UNAUTHORIZED EXPOSURE OF INTIMATE IMAGES OF WOMEN: MULTIPLE FORMATS, MULTIPLE VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT: Through in-depth interviews with 17 women and ten health care professionals that belong to different institutions within the care network for women in situations of violence, and who have experience with cases of violation of privacy rights in Brazil, this work analyzes what women endure when their intimate images are exposed without their consent. It was observed that the unauthorized exposure of intimacy is initiated by different people who are related to these women and it is motivated by different factors. Commonly, exposure occurs amidst other types of violence against women that can be associated with it or not. The main damage caused to women is not the exposure itself, but the repercussion of this event in their personal and professional relationships, and the revictimization they faced, mainly, in institutions such as the police.

KEYWORDS: Exposure of intimacy; ICTs; Gender violence; Intersectionality; Revictimization

EXPOSICIÓN NO AUTORIZADA DE IMÁGENES ÍNTIMAS DE MUJERES: MÚLTIPLES FORMATOS, MÚLTIPLES VIOLENCIAS

RESUMEN: En este trabajo se analizó la experiencia de mujeres que sufrieron la exposición no autorizada de imágenes íntimas. El análisis parte de entrevistas en profundidad a 17 mujeres y diez profesionales de la salud y asistencia de diferentes instituciones pertenecientes a la red de atención a mujeres en situación de violencia en Brasil. Se observó que la exposición no autorizada de la intimidad es iniciada por diferentes personas que sostienen algún tipo de relación con las mujeres, y es motivada por diferentes factores. Comúnmente, la exposición ocurre en combinación con otros tipos de violencia contra la mujer, asociados o no a esta. Los principales daños causados a las mujeres no se refieren a la exposición en sí, sino a la repercusión de este hecho en sus relaciones personales y profesionales, y a la revictimización que se produjo principalmente en instituciones tales como la policía.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Exposición de la intimidad; TIC; Violencia de género; Interseccionalidad; Revictimización

A EXPOSIÇÃO NÃO-AUTORIZADA DE IMAGENS INTIMAS DE MULHERES: FORMATOS MÚLTIPLOS, VIOLÊNCIA MÚLTIPLA

RESUMO: Este trabalho analisou a experiência de mulheres que tiveram imagens íntimas expostas de forma não autorizada por meio de entrevistas em profundidade com 17 mulheres e dez profissionais de saúde e assistência de diferentes instituições pertencentes à rede de atenção à mulher em situação de violência que atenderam as vítimas desse tipo de violência no Brasil. Observou-se que a exposição não autorizada da intimidade é iniciada por diferentes pessoas em relação às mulheres e motivada por diferentes fatores. Comumente, a exposição ocorre em meio a outros tipos de violência contra a mulher, a ela associados ou não. Os principais danos causados às mulheres não se referem à exposição em si, mas à repercussão desse evento em suas relações pessoais e profissionais e à revitimização que ocorreu principalmente em instituições como a polícia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Exposição da intimidade; Tecnologias da informação e comunicação; Violência de gênero; Interseccionalidade; Revitimização

INTRODUCTION

The unauthorized exposure of intimate images of women is configured as a form of gender-based violence (Santos & Izumino 2005), enhanced by the expansion of mobile internet access and the use of social networks.[1] This practice has reached the most diverse countries. In Brazil, some studies (Matzembacher & Stoco 2020, Ramos 2020) have observed an increase in violence against women on the internet, due to the rise in sociability through digital media during the coronavirus pandemic, in which the cases of intimate image exposure represented the greatest proportion (Ramos 2020).

One of the most visible answers to this increase is the creation of laws that typify it as a specific crime.[2] Under Brazilian legislation, Federal Law No. 13,718 was enacted in 2018 (Brasil 2018), addressing crimes of sexual harassment and making prosecutable to disclose, without consent, a photo or video with a scene of nudity, sex, or pornography.

The exposure of women constitutes a particular type of violence, given that the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) allows its multiplication by several agents, as many people now can spread intimate content in an unauthorized way. Therefore, in addition to the person who initiates the violence, several others reproduce it, generating new modes of violence.

Commonly called *revenge pornography* or *non-consensual pornography,* the *unauthorized exposure of women's intimacy* is the term adopted in

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[1] In this work, *intimacy* is understood as content related to nudity or the expression of sexuality with a potentially vexatious character for girls and women, in the context of gender discrimination.

[2] It is important to point out that, as Pérez Hernández (2017) discusses, the legal debate can eclipse the political debate by not revising the normalization of behaviors related to gender roles and power relations.

this text since this act, involving several motivations behind it, is not restricted to the disclosure of sexual content, as it will be argued later on. Calling it as such rejects the terms *pornography* —not recognized by women who suffer this experience (Lins 2019)— and *consent*, which represent a tacit manifestation of gender inequality when reproducing a perspective that associates women with passivity (Pérez Hernández 2016). The term *authorization* (or lack of) is assumed, therefore, as the comprehensive key that distinguishes the practice of sexuality from that of violence, as discussed in another work (Patrocino & Bevilacqua 2021a).

Regarding the understanding of violence against women as a social phenomenon, the debate on the polarization of gender roles in these situations was initiated in Brazil by Maria Filomena Gregori. For this author, the dichotomy between the active male aggressor and the passive female victim hinders the political action from confronting violence, as it does not envision or stimulate transformations in relationships (1993). The understanding of *gender violence* assumed in this work is based on Santos & Izumino's notion (2005) that women are not only passive victims. They understand violence as a power relationship, marked by specific contexts in which gender roles are constructed. The authors also point to the fact that violence practices intersect with other issues, such as race and class, which is in line with the results of this research that deals with the exposure of women's intimacy —and the specific violence this entails.

The investigation aims to answer the following questions: *a)* How are the practices of production, acquisition, and distribution of intimate images of women characterized? and *b)* Which are the effects of unauthorized disclosure of intimate images on women's lives? The damage caused to women and the multiple repercussions caused by violence are, therefore, the guiding threads of the analysis. Furthermore, it was assumed that the violence caused by exposure is related to structural violence that is, in turn, intertwined with issues of class and race, among others.

This text will address the different motivations behind the exhibition of women's intimacy, the modes in which it happens, its association with other forms of violence, the specific victimization processes for this type of violence, and the damage caused to women. The analysis will be carried out from the perspective of social sciences, considering the possibilities of contributing to the field of collective health and the creation of public policies.

METHOD

The research was conducted through 27 in-depth interviews with 17 women who experienced unauthorized disclosure of intimacy and ten health professionals and social workers who attended women in these circumstances.

The participant enrollment was carried out by sharing the research through social media. A *WhatsApp* contact was made available so that those interested in sharing their experiences could contact the researchers.

The interviews with women who went through this kind of violence were comprised by a detailed description of how their pictures were obtained and exposed, how they were affected by this experience, and whether they searched for support within their relationships or resorted to institutional, legal, or health services.

The interviews with health professionals and social workers entailed a thorough account of the treated cases, the damage caused to women, and the care provided in each situation. In all the interviews, women were asked their viewpoint regarding the necessary care in situations of violence that specifically involve intimacy exposure (a theme that will not be discussed further in this work).

The women's experiences were analyzed from a micro-sociological perspective, focusing not only on the concrete description of the violence that occurred, but also on their subjective experiences. The resulting

analyses, in turn, were linked to structural issues of gender inequalities and the limitations of public policies designed for women.

The interviews were conducted by video call during the second half of 2020 and had an average duration of more than 70 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed. Afterward, the records were sent to the women so that they could validate the information provided.

Women in the study were between 17 and 50 years old at the time of the interview, and professionals were between 18 and 62 years old. Apart from the generational diversity, it was also possible to cover ethnic-racial, socioeconomic, and territorial diversity, characterized by the fact that these women live in a variety of places, from small cities and capitals located in the countryside, to metropolitan or coastal regions. The research participants covered six states in three Brazilian regions. Among the women, 18 cities were covered, and one of them lived abroad —this was because one of them was exposed in the context of two different cities. Among the professionals, experiences from five dissimilar cities from the same state were included.

The research procedures were evaluated and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Instituto René Rachou, Fiocruz Minas. The names mentioned here are fictitious in order to preserve the participants' identity. The ethnic-racial description was based on self-declaration.

DIFFERENT MODES AND MOTIVATIONS

The experiences of women who suffered unauthorized exposure of intimate images are diverse, and in each of the stories reported, it was possible to observe particularities. Sydow & Casto (2017) draw attention to the fact that it is necessary to analyze the illegality in obtaining them in addition to the illegality in their media distribution. It is not possible to reduce different modes of violence to revenge alone. The authors exemplify that there is illegality involved both in obtaining and distributing information in the case of hacking accounts. Generally, in the instances of revenge pornography women

have sent their intimate images voluntarily, and their possession is not illegal when the relationship comes to an end. In the cases of "sextortion" (extortion involving sex), obtention can be legal or illegal. The distribution of this sort of media can be used as blackmail, or other threats can be made to get hold of illegal media. Illegality should also be considered in its production, since there are situations in which women are not even aware that the media has been produced, as this research presents.

The experiences reported in the context of this research also involved other situations concerning the goal of the distribution, such as the publishing of photos on social platforms for commercial purposes (*i.e.,* advertising a brothel), and obtaining media from a teenager to extort her family, who live in the public eye. The issue of appropriation of audiovisual resources for commercial exploitation on pornographic pages has been reported in the media (Mohan 2020) and in academic work (Lins 2019). The participants of the research also mentioned the fear of having their videos with sexual content displayed on pornographic pages.

In the context of affective relationships, there were many reports of girls and women that were exposed during their relationships, whether stable or informal. Their partners affirmed their masculinity by exhibiting the possession of the nudity and sexual content where they appeared.[3] There was also a report of a photo released approximately ten years after the end of the relationship when the exposed woman no longer even remembered that she had shared such content.

A 50-year-old woman had a naked photo of hers stolen from her home in the 1990s. That experience draws our attention because such modes of coercion on women's freedom have always been present, but have now expanded due to new technologies. Although it can be understood that women currently experience greater sexual freedom, it

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[3] Masculinity here is understood in terms of hegemonic masculinity, as a non-essentialist concept that considers the hierarchical dynamics of construction of privileges and power (Connell & Messerschmidt 2013).

is possible to say that the forms of menace that this freedom faces have become more sophisticated.

The debate about the relationship between sexual freedom and violence has been present since the rise of feminist studies. Catharine MacKinnon —who belongs to the anti-pornography current—, between the 1970s and the 1980s, mocked the argument that free expression of women's sexuality would reduce violence. She states that the hegemonic representation of sex is constituted by a violence that is not external. The sexuality universe in androcentric culture is itself violent, and it is nonsensical to separate sex from violence (MacKinnon 1987). Such a debate seems pertinent to the contemporary context of exposure since it reveals the appropriation of women's manifestations of freedom —debated by MacKinnon (1987)—, which can be added to the highly condemning and harmful strategies that affect them.

Not only is nudity itself used to expose women, but the content also displays their sexuality in a condemnatory and moralistic way. When it came to friendship, the appropriation of diaries with narratives of sexual experiences and ulterior distribution of copies were present. A woman had a photo with a friend used by her ex-partner to spread the idea of infidelity on her part, which embarrassed her friend's family. Another woman was exposed by her abusive ex-partner (with whom she had previously shared nude photos) who hacked her accounts; he did not post the actual nude photo on social media but a screenshot showing that such a picture had been sent to a man she was dating. A third woman had released screenshots of conversations with her abusive ex-boyfriend, which involved sexual content. These facts reveal the contradictions on the increase in women's sexual freedom, whose manifestation is only allowed to the extent that it can be used for male advantage. The historical condemnation of female sexuality, which, in Western society, was marked by the religious discourse on women's association with sin and evil, contributed to the processes of male domination and female exclusion that, among other characteristics, reduced women to their reproductive function (Salles & Ceccarelli 2010).

Exposures that occurred outside the context of a romantic relationship were also reported. There were accounts of exposures that took place in the workplace (a topic that will be addressed below), in friendships, and within the family itself, such as parental abuse and punishment.

In general, the contents exposed were related to sexuality, involving nudity and sexual acts. However, it is noteworthy that this is not the only kind of intimacy that has been exposed and used to humiliate and threaten women. Exposure of photos of plastic surgeries and the installation of cameras at home were reported as a way to curb privacy and control a woman's behavior. Another instance, narrated by more than one woman, involved the recording and exposure —or threat of exposure— of moments of lack of control, whether due to alcohol use or irritability caused by partner-initiated conflict. This situation draws attention to the control and judgment of women's behavior beyond the manifestation of their sexuality, referring to the historical process of gendered pathologization.

A particular type of exposure in the context of adolescent socialization are the lists labeling the "sluttiest" girls, that speak of the trivialization of its occurrence, its potential for violence, and the evident manifestation of the control over schoolgirls' sexuality. Also, this issue does not seem to reach adult knowledge (the neglect of the school as an institution, albeit of key importance, will not be an issue addressed in this work). A quick search on the internet shows that the media has debated this issue, although it is still scarcely discussed in academia. Valente, Neris, and Bulgarelli (2015) analyzed a case at a school in São Paulo, revealing that these lists are constantly reissued. The case in question was reported in the media and prompted a public hearing in the São Paulo Legislative Assembly.

According to the reports of the young women who participated in this research, the elaboration of the "lists" (as mentioned in the scope of the research) is constant, and each one involves a tacit objective, identifiable by the relationships between the people involved in the distribution of the lists and the exposed girls. Lists can be used,

for example, as revenge for ending relationships, for the fact that boys have been rejected by girls, or to assess their sexual performance. Lists can also introduce boys linked to girls to whom they are related, and characterize the latter as promiscuous or "self-serving". The lists can be drawn up in different formats, such as videos or photos, always containing images and information that identify the girls. In general, they are shared on *Twitter* —which has been a social platform mostly used by teenagers—, and in private *WhatsApp* groups.

Apart from the lists, there are also "gossip pages" about young women, which act as a kind of pre-selection to build the former. Ordinary actions, such as posting a bikini photo on a social network, can justify the exposure, revealing a very high level of control and censorship of very young girls' behavior. Two young female participants in the research, one aged 17 and the other 18, reported it was very common in a large city outside the capital for girls between 13 and 18 to be displayed at least once. These exposures occur at different levels. As noted by the oldest of them, Raquel (who has already been featured on a list), this way of classifying girls also occurs in relationships between young people in the context of churches. In it, generally, the lists condemn girls who explicitly express their interest in boys, informing, therefore, that they should be avoided.

The negativity, repression, and social condemnation of women's sexuality (Salles & Ceccarelli 2010) since childhood and adolescence have serious effects on their development. The harmful discourses reproduced in the context of children's socialization, their exposition, and adult neglect, contribute to the introjection, among girls, of the understanding of how they should or should not behave.

Therefore, it is observed that the exposure of the intimacy of girls and women occurs in different formats and for different motivations. It involves, above all, the affirmation of masculinity, the control and condemnation of women's sexuality —as discussed in other works (Holm Johansen *et al.* 2019, Petrosillo 2016, Rodríguez 2018)— and other behaviors, as well as profit purposes related to the commercial-

ization of the female body. The relationship between these and other acts of violence against women will be addressed below.

ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE

As observed in the research participants' reports, the unauthorized exposure of intimacy can occur as isolated violence or amid other acts of violence against women. It can trigger physical aggression and necessarily involves symbolic violence.

The exposure of intimacy was reported in revenge situations after the end of abusive relationships —which involved control, physical and sexual violence— but it was not exclusive to romantic relationships. It also occurred within the family: a woman was the victim of sexual violence by her stepfather, and another suffered physical and psychological violence perpetrated by her father. In the workplace and in friendships it was accompanied by other forms of harassment and stalking.

The experience of 24-year-old Joana regarding a troubled relationship with a friend at 18, in the context of a small town in the countryside, involved physical fights after a photo of Joana naked was exposed, initially, by her friend, along with other photos that identified her. In this context, relationships were marked by disputes stimulated mainly by the friend's partner.

The dimension of the consubstantiality of the relations of gender, race, class as well as hegemonic aesthetic standards —though these, as proposed by Hirata (2014), are historicized categories— was quite evident and revealed itself as a preponderant factor in the conformation of symbolic violence present in the act of exposing women.

The debate on how the reproduction of hegemonic and racist patterns occurs sharply on the internet —through its specific mechanisms— has been frequent in communication studies. Noble (2012) discusses how search engines, for example, hide and reproduce gender and race inequalities, reinforcing stereotypes and neglecting counter-hegemonic ideological perspectives. The algorithm-based technology,

which contributes to determining the most accessible content, serves both economic and political purposes. In the current political context, it has been possible to observe —especially in the last elections, worldwide— the impact of the dissemination of false information and the restriction of content that hinder access to diverse ideological perspectives. In the same sense, research conducted with internet search pages in several countries identified negative stereotypes, in terms of beauty, regarding black women and older women. Inversely, the positive stereotypes were related to white women, regardless of the country's racial composition (Araújo *et al.* 2016).

With specific regard to women's exposure, Nabil (2014) analyzed posts on *My ex-page,* designed to exhibit former partners, where it was noted that the victims are mostly women. The reproduction of gender roles and the heteronormative perspective are quite evident in the posts. It is also possible to observe other violent discourses such as racism and fatphobia. Also, the judgment and control of women's sexuality are revealed, for example, in the exposure of women that enjoy anal sex.

The racial issue was present in different ways in four reports, and some were critical regarding the sexualization of black women. Flávia, a 20-year-old black girl, had her cellphone stolen from her in 2016, in the context of a small country town. It contained nudity media from her and her girlfriend, and that is why her girlfriend stopped sharing this type of content with her.

In turn, Joana [24], acknowledged that she was protected and praised by the boys —contributing to the process of rivalry between girls— for being white, while her friend and other girls in the group were black.

Objective hostility towards black women was present in two other reports. Maura, 28, who declares herself a light-skinned black woman in the context of a neighborhood in a large city of the metropolitan area, said, regarding the group of teenage friends that exposed her, in which there was just one more black boy, that she received more abusive and invasive treatment than the white girl in the group. She

also said that black girls who attended the group for a shorter time received an even worse treatment than her. Racism was also made explicit by Raquel, who is white, regarding the lists, making it clear that not only is there judgment regarding black girls' sexual behavior, but a direct criticism of their physical characteristics:

> So, the black girls on the list were not listed for what they did, only. So, like, it wasn't like, 'Oh, she had sex with me.' It was like, yeah, 'Her body had dark parts', you know. So, when they were going to criticize black girls, it was not because of what they did, it was because of how they were. The white girls were criticized for what they did and not for what they were like.

In addition, it was observed that in a project chaired by Raquel to welcome women who went through situations of violence, black, fat, and lesbian girls had greater difficulty to interact in groups and had to receive more private assistance.[4]

Another factor that drew attention, present in three reports, refers to the humiliation directed at women for having pubic hair. Kiara, a 25-year-old black woman, resident of a capital, reported that she was directly ridiculed because she had photos of a sensual shoot posted on *Facebook* two years earlier, and were reproduced in a discussion about the presidential elections in Brazil. In it, the man who exposed her, and at the same time defended Bolsonaro, claimed that the young woman was worthless and therefore should not be allowed to argue at all. The other reports refer to experiences lived by two other women. In one, the girl received a nickname at school in reference to her hairy vulva. On the other, Raquel explained the extent of the repercussion of this type of image:

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[4] The project has the collaboration of volunteer professionals for health care and legal support.

There was a girl who was publicized because she had not shaved on the day of the photo, and then her photo was disseminated, she had a name on the list talking about it, you know, like 'That girl is the one that does not shave'. Then her photo without shaving was released, it was one of the most viral.

The imposition of social standards that supported discrimination on women evidenced the combination of gender, class and race oppression, plus certain aesthetic values, experienced in the specificities of the contexts analyzed; this reiterates the need to think of these categories in a dynamic rather than static way (Hirata 2014). The same happened in the contexts of work relationships, as will be discussed next.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORK CONTEXT

The reports of exposure and other forms of violence perpetrated in the context of work were related to markedly male environments. One of them, however, was referring to working as fashion models, in which it was observed by a psychologist that a woman she monitored was working in slavery-like conditions, without a contract, salary, indebted, and without receiving the media she was producing or even knowing about their use.

The other reports referred to mining company Vale and the Fiat car plant. Flávia said that her cousin witnessed the transmission of a video made by a worker in which he had sex with two women, without them knowing that the video was being recorded. The video was shown on television in a Vale cafeteria on more than one occasion. Flávia associates this episode with girls' exposures that started to take place at the school where the daughters of Vale employees' study. She believes that the mining context in which there is a large circulation of capital, as well as child prostitution and sexual exploitation, contributes to the process of naturalizing violence against women.

Kiara, who went to work as a mechanic at a Fiat plant at the age of 18, suffered persistent harassment until she had a photo with her face photoshopped over the naked body of another woman. She was fired under another pretext. She received many messages from men in the plant she did not know, and believed that the bosses themselves passed on her contact information. After her dismissal, she was unable to return to this field of work, which she liked very much and for which she had been training. She also said that when she entered the factory six months before, a woman who worked at the construction site had committed suicide because she was exposed in a film in which she was having sex with two men; Kiara believes in the possibility that she was drunk and raped. She heard from people that the woman was guilty of letting herself be filmed and of taking her own life, and for those reasons she did not deserve to live.

It is known that the risk of sexual harassment increases in feminized and eroticized workplaces, in occupational contexts of discriminatory gender culture, and with mostly male workers, making the authority of women dependent on the management of harassment by both supervisors and subordinates. Gender diversity, in these spaces, presents itself as a possibility to reduce harassment (Dias 2008).

It is observed, based on the situations analyzed in the research, that the appropriation of images of women and their exposure manifested in the work context contribute to the reproduction of a sexist culture, under collusion of large organizations that indirectly victimize workers and reinforce occupational inequalities, through exploitation and persecution.

VIOLENCE IN CARE

In the field of care studies, Tronto (1987) started the debate about the fact that care roles are unevenly socially distributed —which are predominantly occupied by women and minorities— and these groups, therefore, have better developed the ethics of care. Care is understood

as a behavior suitable for women that, in turn, constitutes them (Dumont-Pena & Silva 2018).

In the participants' reports, there was a very present narrative of hurt regarding the mode of support, or the absence of it, by the majority of women from whom they expected care and support at the time they were exposed. Such experiences manifest the inherent difficulties in care, especially when directed at women —socially understood as those who care, not those who are cared for—, who are commonly judged, blamed, and neglected when they suffer violence. Thus, women experienced new forms of harm when they expected support after the violence of the exposure.

Shortly after being exhibited, some women reported that their friends from school advised them to remove photos from social media and to stop sharing them. One young woman stated that some people in her circle turned against her, while others remained neutral, without expressing support. A psychologist at a legal agency said she saw exposed women whose friends openly expressed support for the ex-partners who exposed them. Such reports manifest, more or less directly, how women are blamed when they are exposed, especially when they initially make the media available, but not only in these situations. There are also cases in which women are judged even when it is made explicit that, in addition to dissemination, they were not aware of the production of the media.

The life of Letícia —white, 27 years old, resident in the capital city, photographed at the age of 21 by her male partner when she was performing oral sex on him— was marked by this fact, by the judgment received, by the fear of leaving home, by the feeling of impunity. She said she is aware that she was judged for being a woman, and that her feminist friends helped her to understand what she lived. According to her, what she experienced was important for the construction of the person she is today. In her report, the support received from her friends represented not only an aid to face the situation, but also an influence on the way she started to conceive relationships with other women.

But then, in these situations, the woman is really the victim, she is not guilty. So today, for example, yeah, I am very aware. In the past, if I received any nude from a girl or something, I would judge that girl, and so, I no longer judge, it is not the girl's fault, it is the fault of whoever exposed the girl. So, like this, before I judged these girls, as I was judged. But, after that, I became aware that it is not the girl's fault, the girl is the victim, yes, and we need to embrace these girls.

The relationship of exposed women with their families appeared in the reports as a determining factor in how they faced the violence situations experienced. The help from their families led women to lodge a complaint and to search for other forms of support, such as therapeutic treatment. The ones who did not receive their support felt guilt and feared hurting family members or being reprimanded. Maura received little emotional support from her mother (who continued interacting with the friend who exposed Maura and demanded her to do the same, to not "exaggerate"), and omitted her father (retired military officer). She explains the relationship between her feelings of guilt and lack of support:

Because I think that guilt is what hinders the most, it hinders reporting, it hinders complaining, it hinders opening to an adult you can trust, right, and it even hinders you to seek, yeah, a certain justice for what has happened to you. Because you don't think you deserve justice, you feel guilty, so, you know, you feel wrong, so I think that's the most important thing.

The absence of complaints and search for other forms of help because of fear of the family becoming aware of the exposure was reported both by women interviewed and by professionals. Ursula, a 36-year-old black woman, psychologist at a public capital security body, referred directly to the judgmental social context as an obstacle to the lodging of a complaint. Some girls did not reveal the fact to

their families because they did not expect to be supported by them. In fact, this was an experience lived by most of them.

Clarice —white, 19 years old, exposed at 14 by her boyfriend in the context of a small school in the countryside, which contributed to the worsening of her bulimia—, spoke out about the exposure to her stepmother, from whom she received little support, as she reported: "Actually, there wasn't much talk about it afterwards, just 'You have to hide and pretend it's not you', and that's it, really. It was not a huge support".

Young women who suffered violence in the family context had, in their stories, the negligence and connivance of their mothers and other family members in the face of the violence perpetrated by the father or stepfather, which, according to them, is one of the main causes of their suffering.

A psychologist reported that she counseled three adolescents with similar stories in a mental health facility in a small town. They had been exposed in the school context and were cutting themselves. Such facts manifested a request for help, while also evidenced the absence of participation and support from their families in their lives, which worsened their mental health conditions.

It was possible to observe that, whenever family support was present, it was initiated by women. Likewise, when absent, the questioning was mostly directed at women. Health and care professionals also observed that, in cases involving adolescents, mothers feared lodging a complaint because of the possibility that fathers may become aware of their daughters' exposure. Apart from gender difference, they also observed a class difference in the provision of care and support. Among middle-class families, even if girls were reprimanded, there was greater support, unlike girls of the popular class, who commonly could not even turn to their families.

An experience lived by a 23-year-old girl differed from the others with respect to the level of impact and the overcome time. Irene, brown, resident of a large city in the metropolitan area, a few months before the interview, had her account hacked and a nude photo sent

to more than 15 people by her own email. Among the people who received the photo were patients from the health service where she works as an intern in the capital, and college colleagues with whom she had attended some classes at the beginning of her undergraduate course. Irene was supported by her family, boyfriend and friends, and, as instructed by the police, spoke personally with each person who received the email about the fact that it was a crime under investigation, and the importance of the email not being opened nor shared. Although this involved great embarrassment, Irene felt supported and understood both within her personal relationships, at work, and in college. As will be discussed below, she was only treated badly by members of the police —who later apologized— at the time of the complaint. She reported that her malaise lasted approximately two weeks, a much shorter time than that reported by the other research participants.

This experience draws attention to the fact that the exposure itself can be less harmful than its consequences, such as the judgments received and the sanctions in the context of affective and professional relationships. In this sense, care, put by society as women's responsibility, albeit denied to them, is central as a powerful tool to face violence and, in particular, to overcome intimacy exposure.

The debate, still incipient, about the understanding of how women are victimized with the unauthorized exposure of their intimacy, either by the act in itself or by its consequences, is related to the perspective of affirming the importance of reception in situations of violence against women. The reception, or its absence in the processes of revictimization, occurs both in the scope of personal and institutional relationships. Violence and victimization at the institutional level will be discussed below.

INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

Women's paths between institutions seeking to break with situations of violence have been called *critical routes*. This concept has been used to understand women's responses, the obstacles found, and the mean-

ings conferred to violence by professionals who receive these women (Meneghel *et al.* 2011).

The difficulties of networking when assisting women who experienced violent situations, filing complaints with police assistance, and the defense of psychosocial assistance centered on women and overcoming violence, have all been debated in many works (Kiss *et al.* 2007). Kiss, Schraiber and d'Oliveira (2007) point to the conflicting rationalities between the institutions as the main obstacle to the effectiveness of the networking logic.

Villela *et al.* (2011) showed that women experienced several negative situations in the care network for violence situations, such as the lack of privacy in reception and care. It creates obstacles to qualified listening: the need to talk about the situation experienced to several employees, starting with security personnel; the lack of comfort in spaces, such as the absence of a place to settle; and the trend of providers (both men and women) to quit this line of care. Specifically in the specialized police stations for women, several prejudices and judgments against women were described, such as the idea that violence occurs only in the suburbs, that violence has been invented because women want to have an abortion, the justification of violence by the use of alcohol and other drugs or because the woman likes sex or cheats on her husband. Law enforcement officers also believe that women file complaints out of jealousy, judge them for reconciling with their attackers, and do not understand how a married woman can be raped by her own husband.

Among the participants' reports, the fear of going to the police and the negative experience of having done so was quite evident. The negative evaluation was also present among professionals. As Clarice reported, the police is not perceived as trust-worthy.

I didn't look for it, even because I thought it would be worse, it would be even more exposure if I went to the police to talk about it. And I don't trust the police either, because we suffer a lot of harassment from

the police. We are walking on the street; they mess with us. How can I talk to someone like that about harassment?

The Civil Police said to Kiara that there was nothing they could do because the image was photoshopped, and it was not a photo of her real body. Regarding Nádia —white, 29 years old, resident of a small city in a metropolitan region, importuned by her abusive ex-boyfriend who started to expose and stalk her—, a military policeman disregarded the fact that she had requested a protective measure and that the attacker was prowling outside her workplace in the capital. The situation left her even more exposed.

> She [the gatekeeper] saw him there, then she called me. She had to call the police, then he ran away. And so, the cop was super rude with me that day. Because I was there at the door, all that confusion, you know, then the cop arrived, then I explained the situation to him. Then he spoke to me like, "Look, let me tell you something, the street is public, he can stay wherever he wants." Then I'm like, "But you don't think it's too much of a coincidence that he stays in front of my workplace since he has no activity here, around here?" Then he said "No, but the street is public, he can stay wherever he wants, if he wants to stay glued here, he can stay." The cop spoke to me like that, that there was no reason to call the police. I told him that too, I told the cop, I showed the measure, I had it in my hand, you know. Then he said that he couldn't do anything until he signed, that he could stay where he wanted, the guy, right, like that. Then there was a mess at the door, the cop was super stupid with me, you know. I was very embarrassed, the whole time I was very embarrassed by the situation. And so, everyone who passed the turnstile was watching, right.

Irene was directly judged by the civil police officer who received her at the virtual crime station and said to her, "For starters, you didn't even have to have taken a photo like this." After filing the complaint, she filed another to the head of the sector, who apologized to her.

However, what happened discouraged her in regard to the help that could be obtained from the police.

> It was already like that, right? You're going to seek help… you're going to try to seek… You have your rights, right? In a place that is specialized for this. And you already receive, right when you enter the place, it is already this type of treatment that you have, like this. I was very discouraged from continuing to do it, right? I did the BO [police report] and such. But the treatment, too, that I had at the police station was terrible, in that respect, it was really judgmental.

Úrsula reported the difficulty to understand gender violence among public safety co-workers, and the constant judgments against women, which compromise care, as reported in other studies.

> It is by no means easy. Yes, blaming the victim, unfortunately, is frequent even by those who should be assisting them. So, like this, it is normal to hear comments about clothes, you know, wore at the moment, the fact of going out at night. So, comments are a little less, yeah, apparent, like that, explicit, as we see, for example, on a social network, on the internet, but they exist. So, I think there is still a long, long way for us to prepare all professionals to understand the issue, sexual violence, gender violence, racial violence and all these things that we go through, right? So as not to get a too superficial analysis, which ends up leading, placing the victim in a position of guilt for what she lived [...] But we do see, for example, when the victim comes to us, for example, and tells how she was treated by the military police, right? And then we realize that we are too far, too far from reaching a humanized service.

As Villela and collaborators (2011) argue, it is up to professionals in the care network to recognize violence and avoid participating in its process, which contributes to the victimization of women and increases the damage caused to them.

> Suffering violence is one situation, becoming a victim is another. Being an object of violence due to the fact of being a woman, socially marked by the sign of subordination, is a social process that must be recognized as a right violation and transformed. An abused woman points to a social problem that affects men and women, as it denotes the non-recognition of otherness, which is an assumption of the human condition. To transform the woman who suffers violence into a victim, treating her with indifference or insensitivity, is to participate in this process (Villela *et al.* 2011: 122).

Women's understanding of the general harm caused by unauthorized exposure of their intimacy is what will be discussed in the next section. A more in-depth debate about the damage caused to women's health and the care provided and claimed in these situations is discussed in another work (Patrocino & Bevilacqua 2021b).

DAMAGE TO WOMEN

Although it cannot be generalized, the feeling of shame experienced by women was widely reported. Since it is strongly present in violence situations against women, it was already assumed that it would be no different in situations that precisely involve the unauthorized exposure of intimacy.

Shame is historically related to female nature. It contributes to the increase in violence, for example, by obstructing the complaint (Jarschel 2015). However, it would be possible to think of shame as an extension of violence, given its harmful potential for women.

As Taille (2002) argues, the feeling of shame does not occur in relation to any judgment. The embarrassed person becomes an accomplice of the negative appraisals directed at him/her, actively judging himself/herself. The moral judgment does not involve appreciation only of the action or its intention but of the person's worth. Honor, in turn, would be the feeling of one's moral value,

present in the representations of oneself. Women would be related to shame and men to honor, in order to maintain this positive representation. The author distinguishes self-esteem from honor in the sense that, firstly, worth does not involve morality. It is worth thinking that both the former and the latter are misused by women in situations of exposure of their intimacy.

Pilar, a 33-year-old black woman, had a video released, at the age of 23, in which she was naked in a provocative pose on a sofa, by the man who formatted it using her boyfriend's computer. She remembers, on the few times she started going out on the street of her small countryside town, walking with her head down, as if she had committed a crime.

Apart from the effects on self-esteem, several other negative consequences were mentioned by women, regarding mental health in several daily life areas. Decrease in school performance, dismissal, relationship difficulties, development of phobias, self-mutilation practices, suicidal ideation, and attempts at self-extermination were some of these consequences. Certainly, how the exposure of intimacy affects each woman is related to their specific life context and the possession of both material and emotional resources to cope with the situation.

The perception of intensity and what affected them the most is very subjective. Pilar, currently married (she did not want to share the experience with her husband, who is a police officer) and residing in a large city in the metropolitan area, does not consider this to be just a past fact: "So, the anguish, in fact, it never ends, right? We carry that tightness for the rest of our lives…"

Joana and Maura stated that the feeling of betrayal was much worse than that of the exposure itself. Joana also stated that the exposure of her insecurities, revealed through her diary's disclosure, was worse, for her, than the exposure of her nude photo. Nádia's report expressed the same meaning.

> And people are often surprised when I talk about it. Because everyone thinks that the worst thing was that he forced intercourse with me, right.

But I don't. I don't say that was the worst part. I do not think so. I still don't feel like it was the worst part. For me, the worst part was really shaking my relationships with the people I love.

Such reports reveal that the damage caused to women in cases of exposure of intimacy exceeds the exposure itself, and it may be experienced even more intensely in terms of the consequences for their mental health and emotional relationships.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The unauthorized exposure of women's intimacy was presented as an specific form of violence against women, given its potential to be multiplied and practiced by several other people. In this sense, as discussed in other works, it was observed that despite their positive appropriation, ICTs are also mechanisms that enhance the control of women's bodies and sexuality.

Exposure can have different motivations —such as the affirmation of male sexuality and commercial appropriation— and it can happen in different ways, not only in relation to sexuality, but also to other women's behaviors. It may be compounded by other modes of violence, especially racism.

This type of violence proved to be extremely harmful to women, above all, in the processes of revictimization in the search for support, whether in the context of institutional violence, especially within the police, or in the context of personal relationships, and in the processes of judgment and blaming, of incomprehension and neglect of women's suffering. The consequences for women's personal and professional relationships become more harmful than the exposure itself. In any case, damage to women is related to the combination of experienced violence, especially due to gender, race and class discrimination, as already described.

It is a mode of violence that is widespread and constant, and that demands a deeper understanding —an example would be the analysis among the LGBTQIA+ population (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, transexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual). This would be a way to contribute to a better production of care that may be socially appropriated, in a wider scope, especially through the field of collective health, thus contributing to the process of overcoming violence against women.

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