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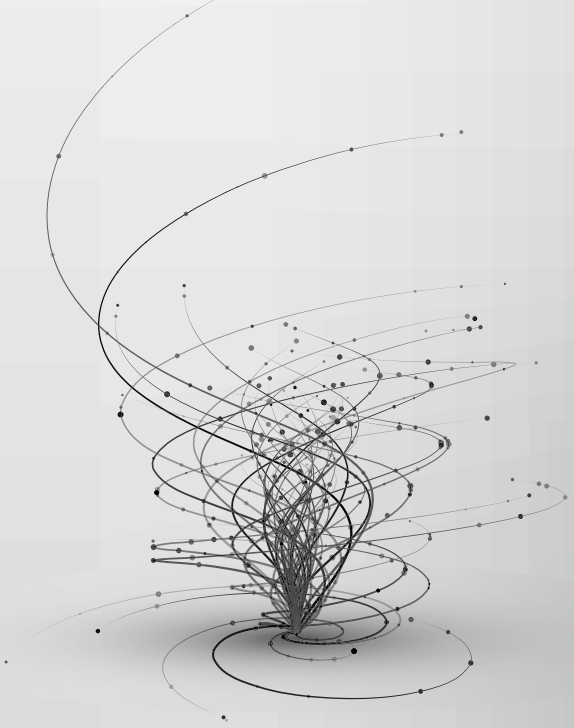

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN A DIGITAL AGE

ANASTASIA POWELL
NICOLA HENRY

Palgrave Studies in Cybercrime and Cybersecurity

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This book represents the culmination of both our collaborative and individual work over the past eight years, with early developmental work featured in Anastasia's first book, *Sex, Power and Consent: Youth Culture and the Unwritten Rules* (2010, Cambridge University Press). Aspects of our research have also previously been published in the scholarly articles

'Embodied harms: gender, shame, and technology-facilitated sexual violence' (2015, *Violence Against Women*); 'Policing technology-facilitated sexual violence' (2016, *Policing & Society*); 'Sexual violence in the digital age: the scope and limits of criminal law' (2016, *Law & Society*); 'Technology-facilitated sexual violence: a literature review of empirical research' (2016, *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*), 'Technology-facilitated sexual violence victimization: results from an online survey of Australian adults' (2016, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*), as well as book chapters 'The dark side of the virtual world: towards a digital sexual ethics' (2014, *Preventing sexual violence*) and 'Seeking informal justice online' (2015, *Rape justice*). We thank the editors of these journals, and our anonymous peer reviewers in particular, for their feedback and support of our research. This book is far more than a collection of our various scholarly articles and chapters; here we present for the first time our in-depth empirical investigations interwoven with an extended conceptual development of technology-facilitated sexual violence. As such, this book reflects both a substantial addition to, and refinement of, our previous works in this field.

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Introduction

In mid-2006 a group of teenage boys in the Melbourne (Australia) suburb of Werribee filmed the sexual assault of a teenage girl. The young men edited and produced a DVD of the assault with the title 'C***: The Movie'—complete with an 'R' rating and credits listing the 'actors' involved on the cover. The 'Werribee DVD', as it became widely known in the media, was initially sold in suburban Melbourne schools for $5 (AUD) and later on Internet sites for up to $60 (AUD), with excerpts also made freely available on YouTube (Cunningham, 2006). The video recording shows the young men urinating on the girl, setting her hair on fire, throwing her clothes into a river and forcing her to participate in sex acts. Eight of the youths were charged with assault, manufacturing child pornography and procuring sexual penetration by intimidation in the Melbourne Children's Court in 2007. At the trial and sentencing of the young men responsible, the victim said she was terrified she would be recognised in public after the distribution of the DVD and that her life had been changed forever (Medew, 2007). The Werribee DVD case caused much shock and outrage. It also marked the start of a growing public awareness of, and scholarly attention to, the ways in which digital

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technologies are used in the context of sexual violence. Indeed, the case remains a common example in research seeking to understand the changing role of technology in sexual and other crimes (Adams, 2007; Bluett-Boyd et al., 2013; Dodge, 2016; Henry & Powell, 2015a, 2015b; King, 2011; Powell, 2010a, 2010b; Yar, 2012).

Ten years on, in 2017, digital technologies have become ubiquitous both in everyday life and everyday crimes. The combination of easy access to Internet- and camera-enabled smartphones and widespread participation in online social networks has provided a ready platform for the perpetration of sexual harassment, abuse and violence. Several high-profile cases illustrate the nature and extent of the problem, including those of UK journalist Caroline Criado-Perez, who was bombarded with anonymous and abusive tweets after a 2013 campaign to have Jane Austen's image on Britain's new £10 banknote; Anita Sarkeesian, who received rape and death threats and was subjected to simulated violence after crowdfunding a video series on sexism in gaming in 2012; and Zoë Quinn and Brianna Wu, who were targeted with online abuse, rape and death threats in the Gamergate controversy in 2014 (see Chap. 6). In 2013, another high-profile case sparked national debate in New Zealand and attracted widespread international attention, involving a group of young Auckland men who intoxicated underage girls, gang-raped them and took photos and videos of the rapes. The men, calling themselves the Roast Busters, then boasted about their exploits on a Facebook page that remained active for two years before being shut down (Powell & Henry, 2014; Sills et al., 2016). These are just a few examples of the types of sexual violence and harassment being perpetrated against women with the use of digital technologies.

Today, barely a day goes by without a news story on yet another incident of 'revenge pornography', of the circulation of images of sexual assault, of 'online misogyny', of rape threats directed towards women in both public and private life, of stalking and harassment by ex-partners, or of online abuse directed at victim-survivors of sexual violence. Yet as disturbing as such individual cases may be, when we examine them collectively we can begin to understand the full nature and extent of the problem: these all-too-common experiences for women online are in fact

a reflection and extension of the everyday sexual harassment and violations experienced by women throughout society.

Sexual violence and harassment are widely recognised as globally significant and prevalent human rights problems. According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013), 35% of women worldwide report having experienced either physical or sexual violence by a partner, or sexual violence by a friend, family member, acquaintance or stranger. National studies and police data in a range of countries indicate the highly gendered pattern to sexual violence, with women continuing to represent the majority of victims and men overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, the perpetrators. Young women aged 16–24 years are widely recognised as being at greatest risk of experiencing sexual assault, and most often at the hands of a known man, such as a boyfriend, friend or acquaintance, rather than a stranger (for prevalence studies, see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Department of Justice (US), 2013; Office for National Statistics (UK), 2013). Further studies indicate that sexual harassment is likewise a persistent problem. National surveys in Australia, for instance, indicate that one in three women experience sexual harassment in their lifetime, compared to one in ten men (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). The international literature more broadly demonstrates the persistent nature and prevalence of sexual violence and harassment, that these harms are disturbingly common, highly gendered and most often relational.

With the rapid uptake of Internet-enabled devices such as computers, phones and tablets, as well as digital communications services such as social media networks and social applications, it is perhaps unsurprising that digital technologies might also be used as tools to facilitate sexually based harms. While empirical studies have highlighted perpetrators' use of technology to facilitate domestic violence (Burke et al., 2011; Dimond, Fiesler, & Bruckman, 2011; Woodlock, 2016), dating abuse (Stonard et al., 2014; Zweig et al., 2013), cyberstalking (Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002), and sexual exploitation of children (Mitchell et al., 2012; Westlake & Bouchard, 2016), there remains a notable lack of empirical research examining the varied nature and prevalence of digital forms of sexual violence and harassment. Similar to the broader umbrella

term of 'sexual violence' that is widely used in the research literature, we use a broad term to capture an array of abusive behaviours involving technology—what we call 'technology-facilitated sexual violence' (Henry & Powell, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Powell, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2015a, 2015b; Powell & Henry, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). This term, which we define below, draws attention to the many dimensions of sexual violence and harassment experienced by adult women and men but which have to date been largely ignored or are poorly understood. This is at least partly due to the rapid pace of technological change, particularly over the last decade, and to the simultaneous failure of legal and social responses to keep up with the changes in technology. Later we take stock of some of the broad shifts in the uptake, nature and practices of digital and communications technology in contemporary society and what we mean by the 'digital age'.

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence

'Sexual violence' is an all-encompassing term that includes 'any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic … against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work' (WHO, 2002, p.149). This definition captures physical acts, such as rape (generally considered to be a penetrative offence) or sexual assault (a sexual attack not necessarily involving penetration), as well as non-contact offenses and behaviours, such as sexual harassment and sexual coercion. The term 'sexual violence', and its widespread usage among academics, professionals and victim-survivors, treats violence as not simply a physical act involving physical injury but also a psychosocial and structural problem. For instance, a rape can result in no direct physical injury to a victim's body but can have long-lasting psychological and physical impacts. Throughout this book, we use this term 'technology-facilitated sexual violence' to encompass a diverse range of acts involving technology, drawing on the WHO definition. We specifically discuss acts

which are increasingly being identified in the research literature (such as 'revenge pornography' or online sexual harassment) under this umbrella term, and provide an analysis of the benefits and limitations of these definitions in the relevant sections.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence is a concept we have developed to refer to the diverse ways in which criminal, civil or otherwise harmful sexually aggressive and harassing behaviours are being perpetrated with the aid or use of digital communication technologies. We intentionally use the term 'harms' throughout this book because such a term captures acts that may not be deemed a criminal offence or a civil wrong under law, and indeed in some cases the law may not necessarily be the most appropriate or effective course of action. While this is a broad and unspecified term, it has the benefit of capturing impacts on victims where some kind of physical, psychological, social or financial harm has resulted (or a combination of them all). Additionally, it implicitly acknowledges that not all people are harmed by the same behaviours. We thus take a *victim-centred approach*, informed in part by what the victim deems to be a harm.

We also have explicitly sought to focus on victimisation as experienced foremost by *adult* victims, and in particular, to explore technology-facilitated sexual violence against women. This is not to suggest that men do not also experience many of the dimensions of technology-facilitated sexual violence we consider throughout this book. Indeed a number of studies, including our own, are demonstrating that men experience *some forms* of digital harassment and abuse at comparable rates to women. While women and girls may be over-represented as victims of particular forms of sexual violence, the experience of men and boys is also often sexed and gendered in particular ways. For example, sexual harassment and abuse directed at men and boys often includes denigration on the basis of sexual identity and/or perceived sexuality, as well as masculine gender role conformity (Carpenter, 2006; Connell, 1987). Moreover, online cultures and closed groups of male peer support for sexual violence against women, to use Walter DeKeseredy's (1990) term, emerge as a particularly challenging and troubling feature of sexual violence in the digital age. Thus, as we explore throughout this book, our conceptualisation

of technology-facilitated sexual violence as 'gendered' is not a stand-in or replacement term for highlighting women's victimisation in isolation, but rather encompasses patterns in gendered victimisation, perpetration and also gender relations that can begin to explain technology-facilitated sexual violence.

In conceptualising technology-facilitated sexual violence, we find it useful to consider multiple dimensions of sexually harmful behaviours, including, though by no means limited to, the following: enabling rape and/or sexual assault or another unwanted sexual experience; image-based sexual abuse (including 'revenge pornography' and 'sextortion'); and online sexual harassment (including sexual solicitation, image-based harassment, gender-based hate speech and rape threats). These three dimensions are not intended to signal discrete categories or types of sexual violence as they can and often do overlap. Nonetheless, we argue that it is important to explicitly identify, describe and understand these various dimensions of technology-facilitated sexual violence since there are some differences that emerge, in particular with respect to varying levels of acknowledgement and justice responses to these harms in legal contexts and across jurisdictions.

In investigating the multiple dimensions of technology-facilitated sexual violence, we have undertaken extensive primary research, including consultations with police, legal service providers, domestic violence services, and sexual assault counsellor advocates; a survey of over 5000 Australian and UK adults regarding the prevalence and diverse experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence; qualitative online interviews with victims; as well as detailed legal and policy research. Throughout this book, we draw on and incorporate this rich and multifaceted data: first, to provide an account of the nature, prevalence and impacts of technology-facilitated sexual violence on adult victims; second, to identify legal and justice gaps in responding to technology-facilitated sexual violence and make recommendations for reform; and third, to conceptualise and position technology-facilitated sexual violence within an understanding of gendered violence and of theories addressing the role of technology in societal changes more broadly.

Communications Technology and the Digital Age

The use of digital technologies (i.e. tools, systems, devices and resources) is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary life. Our worlds now include smartphones, social networking sites, cloud services, video-posting websites, virtual worlds, personal blogs, wearable technology and fitness and health trackers. Few would deny that digital technologies have dramatically changed the way we live and communicate, enabling greater social connectivity, status building and new ways to craft self-identity. In short, digital communication technologies have a profound influence on our intimate relationships with ourselves and others (Belsey, 2005). Understanding the potential short- and long-term consequences of these technologies (Berson & Berson, 2005), and indeed the significance of technology in contemporary life, is the focus of much current research and commentary, particularly in the field of 'digital sociology' (Featherstone & Burrows, 1996; Lupton, 2014; Orton-Johnson & Prior, 2013). In our analysis throughout this book, we build on a technofeminist analysis of sexual violence, adopting a social constructivist approach that views technology as being shaped by human action and interaction and human action as being reciprocally shaped by technology (Hughes, 1986; Pinch & Bijker, 1984). This is also known as the 'social shaping of technology' (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985). We also hold the view that digital technologies are not only thoroughly embedded and entangled in our everyday lives but are also extensions of our embodied selves.

The 'digital age', and its related concepts (such as the 'information society', Webster, 1995; 'information age' and 'network society', Castells, 1996; 'liquid modernity', Bauman, 2000), broadly refers to this period marked by the rapid proliferation of digital global information networks. According to Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), these developments in information and communication technologies substantially enable significant economic, political and social changes, marked by the shift from a nation-based industrial society to a global network society. While Castells recognised the influence, rather than causal role, of digital technologies in these changes, he noted that technological developments also act as

a metaphor for social changes more broadly. Thus, just as technology has enabled flexible and horizontally networked 'flows' of information, social relations too are understood to be less fixed, stable and hierarchical, and more fluid, uncertain and dispersed. Such is the theme of other social theorists of this period, including Anthony Giddens (1991, 1992), Ulrich Beck (1992), Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Zygmunt Bauman (2000), whose conceptualisations of late modernity, reflexive modernity or liquid modernity each emphasises (though in differing ways) those features of contemporary social and political life that are characterised by uncertainty, instability and flexibility.

Throughout this book we refer to the 'digital age' as a shorthand not only for developments in digital technologies but also for associated transformations in societies more broadly. In particular we observe that in addition to the themes of uncertainty and dispersed social relations, as so eloquently described by Beck (1992) and Bauman (2000), the digital age is also characterised by digital social inequalities (Halford & Savage, 2010; Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). Indeed, digital technologies facilitate the persistence or 're-embedding' (Adkins, 1999) of social inequalities in relation not only to gender but also to race, class, disability and sexuality. It is important to acknowledge at the outset that the intersections of digital social inequality—such as across race, class and sexuality—also come to bear on women's experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Globally, women do not have a universal or singular experience of access to communications technologies, just as they do not have a universal or singular experience of sexual violence. In fact, access to communications technology, the first-level 'digital divide', differs by country, locale, socio-economic factors, education and race, as well as by gender (International Telecommunication Union, 2016). While developed countries have high population-level Internet access at 81%, developing countries have roughly half this access at 40.1% (International Telecommunication Union, 2016). Developing regions are home to 2.5 billion Internet users, compared to 1 billion users in the developed world (International Telecommunication Union, 2016). The gender gap in Internet access is, however, greater in developing countries (−7.6%), than in developed countries (−2.3%), with women generally

experiencing less access worldwide (International Telecommunication Union, 2016). This is a serious concern, as reduced Internet access has flow-on effects, including reduced access to education, economic, social and civic engagement opportunities (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). Yet studies are also increasingly demonstrating that when the level of education is controlled for, women's Internet access rates are *not* dissimilar to men's (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014), suggesting that such access reflects broader social patterns of gendered inequality.

Beyond Internet *access*, however, is an emerging concern with differences in Internet *use* and online experiences (Büchi, Just, & Latzer, 2016; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014)—the second-level 'digital divide'. Studies are increasingly examining purposes and parity of participation across age, socio-economic status, gender and race. For example, studies consistently demonstrate that younger groups use technology at higher rates and more often for entertainment and social purposes than older groups do, while lower-educated groups tend to use communications technology for entertainment purposes more than those with higher education. These studies also indicate that more highly educated groups were more likely to report transactional or commercial uses of technology than lower-educated groups (Büchi, Just, & Latzer, 2016). In their study of five countries' Internet use, Büchi, Just, & Latzer (2016) found only one difference by gender: women were less likely than men to use technologies for entertainment purposes. This reflects findings of several other studies that suggest women more frequently use technologies for communication purposes (such as making calls, sending texts, sharing content with friends and family), while men more frequently use them for entertainment (such as watching videos, playing games and playing audio) (Joiner, Stewart, & Beaney, 2015). Interestingly, these findings also reflect broader gendered patterns in time use, such that women are frequently found to have less leisure time overall than men (Norris & Inglehart, 2013; Sayer, 2016; Stalp, 2015). Research also suggests that while women's access to digital technologies may be reaching that of men's (particularly when controlling for education), men still typically use the Internet more frequently than women (Joiner, Stewart, & Beaney, 2015). Explanations for this second-level divide include identifying technology itself as a 'masculine' space developed by, for the purposes of, and largely used by, men (Wajcman, 2004). Further explanations have

begun examining the gendering of experiences of using technology, such that some male users have actively created hostile online environments that discourage women's equal and active participation through sexist flaming and misogynist 'e-bile' (Jane, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Global and local trends in women's experiences of the digital age also feature in other ways that are relevant to technology-facilitated sexual violence. As identified by Castells (1996), among others, one of the key features of the digital age is the *globalisation* of the economies, information and networked communications, such that interactions are increasingly dispersed, as well as operating on an 'always on' basis or 'perpetual contact' (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). The globalisation of digital communications also enables dispersal of social connections which, according to some sociologists, has facilitated changes in interactions that are increasingly characterised by 'loose' social ties across ever-increasing spatial networks, in place of the close social ties of one's local and place-based context (Bauman, 2000). As we go on to explore throughout this book, such changes in the dispersal of communications and the perpetual contact that digital technologies enable have particular implications for women's experiences of sexual violence. The globalisation of digital communications has meant that harassment too is increasingly global. Unlike contact sexual offences and place-based offences, such as physical stalking and workplace sexual harassment, sexual violence in the digital age may be perpetrated by someone in an entirely different country to the victim or victims. This presents numerous barriers for addressing these harms across jurisdictions, which may not have equivalent laws in place and may also lack existing collaborations between law enforcement agencies.

However, we suggest that the globalisation of digital communications can also serve to obscure or minimise the localised experiences and effects of technology-facilitated sexual violence. As we discuss, the global and anonymous nature of online communications is used against women in order to dismiss their experiences of online sexual harassment—since, after all, women can have nothing to fear from a nameless, faceless stranger who may well live in another country altogether and thus cannot possibly represent any 'real' harm to them. While we take issue with the presumed 'harmlessness' of such communications, which we suggest can involve both embodied and collective harms against women (see Chap. 3),

it is also a mistake to assume that the globalisation that is characteristic of the digital age has become likewise characteristic of *all* technology-facilitated sexual violence, even where these behaviours are perpetrated solely online. Rather, in addition to the ways in which technologies are implicated and extend the harm of contact sexual offences, intimate-partner stalking and harassment (including 'revenge pornography', discussed in Chap. 5), many examples of harassing online communications do involve 'local' and often known perpetrators, as opposed to strangers. Moreover, part of the harmful impact that women experience in the face of online threats, harassment and sexualised 'trolling' behaviours is precisely not knowing if the perpetrator is in fact an ex-partner, co-worker, a neighbour, a peer or a stranger. Digital technologies can thus be simultaneously global and local, both in the perpetration of sexual harms and in the effects experienced by victims.

Structure of the Book

The focus in this book remains firmly fixed on technology-facilitated sexual violence as one manifestation of persistent gendered inequality that is both produced and reproduced in the digital age. We draw on empirical research that was in large part focused on Australia and other common law countries, including Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. Nonetheless, throughout the book we describe and analyse legal and media case studies from across a variety of country contexts. It was not possible, however, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the diverse experiences of victims of technology-facilitated sexual violence in every corner of the globe, in part because our research is limited to English language sources. As such, we do not seek to provide a universal account of victim experiences of these harms or explore the plethora of applicable laws in every jurisdiction in a global context. Rather, our intention is to develop a technofeminist and criminological framework for thinking through the nature, impacts and responses to sexual violence in a digital age, as part of the broader conversations happening in both the Global North and South, particularly around women's experiences of violence and inequality.

In order to both explore and provide a conceptual account of technology-facilitated sexual violence, the structure of the book unfolds as follows. Part I of the book (Chaps. 2 and 3) establishes the conceptual framework that underlies our analysis of various aspects of technology-facilitated sexual violence. In Chap. 2, *Sexual Violence: A Feminist Criminological Analysis*, we present a theoretical framework for conceptualising technology-facilitated sexual violence as both a product and reproducer of gendered power relations. More particularly, the chapter introduces three intersecting spheres of theory that underpin this book and are woven throughout the many case studies and analyses that follow: gender and power; technofeminism; as well as feminist and cyber criminologies.

Chapter 3, *Conceptualising Technosocial Sexual Harms*, explores the materiality of women's lived and gendered experiences in increasingly technosocial societies. The chapter breaks apart long-standing dichotomies of online/offline, virtual/real and public/private that carry particular implications for how we interpret and respond to technology-facilitated harms. We argue that the misrecognition of these harms stems from three conceptual blockages: first, the status of 'cyberspace' as abstract, disembodied and separate from everyday life; second, the myth of disembodiment in gender relations in digital spaces; and third, the hierarchisation of physical violence above other forms of violence, such as symbolic or representational violence. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice (2009), we argue that technology-facilitated sexual violence produces 'embodied harms' that further produce and reproduce social subordination and deny or restrict parity of participation in social and political life for women and other marginalised and stigmatised groups.

Part II of the book (Chaps. 4, 5, and 6) presents unique insights into the various dimensions of technology-facilitated sexual violence. In Chap. 4, *Rape Culture Unveiled,* we examine 'technology-enabled' sexual assault, coerced and unwanted sexual experiences, as well as the online harassment of rape victim-survivors. Here, we explicitly connect technology-facilitated sexual violence with producing and reproducing a 'rape culture' and unpack the meaning and relevance of this concept in a digital age. In Chap. 5, *Beyond 'Revenge Pornography'*, we focus on 'image-based sexual abuse', commonly known as 'revenge pornography' or 'non-consensual

sexting'. The chapter outlines a typology to demonstrate the nature of image-based sexual abuse, investigates the few empirical studies to date that have sought to document the prevalence of image-based sexual abuse and then draws on feminist theories of both perpetration and victimisation to further aid our understanding of this problem. We argue that this phenomenon is deeply gendered not only in terms of perpetration and victimisation but also in discursive understandings of these harms.

Chapter 6, *Online Misogyny, Harassment and Hate Crimes*, focuses on online sexual harassment. In this chapter, we critically examine the terminology and describe the state of knowledge about the prevalence of online sexual harassment. Like the previous chapter, we provide a typology of online sexual harassment in order to describe the different behaviours and their impacts, before then examining perpetration and victimisation using existing feminist theories. Consistent with the overarching argument of the entire book, in this chapter we argue that online sexual harassment is indicative of a broader pattern of gender inequality, misogyny and sex discrimination, and the persistent acceptance and tolerance of rape-supportive attitudes and beliefs. Online sexual harassment thus constitutes yet another form of social control and regulation that inhibits equality of digital citizenship and reinforces heterosexual and patriarchal norms.

Finally, Part III of the book (Chaps. 7, 8, and 9) focuses on responding to, and ultimately preventing, technology-facilitated sexual violence. In Chap. 7, *The Potentials and Limitations of Law*, we examine the scope and limitations of criminal and civil law for responding to technology-facilitated sexual violence. We critically examine existing legislation and case law across several case study international jurisdictions, with a particular focus on common law countries. We argue that although perpetrators can be prosecuted, sued or found liable under many existing criminal and civil law frameworks, these laws are often ill-equipped to capture the *harms* of these behaviours. Part of the issue, we argue, concerns law's pacing problem, namely that law has typically been slow to respond to the emergence of new technologies as tools of abuse. These laws are frequently inconsistent, out-dated and poorly enforced. We suggest alternative legislative models to address the justice gap in legal responses to technology-facilitated sexual violence. Moreover, we argue that although

law plays a key role in tackling these behaviours, it is crucial to look beyond law—or the 'state'—as the sole remedy to this issue, particularly given the issues of anonymity and cross-border detection, punishment and conviction. Chapter 8, *Towards Equal Digital Citizenship*, discusses prevention and policy approaches. Here, we argue that the law cannot be the sole focus of efforts to address technology-facilitated sexual violence. This is a complex social problem, and it will require a combination of legal, technical and social solutions to tackle it at its core.

Finally in Chap. 9, *Digital Justice and Feminist Activism*, we provide an account of contemporary feminist anti-rape activism and social justice movements in the digital age. We explore the innovative ways in which digital technologies are facilitating the pursuit of 'digital' or 'informal' justice, as well as feminist activism, in response to sexual violence. Ultimately we argue that such modes of informal justice being sought online by victim-survivors of sexual violence can serve to validate women's individual and collective experiences and ultimately challenge the gendered misrecognition at the heart of both technology-facilitated sexual violence and 'rape culture' more broadly.

Throughout our exploration and examination of technology-facilitated sexual violence there emerge several core and overarching themes, including the simultaneously individual and collective nature of sexually based harms; the blurring of public/private, online/offline and virtual/material dichotomies; the complexity of the gender, power and technology nexus; and the socio-cultural support for sexual violence (or 'rape culture'). In traversing these issues and key concepts, we also acknowledge that this book represents a particular moment in time, place and scholarly development. It is among the first works to provide an in-depth treatment and discussion of the ways in which digital technologies have come to bear on practices and cultures of sexual violence—and vice versa. Yet we do not claim here to offer a final analysis or perspective on the matter. Even as we write this book, digital technologies are rapidly evolving. As a consequence, user practices and behaviours, as well as the diverse legal and non-legal responses to them, are also changing rapidly, albeit at different speeds. In response, feminist and socio-legal scholars in a global context are beginning to offer rich insights into the causes and consequences of digital forms of gender-based violence and abuse, seeking to develop new

theories or draw on existing feminist frameworks to examine the phenomenon. We hope, then, that this book will serve as a foundational source from which to continue to develop understandings of sexual violence in a digital age.

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