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Addressing the Blurred question of "Responsibility": Insights from Online News Comments on a Case of Nonconsensual Pornography

Abstract

In spring 2015, six private videos of a young Italian woman (T.C.) were uploaded on the web without her consent. The videos went immediately viral, and suddenly the woman found herself at the center of a strenuous legal battle to have the video removed from the internet, and to obtain a change of surname. In her complaint, she stated that despite having willingly participated in the filming, she had never consented to the circulation of the videos and as a result of the unwanted publicity she was receiving she was unable to lead a normal life. Incapable of coping with the growing social pressure, in the late summer of 2016 the woman took her own life. Looking at the comments posted under two newspaper articles published online in the immediate aftermath of her suicide, this article examines the socio-cultural implications of nonconsensual pornography practices in the contemporary Italian public debate. Specifically, this study will try to address the following questions: how was T.C.'s case constructed by the public? How was the responsibility for her death framed in such a discussion? What are the implications of such responses when discussing societal sexism and gender inequality in contemporary Italy?

Background

In the late spring of 2015, six private videos of T.C., a 29-year-old woman originally from a town near Naples in Italy, were disseminated on the internet. In just a few days, the videos went viral: besides circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp, the recordings were hosted on platforms providing adult content on the web, attracting an elevated number of viewers. Notably, in one of the videos the woman was filing the whole scene, 'Are you filming? *Bravo*!'. This sentence, and the context in which med while performing a sexual act with different men and saying to the person who was recordit was used, immediately became a 'meme', a word used to describe an internet joke. It was used to create jingles on national radio programs, was cited in the text of a popular song, and was reproduced on a countless number of t-shirts, smartphone cases, mugs, and other paraphernalia. Furthermore, the swift and seemingly unstoppable popularity of the videos, combined with the fact that T. C.'s name and surname were clearly indicated in each release, prompted media speculation about the whole operation being an elaborate marketing strategy to launch a new porn star, thus generating further publicity for the story. In reality, after discovering that her videos were circulating online, the woman immediately filed a complaint to the Public Prosecutor's office asking to have them removed from the internet and to have her name changed. In her complaint, she stated that despite having willingly participated in the filming and having willingly shared the videos with some of her contacts, she had never consented to the circulation of the videos on the web, or on any other social media platforms. She also added that, as a result of the digital pillory (Hess & Waller, 2014) she was experiencing, she was unable to lead a normal life, being constantly recognised, mocked, and insulted while in public, and had to quit her job. In January 2016, a court in Naples accepted her request to change her surname, and in August 2016, the court ruled in her favor on the request to remove the videos from the platforms that were still hosting them. However, due to a series of technicalities, T.C. ended up having to pay almost twenty thousand euros in court expenses. Moreover, all her requests made on the grounds of the 'right

to be forgotten' were denied by the court under the reason that the right to be forgotten might apply only to events dating back in time, and that in her case not enough time had passed to rule out the public interest in her story. On September 13, 2016, only a few weeks after the pronouncement of the sentence, T.C. ended her own life in her aunt's basement.

T. C.'s case has been discussed in a few scholarly articles, mostly for its legislative implications. In particular, her legal battle has been looked at by scholars interested in privacy issues, or in the 'right to be forgotten' when it comes to content that has been shared on social media and web platforms (Mitchell, 2019; Pietropaoli, 2017; Ziccardi, 2017). However, outside the legalistic framework, looking at her story offers the opportunity to better comprehend the socio-cultural implications of nonconsensual pornography practices, a field of research that is still receiving scant attention in scholarly literature (Hall & Hearn, 2017). As such, this paper examines the different ways in which T. C.'s story was discussed in online public commentaries in the immediate aftermath of her death. In particular, the paper aims to provide an exploratory qualitative study to better understand how the question of responsibility, a key element in the construction of victim-blaming narratives, is addressed when it comes to nonconsensual pornography.

Nonconsensual pornography as a form of gendered violence

Nonconsensual pornography is defined here as the nonconsensual distribution, typically - but not exclusively - on the internet, of sexually graphic, or intimate images of individuals by ex-partners, partners, or others (Hall & Hearn, 2017; Franks, 2016; Uhl et al., 2018; Waldman, 2016). Nonconsensual pornography is typically associated with interpersonal revenge (Hall & Hearn, 2017) usually perpetuated over a partner or ex-partner (the so-called 'revenge porn'), even if the practice may also be connected to a range of other motivations, ranging from financial gain to entertainment. In particular, when revenge is implied, the nonconsensual circulation of sexually graphic images is specifically motivated by the desire to harm the public

reputation of those whose intimate images are being distributed. As such, nonconsensual pornography should be understood as a gendered type of cyber harassment since women are usually the ones mostly targeted by this practice (Barak, 2005; Duggan, 2014; Eikren & Ingram-Waters, 2016; Morahan-Martin, 2000; Salter & Crofts, 2015; Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013).

The definition of nonconsensual pornography as a form of gendered violence lies on the premise that sexuality is socially constructed and culturally defined (Jackson, 2006; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Simon & Gagnon, 1984; Scarcelli & Stella, 2019). As such, sexual conduct is regulated by very specific normative and institutionalized gender discourses setting precise boundaries between what might be considered appropriate conduct, and what, in contrast, lies behind the domain of respectability. As Jackson (2006, p. 107) argues, heteronormativity plays a very important role in the definition of these boundaries, as it intersects the domain of gender and sexuality, thus regulating normative sexual practices, as well as the realm of the everyday defining what is considered "a normal way of life". Sexuality and sexual desire appear to be regulated by culturally available "sexual scripts" (Simon & Gagnon, 1984), whose role is not only to define the boundaries of acceptability in a normative heterosexual sexual encounter, but also to regulate how men and women need to act within a sexual situation. Fundamental to the definition of these scripts is the idea that gender plays a crucial part in the process, as men and women do not share the same disposition and interest towards their sexuality and therefore, as a consequence, what is considered acceptable or respectable for a man when it comes to sexual conduct and desire does not necessarily correspond to what is considered acceptable for a woman (Zaikman & Marks, 2017). In particular, traditionally men are seen as being more sexually (pro)active and more entitled to sexual freedom and sexual determination than women. Women, on the other hand, are often portrayed as being less interested in sex, more passive in their sexual behaviors, and more

concerned about pursuing a committed and emotionally stable relationship (Scarcelli & Stella, 2019). Traditional sexual scripts reiterate the conventional public/private divide between men and women. Men, who are living in the public domain, are expected to be outspoken regarding their sexual conduct, discussing it publicly and using it as a way to gain prestige and social status (Mosher, 1991). On the contrary, women, who have been relegated to the private domestic domain are expected to repress their sexuality keeping it private and secured away from the public eye.

This structural dimension of inequality lies at the very heart of the reason why nonconsensual pornography appears to be a particularly heinous crime just for women, while it rarely affects men. By making public something intended to be private, nonconsensual pornography not only breaks down the public/private dichotomy but also publicly exposes women's sexuality in ways that often powerfully transgress the socially accepted sexual scripts for their gender. This disruption of social acceptability appears to be particularly sharp in the case of Italy, where masculinity and femininity are still commonly framed within traditional heteronormative sexual scripts. Even though in recent years some important variations have been recorded, suggesting that the gap between male and female sexuality is shrinking to some extent (Minello et al., 2020), some researchers (Barbagli, Dalla Zuanna & Garelli, 2010; Scarcelli and Stella, 2019) note that biological determinism is still consistently used in Italy to support traditional codes of sexuality, thus serving as a justification in support of the idea that man and women strongly differ when it comes to sex and sexual desire. This double standard appears to be also supported by the persistent objectification and sexualization of women inside of the Italian media. Rather than being represented as individuals entitled to their own sexual agency, women are often portrayed in the media as objects for the male gaze, as erotic prey to be sexually conquered, and as disposable bodies on whom it is possible to exert violence and dominion (Capecchi, 1995, 2006; Corradi, 2012, Giomi & Magaraggia, 2017).

T.C.'s case study could be placed exactly at the intersection of these different discourses over sex, sexuality, public exposure, violence, and the consequences of the infringement of what is considered socially admissible for women when it comes to their sexual life. It also shows the strength of the force exerted by society upon those whose behaviors differ from the accepted norms. In the videos, T.C. is portrayed as actively and willingly having sex with multiple men, while being watched, presumably, by her boyfriend. She appears in control over the situation, expressing agency and self-determination. While looking at the camera she commends the person for filming her. She does so with a joyful and slightly cunning tone, delivering the sentence that later contributed to her notoriety and that was widely used to taunt her. Similarly to what has happened elsewhere (Hess & Waller, 2013; Wood, 2018), once the videos reached the public the call for shame and humiliation was immediate: the infringement of normative sexual practice brought upon her marginalization and social condemnation (Jackson, 2006). In less than a few weeks following the release of the videos, T.C. had become the object of prolonged, extensive, and fierce pillory: when she was not ridiculed, she was described as a cheater and as a nymphomaniac; she was constantly slut-shamed, harassed and abused, both online and offline. Facebook pages full of insults were opened in her name, mock-videos were created altogether with songs and jingles reframing the whole situation as hilarious and grotesque. Protected by the anonymity, or the quasi-anonymity, offered by the net, online users felt compelled to express their opinions freely, voicing hostile and sexist rhetoric that would hardly be considered acceptable in mainstream contexts (Jane, 2014; Jane, 2017), proving once more that the internet remains hostile territory for those who are marginalized by society (Citron, 2014; Eikren & Ingram-Waters, 2016; Henry & Powell 2012; Jane, 2014; Jane, 2017; Massanari, 2015; Megarry, 2014; Morahan-Martin, 2000).

Meanwhile, the story started to gain momentum on mainstream media with information outlets extensively reporting on the videos, providing their own narrative to the story. In

particular, the most widely circulated theory prompted by the media suggested that the videos were part of an elaborate marketing strategy aimed at launching a new porn star. To normalise (Foucault,1970) her, to make her fit within socially acceptable sexual scripts, T.C. 's sexual behavior had to be removed from the realm of the ordinary and turned into fiction. Without questioning the legitimacy of the videos and the circumstances of their circulation, the media turned T.C. into a wannabe professional performing an erotic script to gain popularity. Eye-opening in this respect is the editorial that the newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* published a few days after her death. In the editorial, the director expressed remorse for having contributed to T.C. public exposure and - although unintentionally - to her public humiliation. Moreover, the editorial delivered the decision to remove, out of respect for T.C.'s tragic death, all the articles published on her story, a decision that was followed also by other media outlets. The articles published after the woman's death tried to reframe her story, including a long-overdue reflection on the harm caused by nonconsensual pornography prompting a national debate on women's sexuality when it deviates from the hegemonic discourse on female sexual desire and sexual practice. Suddenly T.C. was presented as a victim, not just as a sexy and trendy topic on the internet, and this shift in her story stimulated a steady flow of comments from ordinary citizens trying to make sense of the events that had just unfolded.

Methodology

This study draws on a data set of 1494 online readers' comments generated in the aftermath of T.C.'s death under two news articles published the day following her suicide by the online editions of two major Italian national daily newspapers: *La Repubblica* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. At the time of the events, both newspapers, which had paper-based and online editions with a large national circulation, had published articles on the case, allowed readers' comments on their websites, and had a large community of posters. As the aim of the research was to look at how the issue of responsibility was accounted for in a case of nonconsensual

pornography, the corpus was analysed with a qualitative thematic approach. Before commencing the analysis of the data all the comments were anonymised, as privacy concerns represent an important ethical issue in this type of research (Hall & Hearn, 2017; Hookway, 2008; Rodham & Gavin, 2006). More specifically, anonymisation appeared essential as most posters operated under nicknames and aliases, making it virtually impossible to gain informed consent from each one of them. Also, as a comparison among the opinions of the two newspapers' readers was outside the scope of this research, the data-set did not indicate the origin of the post, even if hierarchy among the comments was preserved.

After an initial reading, the corpus was coded with Atlas.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, which offered useful support in managing the large field of data and locating the central themes around which T.C.'s story was organized, discussed, and given meaning in the commentaries. As the research was primarily explorative, a quantitative analysis of the corpus was considered outside the scope of this study. As a consequence, the researcher did not look for the number of times a particular theme emerged but focused on the patterns of responses within the commentaries to locate the nascent discourses on nonconsensual pornography and the issue of responsibility connected to it. In particular, recurrent themes named or implied in the comments were identified and coded, compared, and regrouped into specific categories of meanings. The coding hierarchy was progressively updated to include new concepts identified during the analysis. Throughout this process, various themes became evident through their repeated presence in the data. It should be noted, as already pointed out in Hall and Hearn (2017) that most posts contained several, and often competing themes. Since the beginning, it was clear to the researcher that the comments analysed in this research are not representative of the public opinion, but only reflect the views and opinions of a portion of the public, namely those who had access to the internet, who used online news media, and who shared an interest in T. C.'s story. However, the quantity and

quality of comments produced in a relatively short amount of time provide a dataset that helps us to gain a deeper understanding of public attitudes towards nonconsensual pornography.

Results

The readers' comments analysed for this study were posted under two articles reporting on T.C.'s suicide in the immediate aftermath of her death. Central to the argumentation of both articles was the discussion of the digital pillory (Hess & Waller, 2014) T.C. had experienced after the release of her videos, and the lethal consequences it had on her life. Notably, the expression 'revenge porn' was not present in the articles, while significant attention was given to the "unstoppable circulation" of the "hot videos" she had (willingly) participated in (but not agreed to distribute), to the consequent public naming and shaming she had experienced, and to the outcomes of the legal action she had taken against tech companies that had hosted the videos on their platforms. Little information was given by the press on the role played by those who had distributed the videos, or the role the media had in giving resonance to the story. The main argument made by the two articles was that T.C. was a victim of misplaced trust, and she had died as a result of social shame and humiliation sustained by the spread of hate speech practiced in online spaces.

The comments published under the two articles mostly reflect this change in the narrative; many posters wrote words of condolence concerning the fate of the young woman, and in their words there was no trace of blunt mockery or disrespect. In their posts, commentators shared their opinions on the overall story, offered their insights on how the events unfolded, blamed the conduct of this or that participant in the story, and even made recommendations regarding desirable forms of punishment to be commuted in order to secure justice and retribution. In other words, T.C.'s suicide urged the public to reassess their unanimous indignation (Boltanski, 2000) focusing, this time, on the necessity to identify the wrong-doings that had led to T.C.'s tragic end and to name those who had to be considered

responsible for it. In particular, the discussion gravitated at the intersection of two distinct but interrelated questions: the issue of collective culpability for having prompted the pillory sustained by T.C., pinned upon society and the media, and the issue of factual responsibility in determining the outcomes of the events, ascribed to the person who had uploaded the video on the internet and to T.C. herself.

Implicate society and the media

The impact of the digital pillory sustained by T.C. was largely recognised by commentators as the main trigger leading to her suicide. From the comments analysed for this study, it emerged that without the ferocious reaction of the public, without the trolling, the derision, the insults, and without the persistent scrutiny experienced both online and offline, T.C. 's fate would have probably been very different. The intensity of the scandal was so overwhelming that a few posters even declared to have anticipated, long before her death, the effects that the pillory might have had on T.C.'s wellbeing.

> 'When I watched the video for the first time, I found it was really funny. However, after just a few minutes I started thinking about the harm it could cause to that girl because of the humiliation that she was going to experience as a result of the video. I am really sorry it ended up like this: a society in the age of social networks is merciless'. (Comment #46)

Interestingly, although many posters openly acknowledged, or more softly implied, that they knew T.C.'s story well and that, at least on some occasions, they had laughed at her or even shared the memes inspired by her videos, just a handful of comments publicly discussed the possible implications and consequences of their own actions. To be named and shamed for the pillory in the commentaries is society itself, described as a hostile and unforgiving moral agent that disciplines and humiliates those who act outside the accepted norms, actively participating

in causing the suffering endured by its members. The roots of the social condemnation at the base of T.C.'s humiliation are rarely discussed in the posts, even if some commentators refer to institutional sexism and gender double standards when discussing the cause of her problems.

> 'The problem lies in the sh..y mentality of this country. This poor girl is dead because her lover/friends acted like idiots, and because a stupid and closed-minded society believes that if a girl likes to have sex (which is a completely normal thing, of course) she has to be showered with insults'. (Comment #57)

> 'I am asking myself, but if instead of a poor girl, the main character of the video was a man, what type of results would we have had? The true problem is always the same one: men and women are not treated equally.' (Comment #1126)

Although the reference to patriarchy and sexism is often antagonised by other commentators and mostly marginal to the overall discussion, the emergence of this dimension is significant, as it shows that also in Italy, counter-discourses protesting against patriarchy and gender inequality are pushing to emerge.

The media are also often named in the comments for their role in the story. The use of a sensational discourse (Richards, Gillespie & Givens, 2014) involving attention-grabbing titles, excessive information, exaggerated statements, irreverent use of pictures and even false-leading information are noticed, criticised, and pointed out as immoral media practices. According to the posters, some media outlets have paid attention and given resonance to T.C.'s story mostly to profit from it "and collect a bunch of clicks" (Comment #197). Commentators seemed to be aware of the power media hold in defining T.C.'s story, in providing it with context, and in crafting precise narratives to explain her actions while imposing upon her a "digital mark of shame difficult to remove" (Hess & Waller, 2014, p.8).

'The poor woman made a gross mistake and after she has committed suicide because of the treatment she has received on the media, what do the media do? They [the media] don't even leave her alone now after all that has happened and they even link the news of her death to one of the articles that have caused her harm.' (Comment #343)

However, as happens when the role of society is discussed, the vast majority of commentators did not directly address their own responses to T. C.'s mediatic representation. The removal of the role of the audience obliterates the responsibility of those who had consumed and shared the contents provided by the media, thus suggesting a complicit and collusive (Silverstone, 2002) lack of engagement with the media's representational strategies of T.C.'s story. As a result, the discussion of collective culpability in determining the force of T.C.'s condemnation fails to call into question the individual responsibility of the 'ordinary' members of society, neglecting to articulate that paradigm of co-responsibility in which individuals and social institutions work altogether in order to address a shared problem (Apel, 1993).

Punish the wrongdoers

The actions of T.C.'s erotic partners were also extensively scrutinized by posters, despite their role being mostly overlooked in the articles published by *La Repubblica* and the *Fatto Quotidiano*. As a matter of fact, the initial illicit publication of T.C. 's videos on the web and social media was openly recognised by commentators as having had a fundamental part in determining the subsequent chain of events that ultimately led to her death. However, the comments framed the issue, not so much as a criminal activity connected to a structural dimension of violence and abuse, but rather as the result of a breach of trust between T.C. and her offenders.

'The breach of privacy was not her doing, it is those who have betrayed her trust and grossly violated her confidentiality who should be deemed responsible.' (Comment #217)

In particular, the comments, more than focusing on the motivation that had led to the decision to publish T.C.'s videos, debated over the necessity to bring to justice those who had betrayed her, opening up a debate over justice-seeking and punishment.

'The sh..y man who has posted the videos should be immediately apprehended and taken into custody.' (Comment #41)

The call for incarceration was far-reaching in the posts, even if the commentators, often by their own admission, did not have a precise idea of the Italian legal framework on issues concerning the nonconsensual distribution of intimate materials, nor specific knowledge of the laws breached by those who had uploaded the videos on the web. The commentators wanted those who had wronged T.C. to pay a price for their actions, and a long prison sentence appeared to be an adequate form of punishment. The impression is that the main interest of the commentators in discussing the actions of T.C.'s offenders lay mostly in the opportunity it offered them to turn once again into digital vigilantism (Wood, Rose & Thompson, 2017), rather than as an opportunity to discuss and contextualize her story within a framework capable of taking into account a wider discourse on gender violence and gender inequality.

But always blame the victim

The examination of T.C.'s own responsibilities in determining her downfall intersected most of the comments analysed for this research. T.C.'s actions, her sexual conduct, her obvious

amusement while being filmed, and her decision to share her videos with her erotic partners were all elements constantly put under scrutiny by the commentators, even when the posts apparently focused on the other actors who had played a role in her story. The media misrepresented her story, but she "made a gross mistake" (Comment #343). "Society is unmerciful" with those who act outside the socially accepted norm, but "she should have just known better before she got on tape" (Comment #21). Those who had uploaded the video "are idiots", but "couldn't she have had more decency?' (Comment #31). The constant discussion of T.C.'s responsibility shows how much victim-blaming narratives and sexist ideologies are still ingrained in the commentators' opinions and in the Italian public discourse. Blame was often only softly implied, masked behind what appeared to be paternalistic attestations of compassion and condolence. In many comments, posters suggested that T.C. ended up paying for what appears to have been an unintentional "mistake", and as such, that she has to be understood and condoled.

> 'An adult woman decided to participate in a porn video, not with her boyfriend but with her lover. Why did she do it? She then recklessly decides to circulate the video with all the consequences we well know. We must feel pity for her mistake.' (Comment #21)

Other comments address the connection between T.C.'s actions and the events that subsequently unfolded more directly, focusing in particular on her decision to share her videos with others. Although refraining from directly addressing or openly judging T.C.'s sexual choices, these comments embrace a "she should have known better" narrative typical of victim-blaming.

'I am just speechless. I am reading in another article that she had shared the video with five friends of hers. Now, we all agree that when you have sex you may act carelessly. (...). However, after the sexual act is over people usually come to their senses. How is it possible then that this woman sent her video to five friends of hers? I do not want to say that she looked for it, but I'm asking myself how many people do you think you could entrust with a video like this one hoping it doesn't end up in the evening news?' (Comment #262).

'It was the woman who has circulated the video, so she is partially responsible. These kinds of things you do but do not say, let alone have them filmed and shared with six other people.' (Comment #490)

Finally, other commentators directly addressed and criticised T.C.'s sexual behaviors, arguing that she had to be held responsible for what had happened to her because she was sexually promiscuous and morally deprecable, reinforcing the stereotype that nothing happens to innocent women (Benedict, 1992).

'I watched [the video] yesterday: the guy she was going down on was not her boyfriend. In the video she calls him a cuckold. She is being taped, and she is happy about it (*Bravo!*): finally she sent the video (which is really seedy) to six friends of hers as it is something to be proud of to cheat on your boyfriend while being treated in that way.' (Comment #18)

'I am sorry she took her life, but I have no sympathy for those who betray their partners.' (Comment #178)

The ferocity in these kinds of comments, but also the overall incapacity of the commentators to recognise her, at least partially, as a victim, explains well the extent of T.C.'s transgression of cultural gender norms and socially accepted sexual scripts. Through her behavior, T.C. crossed a boundary that turned her into a 'bad woman', shattering her moral credibility (Pacilli et al., 2016) to a point that even her decision to end her life could not have saved her from the blaming and shaming pillory she was experiencing prior to her death. More importantly, whatever the extent of the blame in the comments, and whether others were indicated as having played a role in bringing T.C. to her death, the constant discussion of her culpability exposes the deep-seated hierarchical ordering of the genders (Butler, 2004; Jackson, 2017) of a country where traditional gender discourses are still profoundly informing social structures and shaping social practices.

Conclusions: on the Infamous 'But' of Victim Blaming

From a gender study perspective, T.C.'s story presents several elements of interest. First of all, in Italy it has received unprecedented attention, opening up a public debate on the role of the internet, on the value of privacy when it comes to the unwanted distribution of intimate videos and materials, and on the lack of proper legislation to protect those who are victims of such crimes. More importantly, it is a case that has brought to light a profound and still unresolved tension between the recognition of nonconsensual pornography as a systemic problem rooted in a culture of violence against women (Eikren & Ingram-Waters, 2016), and the constant reiteration of a highly gendered common-knowledge that victimises women for their sexual practices and sexual desires. As this specific case proves, nonconsensual pornography can have devastating effects and very real consequences for the lives of those who have been targeted by this practice (Eikren & Ingram-Waters, 2016; Uhl, 2018). The price paid by women whose private videos or photos are made public without their consent is commensurate to the social blame that women's sexuality catalyses when it deviates from the socially accepted norms for

their gender. In a country like Italy, which still heavily supports traditional sexual scripts grounded in the idea that men and women strongly differ when it comes to the spheres of sexuality and sexual desires (Scarcelli & Stella, 2019) the release of T.C.'s videos generated a fierce and enduring outburst of slut-shaming (Hess & Walker, 2014) and violence impregnated with misogyny and sexism.

In particular, the analysis of the news commentaries published following T.C.'s death shows that several patriarchal myths are at play when nonconsensual pornography is discussed within the Italian public arena. More specifically, the constant scrutiny of T.C.'s behavior discloses the recurrent use of traditional tropes of violence against women which ultimately serves to both excuse (or even entirely obliterate) the actions of the offenders, and to deny the systemic connections between gendered violence and gender inequality (Eikren & Ingram-Waters, 2016; Fairbairn 2015; Gracia, 2004; Gracia & Thomas, 2014; Meyers, 1997). There is a *fil rouge* intersecting the vast majority of the comments analysed for this research, which could be summed up as follows: regardless of the actions of others, T.C. did something that she should not have done (she participated in the videos, she shared the videos with others, she was sexually promiscuous, she trusted the wrong persons, she was too naive, etc.) and, as a result, she paid for her personal choices with her downfall. T.C.'s behavior and sexual choices were constantly at the center of the posters' attention and her persistent secondary victimisation, presented by many as the result of an unfortunate but undeniable logical connection, emerges in the comments even when the responsibility of others is at the center of the discussion (Tang, Wong & Cheung, 2002), thus reinforcing the old idea that male perpetrators are guilty only when female victims are to be considered entirely innocent (Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1977). As a result, it appears that the general public's attitude towards nonconsensual pornography in Italy is still firmly anchored in a gendered double standard supporting the status quo of male domination under the regime of a discourse of

individual responsibility: the unwanted distribution of intimate materials and the consequent troubles that women victims have to face are to be understood as personal troubles, rather than as the expression of a systemic form of violence and discrimination anchored to a social order that affirms and legitimizes the subordination of women over men.

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