



Panel Summary: “Revenge Porn”: The Response to Cyber Exploitation

Moderator: Jennifer Hanley, Family Online Safety Institute

Panelists: Laura Higgins, South West Grid for Learning; Ethel Quayle, University of Edinburgh; Cindy Southworth, National Network to End Domestic Violence; LaMont Walker, Microsoft

Overview: A look at the growing and vexing issue of the “revenge porn” phenomenon.

Ethel Quayle began the conversation by discussing how the generation of content and the change in distribution. She mentioned how the majority of what is classified as child pornography is in fact created by the minors themselves, either by corrosion, such as grooming, or on the other end of the spectrum, such as romantic relationships. In terms of revenge porn, images are used as a form of blackmail. Ethel mentions that a level of misuse and abuse occurs when there is a willingness to share the images with others that were originally created for intimate relations.

Cindy furthered this concept by noting that historically, people dating know intimate details of each other’s lives and that if there is a desire to harm, there is opportunity. Cindy made it clear that these photos are not pornography. If someone shares an intimate photo with someone else and then the individual distribute it widely to hurt the other individual, it’s domestic violence.

Laura talked about how one of the largest topics on the hotline is victim blaming and that new legislation in the UK will help individuals have proper conversations on how to manage new cases of revenge porn. LaMont spoke about how the industry is responding and that the main issue is identifying what to address. He noted that the technology isn’t the problem, that is it the platform and that abusers utilize social media and the Internet for distribution.

Cindy called attention to the fact that there are multiple paths to take when dealing with domestic violence and urged individuals to seek court and legal representation as soon as possible. However, Cindy mentioned that today there is not enough training, not enough resources and not enough hotlines to handle the continual cases. Laura talked about how devastating revenge porn can be to its victims and that providing counseling is a major undertaking of the hotline. She spoke about how reactive the industry has been and how they are changing to make reporting easier.

Ethel spoke about how young people are mindful of the risks and are proactively protecting themselves within the boundaries. She said that this is complex and complicated but individuals should remember that they are not helpless and that some of the worst-case scenarios could have happened but didn’t because individuals took a proactive stance. LaMont furthered this and said that in order to help victims, it must be a collective effort of all areas and that there is a framework, but it still needs work.

Jennifer asked about the terminology and if there was something more appropriate. Laura responded that it’s not revenge but it’s not porn, that it’s what the media has deemed and what people recognize. She mentioned non-consensual sharing of intimate photos as a softer term that could be used or online sexual harassment. Cindy agreed that revenge porn is the name the public recognizes.