

Emerald**Handbooks**

The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse

Edited by

Jane Bailey • Asher Flynn • Nicola Henry

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Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse: International Perspectives and Experiences

Jane Bailey, Nicola Henry, and Asher Flynn

Abstract

While digital technologies have led to many important social and cultural advances worldwide, they also facilitate the perpetration of violence, abuse and harassment, known as technology-facilitated violence and abuse (TFVA). TFVA includes a spectrum of behaviors perpetrated online, offline, and through a range of technologies, including artificial intelligence, live-streaming, GPS tracking, and social media. This chapter provides an overview of TFVA, including a brief snapshot of existing quantitative and qualitative research relating to various forms of TFVA. It then discusses the aims and contributions of this book as a whole, before outlining five overarching themes arising from the contributions. The chapter concludes by mapping out the structure of the book.

Keywords: Technology-facilitated; violence and abuse; digital crime; intersectionality; violence; systemic discrimination and abuse

Introduction

Digital technologies have led to many important social and cultural changes worldwide, but they are also implicated in the facilitation of abusive behaviors. Technology-facilitated violence and abuse (TFVA) is an umbrella term used to describe the use of digital technologies to perpetrate interpersonal harassment, abuse, and violence, such as sexual violence (e.g., [Powell & Henry, 2017](#)), domestic and family violence (e.g., [Douglas, Harris, & Dragiewicz, 2019](#);

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Fraser, Olsen, Lee, Southworth, & Tucker, 2010; Woodlock, 2017), prejudice-based hatred (e.g., Barnett, 2007; Citron, 2014; Perry & Olsson, 2009), and online othering (e.g., Lumsden & Harmer, 2019).

There are numerous examples of TFVA. These include (but are not limited to) technology-facilitated sexual assault (the use of digital devices or apps to facilitate in-person sexual assault); image-based sexual abuse (the nonconsensual taking, sharing, or threats to share intimate images); cyberstalking (surveillance, monitoring, repeated contact, and impersonation); unwelcome requests and sexual solicitation; image-based harassment (the sending of unwanted and unsolicited explicit images); hate speech; threats of rape and violence; restricting access to and use of technology for purposes of isolation and coercion; exposure to violent and abusive imagery (whether sexual or nonsexual); the creation, distribution, and possession of child sexual exploitation materials; cyberbullying; and the nonconsensual disclosure of personal information, also known as “doxxing.” TFVA is carried out through text, images, and unwanted digitally-enabled or enhanced surveillance and monitoring, using a variety of devices and platforms from basic digital tools, such as texting, email, and social media, to more advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) (Flynn, 2019; Henry, Powell, & Flynn, 2018), GPS tracking (Wong, 2019), and drones (Thomassen, 2018).

TFVA arises in both public and private contexts across a spectrum of human relationships between strangers, acquaintances, friends, family members, and intimate partners (Citron, 2014). While a broad spectrum of people have experienced TFVA across different categories of age, sex, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, or socioeconomic status, TFVA is not simply a collection of random acts of hostility and animosity. It is a product of existing intersecting layers of structural and systemic inequalities (Southern & Harmer, 2019), such as misogyny (Henry, Flynn, & Powell, 2020), homophobia (Green, 2019), transphobia (Colliver, Coyle, & Silvestri, 2019), racism (Kerrigan, 2019), colonialism (Carlson, 2019), and ableism (Hall, 2019), with some forms disproportionately affecting children and young people (Powell & Henry, 2019; Quayle & Koukopoulos, 2018). Further, in the digital environment, corporate structuring and monitoring practices for the purposes of maximizing profit contribute to and shape TFVA, its proliferation, and its impacts (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

This introduction provides an overview of existing quantitative and qualitative research relating to various forms of TFVA. It then discusses the aims and contributions of this Handbook, highlighting the breadth of the research included, before proceeding to focus on five overarching themes arising from these collected works. Finally, it maps out the sections within the book, each of which is preceded in the Handbook by its own introductory remarks.

Existing Research on TFVA

Quantitative Studies

While its presence and impacts span the globe, much of the existing published quantitative and qualitative research on TFVA is dominated by industrialized nations in the Global-North, such as Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Some quantitative (survey-based) research has examined TFVA across a

range of behaviors (e.g., [Australia Institute, 2019](#); [Pew Research Center, 2014](#); [Powell & Henry, 2019](#)). Others have focused on individual behaviors, for example, image-based sexual abuse (e.g., [Citron, 2014](#); [Lenhart, Ybarra, & Price-Feeney, 2016a](#); [Henry et al., 2020](#); [OeSC, 2017](#); [Powell, Henry, & Flynn, 2018](#); [Powell, Henry, Flynn, & Scott, 2019](#); [Powell, Scott, Henry, & Flynn, 2020](#); [Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2019](#)); digital dating abuse (e.g., [Borrajó, Gámez-Guadix, Pereda, & Calvete 2015](#); [Burke, Wallen, Vail-Smith, & Knox, 2011](#); [Marganski & Melander, 2018](#); [Martinez-Pecino & Durán, 2019](#); [Ybarra, Price-Feeney, Lenhart, & Zickuhr, 2017](#)); hate speech (e.g., [OeSC, 2020](#)); image-based harassment (e.g., [Oswald, Lopes, Skoda, Hesse & Pederson, 2020](#)); trolling (e.g., [Akhtar & Morrison, 2019](#)); online sexual harassment (e.g., [Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010](#); [Douglass, Wright, Davis, & Lim, 2018](#); [Powell & Henry, 2017](#)); and cyberbullying (especially among youth – for a scoping review, see [Brochado, Soares, & Fraga, 2016](#)). Little quantitative research has investigated sexual assault victimization via online dating sites/apps or online rape threats ([Powell & Henry, 2017](#); [Rowse, Bolt, & Gaya, 2020](#)), although a considerable amount of quantitative research has focused on online child sexual exploitation (e.g., [Karayianni, Fanti, Diakidoy, Hadjicharamlamoulos, & Katsimicha, 2017](#)).

With the exception of studies on digital dating abuse (e.g., [Borrajó et al., 2015](#); [Burke et al., 2011](#); [Marganski & Melander, 2018](#); [Martinez-Pecino & Durán, 2019](#); [Ybarra et al., 2017](#)), there is very little prevalence data on TFVA in the context of domestic and family violence ([Messing, Bagwell-Gray, Brown, Kappas, & Durfee, 2020](#); [Woodlock, 2017](#)). Relatedly, little is known about the nexus or co-occurrence of TFVA with “in-person” experiences of sexual and domestic violence ([Marganski & Melander, 2018](#)) – also known as “poly-victimization” ([Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005](#)). Studies on cyberbullying show that victim-survivors are more likely to be also victims of offline bullying, such as abuse in the school yard (e.g., [Hinduja & Patchin, 2008](#)).

Qualitative Studies

A variety of qualitative studies have been conducted with “targets” (or victim-survivors) and frontline workers who support them in relation to cyberstalking (e.g., [Dimond, Fiesler, & Bruckman, 2011](#); [Weathers & Hopson, 2015](#)); technology-facilitated domestic violence ([Douglas et al., 2019](#); [Dragiewicz et al., 2019](#); [George & Harris, 2014](#); [Harris & Woodlock, 2019](#); [OeSC, 2019a](#); [Woodlock, 2017](#)); image-based sexual abuse ([Amudsen, 2019](#); [Bates, 2017](#); [Henry, Flynn, & Powell, 2018](#); [Henry et al., 2020](#); [McGlynn et al., 2019, 2020](#); [OeSC, 2017](#)); image-based sexual harassment ([Mandau, 2020](#)); online sexual harassment; technology-facilitated sexual assault ([Gillett, 2019](#)); online hate ([Lewis, Rowe, & Wiper, 2019](#); [Smith, 2019](#)); online child sexual exploitation (e.g., [Gerwitz-Meydan, Walsh, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2018](#); for an overview of studies see [DeMarco, Sharrock, Crowther, & Barnard, 2018](#)); cyberbullying (especially in relation to children and youth – for an overview of studies see [Dennehy et al., 2020](#)); and TFVA more broadly ([Henry & Powell, 2015](#); [OeSC, 2019a, b](#); [Powell & Henry, 2017](#)). More research focusing on the experiences of Indigenous peoples; racial minorities; people with disabilities [but see: [Alhaboby, al-Khateeb, Barnes, and Short \(2016\)](#); [Alhaboby, Barnes, Evans, and Short \(2019\)](#)];

sex workers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people; as well as those living in rural, regional, and remote areas is needed. Quantitative studies have shown that these groups (especially women within these groups) are more likely to experience TFVA and/or to experience more adverse impacts (e.g., Henry et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2019, 2020; OeSC, 2017, 2019a, b; Douglas et al., 2018; Lenhart, Ybarra, Zickuhr, & Price-Feeney, 2016b; Powell & Henry, 2019; Ybarra et al., 2017).

There have been relatively few qualitative studies of TFVA perpetrators and bystanders, although there are a number focused on offenders in the contexts of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g., DeMarco et al., 2018), image-based sexual abuse against adults (e.g., Hall & Hearn, 2017; Henry & Flynn, 2019; OeSC, 2019c; Uhl et al., 2018); and online hate speech (e.g., Jane, 2014). Additionally, a number of qualitative studies have focused on perpetrator behaviors by examining content on online platforms, such as 4chan (Green, 2019), Reddit (Lumsden, 2019), Twitter (Megarry, 2014; Southern & Harmer, 2019), YouTube (Colliver et al., 2019), and Facebook (Scrivens & Amarasingam, 2020).

Research on Responses to TFVA

Often the empirical literature on TFVA also includes recommendations as to how best to respond to TFVA (see, e.g., Bailey, 2015; Harris, 2020; Henry, Flynn, & Powell, 2019; Powell et al., 2020). There is also, however, a significant literature focused primarily on proposing and/or analyzing the efficacy of one or more responses, including legal (criminal, civil, human rights, and regulatory), technological, and educational approaches, as well as improved support for TFVA targets and self-help initiatives undertaken by targets themselves.

In some cases, the analyses address TFVA generally (see, e.g., Bailey & Mathen, 2019; Dunn, Lalonde, & Bailey, 2017; Sheikh, 2018). In other cases, they focus on responses to specific forms of TFVA, including *image-based sexual abuse* [see, e.g., Citron & Franks, 2014 (focusing on criminal law); Dodge, 2019 (focusing on criminal law); Henry et al., 2020 (focusing on a range of legal and nonlegal responses); Powell & Henry, 2017 (focusing on digital citizenship)]; *online hate speech* [see, e.g., Bailey, 2010 (focusing on human rights-based legal responses); Citron, 2014 (focusing on a range of responses)]; *online harassment and trolling* [see, e.g., Bailey, 2017 (focusing on education policy); Citron, 2014; Pavan, 2017 (focusing on intermediary responsibility)]; *cyberbullying* [see, e.g., Hinduja, 2018 (focusing on building resilience)]; *technology-facilitated intimate partner violence* [see, e.g., Al-Alosi, 2020 (both considering technological responses); Harris, 2020; Tanczer, Lopez Neira, Parkin, Patel, & Danezis, 2018 (considering, among other things, improved security legislation)]; *online child sexual exploitation* [see, e.g., Bailey, 2007 (considering criminal law responses); Salter, 2018 (considering, among other things, therapeutic and legal responses)]; *online sexual harassment* [see, e.g., Jane, 2017; Vitis & Gilmour, 2017 (both focusing self-help/grassroots responses)]; and *abusive and offensive online content* [see, e.g., Bailey, 2018; Cheer, 2018; Schweppe, 2018 (all focusing primarily on criminal law responses)].

This Handbook

We imagined this collection as one that would contribute to the existing landscape in part by breaking away from geographic, sectoral, and disciplinary silos. To achieve this, we have brought together the work of a diverse range of contributors from 13 countries (Australia, Brasil, Canada, Eswatini, Finland, Hong Kong, Malawi, Malta, New Zealand, Nigeria, Scotland, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and seven different sectors (academia, ICT, nonprofit, consulting, policy, regulatory, and legal practice). Our academic contributions come from scholars in 11 different fields (communications/media studies; law; sociology; health; education; political studies; justice/criminology; behavioral studies; social, global, and cultural studies; digital ethics; and science and engineering), some of whom collaborated with contributors from different areas in the nonprofit sector (women's rights/gender equality, public health, development, privacy rights, and domestic violence). Our contributors report on research drawing on the lived experiences of TFVA targets in places around the globe from a wide range of social locations affected by categories such as gender, gender identity, age, sexual identity, race, and indigeneity, as well as from the on-the-ground advocates and community organizations that support them. They also present insights from academics and policy organizations actively engaged in developing meaningful responses for preventing and/or remedying the harms they inflict, as well as firsthand perspectives from TFVA perpetrators.

Our aim in bringing together this international, intersectoral, intersectional, and interdisciplinary group of contributors, whose work covers a wide spectrum of forms of TFVA, is to produce synergies that reinvigorate discussions of TFVA, encouraging opportunities for future collaboration, as well as insights from one area that could be applied to others. We also hope that in showcasing a range of legal, empirical, and theoretical research focused on the targets, support services, and perpetrators of TFVA, across a diverse range of social locations, as well as multiple strategies for addressing TFVA, this collection can contribute toward nuanced understandings of this complex phenomenon that can open up opportunities for developing meaningful multifaceted responses grounded in recognition of TFVA as both a product and producer of intersecting systems of power.

Research Contributions of this Handbook

This Handbook's empirical contributions include qualitative analyses of:

(1) Interviews and/or focus groups with:

- Men who have sex with men, and their understandings of "rape culture" on Grindr (Dietzel);
- Brazilian and Australian advocates working on technology-facilitated intimate partner abuse among youth (Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira);
- Canadian women who have experienced online abuse (Gosse);

- Women in remote, regional, and rural areas of Australia who have experienced digital coercive control (Harris & Woodlock, 2018);
 - Australian women who have experienced online lateral violence from other women (Jane);
 - New Zealand young heterosexual adults on their experiences of pleasure and harm relating to online pornography (Keene);
 - Australian domestic violence practitioners on the experiences of their culturally and linguistically diverse women clients (Louie);
 - Canadian sexual violence frontline professionals on their clients' experiences of nonconsensual disclosure of intimate images (Marques);
 - US college students' understandings of the impacts of technologically shared images of racist police brutality (Novich & Zduniak);
 - Singaporean frontline domestic violence, sexual violence, and LGBTQI+ support workers and the experiences of their clients (Vitis);
- (2) Online content including:
- Counter-hegemonic responses to gendered violence on Twitter (Broadbent & Thompson);
 - Transphobic comments on YouTube (Colliver);
 - Digital platform policies to identify whether and how they address image-based sexual abuse (Henry & Witt);
 - Discriminatory discussion threads posted on a Finnish discussion forum (Vaahensalo);
 - Self-help efforts to address online child sexual exploitation (Salter & Hanson); and
- (3) Existing research on:
- Doxxing (Anderson & Wood);
 - Polyvictimization and TFVA (DeKeseredy, Lory, & Stoneberg); and
 - TFVA against members of Indigenous communities (Bailey & Shayan; Carlson & Frazer).

This Handbook's empirical contributions also include quantitative analyses of:

- (1) Young people's experiences of TFVA in sub-Saharan Africa (Makinde, Olamijuwon, Ichegbo, & Ilesanmi);
- (2) Adult perpetrators of TFVA in New Zealand (Pacheco & Melhuish); and
- (3) Gay and bisexual men's sharing and privacy-protection practices when using queer dating apps (Waldman).

Finally, this Handbook contributes to the literature relating to the spectrum of responses to TFVA, through analyses of:

- (1) Theoretical and legal understandings of "violence" and the place of TFVA within them (Dunn);
- (2) Legal responses to image and text-based abuse in the United Kingdom (Barker & Jurasz);

- (3) International law instruments applicable to TFVA, particularly gender-based TFVA (Coombs);
- (4) International and Arab region legal responses to gender-based TFVA (Al Nasrawi);
- (5) Legal responses to image-based sexual abuse in Malawi and Scotland (Chisala-Templehoff & Stevenson);
- (6) Judicial approaches to prosecution of (ex) intimate partners for nonconsensual distribution of intimate images in Canadian criminal law proceedings (Aikenhead);
- (7) Legal approaches to privacy in the context of TFVA (Thomassen & Dunn);
- (8) Legal approaches to doxxing in Hong Kong (Cheung);
- (9) Benefits and limitations of responding to TFVA through statutory agencies (Hrick);
- (10) Technology-based responses to TFVA (Marganski & Melander; PenzeyMoog & Slakoff; Slupska & Tanczer);
- (11) Community-based/self-help/collaborative responses to TFVA (Broadbent & Thompson; Lytle, Hudson, & Bratton; Bailey & Liliefeldt); and
- (12) Corporate responsibility for TFVA (Salter & Hanson; Henry & Witt).

Five Key Insights from this Handbook

While this collection yields a myriad of insights and possibilities for future engagement, below we highlight five overarching themes interwoven within this diverse group of contributions: (i) the importance of context; (ii) the need to define and redefine understandings of “violence”; (iii) the power of words and images; (iv) the need to think systemically; and (v) the need to employ a spectrum of legal responses that move beyond criminal law, as well as approaches beyond law altogether. Here we highlight aspects of each of these, leaving more detailed analyses of the content of each chapter for the introductions that precede each section of the collection.

The Importance of Context

The importance of taking context into account in order to better understand and respond to TFVA emerges from this collection in three main ways. The first relates to the critical role that contextuality plays in social science research focused on TFVA. For example, the chapters of Edgar Pacheco and Neil Melhuish, Olusean Makinde et al., and Lopes Gomes Pinto Ferreira, underscore the importance of supplementing quantitative findings with in-depth qualitative analyses in order to better understand and represent lived perspectives. These chapters raise questions about why those who perpetrate and experience behaviors often associated with TFVA fail to categorize them as forms of violence and abuse. There may be a variety of reasons to explain such quantitative findings. Perhaps survey respondents are uninformed or they are immersed in environments where violence is normalized. On the other hand,

particular sorts of behavior (e.g., repeatedly texting someone during the day) could be part of otherwise harmless or even consensual practices. In these kinds of cases, supplemental qualitative research will often be a useful tool for better understanding the context in which listed behaviors are occurring, and concomitantly how to identify and meaningfully address those that are problematic. Further, as Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer point out, perspectives about “what counts” as a form of TFVA can be intimately interconnected with culture, thereby undermining the explanatory power of quantitative research based on standardized definitions with members of mainstream groups.

Second, context can and arguably should play a critical role in developing legal responses to TFVA. Anne Cheung’s chapter, for example, illustrates the importance of sociopolitical context in differentiating legal responses to nonconsensually disclosing personal information about others online (doxxing) for the purposes of calling public authorities to account from doxxing for other motivations, such as sexual shaming and humiliation. Cheung’s particular approach to doxxing in the Hong Kong context is consistent with Bree Anderson and Mark Wood’s more general conclusion that doxxing should be understood as a typology of “inter-connected motivations, expressions and experiences of harm.” Seonaid Stevenson-McCabe’s and Sarai Chisala-Templehoff’s chapter emphasizes the role that context plays in determining whether a legal solution from one jurisdiction is likely to be workable in another. Kristen Thomasen’s and Suzie Dunn’s chapter centers the role of equality considerations in the legal interpretation and application of privacy principles, especially in cases involving the nonconsensual disclosure of intimate images, a form of privacy violation with particular consequences for women and members of LGBTQI+ communities that arise primarily from preexisting prejudices such as misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia.

Third, the chapters by Elena Cama, Chris Dietzel, and Moira Aikenhead remind us of the impact of preexisting rape cultures on understandings of and responses to TFVA. Cama and Dietzel’s chapters connect sexually violent forms of TFVA on dating apps with pervasive myths and stereotypes about sexuality and gender that serve to normalize and excuse sexual violence harms. Similarly, Aikenhead’s analysis of so-called “revenge porn” cases prosecuted under Canada’s criminal prohibition on the nondisclosure of intimate images reveals the way that rape culture myths around women’s sexuality lead to blaming targets for their own victimization and consequently manifest themselves in fact and in law.

Defining and Redefining “Violence”

Several chapters in the collection underscore the importance of grappling with preexisting conceptions of “violence” in order to understand how nonphysical technology-facilitated behaviors can and should be understood as “violence.” Suzie Dunn’s chapter emphasizes the role that conceptualizing TFVA as violence can play in communicating its social unacceptability (even with respect to actions that do not rise to the level of being illegal). Chandel Gosse’s chapter further illustrates the complex ways in which the “online/offline” dichotomy works to