may have influenced these motivations (perhaps to regulate these emotions). Contrary to McDonald and Asher's (2013) finding that individuals had more desire to enact revenge against a romantic partner, Rasmussen et al (2016; study 3) suggest romantic relationships may act as a buffer against vengeful desires. This disparity could be the result of methodological differences in transgression severity (*offence variables)*; vignettes used within McDonald and Asher's (2013)

study could be considered as minor conflicts (and not considered as transgressions in friend or roommate contexts). Rasmussen and colleague's (2016, study 3) findings were explained through increased trust in romantic relationships, where trust's association with interpretations of the transgressor (*social-cognitive variables)* could be responsible for buffering against vengeful responses; increased trust led to more charitable causal attributions (i.e. greater weight towards situational rather than dispositional attributions) (EVT and partner intent). The communal nature of romantic relationships (shared obligation, long-term orientation, long-term mutual fulfilment of needs as opposed to short-term reciprocity) compared to relationships with co-workers or acquaintances (often operating under exchange principles; Clark & Waddell, 1985) could explain why individuals have more trust in romantic partners. Furthermore, the (moderate) negative association between trust and revenge (with trust being a predictor for vengeful desires) could have implications for interventions; targeting trust might reduce desires for revenge (Rasmussen et al, 2016, study 4).

Individuals reported stronger motivations for revenge when they had fewer relational investments. This could be understood within an EVT (reward value*)* and IM (investment) framework. Individuals report using more destructive conflict responses following transgressions by unrewarding partners (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a). It could thus be argued that highly invested individuals are not as motivated to seek vengeance as this would place their relationship (and investments) under threat.

Davidson et al's (2015) study with female victims of IPV introduces the idea that previous (IPV) victimisation could influence vengeful desires (in females). Victimisation could negatively affect overall perceptions of others (i.e. influencing *social-cognitive variables)* and potential levels of trust, which could, in turn, influence vengeful motivations against (male) transgressors. Revenge was discussed in terms of 'moving against' others (defined as an aggressive interpersonal style accompanied with attempts to control others; Horney, 1970), which could serve as a coping mechanism for females who have experienced physical IPV. This could have developed due to experiencing IPV, although it was considered that female (physical) IPV survivors may also have a propensity for retaliation more generally, given that IPV incurs a loss of power and control (so control – the goal - through revenge can be understood within this framework). This was not explored within the study. Future research should consider male IPV victims and revenge motivations towards their transgressor to identify whether results are comparable.

3.4.4 Personality variables

These relate to processes facilitating revenge that are influenced by aspects of an individual's personality, such as dispositional variables. Findings can be understood through the I-cubed theory (Finkel, 2007), postulating that 3 constructs – instigation (event provoking a response), impellance (factors compelling aggressive responses), and inhibition (factors hindering aggressive responses) – determine whether individuals respond with revenge.

Three studies explored dispositional vengefulness (Forbes et al., 2005; Sheppard & Boon, 2012; Sirianni, 2016). Five studies explored the dark triad (psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism) (Brewer et al., 2015; Massar et al., 2017; Pina et al., 2017; Rasmussen & Boon, 2013; Tortoriello et al., 2017). Three studies explored the impact of certain 'big five' personality traits (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Sheppard & Boon, 2012; Tsang & Standford, 2007). See tables 14-16, respectively, for a summary of results.

Table 14. *Results summary for studies exploring dispositional vengefulness.*

Authors	**Results**
Forbes et al., 2005	- Vengeance scores associated with perceptions of getting even for both men and women.
Sheppard & Boon, 2012	- Higher dispositional vengefulness related to viewing costs of revenge as making it more likely and its benefits as making it more desirable.
Sirianni, 2016	- Individuals with higher disposition to seek vengeance were more likely to perceive benefits of sharing RP following provocation.

Table 15. *Results summary for studies exploring the dark triad.*

Authors	Results
Brewer et al., 2015	- Females' perceived likelihood of taking revenge positively related to primary psychopathy (manipulation, grandiosity, low anxiety and low empathy) and secondary psychopathy (negative emotionality, behavioural delinquency, and impulsivity) and narcissism. Only significant individual predictor was secondary psychopathy.
Massar et al., 2017	- Examined motivations for jealousy-induction within a partner who transgressed. - Only primary psychopathy was associated with jealousy-induction to exact revenge or obtain power/control. Secondary psychopaths were motivated through wanting to test their relationship or gain self-esteem.
Pina et al., 2017	- Machiavellianism positively correlated with RP approval. - Higher levels of narcissism and Machiavellianism positively correlated with greater RP enjoyment. - Higher dark triad traits had positive relationship with greater RP proclivity, explaining 18% of variance (only psychopathy remained independent predictor). - Sadistic tendencies yielded no significant relationship with RP proclivity. - Machiavellianism and sexist beliefs explained 11% and 14% of variance in RP proclivity and RP enjoyment, respectively (only Machiavellianism remained independent predictor for both). - Machiavellianism and narcissism explained 7.9% of

	variance in RP enjoyment (only narcissism remained independent predictor). - Disparity between frequencies of RP proclivity (28.6%), enjoyment (87%) and approval (99%) suggests that whilst participants may be unlikely to commit RP themselves, they displayed acceptance of it.
Rasmussen & Boon, 2013	- Perceived effectiveness of revenge had relatively strong relationship with likelihood of revenge. Perceived costs had no relationship to likelihood. - Machiavellianism and psychopathy indirectly related to likelihood of revenge through perceived effectiveness. - Higher scores on Machiavellianism and psychopathy resulted in higher endorsement of power and justice goals; greater endorsement resulted in perceiving revenge as effective. - Narcissism marginally negatively related to relationship (preservation) goals, where likelihood of revenge decreased with an increase in relationship goals.
Tortoriello et al., 2017	- Examined motivations for jealousy-induction within partner who transgressed. - Grandiose narcissism unrelated to revenge motivations, disagreeing with the idea that grandiose narcissists are vengeful (although their vengeful behaviour may not extend to romantic relationships, or their revenge in romantic relationships might not manifest as jealousy-induction; Rasmussen, 2015). - Jealousy-induction in vulnerable narcissists positively related to revenge motivations. A significant indirect effect through Machiavellianism was noted.

Table 16. *Results summary for studies exploring big five personality traits.*

Authors	Results
Barta & Kiene, 2005	- High neuroticism and low agreeableness predicted endorsement of anger as motive for infidelity (defined as wanting to 'get back' at a partner following a transgression and 'even the score').
Sheppard & Boon, 2012	- Lower scores on honesty-humility related to perceiving revenge as more desirable (when appraising benefits) and less undesirable (when appraising costs) (consistent with research demonstrating lower scorers feel motivated and entitled to obtain desires from exploiting others; e.g. Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell & Finkel, 2004). - Low scores on agreeableness related to viewing acts of revenge as more desirable (when appraising benefits) but were not related to viewing it as less undesirable (when appraising costs).
Tsang & Standford, 2007	- Female IPV victims more forgiving towards IPV perpetrators with dominant personalities than those with psychological problems. - Revenge motivations positively related to depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, anxiety, drug problems, suicidal ideation and stress in IPV perpetrators. - Revenge motivations negatively associated with perpetrators with dominant personalities. - Victim's level of empathy did not mediate effects of any offender variables on revenge (but did mediate effects of some offender variables on benevolence).

Findings indicate that dispositional vengefulness impelled vengeful desires through interacting with *social-cognitive variables;* it effected interpretations of the situation (perceived benefits of revenge and their goals), which is supported by research examining the role of the benefits of revenge and vengefulness (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick & Johnson., 2001).

Dark triad traits also appear to interact with *social-cognitive variables*, and the association of these traits appears better understood through impellance rather than inhibition. Findings thus suggest that for those wanting to dissuade a potential retaliator, it may be better to remove factors that impel (e.g. revenge will not help restore their goal of power/justice) instead of emphasising inhibition (e.g. highlighting potential costs).

An association was found between likelihood of revenge and primary and secondary psychopathy and narcissism, albeit secondary psychopathy was the only significant predictor (perhaps indicating that core cognitions, emotions and behaviours typical of each trait might be of greater importance when considering likelihood of romantic revenge; Brewer et al., 2015). Jealousy-induction was related to revenge goals in vulnerable narcissists but not grandiose narcissists (Tortoriello et al (2017) and was also associated with primary psychopathy (revenge and power/control goals) but not secondary psychopathy (Massar et al., 2017). Massar et al's (2017) and Tortoriello et al's (2017) findings seem to suggest convergence between psychopathy and narcissism (in jealousy induction,

specifically) but there were divergences. Grandiose narcissism was inversely related to compensatory self-esteem motivations whereas primary psychopathy was not, which might indicate that the high self-esteem of grandiose narcissists pacifies jealousy-induction responses (distinguishing the two). Vulnerable narcissism was related to security motivations whereas secondary psychopathy was not. Perhaps vulnerable narcissists' need for relational dependence as opposed to the more callous profile of secondary psychopathy differentiates these two constructs within jealousy induction, specifically.

Machiavellianism and psychopathy were indirectly related to likelihood of taking revenge through interacting with *social-cognitive variables* (perceived effectiveness and greater endorsement of power and justice goals, the latter of which resulted in perceiving revenge as effective; Rasmussen and Boon, 2013). Furthermore, higher narcissism and Machiavellianism were associated with higher RP proclivity, enjoyment and approval ratings (Pina et al., 2017). Sadistic tendencies yielded no significant relationship, which is inconsistent with previous research associating sadism together with dark triad traits in sexual assault (Russel & King, 2016) and online sexual violence (Buckels, Trappnell & Paulhus., 2014) (this could be due to the sample, which mainly consisted of females; sadistic tendencies appear more endorsed by males; Buckels, 2012). Manipulation and general callous affect (characteristic of these traits) could thus be important in RP perpetration. Furthermore, perhaps psychopathic traits (e.g. empathy deficits) have greater influence on RP proclivity (consistent with findings that psychopathy independently

predicted romantic revenge; Brewer et al., 2015), more so than unique traits of narcissism (e.g. entitlement) and Machiavellianism (e.g. deceit) (which could have a greater influence on RP enjoyment and RP approval, respectively).

Certain 'Big Five' personality traits (high neuroticism, low agreeableness) could influence romantic revenge (likely through relations with *social-cognitive variables*, such as influencing interpretations of revenge as a desirable and effective response). Lower scores on honesty-humility were related to perceiving revenge as more desirable when appraising benefits and less undesirable when appraising costs. The same was true for low agreeableness, only this was not associated with viewing it as less undesirable when appraising costs (Sheppard & Boon, 2012). This could be explained by the nature of the agreeableness factor of the measure used (HEXACO); lower scoring individuals are more focussed on retaliation and holding grudges than forgiveness (so may become angered more easily and quicker in perceiving the benefits of revenge, and may not focus on appraising potential costs compared to high scorers).

Tsang and Standford's (2007) findings introduce the notion that a transgressor's personality influences revenge motivations. Female IPV victims were less vengeful (and more forgiving) towards male IPV perpetrators with dominant (more charismatic) personalities than perpetrators with psychological difficulties. Empathy mediated the relationship between the transgressor's dominant personality and victim benevolence, where it was argued that the more charismatic

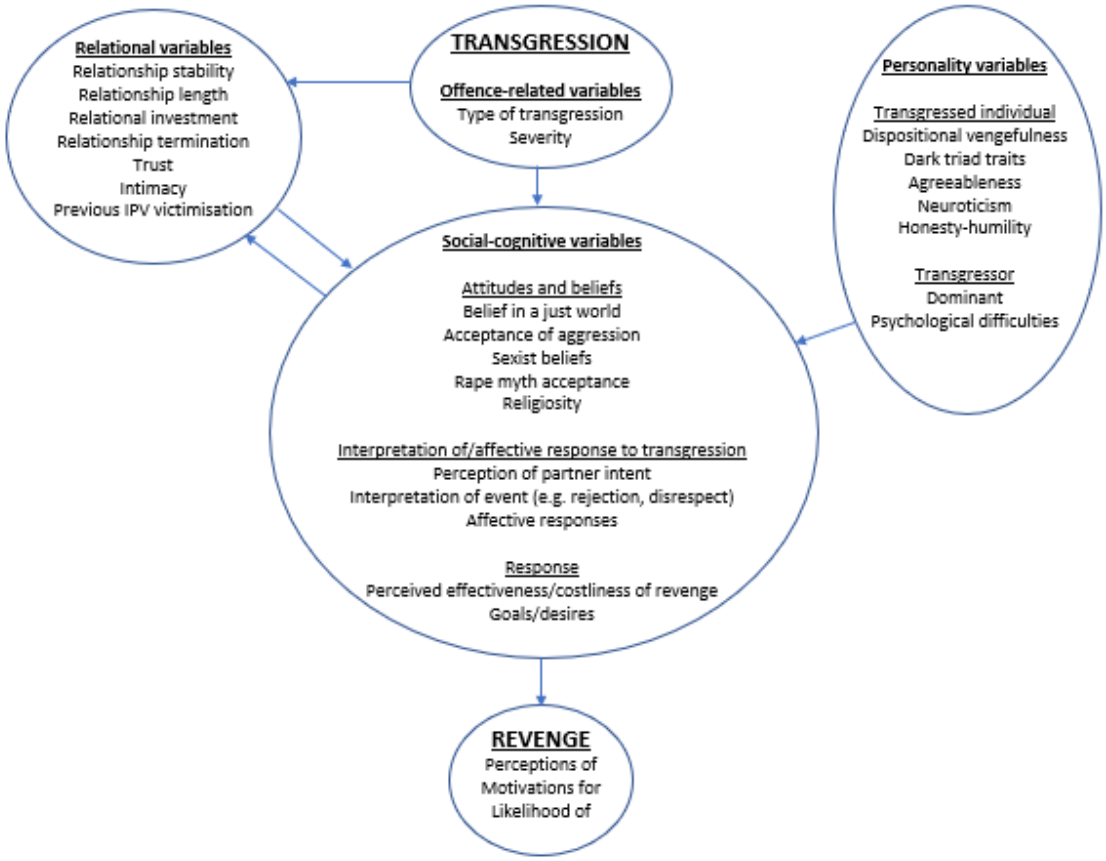
transgressors could be better able to convince victims to empathise with them. These findings could have implications for clinicians supporting those experiencing, or who have experienced, IPV (with female victims/male perpetrators). For example, female victims of male perpetrators could be supported in thinking objectively about their experiences and recognising that their (current or former) partner's personality may have had an influence on their decisions (e.g. if they have previously forgiven them or are considering forgiving them).

4. Discussion

The purpose of this review was to clarify and synthesise knowledge to develop our understanding of romantic revenge, and perhaps identify factors that could be linked to the greater likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge. Included studies identified a number of factors, which can be understood within McCullough's and colleagues' (1998) framework of forgiveness (or lack thereof). Within each of the four variables (social-cognitive, offence-related, relational and personality), various theories can be drawn upon to understand/explain these factors further. It would seem that these four variables do not influence revenge independently. Instead, the current findings suggest that when a transgression occurs (where transgressions vary in nature, such as their type and severity; *offence-related variables)*, this impacts the romantic relationship (*relational variables)* and individuals make interpretations about the transgression and transgressor (and how they, or others, might respond; *social-cognitive variables).* These interpretations and responses are influenced by a number of factors, including the nature of the romantic relationship

(*relational variables)* and the individuals themselves (*personality variables).* Vengeful responses to transgressions in romantic relationships are thus a result of complex processes. Based on the included studies, figure two presents a preliminary framework for understanding the processes that lead to perceptions of, motivation for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge (using variables identified by McCullough and colleagues, 1998). Future research should seek to explore, expand upon, and modify (where necessary) this framework to improve our understanding of romantic revenge. Moreover, there were variables that received less attention within included studies; the majority examined *social-cognitive* and *personality* variables. Future research would benefit from exploring variables that appear to have received less attention thus far (*offence-related* and *relational variables*).

Figure 2. *A preliminary framework for understanding the processes that lead to perceptions of, motivation for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge*



It should be highlighted that the majority of studies (89.5%) explored perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in, romantic revenge (as opposed to *actual* revenge behaviour – the retaliatory act, itself, to cause harm), either using hypothetical transgression scenarios and/or asking participants to imagine how they would behave if the transgression occurred against them. Only two studies (Barber & Cooper, 2014; Barta & Kiene, 2005) examined motivations for *actual* self-reported behaviour following a transgression. The cross-sectional nature of study designs employing these hypothetical/imagined scenarios could limit external validity of findings; responses may not be a true reflection of the

magnitude of real-life cases, the emotions experienced and how individuals would actually respond, where an inconsistent relationship between attitudes and behaviour has been documented (Fabrigar, MacDonald and Wegener, 2010). Additionally, the cross-sectional nature likely fails to capture temporal dynamics of forgiveness (or lack thereof) following transgressions within any relational context (e.g. McCullough et al., 2003). As such, caution should be made when inferring causality.

Findings of this review should also be interpreted with caution due to what the quality assessment highlighted, and the quality assessment findings should be considered when conducting future research in this area to reduce risk of bias. To reduce sampling and selection bias, future research would benefit from improved reporting on/identification of target samples and characteristics of participants, in addition to being explicit regarding how participants are recruited. It would be important for future research to consider samples beyond that of university students (and to include more males, age ranges, sexual orientations and ethnicities) to improve generalisability. Quality would be improved by including power calculations to determine if studies have attained the correct power to detect any effects. For measurement bias, explicit definitions regarding measurement tools used and their validity (e.g. concurrent, discriminant) should be provided. Within included studies, the only established measured (for revenge outcomes) used were the TRIM (six studies), vengeance scale (four studies) and the Motives for Inducing Romantic Jealousy Scale (two studies), where nine studies used tools developed by the author for the purpose of their study. Furthermore, authors should

make explicit statements regarding how missing data was managed, in addition to reporting whether authors were blinded. To reduce statistical bias, author should report data assumptions of statistical tests and account for confounding variables within analyses. When using self-report psychometric measures, it might be beneficial to include measures of social desirability. Finally, future studies should explicitly report information on drop-out rates (with reasons for this) to reduce risk of attrition bias.

Whilst the search strategy attempted to ensure comprehensiveness was achieved, the review is subject to publication bias because only published studies were included; the quality (and findings) of unpublished studies could be different to included studies. Attempts were made to access doctoral dissertation literature by contacting institutions to request access, but these were not successful. As such, viability of this review is reduced as findings may not wholly represent research in this area. Furthermore, only English language publications were included, with the majority being conducted in the USA (63.2%). Whilst the search strategy did not identify any non-English papers (perhaps because the search strategy was conducted using English language), it is possible that research exploring romantic revenge has been conducted elsewhere that yields different findings (perhaps influenced by culture) of different quality. Representation of research in this review is thus limited.

4.1 Conclusions and recommendations

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first review to synthesise knowledge on revenge in romantic relationship and what could make it more likely, where a number of factors have been identified. Findings could be synthesised into a preliminary framework for understanding the processes leadings to perceptions of, motivations for or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge. It would appear that research into *actual* revenge behaviour within romantic relationships is limited, and only a limited number of romantic relational transgressions were explored (using hypothetical scenarios), highlighting a need for further research. Future research would benefit from exploring the identified variables within the preliminary framework (guided by McCullough et al, 1998) with individuals who have enacted behaviour against their current or ex-partner with revenge motivations, perhaps using a case-control study design. Furthermore, identification of revenge as the motivation for a behaviour (and a greater understanding of what influenced the decision) could subsequently have implications for intervention(s) (if an intervention is deemed appropriate).

Further high-quality research in this area is required because a number of limitations were identified in relation to bias, reducing generalisability and interpretation of results. Furthermore, it was identified that at present, a variety of tools (either established or developed by authors) are being used to measure romantic revenge outcomes. Future research would benefit from using an established (valid and reliable) tool to ensure the intended outcome(s) of romantic revenge is truly being measured. In

addition, it would be important for professionals (e.g. clinicians, academics) to ensure that the tool they choose to use as a measure of their revenge outcome is appropriate to use with their intended sample or population. As mentioned previously within this chapter, the TRIM (which has a revenge subscale) could be a possible measure to use with individuals who have behaved in a (potentially) vengeful way against their romantic partner to explore their motivation(s) and identify whether an intervention may be necessary. A psychometric critique to examine its applicability would be warranted, particularly if using this with individuals who have (potentially) committed an offence against their current or ex-partner (e.g. non-consensual disclosure of sexual material, where intent to cause harm is necessary for a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015). Furthermore, using established (valid and reliable) tools would also allow for a more reliable comparison between studies using the same measure(s) looking at the same outcome(s) (and could perhaps allow for a more thorough comparison of results between different relational contexts/samples to identify any similarities or differences).

Chapter Three: Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations: A Psychometric Critique

Abstract

The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) is a psychometric assessing forgiveness motivation towards a transgressor (defined as a reduction in avoidance and revenge motivations and an increase in benevolent motivations). This chapter explores the extent of its reliability and validity, and whether it would be appropriate to use in the context of romantic revenge (and offences committed against a current or ex-partner with revenge in mind, such as the non-consensual disclose of intimate material). Users of this psychometric should be aware of its strengths and limitations, and implications for future research are discussed

1. Introduction

This chapter considers use of the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation inventories (TRIMs; McCullough et al., 1998, 2003) in the context of romantic revenge behaviour/offences. Chapter Two sought to clarify and synthesise knowledge regarding what influences romantic revenge, where the systematic review identified a variety of tools (either established or developed by authors) were used to examine romantic revenge and so future research would benefit from using established, psychometrically-sound measures. The TRIM was the most common (established) measure (n = 6) used within included studies (which explicitly examined its revenge subscale scores). The systematic review also suggested that being able to identify revenge as the motivation for

behaviour could have implications for interventions with those who vengefully transgress against a romantic partner. This would be particularly important if behaviour results in a criminal conviction (e.g. in the case of revenge pornography – RP - where an individual can be convicted of an offence under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 if they non-consensually disclosed sexual material with the intent to cause distress), whereby an intervention may be required to reduce risk of reoffending (and where psychometric tools could be necessary to quantitatively examine change). Of note, the TRIM has been used to assess change in individuals who underwent interventions focussed on forgiveness (e.g. Allemand, Steiner & Hill, 2013; Goldman & Wade, 2012; Ripley & Worthingon, 2002).

In response to some of the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the systematic review in Chapter Two, the aim of this Chapter is to outline and critically examine the TRIM (by considering normative data and psychometric properties). This is important because practitioners and researchers working within this field need to consider what measures to use (e.g. for understanding an individual's motivations and assessing baseline or change), particularly since the recognition of RP (and the Section 33 offence).

2. Overview of TRIM

The TRIM-12 (McCullough et al., 1998; appendix E) is a self-report measure of unforgiving motivations (avoidance and revenge). As mentioned in Chapter One, avoidance involves avoiding contact (both

personal and psychological) with the transgressor(s), and revenge relates to the motivation to see harm come to the transgressor(s) (McCullough et al., 1998). Authors considered these were the key theoretical constructs hypothesised to be the foundation of forgiveness (where they theoretically defined forgiveness as a transformation through reductions in avoidance and revenge and increases in benevolence).

TRIM-12's initial item pool comprised 18 items from the 83-item Wade Forgiveness Scale (WFS; Wade, 1990; Brown, Gorsuch, Rosik & Ridley, 2001), where two subscales (out of eleven) appeared to capture distinct aspects of revenge and avoidance motivations so a principle-components factor analysis was conducted. Two factors explained 68% of total-item variance, following which examination of communalities led to removal of items, resulting in 7 and 5 items being retained for avoidance and revenge subscales, respectively. Structural equation models demonstrated further that the two-factor model fit data well (McCullough et al., 1998). Individuals are instructed to consider a specific transgression and items are endorsed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 5 = *strongly agree)*, with scores ranging from 7-35 and 5-25 for avoidance and revenge, respectively. Scores are summed, where lower scores are considered to reflect more forgiveness.

It was considered, however, that there were other ways to reduce unforgiving motivations besides forgiving (Worthington, 2006), including getting successful revenge or justice being done. It was thus advised one should not assume reduced unforgiving motivations implied forgiveness.

McCullough, Fincham and Tsang (2003) thus developed a measure of benevolent motivations, consisting of 5 items from WFS (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). These 5 items, in addition to TRIM-12 items, encompass TRIM-18 (appendix F). Items are endorsed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 5 = *strongly agree)*. Benevolence scores range from 5-25. Scores for avoidance and revenge subscales are reverse scored, following which all scores are summed, where higher scores are considered to reflect more forgiveness.

3. Normative data

TRIM-12 initial data was established with 238 American undergraduate students (131 females) (McCullough et al., 1998, study 1). Mean age was 19 and 83% were Caucasian, 14% were African-American and 3% were 'other'. A variety of transgressions (and transgressors) were reported. The mean (standard deviation) for avoidance and revenge subscales were 18.14 (8.35) and 8.68 (4.46), respectively. Highers scores indicated greater endorsement of that construct. The authors conducted three further studies with university samples to further establish psychometric properties of TRIM-12.

McCullough and colleagues (2003) established initial data for TRIM-18 with 73 students (age range 18-25; gender was not recorded). Transgressions occurred on average 4.67 weeks (SD = 3.59) before data collection. A variety of transgressions (and transgressors) were reported. The mean level of (current) hurt experienced was 2.71 (SD = 1.53, highest score was 7). Measures were completed once a week for 5

consecutive weeks. Means (standard deviations) are presented in table seventeen.

Table 17. *Means (and standard deviations) for TRIM-18 initial data (McCullough et al., 2003)*

	Week 1	**Week 2**	**Week 3**	**Week 4**	**Week 5**
Avoidance	2.70 (1.09)	2.67 (1.16)	2.53 (1.14)	2.43 (1.22)	2.46 (1.20)
Revenge	1.81 (0.74)	1.83 (0.79)	1.69 (0.77)	1.59 (0.74)	1.59 (0.77)
Benevolence	3.34 (0.91)	3.26 (1.01)	3.30 (0.96)	3.33 (1.03)	3.23 (1.13)

Highers scores indicated greater endorsement of that construct. The authors replicated this study using a different sample of students (who had been hurt within the previous 7-days) to further establish psychometric properties of TRIM-18.

4. Psychometric Properties

For a psychometric to be considered an effective and appropriate tool, a number of factors need to be examined in relation to reliability and validity (British Psychological Society, 2017).

4.1 Reliability

All findings within this section have been obtained from student and/or community samples.

4.1.1 Internal Reliability

This refers to the consistency of a test and whether items are measuring the same construct (Coolican, 2004). Cronbach's alpha (coefficient value) measures internal reliability for each subscale within a psychometric test (Field, 2004), where a coefficient of .70 or above represents good internal consistency.

When developing TRIM-12, McCullough and colleagues (1998) demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency for avoidance and revenge subscales (table eighteen).

Table 18. *TRIM-12 internal consistencies (McCullough et al., 1998)*

Study	Cronbach's Alpha
Study 1	
Avoidance	.86
Revenge	.90
Study 2 (recent victims)	
Avoidance	.86
Revenge	.93
Study 2 (longstanding difficulties forgiving)	
Avoidance	.84
Revenge	.92
Study 4	
Avoidance	.94
Revenge	.90

Further studies have demonstrated good levels of internal consistency for TRIM-12 (table nineteen for examples).

Table 19. *Examples of internal consistencies for TRIM-12*

Study	Cronbach's Alpha
McCullough et al., 2001 (students)	
Avoidance baseline	.91
Revenge baseline	.92
Maltby et al., 2008 (students)	
Avoidance	.88
Revenge	.87
Rasmussen et al., 2016 (study 3) (students)	
Revenge	.84
Guerrero & Bachman, 2010 (students)	
Revenge	.83
Besser & Ziegler-Hill, 2010 (Jewish Israeli community sample)	
Avoidance	.86
Revenge	.85
Rasmussen et al., 2016 (study 4) (community adults)	
Revenge	.94

A meta-analysis conducted by Card (2018) examining TRIM-12's reliability found internal consistencies were higher for early adult (.93, n = 61) than adult (.92, n = 35) samples (although the magnitude of differences was small). Furthermore, TRIM-12 demonstrated high internal consistencies across several regions, including North America (.93), Europe (.92), the Middle East (.95), Asia (.93) and Australasia (.87) (ns of studies = 75, 14, 3, 8 and 4, respectively). Furthermore, TRIM-12 performed better when administered in paper (.93, n = 79) than electronically (.91, n = 24).

When developing TRIM-18, consistency estimates for benevolent items ranged from .91 to .93 (McCullough et al., 2003). Good levels of internal

consistency have been found in a number of further studies (table twenty for examples).

Table 20. *Examples of internal consistencies for TRIM-18*

Study	Cronbach's Alpha
Farrell et al, 2015 (student sample)	
TRIM-18 total	.95
Wortington, Hook & Utsey, 2012 (student sample)	
Benevolence	.91
Avoidance	.93
Revenge	.86
Cornick et al., 2011 (adult community sample)	
Benevolence	.84
Avoidance	.79
Revenge	.82
Davidson et al., 2015 (female student sample)	
Benevolence	.88
Avoidance	.93
Revenge	.86
Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016 (community sample)	
Benevolence	.92
Avoidance	.92
Revenge	.88

4.1.2 Test-Retest Reliability

This refers to stability of results on a measure at different points in time (Coolican, 2004).

Authors of TRIM-12 describe two sets of test-retest results in a sample of recent transgression victims (n = 74) and a sample of individuals with longstanding difficulties forgiving a transgressor (who had hurt them some time in the past whom they had not forgiven; n = 36) (McCullough et al.,

1998, study 2). For recent victims, TRIM-12 was administered 8-weeks after baseline, where test-retest scores were .44 and .53 (*ps* < .01) for avoidance and revenge, respectively. For individuals with longstanding difficulties forgiving, TRIM-12 was administered 3 and 9-weeks after baseline; test-retest scores after 3-weeks were .86 and .79 (*ps* < .001) and after 9-weeks were .64 and .65 (*ps* < .001) for avoidance and revenge, respectively. Results thus indicate TRIM-12 has moderate temporal stability. McCullough and colleagues (2001) found test-retest scores of .50 and .47 for avoidance and revenge, respectively, in their sample of students who completed the TRIM-12 8-weeks after baseline, which were findings mirrored by McCullough and Hoyt (2002, study 1), demonstrating moderate temporal stability. Authors of TRIM-18 found test-retest correlations for benevolent items across 5 time points ranged from .52 to .87 (McCullough et al., 2003). Similarly, McCullough and colleagues (2006) demonstrated the 3 subscales had decent test-retest reliability ranging from .41 to .90 across data collected after 1, 3, 4, 7 and 9-weeks. It is not surprising that modest test-retest reliability values are identified due to the temporal nature of forgiveness, where change (e.g. in motivations, circumstances) occur through the passage of time (McCullough et al., 2003).

4.2 Validity

All findings within this section are obtained from student and/or community samples.

4.2.1 Criterion Validity: Concurrent Validity

This refers to when scores on a tool correspond concurrently to other tools conceptually related to the measured construct (Field, 2014).

TRIM-12 demonstrates concurrent validity through correlations with the vengeance scale (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992) within 200 students (*rs* = .21 and .67, *ps* < .001 for avoidance and revenge, respectively) (Young, 2010). Similarly, concurrent validity was demonstrated with 91 students' vengefulness scores (7-items from Forgiveness of Other's Scale, Mauger et al., 1991) (*rs* = .38 and .52, *ps* < .05 for avoidance and revenge, respectively) (McCullough, Bellah, Kikpatrick & Johnson, 2001).

McCullough and colleagues (1998, study 2) demonstrated TRIM-12 was related to a single-item measure of forgiving within recent victims (*r* = -.41 and -.67, *p* < .001 for avoidance and revenge, respectively) and those with difficulty forgiving (*rs* = -.57 and -.47, *p* < .001 and *p* < .01 for avoidance and revenge, respectively). TRIM-12 and 18 also demonstrated concurrent validity through correlations with subscales of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS; Thompson et al., 2005), which is a self-report measure of dispositional forgiveness (of the self, others and situations) (see table twenty-one for correlations).

Table 21. *Correlations between TRIM-12 and TRIM-18 with HFS*

Study	TRIM correlations
Thompson et al, 2005, study 3 (student sample)	
HFS-other	-.38***
HFS-total	-.25***

Davidson et al., 2015 (female student sample)	
HFS-self	Revenge = -.17** Benevolence = .15**
HFS-other	Avoidance = -.22** Revenge = -.38** Benevolence = .29**
HFS-situation	Avoidance = -.09* Revenge = -.25** Benevolence = .19**

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

Young (2010, study 1) demonstrated avoidance and revenge subscales were negatively correlated with Attitudes Towards Forgiveness Scale (ATF; r = -.24 and -.46, p < .001, respectively) and Tendency to Forgive Scale (TTF; r = -.24 and -.42, p < .001), which measure endorsement of forgiveness-relevant attitudes and behaviours, respectively (Brown, 2003).

Worthington and colleagues (2008) demonstrated TRIM-18's benevolent subscale's concurrent validity with Decisional Forgiveness Scale (DFS; measuring behavioural intention to act less negatively and more positively towards the transgressor) and the Emotional Forgiveness Scale (EFS; measuring the process in which positive-other emotions replace unforgiving emotions) (rs = .68 and .75, ps < .001). Revenge and avoidance subscales were negatively correlated with these measures (DFS rs = -.61 and -.63, ps < .001, respectively; EFS rs = -.44 and -.73, ps < .001, respectively).

4.2.2 Criterion Validity: Predictive Validity

This refers to the how psychometric scores can make specific predictions regarding another variable (often in the future) (Coolican, 2004; Stangor, 2007).

McCullough and colleagues (1998, study 2) found that for recent transgression victims, TRIM-12 predicted 48% of the variance in a single-item measure of forgiveness (R = .69), although only the revenge subscale had a significant unique relationship (B = -.64, $p < .0001$). In those with difficulty forgiving their transgressor, the avoidance subscale predicted unique variance in the single-item measure of forgiving (B = -.46, $p < .001$).

Research suggests forgiveness is positively associated with psychological wellbeing (e.g. Brown, 2003; Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk & Enright, 1996). Bono, McCullough and Root (2008, study 2) demonstrated that with 165 students, TRIM-18 scores predicted psychological wellbeing. Wellbeing was measured by combining scores on Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) and an inventory measuring experience of 27 physical symptoms using items from other measures (e.g. Bartone, Ursano, Wright, & Ingraham, 1989). Higher avoidance and revenge motivations on a given day resulted in lower wellbeing levels the following day. The association between benevolence and wellbeing (the following day) was not significant.

4.2.3 Construct Validity

This refers to whether test results are supported by research hypotheses based on assumed characteristics of a theoretical psychological variable (Cooliocan, 2004).

McCullough and colleagues (1998) demonstrated construct validity of TRIM-12 through confirmatory factor analysis, indicating a two-factor model was a good fit (Comparative Fit Index > .90). Regarding TRIM-18, however, exploration into construct validity reveals different findings. McCullough, Root and Cohen (2006) found two oblique principle components could be extracted (one represented avoidance vs. benevolence, the other represented revenge). McCullough and colleagues (2010) subsequently used Rasch modelling, concluding TRIM-18 measures a unidimensional construct (forgiveness), indicating reduced avoidance and revenge motivations and simultaneous increases in benevolent motivations.

When validating TRIM-18 with a Chinese sample (couples), Wong, Chu and Chan's (2013) exploratory factor analysis revealed a two-factor solution. The first factor was a unidimensional scale comprised of avoidance and revenge items (i.e. unforgiveness). The second factor comprised the remaining 6 benevolence items. As the inclusion of the benevolent construct within the definition of (un)forgiveness was debated by these authors, they retained only the first factor in the final scale (Chinese-TRIM). Furthermore, Guzman, Tapia, Tejada & Valenzuela (2014) validated TRIM-18 with a Chilean sample (couples). The final

version included 15 items from the original 18-item English scale. They did not include the item 'I cut off the relationship with him/her' as its applicability in ongoing relationships was unclear. They removed item 3 (it cross-loaded on revenge and benevolence subscales) and item 1 (it loaded onto avoidance instead of the original revenge factor).

4.2.4 Construct Validity: Convergent Validity

This refers to the extent a measure relates to other measures assessing conceptually related variables (Stangor, 2007). A number of variables have been considered to determine forgiveness (see systematic review for examples of social-cognitive, offence, relational and personality variables).

McCullough and colleagues (1998) found TRIM-12 had convergent validity through moderate significant correlations with other conceptually-related measures (tables twenty-two and twenty-three).

Table 22. *TRIM-12 evidence of convergent validity (McCullough et al., 1998)*

McCullough et al's (1998) measures	**TRIM-12 correlations**
Relational closeness (Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale; Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992)	Avoidance = -.75* Revenge = -.35*
Perceived apology (extent participants perceived their transgressor apologised; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997)	Avoidance = -.51* Revenge = -.32*
Empathy (Empathy Measure; Coke, Batson & McDavis, 1978)	Avoidance = -.80* Revenge = -.46*

Rumination (Impact of Event Scale; Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1978)	Revenge = .27*

*p< .001

Young (2010) also found the revenge and avoidance subscales demonstrated significant correlations with rumination (*rs* = .22 and .25, *ps* < .01 and .001, respectively).

Table 23. *TRIM-12 convergent validity with dyadic satisfaction-commitment*

TRIMs	**Dyadic Satisfaction-Commitment** (Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Spanier, 1976, and Commitment Inventory, Stanley & MarkMan, 1972)	
	Male partners	Female partners
Male partners		
- Avoidance (recent hurt)	-.35***	-.11
- Revenge (recent hurt)	-.32**	-.29**
- Avoidance (worst hurt)	-.31**	-.03
- Revenge (worst hurt)	-.40***	-.37**
Female Partners		
- Avoidance (recent hurt)	-.38***	-.47***
- Revenge (recent hurt)	-.44***	-.47***
- Avoidance (worst hurt)	-.21*	-.13
- Revenge (worst hurt)	-.46***	-.34***

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

A further study revealed the revenge subscale had some convergent validity with other conceptually related measures (table twenty-four).

Table 24. *Evidence of the revenge subscale's convergent validity*

Study	Revenge correlation
Guerrero & Bachman (2010) (211 students in dating relationship)	
Relationship quality (7-items from Sprecher's (2000) scale measuring partner reward value, and 12-items from Rusbult, Martz and Agnew's (1998) Investment Model Scale measuring commitment and satisfaction)	-.22***
Relationship investment (measure created by authors)	-.17*
Low-quality partner alternatives (measure created by authors)	-.19**
Negative valence (measure created by authors)	.27***
Perceived intent (measure created by authors)	.25***

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

TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 2003, study 1) demonstrated convergent validity with transgression severity, empathy and responsibility attribution (table twenty-five).

Table 25. *TRIM-18 evidence of convergent validity*

McCullough et al's (2003) measures (study 1)	TRIM-18 effect size r
Initial transgression severity (single-item created by authors)	Initial avoidance = .20 Initial revenge = .23
Initial empathy (rated strength of eight emotions towards transgressor on Likert-type scale)	Initial avoidance = -.55 Initial revenge = -.37

Initial responsibility attribution (measure created by authors)	Initial avoidance = -.20 Initial benevolence = -.32

In McCullough and colleagues' (2003) second study, initial empathy was significantly associated with initial scores on all 3 TRIMs (effect size correlations ranging from .31 to .48). Initial responsibility attribution was significantly associated with initial avoidance (r = .33). Initial empathy was significantly correlated with linear change in benevolence (r = .24), and higher initial levels of responsibility resulted in steeper declines in avoidance (marginally significant) and steeper increases in benevolence (p < .05) (linear change measured 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9-weeks post-transgression). Examining temporary (fleeting) forgiveness, empathy varied considerably and uniquely with TRIMs (rs = -.18, -.43 and .40 for revenge, avoidance and benevolence, respectively).

Further studies have demonstrated TRIM-18's convergent validity with other measures (table twenty-six).

Table 26. *Evidence of TRIM-18 convergent validity*

Study	**TRIM-18 Correlation**
Tsang & Stanford, 2007 (132 female victims of IPV)	
Empathic concern (empathic concern subscale of Interpersonal Reactivity Index; Davis & Oathout, 1987)	Benevolence = .43*** Revenge = -.37*** Avoidance = -.26**
State empathy (rated strength of eight emotions towards transgressor on Likert-type scale)	Benevolence = .52*** Revenge = -.20* Avoidance = -.27**
Volkmann, 2009 (157 students in romantic relationship)	
Apology sincerity (measure created	.45**

by authors)	
Empathy (Empathy Scale; Batson et al., 1983, 1986)	.38***
Responsibility attributions (Relationship Attribution Measure; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992)	-.28**
Farrell et al, 2015 (459 students)	
Perceived humility of transgressor (Relational Humility Scale; Davis et al., 2011)	.36***
Commitment (commitment subscale of Perceived Relationship Quality Components Scale; Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000)	.34***
Relationship satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale; Hendrick, 1988).	.43***

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

Maltby and colleagues (2008) collected TRIM-12 and NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R, measuring neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness; Costa & McCrae, 1992) scores at baseline and 30-months later (T1 and T2, respectively) in 438 students. At T1, all 5 factor scores shared a significant relationship with avoidance and revenge (except for conscientiousness with avoidance). At T2, 4 factor scores shared a significant relationship with avoidance and revenge (except openness). McCullough and Hoyt (2002, study 2) revealed correlations between measures of neuroticism and agreeableness (Big Five Inventory; John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991) and revenge, avoidance and benevolence within 95 students (agreeableness: -.87, -.75, .70, respectively; neuroticism: .36, .60, -.53, respectively).

Besser and Ziegler-Hill (2010) found narcissism (Pathological Narcissism Inventory; Pincus et al., 2009) was significantly correlated with TRIM-12 in four transgression conditions (table twenty-seven).

Table 27. *Evidence of TRIM-12 convergent validity with narcissism measure*

Besser and Ziegler-Hill (2010)	**TRIM-12 correlations**
Private interpersonal rejection	
Grandiose narcissism	Revenge = .31**
Vulnerable narcissism	Revenge = .22*
Public interpersonal rejection	
Grandiose narcissism	Revenge = .34**
Private achievement failure	
Vulnerable narcissism	Avoidance = .25*
Public achievement failure	
Grandiose narcissism	Avoidance = .34** Revenge = .39**
Vulnerable narcissism	Avoidance = .25* Revenge = .36**

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

Young (2010) further demonstrated revenge and avoidance subscales were positively associated with impulsivity (Eysenck 1.7 Impulsiveness Subscale; Eysenck, Pearson, Easting & Allsopp, 1985) (*rs* = .36 and .13, $p < .001$ and .05, respectively).

4.2.5 Construct Validity: Divergent Validity

This refers to the extent a measured variable is unrelated to other measures that assess a different conceptual variable (Stangor, 2007).

Whilst face validity is valuable (i.e. "the extent to which the validity of a test is self-evident"; Coolican, 2004, p. 198), it could enable individuals to present themselves in a negative or positive light more easily (Kline, 2013). McCullough and colleagues (1998, study 4) found the revenge subscale (TRIM-12) was correlated negatively with impression management (impression management scale; Paulhus, 1984) (r = -.17, p < .01) and positively correlated with self-deception (self-deception scale; Paulhus, 1984) (r = .30, p < .001). Avoidance was not correlated with self-deception or impression management. The authors suggested future research using TRIM-12 might not need to control for effects of self-deception or impression management. However, this study was conducted with students who had not been charged with, or convicted of, an offence. Socially desirable responding and impression management may be prevalent within offender populations and from reviewing the TRIMs items, it may be clear to them what is being measured, encouraging them to present themselves in a favourable light. For example, it has been suggested that deception measures should be used with offenders for anger (Schamborg, Tully & Brown, 2015), where anger could be an emotional response following a romantic partner's transgression (e.g. McDonald & Asher, 2013). It would thus be important to consider the validity of the TRIM-12 or 18 with an offender population to consider their relationship with measures of social desirability and impression management.

Discriminant validity was also demonstrated for TRIM-12 (McCullough et al, 1998, study 4) through small or no correlations with measures of

positive and negative affectivity (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988). The avoidance subscale was not significantly correlated with either. The revenge subscale was not significantly correlated with positive affectivity but was with negative affectivity (r = .32, p < .001). The authors argued future research might not need to control for effects of positive and negative affectivity when using the TRIM-12. However, Bono and colleagues (2008, study 2) demonstrated TRIM-18 predicted psychological wellbeing scores, where the PANAS was included in a battery of measures to comprise an overall wellbeing score. It may be that when considered on its own, TRIM measures do demonstrate divergent validity with PANAS, although future research would be beneficial to examine this further.

5. Discussion

The systematic review in Chapter Two suggested that TRIMs could potentially be used with individuals who have behaved in a vengeful way against their romantic partner to explore their motivation(s), particularly for those who have (potentially) committed an offence against their current or ex-partner (e.g. non-consensual disclosure of sexual material, where intent to cause harm is necessary for a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015). As such, a psychometric critique was warranted, which has been the aim of this Chapter.

Throughout this critique, the samples in which findings are obtained are documented (e.g. within tables). It would appear the TRIMs have been examined primarily with student and community samples (experiencing a variety of transgressions from a variety of transgressors). Findings

suggest that TRIMs are reliable tools for use with student and community populations as there are acceptable levels of internal consistency and good test-retest reliabilities. However, it would appear the reliability has not yet been established with those who have committed an offence against a romantic partner (e.g. a Section 33 offence) or an offender sample, more generally.

TRIMs appear to share some concurrent similarities with other measures of vengeance and forgiveness, although it would seem there are distinct differences. Professionals exploring romantic revenge behaviour should thus be clear regarding which aspects of revenge (or forgiveness) they intend to measure before deciding on a psychometric as the magnitude of concurrent correlations found do suggest that these measures are measuring different aspects of the same construct. Regarding predictive validity, it appears research is limited. Some studies have found that certain variables can predict TRIM scores (e.g. McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; Volkmann, 2009) but given that predictive validity is important in determining the efficacy of a psychometric, future research would benefit from examining whether the TRIMs are able to predict scores on other variables, particularly in offender samples.

Construct validity may depend on a number of factors, including the sample and culture in which TRIMs are being used. For example, married couples may have lower scores on revenge compared to separated couples (Worthington et al., 2015) and different cultures may approach the practice of forgiveness differently (e.g. Scobie, Scobie & Kalavoulis,

2002). TRIMs were validated on university students and to the author's knowledge, construct validity with offender samples, in general or for specific offences (e.g. Section 33), has not yet been examined. It could, for example, be more appropriate to consider forgiveness as a multi-dimensional construct through examining subscales separately when considering motivations of those who have committed an offence against their partner to enact revenge. It has been considered that motivations to avoid and seek revenge are governed by independent psychological systems (McCullough, 2000). It would therefore be important for future research to consider construct validity using offender samples, particularly those who have committed offences against romantic partners (as this may offer insight into whether TRIM is appropriate to use).

Findings suggest that TRIMs do have convergent and divergent validity by sharing (or not sharing) associations with measures examining variables thought to be (or not to be) related to forgiveness and revenge. A number of studies, however, explored this relationship using measures the authors developed themselves (which may not be the 'best' or most valid measures to use). Future research would thus benefit from developing and using established (reliable and valid) measures alongside the TRIM to further examine its convergent and divergent validity.

6. Conclusion

Despite evidence that suggests TRIMs are reliable and valid measures with student and adult community samples, they should be used and interpreted with caution with those who offend against romantic partners

(e.g. those who non-consensually disclose sexual material with the intent to cause distress) until future research can establish their reliability and validity with these samples. Should future research demonstrate this, the TRIM could be used to offer insight into the motivations for behaviours/offences such as RP, namely by identifying whether the behaviour was truly (or mainly) driven by revenge or something else (given that there could be a number of motivations for the non-consensual disclosure of intimate material). This could subsequently help identify appropriate interventions to reduce risk of further offending (and perhaps measure change). The choice regarding which TRIM to use may depend on whether unforgiving motivations (revenge and avoidance) are the sole target (TRIM-12) or whether forgiving motivations (benevolence) are being considered alongside unforgiving motivations (TRIM-18). With offender samples (such as those who have committed a Section 33 offence), this could be further clarified once the TRIMs construct validity with these samples has been established.

Chapter Four: Revenge Pornography - The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the nature of a relationship breakdown on public perceptions of victim blame

Abstract

Objectives: Due to limited research conducted into revenge pornography [RP], victim blame attributions were examined by considering factors recognised as influential in public perceptions of sexual violence and stalking.

Method: 247 adults (UK general population aged 18+) completed online questionnaires. Participants read a vignette depicting a case of RP, where victim-perpetrator gender, circumstances of a relationship breakdown, Belief in a Just World [BJW] and victim (situational) similarity were considered as independent variables. Participants made judgements regarding victim blame.

Results: Male victims were attributed more blame than female victims. Circumstances of relationship breakdown had no effect on victim blame. There was a significant relationship between BJW and victim blame when victims were female and when there had been both victim and perpetrator infidelity. Participants who had consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner blamed the victim less than those who had not.

Implications: There are extra-legal factors (gender and victim similarity) that influence victim blame attribution in RP cases, which are important

when considering victimisation responses, including victim disclosure and RP case progression through the Criminal Justice System [CJS]. Continued efforts thus need to be made to raise awareness of RP as an offence and shift focus away from consensual production of intimate material to the criminal act of non-consensual distribution. Further research is required given the paucity of research into RP.

1. Introduction

The systematic review presented in Chapter Two indicated that when a transgression occurs within a romantic relationship, there are a number of factors that interact that might influence an individual's interpretation of a transgression (and transgressor), which could subsequently result in certain perceptions of, motivations for or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge. Included studies in Chapter Two were primarily focussed on what leads to revenge and whilst some studies suggested that the romantic relationship, itself, might act as a buffer for wanting to cause harm against a partner (e.g. Rasmussen et al., 2016), revenge behaviour still occurs. This Chapter (and Chapter Five) thus seeks to expand our knowledge of romantic revenge further by examining the perceptions of a vengeful behaviour – RP - after it has occurred and considering why these perceptions might have formed. The perceptions that are explored within this Chapter (and Chapter Five) were identified in the literature of offences where romantic relationships have previously occurred, which are important when considering how victims are responded to.

RP typically (although, as discussed in Chapter One, not exclusively) involves a romantic relationship between its victim and perpetrator, where the perpetrator non-consensually discloses (online and/or offline) intimate and sexual material (e.g. images, films) of the victim (that may have initially been consensually shared between partners on the basis that this material would not be disclosed) with the intent to cause them distress. It is considered to fall under the umbrella term of 'non-consensual sharing' of intimate and sexual material and is one form of image based sexual abuse, both of which recognise that the non-consensual disclosure of this material is not solely motivated by revenge. The focus of this thesis, however, is on revenge (i.e. behaviour enacted that is motivated by a desire to see harm come to a transgressor; McCullough et al., 1998), which in line with the offence set out under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015: the non-consensual disclosure of intimate and sexual material with the intent to cause distress (lack of consent and intent to cause harm to the victim must be proven for a conviction).

Prior romantic relationships between victims and perpetrators do exist within other criminal offences, such as stalking and sexual violence. Whilst RP behaviour is not currently recognised as a sexual offence by law (e.g. McGlynn, 2018), it has been considered a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2015) and on a continuum of sexual violence (Powell, 2010). In addition, it has been previously been referred to as a 'digital sexual assault' (Wilson, 2015), where the advent of technology has expanded how sexual violence can be perpetrated

(McGlynn & Rackley, 2017), although it is recognised that the material can also be disclosed "in a more traditional way", such as physical images (UK Government, 2015a).

When a transgression occurs within an interpersonal relationship, individuals often look for causes of events to make them understandable, predictable and controllable (Fosterling, 2001). Upon reviewing the literature into perceptions of sexual violence and stalking (where previous relationships between victims and perpetrators might have occurred), it highlighted that one way this is done is to perceive victims, as well as or instead of perpetrators, in a negative light and attribute some blame to victims (e.g. Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Scott, Rajakaruna, Sheridan & Sleath, 2013). Blame can be conceptualised as holding someone responsible for an event (Grubb & Harrower, 2005), where it does need to be highlighted that within the majority of cases of sexual violence, for example, individuals do tend to attribute more blame to its perpetrators (where victim blame is typically low) (Pollard, 1992), and so when conducting research into this area, the objective is to examine whether there are occasions where victim blame increases or decreases.

The sexual violence literature identifies two approaches when considering causative factors and blame attributions (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Temkin & Krahe, 2008): 1) situational, victim and perpetrator characteristics, and 2) observer (participant) characteristics. Both approaches have been found to influence victim blame attributions (where some findings shall be summarised below). As the aim of this thesis is to

develop our understanding of romantic revenge further, it is important to consider perceptions of vengeful behaviours (and potential criminal offences) committed within a romantic relationship context to identify if there are any misperceptions (and what influence these) because these could impact responses to victimisation (e.g. from family, friend, police, judges, juries) and decisions made within the criminal justice system if the behaviour reaches the threshold for criminal justice involvement (e.g. whether an individual is found guilty and a conviction is warranted).

1.1 Situational, victim and perpetrator characteristics

1.1.1 Victim-perpetrator relationship

Research has examined the nature of the relationship between victims and perpetrators (strangers, acquaintances or former partners) on attributions of blame. Sexual violence literature suggests that the closer the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the higher the level of victim blame attribution (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Krahe et al., 2007). This finding is mirrored in stalking literature (Duff & Scott, 2013; Scott, Lloyd & Gavin., 2010; Sheridan, Gillett, Davies, Blaauw & Patel, 2003) but there are contradictory findings. For example, Stromwall, Alfredsson and Landstrom (2013a) found rape victims were attributed more blame when perpetrators were strangers compared to acquaintances, dating partners or spouses. This finding is reflected in older studies (Bolt & Caswell, 1981; Smith, Keating, Hester & Mitchell, 1976), both of which used scenarios where female victims were alone in a park at night. These studies speculated that participants perceived the victim placed themselves in a

risky situation so this could account for their results, although Stromwall and colleagues (2012a) acknowledged this speculation required corroboration through further research. Furthermore, Whatley (1996) demonstrated in a meta-analysis examining rape victim characteristics and attribution of responsibility that some studies found unacquainted victims (to the perpetrator) were held more responsible, some found that acquainted victims were held more responsible and some found there were no significant difference in attribution of responsibility between acquainted and unacquainted victims. It was considered that this disparity in findings could be due to the differences in scenarios used.

In relation to RP, Bothamley and Tully (2017) did not find that length of a relationship impacted victim blame attribution in RP cases; they presented two levels of relationship length between perpetrator and victim (short or long-term), where it was not explicitly stated what constituted a short or long-term relationship (allowing participants to interpret this using their own perception). Victim-perpetrator gender differences were also not considered (victims were depicted as female). It could be that the absence of length stipulation was why no differences were found (e.g. a 6-month relationship could be considered both short and long-term depending upon the individual).

It has been hypothesised that greater responsibility is assigned to victims of ex-partners because they are assumed to have done something in the relationship to cause/deserve the offence (Sheridan et al., 2003) and that the attribution of blame becomes more blurred because relationships

could involve miscommunication (and so different interpretations may occur; Bell, Kuriloff & Lottes, 1994). Reasons for relationship breakdown (physical violence, verbal abuse, relocation, infidelity) in stalking cases were considered by Duff and Scott (2013) and whilst this information did not always result in statistical differences in blame attributions (compared to stranger perpetrators), participants did consider this information in their decisions. Scott, Duff, Sheridan and Rajakaruna (2018) expanded upon Duff and Scott's (2013) study (using 'observer' as opposed to 'victim' perspectives to allow for examination of perpetrator-target sex composition on perceptions of stalking), where the context of relationship breakdown influenced perceptions. Whilst Scott and colleagues (2018) did not specifically examine victim blame attributions, findings suggest that this information is considered in decision-making. Furthermore, victim infidelity has influenced perceptions of blame attributions (Poole, 2015), although findings have been inconsistent. Victim infidelity was predictive of RP victim blaming (Hatcher, 2016), although Bothamley and Tully (2017) did not find that reason for relationship breakdown (victim infidelity or mutual decision between partners) influenced perceptions of RP victim blame. The latter finding was mirrored by Morris (2017), who found that victim infidelity did not influence perceptions of victim blame.

1.1.2 Victim-perpetrator gender

Sexual violence literature suggests male victims are attributed more blame than female victims (Davies, Pollard & Archer., 2001; Davies, Smith & Rogers., 2009; Gerber, Cronin & Steigman., 2004; Sleath & Bull, 2010; Stromwall Alfredsson and Landstrom., 2013b), which is mirrored in

stalking literature (Sheridan et al., 2003). There are, however, contradictory findings, where female rape (Schneider, Ee & Aronson, 1994; Wakelin & Long, 2003) and RP (Rhyner, Uhl & Terrance, 2016, manuscript in preparation) victims are attributed more blame, suggesting other factors may influence victim blame attributions.

1.2 Observer characteristics

1.2.1 Belief in a Just World

The Just World Theory (BJW; Lerner, 1965, 1980) postulates that (individuals believe) good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, which maintains a sense of control over the environment. Knowing that (seemingly) good individuals suffer unjustly means individuals have to accept that they, too, could suffer unjustly so interpretations of events are altered to restore beliefs that the world is just. Three mechanisms are proposed through which interpretations are altered: 1) reinterpreting outcomes so the victim's fate is considered desirable; 2) reinterpreting causes so the victim's fate is something they have done or failed to do; or 3) reinterpreting characteristics of the victim so their personal qualities mean they deserve their fate. Scott and colleagues (2003) found the second mechanism was employed most when attributing blame to stalking victims. It was, however, acknowledged that the extent to which events could be reinterpreted depended upon ability to 'fill in the gaps' within vignettes; without detailed information (e.g. about the victim's behaviour in the lead-up to the offence), participants could speculate and speculations differed according to the nature of the

victim-perpetrator relationship, where most blame was attributed to victims of ex-partners.

Sexual violence literature found those scoring highly on BJW attributed more blame to victims (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Stromwall et al., 2013a; Stromwall et al., 2013b), although a relationship between BJW and victim blaming has not always been found (Parkinson, 2014; Hammond, Berry & Rodriquez, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2010) so may only be applicable for certain victims and/or circumstances.

1.2.2 Victim similarity

The Defensive Attribution Theory (DAT; Shaver, 1975) suggests individuals increase or decrease perceptions of victim blame depending upon perceived similarity; if perceived as similar to the victim (personal similarity) and their circumstances (situational similarity) (Shaw & McMartin, 1977), individuals attribute more blame to perpetrators to prevent the possibility of being blamed if they experience a similar fate. In the context of intimate violence, it could be argued that females are more likely to identify with victims in general as they are more likely to experience this type of victimisation (Scott, Rajakaruna, Sheridan & Gavin, 2015; Sinclair, 2012). Within sexual violence literature, males attribute more blame to victims compared to females (Kleinke & Meyers, 1990; Krahe et al., 2007; Temkin & Krahe., 2008). This finding is mirrored in stalking (Lambert, Smith, Geistman, Cluse-Tolar & Jiang., 2013) and RP (Bothamley & Tully, 2017; Morris, 2017; Rhyner, 2017) literature, although some studies have not found participant gender

differences (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Stromwall et al., 2013b; Newcombe, Van Den Eynde, Hafner & Jolly., 2008), suggesting there may be other factors influencing victim blame attributions.

In the context of RP, 'sexting' is a method through which intimate material is produced and obtained. Scott and Gavin (2018) considered that 'sexters' would identify more with RP victims because this behaviour increased potential for victimisation; non-sexters attributed more responsibility to the victim compared to sexters, consistent with DAT.

1.3 Rationale and Aims

RP behaviour has only recently been recognised as a criminal offence in the UK under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 and so remains a developing area requiring exploration through research. The systematic review presented in Chapter Two synthesised our knowledge regarding why romantic revenge (perceptions of, motivations for or likelihood of engaging in) might occur but there is a need (particularly from reviewing sexual violence and stalking literature) to consider how romantic revenge victims (who may have initially transgressed against the perpetrator, thus triggering revenge) are perceived once it has occurred.

Previous research has identified that within sexual violence and stalking literature (where previous relationships between victims and perpetrators can exist), individuals consider victims somewhat responsible for the offence (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Maier, 2014) and it would appear that these perceptions can be influenced by a number of extra-legal factors.

Whilst RP behaviour (and the offence set out in Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Court Act 2015) is not currently considered a sexual offence by law (McGlynn, 2018), the behaviour has been considered on a continuum of sexual violence (Powell, 2010) and a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2015). It is thus possible that perceptions of RP victims and their culpability will also be influenced by these, particularly if an individual consensually shares sexual material with their partner in the first instance whose partner then non-consensually discloses this material further (Cecil, 2014; Citron & Franks, 2014; Rhyner, 2017). Findings from an unpublished study reported by Reynolds (2016) found that 70% of a university student sample (USA) had shared intimate material of themselves with a partner and 45.2% believed that if someone shared intimate material of themselves, they held some responsibility if distributed to others. Similarly, Lageson, McElrath & Palmer (2018) found in a survey (USA) that there was support for the criminalisation of non-consensual disclosure of sexual material but that this support reduced when individuals discovered that victims produced the material themselves.

It is important to consider perceptions of victim blame with RP behaviour (and offending) as this may influence victimisation responses and victim disclosure (e.g. fearing they may be blamed if the perpetrator was an ex-partner who they consensually shared intimate material with). Findings could offer insight into possible reasons why victim blame attributions occur and differ (if they do) depending upon various extra-legal factors (such as factors relating to the nature of the offence or an observer's

personality), which could subsequently have implications for informing public policy (e.g. raising awareness to ensure victims are not blamed and feel comfortable in disclosure, and receive the support and justice they require). The harms caused to RP victims shall be explored in more detail within Chapter Five. Moreover, victim blaming could bias investigations (and treatment of victims) whilst progressing through the CJS. If extra-legal variables influence victim blame attributions, it would be important to ensure professionals within the CJS, such as police and lawyers, are aware of these to potentially reduce bias.

The research set out in this Chapter aims to develop insight into perceptions of RP by considering factors identified as influential in perceptions of blame in sexual violence and stalking. Moreover, this could enable examination of whether findings from sexual violence and stalking literature (where previous romantic relationships have occurred) translate to this offence. Specifically, this study explores whether there are differences in public perceptions of victim blame in RP cases by considering: victim-perpetrator gender, circumstances of relationship breakdown, BJW and perceived (situational) similarity to the victim. This study has three hypotheses (which do not specify a direction as their purpose is to explore whether factors thought to influence perceptions of sexual violence and stalking offences also influence RP):

1) There will be differences in the how much blame is assigned to the victim, dependent upon:
    a. victim-perpetrator gender
    b. circumstances of relationship breakdown

2) Belief in a Just World will influence victim blame attribution
3) There will be differences in victim blame ratings, dependent upon whether participants have or have not consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner

2. Method

2.1 Study design

The study was a quasi-experimental 2x3 between-participants design using vignettes and questionnaires to measure victim blame judgements (dependent variable), BJW and victim (situational) similarity. A within-participant design was not used to ensure participants did not become familiar with variables being manipulated (as this may have impacted responses). Opportunistic sampling was applied using online social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), email, instant messaging (text, WhatsApp) and word of mouth. The aim of using this sampling method was to recruit participants from a range of backgrounds to reflect a 'public' sample.

Two independent variables [IVs] were manipulated:

- Victim-perpetrator gender (male perpetrator/female victim; female perpetrator/male victim)
- Circumstances of relationship ending (victim unfaithful so perpetrator ended relationship; perpetrator unfaithful so victim ended relationship; mutual decision to end relationship as it was not progressing).

Participants self-allocated to one of the following conditions (to which they were blind), reflecting the IVs manipulated:

1) female victim unfaithful so male perpetrator ended relationship
2) male perpetrator unfaithful so female victim ended relationship
3) male perpetrator and female victim mutually decided to end relationship
4) male victim unfaithful so female perpetrator ended relationship
5) female perpetrator unfaithful so male victim ended relationship
6) female perpetrator and male victim mutually decided to end relationship

Within conditions 1, 2, 4 and 5, a transgression that could have prompted the RP behaviour has occurred (conditions 1 and 4: victim infidelity; conditions 2 and 5: victim ending the relationship in response to perpetrator infidelity). Conditions 3 and 6 present no clear transgression that could have prompted the RP behaviour. This was done to consider whether participants do consider specific transgression information in their decision-making in RP culpability (e.g. Duff & Scott, 2013; Sheridan et al., 2003).

Bristol Online Survey was used to develop and circulate the questionnaire.

2.2 Participants

Two hundred and forty-seven members of the adult British public were recruited (see table twenty-eight for demographic information). Power analysis (for parametric testing) using an alpha of 0.05, a power of 0.80 and a medium effect size indicated a sample size of at least 206 participants was desired. Due to the nature of the topic, participants could only take part if they were over the age of 18. The decision to exclude individuals under the age of 18 was made based on ethical consideration and exposing young people and adolescents to a sexual topic. This was confirmed by the Ethics Committee, who were concerned about age verification in internet-mediated research and exposing those under the age of 18 to material of this nature (the necessary provisions to data collection were made and subsequently approved by The Committee). Furthermore, participants had to reside in the UK as this study was developed in response to the UK's legislation

2.3 Materials

Online questionnaires comprised a vignette, six questions measuring BJW, six questions measuring victim blame attribution, and a question relating to victim similarity.

Table 28. *Participant demographic information*

Gender	**Age**	**Ethnicity**	**Occupation:**
Females: 193 (78.1%) Males: 54 (21.9%)	18-24 years: 31 (12.6%) 25-34 years: 146 (59.1%) 35-44 years: 25 (10.1%) 45-54 years: 19 (7.7%) 55-64 years: 21 (8.5%) 65+ years: 5 (2%)	White (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish): 199 (80.6%) White (Irish): 3 (1.2%) White (European): 10 (4%) White (Any other): 6 (2.4%) Black (African/Caribbean/Black British): 5 (2%) Asian/Asian British: 8 (3.2%) Mixed: 13 (5.3%) Hispanic: 1 (0.4%) Middle Eastern: 1 (0.4%) Prefer not to disclose: 1 (0.4%)	Mental health and psychology: 37 (15%) Academia and education: 30 (12.1%) Student: 21 (8.5%) Healthcare: 16 (6.5%) Retired: 14 (5.7%) Research: 11 (4.5%) Civil Service: 10 (4%) Retail: 9 (3.6%) Management: 7 (2.8%) Engineering and Construction: 7 (2.8%) Finance: 5 (2%) Law and Enforcement: 5 (2%) Film and Media: 5 (2%) Advertisement and Marketing: 4 (1.6%) Events and Hospitality: 4 (1.6%) Charity: 4 (1.6%) Administration: 4 (1.6%) Childcare: 4 (1.6%) Art and Design: 3 (1.2%) Science: 3 (1.2%) Faith and Spirituality: 2 (0/8%) IT: 3 (1.2%) Human Resources: 2 (0/8%) Logistics: 1 (0.4%) Hair and Beauty: 1 (0.4%) Journalism: 1 (0.4%) Unclear: 33 (13.4%)*

*the information participants provided regarding their occupation was unclear, to the extent that it could not be categorised by the author

2.3.1 Vignette

Vignettes were consistent across the six conditions; the only information manipulated related to the IVs. Vignettes did not explicitly state how the material was distributed (e.g. online, via text) to allow for participants to answer using their own interpretation; this study was not exploring the effect of the medium in which material was distributed. The names 'Daniel' and 'Emma' were used to avoid ambiguity relating to victim-perpetrator gender. Furthermore, the vignettes depicted adults. Whilst young people can (and have) been convicted of RP behaviour and the offence set out under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, consideration in these cases must also be given as to whether other offences have occurred in relation to indecent/sexual images of children (as discussed in Chapter One). As the focus of this thesis is on romantic revenge and Section 33 offences (where the potential for additional legislation could influence results), using scenarios depicting young people was not considered.

The vignette used is as follows:

"[Perpetrator] and [victim] had been in a relationship and during the course of this relationship, [victim] consented for [perpetrator] to possess intimate images of [him/her] on [perpetrator's] mobile phone for private and personal use. The relationship came to an end due to the fact that [circumstance of relationship ending]. After the relationship ended, [victim] discovered that [perpetrator] had made the intimate, naked images of [him/her] public by sharing them with others."

2.3.2 Belief in a Just World

BJW was measured using the 6-item 'General Belief in a Just World Scale' (Dalbert, Montada & Schmitt, 1987). Responses are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Scores for each item were summed to produce an overall score; higher scores indicated stronger BJW (minimum score = 6, maximum score = 36). Example items include, 'I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve' and 'I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice'. The scale was initially developed in Germany and intended for use with non-psychiatric populations. It has been translated into other languages and considered appropriate and psychometrically-sound to use with English speaking samples (e.g. Dalbert & Yamauchi, 1994; Furnham, 1995). It has satisfactory levels of internal reliability, ranging from 0.66 (Dalbert, 1993) to 0.88 (Montada, Schmitt & Dalbert, 1986); Furnham (1995) demonstrated internal reliability was 0.82 within a British sample. It has reasonable convergent validity with other measures of BJW (Lipkus, Dalbert & Siegler, 1996) and has discriminant validity when compared to optimism (Dalbert, 1996), authoritarianism (Dalbert, 1992), fairness related self-concept (Dalbert, 1999) and personal belief in a just world (Dalbert, 1999).

It was considered that the General BJW scale was a more appropriate scale to use than the 'Personal Belief in a Just World Scale' (Dalbert, 1999); the personal BJW scale considers beliefs in response to an individual's personal experiences of injustice rather than injustices experienced by others, the latter of which is what this study was

examining. Furthermore, the general and personal BJW scales can be differentiated; the personal BJW scale is related to subjective well-being and self-esteem (Dalbert, 1999), neither of which were explored within this study.

2.3.3 Victim Blame

Victim blame was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Krahe and colleagues' (2007) study on rape judgements; to the author's knowledge, there is currently no established measure for victim blame within RP cases. Six items were considered and responses rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much so). Scores for each item were summed to produce an overall score; higher scores indicated more victim blame attribution. Items were as follows:

1) How much do you think that [perpetrator] is to blame for the incident?
2) How much do you think that [perpetrator] had control over the situation?
3) How much do you think that [victim] is to blame for the incident?
4) How much do you think that [victim] had control over the situation?
5) How likely do you think that it is [victim] who could have avoided the incident?
6) To what extent do you feel sorry for [victim]?

Within sexual violence literature, two approaches have been employed to measure victim blame. One approach uses a unidimensional scale (Stromwall et al, 2013b) on the basis that if a victim is considered more

blameworthy, perpetrator blame should reduce (e.g. Krahe, 1991; Weiss, 2009). The second approach uses two separate scales for victim and perpetrator blame. By including items relating to perpetrator blame, both approaches for measuring victim blame could be considered.

A preliminary analysis was conducted using all six items (items 1, 2 and 6 reverse scored so higher scores reflected higher victim blame) (e.g. Krahe, 1991; Weiss, 2009). Further analyses were conducted using the four items Krahe and colleagues (2007) used to measure victim blame only (items 3–6); item 6 reverse scored so higher scores reflected higher victim blame. Items 3-6 have also been used in research into RP with adequate reliability (cronbach's alpha = .72; Bothamley & Tully, 2017).

2.3.4 Victim similarity

Participants were asked whether they had ever consensually allowed intimate images/videos of themselves to be in possession of a partner (y/n response). The method of consensually sharing this material was not stipulated to allow for participants to answer using their own interpretation and attach their own meaning to it (e.g. what is considered intimate for some might not be considered intimate for others). Furthermore, this lack of stipulation captures the nature in which RP can be disclosed; it "applies both online and offline and to images which are shared electronically or in a more traditional way", including the uploading of images to the internet, sharing images by text and email, or showing an individual a physical or electronic image (UK Government, 2015).

2.4 Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee at The University of Nottingham, School of Medicine.

Participants were invited to take part in the study by following an online link. The invitation stated, 'Please spare 15 minutes of your time to complete a survey for my doctoral research thesis that is exploring attitudes towards a specific crime'. An initial information sheet (appendix G) indicated the study related to attitudes towards 'a specific crime' (omitting information relating to RP to ensure individuals under the age of 18 were not exposed to this topic). An electronic consent form followed (appendix H) and if consent was obtained, participants provided demographic information. For participants who did not meet eligibility criteria (i.e. under the age of 18 and/or not a UK resident), they were directed to a page stating, 'Thank you for your time. Your participation is no longer required for this study'. If participants fulfilled eligibility criteria, they were presented with a second information sheet (appendix I) containing the same content as the first information sheet but it explicitly stated the 'specific crime' was RP. Participants were then asked to provide consent (appendix J) on a second occasion.

Participants chose a number between one and six, which directed them to one of the six conditions (see table twenty-nine for participant demographics for each condition). They read the vignette and then answered the General BJW scale, victim blame questionnaire, and whether

they had ever consensually allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner. A debrief page followed.

2.5 Pilot study

The survey was piloted using opportunistic sampling (n = 12) to ensure vignettes were suitable. Feedback was obtained; no adjustments to vignettes were necessary.

1. Results

Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 24.

3.1 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted for the 6-item victim blame scale (items 1, 2 and 6 reversed), which had adequate internal consistency (determined by Cronbach's alpha; a = .77). Reliability analysis was also conducted for the 4-item victim blame scale (items 3-6), which had adequate internal consistency (a = .75).

Table 29. *Participant demographic information for each condition*

Condition	Total n (%)	Gender (n)	Age (n)	Ethnicity (n)	Sharing (n)
One	42 (10.03%)	Male*:* 9 Female: 33	18-42: 8 25-34:21 35-44: 7 45-54: 1 55-64: 4 65+: 1	White: 36 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 1 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 3 Black/Black British: 0 Mixed: 0 Other: 1	Yes: 18 No: 24
Two	38 (15.38%)	Male: 9 Female: 29	18-42: 3 25-34:24 35-44: 2 45-54: 6 55-64: 2 65+: 1	White: 31 White (Irish): 1 White (European): 2 White (any other): 0 Asian/Asian British: 2 Black/Black British: 0 Mixed: 2 Other: 0	Yes: 24 No:14
Three	39 (15.79%)	Male: 10 Female: 29	18-42: 4 25-34: 25 35-44: 3 45-54: 4 55-64: 3 65+: 0	White: 29 White (Irish): 1 White (European): 1 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 1 Black/Black British: 1 Mixed: 5 Other: 0	Yes: 24 No: 15
Four	51 (20.65%)	Male: 9 Female: 42	18-42: 2 25-34: 31 35-44: 6 45-54: 4 55-64: 6 65+: 2	White: 42 White (Irish): 1 White (European): 1 White (any other): 3 Asian/Asian British: 1 Black/Black British: 2 Mixed: 1 Other: 0	Yes: 31 No: 20

Five	36 (14.57%)	Male: 8 Female: 28	18-42: 6 25-34: 21 35-44: 4 45-54: 2 55-64: 3 65+: 0	White: 27 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 1 White (any other): 0 Asian/Asian British: 1 Black/Black British: 2 Mixed: 3 Other: 2	Yes: 21 No: 15
Six	41 (16.60%)	Male: 9 Female: 32	18-42: 8 25-34: 25 35-44: 3 45-54: 2 55-64: 3 65+: 1	White: 34 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 4 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 0 Black/Black British: 0 Mixed: 2 Other: 0	Yes: 22 No: 19

3.2 Findings

Preliminary analyses were conducted using the 6-item victim blame scale, where Spearman's Rho found a significant negative relationship between perpetrator blame scores (items 1 and 2) and victim blame scores (items 3-6), r = -.412, p (two-tailed) < .01, suggesting that if more blame was attributed to the perpetrator, the amount of blame attributed to the victim reduced (and vice versa). Victim blame data was not normally distributed, where all conditions except condition 4 consisted of less than 50 participants (condition 4 had 51 participants) so data normality was examined by calculating the z-scores for skew and kurtosis. Conditions with z-scores greater than an absolute value of 1.96 were considered as non-normal. Standardised residuals were also plotted for each condition. As such, non-parametric analyses were performed. Further analyses were

conducted using the four-item victim blame scale (items 3-6), where victim blame data were not normally distributed as two conditions (1 and 6) were positively skewed (z scores of 3.05 and 2.05, respectively). Standardised residual plots confirmed the non-normal distribution of scores. This could not be adjusted for with transformations) so non-parametric analyses were performed.

This section documents results using the 4-item victim blame scale to reflect Krahe and colleagues' (2007) and Bothamley and Tully's (2017) methodology, although results from preliminary analysis (using the 6-item scale) are presented within table thirty for comparison.

3.2.1 Hypothesis 1: There will be differences in how much blame is assigned to the victim, dependent upon:

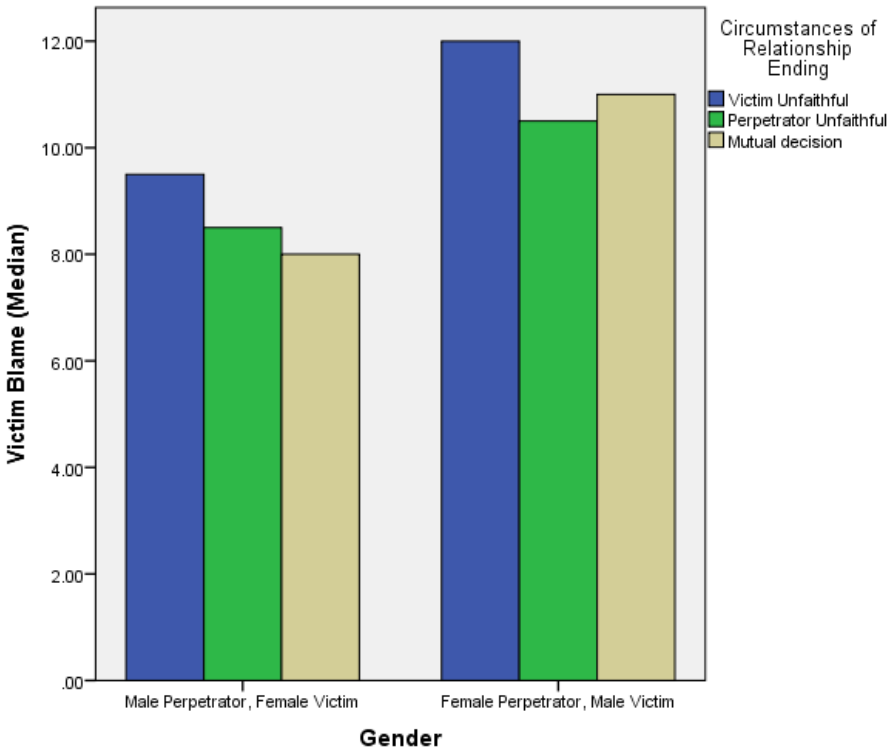
a) victim-perpetrator gender

b) circumstances of the relationship breakdown

Kruskall-Wallis analysis revealed victim blame ratings were not significantly affected by the condition, $H(5) = 10.173$, $p = .07$ (see figure three). Further analyses examined direct effects of victim-perpetrator gender and circumstances of relationship breakdown. A Mann-Whitney U test demonstrated male victims were blamed significantly more ($Mdn = 11$) than female victims ($Mdn = 9$), $U = 8{,}994$, $z = 2.37$, $p < .05$, $r = .15$. Victim blame ratings were not significantly affected by circumstances of relationship breakdown, $H(2) = 4.659$, $p = .09$ (medians for victim

unfaithful, perpetrator unfaithful and mutual decision were 11, 9 and 10, respectively).

Figure 3. *Median victim blame scores dependent upon victim-perpetrator gender and circumstances of relationship breakdown (medians are 9.6, 8.5, 8, 12, 10.5 and 11, respectively)*



It should be noted that scores for victim blame could range from 7-28. Based on the medians found, this would indicate that blame attribution for the victim were modest. An exploratory analysis was conducted comparing perpetrator blame (items 1 and 2) and the corresponding items for victim blame (items 3 and 4), where scores would range from 2-14 for both. A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test indicated that perpetrator blame (*Mdn = 14)* was significantly higher than victim blame (*Mdn = 4), Z* = 280.5, *p* < .001, *r* = .84.

3.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Belief in a Just World will influence victim blame attribution

Spearman's Rho correlation revealed a significant relationship between BJW and victim blame, r = .226, p (two-tailed) <.001. Further analyses using Spearman's Rho examined the direct effect of BJW on victim blame dependent upon victim-perpetrator gender and circumstances of relationship breakdown. There was a significant relationship when the victim was female, r = .319, p (two-tailed) <.001 but not when the victim was male, r = .117, p (two-tailed) = .189. There was a significant relationship when the relationship ended because the perpetrator was unfaithful, r = .285, p (two-tailed) < .05. When the victim was unfaithful, the relationship was on the threshold of significance, r = .201, p (two-tailed) = .05. There was no significant relationship when the relationship ended due to a mutual decision, r = .173, p (two-tailed) = .12.

3.2.3 Hypothesis 3: There will be differences in victim blame attribution, dependent upon whether participants have or have not consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner

A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that individuals who consensually allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner blamed the victim significantly less (*Mdn* = 9) than those who had not (*Mdn* = 12), U = 9610, z = 3.819, p < .0001, r = .24 (see figure four).

For exploratory purposes, victim blame medians were considered for male participants (mdn = 9, n = 25) and female participants (mdn = 9, n =

111) who had shared, and for male participants (mdn = 14, n = 25) and female participants (mdn = 12, n = 82) who had not shared; the median for male participants who had not shared was higher than the median for female participants who had not shared (although the statistical significance of this difference was not examined due to unequal gender splits) but there was no difference in the medians of male and female participants who had shared.

Figure 4. *Median victim blame scores dependent upon whether the participant had (n = 140) or had not (n = 107) consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner*

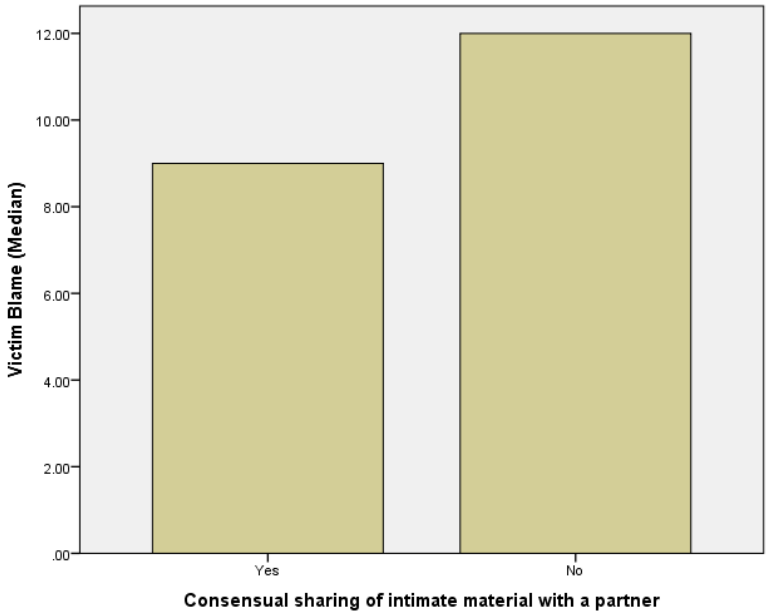


Table 30. *A summary and comparison of results between preliminary and current analysis*

	Preliminary analysis (6 scale items)	**Current analysis (4 scale items)**
Hypothesis 1	<u>*Kruskall-Wallis*</u> Victim blame not significantly affected by the condition participants were assigned to. Victim blame not significantly affected by the circumstances of the relationship breakdown. <u>*Mann-Whitney U*</u> Male victims blamed significantly more (*Mdn* = 14) than female victims (*Mdn* = 11), *U* = 8,997, *z* = 2.43, *p* = .015, *r* = .15.	<u>*Kruskall-Wallis*</u> Victim blame not significantly affected by the condition participants were assigned to. Victim blame not significantly affected by the circumstances of the relationship breakdown. <u>*Mann-Whitney U*</u> Male victims blamed significantly more (*Mdn* = 11) than female victims (*Mdn* = 9), *U* = 8,994, *z* = 2.37, *p* = .018, *r* = .15.
Hypothesis 2	<u>*Spearman's Rho*</u> Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame, *r* = .237, *p* (two-tailed) <.001. Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame when victim was female, *r* = .327, *p* (two-tailed) <.001, but not when victim was male. Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame when relationship ended because victim was unfaithful, r = .211, p (two-tailed) < .05, and perpetrator was unfaithful, r = .283, p (two-tailed) = .015, but not when relationship ended due to mutual decision.	<u>*Spearman's Rho*</u> Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame, *r* = .226, *p* (two-tailed) <.001. Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame when victim was female, *r* = .319, *p* (two-tailed) <.001, but not when victim was male. Significant relationship between BJW and victim blame when relationship ended because perpetrator was unfaithful, r = .285, p (two-tailed) = .014. but not when relationship ended due to mutual decision. Relationship between BJW and victim blame when victim was unfaithful was on the threshold of significance, *r* = .201, *p* (two-tailed) = .05.

Hypothesis 3	*Mann-Whitney U* Those who allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner (*Mdn* = 11.5) blamed the victim significantly less than those who had not (*Mdn* = 15), *U* = 9558.5, *z* = 3.725, *p* < .0001, *r* = .24.	*Mann-Whitney U* Those who allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner (*Mdn* = 9) blamed the victim significantly less than those who had not (*Mdn* = 12), *U* = 9610, *z* = 3.819, *p* < .0001, *r* = .24.

2. Discussion

Findings suggest that in general, perpetrators of RP are blamed more than its victims, where attributions of victim blame were modest. This is consistent with the sexual violence literature, where individuals do blame its perpetrators and victim blame is low (Pollard, 1992). There were, however, some factors that appeared to have an impact on the amount of victim blame attribution.

Victim-perpetrator gender influenced victim blame attributions, where male victims were blamed significantly more than female victims. This is inconsistent with research where female RP victims are blamed more than male RP victims (Rhyner et al., 2016; manuscript in preparation) or where no victim gender differences have been found (Morris, 2017, who considered the effect of empathy-induction and victim infidelity with a sample of 514 American university students who read the blog of a RP victim). Findings are, however, consistent with research with sexual violence (Davies et al., 2001; Davies & Rogers, 2006; Davies et al., 2009; Davies, 2011; Gerber et al., 2004; Sleath & Bull, 2010 Stromwall et al.,

2013b) and stalking (Sheridan et al., 2003), where males victims are attributed more blame than female victims.

The finding that male victims are blamed more could be linked to rape myth acceptance and gender-role beliefs (e.g. Rhyner, 2017). Sleath and Bull (2010) found blaming male victims of sexual violence was predicted by rape myth acceptance (e.g. men instigate sexual activity and thus would not be targets for rape; male victims lose their manhood). Rape myths are thought to originate from traditional views of masculinity (e.g. men should be strong, assertive, sexually dominant and able to fight back; Davies, 2002; Davies & Rogers, 2006) and men who do not conform to this are perceived negatively (Moss-Racusin, Phelan & Rudman., 2010). Conversely, women are expected to be passive, vulnerable, weak and emotionally expressive (Gerber, 1991; Sleath & Bull, 2010). Doherty and Anderson (2004) found that societal expectations regarding masculinity discouraged males from reporting sexual victimisation as they feared being labelled as inadequate or weak. Male victims of female perpetrators were also more likely to be perceived negatively, held responsible and taken less seriously (Gavin & Scott, 2016; Seelau & Seelau 2005). Moreover, those who endorsed traditional gender-role beliefs were found to engage in more victim blaming (Pollard, 1992; White & Robinson Kurpius, 2002). Future research examining victim blame in RP cases would benefit from exploring rape myth acceptance and gender-role beliefs to consider their influence. It is possible there are specific myths in relation to RP offences (e.g. Hadwin, 2015), which research should seek to explore. With perceptions of male victims, in particular, it would be

interesting to consider whether there is anything specifically de-masculating in RP cases, which could subsequently impact perceptions of victim blame.

Circumstances of relationship breakdown (the transgression that could have prompted RP behaviour) did not impact victim blame attributions, consistent with Bothamley and Tully's (2017) research. This is, however, in contrast with Hatcher (2016) who found victim infidelity increased victim blame in RP cases. Given these inconsistencies and the fact that only a few studies have examined circumstances of a relationship breakdown in RP cases, further research is warranted. It may be beneficial to consider other circumstances for why a relationship ends, such as domestic abuse or relocation, as these circumstances were considered when making decisions regarding attribution of blame in stalking (Duff & Scott, 2013; Scott et al., 2018).

BJW was related to victim blame for female victims only and when there had been victim or perpetrator infidelity (i.e. when participants were provided with clear information for why the relationship ended so could use this to inform their decision). This is in contrast, somewhat, to findings that have found a relationship between BJW and victim blame in sexual violence (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Stromwall et al., 2013a; Stromwall et al., 2013b), although other studies have not found a relationship (Hammond et al., 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2010). The finding that BJW did not influence decisions for male victims is consistent with Sleath and Bull's (2010) finding. Although speculative, this could perhaps be

explained using gender-role beliefs, where expectations regarding masculinity may result in incompatibility between seeing a man as a victim who had been harmed (Burcar, 2013; Seelau et al., 2003). Perhaps participants did not view the male as a victim in the first instance, or perhaps they perceived males as more threatening and females as more vulnerable (Gerber, 1991). Alternatively, it may be that BJW only influenced perceptions with female victims because a female who (initially) consensually shared intimate material with their (ex)partner goes against gender-role expectations that females should not be sexually assertive (Ussher, 1998; Wiederman, 2005). Considering BJW only influenced decisions in certain conditions, it may not be wholly useful in explaining what influences blame attribution in RP cases, although future research is warranted to clarify this.

Participants whose circumstances were similar to the victim (i.e. those who had consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner) attributed less blame to victims than those who had not. This is consistent with Scott and Gavin's (2018) finding, where 'non-sexters' held RP victims more responsible than 'sexters'. These are consistent with DAT (Shaver, 1975)**,** suggesting that in RP cases, individuals whose situation is similar to the victim's attribute less victim blame to prevent the possibility of being held responsible if they experienced a similar fate.

Whilst it was found that the perpetrators of RP were generally blamed significantly more that the victims, there were factors that influenced whether attributions of victim blame increased or decreased and so these

findings need to be considered in the context of victimisation responses and how cases progress through the CJS because victim blaming could influence this (Patterson, 2011). Victims (particularly males) may fear being blamed or perceived negatively if they disclose their victimisation. Societal expectations regarding masculinity have discouraged males from reporting sexual victimisation due to fears of being considered inadequate or weak (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). This may particularly be the case if male and female victims were in a relationship with the perpetrator and consensually shared intimate material of themselves, where they may fear being perceived as encouraging their own victimisation. Victims may consequently avoid disclosure altogether (to police, family or peers), preventing them from receiving the support and justice they require.

The act of RP itself has a negative impact on victims (e.g. Bates, 2017), which will discussed further in Chapter Five, but negative disclosure reactions (e.g. being blamed) could result in further negative impact, such as self-blame and maladaptive coping strategies (e.g. Littleton & Radecki Breikopf, 2006; Ullman, Townsend, Filipas & Starzynski., 2007). Research shows that when victims knew the perpetrator, more blame was assigned to victims of sexual violence (Grubb & Harrower, 2005; Krahe et al., 2007) and stalking (Duff & Scott, 2013; Scott et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2003). Whilst Bothamley and Tully (2017) did not find an effect for relationship length, which may suggest that level of familiarity does not influence blame attribution in RP cases, further research is warranted to examine this finding (where research might

benefit from clarifying the length of a relationship, which Bothamley and Tully did not do).

Another concern relates to police investigation and progression to trial. Sleath and Bull (2012) found BJW significantly predicted victim blaming in sexual violence cases with police officers and Page (2008) found gender differences in rape myth acceptance by police officers. Additionally, Pathe, MacKenzie and Mullen (2004) found victim blaming was present in a sample of police officers, where stalking was considered a consequence of the victim's poor relationship choice. It is possible that RP victim blaming occurs within criminal justice professionals so research examining these professionals' perceptions of RP victim blame is required. Huber's (2018) research conducted into (UK) RP victims' experiences of the police suggests victim blaming does occur through comments such as, 'don't send pictures' and calling victims a 'silly girl'. Furthermore, whilst most cases relating to RP (and the offence set out in Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Court Act 2015) are tried in the Magistrates Court, if cases progress to trial at the Crown Court, the judge and jury's perceptions (and attributions of blame) could be influenced by extra-factors considered within this study. It would be important to ensure that individuals involved with the Courts and Criminal Justice System are made aware that certain factors are known to influence attribution of blame.

Increases in knowledge and exposure to information about RP could reduce levels of victim blame. Hadwin (2015) modified the Illinois Rape-Myth Acceptance Scale to reflect wording representing RP myth

acceptance (as there is currently no existing scale for this), finding that increases in knowledge decreased rape and RP myth acceptance and victim blame. Research would benefit from ascertaining what the public's current knowledge is regarding RP (e.g. do they recognise that it is a crime; do they recognise its harm; are there factors that influence these judgements). Based on Hadwin's (2015) findings, it is possible that by increasing the public's knowledge regarding RP (and its impact on victims), victim blaming would reduce.

Currently, campaigns aimed at raising awareness about sexual violence and 'sexting' focus on a 'risk management' model (where individuals - potential victims - are held responsible for managing this risk) rather than focussing on the actions of perpetrators (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Fleschler Peskin et al., 2013; Scott & Gavin, 2018). It has been argued that a preventative approach to decreasing digital sexual activity places responsibility on individuals to prevent their victimisation (Henry & Powell, 2015), which could increase victim blame should an offence occur. Furthermore, as more individuals (particularly young individuals) engage with the digital world, and as 'sexting' becomes more prevalent in dating and committed relationships (Delevi & Weisskirch, 2013; Lippman & Campbell, 2014), discouragement of these activities may deny individuals of sexual autonomy (Steeves, 2015). Instead, campaigns should shift focus away from (consensual) creation of intimate material to highlighting the harmful and (potentially) criminal nature of non-consensual distribution. This could remove the burden of responsibility from

individuals to prevent their own victimisation, reduce victim blame and may, in turn, encourage disclosure.

4.1 Future Directions and Limitations

A number of research suggestions have already been documented, although a number of further suggestions will be mentioned upon considering several limitations that exist.

Whilst it was beneficial the sample comprised a range of professions to reflect the 'public' and was not skewed towards one profession (e.g. psychologically-informed participants), the majority were female, aged 25-34 and white Caucasian. The sample is thus not representative so results cannot be generalised to the public. Future research should endeavour to obtain a more representative sample. Furthermore, this study did not include participants under the age of 18 due to ethical considerations. Whilst the findings from Walker and Sleath's (2017) systematic review into RP and non-consensual sharing of sexual material need to be interpreted with caution (where the reasons for this are set out in Chapter One), it was found that the prevalence of victimisation and perpetration of non-consensual sharing of sexual material (albeit not necessarily RP) was higher amongst adolescent samples than adult samples. Additionally, criminal justice statistics do indicate that juveniles and young adults are being convicted of Section 33 offences (UK Government, 2019; see Chapter One for the official statistics from 2018). As such, it would be important for future research to consider using individuals, and scenarios depicting individuals, under the age of 18. This

would allow the exploration of whether there are differences in perceptions dependent on the ages of participant and the ages of individuals depicted within scenarios.

The majority of participants were female and it is possible they did not perceive themselves as personally similar to male victims (so attributed more blame to male victims, as per DAT). That said, research into sexual violence, stalking and RP suggests females generally blame victims less than males (e.g. Bothamley & Tully, 2017; Lambert et al., 2013; Temkin et al., 2008), regardless of victim gender (Davies, 2011). Furthermore, Sleath and Bull (2010) found males were more accepting of male rape myths than females (Hayes, Lorenz & Bell, 2013) and it is generally acknowledged that traditional gender-roles are more rigid for men (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). Participant gender may or may not have influenced victim blame attributions here but it was not explored statistically due to the unequal gender split. For exploratory purposes, victim blame medians were examined for male participants (mdn = 11, n = 54) and female participants (mdn = 10, n = 193); male participants did blame victims more, which is consistent with sexual violence, (e.g. Krahe et al., 2007), stalking (Lamber et al., 2013) and RP (Bothamley & Tully, 2017) literature, although the statistical significance of this difference was not considered. Future research would benefit from considering whether participant gender influences victim blame attribution in RP cases.

A study found that with sexual violence, gay men engaged less in victim blaming and rape myth acceptance (Davies & McCartney, 2003).

Additionally, heterosexual males tended to blame gay, lesbian and bisexual victims more compared to gay, lesbian and bisexual male and female observers (Davies & Rogers, 2006). It would be interesting to examine whether participant sexual orientation influences attribution of blame in RP cases. Moreover, same-sex relationships were not considered within vignettes. Emerging research suggests the LGBT population could be at higher risk of having intimate images shared non-consensually (Data & Society, 2016; Hadwin, 2015). Research also found homosexual male victims of sexual violence are attributed more blame than heterosexual male victims (Davies, Pollard & Archer., 2006). Heterosexual male victims were blamed more than homosexual male victims of a female perpetrator, and homosexual male victims were blamed more than heterosexual male victims of a male perpetrator (Davies et al., 2006). Furthermore, a correlation was found between homophobia and blame towards male rape victims (Davies & Rogers, 2006). Future research should consider the impact of same-sex relationships on attributions of blame in RP cases.

For BJW, three mechanisms are proposed through which reinterpretations of events are made to restore a belief the world is just. Vignettes only related to two mechanisms, where the victim's fate was either due to personal qualities (i.e. gender) or something they did or failed to do (i.e. circumstances of the relationship breakdown). Future research could consider the third mechanism and whether providing information regarding outcomes for victims (and perpetrators) influence blame attributions. For example, expression of perpetrator's remorse increased sympathy for RP victims and reduced victim blame in an American sample

(Rhyner, 2017). Research found that inducing empathy influenced blame attributions (e.g. Haegerich & Bottoms, 2000; Plumm & Terrance, 2009) so inducing empathy in those who make decisions regarding RP cases (e.g. CJS professionals) could reduce victim blame (e.g. by asking individuals to place themselves in the victims' shoes; Morris, 2017).

Whilst the nature of the relationship breakdown appeared to have no influence on victim blame attributions, it could be argued that the nature of the transgressions used were not comparable. For example, whilst it was evident in conditions 1 and 4 that the victim had potentially done something that triggered the perpetrator's motivation for revenge (and caused the perpetrator harm), the transgression may not have been as clear in conditions 2 and 5 (where the transgression was that the victim ended the relationship with the perpetrator following the perpetrator's infidelity). Within conditions 3 and 6, no transgression was stipulated. Furthermore, whilst the behaviour described in all scenarios could be a case of RP, in no condition was it explicitly stated that the perpetrator intended to cause the victim distress, which is necessary for the perpetrator to receive a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (although participants were made aware in the Information Sheet prior to completing the study that RP behaviour is intended to cause distress and so they may have inferred this when reading the scenario). It thus may have been beneficial to explicitly state the intent of harm in scenarios and to have asked participants to consider how serious they considered the transgression or how angry or hurt the perpetrator was feeling (both of which were identified in Chapter Two as

emotions experienced by transgressed individuals) to consider whether this had any influence on results and to see if the scenarios were, indeed, comparable with one another. Future research should take these limitations into consideration when exploring RP and considering scenarios, where it may also be interesting to examine a wider range of transgressions within a romantic relationship (e.g. domestic abuse, silent treatment) or whether the behaviour occurred with a current or ex-partner (i.e. where the behaviour does not necessarily follow a relationship breakdown).

Rhyner (2017) demonstrated that when RP victims produced material themselves, they were blamed more than when perpetrators produced the material. Production of intimate material could be considered in future research examining RP victim blame attributions (e.g. physical or electronic material, material produced with or without victim's knowledge, material produced through coercion). Method of distribution could also be explored, such as distribution online (and to what platforms, e.g. social media, forums, pornographic websites), via text or email, or the inclusion of additional personal information, to allow for a more in-depth exploration of blame attributions.

The measure assessing victim blame (i.e. responsibility for the event) was adapted from a study that examined victim blame in sexual violence. Whilst findings from the preliminary analysis (6-item scale) did not differ from findings of the analysis described in-depth in this report (4-item scale), there were differences in strengths of significance. This suggests

that choice of measure does have an influence on results. At present, there is no uniform measure (to the author's knowledge) assessing victim blame in RP cases so it would be beneficial to develop a psychometrically-sound measure for this to account for issues (e.g. reliability and validity) that could affect measurement of victim blame. Furthermore, the development of a psychometrically-sound measure of victim blame could ensure that the construct of blame is truly being measured. Whilst the measure for victim blame used within this study demonstrated good internal reliability (i.e. the items appeared to measure the same construct), other factors related to what makes a measure reliable and valid (which are discussed within the Critique presented in Chapter Three) were not considered. As such, it cannot be stated that the measure wholly captured blame adequately (or something else) and so results should be interpreted with caution.

3. Conclusion

This research offers insight into the attribution of victim blame in a relatively new area of UK criminal legislation related to revenge and intent to cause harm. Findings indicate whilst perpetrators of RP were generally blamed more than its victims, victim blame attribution could be influenced by victim-perpetrator gender, where male victims are blamed more than female victims (despite the fact the same behaviour occurred). This finding is reflected in sexual violence and stalking literature. BJW has been found to influence attribution of blame in sexual violence and stalking cases, although this study suggests it does not wholly translate to RP because BJW was only influential in certain circumstances. Findings are

consistent with DAT, whereby those similar to victims were less likely to blame the victim than those who were not. Future research is important given the limited research in this developing area. Continued efforts need to be made to raise awareness of RP as an offence and shift focus away from the consensual production of intimate material to the criminal act of non-consensual distribution.

Chapter Five: Revenge Pornography - The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the medium in which is it shared on public perceptions of victim harm, the perpetrator's actions and how these actions should be dealt with by the Criminal Justice System

Abstract

Objectives: Public perceptions of the harm caused to Revenge Pornography [RP] victims, of the RP behaviour itself and how it should be dealt with by the Criminal Justice System [CJS] were examined by considering extra-legal factors recognised as influential in perceptions of stalking and sexual violence.

Method: 151 adults (UK general population aged 18+) completed online questionnaires. The impact of victim-perpetrator gender, the medium RP was shared, Belief in a Just World [BJW] and victim (situational) similarity were considered. Participants read a vignette depicting a case of RP and completed the General BJW Scale, made judgements about victim harm and their perception of the event, considered how the case should be dealt with by the CJS, and identified whether they had consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner.

Results: Participants perceived more harm was caused to female victims (male perpetrator) than male victims (female perpetrator). The medium RP was shared had no impact on victim harm ratings. Participants considered RP behaviour occurred in all conditions. There was a significant negative relationship between BJW and RP ratings for male victims

(female perpetrator) who had material shared via text. There was no impact of victim-participant gender or medium RP was shared on CJS outcomes. There was no significant influence of victim (situational) similarity on victim harm perceptions or RP ratings.

Implications: Awareness needs to be made regarding the extra-legal factors (victim-perpetrator gender) that could influence perceptions in RP cases, particularly when considering perceptions of harm and victimisation responses (e.g. victim disclosure, progression through the CJS). Continued efforts need to be made to understand the specific needs of victims to ensure they receive the support they require. Future research is required given the limited amount of research into this developing area.

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to synthesise and develop our understanding of romantic revenge, not only in relation to considering why this might occur (which was addressed in Chapter Two) but in terms of how this behaviour is perceived once it has occurred. Chapter Four sought to achieve the latter by considering perceptions of revenge pornography [RP] (where an extensive description of what this is is presented in Chapters One and Four and so will not be repeated here) given the recent recognition in legislation that non-consensual disclosure of sexual material with the intent to cause the victim distress is an offence (UK Government, 2015).

In Chapter Four, the perception explored related to victim blame attributions (and the potential impact this could have on victimisation

responses), where it was found that some of the extra-legal factors that influence perceptions of victim blame in sexual violence and stalking (victim-perpetrator gender and victim similarity influence perceptions) extended to RP cases. Furthermore, Chapter Four identified that research would benefit from ascertaining what the public's current knowledge is regarding RP (e.g. do they recognise that it is a crime; do they recognise the harm it can cause to victims; are there factors that influence these judgements) in light of the fact that increases in knowledge regarding RP was found to reduce victim blame in the USA (Hadwin, 2015). If the public have misperceptions regarding these areas, this could have implications for the amount of blame attributed to the victim. Similar to misperceptions about victim blaming, these misperceptions could impact responses to victimisation (e.g. from family, friends, police, criminal justice professionals).

As discussed in Chapter Four, the sexual violence and stalking literature found that a number of situational and observer (participant) variables influenced perceptions of these offences. These variables extend beyond influencing perceptions of victim blaming to perceptions of harm caused, whether an event/behaviour constitutes an offence, and how these offences should be dealt with by the CJS (some of the literature shall be summarised below). This Chapter is thus a development of Chapter Four, seeking to advance our understanding of perceptions of RP further by considering public perceptions in relation to victim harm, the behaviour itself and how it is felt this behaviour should be dealt with by the Criminal Justice System.

1.1 Situational variables

1.1.1 Victim-perpetrator relationship

Stalking literature suggests that as relationships between victims and perpetrators become more familiar, perceptions of victim harm decrease; more harm (mental and/or physical) is perceived to be caused when perpetrators are strangers than acquaintances or former partners (Scott, Lloyd & Gavin., 2010; Scott, Rajakaruna, Sheridan & Sleath., 2013; Sheridan, Gillett, Davies, Blaauw & Patel., 2003). Furthermore, individuals perceive stranger stalkers are more persistent and dangerous than stalkers portrayed as former partners (Scott et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2013). Additionally, behaviour was considered more likely to constitute stalking when perpetrators were strangers compared to acquaintances or former partners (Sheridan et al., 2003; Scott & Sheridan, 2011; Scott et al., 2010; Scott, Duff, Sheridan & Rajakaruna, 2018).

When stalking perpetrators are portrayed as strangers, participants are more likely to believe the behaviour requires police intervention and a criminal conviction than acquaintances or former partners (Scott & Sheridan, 2011; Scott et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2003;). When presented with hypothetical stalking cases, mock-jurors in the stranger condition could reach a unanimous guilty verdict whereas those in the ex-partner condition could not (Scott & Gavin, 2011). Furthermore, ex-partner stalkers are less likely to be arrested and convicted for stalking compared to stranger stalkers (Harris, 2000; Pearce & Easteal, 1999). Scott and colleagues (2010) found participants believed restraining orders

or criminal convictions were more necessary when stalking perpetrators were strangers than acquaintances or ex-partners.

1.1.2 Victim-perpetrator gender

Sexual violence and stalking literature suggest offences are considered more serious (i.e. requiring police intervention) and have greater impact upon victims when perpetrators are male than female (Angelone, Mitchell & Pilafova., 2007; Corbally, 2015; Scott, Rajakaruna, Sheridan, & Gavin., 2015; Scott et al., 2018). When stalking perpetrators are male (female victim), police intervention is considered more necessary and victim bodily injury considered more likely than when perpetrators were female (male victim) (Sheridan et al., 2003). Furthermore, Scott and colleagues (2018) found the perpetrator's behaviour was more likely to constitute stalking when perpetrators male (with female victim) than vice versa.

Scott and Gavin (2018) found an RP offence was considered more serious with a male perpetrator (female victim) than a female perpetrator (male victim). Males considered the offence more serious if the perpetrator was male (female victim), whereas victim-perpetrator gender did not influence perceived severity for females. Females considered the offence more serious than males when the perpetrator was female (male victim), but there were no differences in perceptions of severity between genders if the perpetrator was male (female victim).

1.2 Observer variables

1.2.1 Belief in a Just World

Chapter four describes the basis of The Just World Theory (Lerner, 1965, 1980) and the three proposed mechanisms through which interpretations are altered (reinterpreting the outcome; reinterpreting the cause; reinterpreting characteristics of the victim).

Scott and colleagues (2013) suggested the comparatively low arrest and conviction rates for ex-partner stalkers (compared to stranger stalkers) could be considered in terms of belief in a just world [BJW] due to ambiguities that are characteristic within interactions of people who know each other, with potential for misunderstandings to occur (Bell, Kuriloff & Lottes., 1994). Sheridan and colleagues (2003) explained their findings (that a perpetrator's behaviour constituted stalking and required police intervention more-so when perpetrators were strangers than ex-partners) using BJW; individuals altered perceptions to believe that victims who knew their stalker had done something in the past/relationship to trigger the perpetrator's behaviour (mechanism two).

Scott and colleagues (2013) reported the second mechanism was employed most when interpreting stalking vignettes (and attributing blame to victims). The interpretation of the event depended upon participants' ability to 'fill in the gaps' in the vignettes; without detailed information (resulting in ambiguity), participants could speculate and these differed depending on the nature of the victim-perpetrator

relationship (where victims were attributed more blame when the perpetrator was an ex-partner). Furthermore, sexual violence literature suggests BJW influences perceptions of rape; those high on BJW considered the event depicted as rape to a lesser extent than those low on BJW (Stromwall, Alfredsson and Landstrom., 2013a).

1.2.2 Victim similarity

Chapter four describes the basis of the Defensive Attribution Theory (DAT; Shaver, 1975) and an individual's similarity to a victim (Shaw & McMartin, 1977)**.**

In the context of intimate violence, females are considered more likely to identify with victims as they are considered more likely to experience this type of victimisation (Scott et al., 2015; Sinclair, 2012). Females perceive stalking as more harmful and pervasive than males (Lambert, Smith, Geistman, Cluse-Tolar & Jiang., 2013), which is mirrored in sexual violence literature (Temkin & Krahe, 2008) where males tend to minimise the seriousness of sexual assault against females (Newcombe, Van Den Eynde, Hafner & Jolly, 2008) and females are more likely to consider the event constitutes an offence (Angleone et al., 2007). Lambert and colleagues (2013) found males were more likely to believe stalking occurred between strangers (whereas females comprehended that stalking could be relational). Furthermore, Dunlap, Hodell, Golding and Wasarhaley (2012) found females were more likely to reach guilty verdicts in a stalking mock-juror case compared to males.

With RP, females reported victims were more likely to experience mental harm and that police intervention was more necessary than males (Bothamley & Tully, 2017; Rhyner, 2017). Scott and Gavin's (2017) findings regarding participant gender have previously been mentioned (see '*victim-perpetrator gender'* section).

Intimate material can be produced and obtained through 'sexting'. Gavin and Scott (2017) found 'non-sexters' perceived the RP situation as more serious than sexters, which is the opposite direction DAT would expect; it was considered that individuals who engage in risky behaviour(s) tend to downplay the behaviour's costs (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003) so the perceived seriousness of 'sexting' (and potential for RP) could be why participants had not engaged in 'sexting' in the first instance.

1.3 RP victimisation

RP victims and victims of non-consensual sharing of sexual material experience a number of negative effects beyond embarrassment and shame (Citron & Franks, 2014), including difficulties with employment (Hadwin, 2015; Franks, 2016), depression, suicidal thoughts and problems in relationships (familial, friendships, romantic) (Henry & Powell, 2015). RP victims have also committed suicide (Guardian, 2012; Times, 2014). Moreover, research conducted with (Canadian female) RP victims suggest a number of psychological effects, including trust issues, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts, which are similar to the effects following sexual violence (Bates, 2017).

RP perpetrators may include identifying information alongside the non-consensually distributed material (or distribute it directly to individuals known to the victim) (Citron & Franks, 2014). This could result in other individuals (known or unknown) contacting victims and causing further victimisation through harassment, stalking, emotional and/or (threatened and/or actual) physical abuse, rape and death threats (Bloom, 2014; Citron & Franks, 2014). Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of RP victims receiving support, which could perhaps mitigate its effects.

1.4 Rationale and Aims

As discussed within Chapter Four, the offence of non-consensual disclosure of sexual material with the intent to cause distress was introduced into legislation in 2015 and so is a developing area warranting research. This Chapter aims to extend Chapter Four and further develop our understanding of perceptions of romantic revenge once it has occurred (beyond that of victim blame).

Sexual violence and stalking literature (both of which are offences which might have involved a romantic relationship between victims and perpetrators) has identified there are extra-legal factors that influence perceptions of victim harm, whether a behaviour constitutes an offence and CJS outcomes. Given that RP behaviour (and the Section 33 offence) is considered on a continuum of sexual violence and a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence (albeit it is not currently recognised as a sexual

offence by law; McGlynn, 2018), it is possible that perceptions of RP are also influenced by these factors. This study thus aims to establish whether RP behaviour/offending, and the negative impact of its victimisation, is understood (and whether extra-legal factors have any influence on perceptions). For example, stalking literature suggests that as victim-perpetrator relationships become more familiar, perceptions of victim harm, what constitutes an offence and the need for police/criminal justice intervention decrease; it is thus possible that perceptions of RP are already influenced by the victim-perpetrator's previous relationship. Moreover, findings may highlight a need to ensure the public's understanding is in line with what constitutes RP (e.g. recognition a RP offence has occurred) and whether measures are required to ensure harms are recognised (and that victims are not blamed).

Findings could have implications for informing public policy, such as educating and raising awareness regarding the nature of RP, ensuring victims feel comfortable to disclose RP (and receive the support they require), and improving knowledge regarding how RP victims should be approached. As discussed in Chapter Four, it is possible that perceptions of RP victims (and the offence itself) will affect responses to disclosure. Findings may also have implications for the way RP is managed and progressed through the CJS, from the initial police interview to trial (if deemed necessary). Most cases of RP (the offence set out in Section 33) will appear before the Magistrates Court (and not progress to the Crown Court, where the case would be heard by a jury who will determine guilt but not recommend sentencing), where it would be important to ensure all

individuals working within the CJS are aware of the nature of RP offences (e.g. the harm caused to victims, ensuring victims are taken seriously, or offering consultations) to ensure they are aware of extra-legal variables that could impact their perceptions to potentially reduce any bias.

This Chapter explores the public's understanding of RP by specifically examining perceptions of: victim harm, whether the perpetrator's actions constitute RP, and how the perpetrator's behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS (the latter of which will be used as a proxy to examine perceptions of seriousness and harm caused by RP). Victim-perpetrator gender, the medium RP was shared (which was recommended in Chapter Four as a factor to explore as no research has done this previously, to the author's knowledge), BJW and victim (situational) similarity were considered to examine whether these influenced judgements. This study has five hypotheses (none of which specify a direction as the purpose of this research is exploratory to either examine whether factors thought to influence perceptions of sexual violence and stalking offences also influence RP, or whether factors that have not previously been examined in research influence perceptions):

1) There will be differences in perceptions of victim harm, dependent upon:
    a. victim-perpetrator gender
    b. medium RP is shared
2) There will be differences in perceptions of whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP, dependent upon:
    a. victim-perpetrator gender

b. medium RP is shared;

3) There will be differences in perceptions of how the perpetrator's behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS, dependent upon:
    a. victim-perpetrator gender
    b. medium RP is shared;
4) BJW will influence perceptions of
    a. victim harm
    b. whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP
5) There will be differences in perceptions dependent upon whether participants have or have not consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner on:
    a. victim harm
    b. whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP

2. Method

2.1 Study design

The study was a quasi-experimental 2x2 between-participants design using vignettes and questionnaires to measure victim harm (dependent variable – DV - 1), perceptions of the perpetrator's behaviour (RP rating; DV2), perceptions of how the perpetrator's behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS (DV3), BJW and victim similarity. A within-participants design was not used to ensure participants did not become familiar with the variables manipulated (as this could impact responses). Opportunistic sampling was employed using online social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter), email, instant messaging (text, WhatsApp) and word of mouth.

This sampling method was used to recruit participants from a range of backgrounds to reflect a 'public' sample.

Two independent variables [IVs] were manipulated:

- Victim-perpetrator gender (male perpetrator/female victim; female perpetrator/male victim)
- medium RP was shared (online; via text).

Participants self-allocated to one of the following conditions (to which they were blind):

1) Male perpetrator shared intimate material of female victim online
2) Male perpetrator shared intimate material of female victim via text
3) Female perpetrator shared intimate material of male victim online
4) Female perpetrator shared intimate material of male victim via text

Bristol Online Survey was used to develop and circulate the questionnaire.

2.2 Participants

One hundred and fifty-one members of the adult British public were recruited (see table thirty-one for participant demographic information). Power analysis (for parametric testing) using an alpha of 0.05, a power of 0.80 and a small effect size indicated that a sample size of at least 72 participants was desired. Participants could only partake in the study if they were over the age of 18 (please refer to the 'participant' section of Chapter Four for a description of why those under the age of 18 were

excluded) and resided in the UK, given the fact that this study was developed in response to the UK's RP legislation.

2.3 Materials

The online questionnaire comprised of a vignette, six questions measuring BJW, four questions relating to the vignette and a question relating to victim similarity.

2.3.1 Vignette

Vignettes were consistent across all conditions; the only information manipulated related to the IVs. Vignettes did not explicitly state the reason why the relationship ended (this was not a variable examined within this study), although the victim ended the relationship in all conditions for consistency. The names 'Jane' and 'Alan' were used to avoid ambiguity regarding victim-perpetrator gender. Please refer to the 'vignette' section of Chapter Four for a description of why scenarios only depicted adult relationship as opposed to including relationships between young people.

Table 31. *Participant demographic information*

Gender	**Age**	**Ethnicity**	**Occupation**
Females: 125 (82.8%) Males: 26 (17.2%)	18-24 years: 20 (13.2%) 25-34 years: 87 (57.6%) 35-44 years: 13 (8.6%) 45-54 years: 12 (7.9%) 55-64 years: 12 (7.9%) 65+ years: 7 (4.6%)	White (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish): 123 (81.5%) White (Irish): 2 (1.3%) White (European): 7 (4.6%) White (Any other): 3 (2%) Black (African/Caribbean/Black British): 2 (1.3%) Asian/Asian British: 6 (4%) Mixed: 8 (5.3%)	Mental health and psychology: 21 (13.9%) Academia and education: 16 (10.6%) Student: 15 (9.9%) Healthcare: 10 (6.6%) Retired: 10 (6.6%) Civil Service: 9 (6%) Research: 5 (3.3%) Retail: 9 (6%) Childcare: 7 (4.6%) Management: 5 (3.3%) Film and media: 4 (2.6%) Advertisement and marketing: 4 (2.6%) Engineering and construction: 4 (2.6%) Law and enforcement: 3 (2%) Science: 2 (1.3%) Art and design: 2 (1.3%) Charity sector: 2 (1.3%) Unemployed: 2 (1.3%) Administration: 1 (0.7%) IT: 1 (0.7%) Faith and spirituality: 1 (0.7%) Finance: 1 (0.7%) Unknown: 16 (10.6%)*

*the information participants provided regarding their occupation was unclear, to the extent that it could be categorised by the author

The vignette used is as follows:

"[Perpetrator] and [victim] had been in a relationship and during the course of this relationship, [victim] consented for [perpetrator] to possess intimate images of [him/her] on [perpetrator's] mobile phone for private and personal use. [Victim] ended the relationship, after which [victim] discovered that [perpetrator] had shared the intimate, naked images of [him/her] via [medium condition]."

2.3.2 Belief in a Just World

Participant's BJW was measured using the 6-item 'General Belief in a Just World Scale' (Dalbert, Montada & Schmitt, 1987). Please refer to Chapter Four for a description of this measure and its psychometric properties.

2.3.3 Victim Harm

Victim harm was measured using two items adapted from Scott and colleagues' (2010) study on stalking perceptions. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much so). Scores for each item were summed to produce an overall score; higher scores indicated more harm was caused. The items were as follows:

1) Do you think [perpetrator's] behaviour will create fear or apprehension in [victim]?
2) Do you think [perpetrator's] behaviour will cause mental harm to [victim]?

2.3.4 RP ratings

Perceptions regarding whether the perpetrator's behaviour constituted RP were measured using an item adapted from Scott and colleagues' (2010) study: "To what extent do you consider [perpetrator's] behaviour to be a case of revenge porn?" Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much so); higher scores indicated a stronger belief the behaviour constituted RP.

2.3.5 CJS outcomes

Perceptions of how the perpetrator's behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS were measured by adapting an item from Scott and colleagues' (2010) study: "What would be the most appropriate outcome if [perpetrator] was arrested and the case went to trial". Participants chose one of four options:

1) The case should be dropped as police intervention was unnecessary and the case should not have gone to trial
2) [Victim] is granted a restraining order against [perpetrator] and [perpetrator] does not receive a criminal conviction
3) [Victim] is not granted a restraining order against [perpetrator] and [perpetrator] receives a criminal conviction
4) [Victim] is granted a restraining order against [perpetrator] and [perpetrator] receives a criminal conviction

The inclusion of this part of the survey was used as a proxy to examine perceptions of seriousness and harm caused by RP warranting criminalisation. It was not asking participants to determine whether the

perpetrator had committed the offence set out in Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

2.3.5 Victim similarity

Please refer to the 'victim similarity' section of Chapter four; the same question was asked to consider victim (situational) similarity.

2.4 Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee at The University of Nottingham, School of Medicine.

Please refer to the 'procedure' section of Chapter four; the same recruitment procedure was employed (information sheets x2 and consent forms x2 can be found in appendices K-N).

Participants chose a number between one and four, directing them to one of the four conditions (see table thirty-two for participant demographic information for each condition). They read the vignette and then answered the General BJW scale, victim harm items, the item relating to whether the behaviour constituted RP and how it should be managed by the CJS, and whether they had ever consensually allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner. A debrief page followed.

2.5 Pilot study

The survey was piloted using opportunistic sampling (n = 7) to ensure vignettes were suitable. Feedback was obtained; no adjustments were necessary.

3. Results

Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 23.

3.1 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted for the victim harm scale, which had adequate internal consistency (determined by Cronbach's alpha; a = .74).

3.2 Findings

Victim harm responses were not normally distributed. All conditions consisted of less than 50 participants so data normality was examined by calculating the z-scores for skew and kurtosis. Conditions with z-scores greater than an absolute value of 1.96 were considered non-normal. Standardised residuals were also plotted for each condition. Conditions 1-3 were negatively skewed (z scores of -6.66, -2.34, and-4.44, respectively). Conditions 1 and 3 had a positive kurtosis (z-scores of 9.88 and 6.39, respectively). Standardised residual plots confirmed the distribution of scores. Similarly, RP ratings were not normally distributed. All conditions were negatively skewed (z scores of -5.47, -6.02, -6.57 and -5.72, respectively). All conditions had a positive kurtosis (z-scores of 4.13, 9.52, 8.22 and 8.06, respectively). Standardised residual plots

confirmed the distribution of scores. Neither could be adjusted with transformations) so non-parametric analyses were performed.

Table 32. *Participant demographic information for each condition*

Condition	Total (n)	Gender (n)	Age (n)	Ethnicity (n)	Sharing (n)
One	42	Male*:* 9 Female: 33	18-42: 8 25-34: 23 35-44: 4 45-54: 6 55-64: 0 65+: 1	White: 31 White (Irish): 2 White (European): 2 White (any other): 0 Asian/Asian British: 3 Black/Black British: 1 Mixed: 3	Yes: 24 No: 18
Two	37	Male: 4 Female: 33	18-42: 5 25-34: 21 35-44: 3 45-54: 1 55-64: 5 65+: 2	White: 33 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 0 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 1 Black/Black British: 0 Mixed: 2	Yes: 22 No:15
Three	39	Male: 6 Female: 33	18-42: 6 25-34: 22 35-44: 4 45-54: 1 55-64: 4 65+: 2	White: 30 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 3 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 2 Black/Black British: 1 Mixed: 2	Yes: 20 No: 19
Four	33	Male: 7 Female: 26	18-42: 1 25-34: 21 35-44: 2 45-54: 4 55-64: 3 65+: 2	White: 29 White (Irish): 0 White (European): 2 White (any other): 1 Asian/Asian British: 0 Black/Black British: 0 Mixed: 1	Yes: 22 No: 11

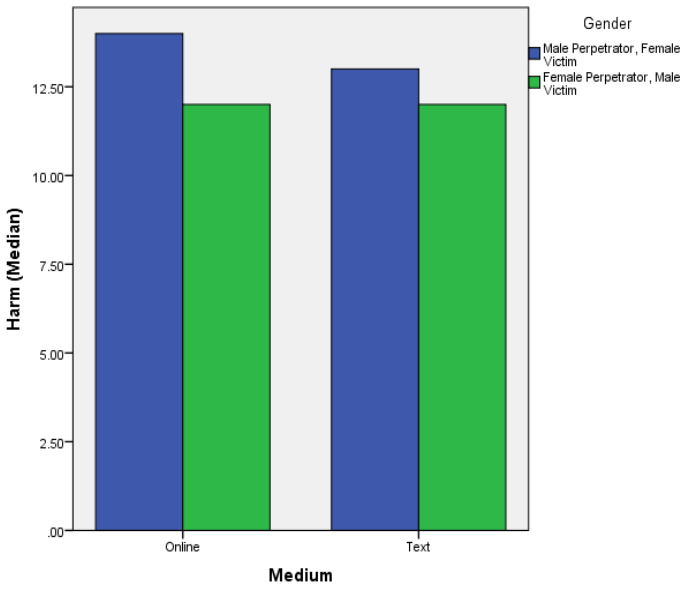
3.2.1 Hypothesis 1: There will be differences in perceptions of victim harm, dependent upon

a) victim-perpetrator gender

b) medium RP is shared

Kruskall-Wallis analysis revealed harm ratings were significantly affected by the manipulation of independent variables, *H(3)* = 8.636, p = .035 (see figure five). A Mann-Whitney U test found participants believed female victims (*Mdn* = 14) were harmed significantly more than male victims (*Mdn* = 12), *U* = 2093, *z* = -2.91, *p* = .004, *r* = -.24. The medium RP was shared had no significant effect on harm ratings, *U* = 2770, *z* = 257.52, *p* = .801 (*Mdn* = 13 for both online and text).

Figure 5. *Median victim harm ratings dependent upon the gender of the victim-perpetrator and the medium RP was shared*



3.2.2 Hypothesis 2: There will be differences in perceptions of whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP, dependent upon:

a) victim-perpetrator gender

b) medium RP is shared

Kruskall-Wallis analysis revealed RP ratings were not significantly affected by the manipulation of independent variables, *H(3)* = 1.586, p = .662 (*Mdn* = 7 in all four conditions).

3.2.3 Hypothesis 3: There will be differences in perceptions of how the perpetrator's behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS, dependent upon:

a) victim-perpetrator gender

b) medium RP is shared

There was no significant association between condition and criminal justice outcomes (*p* = .177, Fisher's Exact Test). Neither victim-perpetrator gender (*p* = .072, Fisher's Exact Test) nor the medium RP was shared (*p* = .611, Fisher's Exact Test) were associated with criminal justice outcomes. See table thirty-three for CJS outcome frequencies.

Table 33. *CJS outcome frequencies*

	Option 1: Case dropped, police intervention unnecessary	**Option 2: Restraining order, no criminal conviction**	**Option 3: No restraining order, criminal conviction**	**Option 4: Restraining order, criminal conviction**
Condition 1 (n = 42)	1	8	3	30
Condition 2 (n = 37)	1	3	8	25
Condition 3 (n = 39)	2	8	9	20
Condition 4 (n = 33)	2	8	8	15
Total (n = 151)	6	27	28	90

For exploratory purposes, a series of multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted, which suggested that factors such as harm ratings, RP ratings, BJW (and their interactions with gender) had an impact on CJS outcome ratings.

3.2.4 Hypothesis 4: BJW will influence perceptions of:

a) victim harm

b) whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP

Spearman's Rho correlation revealed no significant relationship between BJW and victim harm, r = -.132, p (two-tailed) <.107. There was an overall significant relationship between BJW and RP ratings, r = -.272, p (two-tailed) = .001, although the only condition with a significant relationship was when the male victim had RP shared via text, r = -.606, p (two-tailed) < .001.

3.2.5 Hypothesis 5: There will be differences in perceptions dependent upon whether participants have or have not consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner on:

a) Victim harm

b) Whether the perpetrator's behaviour constitutes RP

A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant effect on whether or not an individual allowed intimate material of themselves to be possessed by a partner on harm ratings, $U = 2809.5$, $z = .147$, $p = .883$, or RP ratings, $U = 3102$, $z = 1.641$, $p = .101$.

4. Discussion

This Chapter has sought to expand upon Chapter Four (and respond to some of the recommendations made) in order to advance our understanding of how romantic revenge (specifically RP) is perceived by the public once it has occurred (and perhaps consider how these perceptions are formed) in relation to victim harm, the behaviour itself, and how it should be dealt with by the CJS. It would appear that there are some extra-legal factors that are considered influential in perceptions of sexual violence and stalking that translate to perceptions of RP behaviour, although not others.

Similar to the findings in Chapter Four, victim-perpetrator gender influenced decisions regarding victim harm; participants believed more harm was caused to female victims (male perpetrator) than male victims

(female perpetrator). This is consistent with sexual violence, stalking and RP literature, where a greater impact upon female victims than male victims is noted (Bothamley & Tully, 2017; Corbally, 2015; Runtz & O'Donnell, 2003; Scott et al., 2015). This could be explained in terms of gender-role expectations and rape myth acceptance, where men are expected to be strong and sexually dominant (Davies, 2002) and women are expected to be emotionally expressive, passive and vulnerable (Gerber, 1991; Sleath & Bull, 2010). For sexual violence, a number of rape myths pertaining to men and masculinity exist (e.g. men are: instigators of sexual activity so would not be targets for rape; are strong enough to cope with sexual violence victimisation; are emotionally apt to deal with traumatic situations; Levant et al., 1992; Sleath & Bull, 2010). Furthermore, studies suggest there is a perception that sending intimate material has a positive impact upon male's (perceived) masculinity but a negative impact upon women in terms of their sexuality and reputation (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith., 2013). These beliefs could have manifested in this sample and explain why male victims were perceived to experience less harm than female victims. Future research should examine rape myth and gender-role beliefs to examine their impact upon RP victim harm perceptions.

These findings could also be explained using an Expectancy Violations Theory [EVT] framework (which was considered within the systematic review presented in Chapter Two), whereby individuals evaluate a transgression (and transgressor) based on various factors (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). In terms of violation valence (which is where an event is

either positively or negatively evaluated), if it is perceived that sending intimate material has a positive impact upon men but not women then perhaps that's why female victims were perceived as experiencing more harm than male victims. Similarly, if males were perceived by participants to be (stereotypically) dominant and strong (Davies, 2002) and females (stereotypically) vulnerable (Gerber, 1991; Sleath & Bull, 2010) then perhaps these findings could be linked to partner intent (where individuals tend to respond more negatively when harm is intended; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a). Perhaps the female perpetrators were not considered to have intentionally caused harm as strongly as male perpetrators by virtue of the fact they were perceived as vulnerable (unlike the male perpetrators who were perceived as dominant and strong). As previously mentioned, gender-role beliefs should be examined in future research to consider their impact upon RP victim harm perceptions.

There were no significant differences in victim harm ratings depending on the medium RP was shared (although it could be possible that participants considered both online and text sharing had similar properties). Likewise, there was no effect of victim-participant gender or medium RP was shared on RP ratings; this (and the fact that median scores for RP ratings was 7 – the highest rating - across all conditions) suggests participants understood what constitutes RP behaviour. That said (and similar to Chapter Four), in none of the scenarios was it stated that the perpetrator non-consensually shared the material with the intent to cause to distress (albeit participants could have inferred this was the case due to the fact that the Information Sheet stated this behaviour is committed with the intent to cause

distress). In the absence of proof that the perpetrator intended to cause distress, this would not be considered a case of RP under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (and so perhaps scenarios were more aligned with non-consensual sharing rather that RP). That said, the findings could suggest that even in the absence of a clear motivation, this behaviour is still deemed an offence and supports some arguments that the non-consensual sharing of sexual material and image based sexual abuse (regardless of motivation) should be recognised by specific legislation (e.g. McGlynn, 2018). In addition, RP typically occurs following a relationship transgression but it could be considered that there was no transgression within any of the scenarios (although the relationship breakup, itself, could arguably be a transgression but this was not explicitly stated). Both the inclusion of a clear transgression and explicit statement regarding intent to cause harm could have resulted in different findings and so future research should consider these limitations when designing studies and scenarios to include. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to explore perceptions of other RP distribution methods (e.g. inclusion of additional personal information, via email, to different online platforms such as social media sites, forums or pornographic websites) and material production (e.g. physical photographs, material produced with or without victim's knowledge) to allow for a more in-depth exploration of perceptions and whether these do, in fact, influence decisions. For example, RP victims were held more culpable for victimisation when they produced material themselves (compared to when perpetrators produced the material) (Rhyner, 2017)

BJW has been used to explain stalking perceptions depending on whether stalkers were strangers or known to victims (Scott et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2003). This study, however, found no significant relationship between BJW and victim harm, suggesting this is not a useful framework for explaining perceptions of harm compared with other offences. Regarding RP ratings, the only significant relationship was with male victims (female perpetrator) who had material shared via text; an increase in BJW decreased participants' belief that a male was a victim of RP when material was shared via text, which is consistent with Stromwall and colleagues' (2013a) finding that those with higher BJW described an event depicted as rape to a lesser extent. It should be noted, however, that participants in this study did believe RP occurred in all scenarios (and so perhaps enough information was provided to mitigate any ambiguity). This finding could also be explained with gender role beliefs, where expectations regarding masculinity could result in incompatibility between seeing a man as a victim (Burcar, 2013; Seelau et al., 2003) when material was shared via text. Contrary to the finding that the method of distribution did not have a direct effect on perceptions of harm or RP ratings, this finding could suggest that medium of distribution is, in fact, a factor considered in determining what constitutes a RP offence and so future research should examine this further. Furthermore, research suggests that sending intimate material is perceived to have a positive impact upon male's masculinity (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Walker et al., 2013); perhaps a male who had material shared via text was perceived as experiencing a masculinity boost rather than being seen as a victim (as BJW increased). Further research could examine this finding

further. Moreover, considering that BJW was only related to decisions in certain conditions (which is similar finding to Chapter Four), it may be that BJW is not wholly useful in explaining what influences perceptions of RP, although given that RP is a developing area for research, further research is warranted.

Those with higher BJW considered the scenario with a male victim who had RP material shared via text constituted RP to a lesser extent. It is possible participants perceived online sharing for male victims constituted RP irrespective of BJW (hence why there was no relationship between BJW and online sharing). The permeance and speed material can be shared online causes difficulty for victims (Pina, James & Holland, 2017) and there are often challenges removing material online (and preventing redistribution) (Dick et al., 2014; Zemmels & Khey, 2015). When material is posted online, it could be perceived that more individuals (including strangers) view and share material, making it more challenging for victims to predict and control the situation compared to when material is shared via text (e.g. perceiving that material shared via text will only go to those whose contact details the perpetrator has on their phone). In stalking literature, perceived inability to predict and control a situation is called 'fear of the unknown' (Hills & Taplin, 1988) and has been used to explain why stranger stalkers are considered more harmful and dangerous. Future research could consider whether this concept could be applied to RP, where sharing online could be perceived as more dangerous ('the unknown') than when shared with individuals the victim and/or perpetrator has the contact numbers of.

Victim-perpetrator gender and medium of RP distribution had no association with criminal justice outcomes (which was used as a proxy to explore perceptions of how harmful and serious RP is), suggesting there may be other factors associated with these decisions. It is worth noting that only a minimal number of participants thought police intervention was unnecessary in each condition, suggesting the majority recognised the seriousness and harmful nature of a behaviour that warranted a CJS outcome. This is positive considering that stalking literature suggests police intervention is considered less necessary when the victim and perpetrator were ex-partners (e.g. Scott et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2003). Given that this is the first study (to the author's knowledge) to examine perceptions of how RP cases should be dealt with by the CJS (beyond that of considering whether police intervention is necessary; Bothamley & Tully, 2017), further research is warranted to examine what factors, if any, influence criminal justice outcome decisions, such as the impact of victim harm ratings, RP ratings and BJW.

There were no significant differences in victim harm perceptions or RP ratings between those who had or had not consensually shared intimate material of themselves with a partner. This is contrary to DAT (Shaver, 1975), which would expect those who had consensually shared intimate material to perceive the situation as more harmful (and perhaps more likely believe the scenario constituted RP). Furthermore, Scott and Gavin (2018) found perceptions of RP were in the opposite direction to what DAT would expect. This may suggest DAT is not a useful framework when

considering harm and RP ratings in RP cases (contrary to what was found in Chapter Four in relation to victim blame), although there is a need for further research to explore this.

It is encouraging that participants seem to understand what behaviour constitutes RP and, from observing median scores, recognise that psychological harm is caused to victims, although it would appear there is a belief that male victims are not harmed as much. Bates (2017) conducted in-depth interviews with Canadian female RP victims to examine (psychological) harms caused and so it would be beneficial to replicate this study with male and female RP victims (UK samples) to 1) understand the harm RP causes; 2) consider whether there are similarities between male and female RP victims, and 3) identify whether victims' needs are being met (and if not, how needs could be met; e.g. by peers, CJS professionals, and mental health services).

Findings exploring perceptions of RP need to be considered in the context of how RP cases are managed and progressed through the CJS (if at all). Whilst RP offences have been considered more prevalent against females (Rhyner, Uhl & Terrance, 2016), RP does happen to males, where Walker and Sleath (2017) found that prevalence for victimisation (of non-consensual sharing and, potentially, RP) was higher for males (1.8-10.3%) than females (0.5-3.3%) in their systematic review. If male victims are thought (and are expected) to be strong enough to cope with RP experiences (which is a misperception in sexual violence; Sleath & Bull, 2010) or are not viewed as victims on the basis of gender-role

expectations (Burcar, 2013; Seelau et al., 2003), this may discourage them from disclosing victimisation in the first instance (subsequently preventing them from receiving support they may require).

Positive responses to victim disclosure have been associated with lower levels of depression (Broman Faulks et al., 2007), social anxiety (Brown & Heimberg, 2001), psychological and traumatic stress (Kearns, Edwards, Calhoun & Gidycz., 2010), although it is possible that perceptions of RP and its victims effect disclosure responses provided (e.g. research found male victims were perceived negatively and taken less seriously; Gavin & Scott, 2016; Seelau & Seelau 2005). Whilst participants in this study recognised that psychological harms are caused by RP, more research is required to compare these findings. If RP victimisation is disclosed (e.g. to family, peers, CJS professionals) and male and female victims receive negative disclosure reactions (e.g. are not perceived to suffer harm, are not perceived to be a victim), their needs may be neglected, which could result in further harms, such as self-blame and maladaptive coping strategies (e.g. Littleton & Radecki Breikopf, 2006; Ullman, Townsend, Filipas & Starzynski., 2007).

Page (2008) found gender differences in the acceptance of rape myths within a police officer sample, which has been found to influence the attribution of blame and can result in misperceptions regarding men as victims and their ability to manage traumatic experiences (Sleath & Bull, 2010). Additionally, Pathe, MacKenzie and Mullen (2004) found police officers considered stalking a consequence of an unfortunate relationship

choice by the victim. Given that rape myth acceptance and victim blaming have been found to occur within these professions, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with CJS professionals to ensure cases are being managed effectively and without bias. Furthermore, Huber (2018) found that that RP activists and some police officers identified training is required to improve police understanding regarding the effects of RP, and that the current understanding of RP by police reflect some myths, particularly if RP material is not distributed electronically or to social media.

If RP cases progress to prosecution, the perceptions of the victim and perpetrator made by judges' and lawyers' (and potential jurors' if the case progresses to the Crown Court, although most RP cases are tried at the Magistrates Court) could be influenced by extra-legal factors identified within this study, namely victim-perpetrator gender. As aforementioned, this research could be replicated with CJS professionals, where the findings may highlight that it would be important to ensure CJS professionals (and jury members, if a Crown Court trial was to occur) are aware that certain factors are known to influence perceptions of harm to potentially reduce bias. Morris (2017) found that when empathy for RP victims was induced in a mock-jury trial (by directly asking participants to place themselves in the victims' shoes), participants were more likely to empathise with male victims. It was considered that perhaps these instructions were beneficial to male victims as they were (initially) less likely to be viewed as a victim (Rogers & Terry, 1984). Furthermore, it was found that when participants felt more sympathy for the victim and

recognised the harm caused, victim blame reduced (Bornstein, 1998; Rhyner, 2017) so this could have implications for how cases are managed throughout the CJS if there are factors known to influence perceptions. Empathy induction and victim blame (which has been considered in RP cases; Kitchen, 2015) could be included in future research with RP to examine whether they have any influence on perceptions of victim harm, what constitutes RP and how RP cases should be dealt with by the CJS in the UK. Furthermore, this study could be expanded upon in future research by considering both victim blame and harm in one study (to consider whether there is an impact of each on the other).

4.1 Future Directions and Limitations

A number of research suggestions have been documented throughout this discussion, although further suggestions will made when considering several limitations.

Whilst the sample consisted of a range of professions to reflect the 'public', the majority were female, aged between 25-34 and white Caucasian. The sample is thus not representative so results cannot be generalised. Future research should endeavour to obtain a larger, more representative sample to compare these results and determine whether they can be generalised. Similar to Chapter Four, this study did not include participants under the age 18 or use scenarios depicting individuals under the age of 18 due to ethical considerations and so future research should consider doing so (please refer to the 'discussion' section of Chapter Four for why this would be important).

Within this sample, the majority were female. Similar to Chapter Four, females may not have perceived themselves as similar to male victims (and so rated female victims as experiencing more harm, as per DAT). It was discussed within Chapter Four that previous research into sexual violence, stalking and RP indicates that females generally hold less negative attitudes towards victims than males (e.g. Bothamley & Tully, 2017; Lambert et al., 2013; Temkin & Krahe., 2008), perhaps because females are considered more likely to experience intimate violence victimisation (Scott et al., 2015; Sinclair, 2012). Participant gender was not explored statistically due to the unequal gender split, although Bothamley and Tully (2017) found that males perceived RP victims to experience less mental harm than females. For exploratory purposes, victim harm medians were examined for male participants (mdn = 12, n = 26) and female participants (mdn = 13, n = 125); female participants did think more harm was caused to victims than males, which is consistent with sexual violence and stalking literature, although the statistical significance of this difference was not considered. Given the paucity of research into RP, future research would benefit from considering participant gender in RP perceptions.

Participant sexual orientation has been found to influence perceptions of sexual violence but similar to Chapter four, this was not considered within this study. It has been found that gay men were less likely to engage in victim blaming and rape myth acceptance (Davies & McCartney, 2003). Additionally, Hadwin (2015) found bisexual participants had greater

knowledge of RP than heterosexuals, where lower knowledge of RP resulted in higher levels of RP myth acceptance. It would be important to examine whether participant sexual orientation has an influence on perceptions of RP. Furthermore, same-sex relationships were not considered in this study. Emerging research suggests the LGBT population could be at more risk of having intimate images non-consensually distributed (Data & Society, 2016; Hadwin, 2015). Future research should thus consider same-sex relationships on perceptions of RP cases.

In terms of the three proposed BJW mechanisms (where interpretations of events are made to restore a belief that the world is just), vignettes only related to one mechanism, where the victim's fate was due to personal qualities (i.e. their gender). It may be interesting for future research to consider whether providing information regarding the outcome for the victim and perpetrator (e.g. a victim impact statement) or the nature of the victim-perpetrator's relationship (e.g. possessive, abusive, why it ended) has any influence on perceptions of harm, what constitutes RP or criminal justice outcomes. For example, perpetrator remorse decreased sentence length (Davis & Gold, 2011) and increased the likelihood of a guilty verdict (Jehle, Miller & Kemmelmeier., 2009). Furthermore, this study only focussed on psychological harms so future research should endeavour to explore other types of harms, such as the impact on social life and employment. (e.g. Morris, 2017).

5. Conclusion

This research extends findings described in Chapter Four by offering further insight into perceptions of a behaviour – RP - that has relatively recently been recognised as a criminal offence in the UK under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. Findings indicate that participants in this sample understood that the RP perpetrator's behaviour constituted a RP offence and that psychological harm was caused to victims, although it was believed male victims experienced less harm than female victims. BJW influenced perceptions of RP as a crime but only when a male victim had material shared via text, suggesting BJW does not wholly translate to RP because it was only influential in certain circumstances. Findings were not consistent with DAT as there were no differences in perceptions between those who were situationally similar to the victim and those who were not. Criminal justice outcomes were not influenced by victim-perpetrator gender or the medium RP was shared. Further research is important to contribute to this developing research area. Continued efforts need to be made to understand the impact RP has on victims within the UK.

Chapter Six: Discussion

This research thesis aimed to explore revenge within romantic relationships, with an aim to clarify our current knowledge of this phenomenon (both in terms of why revenge might happen and how it is perceived once it has happened) and identify areas that require further exploration through research in order to develop and improve our understanding of it. To achieve this, a systematic review was conducted examining factors that could make revenge more likely within a romantic relationship and a psychometric critique was presented of a measure that has been used to examine motivations for romantic revenge (identified through the systematic review). The critique also sought to explore whether the identified measure would be appropriate to use with individuals who had engaged in offences against a romantic partner. Two empirical research studies were conducted, which examined public perceptions of a specific behaviour once it had been enacted against a (current or ex) romantic partner with the motivation of exacting revenge – revenge pornography [RP] (which became a criminal offence under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act in 2015).

1. General Discussion

As discussed within Chapter One, revenge can be understood within the construct of forgiveness; an individual experiences harmful conduct from another person(s) (i.e. the transgression) and subsequently experiences a transformation from an initial negative psychological state(s) (e.g. where they seek to avoid the transgressor or feel compelled to seek retaliation; McCullough et al., 1997; Waldron & Kelley, 2008) to a more positive

psychological state(s) (e.g. where benevolent "conciliatory courses of action" are taken; McCullough et al., 197, p. 322). In some instances, transgressed individuals have difficulty making this transformation following a transgression and, instead, engage in revenge (i.e. forgoing forgiveness) and thus become a transgressor themselves. Revenge is construed as a behaviour, namely a retaliatory act where a transgressed individual inflicts harm in response to a perceived wrongdoing (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). A number of psychological approaches have been adopted to consider the precipitating factors that result in this behaviour, although there are inherent limitations within each of these approaches. It is clear that venegeful behaviour is a likely result of complex interactions between these factors (confirmed in Chapter Two).

Chapter One highlighted that revenge within interpersonal relationship contexts has been examined within literature but that revenge within the romantic relationship context appears to have received less attention than other interpersonal relationship contexts, such as the workplace. The inherent differences between a romantic relationship and other interpersonal relationships could mean there are differences in revenge. Furthermore, given the recent criminalisation of RP behaviour (the Section 33 offence), it would be important for literature to begin to examine this behaviour to improve understanding of it.

The systematic review presented in Chapter Two sought to commence the bridging of this gap by examining and synthesising literature that has already been conducted into romantic revenge, with an aim to identify

what factors, if any, could make revenge more likely within this context. This could help researchers and practitioners identify and understand factors that might have contributed to an individual committing a vengeful offence against their romantic partner. Of note, several studies did examine RP behaviour. It was found that there are a number of factors associated with perceptions of, motivation for or likelihood to engage in romantic revenge, where these factors could be understood within McCullough et al's (1998) framework of forgiveness (or lack thereof); factors could be organised into the framework's four variables: social-cognitive (attitudes and beliefs; perceived effectiveness, costliness and goals of revenge; interpretation of the transgression; the victim's emotional/affective experiences following the transgression), offence-related (severity of the transgression), relational (circumstances of a relationship breakdown; relationship quality; experience of interpersonal violence victimisation) and personality (dispositional vengefulness; dark triad personality traits; big-five personality traits; transgressor personality). The findings highlight that romantic revenge is a result of complex processes and interactions, where these variables are not independent of one another but are, instead, related. This is reflected in the review of the literature presented in Chapter One into psychological approaches that aim to consider the precipitating factors for vengeful behaviour, concluding that it is likely the result of complex interactions. A preliminary framework was subsequently developed through synthesising the findings of the systematic review.

The systematic review identified that the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations [TRIM] inventory (TRIM-12 and TRIM-18) was the most common measure used to examine revenge motivations within the included studies and so the critique presented in Chapter Three sought to examine the extent of its reliability and validity. Through the process of conducting the systematic review, it was considered whether the TRIM would be an appropriate psychometric to use within the context of romantic revenge (and in particular, criminal offences committed against a current or ex-partner, such as RP and the Section 33 offence). Evidence demonstrated that the TRIMs are valid and reliable measures but that if used with an individual who commits an offence against a current or ex-partner, findings should be interpreted with caution as its reliability and validity with this specific sample (or even an offender sample, more generally) has not yet been established.

The empirical research presented in chapters Four and Five sought to further address the gaps within the romantic revenge literature by exploring factors that could influence perceptions of it once it has occurred. To achieve this, perceptions of a specific behaviour enacted against a current or ex-partner with revenge motivations – RP – were explored. Given the recent recognition that RP is a criminal offence under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, it remains a developing area requiring exploration through research; understanding perceptions of this behaviour is important because findings could have implications for informing public policy and the way in which this

behaviour is managed through the criminal justice system [CJS] (before, during and after RP is reported).

When considering the development of the empirical research studies in Chapters Four and Five, scoping of literature into sexual violence and stalking (both of which are offences where a romantic relationship between victims and perpetrators could have occurred, which is typical, although not exclusive, in cases of RP) was conducted. It became apparent that much of the perception research within these fields examined perceptions of victim blame, in addition to perceptions of victim harm, the offence itself and the need for criminal justice involvement. It was thus considered whether the observed influences on perceptions in these areas could be extended to that of revenge and a vengeful offence. As such, Chapter Four explored the impact of victim-perpetrator gender (offence-related variable), circumstances of a relationship breakdown (relational variable), belief in a just world [BJW] (social-cognitive variable) and victim similarity (offence-related variable) on victim blame attributions. Chapter Five explored the impact of victim-perpetrator gender (offence-related variable), the method of RP distribution (offence-related variable), BJW (social-cognitive variable) and victim similarity (offence-related variable) on perceptions of victim harm, whether the actions of the perpetrator constituted RP, and how this behaviour should be dealt with by the CJS (the latter being a proxy in determining perceptions of the behaviour depicted in scenarios as a harmful act warranting criminalisation, as opposed to whether an offence had been committed).

The research presented in Chapter Four found that in general, the RP perpetrators were blamed significantly more than victims but that certain factors could influence perceptions of victim blame, namely the victim-perpetrator gender (male victims were blamed significantly more than female victims) and victim similarity (those whose circumstances were similar to the victim's attributed less blame to the victim that those whose circumstances were not). An individual's belief in a just world influenced victim blame attributions but only in certain circumstances (when the victim was female and when there was a clear reason for why the relationship ended), suggesting that it may not be a wholly useful framework for understanding perceptions of RP. The circumstance of the relationship ending had no influence on victim blame attributions.

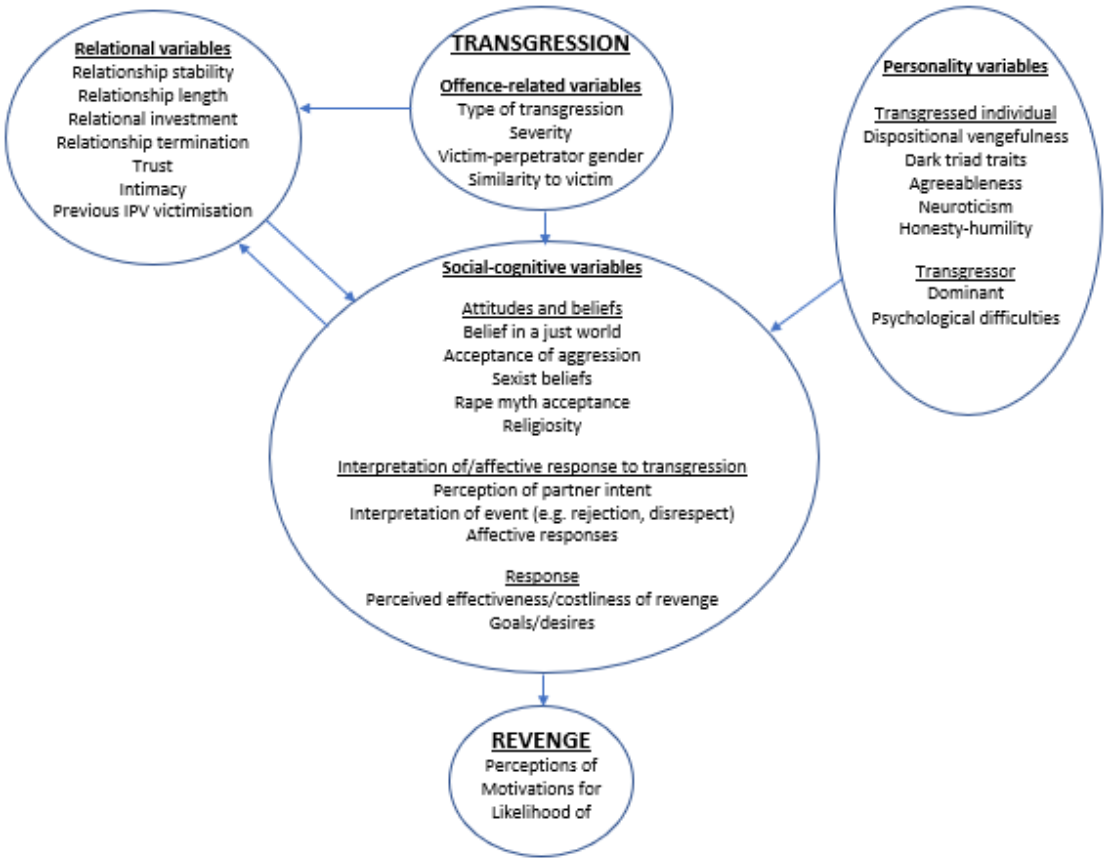
Chapter Five also found that there are factors that could influence perceptions of victim harm in RP cases. Similar to findings in Chapter Four, victim-perpetrator gender influenced victim harm perceptions (female victims of a male perpetrator were believed to experience more harm than male victims of a female perpetrator) but it had no influence on perceptions of whether the behaviour depicted was (or was not) a case of RP. The medium in which RP was distributed had no influence on victim harm perceptions or perceptions of whether the behaviour depicted was (or was not) a case of RP. Participants considered that the behaviour depicted was a case of RP in all conditions. BJW had no influence on perceptions of victim harm but it did influence perceptions of the RP behaviour in certain conditions (when the victim was male who had

material distributed by a female perpetrator via a text message) which, again, could suggest that this is not an entirely useful framework to explain perceptions of RP. Furthermore, victim-perpetrator gender and the medium RP was shared had no association with criminal justice outcomes, although it was noted that only a minimal number of participants believed police intervention was unnecessary (suggesting that individuals do recognise that RP cases warrant criminal justice intervention). Victim similarity had no impact on perceptions of victim harm or perceptions of the perpetrator's behaviour (i.e. whether it constituted RP), suggesting that victim similarity may only influence victim blame attribution in RP cases (Chapter Four).

By exploring revenge within romantic relationships throughout this research thesis, it is evident that there are factors that are influential in terms of perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in this behaviour. McCullough and colleague's (1998) developed a framework of forgiveness (where the construct of forgiveness formed the basis for the development of the psychometric that was examined in Chapter Three). This framework has been useful in exploring the construct of romantic revenge, specifically, and understanding/examining factors that are (or are not) influential in determining perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge. A preliminary framework was developed within the systematic review (Chapter Two) to highlight what research had found with regards to understanding the processes involved in romantic revenge. The findings from Chapters Four and Five reveal that some of these factors can extend to perceptions of a specific offence

enacted against a current or ex-partner with vengeful motivations (RP and the Section 33 offence), particularly in relation to victim blame and perceptions of harm. As such, the preliminary framework developed within Chapter Two can be expanded upon with the inclusion of offence-related variables that influenced perceptions of RP (see figure six).

Figure 6. *A preliminary framework for understanding the processes that lead to perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in romantic revenge*



Not only does this preliminary framework offer some insight into the processes involved in romantic revenge, it highlights some of the factors that have already been examined in research thus far. As such, it can be used as a guide for future research. Given its infancy, it is likely that

future research will expand upon and modify this framework as our understanding of romantic revenge develops (particularly if research begins to examine *actual* revenge behaviours and transgressors, and considers different transgressions). It may also be that the processes involved before, during and after revenge has been exacted are different and so different models emerge.

2. Implications and Future Directions

Based on the results presented in the systematic review in Chapter Two, it appeared that the majority of studies were conducted with student samples and so future research should extent sampling beyond this (including more males, age ranges, sexual orientations and ethnicities) to improve generalisability of findings. Furthermore, there were variables that received less attention than others within the current literature; the majority of studies focused on exploring personality and social-cognitive variables and so it was suggested that future research would benefit from examining offence-related and relational variables to broaden our understanding of what could make romantic revenge more likely. The empirical research presented in Chapters Four and Five attempted to address this gap by exploring more offence-related and relational variables.

Extending the findings of the systematic review to the psychometric critique presented in Chapter Three, the TRIMs reliability and validity have primarily been established with student and community samples (with individuals who have experienced a wide range of transgressions from a

variety of transgressors). It would appear that reliability and validity have not yet been established with offender samples more generally (and in particular, a sample of individuals who have committed an offence against current or ex-partners, such as RP and the Section 33 offence) so future research should seek to establish this. In the meantime, any results on the TRIM with these individuals (e.g. with Section 33 offenders to examine their motivation for the behaviour or to identify any changes within an intervention) should be interpreted with caution.

The results of the empirical research presented in Chapter Four mirror the findings of the systematic review (Chapter Two) in that there are factors that do (and do not) influence perceptions associated with revenge behaviour, namely victim blame attributions in RP cases, although these findings were not always consistent with previous research exploring sexual violence, stalking and, indeed, RP. Given that RP is a relatively new area that is being examined through research, it is currently difficult to ascertain the exact reason(s) for these inconsistencies. One possibility is that RP is distinct from sexual violence and stalking offences and so any inconsistencies in victim blame attributions reflect inherent differences between the crimes (which future research should seek to clarify). Future research possibilities are identified within the 'discussion' section of chapter four, including exploration of rape myth acceptance and gender role beliefs and different circumstances for why a relationship ends (e.g. domestic abuse). Another possibility is that inconsistencies are the result of methodological differences. The limitations of this empirical research are discussed later on in this chapter (which do have implications

regarding the generalisability of findings). As such, this thesis has identified that future research into RP (and romantic revenge, in general) is pivotal in order to develop our understanding of perceptions of vengeful behaviour in romantic relationships and RP further.

The findings presented in Chapter Four highlighted that research would benefit from ascertaining what the public's current knowledge is regarding RP (e.g. do they recognise it as a crime, do they recognise the harm it can cause to the victim), where research has found that increases in knowledge and exposure to information about sexual assault reduced levels of victim blaming (Hadwin, 2015). The empirical research within Chapter Five addressed this and similar to chapters Two and Four, it was found that there are factors that do (and do not) influence perceptions of victim harm, perceptions of the RP behaviour itself, and consideration that the behaviour depicted in scenarios was a criminal offence warranting criminal justice intervention. As discussed in the 'discussion' section of Chapter Five (and Four), in none of the scenarios was it explicitly stated that the motivation of the perpetrator was to cause distress (where the proof if intent to cause distress is required for a conviction under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015). Whilst this does present a limitation to the findings (in that the findings may have been different if this had been explicitly stated), participants in Chapter Five still considered that a criminal offence had occurred, which supports some arguments that all motivations (some of which are discussed in Chapter One) for non-consensual sharing of intimate material and image based

sexual abuse (and not just intent to cause harm) should be considered in legislation (e.g. McGlynn, 2018).

The findings within Chapter Five regarding victim harm and the influence of victim-perpetrator gender are consistent with the sexual violence, stalking and RP literature. Whilst there may be inherent differences between RP and sexual violence and stalking offences in terms of victim blame (Chapter Four), these differences may not exist when exploring perceptions of victim harm and could be explained through rape myth acceptance and gender-role beliefs, although future research is warranted to clarify this speculation. Furthermore, the medium in which RP was shared had no influence on any of the dependent variables but future research is required for clarification. It is encouraging that participants understood what constitutes a case of RP and that the factors explored within this study did not appear to bias judgements regarding CJS outcomes but given that this is the first study of its kind to examine how participants think RP cases should be dealt with by the CJS (beyond that of police intervention; Bothamley & Tully, 2017), further research is required to determine if this finding can be generalised. It may be that there are other factors that influence these decisions. Future research possibilities are identified within the 'discussion' section of Chapter Five, including examining other methods of RP distribution. Similar to Chapter Four, this study does present with limitations (which do have implications for the generalisability of results).

Notwithstanding the potential difficulty in generalising the findings presented in chapters Four and Five (see 'limitations' section), they do appear to have implications for how RP cases are dealt with and progressed through the CJS. Victims (particularly males) could avoid disclosure altogether as they may believe they will be blamed or perceived in a negative light. This would prevent them from receiving the support they require, where RP has been found to have a negative impact on victims (e.g. Bates, 2017). Furthermore, if victims do disclose and are blamed or perceived negatively, this could further increase the negative impact upon them (e.g. Ullman et al., 2007). Perceptions of how much the victim has been harmed could influence the way in which individuals (e.g. family, friends, criminal justice professionals) respond to them; whilst participants within the empirical study presented in Chapter Five did generally recognise that psychological harm was caused to the victim, findings did suggest that female victims could be perceived as experiencing more harm than male victims. If males are believed, and are expected, to be able to cope with RP experiences or are not viewed as a victim, this could discourage disclosure of the offence (and subsequent support for them). Research should explore the psychological effects upon male victims of RP, and on male and female RP victims within the UK. Furthermore, the influence of victim harm perceptions on victim blame attributions needs to be examined.

Victim blaming has been found within police officers in cases of sexual violence (e.g. Page, 2008; Pathe et al., 2004; Sleath & Bull, 2012) and rape myth acceptance within police officers also influence misperceptions

regarding men as victims of sexual assault and their ability to cope (Sleath & Bull, 2010). It is possible that this occurs in cases of RP as well (e.g. Huber, 2018). This thesis has identified a need for future research to examine perceptions of RP (and romantic revenge, more generally) within those involved in the CJS (e.g. police officers, judges, jury members), which would bolster our understanding of how RP (and romantic revenge) is perceived and whether measures are required to reduce any impact of victim blaming and perceptions of harm (e.g. police training, Huber, 2018; ensuring CJS professionals and jury members are aware of factors that can bias perceptions of blame and harm, or ensuring they are wholly aware of the harm caused, Morris, 2017). The empirical research also highlights a need for any campaigns regarding RP to shift focus away from the (consensual) creation of intimate material between romantic partners to highlighting the criminal nature of non-consensual distribution and the harm this can cause. This could encourage victim disclosure and subsequently ensure they receive the support they require and deserve.

3. Limitations

Limitations of the research process need to be acknowledged. Limitations have been considered individually within each Chapter, but an overview shall be presented here.

The systematic review presented in Chapter Two identified that the majority of studies explored perceptions of, motivations for, or likelihood of engaging in, romantic revenge behaviour (rather than *actual* revenge behaviour) using hypothetical scenarios and/or asking participants to

imagine their response if the transgression occurred against them. Studies were also of a cross-sectional nature, limiting their external validity. It was also likely that the cross-sectional nature of studies failed to capture the temporal dynamics of forgiveness (e.g. McCullough et al., 2003) and so caution is required when inferring causality. An important avenue for future research relates to the need for the utilisation of longitudinal study designs to reflect the temporal nature of forgiveness (or lack thereof) to enable the inference of causality between factors that are thought to influence vengeful behaviour.

The empirical studies presented in Chapters Four and Five reflect some of these limitations in that hypothetical scenarios were employed using a cross-sectional study design and participants were observers asked to consider their perceptions of the scenario as opposed to considering *actual* behaviour or *actual* experiences of RP, limiting the external validity of this research. Due to ethical considerations (e.g. victim anonymity, the potential harm this research could cause, the ability to obtain an adequately-sized sample), it was not considered possible to obtain a sample of RP victims or use real-life cases of RP within the time-frame. It was also not considered possible to gain access to an adequately-sized sample of RP perpetrators within the time-frame (where the psychometric properties of the TRIM and the appropriateness of its use with this sample could be examined). As such, *actual* RP victimisation experiences or *actual* RP behaviours could not be explored but this thesis has nonetheless improved our understanding of romantic revenge somewhat.

Another ethical consideration that needed to be taken into account in Chapters Four and Five was related to age. Participants under that age of 18 were not included, despite the fact that this behaviour is prevalent amongst young people (e.g. Walker & sleath, 2017). The reason for this exclusion is discussed in more detail in the 'participant' sections of Chapters Four and Five. In addition, the focus of legislation in this thesis was Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. Whilst young people do engage in this behaviour (and have been convicted of a Section 33 offence; UK Government, 2019), the Crown Prosecution Service advises that in cases of young people, consideration of other legislation must be made in relation to indecent/sexual images of children. As such, only adults were depicted in the scenarios used. Furthermore, due to the exclusion of young people from the empirical research, they were also excluded from the systematic review in order to maintain consistency within this thesis. Given the prevalence of this behaviour amongst young people, this is an avenue that should be explored in future research.

The findings of the systematic review should also be interpreted with caution because conclusions were based on the available published research that the search strategy yielded. It was not possible to obtain every full-text article within the available time frame. It is also possible that the systematic search strategy did not find every available study (particularly if studies were unpublished). As such, the review may have been biased in favour of published, English-language research. Furthermore, findings within Chapter two need to be interpreted with caution due to what the quality assessment highlighted. Future research

could integrate recommendations discussed in the systematic review to increase methodological quality and allow firmer conclusions to be drawn.

The empirical studies within Chapters Four and Five attempted to address some of the methodological limitations highlighted within the systematic review to reduce the risk of bias by, for example, sampling participants from the community (as opposed to sampling students) to improve generalisability, being explicit regarding how participants were recruited, conducting power calculations and reporting data assumptions of statistical tests. There were, however, some inherent limitations that could have biased results so caution must be taken when generalising the findings. Whilst the samples consisted of a range of professions, the majority of participants were female, aged 25-34 and white Caucasian. Sexual orientation was also not considered within the studies, nor were individuals under the age of 18. Data was gathered via an online, anonymous tool; it was hoped this would reduce the likelihood of socially desirable responding, although it is still possible that this occurred. Furthermore, recruiting and gathering data online may have excluded some individuals from participating (e.g. individuals who do not have access to a computer/laptop/smartphone or the internet). Future research would need to obtain more representative samples.

The measures used within the empirical research studies were adapted from studies of sexual violence and stalking, where the validity of these measures has not been established. This reflects a finding that was identified within the systematic review presented in Chapter Two, where

some authors developed their own tool to measure the aspect of revenge they were interested in (e.g. perceptions of, motivations for, likelihood of engaging). There is currently no uniform measure (to the author's knowledge) that assesses victim blame or harm in RP cases. It is thus possible that the results obtained here are a reflection of the measure(s) used and that different results would be obtained if another measure was used (that purported to measure the same construct). It would thus be beneficial if a psychometrically-sound measure is developed to account for issues of measurement (e.g. reliability and validity). Future research within the arena of romantic revenge should seek to use established (valid and reliable) tools to ensure the intended outcome(s) is truly being measures, which would allow for more reliable comparisons to be made between studies looking at the same outcome(s).

4. Conclusions

This thesis aimed to explore revenge within romantic relationships (both in terms of why this behaviour might occur and perceptions of it once it has occurred), which was necessary given that it would appear that less is known about revenge within the romantic relationship context compared to other interpersonal relationship contexts. It was also warranted given the recent criminalisation of RP behaviour under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Court Act 2015. Across the six chapters (which focussed on adult relationships), the understanding of romantic revenge has been synthesised and developed upon (where a preliminary framework has been developed for beginning to understanding the processes that lead to perceptions of, motivation for, or likelihood of

engaging in romantic revenge), although future research is still necessary, particularly in terms of *actual* revenge behaviour. A psychometric critique of the TRIM was also presented to consider the appropriateness of using this tool in the romantic revenge context and, specifically, with individuals who vengefully offend against their romantic partner. Furthermore, this thesis has identified that we are a long way off from wholly understanding RP behaviour, where the focus here was on exploring perceptions of it and what may influence these perceptions (which related to victim blame, victim harm, perceptions of the behaviour itself and how individuals think it should be dealt with by the CJS). Limitations and implications of the findings across this thesis have been discussed. Future research in the arena of romantic revenge might be guided by the preliminary framework, conclusions and recommendations throughout this thesis. Such research would allow for firmer conclusions to be drawn regarding revenge within this context.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Systematic Review Inclusion Form

First author, date, country:

Inclusion criteria	Criterion met	Comment
Study design: • Cohort, case-control or cross-sectional • Quantitative	Yes Unclear Discuss No	What study design was used?
Population: • Aged 16+ • Any gender	Yes Unclear No	
Exposure: • Situations where individuals engage romantic revenge	Yes Unclear No	
Comparator: • Situations where individuals do not engage romantic revenge	Yes Unclear No	
Outcomes: • Factors related to engaging in romantic revenge	Yes Unclear No	

If all questions answered with yes, include study.

Appendix B – Systematic Review Quality Assessment Form

Reference:
Source:

Question	Score				Comments
	Yes	**Partial**	**No**	**?**	
Study objectives - Will a cohort/case control/cross-sectional study address the question/objectives?					
Sampling and selection bias - Was the method of selection/recruitment clearly described and appropriate? - Were the cohort/cases clearly defined? - Were the cohort/cases representative (or were they special in some way)? - Were demographics clear? - Did the sample size take into consideration pre-study considerations for statistical power? - Was the sample size adequate? (e.g. 200+) - Was a satisfactory response rate achieved?					
Sampling and selection bias (additions for case control and cohort) - Was the method of control selection/recruitment clearly described and appropriate? - Were the controls clearly defined? - Were the control demographics clear? - Were the demographics of cases and controls comparable?					*Was there a sufficient amount of controls selected?*
Measurement bias - exposure - Were all subjects classified into exposure groups using the same procedure? - Were exposure and outcome measures clearly stated? - Was the exposure and outcomes accurately measured (uniform to all)? - Were measurement tools described clearly? - Do the exposure and					*Were subjective or objective exposure measurements used?* *Does it matter if the assessor was or was not blinded?*

outcome measurement tools truly reflect what they are meant to (have they been validated)? - Are the exposure and outcome measurement tools reliable? - Was missing information dealt with appropriately? - Was the assessor blinded to exposure/outcome?					
Measurement bias – additions (additions for case control and cohort) - Was there a long enough follow up period for effects to be demonstrated? - Were the same measures used at exposure and follow up?					
Statistical bias - Are results reliable? (i.e the design, methods and statistical analyses would not cause the study to be sufficiently flawed to make the results unreliable) - Can the results be generalised? - Were confounding factors taken into account/discussed in the design and/or analysis? - Do results fit with other available evidence?					List important confounding variables missed:
Attrition bias - Was drop-out/non-completion rate recorded?					And were they discussed?

Appendix C – Systematic Review Data Extraction Form

General information
- Date of extraction:
- Author:
- Title:
- Source:

Study characteristics
- Study location:
- Inclusion criteria
    - Population:
    - Exposure:
    - Comparator (if necessary):
    - Outcome:
- Study design:
- Quality score:
- Notes:

Population characteristics
- Characteristics of participants:
- Total sample size:
    - Exposure size:
    - Comparator size (if necessary):
- Recruitment procedures:
- Notes:

Exposure
- Type:
- Definition/classification system used:
- Number of conditions:
    - Content of each condition (if necessary):
- Specific theoretical model:
- Mediating variables investigated:
- Notes:

Outcome
- What was measured:
    - Before (if necessary):
    - After (if necessary):
- Who carried out the measurement:
    - Was the assessor blind:
- What was the measurement tool:
- Was/were the tools validated:
    - How:
- How was the validity of self-reported behavior maximized:
- Drop out rate:
- Analysis:
    - Statistical methods used:
    - Are confounding variables adjusted for:
        - How:
    - Missing data:

        - How was it dealt with:
- Results:
- Notes:

Appendix D – Systematic Review Quality Assessment Scores

	Sampling and Selection							**Measurement**								**Results**				**Attrition**	**Total**	**Unclear**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**		
Barber & Cooper, 2014	2	2	1	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	U	1	0	2	2	2	28/40	2/20
Barta & Kiene, 2005	1	2	1	0	U	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	20/40	4/20
Bartholomaeus & Strelan, 2016	1	0	0	0	U	1	1	2	2	2	2	U	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	17/40	5/20
Brewer, Hunt, James & Abell, 2015 (study 2)	U	2	1	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	2	U	2	U	U	1	0	0	1	U	18/40	6/20
Davidson, Lozano, Cole & Gervais, 2015	2	2	1	1	U	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	U	U	1	0	0	2	2	27/40	3/20
Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch & Adams-Curtis, 2005	1	0	0	1	U	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	U	1	0	1	1	2	22/40	2/20

Guerrero & Bachman, 2010	1	2	1	2	U	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	24/40	4/20
Massar, Winters, Lenz & Jonason, 2017	2	2	1	1	U	2	2	2	2	2	1	U	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	23/40	5/20
McDonald & Asher, 2013	U	2	1	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	20/40	5/20
Pina, Holland & James, 2017	1	2	0	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	U	U	1	0	0	2	U	20/40	4/20
Rasmussen, 2013	U	1	0	2	U	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	22/40	5/20
Rasmussen, Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016 (study 3)	U	1	0	1	U	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	U	1	0	1	2	U	22/40	4/20
Rasmussen, Alibhai, Boon & Ellard, 2016 (study 4)	1	1	0	1	U	0	0	2	2	2	1	U	2	2	U	1	0	1	2	U	18/40	4/20
Rasmussen & Boon, 2013	U	2	0	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	U	1	0	0	1	2	20/40	3/20
Sheppard & Boon, 2012	2	1	0	1	U	1	1	2	2	2	1	U	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	19/40	5/20
Simon, Kobielski &	2	2	1	2	U	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	U	U	1	0	2	2	U	27/40	4/20

Martin, 2008																						
Sirianni, 2016	1	2	1	0	U	2	2	U	2	2	1	2	2	U	U	1	0	2	1	U	21/40	5/20
Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson & Tullett, 2017	1	1	0	0	U	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	U	U	1	0	1	2	U	20/40	4/20
Tsang & Stanford, 2007	1	2	1	2	U	2	1	2	2	2	2	U	2	U	U	1	0	0	2	U	22/40	5/20

Appendix E – TRIM-12

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale--12-Item Form (TRIM-12)

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

1= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

____1. I'll make him/her pay.

____2. I keep as much distance between us as possible.

____3. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.

____4. I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.

____5. I don't trust him/her.

____6. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.

____7. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.

____8. I avoid him/her.

____9. I'm going to get even.

____10. I cut off the relationship with him/her.

____11. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.

____12. I withdraw from him/her.

Source: McCullough, M.E., Rachal, K.C., Sandage, S.J., Worthington, E.L., Jr., Brown, S.W., & Hight, T.L. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76, 1586-1603.

Scoring Instructions

Avoidance Motivations:
Add up the scores for items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 12

Revenge Motivations:
Add up the scores for items 1, 3, 6, 9, and 11.

Appendix F – TRIM-18

Trim-18
(McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006)

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you; that is, we want to know how you feel about that person **right now**. Next to each item, circle the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1. I'll make him/her pay.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am living as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I don't trust him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am avoiding him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I'm going to get even.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have given up my hurt and resentment.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I withdraw from him/her.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring Instructions

Avoidance Motivations:
Add up the scores for items 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, and 18

Revenge Motivations:
Add up the scores for items 1, 4, 9, 13, and 17

Benevolence Motivations
Add up the scores for items 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, and 16

Appendix G – Participant information Sheet 1

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project: Attitudes Towards A Specific Crime

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer, Doctoral Forensic Psychologist in Training; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 231

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about attitudes towards a specific crime. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like further information. If you decide to take part, you may keep this leaflet.

What is the project about?

This study aims to gain an understanding of what the public think about a specific crime. It is important to gain knowledge about the public's understanding of this crime so that we can inform public policy surrounding this issue and ensure that it is appropriately managed within the criminal justice system.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

The study aims to gather data from approximately 240 members of the public in total. You are being invited to take part because you were given information about the study and have followed the link to the research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. Withdrawal does not require a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window.

What will I be asked to do?

Once you have decided to take part in the study, you will asked to sign an electronic consent form. Once you have given your electronic consent, you will be asked to provide some general demographic information. At no stage will you be asked for any information that may identify you (e.g. your name) and you will remain anonymous throughout the study.

You will be given a scenario to read. After you have read the scenario, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires; one questionnaire will ask you to consider your beliefs about the world and one questionnaire will ask you questions about the scenario you have just read. Remember that your responses will remain anonymous. After you have completed the questionnaires, a page containing further information will be presented to you.

The study is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Crime is a sensitive topic and some participants may feel uncomfortable and/or may have been affected by the subject matter. Remember that you are able to withdraw at any time without a need to give a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window. Due to the anonymous nature of the Bristol Online Survey tool, once you have completed the study it will not be possible to withdraw the data because we won't know who you are.

You are able to contact the researcher at any point during the study on the above email address above if you have any concerns. If you continue to remain concerned, you can contact the researcher's supervisor on the above email address.

You will also be provided with links to resources that may be of interest or helpful to you at the end of this information sheet and at the end of the study.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

It cannot be said that the study will help you but the information we get from the study may help us to gain a better understanding about what the public think and know about this specific crime.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As a participant, you will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. What this means is that the researchers will not be able to identify who you are. At no point will information such as your name or address be requested. All information that is collected throughout the study will remain anonymous and confidential. The information you provide will be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous. We will minimize any risks by using an encrypted secure https website to host the questionnaire. To ensure anonymity, an option to collect any store your responses without any additional details will be active in the survey tool used. What this means is that researchers will not be able to see, access or store your IP address.

What will you do with the data?

Data will be stored electronically and securely by the researcher on password protected personal computer and on a university drive that is accessible only by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. Data will only be accessible by the researcher's username and password. The data will be analysed using a statistical package.

The aim is to have the results of the study analysed and written by September 2018 as part of a Research Thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Forensic Psychology. No data identifying any participant will be included in the thesis or publication. It is hoped that the results of the research will be published in journals or communicated at presentations. If you would like to know the findings, you can request a summary of the findings once the thesis has been completed.

At the end of the project, all raw data will be kept securely by the University under the terms of the Data Protection Act. The data will not be kept elsewhere. All data will be kept securely for seven years, after which time the data will be destroy securely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

Who has reviewed the study?

The Division of Psychiarty and Applied Psychology (DPAP) Ethics Committee of The University of Nottingham.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee (MS-DPAPEthics@nottingham.ac.uk, +44 (0)115 8232214) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

Useful links:
If you feel that you have been affected by a crime, you can contact Victim Support on 08 08 16 89 111. Details about Victim Support (and other ways to contact Victim Support) can be found here: https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/.

Appendix H – Consent form 1

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project: Attitudes Towards A Specific Crime

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 231

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information? YES/NO
- I agree to answer an online questionnaire YES/NO
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that for anonymous questionnaire studies, once you have completed the study and submitted your questionnaire, the data cannot be withdrawn?
  YES/NO
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications?

YES/NO

Signature of the Participant ……. Date: …….

Name (in block capitals) ……..

By clicking the button above/below I indicate that I understand what the study involves and that my answers are anonymous. I agree to take part and I understand that once I click 'submit' at the end of the questionnaire it will not be possible to withdraw the dat

Appendix I – Participant Information Sheet 2

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET 2

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: 'Revenge Pornography': The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the nature of a relationship breakdown on public perceptions of victim blame.

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer, Doctoral Forensic Psychologist in Training; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 231

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about the 'specific crime' known as 'revenge pornography'. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like further information. If you decide to take part, you may keep this leaflet.

What is the project about?

'Revenge pornography' is the act of sharing/distributing an intimate photograph or video of an individual (for example, naked images/videos of the individual, images/videos of an individual engaging in sexual activities/intercourse) without their consent with the intent to cause distress. This study aims to gain an understanding of what the public think about 'revenge pornography'. It is important to gain knowledge about the public's understanding of 'revenge pornography' so that we can inform public policy surrounding this issue and ensure that it is appropriately managed within the criminal justice system.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

The study aims to gather data from approximately 240 members of the public in total. You are being invited to take part because you were given information about the study and have followed the link to the research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. Withdrawal does not require a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window.

What will I be asked to do?

Once you have decided to take part in the study having now considered the nature of the crime being studied (i.e. 'revenge pornography'), you will asked to sign an electronic consent form for a second time. The demographic information

you previously provided will be used. Remember that no information will identify you (e.g. your name) and you will remain anonymous throughout the study.

You will be given a scenario to read. After you have read the scenario, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires; one questionnaire will ask you to consider your beliefs about the world and one questionnaire will ask you questions about the scenario you have just read. At the end of the study, you will be asked whether you have allowed an individual to possess an intimate image of yourself. Remember that your responses will remain anonymous. After you have completed the questionnaires, a page containing further information will be presented to you.

The study is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

'Revenge pornography' is a sensitive topic and some participants may feel uncomfortable and/or may have been affected by the subject matter. Remember that you are able to withdraw at any time without a need to give a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window. Due to the anonymous nature of the Bristol Online Survey tool, once you have completed the study it will not be possible to withdraw the data because we won't know who you are.

You are able to contact the researcher at any point during the study on the above email address above if you have any concerns. If you continue to remain concerned, you can contact the researcher's supervisor on the above email address.

You will also be provided with links to resources that may be of interest or helpful to you at the end of this information sheet and at the end of the study.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

It cannot be said that the study will help you but the information we get from the study may help us to gain a better understanding about what the public think and know about 'revenge pornography'.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As a participant, you will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. What this means is that the researchers will not be able to identify who you are. At no point will information such as your name or address be requested. All information that is collected throughout the study will remain anonymous and confidential. The information you provide will be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous. We will minimize any risks by using an encrypted secure https website to host the questionnaire. To ensure anonymity, an option to collect any store your responses without any additional details will be active in the survey tool used. What this means is that researchers will not be able to see, access or store your IP address.

What will you do with the data?
Data will be stored electronically and securely by the researcher on password protected personal computer and on a university drive that is accessible only by

the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. Data will only be accessible by the researcher's username and password. The data will be analysed using a statistical package.

The aim is to have the results of the study analysed and written by September 2018 as part of a Research Thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Forensic Psychology. No data identifying any participant will be included in the thesis or publication. It is hoped that the results of the research will be published in journals or communicated at presentations. If you would like to know the findings, you can request a summary of the findings once the thesis has been completed.

At the end of the project, all raw data will be kept securely by the University under the terms of the Data Protection Act. The data will not be kept elsewhere. All data will be kept securely for seven years, after which time the data will be destroy securely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

Who has reviewed the study?
The Division of Psychiarty and Applied Psychology (DPAP) Ethics Committee of The University of Nottingham.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee (MS-DPAPEthics@nottingham.ac.uk, +44 (0)115 8232214) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

Useful links:
A Revenge Pornography factsheet provided by the Ministry of Justice following the launch of their campaign, 'Be Aware B4 you Share', to raise awareness: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405286/revenge-porn-factsheet.pdf

A Revenge Pornography leaflet provided by the Revenge Porn Helpline, which provides information about Revenge porn, including information about how to deal with it if you have been a victim:
http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/documents/'RP'-Helpline_web.pdf

If you feel that you have been affected by revenge pornography, you can contact the Revenge Porn Helpline on 0845 6000 495. Details about the Revenge Porn Helpline can be found here: http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/

The Revenge Porn Helpline also lists a number of other sources of support, details of which can be found here: http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/supporters/

The University of Nottingham have produced a leaflet entitled 'Let's be Clear on Consent', providing information, help and support relating to sexual consent. The link to this leaflet can be found here:
https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/lets-be-clear-on-consent.aspx

Appendix J – Consent Form 2

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM 2

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: 'Revenge Pornography': The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the nature of a relationship breakdown on public perceptions of victim blame

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 231

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information? YES/NO
- I agree to answer an online questionnaire YES/NO
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that for anonymous questionnaire studies, once you have completed the study and submitted your questionnaire, the data cannot be withdrawn?
  YES/NO
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications?

YES/NO

Signature of the Participant ……. Date: …….

Name (in block capitals) ……..

By clicking the button above/below I indicate that I understand what the study involves and that my answers are anonymous. I agree to take part and I understand that once I click 'submit' at the end of the questionnaire it will not be possible to withdraw the data

Appendix K – Participant Information Sheet 1

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project: Attitudes Towards A Specific Crime

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer, Doctoral Forensic Psychologist in Training; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 230

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about attitudes towards a specific crime. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like further information. If you decide to take part, you may keep this leaflet.

What is the project about?

This study aims to gain an understanding of what the public think about a specific crime. It is important to gain knowledge about the public's understanding of this crime so that we can inform public policy surrounding this issue and ensure that it is appropriately managed within the criminal justice system.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

The study aims to gather data from approximately 240 members of the public in total. You are being invited to take part because you were given information about the study and have followed the link to the research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. Withdrawal does not require a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window.

What will I be asked to do?

Once you have decided to take part in the study, you will asked to sign an electronic consent form. Once you have given your electronic consent, you will be asked to provide some general demographic information. At no stage will you be asked for any information that may identify you (e.g. your name) and you will remain anonymous throughout the study.

You will be given a scenario to read. After you have read the scenario, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires; one questionnaire will ask you to

consider your beliefs about the world and one questionnaire will ask you questions about the scenario you have just read. Remember that your responses will remain anonymous. After you have completed the questionnaires, a page containing further information will be presented to you.

The study is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Crime is a sensitive topic and some participants may feel uncomfortable and/or may have been affected by the subject matter. Remember that you are able to withdraw at any time without a need to give a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window. Due to the anonymous nature of the Bristol Online Survey tool, once you have completed the study it will not be possible to withdraw the data because we won't know who you are.

You are able to contact the researcher at any point during the study on the above email address above if you have any concerns. If you continue to remain concerned, you can contact the researcher's supervisor on the above email address.

You will also be provided with links to resources that may be of interest or helpful to you at the end of this information sheet and at the end of the study.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

It cannot be said that the study will help you but the information we get from the study may help us to gain a better understanding about what the public think and know about this specific crime.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As a participant, you will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. What this means is that the researchers will not be able to identify who you are. At no point will information such as your name or address be requested. All information that is collected throughout the study will remain anonymous and confidential. The information you provide will be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous. We will minimize any risks by using an encrypted secure https website to host the questionnaire. To ensure anonymity, an option to collect any store your responses without any additional details will be active in the survey tool used. What this means is that researchers will not be able to see, access or store your IP address.

What will you do with the data?

Data will be stored electronically and securely by the researcher on password protected personal computer and on a university drive that is accessible only by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. Data will only be accessible by the researcher's username and password. The data will be analysed using a statistical package.

The aim is to have the results of the study analysed and written by September 2018 as part of a Research Thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate

in Forensic Psychology. No data identifying any participant will be included in the thesis or publication. It is hoped that the results of the research will be published in journals or communicated at presentations. If you would like to know the findings, you can request a summary of the findings once the thesis has been completed.

At the end of the project, all raw data will be kept securely by the University under the terms of the Data Protection Act. The data will not be kept elsewhere. All data will be kept securely for seven years, after which time the data will be destroy securely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

Who has reviewed the study?

The Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology (DPAP) Ethics Committee of The University of Nottingham.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee (MS-DPAPEthics@nottingham.ac.uk, +44 (0)115 8232214) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

Useful links:
If you feel that you have been affected by a crime, you can contact Victim Support on 08 08 16 89 111. Details about Victim Support (and other ways to contact Victim Support) can be found here: https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/.

Appendix L – Consent Form 1

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project: Attitudes Towards A Specific Crime

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 230

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information? YES/NO
- I agree to answer an online questionnaire YES/NO
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that for anonymous questionnaire studies, once you have completed the study and submitted your questionnaire, the data cannot be withdrawn?
  YES/NO
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications?

YES/NO

Signature of the Participant ……. Date: …….

Name (in block capitals) ……..

By clicking the button above/below I indicate that I understand what the study involves and that my answers are anonymous. I agree to take part and I understand that once I click 'submit' at the end of the questionnaire it will not be possible to withdraw the data

Appendix M – Participant Information Sheet 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET 2

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: 'Revenge Pornography': The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the medium in which it is shared on public perceptions of victim harm, the perpetrator's actions and how these actions should be dealt with by the Criminal Justice System.

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer, Doctoral Forensic Psychologist in Training; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics Reference Number: 230

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about the 'specific crime' known as 'revenge pornography'. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like further information. If you decide to take part, you may keep this leaflet.

What is the project about?

'Revenge pornography' is the act of sharing/distributing an intimate photograph or video of an individual (for example, naked images/videos of the individual, images/videos of an individual engaging in sexual activities/intercourse) without their consent with the intent to cause distress. This study aims to gain an understanding of what the public think about 'revenge pornography'. It is important to gain knowledge about the public's understanding of 'revenge pornography' so that we can inform public policy surrounding this issue and ensure that it is appropriately managed within the criminal justice system.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

The study aims to gather data from approximately 150 members of the public in total. You are being invited to take part because you were given information about the study and have followed the link to the research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. Withdrawal does not require a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window.

What will I be asked to do?

Once you have decided to take part in the study having now considered the nature of the crime being studied (i.e. 'revenge pornography'), you will asked to sign an electronic consent form for a second time. The demographic information you previously provided will be used. Remember that no information will identify you (e.g. your name) and you will remain anonymous throughout the study.

You will be given a scenario to read. After you have read the scenario, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires; one questionnaire will ask you to consider your beliefs about the world and one questionnaire will ask you questions about the scenario you have just read. At the end of the study, you will be asked whether you have allowed an individual to possess an intimate image of yourself. Remember that your responses will remain anonymous. After you have completed the questionnaires, a page containing further information will be presented to you.

The study is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

'Revenge pornography' is a sensitive topic and some participants may feel uncomfortable and/or may have been affected by the subject matter. Remember that you are able to withdraw at any time without a need to give a reason. To withdraw from participation, you simply close the internet browser window. Due to the anonymous nature of the Bristol Online Survey tool, once you have completed the study it will not be possible to withdraw the data because we will not know who you are.

You are able to contact the researcher at any point during the study on the above email address above if you have any concerns. If you continue to remain concerned, you can contact the researcher's supervisor on the above email address.

You will also be provided with links to resources that may be of interest or helpful to you at the end of this information sheet and at the end of the study.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?
It cannot be said that the study will help you but the information we get from the study may help us to gain a better understanding about what the public think and know about 'revenge pornography'.

What will happen to the information I provide?
As a participant, you will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. What this means is that the researchers will not be able to identify who you are. At no point will information such as your name or address be requested. All information that is collected throughout the study will remain anonymous and confidential. The information you provide will be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous. We will minimize any risks by using an encrypted secure https website to host the questionnaire. To ensure anonymity, an option to collect any store your responses without any additional details will be active in the survey tool used. What this means is that researchers will not be able to see, access or store your IP address.

What will you do with the data?

Data will be stored electronically and securely by the researcher on password protected personal computer and on a university drive that is accessible only by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. Data will only be accessible by the researcher's username and password. The data will be analysed using a statistical package.

The aim is to have the results of the study analysed and written by September 2018 as part of a Research Thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Forensic Psychology. No data identifying any participant will be included in the thesis or publication. It is hoped that the results of the research will be published in journals or communicated at presentations. If you would like to know the findings, you can request a summary of the findings once the thesis has been completed.

At the end of the project, all raw data will be kept securely by the University under the terms of the Data Protection Act. The data will not be kept elsewhere. All data will be kept securely for seven years, after which time the data will be destroy securely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

Who has reviewed the study?
The Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology (DPAP) Ethics Committee of The University of Nottingham.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Sub-Committee (MS-DPAPEthics@nottingham.ac.uk, +44 (0)115 8232214) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.

Useful links:
A Revenge Pornography factsheet provided by the Ministry of Justice following the launch of their campaign, 'Be Aware B4 you Share', to raise awareness: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405286/revenge-porn-factsheet.pdf

A Revenge Pornography leaflet provided by the Revenge Porn Helpline, which provides information about Revenge porn, including information about how to deal with it if you have been a victim:
http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/documents/RP-Helpline_web.pdf

If you feel that you have been affected by revenge pornography, you can contact the Revenge Porn Helpline on 0845 6000 495. Details about the Revenge Porn Helpline can be found here: http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/

The Revenge Porn Helpline also lists a number of other sources of support, details of which can be found here: http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/supporters/

The University of Nottingham have produced a leaflet entitled 'Let's be Clear on Consent', providing information, help and support relating to sexual consent. The link to this leaflet can be found here:
https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthyu/lets-be-clear-on-consent.aspx

Appendix N – Consent Form 2

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM 2

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology
School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: Revenge Pornography: The impact of victim and perpetrator gender and the medium in which it is shared on public perceptions of victim harm, the perpetrator's actions and how these actions should be dealt with by the Criminal Justice System

Researcher: Elspeth Dustagheer; email: msxed3@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff; email: simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk
Ethics Reference Number: 230

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information? YES/NO
- I agree to answer an online questionnaire YES/NO
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that for anonymous questionnaire studies, once you have completed the study and submitted your questionnaire, the data cannot be withdrawn?
  YES/NO
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications?
  YES/NO

Signature of the Participant ……. Date: …….

Name (in block capitals) ……..

By clicking the button above/below I indicate that I understand what the study involves and that my answers are anonymous. I agree to take part and I understand that once I click 'submit' at the end of the questionnaire it will not be possible to withdraw the data