

Gender Narratives and Serial Production: The Case of the Tv-Series *Nudes*^{*}

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Television series have emerged as a central cultural force in contemporary media, functioning as narrative form that both reflect and influence societal values and attitudes. For researchers examining youth cultures, the distinctive connection between serialized productions and younger audiences offers crucial insights into identity formation processes and how cultural meanings are negotiated within these demographics. In today's media environment, dominated by global digital platforms and social media networks, television fiction plays a key role in forming the collective imagination of young adults, who constitute the most engaged and interactive segment of digital audiences. Recent serialized productions attuned to social dynamics have become essential tools for depicting the complexities of adolescent and young adult life. Serial fictions like *Euphoria* and *Skam* have achieved considerable success by tackling challenging topics including sexuality education, gender politics, harassment, problematic relationships, and diversity. These narratives actively participate in shaping youth experience rather than merely reflecting it, offering linguistic frameworks, interpretive lenses, and meaningful patterns through which younger viewers process their daily lives. Within this landscape, gender emerges as a central organizing principle for youth-oriented serial fiction. While adolescent programming has traditionally reproduced conventional gender stereotypes, more recent productions offer increasingly nuanced portrayals of young people's experiences, engaging with difficult subjects like sexual abuse and gender-based violence. This contribution examines *Nudes*, the Italian adaptation of a Norwegian format produced in 2021 by Rai Fiction. The series follows three young characters – Vittorio, Sofia and Ada – whose lives are affected by online harassment and non-consensual intimate images (NCII), also known as revenge porn. The production explores this phenomenon from various generational and gendered perspectives, shedding light on the stark inequalities inherent in digital harm. The analysis reveals how unauthorized circulation of intimate visual content produces vastly different consequences depending on victims' gender. The series exposes a continuing gendered double standard governing young women's bodies and sexual expression, compelling them toward constant self-monitoring and pre-emptive restraint. Actions that might be dismissed as mistakes or adventures for young men become permanent stains on young women's reputations. Drawing on media analysis frameworks, this study highlights how current serial narratives occupy a critical position between depicting and constructing youth realities, serving as vehicles for critical examination and cultural evolution, particularly regarding gender inequities and power imbalances that continue to define younger generations' lives in digital society.

Keywords: Tv series; non-consensual intimate images; revenge porn; young people; Italy; *Nudes*.

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Television Series and Youth Realities

In the media landscape of recent decades, the success of television series represents one of the most significant cultural phenomena, as these products configure themselves not only as original forms of entertainment, but also as genuine narrative devices capable of reflecting and influencing collective attitudes and values. For those engaged in the study of youth cultures, the privileged relationship linking serial productions and new generations constitutes a particularly fertile field of investigation, also for understanding processes of identity construction and the dynamics of negotiation of cultural meanings enacted by these audiences.

Moreover, in a media ecosystem marked by the pervasive presence of global digital platforms and the centrality of social media, television series have acquired a fundamental role in the construction of the collective imaginary of those cohorts of young adults who represent the most active and participatory audience segment of the digital scenario. As Msofu and Britto (2024) highlight, television storytelling has demonstrated its capacity to reflect and, in some cases, anticipate public debate on sensitive issues such as bullying, dysfunctional relationships, inclusivity, and the struggle against gender stereotypes. These narratives function both as mirrors and as instruments for shaping individuals' daily lives, ultimately actively moulding social values and collective attitudes.

In the recent past, highly popular series such as *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Dawson's Creek*, or *The O.C.* had already outlined a multifaceted portrait of the youth universe, highlighting its complexity and contradictions, also through the construction of controversial and, at times, ambiguous storylines and characters. Even more so today, serial productions most attuned to social reality have established themselves as privileged instruments for exploring and representing the youth universe in its complexity. As Masanet, Ventura, and Ballesté (2022) and Sundet (2020) emphasize, series such as *Euphoria* and *Skam* have gained widespread popularity among young people by addressing sensitive themes such as sexual education and gender issues, placing at the centre of their narrative the relational dynamics of a generation forced to confront a constantly changing reality. Indeed, these narratives do not limit themselves to passively mirroring youth reality, but actively contribute to shaping it, providing languages, interpretive categories, and models of meaning through which young people manage to elaborate their everyday experiences. Television series can offer young people a sort of existential laboratory where they can experiment with and negotiate new forms of subjectivity, new ways of conceiving interpersonal relationships, and new modalities of identity expression. In the case of the youth universe in particular, the analysis of selected fictional texts offers a privileged interpretive lens for understanding ongoing transformations and the processes through which new generations elaborate their relationship with the society surrounding them.

Within this context, gender emerges as one of the central dimensions shaping contemporary serial narratives targeted at youth audiences. If, as García-Muñoz and Fedele (2011) emphasize, teen fiction has long been characterized by the presence of traditional

gender stereotypes, more recent television productions have begun to offer richer and more multifaceted representations of youth experiences, addressing more complex issues such as sexual education, abuse, or gender-based violence. Indeed, themes such as so-called “revenge porn”¹ and various forms of online harassment are increasingly at the centre of contemporary serial narratives (Sullaway, 2022), highlighting the pressing urgency of such issues, but also the capacity of television series to establish themselves as privileged spaces for the cultural elaboration of themes often linked to persistent gender inequalities². In such a scenario, it is interesting to highlight how, in television series aimed at adolescent girls, the theme of sexual violence is increasingly addressed through narrative modalities that reflect a feminist sensibility that seemed relegated to the past (Brüning, 2022), with explicit references to the struggle against patriarchy and female empowerment.

Interrogating how young viewers negotiate and interpret these media messages thus becomes crucial: the reception of gender representations in television series is not a passive process but rather implies active forms of decoding and re-signification mediated by the personal experiences and social contexts of young viewers. The intersectional approach itself, an essential interpretive framework for understanding the weight of different identity dimensions (including gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation), explicitly refers to the structural conditions that characterize individual biographies (Collins, 2000).

The series *Nudes*, which will be discussed in the following pages, provides a particularly significant example in this context. Produced by Rai Fiction in 2021, it is the Italian adaptation of a Norwegian series. The first season follows the stories of three young protagonists – Vittorio, Sofia, and Ada – who are either victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying and digital violence. The phenomenon commonly referred to as *revenge porn* represents one of the most visible and damaging manifestations of technology-facilitated sexual violence in contemporary societies. In scholarly literature, it is more accurately conceptualised as *non-consensual intimate images* (NCII), while earlier studies often employed the term *non-consensual pornography* (NCP) (Falduti & Tessaris, 2023). Across the episodes, the series clearly demonstrates how the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images and videos, a central theme of the narrative, has a gendered impact on the lives of young people. The circulation of intimate content is shown to have more severe consequences for adolescent girls than for boys, as the female protagonists navigate social contexts still marked by profound gender inequalities, power asymmetries, and unequal opportunities for self-determination. Contemporary serial narratives therefore occupy a space between representing and shaping youth realities, functioning as catalysts for critical reflection and cultural transformation. In particular, they offer a lens through which to explore gender relations and the persistent inequalities that continue to shape young people’s experiences in digital environments.

From this perspective, *Nudes* inserts itself in the trajectory traced by productions such as *Euphoria* and *Skam*, configuring itself as a cultural text capable precisely of laying bare those mechanisms of social control that, through the threat of stigmatization and exclusion, continue to differentially discipline the bodies and sexualities of boys and girls.

Non-consensual Intimate Images as Gendered Digital Violence

As we have pointed out, in the context of television series that not only reflect social reality but also actively participate in its construction, offering interpretative frameworks through which individuals – especially young audiences – make sense of their lived experiences, *Nudes* represents a paradigmatic case study, as it articulates a complex narrative exploration of non-consensual intimate images (NCII), digital violence, and gendered power asymmetries within the everyday lives of adolescents. *Nudes* is characterized by its explicit focus on technology-facilitated sexual violence and its differentiated impact on male and female subjectivities, thereby illuminating the persistence of structural gender inequalities (Cosma et al., 2022) within ostensibly progressive and technologically advanced societies. Central to the series is the representation of NCII not as an isolated deviant act, but as a systemic phenomenon embedded in broader cultural logics that normalize male entitlement (Alsawalqa & Alrawashdeh, 2022), sexual double standards (Endendijk, van Baar, & Deković, 2020), and the objectification of female bodies (Santonniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso, & Rollè, 2023).

In *Nudes*, rather than constituting a marginal or exceptional deviance, NCII emerges as a practice embedded within broader structures of gender inequality, sexual norms, and digital power relations specifically as the most common feature of the broader Cyber-VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) phenomenon. Indeed, the term Cyber-VAWG is used to identify “acts of gender-based violence committed, facilitated, or aggravated through the use of information and communication technologies” (UN Broadband Commission, 2015, p. 13) and represents one of the most pervasive and problematic manifestations of the intersection between digital technology and gender inequality in the twenty-first century.

Henry and Powell (2018) propose the definition of “technology-facilitated violence” to emphasize how digital media not only enable the perpetration of traditional forms of abuse, but also generate new forms of violence that are specific to the digital context such as cyberstalking (Lee & Park, 2025) and online threats (Jane, 2014), the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2022) and digital surveillance (Pande, 2024).

From a sociological perspective, technology-facilitated violence is not merely an individual harm but a structural phenomenon that exposes the persistence of patriarchal regulation of sexuality, the erosion of the public-private divide, and the normalization of surveillance within digital cultures. As *Nudes* highlights, this form of online harassment appears to be particularly gendered, as women are usually the primary victims of this practice (Gius, 2022).

From a gendered standpoint, NCII reproduces long-standing sexual double standards that reward male sexual agency while punishing female sexual visibility. While sexuality is a social and cultural construct, men are generally more likely to be allowed to express their sexual freedom and self-determination than women. In many societies, female sexuality continues to be framed as something that must be controlled, contained, and morally regulated, while male sexual behaviour is more readily normalized or excused. Empirical

studies consistently show that women and girls experience more severe social, psychological, and reputational harm as a result (Citron & Franks, 2014; Araújo et al., 2022). They frequently report experiences of anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and suicidal ideation, as well as tangible consequences such as job loss, educational disruption, and physical relocation (Citron & Franks, 2014). These outcomes demonstrate that digital harm is not less “real” than offline violence but intersects with material conditions of life in profound ways.

One of the defining features of the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images is its capacity to collapse the boundary between public and private spheres. Armstrong and Squires (2002) note that feminist critiques of the public/private dichotomy have long emphasized how women’s subordination is sustained by the relegation of sexuality and intimacy to the private realm, where regulation is weak and accountability limited. Digital media disrupt this division by rendering intimate content potentially public, searchable, and permanently accessible. However, this disruption does not produce symmetrical consequences. Instead, it intensifies gendered surveillance, as women’s sexual lives become subject to public scrutiny and moral judgment. Digital platforms play a central role in shaping the conditions under which NCII circulates. As the series emphasizes, digital technologies have radically transformed the conditions under which intimacy is produced, recorded, and circulated. Smartphones, social media platforms, and encrypted messaging applications have normalized the creation of sexual images as part of everyday relational practices, particularly among younger generations (Döring, 2014). Sexting, once framed as a risky or deviant behaviour, is now widely recognized as a common and often consensual form of sexual communication. However, the same technological affordances that enable intimate self-expression also facilitate unprecedented forms of exposure and violation. The capacity for instant replication, global dissemination, and permanent storage of digital content means that breaches of sexual privacy can have enduring and uncontrollable consequences. As Henry and Powell (2018) argue, technology does not simply mediate sexual violence but actively amplifies it by increasing scale, speed, and audience reach.

***Nudes*: Format, Narrative Architecture, and Content**

The first season of *Nudes* (2021), the series directed by Laura Luchetti and produced by BiM Produzione and Rai Fiction, is structured through an anthology format that divides the ten episodes among three protagonists: Vittorio (played by Nicolas Maupas, four episodes), Sofia (Fotini Peluso, three episodes), and Ada (played by Anna Agio, three episodes). This narrative choice, inherited from the original Norwegian format but readapted to the Italian context by the director and by the head writer Emanuela Canonico, allows for the exploration of the technology-facilitated violence phenomenon from different generational and gender perspectives. The fragmented serial architecture is not just a stylistic choice but seems to reflect the very nature of digital violence: episodic, almost disconnected from biographical

flow, yet simultaneously pervasive and dangerous. The anthology format, moreover, allows the series to avoid traditional narrative linearity, opting instead for a structure that mirrors the fragmentation of contemporary digital experience. Each story, while autonomous, contributes to composing a broader mosaic that reveals the multiple facets of the theme. The anthology structure of *Nudes* produces something more than a mere multiplication of storylines: it generates a distinctive epistemic device through which the viewer is positioned as a privileged witness, gradually accumulating knowledge that no single character within the narrative possesses. As each protagonist's story unfolds in relative isolation (Vittorio unaware of Sofia's experience, Sofia unaware of Ada's), the audience alone is granted access to the full architecture of the phenomenon, perceiving its systemic character from a vantage point that remains inaccessible to those living it from the inside. This structural condition is not incidental but politically productive: it transforms the act of watching into an act of critical recognition, compelling the viewer to connect what the characters cannot connect, and to read as structural what each protagonist experiences as singular and exceptional. In this sense, the anthology format operates as a sociological lens *avant la lettre*, enacting through narrative form the very analytical move that social research performs through method: the shift from individual experience to structural pattern. The fragmentation that characterises each story is thus simultaneously a mimetic device (reproducing the isolation and opacity that victims of technology-facilitated violence typically experience) and an epistemological one: by withholding the full picture from each character while granting it to the viewer, the series makes visible precisely what digital violence tends to obscure: its pervasiveness, its gendered systematicity, and its embeddedness in ordinary social life. The visual strategies – split screen, overlays and graphic inserts – reveal what is usually invisible in everyday digital experience: the conditions that cause intimate content to become a weapon and private vulnerability to be converted into public stigma. This makes the medium itself a critical instrument of awareness.

Nudes addresses the challenge of representing this phenomenon without falling into spectacularization. Through a careful combination of directorial and narrative strategies, the series avoids explicitly showing intimate photos and videos, instead evoking their presence through characters' reactions, incoming phone messages, or the gazes of others. By not displaying the images, the fiction forces the viewer to concentrate on the effects of violence, rather than on its spectacular content. From this perspective, each of the three stories reveals different aspects of the phenomenon – male privilege (Vittorio), female stigma (Sofia), adolescent vulnerability (Ada) – composing a complex picture that aims to avoid moralistic or sensationalistic simplifications.

In the first four episodes, Vittorio, the eighteen-year-old son of a wealthy family, represents the archetype of the “successful” boy: a charismatic student at a classical high school, engaged to Costanza, surrounded and admired by his friends. He is president of “Officina 27”, a project involving a group of young people engaged in the regeneration of an urban space. Vittorio's story begins with a summons to the police station: the boy is accused of having distributed a child pornography video featuring a minor, Marta. Vittorio admits to having recorded the video during a Halloween party but denies having distributed it, claiming

to have lost his phone. The events unfold through lies and initial admissions until the final epilogue, Marta's suicide attempt. Crucially, the narrative gradually unveils that Vittorio had initially made sexual advances towards Marta, only to be rejected by her. What the series reveals through this detail is not simply the mechanics of personal grievance, but something structurally more revealing: Vittorio's inability to tolerate the frustration of rejection and, above all, to accept Marta's autonomous exercise of desire. It is precisely the fact that Marta chose to give her boyfriend the affection and intimacy that she had previously withheld from him that appears to be the true emotional trigger of his behaviour. In this sense, his reaction is not merely one of jealousy but of punitive retaliation against a female subject who dared to assert her own sexual agency independently of his expectations. This prior refusal thus repositions the act of recording not merely as voyeuristic opportunism but as an expression of wounded masculine pride seeking to reassert, through humiliation and exposure, the control that had been denied to him through legitimate relational means. Vittorio seems to adhere to a traditional cultural model of masculinity in which the man "occupies the role of the active subject, the one who aspires, acts, takes. To the feminine, instead, is assigned the passive position: the one who is looked at, wanted, used. Being a 'real man', in this logic, means desiring without ever identifying with the object of desire" (Farci, 2025, p. 113, *our translation*).

Vittorio's characterization is particularly significant because he embodies what Connell (1995) defines as "hegemonic masculinity", a form of dominant masculinity based on success, control, and social prestige. His origin from a wealthy family and his role within his peer group place him in a position of structural privilege that profoundly influences the way he confronts the crisis situation: unlike the other two female protagonists of the series, Vittorio can count on a solid social network and on economic and cultural resources that allow him to maintain a certain control over the public narrative of events. Despite the gravity of the accusation, when rumours about the complaint begin to circulate, his social position allows him to negotiate the effects of the crisis, utilizing his and his family's social and cultural capital as a sort of protective shield.

It is interesting to note how the storytelling constructed around Vittorio's case also reveals a crucial aspect of NCII from the male perspective, namely the clear dissociation between the act of recording intimate content and that of distributing images; the boy admits with relative ease to having filmed the sexual encounter between Marta and her boyfriend, almost as if this were normalized behaviour in male youth culture, while he categorically denies having shared the videos within his circle of friends. This distinction raises crucial questions about consent and privacy in the digital era, where the line between documenting and sharing is becoming increasingly blurred.

The second narrative line features Sofia, a sixteen-year-old passionate about rock climbing, at the centre of the series' next three episodes. Sofia embodies a young woman who has always sought to exercise strict control over her life; in this sense, her choice of sport is far from accidental. Rock climbing requires precision, strength, and absolute control of one's body in space, all qualities that Sofia will symbolically lose when the video of her sexual encounter with Tommy is distributed among her friends. During a party, Sofia and

Tommy retreat to a tool shed where they have sexual intercourse. The following day, Sofia discovers that the video of their encounter is circulating among her friends, transforming within a few hours an intimate moment into a public spectacle, without her having any possibility to intervene. The exponential multiplication of such private content leaves her stunned and defenceless, victim of a perverse and apparently uncontrollable dynamic. Sofia's story allows us to understand the profound gender disparities that operate in the context of NCII: unlike Tommy, the girl suffers a totalizing stigma that seems to immediately marginalize her from the peer group. School, a fundamental socialization space for adolescents, transforms into a place of daily psychological torture, between jokes and malicious looks. The glances, whispers, and veiled comments constitute a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998) invisible yet pervasive, which operates through cognitive structures and incorporated social expectations, rather than overt coercion.

Moreover, the loss of control over one's sexual image constitutes not only a privacy violation but also a profound form of identity disruption, as individuals – as in the cases of Sofia and Marta – are reduced to a stigmatized representation that eclipses other aspects of their identity. The series effectively portrays how humiliation can be perpetuated through subtle, everyday gendered practices, such as glances, whispers, silences, which implicitly interrogate the viewer about the responsibility of those who share intimate content without considering its potential consequences.

A particularly significant element of Sofia's storyline is the presence of other female figures: Viola and Anna, the girl's friends, embody different modalities of female response to gender-based violence. The friends try to help Sofia by discovering who is behind the video's distribution, supporting her and accompanying her in the difficult search for truth. This female solidarity contrasts with the social isolation that often characterizes NCII or revenge porn victims, highlighting the importance of support networks in the resilience process. Throughout the episodes, Sofia's character transforms from passive victim to active subject. Her decision to investigate who recorded and circulated the video with Tommy represents an attempt to reappropriate her life, opposing events and recovering agency and decision-making capacity. Sofia appears increasingly determined to go all the way, even though this choice will confront her with painful and lacerating discoveries. We therefore witness a particularly significant transformation of storytelling: instead of remaining crushed by stigma, Sofia seeks to understand and unmask the mechanisms that permitted the violation of her intimacy, reappropriating her own story. The revelation that it was Emilia, one of Sofia's oldest friends, who circulated the intimate video, enables the series to shed light on the deep ambivalence that can exist even within long-standing adolescent friendships. Rather than being driven by cruelty, Emilia's betrayal stems from a complex cluster of sociologically significant emotions: a growing sense of exclusion from a new friendship group that she perceives as becoming distant, jealousy towards Sofia, who appears to be drifting away and surrounding herself with new friends, and the painful feeling of being superfluous and unwelcome among those friends who do not make room for her. Unable to process these feelings of marginalisation and relational loss through direct communication, Emilia channels her resentment into an act of retaliation against Sofia, the

very person whose social success she both admires and resents. Thus, the series reveals that the non-consensual circulation of intimate images does not always stem from misogynistic impulses or explicit power strategies, but can also emerge from a wide range of motivations (Davidson et al., 2019; Gauthier, 2023), including fractures in female friendships and the unresolved tensions of belonging and exclusion that characterise peer group dynamics in adolescence.

The last protagonist of *Nudes*' first season is also the youngest, Ada, a shy fourteen-year-old who seems to represent all the vulnerability of that early adolescence lived in digital contexts. Unlike her peers, apparently projected toward more adult behaviours, at first Ada appears disinterested in demonstrating that she is older than her age. However, growing social pressure, the fear of remaining excluded from the peer group, and the stimulus toward precocious sexualization induce her to make choices that will prove deleterious.

For her it all begins as a game, from an exchange of messages with a boy met on a dating app. Mirko is the first who does not seem to treat her like a child, the first who makes her feel like a beautiful and desired young woman. In the three episodes, the description of the online grooming process appears particularly accurate also from a psychological perspective: the digital predator exploits the need for recognition and approval typical of adolescence, making the girl feel loved and desired like her friends. Ada sends intimate photos to Mirko, thus initiating a spiral that will disrupt her life. The story assumes even more dramatic tones when Giancarlo enters the scene, a man who contacts her by phone to offer her fundamental protection: through his company he will help her remove the photos that ended up on pornographic sites, but in exchange for a substantial payment. This second victimization also represents a frequent pattern in NCII situations: victims, already vulnerable from the first violation suffered, become easy targets for further forms of exploitation and blackmail. Throughout the narrative, Ada's downward spiral is represented in a pressing manner. After the initial phone calls with Giancarlo, viewers witness the girl's desperate attempts to conceal her mistake: the lies she is forced to tell multiply, leading her even to theft to cope with the blackmail she is subjected to, until she loses her sense of identity amid layers of deception. This forced identity transformation represents one of the most devastating effects of NCII: the victim is forced to renounce her own authenticity to manage the consequences of the violence suffered. Only at the end of the third episode will Ada manage to confide in her best friend and find a way to confront her blackmailer.

Serving as backdrop to the entire series are Bologna and the Emilian province, in a combination of tradition and modernity, of localism and cosmopolitanism particularly suited to illustrating the contradictions of a country almost disoriented by the speed of digital evolution. Bologna, the university city *par excellence*, is characterized by a young and technologically literate population, but also by social and familial structures still rooted in traditional models. The spaces of the narrative – Vittorio's classical high school, party venues, the urban regeneration project, gathering spaces – delineate a cross-sectional social geography capable of showing how NCII traverses all social strata.

In *Nudes*' first season, parents and teachers, though present in the narrative, appear as marginal and faded figures, incapable of breaking that bubble of silence and distrust in which

the young people are immersed. Their physical proximity does not translate into an emotionally effective presence: they lack the cultural and digital literacy to understand and address the phenomenon of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2018), and they underestimate its severity. In fact, in this context, phone screens, chats, and social media are not simple background elements but become an integral part of the narrative, with the series using techniques such as split screen, overlays, and graphic inserts to convey the simultaneity and fragmentation of experience mediated by digital platforms.

A recurring theme across the three storylines is the lack of emotional literacy among both perpetrators and victims. Vittorio cannot process frustration at rejection without wanting to retaliate; Sofia's friend Emilia cannot express her feelings of exclusion and loss directly, instead channelling them into betrayal; Ada cannot distinguish between genuine affection and manipulative attention, which makes her particularly vulnerable to grooming. The inability to recognise, control and express complex emotions does not remain confined to the interpersonal sphere but is amplified by digital platforms: social media reward immediate, intense and visible reactions, turning unprocessed feelings into actions with irreversible consequences. This emotional illiteracy is not an individual failure, but rather a structural condition shaped by peer cultures that prioritise performance over vulnerability, and an adult world that is too distant, both culturally and digitally, to provide meaningful guidance.

From Relational Shame to Platform Violence: *Skam*, *Euphoria* and *Nudes*

The representation of image-based sexual abuse in contemporary television drama offers an important lens through which to analyse the changing nature of intimacy, surveillance, and gendered power in digital culture. As already highlighted, series such as *Nudes*, *Skam*, and *Euphoria* have explored the circulation of intimate images among adolescents, yet they do so through significantly different cultural imaginaries and media ecologies. Comparing the first season of *Nudes Italia* with *Skam Italia* and *Euphoria* reveals how representations of NCII evolve according to the historical moment of production, the role attributed to social media, and broader transformations in platform culture.

This phenomenon can be understood as an extension of traditional gender-based violence (Henry & Powell, 2015), amplified by the distinctive features of digital environments – anonymity, virality, persistence, scalability, and global accessibility (Jane, 2016). The circulation of intimate images via digital platforms deserves particular attention: the three series effectively convey how a single act of sharing can be amplified immediately by the viral nature of social media. This transforms a private violation into a rapidly expanding public spectacle that cannot be contained. Virality is thus not merely a technical feature of digital environments, but a social force that exponentially intensifies harm. Once something has been shared, it cannot be unshared, and each subsequent forwarding constitutes a renewed act of violation. This extends the reach of humiliation across peer networks in instantaneous and irreversible ways.

Crucially, viral diffusion operates according to an affective economy whereby content circulates because of, not despite, its transgressive or humiliating nature. The intimate image becomes a unit of *social currency*, exchanged within peer networks and fuelling voyeuristic, complicit, and entertaining dynamics that render each viewer a participant in the violation, whether consciously or not. This logic turns the initial act of recording or sharing into a self-perpetuating process, where the platform's architecture – its algorithms, notification systems, and frictionless sharing mechanisms – acts as an accelerant rather than a neutral conduit. The series therefore embody the concept of the “culture of connectivity” (van Dijck, 2013) and of “networked privacy” (Marwick & boyd, 2014), where personal boundaries collapse under conditions of constant sharing and algorithmic amplification.

Unlike *Nudes*, *Skam* approaches NCII through a softer and more relational framework. The three last episodes of the second season of the Norwegian edition and of the third season of the Italian adaptation, centred on the troubled love story of Eleonora and Edoardo, engage specifically with the topic, embedding these issues within broader narratives about intimacy, friendship, and emotional vulnerability. Moreover, as Brioni (2025, p. 170) notes, “representations of online bullying and shaming in *Skam* tend to underline young people's understanding of, and active engagement with, these issues, rather than uniquely present young people as helpless victims”.

The different production periods also highlight how the role of social media platforms has evolved over time: unlike *Nudes Italia*, where platforms operate primarily as sites of danger and humiliation, *Skam* (2015-2017) and the first seasons of *Skam Italia* (2018-2019) emerged during a transitional moment in digital culture, when Instagram, WhatsApp, and online interaction still retained a degree of optimism associated with youth participation and authenticity. The NCII narrative associated with the *Skam* universe remains tied to interpersonal betrayal and adolescent shame rather than to systemic platform violence. Shame, in *Skam Italia*, is primarily social and relational. In *Nudes Italia*, it becomes infrastructural and algorithmic.

On a different level, the representation of NCII in *Euphoria* is markedly darker and more spectacularized. Produced by HBO beginning in 2019, the series depicts harsh realities long associated with teen life, including sexuality, mental illness, and substance abuse (Macintosh, 2022), reflecting a media ecosystem deeply shaped by platform capitalism, influencer culture, and the commodification of visibility. The storyline involving Jules and Nate centres on nude images, catfishing, blackmail, and the threat of criminalization. Nate weaponizes Jules's intimate photos, threatening to expose her and accuse her of distributing child pornography, being herself underage. Nate's threat is about domination: the possession of intimate images allows him to influence Jules's behaviour through fear, shame, and anticipatory humiliation.

Euphoria portrays NCII as part of a broader economy of sexual commodification. Bodies circulate as digital capital. Desire, humiliation, and visibility become deeply intertwined. The threat faced by Jules is intensified not only by the potential circulation of her intimate images, but also by the fact that, as a transgender teenager, she relies on dating apps and digital

communication to negotiate intimacy, desire, and social recognition. Consequently, exposure becomes entangled with questions of gender identity, vulnerability, and the dynamics of online spectatorship.

While the series criticizes misogyny and digital abuse, it also reproduces the aesthetic logic of platform culture, where visibility itself becomes addictive and profitable, as Kat's storyline demonstrates. In the first season, she exploits the circulation of an intimate video filmed and released without her consent and, rather than retreating from online exposure, she responds by strategically embracing hypervisibility. As the series progresses, she begins performing sexuality online through *cam work* and anonymous digital interactions. In this sense, *Euphoria* reflects a different stage of social media culture than *Nudes* and *Skam Italia*: one in which platforms are fully integrated into economies of attention, branding, and self-exploitation.

The comparison between *SKAM*, *Euphoria*, and *Nudes* highlights that all three series depict adolescents navigating digital sexual violence in contexts marked by weak or fragmented adult support. However, they differ significantly in the degree to which adult absence is normalized, dramatized, or problematized. In *SKAM Italia*, adults remain largely marginal to the emotional experiences of the protagonists. The series privileges peer-to-peer intimacy and emotional solidarity, constructing adolescence as a relatively autonomous social sphere. Although parents and teachers occasionally appear, they rarely become meaningful actors in moments of emotional crisis connected to digital exposure or sexual vulnerability. In Eleonora's storyline, emotional regulation occurs primarily through friendships and romantic relationships rather than through family mediation. Emotional support becomes horizontal rather than vertical, generated within peer networks. Her friends encourage her to go to the hospital and eventually to report Andrea, Edoardo's brother, for the alleged rape. In this case, the institutions seem to play a positive role: when Eleonora meets Andrea, who is threatening to blackmail her, she tells him that she has reported him to the authorities and quotes articles from the criminal code according to which he could end up in prison.

In *Euphoria*, adults, when present, are deeply flawed, frequently distracted, psychologically unstable, and disconnected from the digital realities inhabited by teenagers. Unlike *SKAM*, where adult marginality coexists with relatively supportive peer communities, *Euphoria* portrays the absence of adults as part of a broader social collapse. Adolescents are left alone not only technologically, but emotionally. As a result, NCII becomes intertwined with broader dynamics of control, shame, and self-destruction. The lack of reliable adult mediation intensifies vulnerability, reinforcing a cultural landscape in which young people seek recognition and validation primarily through visibility and self-performance online. While *Euphoria* aestheticizes emotional chaos and social disintegration, *Nudes* approaches NCII more explicitly as an ordinary social risk embedded in everyday digital practices. The absence of adults is therefore represented less as exceptional dysfunction and more as evidence of a broader generational gap regarding sexuality, technology, and consent. Teenagers are compelled to confront the consequences of digital exposure largely alone, relying on fragile peer relationships and personal coping strategies.

Across these three series, the representation of adults reflects broader cultural anxieties concerning authority and care in platform society. *SKAM* normalizes adolescent autonomy, *Euphoria* dramatizes the catastrophic consequences of emotional abandonment, and *Nudes* highlights the inadequacy of adult understanding in relation to digital sexual violence. In all cases, NCII emerges not simply as an individual trauma, but as a symptom of changing intergenerational relationships in contemporary mediated culture.

Ultimately, the three series reveal a broader transformation in contemporary media culture. NCII is no longer represented simply as deviant individual behaviour but as a structural condition of networked society. The circulation of intimate images exposes the instability of privacy under platform capitalism and highlights the gendered asymmetries embedded within digital participation. While *Skam* still imagines social media as spaces of relational authenticity, *Euphoria* and *Nudes* depict a more fragmented environment in which visibility itself becomes dangerous, irreversible, and economically structured.

Conclusions

Through serialized storytelling, *Nudes* effectively translates the social, psychological, and relational implications associated with the phenomenon commonly known as revenge porn, while also offering a space for critical reflection on the role of media representations and their capacity to raise awareness among young people about issues of gender-based violence. At the same time, the series foregrounds the emotional illiteracy that characterises both perpetrators and victims, suggesting that NCII often emerges from an inability to recognise, process, and manage complex emotions such as rejection, frustration, vulnerability, and betrayal. Vittorio's storyline, for example, highlights the frustration of rejection, while Sofia's narrative explores the anger generated by betrayal and the desire to regain control over a body that has become the object of public exposure. These emotions are further amplified by the operational logic of social media platforms, which privilege immediacy, visibility, and virality over reflection and deliberation. Within such an environment, revenge may appear as an immediate response to emotional distress, despite its often dramatic and far-reaching consequences. Emotional illiteracy is also evident in the victims' difficulties in processing and articulating their experiences of trauma. Throughout the series, the protagonists frequently withdraw into isolation, reluctant to confide in adults whom they perceive as distant, uncomprehending, and incapable of offering meaningful support.

By integrating smartphones, chat interfaces, and social media aesthetics directly into its visual language, *Nudes* reinforces the idea that digital technologies are not merely tools but constitutive elements of contemporary subjectivity, shaping how emotions are experienced, expressed, and weaponized. Ultimately, the main thematic strength of the series lies in its capacity to render visible the gendered power relations that structure digital interactions, exposing NCII as a continuation of long-standing mechanisms of social control over female bodies and sexualities, rather than as a novel or exceptional pathology of the digital era.

Moreover, NCII seems to highlight the contradictions of late modern intimacy. On the one hand, individuals are encouraged to express themselves sexually, curate their identities online, and pursue visibility as a form of social capital. On the other hand, this visibility exposes them to intensified surveillance, judgment, and control. *Nudes* exploits these contradictions, transforming intimacy into vulnerability and trust into risk.

In the context of digital modernity, *Nudes* operates as a form of symbolic mediation through which complex social phenomena such as technology-facilitated sexual violence are translated into accessible narratives capable of fostering recognition, empathy, and critical reflection among young audiences. In doing so, it confirms the broader theoretical insight that serial television functions as a “laboratory of meaning”, where social actors can experiment with moral positions, emotional responses, and interpretative frameworks without bearing their immediate real-world consequences (Bauman, 2000). For example, Sofia’s gradual transformation from a stigmatized victim into an agentive subject who seeks truth and accountability reflects a narrative alignment with feminist discourses of empowerment and resistance, echoing broader shifts in contemporary teen television towards more politically conscious representations of sexual violence (Brüning, 2022).

Importantly, *Nudes* avoids simplistic moral binaries by situating individual behaviours within structural conditions, thereby aligning with sociological approaches that emphasize the interplay between agency and constraint. The differentiated outcomes experienced by Vittorio, Sofia, and Ada demonstrate how gender remains a fundamental axis of stratification that shapes exposure to risk, access to resources, and possibilities for recovery in the aftermath of digital violence. The sociological significance of NCII becomes particularly evident when examined through the lens of power and control. While popular discourse often frames perpetrators as aggrieved ex-partners seeking revenge after a breakup, research indicates that many cases involve no prior romantic relationship and no identifiable grievance (Hall & Hearn, 2017). Images are frequently shared within peer groups as a form of bonding, status enhancement, or entertainment, especially in male-dominated social contexts. This practice reinforces homosocial dynamics in which women’s bodies function as symbolic currency through which masculinity is performed and validated. NCII becomes one mechanism through which masculine power is asserted in digitally mediated environments.

At the same time, *Nudes* highlights the ongoing discrepancy between technological advancements and cultural adaptation. Adults may be physically present, but they are often emotionally and digitally distant. They lack the skills necessary to guide adolescents through technologically mediated forms of intimacy and conflict. This absence exacerbates the isolation of young people and perpetuates the silence and self-blame that frequently accompany experiences of sexual violence.

While *Nudes* is situated within a specific national and cultural context, Italy and the city of Bologna, its themes possess a transnational resonance, reflecting broader patterns observed across Western societies where digital platforms intensify existing inequalities rather than neutralizing them. In this sense, the series participates in a growing body of

media texts that challenge the myth of technological neutrality and expose the deeply social nature of digital infrastructures.

By refusing to sensationalize explicit content and instead focusing on the relational and emotional consequences of NCII, *Nudes* adopts an ethical representational strategy that prioritizes the dignity of victims and shifts attention from voyeuristic consumption to critical understanding.

In conclusion, *Nudes* exemplifies the potential of serial storytelling to function as a site of cultural critique and social learning, illuminating the structural roots of NCII and inviting viewers to reconsider the power relations embedded in everyday digital practices. By making visible the asymmetries that govern who is protected, who is punished, and who is silenced, the series contributes to a broader project of denaturalizing gendered violence and fostering more equitable forms of digital citizenship. Addressing this phenomenon requires more than legal prohibition; it demands a collective rethinking of consent, intimacy, and responsibility in digital societies. Only by situating this phenomenon within its broader social context can we develop responses that are not merely reactive but transformative, capable of challenging the structures that make such violence possible in the first place.

Biographical Notes

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Notes

¹ Throughout this article, the term “revenge porn” is used when referring to public and media discourse, where it remains widely employed despite extensive scholarly criticism. As an analytical category, however, we adopt the term “non-consensual intimate images” (NCII), which avoids the motivational assumptions embedded in the notion of revenge and the problematic association with pornography (Citron & Franks, 2014). Following McGlynn, Rackley, and Houghton (2017), NCII is understood as a form of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) and is situated within the broader framework of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2018).

² As Hall and Hearn (2017) observe, for example, the non-consensual dissemination of pornographic content affects women far more frequently and is based on a structural dimension of inequality that attributes to men greater legitimization in the expression of their sexual freedom and self-determination.