

Technology and Sexual Violence: SACC Summary Report

August 2017

Dr Laura Vitis (University of Liverpool, Singapore)
Ms Anisha Joseph (Manager, SACC & Community Engagement)
Ms Divya Mahadevan (Data Consultant, SACC)



Abbreviations

NRIC	National Registration Identity Card
POHA	Protection From Harassment Act
TFGV	Technologically Facilitated Gendered Violence
TFH	Technologically Facilitated Harassment
TFIPV	Technologically Facilitated Intimate Partner Violence
TFIPVH	Technologically Facilitated Intimate Partner Violence and Harassment
TFSH	Technologically Facilitated Sexual Harassment
TFSV	Technologically Facilitated Sexual Violence
TFV	Technologically Facilitated Violence

2

Executive Summary

The *Technology and Sexual Violence: SACC Summary Report* presents findings from an exploratory study into the role of technology in the Sexual Assault Care Centre's (SACC) sexual violence cases in 2016. This report investigates whether and in what ways technology is shaping women's experiences of sexual violence and their resistance to sexual violence. To do so, this report examined de-identified case summaries, legal session reports, befriender session notes and case management notes collated by the SACC a project of AWARE a local women's research, advocacy and support organisation. Rather than examining whether one 'type' of technology was present in the SACC cases, this report investigates the range of roles technology played within clients' experiences of sexual violence.

- Technology played a role in almost 1 in 5 (18%) of the 338 SACC case inquiries in 2016.
- There were 6 major technological components in these 60 cases:
 - Contact Based Sexual Harassment;
 - Image Based Sexual Abuse;
 - Digital evidence;
 - Meeting perpetrators online;
 - Social media and email contact with perpetrators;
 - Confiscation of a communication device.
- Image based sexual abuse (e.g. revenge pornography, sextortion, non-consensual distribution of intimate images) and contact based sexual harassment (e.g. unwanted messaging and calling) were the main forms of technologically facilitated sexual violence experienced by clients in 2016.
- Almost 1 in 2 (48%) of the 60 SACC cases featuring technology involved image based sexual abuse or harassment.
- Almost 1 in 3 (30%) of the 60 SACC cases featuring technology involved contact based sexual harassment, most perpetrators were employers or colleagues.
- Technology was not only used by perpetrators to facilitate abuse, but also by clients as a way of recording abuse/harassment and collating evidence.
- Technology was being 'folded into' pre-existing practices of violence, harm and harassment, particularly intimate partner violence and workplace sexual harassment, in addition to creating new modalities of violence, harm and harassment.

For example, recent research into intimate partner violence suggests that mobile phones, smart phones, GPS tracking, email and social networking sites are being used by perpetrators to: surveil women's movements and personal lives; facilitate threats and abuse and intensify controlling behaviours (Maher, McCulloch & Fitz-Gibbon 2017; Southworth et al. 2007; Woodlock 2016). Women are experiencing high volumes of online harassment in the forms of doxingⁱ, online sexual harassment, gender based cyberhate and online misogyny (cf. Henry & Powell 2016; Jane 2017), particularly women who appear and work within the public sphere (Jane 2017). Moreover, in the aftermath of Web 2.0 there has been a proliferation of image based sexual abuses against women. Common iterations of image based sexual abuse include posting intimate images (produced consensually or non-consensually) to third parties, online forums and social media (Powell & Henry 2017; McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017) to seek revenge or as a way of profiteering, or extorting sexual favours (Powell, Henry & Flynn 2017: 3). These practices illustrate the ways in which technology is being used to manifest 'control, abuse, humiliation and gratification' (Powell & Henry 2017) against women and girls.

This emerging research has been conducted in Australia, (Dimond et al. 2011; Maher, McCulloch & Fitz-Gibbon 2017; Powell & Henry 2015; Woodlock 2013; Woodlock 2016), the United States (Burke et al. 2011; Levy 2011; Southworth et al. 2007), India (Halder & Jaishankar 2008) and Malaysia (sm Kee & Randhawa 2009). Yet, there is limited Singaporean research addressing this phenomenon. Despite this dearth of empirical research into both gendered and technologically facilitated gendered violence (TFGV), recent legislative reforms and policy debates illustrate that Singapore has recognised the problem of technologically facilitated harassment (TFH). In 2013, the Institute of Policy Studies held a conference on harassment which raised issues such as the limits of the law in protecting victims of harassment outside of intimate relationships and the multifarious nature of contemporary harassment (including harassment in schools, workplaces and online) (Goh & Yip 2014). Additionally, in 2014 the *Protection from Harassment Act* (POHA) was implemented and it extended the substantive definition of harassing behaviour to include electronic means (Goh & Yip 2014) and provided more comprehensive protection orders for victims of harassment outside of intimate relationships (Goh & Yip 2014). These discussions and reforms suggest that TFH has entered the Singaporean policy landscape as Goh and Yip (2014: 725) argue these reforms 'represent a strong commitment to combat against cyber bullying/harassment'. Despite this, the gendered nature of TFH remains under researched, a critical gap considering Singapore leads the world in social media usage (We are Social 2016).

As such, the aim of this report is to investigate the role of technology in facilitating and shaping women's experiences of sexual violence in Singapore. It aims to both contribute to the burgeoning technologically facilitated gendered and intimate partner violence research base and to address the dearth of empirical research on TFGV and TFSV within South East Asia.

This report draws on SACC's 2016 de-identified case summaries, legal session reports, befriender session notes and case management notes for cases involving sexual violence. As a key local organisation advocating for women's rights and providing support to sexual assault survivors, SACC has collected rich data

3

Context

Over the past ten years violence facilitated by technology has come to the fore as a key political and legislative concern. There has been a sustained focus within the research literature on Technologically Facilitated Violence (TFV) with respect to issues like youth cyberbullying (Chadwick 2014; Cross et al. 2012; Gillespie 2015; Kowalski et al. 2012), cyber stalking (Yar 2013) and online 'sexual predators' (Barnes 2006; Jenkins & Boyd 2006; Shade 2007; Cassell & Cramer 2008). Yet a growing body of literature has begun to examine the role of technology in facilitating violence against women and girls as communication technologies have begun to shape the modalities of gendered, sexual and intimate partner violence and their impacts (Powell 2015).

which provides a snapshot insight into the impacts of technology on women's experiences of isolated, sustained or ongoing violence.

It is important to note at this juncture that this data is limited. It has been gathered from an organisation focused on sexual violence support and is, therefore, only reflective of women contacting the service. Therefore, these findings cannot be considered reflective or generalisable to the experiences of all women within Singapore. Moreover, as this report focuses on the 2016 data it cannot speak to the overall prevalence of these incidents within SACC's cases. This limited data is only illustrative of the **types** of TFSV women in Singapore are facing, the social dynamics underpinning these experiences and their technological strategies of resistance.

4

Approach

This report draws on four streams of de-identified information gathered by SACC from January 2016-December 2016: call logs, legal session notes, case manager notes and befriender session notes.

Call Logs: The information provided by clients when they either call, email, drop-in or WhatsApp the SACC services. In this first communication, clients provide a précis of their complaint which is then recorded by the case manager or helpline.

Legal Sessions: Notes recorded by a volunteer, or case manager based on legal sessions between lawyers and clients. The notes include a summary of the advice provided to clients and ways to proceed.

Befriender Sessions: The SACC provides the option for clients to be accompanied while making police reports for additional support. These are summaries of the 'befrienders' observations while accompanying clients.

Case Sessions: These are ongoing notes made by case managers based on each time client contact is made with a practitioner in the service.

Counselling reports were not included in order to maintain the confidentiality of the client-counsellor communication. Moreover, in most call logs the helpline made a note of the emotional status of the client at the time of their call.

The first stage of the analysis comprised: de-identifying the data and removing all personal information to maintain client confidentiality in addition to examining the précis summarised by helpline and case managers. This data provided an overview of the key points of each case and were coded for components involving technology. The types of technology of interest to this report include communication technologies (e.g. mobile phones, text messages), digital technologies (e.g. GPS trackers), image technologies (e.g. video and image content) and internet technologies (e.g. apps, social media and software). Each case was then cross referenced to ensure that the case notes, befriender report and legal notes could be coded together. This was important as in some cases the role of technology was not apparent within the original précis but became apparent within the respective legal, befriender or case manager notes.

A coding frame was developed based on a review of the technologically facilitated gendered violence literature. However, implementing a grounded approach, incidents emerging from the data outside the initial coding frame, were also included. In the final coding process 6 major codes were established.

These codes do not represent separate or discriminate incidents. As has been observed in the empirical research into TFGV one 'case' can comprise multiple 'incidents' where technology plays a role (Powell & Henry 2016). For example, cases where an ex-partner both threatens to disseminate intimate images without consent and then disseminates those images for revenge involve both the components of sextortion (the threat) and revenge pornography (the non-consensual distribution of images for the purposes of revenge). Both can be included in the incident trajectory. As such, the following report considers technology as a 'component' in a single case. One implication of this is that recorded cases can have multiple technological components.

An additional point to note at the outset of this summary is that while this report investigates the role of technology in facilitating sexual violence, it does not take a technologically deterministic perspective which assumes that technology is solely a causal element in violence. Rather technology is a 'tool' in the sense that it can be utilised for violence but also for protection and resistance. As such, this report includes cases where technology is used for self-protection and evidence gathering. This is included to build a more nuanced account of the complex relationship between technology and violence.

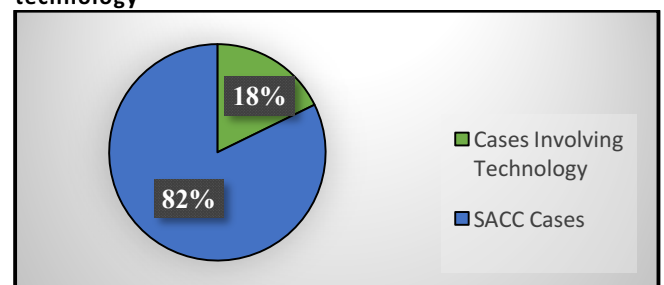
Where relevant, this report makes note of the important contextual aspects of each incident as there is a dearth of empirical research which explores how TFV intersects with race, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality (Henry & Powell 2016: 4) and citizenship status. The most common contextual factor which shaped each incident was the relationship between the perpetrator and the client. Key relationships included: Partners (boyfriends, husbands), ex-partners, colleagues, employers and friends. Other contextual factors, such as power dynamics, gender, citizenship and sexuality were all considered where relevant

5

Findings

From January 2016 to December 2016, SACC received 338 inquiries from clients. Of those inquiries, 60 (18%) cases involved the use of technology to either: facilitate or exacerbate violence/harassment or to record abuse/harm.

Figure 1: SACC Cases involving a component of technology



Cases involving technology

Of the 60 SACC cases involving technology, there were 6 major technological components: image based sexual abuse, contact based sexual harassment; meeting perpetrators online, digital evidence, social media and email contact with perpetrators and confiscation of communication devices.

6

Table 1. Key Components

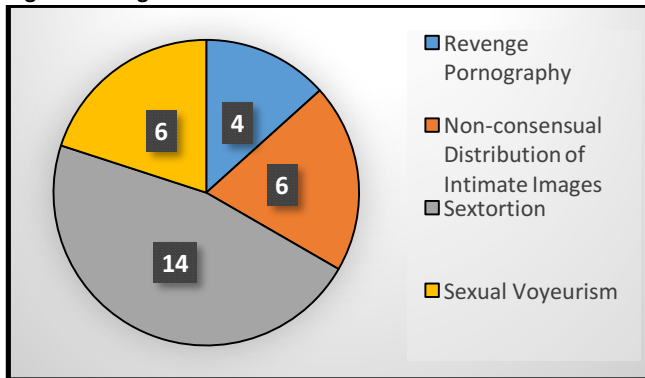
Code	No.
Image Based Sexual Abuse	30
Contact based sexual harassment	18
Meeting perpetrators online	8
Digital Evidence	3
Social Media & Email Contact with Perpetrator	6
Employer Confiscates Phone	1

As mentioned above, cases have overlapping technological elements. In six of these cases there were two technological components, therefore, the components total 66 rather than 60. To discuss the complexities of these cases, smaller codes (i.e. profiteering) will be included in the summaries below.

7

Image Based Sexual Abuse

Image based sexual abuse is an umbrella term developed by McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton (2017) and Powell and Henry (2017) to refer to the use of nude, sexual or intimate images of women to sexually harass or harm and can include: taking images without consent, distributing images without consent, attempts to coerce nude/intimate images and the use of those images to blackmail, extort, profit and coerce. We draw – not exclusively- but largely from Powell and Henry's (2017) typology of image based sexual abuses to distinguish between the types of abuse present in these cases as they varied with respect to *motive*, *mode* (creation, distribution, threats) and *scale*. In the 2016 SACC cases 29 clients reported 30 incidents of image based sexual abuse including: revenge pornography, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, sextortion and sexual voyeurism.

Figure 2: Image Based Sexual Abuse

Revenge Pornography

Revenge pornography is defined as the malicious or retributive, non-consensual distribution of intimate images by an intimate or ex- partner to online forums or third parties, often in the context of a relationship breakdown (McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017: 5). While early understandings of revenge pornography focused on the distribution of images to websites specifically dedicated to posting non-consensual images of 'ex-girlfriends' such as 'Is Anyone Up' (McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017: 5), the term can be applied to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images to third parties including: friends, family, workplaces, online spaces and social media. In the 2016 cases, there were four revenge pornography cases involving ex-partners and acquaintances distributing intimate images to family members and sex themed Tumblr sites.

Table 2. Revenge Pornography: Perpetrator, Content and Distribution Location

Perpetrator	No.
Ex-partner	3
Acquaintance/Friend	1
Content	No.
Intimate images/video	2
Facebook photos	1
Sexualised Photoshopping	1
Distributed	No.
Family/Friends/Partners	2
Tumblr	2

For example, one client reported that her ex-partner sent her intimate images to her mother and was threatening to release more on social media. Another client whose nude images had been disseminated onto social media assumed that the perpetrator was an acquaintance whose marriage proposal she'd rejected. Revenge pornography was not exclusive to heterosexual relationships: in one case, a client reported that her former girlfriend had sent nude images of the client (which she had obtained non-consensually) to her current girlfriend in the aftermath of their breakup. In this complex case, the perpetrator reportedly sent these images to her own friends who were also participating in acts of revenge pornography by printing them out and sending them to the client's family. Revenge was also a motive outside of intimate relationships. For example, the final revenge pornography case involved a client whose images were disseminated on Tumblr, by an acquaintance who had a personal grievance against her.

While in most cases, the images in question featured the client (either consensually or non-consensually obtained) one case illustrated that 'real' representations are not necessary to harm or harass. These images were 'sexualised photoshopping' (McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017: 9) as the client's face was photoshopped onto another woman's body and then posted to social media. This case illustrates that perpetrators can and are resorting to 'sexualised photoshopping' in the absence of authentic images and that the images need not be authentic for clients to experience embarrassment and distress.

These cases clearly align with observations about revenge pornography within the empirical literature: namely that they are animated by gendered dynamics, particularly gendered notions of shame and public space; and are perpetrated largely (but not exclusively) by men retributively attempting to humiliate, shame and harass (publically and within family contexts) women who have either rejected them or ended relationships with them (Citron & Franks 2014; McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017; Powell & Henry 2014).

Non-consensual distribution of intimate images

As others have noted, the dominance of revenge pornography in public discourse has led to limited recognition of the wider range of behaviours situated on the continuum of image based abuse (McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton 2017; Powell & Henry 2017), specifically the many incidents which involve the use of intimate images yet don't involve intimate partners or revenge as a motive. The next sub-section is dedicated to six cases involving non-consensual distribution of intimate images. In these cases, images were distributed without consent, however, perpetrators were not specifically motivated by revenge, or the motivation was unclear.

Table 3: Non-consensual distribution of intimate images: Perpetrator, Content, Distribution

Perpetrator	No.
Ex-partner	2
Partner	1
Stranger	3
Content	No.
Consensually shared images	2
Hacked images	2
Unclear	1
Non-consensual recording	1
Distributed	No.
Online	5
Friends	1

In three cases, perpetrators (ex-partners, a partner and strangers) posted or sold the client's intimate images (without consent) for profit. For example, the first case involved a client who had previously given her partner permission to post her nude images online, however, after ending the relationship she found that he posted further images without her consent for money. In another case a (presumed) stranger hacked the client's Dropbox, obtained nude images she had recorded then and distributed those images to Singaporean sex forums. This was accompanied with her identifying information (NRIC and Passport number). When the client requested the person who posted to take it down, the perpetrator refused and told her that he profited as these images were generating 'traffic' on these forums thereby providing an incentive for him to continue uploading the content. Additionally, in another case the client and her husband created a video recording of their sexual activity and she later found out that he was sharing this content with an acquaintance as payment for a debt. The acquaintance then posted the content on an online forum. Collectively these cases illustrate that while 'revenge' is a prominent motive, alternative motives such as profiteering also shape this practice. Moreover, that these images can generate profit and traffic illustrates there is a market for non-consensually obtained/shared nude images of women and more specifically nude images of local Singaporean women within Singapore focused forums. These cases (and those in the category of revenge pornography) also highlight that the subsequent dissemination of images by anonymous third parties makes image based abuse a collusive and collective practice whose harms are cumulative (Citron 2014).

There were also cases which illustrated that the specific motives of image based abuse are unclear, particularly if the person disseminating the content is unknown. For example, two incidents involved strangers hacking either the Dropboxes or the emails of each client with the specific intention of obtaining their intimate images and then distributing them onto public and pornographic websites. While this was injurious, it was unclear whether these distributions were motivated by personal reasons (like revenge) or opportunism. In one of these cases the client found that an unknown person had obtained her intimate images and then leaked to them pornographic websites. Once the images were removed at her request, the videos resurfaced on 'mainstream forums' along with her identifying information (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram handles). This case illustrates that doxing remains one of the more harmful and malicious aspects of image based sexual abuse, as the victim is not only injured by the violation of consent, but also subject to further harassment by strangers who have seen the images and then begin contacting them to insult, threaten, sexually harass and demand more images (Jane 2017).

One complex and isolated case also illustrated that many of the stereotypes about image based abuse (e.g. it is motivated by revenge, it is targeted at one victim and images are consensually shared with the perpetrator) are too narrow. In this case, the client's ex-boyfriend posted non-consensually recorded videos of the client showering and videos of himself sexually assaulting her while she slept to Tumblr and porn sites along with other sexually voyeuristic recordings of other girls. This highlights that the intersection between intimate partner abuse and image based abuse does not hinge on relationship breakdowns and can occur during relationships without open conflict. Moreover, this case highlights that images of sexual assault, in addition to intimate and consensually created images are also being included in the online image abuse market.

Sextortion

As evident above, the distribution of intimate images was prominent in this sample. However, 14 separate cases also involved threats to disseminate images and attempts to extort or coerce nude images. This practice is referred to as sextortion, which Powell and Henry (2017: 122) specifically define as a process whereby a perpetrator obtains 'sexual or sexually explicit images of a victim and then threatens to distribute those images in order to demand the victim sends further photos or videos' or as a way to coerce sex acts and prevent women from leaving relationships. In addition, sextortion refers to cases where the perpetrator attempts to coerce or extort nude images. In the 2016 data, these threats were made by ex-partners, friends, unknowns/strangers, acquaintances, colleagues and employers. Most involved the threat to distribute images online or to family members. In some cases, the motive was specifically for revenge, usually for a previous break up or when the client was attempting to end a relationship. For example, one client reported that her ex-partner had come to her house threatening to show her parents videos of them having sex, videos she didn't know existed. In other cases, the perpetrator used the palpable threat of exposing images to coerce clients into:

- Sex
- Sending more nude images
- Meeting offline
- Reinstating social media contact
- A relationship

For example, two clients reported that they were being harassed and threatened by men who were unknown to them and claimed to have their nude images and private videos. In the first instance the perpetrator threatened to release the video unless the client met with him in person and in the second instance the perpetrator threatened to release the images online unless the client sent him more nude images of herself. In the latter instance this was an ongoing threat and the client was unaware as to the identity of the person or how they obtained her images in the first place. Moreover, in another case a man threatened to expose a client's intimate videos to her parents if she refused to be in a relationship with him.

There also emerged cases which illustrated the role of power dynamics (particularly between employers, employees and colleagues) in instances of sextortion. For example, one involved a client with financial problems who asked a colleague to borrow money, the colleague stated that he would help her if she had sex with him and began requesting nude images from her (she acquiesced but sent a cropped image of a woman off the internet). Similarly, another client who was not a Singaporean citizen met a Manager of a business who promised to provide her with a work permit if she quit her job. After she acquiesced he began demanding cybersex and nude images in exchange.

As has been observed elsewhere, the use of images as techniques of coercion is a concerning trend because communication technologies enable consistent and pervasive contact (Henry & Powell 2016; Bluett-Boyd, Fileborn, Quadara, & Moore 2013). Indeed, helplineers described victims of sextortion as 'anxious', 'scared', 'paranoid' and 'frightened' that the perpetrator would make good on their threats. Some clients reported that they were scared to the point that it was affecting their studies, sleep and ability to participate in the workplace.

Fear and anxiety were evident in most cases of sextortion, however, the powerful reality of these threats and their ability to induce anxiety was particularly visible in cases where clients complied with threats. For example, in one case a client's friend threatened to post her nude pictures and videos online unless she had sex with him weekly. Out of fear she complied. Similarly, other clients complied with threats to release images by sending the perpetrator more nude images at their request. Evident in these cases is that the social shame attached to public displays of the female body and broad social stigmas attached to female sexuality modulate and intensify these fears (Powell & Henry 2017).

The impact of this threat was also evident in cases where the perpetrator 'claimed' they had nude images of the client but the client was unable to recall when or how they had obtained these images and it was unclear whether these images were in fact in the perpetrator's possession. One client was petrified that her parents would find out about her taking images in the first place and even after police uncovered no images on the perpetrator's devices she was still concerned that images were in his possession and therefore outside her control. Such a response is illustrative of recent research into the impacts of image based sexual abuse which suggests that 'loss of control' remains one of the main negative outcomes for victims (Bates 2017). These cases illustrate the impact of these threats and that sextortion doesn't require the victim to know, for certain, that images of themselves are: circulating or in the possession of an unknown perpetrator to feel anxious, frightened or threatened enough to comply.

Sexual Voyeurism

Sexual voyeurism refers to 'record[ing] or distribut[ing] images without the victim knowing...for voyeuristic reasons' (Powell & Henry 2017: 124-125). There were six incidents where the victim was voyeuristically recorded without consent, these cases involved clients being non-consensually recorded by employers, ex-partners, friends and strangers. Two of these incidents involved clients being recorded by strangers in public space. For example, one client reported that while she was at a popular MRT station a man began filming up her skirt (also referred to as Upskirting) and another reported that she had been filmed by a man while breastfeeding in public.

In two cases the non-consensual recording occurred within the work environment. In one of these cases the woman was working as a domestic worker. This client reported being sexually harassed by her male employer (the father of the children she cared for) who had installed a camera in the bedroom where she sleeps with the child. This case highlights that domestic workers may be subject to non-consensual recording by employers who utilise cameras as mechanisms of surveillance. While this raises broader issues with regards to privacy in the workplace, as digital technologies (particularly video and e-monitoring) have become normalised techniques of governing employee behaviour and performance (Ball 2010). It also raises important issues with respect to the normalised and supportive community attitudes towards surveillance of domestic workers while they are alone, in private space and have an expectation of privacy. One of the

implications of such normalisation is that it has the potential to render this cohort of workers highly vulnerable to non-consensual recording, regardless of whether the intention is sexually voyeuristic or managerial.

8

Contact Based Sexual Harassment

Technologically facilitated sexual harassment (TFSH) is a broad term that refers to a range of behaviours involving the use of digital and communication technologies to sexually harass, harm or humiliate. TFSH can include: cyberstalking (Maher, McCulloch & Fitz-Gibbon 2017), gender based cyberhate such as rape threats, sexualised threats and misogynistic insults, in addition to unwanted sexual contact via online forums, social media or communication technologies (Megarry 2014; Jane 2017). One key component of TFSH, is contact based sexual harassment, namely the use of communication and internet technologies to facilitate harassment, make unwanted sexual contact or share unwanted sexual content (messages or visual content).

Cases involving contact based sexual harassment were one of the most prevalent in the 2016 SACC data. Eighteen (30%) of the 60 technology cases featured contact based sexual harassment and most included the use of communication technologies by perpetrators to facilitate unwanted sexual/harassing contact or share unwanted sexual content. This included: testing messages, explicit, coercive & sexually harassing messages and in one case non-consensual outing on social media. In these cases, perpetrators were employers, colleague/s, strangers, teachers (not school teachers) and unknown parties.

Table 4: Instances of Contact Based Sexual Harassment

Category	No.
Testing Messages	5
Unwanted and Explicit messages/content	9
Calling/messaging to coerce sex/relationship	3
Non-consensual outing on social media	1

Testing messages

Within this category there were five instances of testing messages. Testing messages are defined as messages which were friendly, suggestive or coercive and preceded either a sexual assault or rape by an employer/colleague or were part of an ongoing pattern of sexual harassment in the workplace. Testing messages were often not explicitly sexual but attempts to: (1) build familiarity through frequent contact or (2) set up the understanding that text exchanges equated to sexual interest.

For example, in one case where a client was sexually assaulted by her work colleague, prior to the assault, the perpetrator would text the client outside of work hours (specifically before and after work), she noted that she 'always thought of it as colleagues/friends texting each other and didn't think that [her] messages could be misconstrued'. This case illustrates a key theme in cases where technology was used by employers and colleagues to harass. The connectivity offered by text messages, WhatsApp and social media was utilised by these men as a way of extending their contact, attempting to establish intimacy and inserting themselves into clients' lives. This was evident in the content of their messages which were often personal and suggested an intimacy between themselves and the client. For example, clients reported that their employers/colleagues would often send texts or message on Facebook saying: 'Good night', 'are you sleeping or

working out', 'I want you to be my wife' and 'I love you' or would use messages as a way of inviting clients to meet outside of work.

The timing and mode of these messages was also significant as they usually took place before or after work hours and on the weekends. For example, in one particularly acute case, a client's employer called and emailed multiple times on the weekend, asking personal questions. He also messaged her every day to ask her to lunch and talk about non-work related matters, despite her clearly stating that she would only respond to emails and messages about work related matters.

This category of messages brings to bear some important issues with respect to sexual harassment in the workplace and how modes of communication in the contemporary work place act as enablers for harassment. Specifically, social media and messaging services which bring colleagues and employers into 'manufactured social spaces' are shaped by the expectation that employees will be contactable outside formal workplace channels (such as emails). In these cases, perpetrators took advantage of these spaces of 'normalised contact' to connect with clients and repeat unwanted contact.

One of the implications of testing messages centres on believability and evidence. For example, in one case the client resisted going to HR because she didn't want anyone at work having access to the messages that were sent between her and her employer. However, the key reason cited for her reluctance was a concern that her messages would be interpreted as encouraging contact. In these messages the client thanked him for his attentions and suggested that he should get a divorce if he wanted to pursue other relationships. While the client clearly stated that this was a tactic used to avoid confrontation, there is a likelihood that defensive and placating strategies via text can be misinterpreted as encouragement or enjoyment as harassing messages can be misunderstood and trivialised by outsiders who cannot accurately interpret the context of the specific communication (Woodlock 2016).

Unwanted and Explicit messages/content

Nine TFSV cases involved colleagues (3), strangers (3), a Teacher (Not school) (1), an ex-partner (1) and an employer (1) sending explicitly sexual messages, videos and photos or making unwanted sexually harassing contact via text messages. For those involving colleagues they were not 'testing messages' but co-workers using messages to disseminate sexual content or make unwanted sexual or harassing comments. For example, in one case a client, who was being sexually harassed by her employer, reported that during a meeting he showed her that he had obtained (she was unclear as to how) a nude image of her and was keeping it on his phone. In another case a client reported that a colleague was sending unwanted sexual videos and photos.

Outside of sexual harassment in the workplace, other cases involved strangers sending explicit messages and images. For example, one case involved a young woman who advertised her work services on GumTree receiving unsolicited nude images from a man in response to the advertisement. Two other cases involved young women under the age of 18 receiving unsolicited nude images and sexual messages and images from strangers.

Calling/messaging to coerce sex/relationship

In three cases the perpetrator used messages and phone calls to continually contact the client to harass or coerce them into sex or a relationship. This was particularly evident in one case where a client's friend became possessive, controlling and jealous and began demanding to see her once a week for sex. She eventually

complied to stop him from calling so frequently and to end the harassment. After she began refusing his demands for sex, he began calling 10 times a day, checking her location, and contacting her employer, colleagues and friends to speak disparagingly about her. Though she reported this sexual assault and the harassing calls and threats to the police, they considered this consensual sex. This case highlights the palpable impact that contact based harassment can have on a victim, it is highly intrusive and disruptive and therefore, a powerful tool of coercion and extortion.

Non-consensual outing on social media

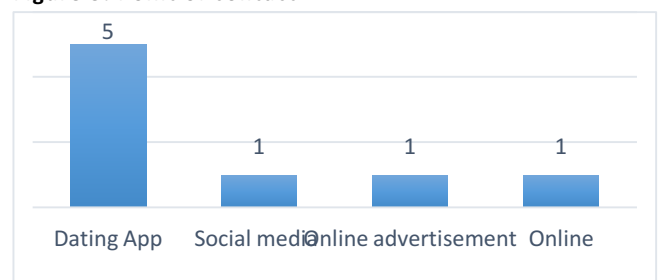
The final contact based case illustrated the problematic realities of harassment and the public sphere. A client who was experiencing pre-existing sexual harassment from an unknown person reported that this person was also emailing negative comments about her to her employer, and, importantly, writing negative comments about her competency on her workplace Facebook page. This perpetrator also used the Facebook page to disclose that the client is a lesbian. While the client indicated that her workplace was understanding, she was concerned that the perpetrator would inform her family about her sexuality, as they were not aware of it. This case indicates the intersection between gender, sexuality and technological harassment; where sexuality shaming and non-consensual 'outing' in public spaces has become a tool of abuse. While sexuality based harassment is not to be conflated with sexual harassment, this case is included in this subsection because it occurred within a broader context of sexual harassment and it is an important example of how unwanted contact based harassment also involves references to sexual orientation.

9

Meeting Perpetrators Online

In eight cases women who were raped or sexually assaulted met their perpetrator in an online space. Clients met perpetrators via: dating apps (5) social media (1), in an unspecified context online (1) and through an online advertisement (1). In most cases, social media and dating apps facilitated the interaction between the perpetrator and the victim, which was either a date or a meeting to exchange services and the sexual assault or rape occurred in the aftermath of their initial meeting. These cases illustrate that technology is being used to facilitate contact between perpetrators and survivors, outside of pre-existing friendship circles and social networks.

Figure 3: Point of contact



10

Digital Evidence

While these cases indicate that technology is being woven into pre-existing techniques of violence, there were three cases where new media was utilised by clients to support strategies for disclosing violent incidents or for the purposes of creating a visual or digital record of sexual violence. For example, clients used videos or cameras to record injuries after being sexually assaulted.

11

Social Media & Email Contact with Perpetrator of a Sexual Assault

In six cases involving sexual harassment, assault or rape, social media and messaging played a part in facilitating contact between perpetrators and victims both before and after the assault. Social media was utilised by the perpetrator after the assault for several reasons: to apologise and claim that the assault was consensual, to negate the seriousness of the assault and to continue friendly conversation 'as if nothing had happened'. Mediated contact after the assault was linked to negative impacts on victims. For example, one client reported that she had been raped by her then boyfriend and he was still emailing her every week and triggering her psychological trauma from the rape.

12

Employer Confiscates Phone

In one rare case technology was being withheld as opposed to utilised to facilitate abuse. In this case, a maid agency called on behalf of a woman working as a domestic worker. This woman had been both sexually harassed and sexually assaulted by her male employer, he had harassed her daily by touching her without consent and showing her pornography. One day while his wife was at work he locked her in the bathroom and sexually assaulted her. When the woman eventually told his wife (after asking for a transfer) the couple jointly cancelled her working pass, took her phone away and took her directly to the airport.

13

Assistance and Reporting

The following section focuses on: the advice provided to clients, clients' experiences reporting to the police and some of the challenges that the technological aspects of these cases raised with respect to formal legal intervention. This section will focus specifically on the technological aspects of the client's case, as opposed to other legal concerns. For example, much of the legal advice for cases where the perpetrator of a sexual assault met the client via a dating app centred on issues around consent and the strength of the client's case. These will not be included here. Moreover, it is beyond the scope of this report to examine the impact and effectiveness of interventions like Protection Orders under the *Protection from Harassment Act* (2014) reforms. This section briefly reflects upon specific aspects of the support trajectory which illustrate the impact of technology on intervention.

Support

Client's reporting TFSV were consistently provided with detailed information by a helpline or lawyer (during a legal session at SACC) about (1) criminal prosecution via a Magistrate's complaint or (2) Protection Orders under the *Protection from Harassment Act* (2014). However, it was unclear at the time of writing this report whether a client had successfully obtained a Protection Order, *specifically* for incidents of TFSV and whether that Order had been effective. There could be many reasons for this. For example, clients could have obtained successful Protection Orders without informing SACC, moreover many of these cases are ongoing and therefore clients may have subsequently obtained such Orders. As such, this raises important question about how and whether Protection Orders, are being used by clients facing contact and image based abuse and is something which should be explored in future research.

Police intervention and technology

There were several cases in this cohort which illustrated the tension between formal intervention and TFSV. Firstly, some cases demonstrated the challenges law enforcement face when the perpetrator or the content is outside local jurisdictions. For example, in one case a client's ex-partner was in Malaysia and threatened to disseminate her intimate images on social media. Police responded that they were unable to proceed as he was outside of the country. Similarly, in another case where the perpetrator hacked a client's Dropbox and posted her images onto local forums, police knew he was a 'serial uploader' yet they were unable to proceed as the sites were hosted in the US and therefore outside of SPF's jurisdiction. Alternative technological challenges were evident in cases involving the distribution of intimate images without consent. In one case, photoshopped images of a client's head onto a nude image were being circulated on Tumblr yet police couldn't proceed because the photos had already been removed. Despite this, the client had been informed that the images were still being disseminated via acquaintances. These cases illustrate the long-observed challenges that law enforcement face when investigating technologically facilitated crimes. Often the perpetrator is outside their jurisdiction, the evidence is not clear cut and the perpetrator is made anonymous through the internet (Citron 2014). Moreover, that images can be disseminated easily, through multiple channels and via multiple individuals raises difficulties for both investigation and intervention.

However, even in cases where police were successful in arresting and charging the perpetrator, police attitudes and understanding of the techno-social aspects of the case impacted their decision to investigate and their advice to clients. For example, in one case a client was coerced into sex with a perpetrator after he threatened to post intimate images and videos of her online. He also created a fake Instagram account with her name and information. When she made a police report, the Investigating Officer first claimed that this was not a rape but a 'sex scam' and suggested that she should merely 'delete Instagram' to manage the harassment.

Similar misunderstandings of the coercive nature of contact and image based harassment were evident in other cases. Such a response illustrates that in addition to the 'technological' challenges associated with investigating, stakeholders' limited understanding of TFSV and its impacts is also a challenge victim's have to navigate when reporting (Citron 2014). This is particularly evident in cases where police advise victims to merely 'switch off' and misunderstand (as with the 'sex scam' case) the palpable impact TFSV can have on victims by replicating the flawed assumption that there exists a distinction between online and offline space.

Individual Responsibilities

Select cases in this cohort raised important questions about clients' decisions to pursue formal legal interventions and the individual responsibilities they took on in the absence of legal interventions. In some cases, clients were so afraid of sextortion threats that they refused advice to report cases to police. For example, in a case where the perpetrator (the client's partner) threatened to release intimate images, the client refused to seek legal intervention because she was afraid that he would make good on the threat. Others illustrated that age and embarrassment were factors preventing reporting, particularly in cases of image based sexual abuse where clients volitionally produced and shared intimate images. For example, in one sextortion case, it was recommended that the client could pursue a Protection Order.

However, as she was under 21, she would need parental/guardian consent to make a Magistrate's complaint. The client deferred and stated that she would wait until she was 21, as she didn't want her parents to find out about the incident. While such an issue could arise with respect to any intervention order for cases involving intimate images, such an age requirement can act as a further barrier for young women seeking civil or criminal protective mechanisms as they wish to avoid the shame and/or embarrassment of informing family members. Indeed, many clients made explicit mention to helpline staff that they were concerned about parents 'finding out' about either their images or harassment, or self-blamed and indicated that they didn't disclose an image based abuse because they didn't want to be seen as one of 'those girls' who would volitionally take intimate images. This indicates that embarrassment, shame and concern about getting in trouble, is potentially a key barrier for victims to come forward and report and places greater pressure on these women to manage the problem without support from friends or family.

In some cases, in the absence of formal intervention, clients developed individualised strategies for managing abuse. This was particularly evident in a case where a client's images were hacked and posted online. In the absence of support from police the client resorted to defensive strategies such as emailing site administrators to remove the images. The impact of this responsibilised practice was clear as the client had to log in everyday and check that the images weren't being re-posted every few hours. As Jane (2017) has argued individualised strategies for preventing TFV are commonplace and in the absence of formal protections victims will often be forced to take on the responsibility of managing abuse.

14

Conclusion & Recommendations

These findings indicate that a substantial number of sexual violence inquiries made to SACC in 2016 involve one or multiple technological components. Predominantly, these findings indicate that women are being subject to contact based abuse and harassment through persistent and unwanted messages and calls. Or image based abuses through non-consensual obtainment & dissemination of intimate images or threats to disseminate their intimate images. What was also evident in these findings was the complex role of technology across a variety of experiences of abuse and harassment. As is evident from the cases articulated above, sexual violence was in some way mediated, facilitated and impacted by technology. This confirms the growing international empirical evidence on TFGV and serves to illustrate that technology is being 'folded into' practices of violence, harm and harassment as opposed to exclusively creating 'new types' of violence, harm and harassment. These findings also illustrate that technology is shaping the realities of women's experiences of violence as contact and image based abuse is often constant, continual and intrusive and the interconnectivity of new media allows perpetrators to engage in conduct which impacts on client's sense of safety, professional reputation, personal lives and mental health.

There were also important and illustrative cases within this data set which indicate as Henry and Powell (2016) have argued the need to examine, in closer detail, the contexts which inform TFV and TFSV. Several cases in this report illustrated that women who were without the protections of permanent residency or full citizenship or subordinate to their employer were being targeted for TFSV. In addition, the prominence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images or threats to distribute intimate

images within this dataset also illustrates the need to situate these behaviours within a gendered context, as these cases suggest perpetrators understood the impact that the dissemination of intimate images would have on victims. As stated at the beginning of this report, these cases are merely illustrative and therefore cannot lead to conclusions about prevalence or representation. However, they raise important questions and illustrate the need for greater research of this phenomenon within Singapore.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That SACC and AWARE ensure staff receive training on the modalities and impacts of TFSV.

Recommendation 2

That SACC and AWARE ensure staff receive training on eSafety strategies.

Recommendation 3

That SACC and AWARE commission TFSV and eSafety educational resources for clients. These resources should provide an overview of technologically facilitated forms of gendered and sexual violence/harassment. These resources should also instruct clients on their legal options for TFSV and eSafety strategies for self-protection. The resources should be focused on supportive behaviours and strategies and not merely inform women that they should reduce their online participation or in the case of image based abuse suggest that they 'not' take pictures.

Recommendation 4

Further research should be commissioned into the usefulness and impact of Protection Orders under the *Protection from Harassment Act* (2014). This research should focus on (1) access to Protection Orders and (2) the preventive impacts of Protection Orders for technologically facilitated sexual violence and image based abuse.

Recommendation 5

That the Singapore Police Force and Criminal Courts ensure officers and key actors are appropriately trained in the range of technologically facilitated forms of sexual violence and image based abuse. This training should attend to the range of harms caused by these practices and provide education as to how existing offences and protection orders can be used in response.

Recommendation 6

That the Singaporean government commission educational and media campaigns focusing on technologically facilitated sexual violence/harassment and image based sexual abuse. These campaigns should focus on the behaviour of the perpetrator not the victim.

References

- Ball, K. (2010). Workplace surveillance: an overview. *Labour History*, 51(1): 87–106.
- Bates, S. (2017). Revenge Porn and Mental Health: A Qualitative Analysis of the Mental Health Effects of Revenge Porn on Female Survivors. *Feminist Criminology*. Online First DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1177/155708511665456>
- Barnes, S.B. (2006). A privacy paradox: social networking in the United States. *First Monday*, 11(9), viewed 28 October 2012, http://www.firstmonday.org/ISSUES/issue11_9/barnes/
- Bluett-Boyd, N., Fileborn, B., Quadara, A., & Moore, S. (2013). *The role of emerging communication technologies in experiences of sexual violence: A new legal frontier? A new legal frontier?* Retrieved from papers2://publication/uuid/5E70CEF5-1D5F-46E3-91BC-514FFDA137DB
- Burke, S., Wallen, M., Vail-Smith, K. & Knox, D. (2011). Using technology to control intimate partners: An exploratory study of college undergraduates. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27: 1162–1167
- Cassell, J. & Cramer, M. (2008). High tech or high risk: moral panics about girls online. In: T. McPherson (Ed.) *Digital youth, innovation, and the unexpected*. MIT Press: Cambridge, pp. 53–75
- Cavezza, C. & McEwan, T. (2014). Cyberstalking versus off-line stalking in a forensic sample. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 20(10): 955–70.

- Chadwick, S. (2014). *Impacts of cyberbullying, building social and emotional resilience in schools*. Cham: Springer.
- Cross, D. Li, Q. & Smith, P. (2012). *Cyberbullying in the global playground research from international perspectives*. Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Dimond, J., Fiesler, C. & Bruckman, A. (2011). Interacting with Computers Domestic violence and information communication technologies. *Interacting with Computers*, 23(5): 413–421.
- DVRCV (2015). *ReCharge: Women's Technology Safety, Legal Resources, Research & Training: National Study Findings*, Legal Service NSW, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria and WESNET.
- Citron, D. K. (2014). *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England.
- Citron, D. K., & Franks, M. A. (2014). Criminalizing Revenge Porn. *Wake Forest Law Review*, 49: 345–391.
- Gillespie, A. (2015). *Cybercrime: Key Issues and Debates*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Goh, Y. & Yip, M. (2014). The Protection From Harassment Act 2014: Legislative Comment. *Singapore Academy of Law Journal*, 26: 703–726
- Halder, D. & Jaishankar, K. (2008) Cybercrimes against women in India: Problems, perspectives and solutions. *TMC Academic Journal*, 3(1): 48–62.
- Henry, N. & Powell, A. (2016). Technology-facilitated sexual violence: a literature review of empirical research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, online first 1–14, DOI: 10.1177/1524838016650189
- Jane, E.A. (2017). Feminist flight and fight responses to gendered cyberhate. In M. Segrave & L. Vitis (Eds.) *Gender, Technology and Violence*. Routledge: London.
- Jenkins, H. & boyd, D. (2006). Discussion: MySpace and Deleting Online Predators Act, *Digital Divide Network*, viewed 10 February 2014, <http://www.webcitation.org/5JcDJkn4u>
- Kowalski, R. Limber, S. & Agatston, P. (2012). *Cyberbullying bullying in the digital age* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Levy, K. (2014). Intimate surveillance. *Idaho Law Revue*, 51: 679–94.
- McGlynn, C., Rackley, E., & Houghton, R. (2017). Beyond “Revenge Porn”: The Continuum of Image-Based Sexual Abuse. *Feminist Legal Studies*. Online first, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-017-9343-2>
- Maher, J.M., McCulloch, J. & Fitz-Gibbon, K. (2017). New forms of gendered surveillance? Intersections of technology and family violence. In M. Segrave & L. Vitis (Eds.) *Gender, Technology and Violence*. Routledge: London.
- Megarry, J. (2014). Online incivility or sexual harassment? Conceptualising women's experiences in the digital age. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 47: 46–55.
- Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (2010). *Protecting Families from violence: The Singapore experience*. Singapore: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.
- Powell, A. (2015). Seeking Informal Justice Online: Vigilantism, Activism and Resisting a Rape Culture in Cyberspace. In N. Henry, A. Flynn & A. Powell (Eds.) *Rape Justice Beyond the Criminal Law*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Powell, A. & Henry, N. (2014). Blurred lines? Responding to “sexting” and gender-based violence among young people. *Children Australia*, 39(2): 119–124.
- Powell, A., & Henry, N. (2016). Policing technology-facilitated sexual violence against adult victims: police and service sector perspectives. *Policing and Society*, 1–17. Online First, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1154964>
- Powell, A, Henry, N. & Flynn, A. (2017). *Not Just ‘Revenge Pornography’: Australians’ Experiences of Image-Based Abuse: A summary report*. Melbourne: RMIT University.
- Powell, A. & Henry, N. (2017). *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Reynolds, B. W., Burek, M. W., Henson, B., & Fisher, B. S. (2013). The unintended consequences of digital technology: Exploring the relationship between sexting and cybervictimization. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 36: 1–17.
- Shade L.R. (2007). Contested spaces: protecting or inhibiting girls online? In S. Weber & S. Dixon (Eds.) *Growing Up Online: Young People and Digital Technologies*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, pp. 227–244.
- sm Kee, J. and S. Randhawa (2009). *Malaysia: Violence Against Women and ICT*. Retrieved from: http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/malaysia_APC_WNSP_MDG3_VAW ICT_ctype.pdf
- Southworth, C., Finn, J., Dawson, S., Fraser, C. & Tucker, S. (2007). Technology, and Stalking. *Violence Against Women*, 13(8): 842–856
- We Are Social (2016). *Digital in 2016*. Retrieved from: <http://wearesocial.com/sg/special-reports/digital-2016>.
- Woodlock, D. (2016). The abuse of technology in domestic violence and stalking. *Violence against Women*, online first 1–19, DOI: 10.1177/1077801216646277.
- Woodlock, D. (2015). Remote control. *DVRCV Advocate*, Autumn/Winter 2015.
- Yar, M. (2013). *Cybercrime and society: crime and punishment in the information age* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

ⁱ Posting someone's personal identifying information online to expose their identity