



How Children are Involved in Technology-Facilitated Coercive Control

8 July 2021

British Society of Criminology

Plenary Address

Molly Dragiewicz

Associate Professor

Griffith University

@MollyDragiewicz

m.dragiewicz@griffith.edu.au

Study team

- Molly Dragiewicz
- Patrick O’Leary
- Jeffrey Ackerman
- Ernest Foo
- Christine Bond
- Amy Young
- Claire Reid

eSafetyresearch

Children and technology-facilitated abuse in domestic and family violence situations Full report

December 2020



eSafetyCommissioner

esafety.gov.au

The study

- survey of 515 professionals who work with domestic violence cases
- focus groups with 13 domestic violence specialist staff who work with children
- interviews with 11 mothers who are survivors of domestic and family violence
- interviews with 4 young people who had been affected by technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic and family violence
- interviews with 11 fathers in behaviour change programs for domestic and family violence

What is technology-facilitated coercive control?

coercive control

- patriarchal structural inequality
- violence
- control
- intimidation
- isolation



technology



technology-
facilitated
coercive control

Selected findings:

- Children are heavily involved in technology-facilitated coercive control
- Post-separation co-parenting is a key context for abuse
- Most abuse involves common technologies
- Technology-facilitated abuse harms children
- Identical devices, applications, and behaviours can be used to abuse and protect

- Professionals' estimates of cases involving tech abuse ranged from 8%-48%.

Children and **technology-facilitated abuse** in domestic violence situations



27%

of domestic violence cases
involve technology-facilitated
abuse of children

Of cases involving children:


Children experience a range of technology-facilitated abuse including:

Monitoring and stalking **45%**

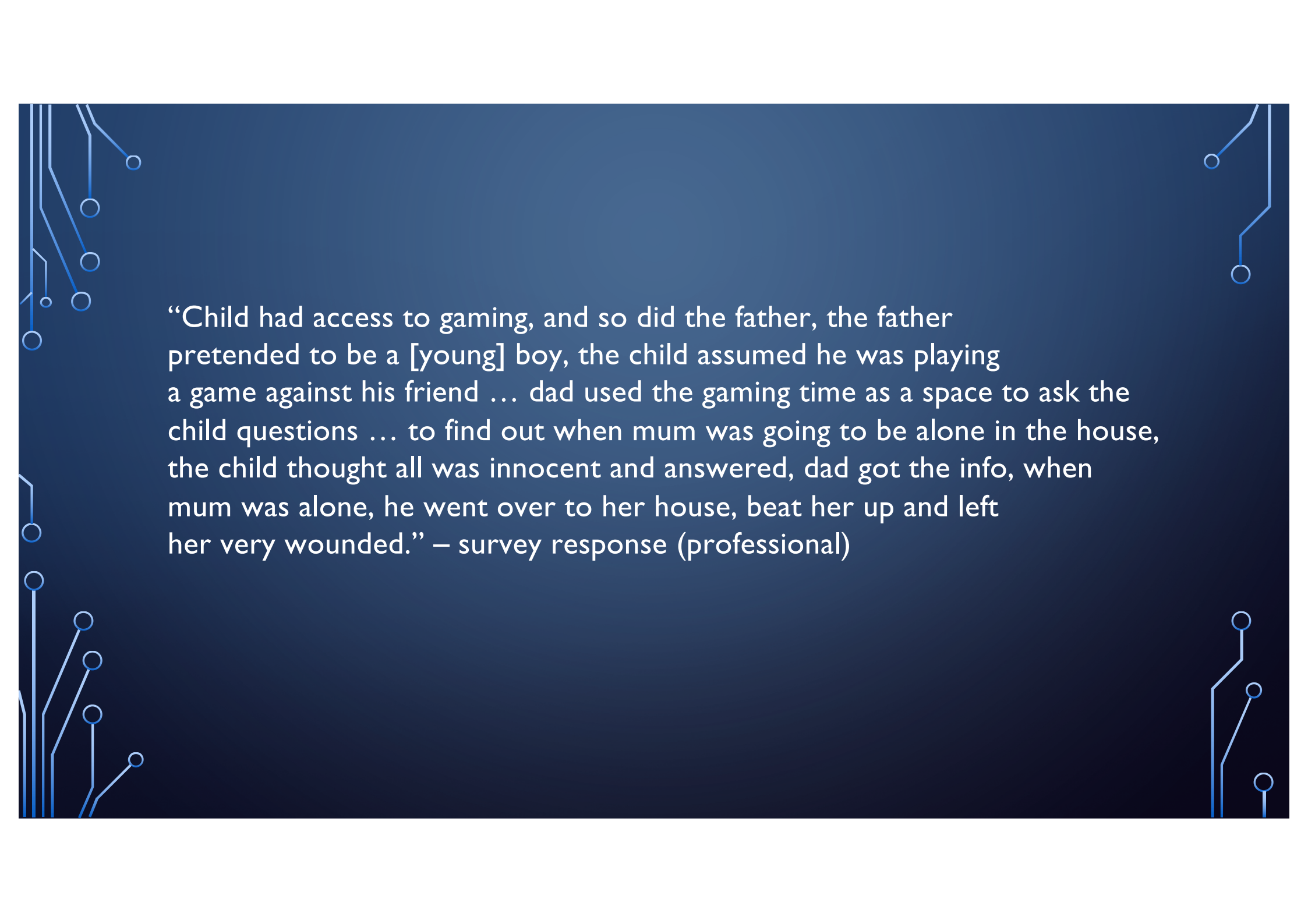
Threats and intimidation **38%**

Blocking communications **33%**





“He’s logged into my Messenger on Facebook. I don’t know how he did it. He guessed my password, I don’t know, somehow just got into it, and messaged all my friends and read all of it. And yeah, that’s the only thing he’s done like that. And found out where I was by reading all my messages and stuff. I don’t know, he hasn’t actually like tracked me from his phone.... He stupidly messaged my boyfriend when I was with my boyfriend. We were just watching a movie None of us were on our phones. And his phone went ding and it’s all these abusive messages from me. And he’s like. ‘Oh, look at this.’ I got onto it pretty quickly from there.”- Abby, 16 (young person)



“Child had access to gaming, and so did the father, the father pretended to be a [young] boy, the child assumed he was playing a game against his friend ... dad used the gaming time as a space to ask the child questions ... to find out when mum was going to be alone in the house, the child thought all was innocent and answered, dad got the info, when mum was alone, he went over to her house, beat her up and left her very wounded.” – survey response (professional)



Post-separation contact around parenting enabled ongoing abuse

- Technology-facilitated contact was used to decrease risk, yet it enabled persistent harm

Impacts of technology-facilitated abuse on children

Children in domestic violence situations suffer significant harm from technology-facilitated abuse:

Mental health issues

67%

Fear

63%

Feelings of guilt for disclosing information to the offending parent

59%

Negative impacts on the relationship with the non-abusive parent

59%

Technologies used to harass and abuse

Most of the reported abuse involves the misuse of common devices or platforms:



Mobile phones

79%



Texts

75%



Facebook

59%

Identical devices, applications, and behaviours are used to abuse and protect

- Specific technologies or technology-related behaviours are not the problem
- Context is everything
- We need new cybersecurity models tailored to interpersonal, intimate & family contexts (see Doerfler, 2019; Dragiewicz et al., 2019; Slupska & Tanczer, 2021)
- Tech abuse demands collaboration between DV professionals, survivors, academics, technology designers, and governments to respond to and ultimately prevent abuse.
- It also requires difficult conversations about the underlying causes of abuse, which are deeply embedded in our cultures and institutions.

References

- Bailey, J., & Liliefeldt, R. (2021). Calling all stakeholders: An intersectoral dialogue about collaborating to end tech-facilitated violence and abuse. In J. Bailey, A. Flynn, & N. Henry (Eds.), *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology Facilitated Violence and Abuse* (pp. 769–786). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83982-848-520211056>
- Doerfler P (2019) Something you have and someone you know: Designing for interpersonal security. In: *USENIX: The Advanced Computing Systems Association*, Burlingame, CA, January 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBZ1IPdRjzg&feature=emb_title
- Dragiewicz M, Harris B, Woodlock D, et al. (2019) *Domestic violence and communication technology: Survivor experiences of intrusion, surveillance, and identity crime*. Brisbane, Australia: QUT & Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN). <https://accan.org.au/Domestic%20Violence%20and%20Communication%20Technology%20final%20report%20190801.pdf>
- Dragiewicz, M., O’Leary, P., Ackerman, J., Foo, E., Bond, C., Young, A., & Reid, C. (2020). *Children and technology-facilitated abuse in domestic and family violence situations: Full Report* (ESafety Research). eSafety Commissioner & Australian Government. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-12/Children%20and%20technology-facilitated%20abuse%20-%20Full%20report.pdf>
- Slupska, J., & Tanczer, L. M. (2021). Threat modeling intimate partner violence: Tech abuse as a cybersecurity challenge in the internet of things. In J. Bailey, A. Flynn, & N. Henry (Eds.), *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology Facilitated Violence and Abuse* (pp. 663–688). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83982-848-520211049>
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. Oxford University Press.

The image features a dark blue gradient background. In the four corners, there are white, stylized circuit board traces and nodes, resembling a network or data flow diagram. The central text "Thank you!" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Thank you!