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Perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse across three nations: An exploration of how victim gender and race shape attitudes towards deepfake abuse in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia

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A B S T R A C T

Despite a growing body of literature on various forms of image-based sexual abuse, little is known about public perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse. In this three-nation, pre-registered experimental study with a sample of 1,925 adults from the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and Australia, we manipulated the race and gender of victims of sexualized deepfake abuse to examine perceptions of blame and harm. Specifically, we exposed participants to pre-tested, ethically digitally-generated, full-frontal nude images of Black, East Asian, and White women and men in a between participants design, and assessed the extent to which the victim and perpetrator were blamed for the creation and sharing of the image, and the extent to which the victim was seen as harmed by the creation and sharing of the image. The analyses revealed that: (1) female victims were perceived to experience more harm than male victims from both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes; (2) male participants attributed less responsibility to perpetrators and less harm to victims for the creation and sharing of deepfakes; and (3) US participants were higher in attributions of victim blame and lower in perpetrator responsibility and victim harm than UK and Australian participants, for both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes. Finally, (4) US participants demonstrated gendered racism in attributions of harm, perceiving less harm to the Black female victim than the white and Asian female victims for image creation. One implication of these findings is that intersectional training and education on IBSA may be useful for bystanders and service providers.

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed numerous aspects of society, offering groundbreaking advancements across sectors from medicine to visual art. However, its rapid proliferation has also introduced significant challenges, including the misuse of AI for disinformation and criminal activities. For example, AI technologies have been employed to fabricate highly realistic fake content, manipulate public opinion, and perpetrate fraud on a global scale. 'Deepfakes,' AI-generated media that synthetically alters images or videos, have become particularly notorious for their ability to deceive and harm (George, 2024). The present study aims to examine how perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse are shaped by victim gender and race across three national contexts, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and Australia, drawing on theories and findings from feminist psychology and criminology that link victim gender and race with attributions of blame and harm (e.g., Penone & Spaccatini, 2019).

Sexualized deepfake abuse, a subset of AI-generated media, involves the creation of synthetic imagery depicting a person(s) in sexually explicit ways without their consent (Flynn et al., 2022a). Sexualized deepfake abuse falls under the umbrella of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), which includes a range of harmful practices involving the nonconsensual creation, sharing, or use of intimate images or videos (Henry et al., 2021). IBSA is a violation of a person's privacy and autonomy, and can include the non-consensual taking of intimate images, the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images, the threat to share intimate images without consent (also referred to as 'sextortion', Eaton et al., 2023), and sexualized deepfake abuse creation and distribution (Flynn et al., 2025a). Sexualized deepfake abuse may be understood as distinct from other forms of sexualized, AI-image generation, both by its likeness to a specific person, and the absence of consent.

Though research is sparse, there is some indication that the rate of creating and sharing sexualized deepfakes is increasing exponentially globally, similar to other forms of IBSA (Powell et al., 2020). Victim-survivors in recent years have included celebrities (e.g., Taylor Swift, see Flynn et al., 2025b), politicians (e.g. US Congresswoman

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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, see Flynn & Henry, 2021; Gozzi, 2024), and school-age children (Flynn et al., 2024). Government and non-government agencies are increasingly concerned about the threat that sexualized deepfakes pose, especially when used as a form of abuse towards women and girls (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2023; eSafety, 2025). Indeed, in 2020, the deepfake detection company Sensity reported that 96 % of all detected deepfakes were sexualized in nature, and these predominantly featured women (Ajder et al., 2020). This growth has been driven by technological advancements that make creating deepfakes accessible to non-experts, alongside a surge in demand on illicit online platforms (Henry & Flynn, 2019; Patton et al., 2022).

1.1. The harms of IBSA and sexualized deepfake abuse

The harms associated with IBSA are profound and multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, economic, and existential dimensions. Victims frequently report experiencing severe emotional distress, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Bates, 2017; McGlynn et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2024). They also report experiencing economic instability, physical distress, and social losses (Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020; Spiker et al., 2025), as well as social stigma and reputational damage that can lead to job loss and further victimization (Powell et al., 2018, 2024). Experiential harms that go beyond medical diagnoses have also been documented, such as existential threat and social isolation (McGlynn et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, research consistently demonstrates that the harms experienced by victims of IBSA are minimized and normalized, both within societal discourse and institutional responses (Eaton et al., 2024; Flynn et al., 2025b). Victims of IBSA often face skepticism regarding the severity of their distress, with many perceiving IBSA as less harmful than other forms of sexual violence (Flynn et al., 2023; McGlynn et al., 2021). This minimization is reinforced by cultural narratives that trivialize digital abuses as less impactful than physical violence, despite evidence to the contrary, including the compounding effects of the public and permanent nature of online dissemination (Flynn et al., 2024; Powell et al., 2018).

1.1.1. Victim characteristics and bystander attributions

While the harms to victims of IBSA are generally minimized and normalized, it is likely they are not minimized equally across all victims. While no research to date has compared perceptions of female versus male victims of sexualized deepfake abuse, sexual double standards that reward men for sexual behaviors and penalize women (e.g., Crawford & Popp, 2003; Eaton & Rose, 2011) may lead women to be blamed for deepfake victimization more than men. In addition, research shows that men often face a precarious status as victims of sexual violence, as their experiences conflict with dominant norms of masculinity (Glick & Fiske, 1999). The belief that men always desire sex and cannot be sexually coerced or abused may result in heightened disbelief of male victims or lowered attributions of harm (Stephens & Eaton, 2014; Studzinska & Hilton, 2017).

Similarly, the race of victims of sexualized deepfake abuse may influence bystander attributions of blame and harm. While no research to our knowledge has examined how the race of victims of deepfake abuse affects perceptions or attributions, previous work finds that Black victims of sexual assault are blamed more than white victims (Linhares & Torres, 2022). This has been shown to be related to racial stereotypes that cast Black men and women as sexually aggressive and promiscuous (e.g., Leath et al., 2021; Zounlome et al., 2019).

1.1.2. Bystander characteristics and bystander attributions

The ways in which people perceive victims of sexualized deepfake abuse are also likely influenced by their own social identities, such as gender and cultural background. For example, research has demonstrated that men are more likely than women to minimize the harms of authentic IBSA and attribute blame to victims (Flynn et al., 2023; Maddocks, 2020; Zvi, 2022). Cultural norms regarding gender roles and sexuality may also influence perceptions of harm, with victims from more conservative cultures with stronger gender role norms facing harsher moral judgments (Penone & Spaccatini, 2019). Similarly, research by Rollero and Pagliaro (2022) found that progressivism was negatively related to victim blaming and positively related to perpetrator blaming for the non-consensual dissemination of authentic sexual images.

In addition, some countries, such as Australia and South Korea, have criminalized the creation of sexualized deepfake abuse (Australian Government, 2024; Yim, 2024), or are in the process of criminalizing it, like the United Kingdom (House of Lords, 2024). Others, like the US, have not, indicating different levels of national acceptance of this form of violence. Systematic and direct comparisons between women's and men's perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse across nations is therefore important for addressing societal and cultural attitudes and policies that perpetuate victim-blaming and hinder justice for victims.

In sum, despite a growing body of literature on various forms of IBSA, little is known about public perceptions of perpetrators and victims of sexualized deepfake abuse. Factors such as the fabricated nature of the imagery and the absence of physical access to victims may shape perceptions of harm and blame in ways that differ from other forms of sexual violence, or even from other forms of IBSA. Moreover, these perceptions are likely influenced by victim and bystander characteristics, such as gender, race, and culture. This gap in knowledge highlights the need for focused research on societal attitudes toward sexualized deepfake abuse.

1.2. The current study

In seeking to understand how victim and bystander characteristics affect perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse, an intersectional feminist framework is required. Rather than examining victim gender in isolation, or victim race in isolation, intersectionality considers how various forms of social privilege and marginalization combine to affect people's lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional feminist research therefore illuminates how systemic inequalities based on features like gender and race intersect to potentially exacerbate or change victimization experiences and societal responses (Eaton et al., 2019). For example, intersectional research has shown that stereotypes about gender and social class together affect attributions of blame for women's gender-linked mistreatment at work (Kiebler & Stewart, 2022). Intersectional feminist research has also found that Black women in the US are seen as generally less vulnerable to harm than white women (Thomas et al., 2022). By examining the intersection of gender and race among victims, and the emergent effects they create, scholars can contribute to the development of interventions and policies that address the unique needs of diverse populations affected by IBSA (Powell et al., 2024).

In the current study, we apply intersectionality theory to examine how victim and participant characteristics predict perceptions of harm and attributions of blame for diverse victim-survivors of sexualized deepfake abuse. Specifically, we use experimental methods to examine how adults perceive victims of sexualized deepfake abuse based on the victim's race (Black, East Asian, white) and gender (female, male), and based on the participant's gender (female, male) and country of residence (US, UK, Australia).

1.2.1. Victim gender

Our first set of predictions are rooted in international research on sexual double standards (e.g., Crawford & Popp, 2003; Eaton & Rose, 2011). The sexual double standard refers to the societal norm that judges women and men differently for identical sexual behaviors, typically endorsing or excusing male promiscuity, while stigmatizing similar behaviors in women. This phenomenon has been extensively studied

across various cultures, including the US, the UK, and Australia. In the US, research indicates that both women and men are subject to sexual double standards, with women often facing harsher judgments for sexual activity. A study by Conley et al. (2013), for example, found that women are more likely to be stigmatized for accepting casual sex offers. This stigma contributes to women's greater reluctance to engage in casual sex, reinforcing the double standard. In the context of sharing nude images consensually (often referred to as 'sexting'), Lippman and Campbell (2014) reported that girls in the US faced a double bind: they were criticized as 'sluts' for sharing nudes and as 'prudes' for refusing to do so, whereas boys were largely exempt from such moral scrutiny.

Studies in the UK reveal similar patterns. For example, research by Farvid et al. (2017) demonstrated that women who engage in multiple sexual partnerships are often labeled negatively, whereas men receive more lenient or even positive evaluations for comparable behaviors. In their study with young people in secondary schools in the UK, Ringrose et al. (2013) observed similar views in relation to consensual sexting. While sexting was often viewed as a normative aspect of adolescent sexual development, negative judgments disproportionately targeted girls and ignored the sexting behaviors of boys, reinforcing gendered expectations around sexuality and respectability.

In Australia, the sexual double standard manifests in both social judgments and personal experiences. For example, in a study of high school students from rural Australia, participants perceived greater social and reputational risks for young women engaging in sexual activity compared to young men (Hillier et al., 1998). This finding illustrates how the sexual double standard operates by amplifying the perceived consequences for women's sexuality while normalizing comparable behavior among men.

As a result of sexual double standards, not only is women's sexual behavior judged more harshly than men's, but the harms that come to male victims of sexual abuse are often denied. For example, in the US studies have shown that male victims of sexual abuse face skepticism and are often perceived as being less affected by trauma than female victims, stemming from societal beliefs that men are always willing participants in sexual activity (e.g., Stephens & Eaton, 2014). Similarly, research in the UK reveals that male victims are less likely to report incidents of sexual violence due to fear of stigmatization and disbelief, as prevailing cultural narratives often position men as aggressors rather than victims (Weare, 2018).

In Australia, findings indicate that institutional responses to male sexual abuse, particularly within schools and sports organizations, frequently trivialize their experiences, contributing to underreporting and a lack of support services tailored to their needs (O'Leary & Barber, 2008). In sum, the sexual double standard perpetuates harmful stereotypes that deny the legitimacy of male victimhood, further exacerbating the psychological and societal barriers that male victims of sexual abuse face. Based on the sexual double standard, which supports men's greater sexual expression and autonomy, and denies their susceptibility to sexual coercion or abuse, we predicted the following main effects:

(H1a). Female victims will be seen as more to blame than male victims for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.

(H1b). Perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are women rather than men.

(H2). Female victims will be seen as more harmed than male victims by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.

1.2.2. Victim race

Next, we propose main effect predictions for the role of victim race in attributions of blame and harm for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes. In all three nations under investigation, Black individuals have historically been dehumanized and perceived as less susceptible to harm than their white counterparts, a belief rooted in systemic racism and perpetuated through social, legal, and cultural practices. In the US, studies reveal that Black individuals are often viewed as having a higher pain tolerance, a bias stemming from slavery-era pseudoscience that continues to influence medical decision-making today (Hoffman et al., 2016). In the UK, Black communities face similar biases, as evidenced by disproportionate rates of police brutality, where officers frequently treat Black individuals with excessive force under the assumption they are more dangerous and less vulnerable (Shiner et al., 2019). In Australia, the colonial narrative of Indigenous inferiority has extended to Black individuals, with studies showing they are overrepresented in high-risk occupations and receive inadequate workplace safety protections, reflecting societal disregard for their well-being (Bargallie & Carlson, 2025).

In addition, Black people in all three nations are stereotyped as hypersexual, potentially increasing the belief that they are to blame for sexual violence victimization. Racist stereotypes in the US, the UK, and Australia encourage the sexualisation of Black male bodies and regard Black men as promiscuous and sexually aggressive (Calabrese et al., 2018; Jordens & Griffiths, 2022; Nwaosu et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Black women are frequently framed through the 'Jezebel' stereotype as hypersexual and manipulative. For instance, compared to white women, Black women in the US are more likely to be sexually objectified (Anderson et al., 2018).

As a result of anti-Black racism in the US, the UK and Australia, dehumanizing Black people and stereotyping them as hypersexual, we made the following main effect predictions:

(H3a). Black victims will be seen as more to blame than East Asian or white victims for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.

(H3b). Perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are Black rather than East Asian or white.

(H4). Black victims will be seen as less harmed than East Asian or white victims by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.

No a priori predictions were made about the contrasts between white and East Asian victims. The literature on stereotypes about East Asian victims suggests that they may sometimes be seen as more sexually passive or submissive than white victims (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Wong & McCullough, 2021), and thus potentially as less to blame or as more harmed by sexual violence than their white counterparts. However, other literature finds that East Asian people are sexually fetishized (Espinosa, 2023) and at risk of objectification (Wong & McCullough, 2021), indicating that they might experience more blame or be seen as less harmed than white victims. No published literature to our knowledge has directly examined perceptions of victim blame and harm for white compared to East Asian victims of sexual violence.

The decision to focus on Black, East Asian, and white victims in the US, the UK, and Australia was informed by both theoretical and methodological considerations. These groups reflect the three most salient racial categories within Western cultural contexts (Dovidio et al., 2017). Selecting these categories also ensured cross-national comparability of target images. For example, indigenous groups across nations (e.g., Native Americans versus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians), could not be visually represented in identical ways.

1.2.3. Participant gender

Based on previous work finding that men are more likely than women to blame victims, excuse perpetrators, and minimize the harms of sexual abuse (de la Torre & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2022), including IBSA (Flynn et al., 2023, 2025; Zvi, 2022), we predicted the following main effects:

(H5a). Male participants will attribute more blame to victims of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.

(H5b). Male participants will attribute less responsibility to perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.

(H6). Male participants will attribute less harm to victims of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.

1.2.4. Participant gender by country

Finally, based on intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991), we offer predictions about how victim gender and race intersect to produce perceptions of blame and harm. Gendered racism in the US perpetuates the stereotype that Black women are sexually promiscuous, a harmful trope rooted in the history of slavery. During slavery, Black women were dehumanized and portrayed as hypersexual beings to justify their exploitation and the widespread sexual violence they endured from enslavers. This constructed image framed Black women as inherently lascivious, contrasting them with the 'pure' ideal of white femininity (Collins, 2000; West, 1995).

In contemporary contexts, this stereotype persists, as Black women are disproportionately hypersexualized in media portrayals and subjected to judgment in both legal and social spheres, including disparities in how their claims of sexual violence are treated compared to those of East Asian and white women (Collins, 2000). For East Asian women, their fetishization as 'submissive' and 'pure' further underscores the racialized dichotomy (Pyke & Johnson, 2003), amplifying the marginalization of Black women as unworthy of protection or respect. These understandings not only reinforce oppressive views of the sexuality of women of color, but also perpetuates systemic inequities in how they are perceived and treated in society. As a result of gendered racism in the US, we made the following predictions:

(H7a). In the US, Black female victims will be seen as more to blame for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes than East Asian or white female victims.

(H7b). In the US, perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are Black women rather than East Asian or white women.

(H8). In the US, Black female victims will be seen as less harmed by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes than East Asian or white female victims.

No additional a priori predictions were made about nation-level effects. However, national comparisons were probed because of the variability in laws related to sexualized deepfake abuse across nations and the variations in national conservatism (with the US being higher than the UK and Australia; Duffy et al., 2023; Venaglia & Maxwell, 2021).

2. Method

This experiment used a 2 (victim gender: female, male) × 3 (victim race: Black, East Asian, White) × 2 (participant gender: female, male) × 3 (participant country: US, UK, Australia) between-participants design. The experiment was pre-registered in AsPredicted (Submission #193436). There were six key dependent variables: blame assigned to the victim for the creation of the image, blame assigned to the victim for the sharing of the image, ratings of perpetrator responsibility for the creation of the image, ratings of perpetrator responsibility for the sharing of the image, perceptions of harm to the victim for the creation of the image, and perceptions of harm to the victim for the sharing of the image.

2.1. Pretest

To create our stimuli, which included six entirely AI-generated and photoshopped full-frontal deepfake nude images, we employed a graphic designer. Rather than use an actual sexualized deepfake abuse application, which is both unethical and illegal in some countries, we opted to use a graphic designer to generate and edit the faces and bodies to be used in this experiment. The bodies of all three women stimuli (Black, East Asian, white) were identical and entirely AI-generated and photoshopped, with the only difference in bodies being the skin tone. The bodies of all three men stimuli (Black, East Asian, white) were also identical, with the only difference in bodies being the skin tone. The faces of each target were AI-generated and different, reflecting the different racial/ethnic and gender-based features of each target.[1]

The six stimuli were then pretested online using US ($N = 254$) and UK ($N = 256$) adults to assess participant perceptions of target age, attractiveness, and realism. Target age was assessed using a drop-down menu with options from 18 to 100. Target attractiveness and realism were assessed on Likert-type scales from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). A 2 (participant country) × 6 (target condition) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was then conducted to examine the effects of participant country and target condition, as well as their interaction, on perceptions of target age, attractiveness, and realism. There were no significant participant country by target condition interactions for any of the dependent variables ($ps > .14$). There were also no significant participant country main effects for any of the dependent variables ($ps > .17$). However, there were significant target condition main effects for each of the three dependent variables. The lowest perceived target age was for the white woman ($M = 24.52$, $SE = 0.39$) and the highest perceived target age was for the white man ($M = 29.22$, $SE = 0.40$), $F(5, 498) = 16.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .143$. The lowest attractiveness rating was for the Black man ($M = 2.75$, $SE = 0.10$) and the highest was for the white woman ($M = 3.70$, $SE = 0.10$), $F(5, 498) = 13.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .129$. Finally, the lowest realism rating was for the East Asian man ($M = 2.99$, $SE = 0.11$) and highest was for the Black woman ($M = 3.72$, $SE = 0.11$), $F(5, 498) = 8.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .094$. Given these differences among targets, we measured and controlled for these variables in the subsequent study.

2.2. Participants

A priori analysis conducted with G*Power at $\alpha = .05$, power = .80, and an effect size of .15, indicated that the minimum sample of 600 per country was needed to detect the expected small effect size in the 2 (victim gender) × 3 (victim race) × 2 (participant gender) × 3 (participant country) between-participants design. Our final sample comprised 1,925 adults (51.5 % women, 48.5 % men) from the US ($N = 637$), the UK ($N = 653$), and Australia ($N = 635$). Participants were between 18 and 90 years of age ($M = 51.00$, $SD = 16.83$) and most self-identified as white (79.6 %), with other racial/ethnic groups including Black (7.5 %), Asian (6.6 %), multi-racial (2.5 %), Hispanic/Latine (2.2 %), First-Nations/Indigenous (0.8 %), and Middle Eastern (0.6 %). Most participants self-identified as heterosexual (90.9 %), with other selections including bisexual (4.2 %), gay or lesbian (3.1 %), asexual (1.0 %), pansexual (0.2 %), and preferred not to say (0.6 %). In terms of education, 7.0 % had some high school or less, 25.2 % had a high school diploma or GED, 15.9 % had some college, 13.4 % had an associates or technical degree, 24.7 % had a bachelor's degree, 13.0 % had a graduate degree, and 0.8 % preferred not to say.

2.3. Procedure

Participants were recruited for this approximately 15-min study ($M = 14.33$ min, $SD = 17.92$ min) via Qualtrics panels, and compensated through registered panel partners for their time. Proportional quota sampling was used to sample approximately 51 % women and 49 % men in each country, and 33 % individuals aged between 18 and 34 years, 35 and 54 years, and 55 plus years in each country. This study was approved through the Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional

[1] Initially, we attempted to generate identical faces for all three women and all three men, only changing target skin tone, to keep target facial features identical within gender condition. However, these images did not look realistic, nor did they reflect the racial-ethnic differences they were intended to.

Review Board of a Southeastern US University.

All participants completed the study online via Qualtrics survey software. A speeding check, measured as half the median soft launch time, automatically terminated those who were not responding thoughtfully. Participants were also screened out of the final sample if there was missing data or they responded incorrectly to either of two attention checks embedded in the survey questions (e.g., "select 'agree' to show that you are paying attention to this question").

2.4. Measures

First, participants were given a consent form to read about the study. The consent form clearly outlined that the participant would be randomly assigned to view one (1) full-frontal AI-generated nude image of a person and that no images of real people were used to create this image. After consenting to the study, participants were given the following instructions:

On the next screen we will be showing you a full-frontal nude image of a person. This image was entirely AI-generated.

For the purpose of this study, please imagine that this image was created by taking a real, full-body image of a clothed person and then using an app to 'undress' them. This is called a deepfake nude. We will be referring to this moving forward as a 'deepfake'.

Again, please imagine this image was made by downloading a clothed image from a user's social media page, made into a deepfake nude using an app, and then shared on that social media platform.

After these instructions, participants saw one of the six nude images. All images are provided in Appendix A. On the same webpage as the image were the questions from the pretest asking participants to select the age of the target and to rate the attractiveness and realism of the target on 5-point Likert-type scales.

Next, participants were asked to complete the six dependent variables of victim blame for image creation (α = .85), victim blame for image sharing (α = .90), perpetrator responsibility for image creation (α = .83), perpetrator responsibility for image sharing (α = .84), harm to victim for image creation (α = .61), and harm to victim for image sharing (α = .63).[2] Each of these variables was assessed using three questions, which were used to create composite measures. Given the recency of sexualized deepfake abuse, no existing validated measures of deepfake victim blaming could be identified; as such, items were adapted drawing from the authors' prior research on victim blaming and perpetrator responsibility and in gender-neutral terms (removed for review). Furthermore, prior research into IBSA indicates that there may be different attributions of blame and responsibility for the taking/creation of a sexual image, as compared with its distribution (removed for review); in turn, the items explore both image creation and sharing as separate variables. All items are provided in Appendix B.

Demographic and individual difference variables were collected last, including participant gender, age, race, sexual identity, education level, country of residence, and experience as a victim of IBSA. After the study concluded participants were provided nation-specific resources for sexual violence support (including hotlines and websites) in case the study brought up challenging feelings for participants, including those who were victim-survivors. Finally, participants were given a more detailed explanation of the study purpose after the study concluded.

3. Results

A four-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the main and interaction effects of victim gender, victim race, participant gender, and participant country on the combined dependent variables.[3] Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) using Bonferroni corrected alpha values of .008 were then performed on the individual dependent variables. The F ratios, significance values, means and standard deviations are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

3.1. Victim gender

To begin testing our hypotheses, we first examined the main effects of victim gender on perceptions of victim blame (H1a), perpetrator responsibility (H1b), and victim harm (H2) for creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes. The initial MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for victim gender on the combined dependent variables, $F(6, 1885) = 3.73$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .01$. Consistent with H2, follow-up analyses of variance (ANOVAs) found that female victims were perceived to experience more harm than male victims from the creation ($M = 4.17$ vs. $M = 4.04$) and sharing ($M = 4.22$ vs. $M = 4.07$) of sexualized deepfakes, $F(1, 1889) = 13.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$ and $F(1, 1889) = 17.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$, respectively. The findings for victim blame and perpetrator responsibility were non-significant, therefore, H1a and H1b were not supported. The significant three-way interaction for victim gender, victim race and participant country on the combined dependent variables is discussed with reference to H7a, H7b and H8.

3.2. Victim race

Next, we examined the main effects of victim race on perceptions of victim blame (H3a), perpetrator responsibility (H3b), and victim harm (H4). The initial MANOVA did not reveal a significant main effect for victim race on the combined dependent variables, $F(12, 3768) = 0.87$, $p = .576$, $\eta 2 = .00$. Therefore, H3a, H3b, and H4 were not supported. Although the initial analysis produced a significant two-way interaction for victim race by participant gender, $F(12, 3768) = 1.92$, $p = .027$, $\eta 2 = .01$, the follow-up ANOVAs did not find the interactions to be significant for any of the individual dependent variables at the Bonferroni-corrected alpha value of .008.

3.3. Participant gender

Next, we examined the main effects of participant gender on perceptions of victim blame (H5a), perpetrator responsibility (H5b), and victim harm (H6) (see Table 3). The initial MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for participant gender on the combined dependent variables, $F(6, 1884) = 15.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .05$. Consistent with H5b, follow-up ANOVAs found that male participants attributed less responsibility to perpetrators than female participants for the creation ($M = 4.28$ vs. $M = 4.41$) and sharing ($M = 4.39$ vs. $M = 4.47$) of sexualized deepfakes $F(1, 1889) = 14.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .01$ and $F(1, 1889) = 3.47$, $p = .008$, $\eta 2 = .00$, respectively. Consistent with H6, male participants perceived victims to experience less harm than female participants from the creation ($M = 3.98$ vs. $M = 4.23$) and sharing ($M = 4.01$ vs. $M = 4.28$) of sexualized deepfakes, $F(1, 1889) = 60.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .03$ and $F(1, 1889) = 69.16$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .04$, respectively. The findings for victim blame were non-significant, therefore, H5a was not supported.

3.4. Participant gender by participant country

To test our final predictions, we examined the possibility of gendered

[2] The internal consistency of the harm scales was moderate, at levels commonly observed in attitudinal and perceptual research when measuring complex and context-dependent constructs (Cortina, 1993; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

[3] It is important to note that we performed a separate MANOVA where we controlled for four additional variables: the three confounding variables detected in pretesting (target age, attractiveness, and realism) and participant race (White, non-White). This analysis produced a consistent pattern of significance for victim gender, victim race, participant gender, and participant country, and is available upon request.

Table 1
Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance F ratios for victim gender and race, and participant gender and country.

Independent Variable		ANOVA *F*					
		Victim Blame		Perpetrator Responsibility		Victim Harm	
	MANOVA *F*	Creation	Sharing	Creation	Sharing	Creation	Sharing
Victim gender (VG)	3.73**	2.40	3.61	0.88	1.04	13.23***	17.88***
Victim race (VR)	0.87	0.61	0.99	0.09	0.65	1.03	2.03
Participant gender (PG)	15.24***	0.55	1.72	14.00***	7.02**	60.73***	69.16***
Participant country (PC)	6.18***	12.09***	13.92***	23.93***	27.78***	20.71***	20.06***
VG × VR	0.47	0.38	0.43	0.67	1.53	0.52	1.18
VG × PG	0.91	0.51	0.53	0.04	0.01	0.89	0.02
VG × PC	1.59	3.25	1.61	1.58	4.08	3.19	4.04
VR × PG	1.93*	1.46	3.33	2.00	0.97	1.15	3.56
VR × PC	1.14	0.53	0.44	1.12	0.87	0.60	1.40
PG × PC	0.79	1.23	1.05	0.38	0.06	0.84	0.15
VG × VR × PG	0.57	0.99	0.26	0.37	0.51	0.13	0.61
VG × VR × PC	1.80**	0.48	1.32	0.72	1.42	4.56**	3.34
VG × PG × PC	0.91	0.41	0.41	0.28	0.25	0.88	2.44
VR × PG × PC	1.13	1.96	0.86	0.10	0.89	0.98	0.48
VG × VR × PG × PC	1.35	2.60	1.88	0.21	0.15	1.08	0.40

Note. MANOVA: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. ANOVA: ** Bonferroni corrected $p \leq .008$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 2
Means and standard deviations for the six dependent variables as a function of victim gender and race, and participant gender and country.

Independent Variable	Victim Blame				Perpetrator Responsibility				Victim Harm			
	Creation		Sharing		Creation		Sharing		Creation		Sharing	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Victim gender												
Female	2.35	1.24	2.44	1.32	4.36	0.81	4.44	0.72	4.17	0.76	4.22	0.76
Male	2.42	1.20	2.54	1.15	4.33	0.79	4.42	0.70	4.04	0.73	4.07	0.74
Victim race												
Black	2.40	1.22	2.47	1.28	4.34	0.81	4.42	0.73	4.08	0.77	4.11	0.76
East Asian	2.41	1.23	2.45	1.27	4.34	0.78	4.42	0.70	4.13	0.73	4.15	0.75
white	2.35	1.21	2.38	1.27	4.35	0.82	4.45	0.71	4.12	0.74	4.18	0.76
Participant gender												
Female	2.37	1.22	2.34	1.23	4.41	0.74	4.47	0.66	4.23	0.71	4.28	0.71
Male	2.41	1.22	2.61	1.30	4.28	0.86	4.39	0.77	3.98	0.77	4.01	0.78
Participant country												
US	$2.58_{a,b}$	1.21	$2.71_{a,b}$	1.25	$4.16_{a,b}$	0.88	$4.26_{a,b}$	0.80	$3.96_{a,b}$	0.77	$4.00_{a,b}$	0.79
UK	2.26_{a}	1.21	2.35_{a}	1.26	4.41_{a}	0.77	4.52_{a}	0.66	4.17_{a}	0.74	4.23_{a}	0.75
Australia	2.32_{b}	1.22	2.35_{b}	1.28	4.45_{b}	0.73	4.51_{b}	0.65	4.19_{b}	0.71	4.22_{b}	0.71

Note. The six dependent variables were all rated on Likert-type scales from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). For participant country, column means sharing subscripts are significantly ($p < .05$).

racism in perceptions of victim blame (H7a), perpetrator responsibility (H7b), and victim harm (H8). The initial MANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction for victim gender, victim race and participant country on the combined dependent variables, $F(24, 6574) = 1.80$, $p = .009$, $\eta 2 = .01$. Therefore, a series of ANOVAs were performed for victim race across the six participant country × participant gender conditions. Partially consistent with H8, these analyses found that US participants perceived Black female victims ($M = 3.78$) to experience less harm than East Asian female victims ($M = 4.05$) or white female victims ($M = 4.11$) from the creation of sexualized deepfake, $F(2, 343) = 5.73$, $p = .004$, $\eta 2 = .03$. There were no comparable significant findings for UK or Australia participants, or for male victims. The findings for victim blame and perpetrator responsibility were also non-significant, therefore, H7a and H7b were not supported.

Finally, we examined the main effects of participant country on perceptions of victim blame, perpetrator responsibility, and victim harm. The initial MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for participant country on the combined dependent variables, $F(12, 3768) = 6.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$. and follow-up ANOVAs found significant findings for victim blame, perpetrator responsibility, and victim harm. In brief, US participants attributed more blame to victims than UK or Australian participants for the creation ($M = 2.58$ vs. $M = 2.26$ and $M = 2.32$) and sharing ($M = 2.71$ vs. $M = 2.35$ and $M = 2.35$) of sexualized deepfakes, $F(2, 1889) = 12.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .01$ and $F(2, 1889) = 13.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$, respectively. US participants also attributed less responsibility to perpetrators than UK or Australian participants for the creation ($M = 4.16$ vs. $M = 4.41$ and $M = 4.52$) and sharing ($M = 4.26$ vs. $M = 4.45$ and $M = 4.51$) of sexualized deepfakes, $F(2, 1889) = 23.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .03$ and $F(2, 1889) = 27.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .03$, respectively. Finally, US participants perceived victims to experience less harm than UK or Australian participants from the creation ($M = 3.96$ vs. $M = 4.17$ and $M = 4.19$) and sharing ($M = 4.00$ vs. $M = 4.23$ and $M = 4.22$) of sexualized deepfakes, $F(2, 1889) = 20.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$ and $F(2, 1885) = 20.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .02$, respectively.

4. Discussion

Several of our hypotheses around gender were supported. First, female victims were perceived to experience more harm than male victims from both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes. This aligns with research demonstrating that the suffering of male victims of sexual violence is often minimized and denied (e.g., Studzinska & Hilton, 2017). For example, one review found male survivors face higher stigma and are often doubted or seen as less harmed than females (Rechenberg et al., 2024).

While research on the actual harms of IBSA among real victims does

Table 3
Summary of hypotheses and outcomes.

Hypothesis	Outcome	Summary of Finding
H1a: Female victims will be seen as more to blame than male victims for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.	**Not supported**	Victim gender did not significantly affect perceptions of victim blame.
H1b: Perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are women rather than men.	**Not supported**	Victim gender did not significantly affect perpetrator responsibility.
H2: Female victims will be seen as more harmed than male victims by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.	**Supported**	Female victims were perceived to experience significantly more harm than male victims from both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.
H3a: Black victims will be seen as more to blame than East Asian or white victims for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.	**Not supported**	Victim race did not significantly affect perceptions of victim blame.
H3b: Perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are Black rather than East Asian or white.	**Not supported**	Victim race did not significantly affect perceptions of perpetrator responsibility.
H4: Black victims will be seen as less harmed than East Asian or white victims by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.	**Not supported (overall)**	There was no main effect of victim race on perceived harm, though US participants later showed a specific interaction effect consistent with H8.
H5a: Male participants will attribute more blame to victims of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.	**Not supported**	Participant gender did not significantly affect perceptions of victim blame.
H5b: Male participants will attribute less responsibility to perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.	**Supported**	Male participants attributed significantly less responsibility to perpetrators than female participants for both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.
H6: Male participants will attribute less harm to victims of sexualized deepfake abuse than female participants.	**Supported**	Male participants perceived victims to experience significantly less harm than female participants from both the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes.
H7a: In the US, Black female victims will be seen as more to blame for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes than East Asian or white female victims.	**Not supported**	There was no significant racialized gender effect for victim blame.
H7b: In the US, perpetrators of sexualized deepfake abuse will be seen as less responsible when the victims are Black women than East Asian or white women.	**Not supported**	There was no significant racialized gender effect for perpetrator responsibility.
H8: In the US, Black female victims will be seen as less harmed by the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes than East Asian or white female victims.	**Supported**	U.S. participants perceived Black female victims to experience significantly less harm than East Asian or white female victims from the creation of sexualized deepfakes.

suggest that women may, at times, suffer more harms than men (e.g., Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020), that may be due to differences in nature of the images of real women vs. men victims (e.g., including or not including a face) or the type of dissemination of such images (e.g., widespread vs. local). In our study, these factors were held constant across targets. In addition, while sexual double standards that require women to be chaste may in fact result in greater social stigma and related harms for real women victims, our finding that perceivers rate men's harm as less severe than women's still demonstrates the application of a general stereotype to an individual target.

Other gendered findings included that male participants, compared to female participants, attributed less responsibility to perpetrators and perceived less harm to victims. This gender difference among participants held for both male and female victims of sexualized deepfake abuse. This suggests differences in gendered understandings of how sexualized deepfakes may affect victims and of the seriousness of sexualized deepfake abuse. Though little research has examined these differences in relation to sexualized deepfake abuse, these findings are consistent with broader research into other forms of IBSA. For example, Flynn et al.'s (2023) study across the UK, Australia, and New Zealand found that male respondents were significantly more likely to blame victims and downplay the seriousness of IBSA than female respondents. Zvi's (2022) research on Israeli college students also found that blame attributions towards IBSA victims, as well as negative feelings toward victims, were particularly high among male participants.

The race of the victim alone was not a significant factor in determining the perceived level of blame attributed to the victim, level of responsibility assigned to the perpetrator, or the levels of harm experienced by a victim, among UK and Australian participants. This main effect finding may reflect demand characteristics. Although participants only received one image to rate, they may have inferred that the study concerned race and adjusted their responses accordingly. Research on racial bias consistently shows that when participants become aware that their attitudes or judgments are being evaluated in relation to race, they tend to regulate their responses to align with perceived social norms (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Norton et al., 2006). At the time this study was conducted, November 2024, social norms in the UK and Australia may have favored racial equality for Black people to a greater extent than in the US, where hate crimes against Black people increased and perceptions of anti-Black racism and discrimination were high (Brenan & Saad, 2025; USA Facts, 2025). Thus, if participants suspected that our stimuli varied by target race, those in the UK and Australia (versus the US) may have made greater efforts in their responses to avoid appearing prejudiced.

In the US, however, interactive effects of victim race and gender on bystander perceptions were detected. Specifically, US participants attributed less harm occurring to Black female victims when a sexualized deepfake was created, than to East Asian female victims or white female victims. This finding supports our hypothesis, informed by intersectional theory, that participants from the US would perceive Black victims as less harmed than East Asian or white victims. Critical race scholars have argued that Black and other racialized victims are often denied the status of victims (or ideal victims) in the US due to intersecting biases relating to race, gender and class (Long, 2021). These dynamics are compounded by views that criminalize Black bodies and sexualize women of color, reinforcing a harmful narrative that delegitimizes their victimhood (Crenshaw, 1991). Our findings also align with research in which racial bias has been found to affect perceptions of credibility and harm in sexual violence cases in the US (Donovan, 2007), highlighting the potential for racial stereotypes and prejudice to influence the treatment and perception of victims of sexualized deepfake abuse.

Also in the US, participants attributed more blame towards victims and less responsibility towards perpetrators than UK or Australian participants for both the creation, and sharing, of sexualized deepfake abuse images. US participants also perceived less harm to victims from the creation or sharing of sexualized deepfake abuse images than UK or Australian participants. These findings suggest some significant country differences in understandings of the harms and nature of sexualized deepfake abuse. One potential reason for this discrepancy is the difference in conservatism across cultures, with the US being lower in social liberalism and higher in right wing authoritarianism than the UK and

Australia (Duffy et al., 2023; Venaglia & Maxwell, 2021). However, these associations should be viewed as interpretive rather than causal, as the current study was not designed to test the influence of national conservatism.

Another reason may be due to the absence of laws in the US criminalizing the creation of sexualized deepfake abuse, compared with the UK and Australia. While criminalization is not the sole factor underpinning social attitudes, it plays a critical role in signaling societal condemnation of behavior (Flynn & Henry, 2021). In this sense, legal sanctions can contribute to shifting social norms by affirming the seriousness of the harm of sexualized deepfake abuse and reinforcing the unacceptability of creating or sharing AI-generated sexual content without consent.

This difference in perceptions of perpetrator responsibility and victim harm may also reflect recent political and cultural shifts in the US, which have contributed to a broader climate of diminished institutional and societal support for women's rights, which may influence how emerging forms of gendered abuse, such as sexualized deepfake abuse, are perceived. The rollback of reproductive rights, exemplified by the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, has been described as part of a wider pattern of reproductive and gendered violence that signals declining state commitment to bodily autonomy and gender equality (Zebadúa-Yáñez et al., 2023). These developments reflect a sociopolitical environment in which women's experiences of harm, particularly those involving sexual violence or digital abuse, may be trivialized or dismissed (Schmitz & Gatenio Gabel, 2023). However, this is speculative, as our study was not designed to test the mediational effects of national social and political developments.

4.1. Implications

There are several implications of the findings of this study for justice and support responses, as well as policy and prevention measures. In particular, the findings demonstrate that perceptions of harm and blame vary systematically according to both victim and participant identities, revealing that social biases rooted in gendered racism can shape responses to IBSA victims. Intersectional frameworks (Bowleg, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991) emphasize that individuals' experiences of violence and justice are influenced by the overlapping effects of race, gender, and other social categories; yet current professional training often treats these identities in isolation. Addressing both racial and gender bias in victim recognition and support is essential to ensuring equitable justice and care for all victims. Such victim-blaming further discourages victims from seeking support and/or reporting to justice systems, and can reinforce stigma, especially for women (Bongiorno et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2023). As such, an intersectional approach to education and prevention messaging, that specifically challenges victim-blaming may be appropriate for reducing this barrier for victims, as well as some of the harms of stigma within communities (Flynn et al., 2024).

The findings presented here further illustrated that men, more than women, tend to hold attitudes and perceive sexualized deepfake abuse in ways that excuse perpetrators. This finding is further indicative of a need for targeted education and prevention messaging that targets male audiences to challenge sexual violence myths that excuse or minimize perpetrator behavior, and seek to promote victim empathy. Evidence-based approaches such as bystander intervention programs and empathy development have shown effectiveness in engaging men in violence prevention, reducing sexism and rape myth acceptance, while increasing supportive attitudes and promoting prosocial behavior among male participants (Coker et al., 2017; Stewart, 2014; Wu et al., 2024). Incorporating these empirically supported strategies can strengthen the impact of educational interventions and ensure they are grounded in approaches shown to be effective with male audiences. Policy and practice relating to sexualized deepfake abuse must address gendered dynamics to ensure equitable support for victims, as well as accountability for perpetrators.

A key direction for future research and practice is to develop and empirically test intersectional training and education programs on IBSA for service providers, including law enforcement, healthcare practitioners, educators, and victim support personnel. Building upon evidence that bias-awareness interventions and empathy-based education can reduce stereotyping and improve equitable decision-making in helping contexts (Devine et al., 2012; Cameron et al., 2019), this training should include (a) modules on implicit bias and cultural humility, (b) evidence-based education on the harms of digital sexual abuse, and (c) survivor-centered communication strategies that validate diverse experiences of harm. Experimental research is then required to evaluate whether intersectional training and education programs reduce victim-blaming tendencies, increase empathy, and enhance procedural justice for marginalized survivors. By embedding intersectional competence into professional training, service systems can move toward more equitable and trauma-informed responses to emerging forms of technologically facilitated sexual violence.

4.2. Limitations

Although this study took exceptional care to construct highly standardized, fully AI-generated stimuli, the images were not identical except for race; facial features, hair texture, and other racialized phenotypic cues necessarily varied. These differences could have introduced minor confounds influencing perceptions of attractiveness, age, or realism. Yet, perfect standardization across racialized stimuli is not only practically difficult, but theoretically problematic, as it risks erasing the meaningful, identity-relevant variation that enables psychological realism (Livingston & Brewer, 2002). The inclusion of naturalistic features was essential to preserve ecological validity, given that hyperrealism and racialized embodiment shape how targets are socially perceived (Hagiwara et al., 2012; Maddox, 2004). To mitigate this limitation, we performed a separate MANOVA where we statistically controlled for participant ratings of attractiveness, age, and realism, to ensure that these attributes did not drive the observed effects. Future research could employ dynamic deepfake stimuli (e.g., short videos) or morphing techniques to hold facial structure constant while manipulating race cues (Freeman & Ambady, 2011). It is also possible that participants' prior exposure to AI or digital media literacy could moderate their perceptions; controlling for this potential factor is a further avenue for future research.

Next, while the observed differences across target gender and race align with well-documented stereotypes (e.g., the 'strong Black woman' schema and racialized dehumanization; Donovan, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2016; Long, 2021), this study did not directly assess the mechanisms underlying these effects. Future research should explicitly test mediating processes such as (a) endorsement of gendered racial stereotypes (e.g., Jezebel and Lotus Blossom tropes; Collins, 2000), (b) implicit dehumanization (Haslam, 2006), and (c) empathy deficits toward marginalized targets (Cameron et al., 2019). Experimental or longitudinal mediation models could examine whether internalized beliefs about strength, agency, or sexual availability of Black women explain their diminished perceived harm. Incorporating measures of empathy, stereotype endorsement, or moral disengagement (Bandura, 2016) would clarify the psychological pathways through which racialized and gendered biases influence judgments about harm and blame in digital sexual abuse contexts.

Importantly, like much research on racial stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, our research largely examined the perceptions of the majority group-whites (Peng et al., 2025). While it is important to understand how privileged majorities perpetuate racial and gender stereotypes, this does limit the generalizability of our findings. Future research should examine perceptions of more racially-diverse samples of participants to see if they also perpetuate gender and racial stereotypes in their attributions about sexualized deepfake abuse. Future work should also take an intersectional approach to understanding participant

perceptions, by looking at how participant race and gender interact to produce outcomes.

Some hypothesized effects, such as the interaction of target gender and race on perpetrator responsibility or victim blame, were not statistically significant. In addition, effects that were significant were often small. Though small effects can be practically relevant as they (Prentice & Miller, 1992), the small and limited presence of these interactions may reflect the subtlety of intersectional processes in perception (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional biases may operate more strongly in implicit cognition or behavioral outcomes than in self-reported judgments (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). It is also possible that cultural familiarity with deepfake discourse influenced participants' moral appraisals in ways not captured by explicit scales. Nevertheless, preregistration and Bonferroni corrections enhanced interpretive confidence by reducing Type I error risk (Nosek et al., 2018). Future work might incorporate implicit association or neurophysiological measures (e.g., eye-tracking, EEG) to detect subtle perceptual biases that conscious ratings obscure (Ito & Urland, 2003). Moreover, mixed-methods designs could explore why perceived harm and blame diverge conceptually, and whether sociopolitical factors (e.g., digital literacy or gender equity norms) moderate these associations across national contexts.

Finally, while deepfake realism enhances experimental control, it also raises ethical and interpretive challenges. Realistic sexualized imagery can elicit variable moral, emotional, and empathic responses that differ from reactions to text-based vignettes (Henry & Flynn, 2020; Rousay, 2023). Thus, responses in digital realism contexts may reflect both perceptual biases and moral disengagement mechanisms specific to AI-generated content. Continued refinement of stimuli that balance ethical integrity and perceptual realism remains a central methodological frontier for deepfake abuse research.

5. Conclusion

Overall, this study has examined participant perceptions of sexualized deepfake abuse, within respect to victim-blaming, perpetrator responsibility and harm minimization. It has found that victim gender significantly impacts perceptions of victim harm, and participant gender significantly impacts perceptions of perpetrator responsibility and victim harm for the creation and sharing of sexualized deepfakes. These findings are further shaped in some contexts by victim race. Sexualized deepfake abuse is a rapidly growing, and increasingly criminalized form of abuse, which can have devastating harmful impacts on victims. In light of the findings presented here, there is a clear need for an intersectional approach to justice and support responses, as well as policy and prevention approaches in order to address the critical gender and racial bias that can present barriers to victims, and excuse perpetrators.

Appendix A. Images

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Asia A. Eaton: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Adrian J. Scott:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Asher Flynn:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization. **Anastasia Powell:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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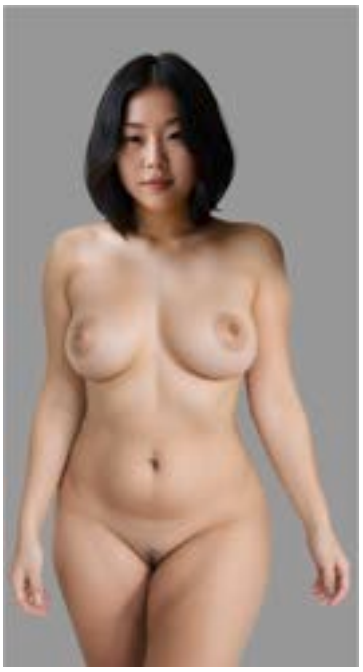
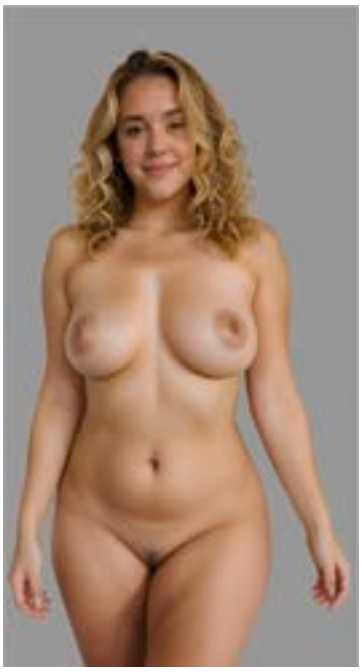
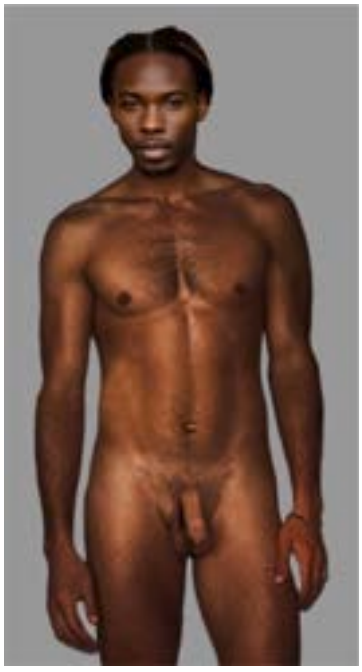
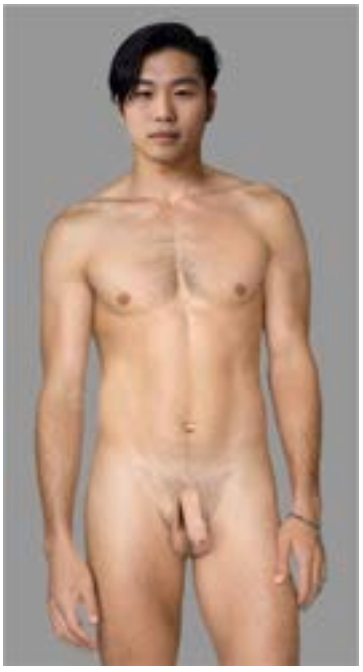
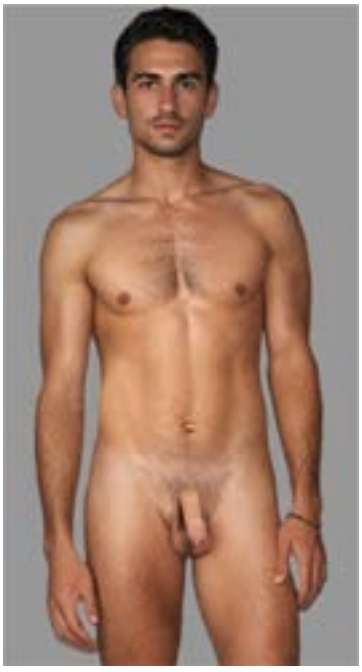
Black woman	East Asian woman	white woman
		
Black man	East Asian man	white man
		

Appendix B. Questions

Table B1
Victim blame: Creation and sharing items.

Creation
1. The person in the deepfake image is at least partly responsible for its *creation.* 2. The person in the deepfake image shouldn't have posed for the original photograph if they didn't want it *made into a deepfake.* 3. Once the person in the original photograph posted it online, they gave up the right to *whether it gets made into a deepfake or not.*
Sharing
1. The person in the deepfake image is at least partly responsible for it *being shared on social media.* 2. The person in the deepfake image shouldn't have posed for the original photograph if they didn't want it *shared as a deepfake on social media.* 3. Once the person in the original photograph posted it online, they gave up the right to *whether it gets disseminated as a deepfake or not.*

Table B2
Perpetrator responsibility: Creation and sharing items.

Creation
1. The person who downloaded the original photograph *should not have used an app to turn it into a deepfake image.* 2. It was wrong for someone to have *created* the deepfake image I saw. 3. The person who *created* the deepfake image is to blame for any harms that occur.
Sharing
1. The person who made the deepfake should not have *disseminated it on social media.* 2. It was wrong for someone to have *disseminated* the deepfake image I saw. 3. The person who *shared the deepfake image on social media* is to blame for any harms that occur.

Table B3
Victim harm: Creation and sharing items.

Creation
1.The *creation* of the deepfake I saw could seriously hurt the person pictured. 2.The person in the deepfake image I saw may benefit from having a deepfake *created.* (reverse-coded) 3.The person in the deepfake image I saw may feel sexually violated by its *creation.*
Sharing
1.The *sharing* of the deepfake I saw could seriously hurt the person pictured. 2.The person in the deepfake image I saw may benefit from having the deepfake *shared on social media.* (reverse-coded) 3.The person in the deepfake image I saw may feel sexually violated *by having it shared on social media.*

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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