

# THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND VIRTUAL RAPE

Rape is the most severe sexual offense, involving one of the most feared and reviled acts a person can inflict on another. But what are the normative foundations of rape? Initially, the doctrine of rape was limited to penial-vaginal forceful penetration. Over time, other forceful kinds of penetrations have been added: oral, anal, and later, the forceful insertion of inanimate objects. The requirement of using force lost its exclusiveness and much of its normative power, paving the way to other kinds of rape: sex by non-forceful coercion, sex by sedation, sex with mentally incompetent people, sex by fraud, and other forms of non-consensual problematic sex. The normative debate about each form is ongoing and, in a manner of speaking, rape has become a limitless notion. Where will the rape offense go next? Cyberspace, apparently. Harduf, Asaf (2021) "Rape Goes Cyber: Online Violations of Sexual Autonomy," University of Baltimore Law Review: Vol. 50 : Iss. 3 , Article 2. Available at: <https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/ublrl/vol50/iss3/2>

## WHAT IS HAPTIC TECHNOLOGY?

**Haptic technology** (also **kinaesthetic communication** or **3D touch**) is technology that can create an experience of touch by applying forces, vibrations, or motions to the user. These technologies can be used to feel virtual objects and events in a computer simulation, to control virtual objects, and to enhance remote control of machines and devices (telerobotics). Haptic devices may incorporate tactile sensors that measure forces exerted by the user on the interface. The word haptic from the **Ancient Greek**: *ἅπτικός* (*haptikos*), means "tactile, pertaining to the sense of touch".

Haptic technology facilitates investigation of how the human sense of touch works by allowing the creation of controlled haptic virtual objects. Vibrations and other tactile cues have also become an integral part of mobile user experience and interface design. Most researchers distinguish three sensory systems related to sense of touch in humans: cutaneous, kinaesthetics and haptic. All perceptions mediated by cutaneous and kinaesthetic sensibility are referred to as tactual perception. The sense of touch may be classified as passive and active, and the term "haptic" is often associated with active touch to communicate or recognize objects. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haptic\\_technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haptic_technology)

## WHAT ARE SENSORY SUBSTITUTIONS?

**Sound substitution:** In December 2015 David Eagleman demonstrated a wearable vest that "translates" speech and other audio signals into series of vibration. This allowed hearing-impaired people to "feel" sounds on their body; it has since been made commercially as a wristband. [\*"This vibrating vest is giving deaf people a sixth sense"\*](#). *Wired UK*.

**Tactile electronic displays:** A tactile electronic display is a [display device](#) that delivers text and graphical information using the sense of touch. Devices of this kind have been developed to assist blind or deaf users by providing an alternative to visual or auditory sensation.

**Teledildonics:** Haptic feedback is used within [teledildonics](#), or "sex-technology", in order to remotely connect sex toys and allow users to engage in virtual sex or allow a remote server to control their sex toy. The term was first coined by Ted Nelson in 1975, when discussing the future of love, intimacy and technology. In recent years, teledildonics and sex-technology have expanded to include toys with a two-way connection that allow virtual sex through the communication of vibrations, pressures and sensations. Many "smart" vibrators allow for a one-way connection either between the user, or a remote partner, to allow control of the toy.

## WHAT IS REMOTE HAPTIC TECHNOLOGY?

Remote haptic technology and immersive virtual environments have introduced the complex issue of **virtual rape**, where users experience non-consensual sexual simulations through haptic suits or teledildonics that mimic physical touch. While these technologies are primarily designed for entertainment or therapy, their ability to bridge the gap between digital and physical sensations has raised significant legal and ethical concerns regarding digital consent and trauma.

**Haptic Suits and Wearables:** Devices like full-body haptic suits use vibrations and sensors to allow users to "feel" digital interactions. This immersion can make virtual assaults feel real, leading to significant psychological distress.

**Teledildonics:** Internet-enabled haptic sex toys can be remotely controlled. Legal scholars have raised concerns about "rape by deception" or unauthorized access, where these devices are manipulated without the user's consent.

**The Metaverse:** Platforms like [Meta's Horizon Worlds](#) have seen reported incidents where avatars are subjected to "virtual gang rape," illustrating how social VR can facilitate non-consensual interactions even without full-body haptics.

**[Touching at a Distance: Digital Intimacies, Haptic Platforms, and the Ethics of Consent](#)**

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8454010/>

**[Virtual Rape](#)**

<https://academic.oup.com/jcmc/article/2/4/JCMC247/4584404>

**[From Virtual Rape to Meta-rape: Sexual Violence, Criminal Law and the Metaverse](#)**

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12395229/>

**[Scrutinizing Sexual Persecution in Digital Communication Through the Field of Haptics:](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365717752)**

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**[A sexual assault in the metaverse has investigators questioning the future of virtual crime prosecution:](https://www.businessinsider.com/police-investigate-digital-gang-rape-teen-vr-metaverse-horizon-worlds-2024-1)**

**<https://www.businessinsider.com/police-investigate-digital-gang-rape-teen-vr-metaverse-horizon-worlds-2024-1>**

**[First conviction for remote rape for a cyberstalker](https://e-enfance.org/en/first-conviction-for-remote-rape-for-a-cyber-stalker/)**

**<https://e-enfance.org/en/first-conviction-for-remote-rape-for-a-cyber-stalker/>**

**[Between Pixels and Predators: The Landscape Of Sexual Assault And Rape In The MetaverseAnd Rape In The Metavers](https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1704&context=lawreview)**

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**[Teledildonics and Rape by Deception](https://robsparrow.com/wp-content/uploads/Teledildonics-and-rape-by-deception.pdf)**

**<https://robsparrow.com/wp-content/uploads/Teledildonics-and-rape-by-deception.pdf>**

**[The Metaverse And Its Dark Side: Confronting The Reality Of Virtual Rape:](https://bernardmarr.com/the-metaverse-and-its-dark-side-confronting-the-reality-of-virtual-rape/)**

**<https://bernardmarr.com/the-metaverse-and-its-dark-side-confronting-the-reality-of-virtual-rape/>**

**[From Virtual Rape to Meta-rape: Sexual Violence, Criminal Law and the Metaverse](https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2025/04/new-publication-from-virtual-rape-to-meta-rape-sexual-violence-criminal-law-and-the-metaverse)**

**<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2025/04/new-publication-from-virtual-rape-to-meta-rape-sexual-violence-criminal-law-and-the-metaverse>**

**[Sexual Harassment In Virtual Reality Feels All Too Real – 'It's Creepy Beyond Creepy](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/oct/26/virtual-reality-sexual-harassment-online-groping-quivr)**

**<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/oct/26/virtual-reality-sexual-harassment-online-groping-quivr>**

**[Rape Goes Cyber: Online Violations of Sexual Autonomy](https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2090&context=ublr)**

**<https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2090&context=ublr>**

**[Metaverse Rape, Murder Could Be Treated As Crime: UK Agency](https://www.newsnationnow.com/business/tech/metaverse-rape-murder-treated-crime-agency/)**

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