

Reel Girls: Approaching Gendered Cyberviolence with Young People through the Lens of
Participatory Video

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Abstract

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This study analyzes young women's descriptions and conceptualizations of cyberviolence (CV) and cyberbullying (CB), including how they both challenge and reify mainstream CB discourses. The central themes analyzed include the way(s) in which self-representation in social networking sites (SNS) are constrained through the limited options young women describe as being available for self-expression in these spaces, how notions of publicity, privacy and context-specific communication in SNS factor in girls' descriptions of platform architecture, and how platform architecture often amplifies CV. Finally, the study unpacks the reasons that young women offer to explain why adults are often so out of touch when it comes to understanding CV and its relationship to young people's digital culture. This dissertation contributes to cyberviolence studies, feminist new media, and girls' digital culture studies, and has relevance for critical feminist criminology, by centring the voices of young women in order to investigate cyberviolence through participatory video (PV) with a sizable number of young women. The findings are based on data collected through eight PV workshops, two co-produced short documentaries and six focus groups with one hundred and twelve (112) participants in total under the larger umbrella study "Cyber & Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond" (2013-2016). This project was a community partnership between the Atwater Library and Computer Centre in Montreal and the TAG Lab at Concordia University, and was funded by Status of Women Canada. I employ an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that puts feminist new media studies, feminist approaches to online misogyny and girls' digital culture studies into conversation with the extant literature on cyberbullying and cyberviolence. This theoretical approach is used to examine how the social norms in the discourse communities of SNS that girls

outline in their descriptions of CV are structured through age-old misogynistic myths and impossible contradictions around femininity. Employing a participatory arts-based feminist lens allowed me to invite participants to share their perspectives in an accessible and fun way while examining their work through qualitative thematic analysis.

Among the many findings this research produced, three key themes extend as threads that run throughout the dissertation. First, my participants did not relate to the term ‘cyberbullying’ in the way that adults often use it. While researchers and policy-makers continue to debate how to define cyberviolence and cyberbullying, participant responses illustrated the need for more dialogue around the toxic social norms and assumptions that currently structure young people’s digital culture, mainstream CB debates and anti-CB programming. Secondly, young women’s focus on issues of publicity versus privacy, anonymity, and peer surveillance highlights both the nuances that girls’ voices contribute to ongoing CB debates and how SNS amplify age-old double standards facing women and girls in visual culture and the public sphere. Finally, the themes of empathy and education that emerged from participants’ suggestions for strategies with which to address CV underscore the systemic changes that will be necessary in tackling the continually evolving and widespread phenomenon of cyberviolence. Participants conceptualize CV and CB as existing along a continuum of daily interactions in SNS that include encountering everything from mean jokes to sexual violence.

Keywords: girls, young women, cyberbullying, cyberviolence, digital culture, participatory video, arts-based research, youth, feminism, new media

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Glossary of Terms

CB Cyberbullying

CBO Community-Based Organization

CV Cyberviolence

GIF Graphics Interchange Format

ICTs Information Communication Technologies

ISP Internet Service Provider

MMOG Massively Multiplayer Online Games

OSN Online Social Network(s)

PAR Participatory Action Research

PV Participatory Video

SNS Social Networking Sites

QTA Qualitative Thematic Analysis

VAWG Violence against Women and Girls

VR Virtual Reality

YPAR Youth Participatory Action Research

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.” – Arundhati Roy, Sydney Peace Prize Lecture (2004)

“The children, the young, must ask the questions that we would never think to ask, but enough trust must be re-established so that the elders will be permitted to work with them on the answers.” – Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment* (1970)

The faces of Amanda Todd (2012) and Rehtaeh Parsons (2013) in Canada, and Megan Meier, Jessica Logan (2008) and Hope Sitwell (2009) in the United States, have been gazing at us, statically, for years. Photographs of Todd, Meier, Logan and Sitwell often circulate in online platforms as signifiers of the deadly consequences that result when girls use new media technologies. These girls are the faces of ‘cyberbullying’¹ and the volume of press coverage they receive is staggering (e.g., Bell, 2017; Chen, 2017; Corder, 2017; Culbert, 2015; Hager, 2014; Omand, 2016; Woo, 2017). The dominant focus in the media coverage examines the details of each girl’s personal experiences of victimization (e.g., *The Fifth Estate*, 2013; Todd, 2014). These narratives construct a specific picture of ‘good’ cyberbullying (CB) victims and their otherwise ‘normal’ white, middle-class lives. These photos link lives forever altered, and now gone, to the ‘new’ phenomenon of cyberbullying. The dominant (highly gendered and racialized) narratives of cyberbullying often revolve around the most extreme cases, serving to frame cyberbullying as an issue that impacts a few individual girls rather than addressing the social norms that structure young people’s (digital) cultures.²

¹ My use of quotation marks around the term ‘cyberbullying’ signifies not just the contested nature and ongoing debates around how best to define this term but also the problematic misnaming of many forms of identity-based harassment that are too often referred to as ‘cyberbullying’. (For a detailed critique of this term, see Bailey, 2013.)

² I use the terms ‘girls’ and ‘young women’ interchangeably throughout this dissertation. These are contested terms and I use them with the permission of my participants.

Another set of images exists (Chun, 2016): several young people have created videos detailing their experiences of online and offline harassment, hostility, and hate. In 2012, Amanda Todd posted one of the most viewed self-produced videos. In the video, she holds up index cards and narrates her experiences of stalking, bullying, harassment, the non-consensual distribution of her images, and self-harm. Todd, her face slightly out of frame, then holds up the final cards: “I’m stuck...whats left of me now...nothing stops/ I have nobody, I need someone/ my name is Amanda Todd ...”.³ While this type of coverage makes up the lexicon and visual image bank of cyberbullying in North America, it misses the larger story. The challenges that participants described over the course of the “Cyber and Sexual Violence Project”, a mixed-methods study with over 600 participants, 300 of whom were young women under the age of 25, demonstrated that cyberviolence targets young women disproportionately more than young men and impacts them differently (Dixon, Craven, Crooks, Fisher, & Weber, 2015).⁴ During the data collection process for this dissertation I documented the voices and perspectives of 112 (N=112) girls and young women aged 15 to 18 in a linguistically and socioeconomically diverse urban centre in Quebec, Canada. The conceptualizing of cyberviolence (CV) and CB that participants shared

³ The tragic case of Amanda Todd is one of the most recognizable examples of ‘cyberbullying’ in North America. Todd, a victim of identity fraud, was exploited and stalked by Aydin Coban, an adult man in the Netherlands. Amanda experienced harassment and bullying in several school settings, and died by suicide (not long after creating her video), after Coban created a false Facebook account that featured a photograph, captured via webcam, of Amanda’s bare breasts. Much commentary on this complex criminal case has been framed as an offline bullying story focusing on ‘mean’ youth (placing the adult stalker on the periphery) and thus turned into a cautionary tale regarding vulnerable girls who do not know how to protect themselves online (Chun, 2016). To put this case into perspective, youth suicide in Canada is far from exceptional. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young Canadians aged 10 to 24. We also know that those at greatest risk are First Nations, Inuit & Métis youth, who are 11 times more likely than other young people in Canada to die by suicide before reaching adulthood (Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention, 2016). LGBTQQ2IA -identifying youth, especially transgender youth (Egale Human Rights Trust, 2013), are also at an increased risk.

⁴ The Status of Women Canada-funded study “Cyber & Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond” was a multi-year collaboration between the Atwater Library and Computer Centre and Technoculture, Art and Games (TAG) Lab at Concordia University led by Principal Investigator Mia Consalvo. I describe the study and my role in it at length in Chapter Four (on methodology).

with me through their descriptors of cyberviolence in video work and focus groups demonstrates that old struggles continue to inform girls' negotiations with social media.⁵

In Canada and the United States, the high-profile suicides of Amanda Todd (2012), Rehtaeh Parsons (2013), Tyler Clementi (2010), Megan Meier (2006), and Rebecca Sedgwick (2013) have catapulted the issue of cyberbullying into the mainstream news. Much of the preoccupation with cyberbullying in the mainstream news and in popular commentary reflects antiquated moral panic frameworks. The utopian discourses of the 1990s around young people's use of the Internet quickly gave way to anxieties about 'stranger danger' that we have seen in previous eras, whenever young women have gained more access to public space (boyd, 2014, p. 103). This utopian-versus-dystopian binary method of approaching young people's access to digital culture is particularly pronounced when it comes to girls' use of the Internet, often manifesting in tight regulation of girls' sexuality and expression through expanding surveillance, laws, and oppressive anti-bullying programming (Crooks, 2016). A great deal of academic work and public commentary paints social media in the same way as new media and emerging technologies have been described for hundreds of years. For example, in the eighteenth century, books were considered to be dangerous for girls (Fraas, 2012; Berenguier, 2011; Bilton, 2008) as, later, were advertising, cinema, and the city (Gonick, 2006). The young women who participated in this research overwhelmingly focused on a set of misogynist practices and contexts that shaped their experiences of digital (and analog) culture. Rather than producing a homogeneous description of cyberbullying, the participants with whom I spoke and filmed told

⁵ At the time of writing, the largely unquestioned assumptions that inform this popular narrative of mean youth cyberbullying are appearing in the controversy surrounding the Netflix drama *13 Reasons Why*. The fictional series, aimed at teen audiences, examines the suicide of the protagonist, Hannah. Each episode revolves around one of the people or events that supposedly contributed to Hannah's suicide. Critics accuse the show of glamorizing and sensationalizing suicide, while supporters celebrate it for promoting suicide awareness (Gilbert, 2017). The show represents the 'vulnerable teen' trope in a highly aestheticized package. The discourse of girlhood vulnerability is repeated and alluded to in many participants' comments as a reason why girls are targeted online.

of their social realities on SNS, while challenging adults' perceptions of the root causes of cyberviolence (CV). The findings highlight the need to understand cyberviolence as structured through systemic online misogyny.

Although leading scholars in the (relatively new) field of cyberviolence studies disagree as to how CV should be defined, feminists across disciplines are pointing out the urgent need for multifaceted interventions (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Jane, 2017) to address what some refer to, often interchangeably, as “cyberhate” (Jane, 2017), “cyberviolence”, “online violence against women and girls” (VAWG) (The Broadband Commission for Digital Development Working Group on Broadband and Gender, 2015), and “gendered e-bile” (Jane, 2014, 2017). In 2015, The United Nations released a report warning that the growing problem of VAWG online poses the greatest risk to women and girls (The Broadband Commission, 2015, p. 6-7) – a demographic that we know encounters the most harassment and abuse on social media (Duggan, 2014, 2017). So far, the literature on cyberbullying has produced largely inconclusive and contradictory findings, particularly around occurrence rates (Arntfield, 2015; Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, & Klockenbusch, 2013).

Recently, prominent women and feminists have received so many death and rape threats that they are driven offline and out of work (Chess & Shaw, 2015).⁶ Many young citizens negotiate racism and sexism daily on their social media profiles and devices in school and at home (Steeves, 2014), and many daily abuses they encounter are unhelpfully categorized as ‘cyberbullying’, an umbrella term my participants did not relate to. My participants complicated

⁶ Recently, a York University professor Alice McLaughlin said she would not appear on the TVO television program *The Agenda* again due to “the barrage of hate mail, including multiple threats of rape and violence”, including violence to her family, she received after her last appearance on the show (Paikin, 2017). Moreover, after a decade of research, Ruth Palmer argues that journalists should warn their interview subjects about the potential online consequences of sharing their stories (Swain, 2017). Ruth Palmer of Harvard University’s Nieman Journalism Lab argues that studies are finding that “minorities and women in particular get very harsh cyber feedback when they speak out about things” and are more likely to self-censor because of this (Nieman quoted in Swain, 2017).

straightforward readings of cyberbullying behaviours; it will be important for researchers, policy-makers and mental health professionals who work on this issue (Angrove, 2015; Bailey, 2016a; 2016b; Regan & Sweet, 2015) to move beyond the popular meaning(s) of the term ‘cyberbullying’. More studies on CV and CB are being published. Quantitative data are important, but at this stage of cyberbullying research, qualitative research is crucial when it comes to understanding the broader context that gives rise to cybermisogyny. Moreover, some quantitative work does more harm than good when attempts to quantify cyberbullying styles simply reinscribe harmful cultural stereotypes regarding gender, racial and ethnic identities (for an example, see Shapka & Law, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

In 1979, when *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (MacKinnon, 1979) was published, sexual harassment was understood to be an inevitable daily aspect of women’s lives; in fact, the phrase “sexual harassment” was not coined until 1975 by a group of women at Cornell University (Cohen, 2016). However, we began to move closer to accessing legal (and popular) language to describe it when the United States Supreme Court agreed in 1986 that sexual harassment was a form of sexual discrimination under the US *Civil Rights Act*, (Jeffries, 2006). In Canada, as well as globally (Chisholm, 2014), we are at a similar moment of definition in our rapidly proliferating digital culture, and the “exact composition of the construct of cyberbullying is still an uncharted territory” (Pieschl et al., 2013, p. 241). We are learning more every day that there is a relationship between online and offline violence against women (West, 2014). While tending to focus on online misogyny in a North American context, the United Nations Broadband Commission’s report on cyberviolence (Cyber Violence against Women and Girls, 2015) notes that “women of the Global South also experience various acts of

cyber-violence against women and girls (VAWG), but these are usually less well publicized” (UN Women, p. 1). The United Nations report was withdrawn for revision weeks after it was released due to poor sourcing and the citing of unsubstantiated claims from studies, since debunked, produced in the early 2000s (Knibbs, 2015).⁷ Although the UN report must be revised, the central arguments of the first UN Report on cyberviolence targeting women and girls are sound. For instance, the report argues that we must understand CV as existing along a continuum of VAWG. My participants’ work and responses highlighted this. For example, the normalization of VAWG is continually reinforced in gaming communities and massively multiplayer online games (MMOG) platforms; these are a few of the online spaces in which CV is flourishing.

In 2014, the Pew Research Centre conducted a poll that surveyed 2,849 Americans on online harassment and found that “online violence is especially more pronounced at the intersection of gender and youth” (Duggan, 2014). Girls have long been mobilized in discourses that circulate when anxieties over economic, technological and cultural changes reach a boiling point (Gonick, 2006). With prominent news sources such as *The Atlantic* (2010) and *Maclean’s* (2010) focusing on the supposedly ‘empty’ lives of teenage girls duped by sexting and the sexualization of digital culture, the stakes for girls – the Internet’s most prolific media producers – are clear (Hasinoff, 2013). While girls and young women are not the only victims of cyberviolence, we now know that it disproportionately impacts them. Further, the way in which cyberviolence manifests towards girls and women is unique, often containing comments and harassment targeting their gender identity and sexuality. A strategy recently put forward by alt-

⁷ This report, released by UN Women, was retracted and removed from the Internet after critics, including extreme right-wing commentators, found flaws and errors in the body of the report. For example, the discredited 2000 report “Programmed to Kill”, which linked the Columbine shooters in the United States to video games in order to make a general claim about the effects of video games, was cited in the report. At the time of writing, the UN Report has still not been re-released.

right *Breitbart News* to tackle the increasing amount of vitriol and harassment targeting women and girls is simply: “get offline” (Yiannopoulos, 2016).

Michael Arntfield argues that the apparent lack of progress with regard to combating and legislating cyberbullying is directly tied to “the fact that there is remarkably still no consensus on a clear and workable definition of cyberbullying in either a scholarly or criminal context...”

(Arntfield, 2015, p. 372). As one of my participants put it, there is no easy way to define cyberviolence. Zan said:

I think cyberviolence is complex because no one can give it a real definition and what you think is CV maybe it isn't or maybe it is and its [sic] very complicated to find a definition for it so I consider it to be something that is very complex (Zan, 15).

As Zan argued, pinpointing a singular definition of CV is difficult because the terrain is complex.⁸ Although the research in this very new field is becoming more sophisticated, scholars are still largely in disagreement when it comes to the best practices for examining CV. For example, there is a great deal of disagreement about which instruments to use (Garrett, Lord, & Young, 2016). My participants' video work and discussions highlight the importance of not just defining, but naming the sexism and misogyny that structure their favourite social networking sites (SNS). While the technologies themselves change rapidly, the way we name and attend to these problems now will have far-reaching implications for girls' participation online. In response to gaps in the cyberbullying literature, I designed an exploratory arts-based study to determine how a group of young women in an urban centre would describe what cyberviolence means to them.

It is undeniable that many public figures blame social media platforms for the harassment, bullying and violence women and girls receive online. For example, investigative

⁸ This name is a pseudonym, as are all of the names that I have given to the participants who contributed their voices and perspectives to this research.

journalist Paula Todd, in her book *Extreme Mean* (2014), rightly states that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by cyberviolence. However, she fails to properly contextualize this violence and resorts to blaming YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, along with the “abusers’ issues”, for online misogyny (2014). This over-emphasis on tools and platforms adds technological determinism (Marx, 2010; Smith & Marx, 1994) to the matrix of problems which must be reconciled in rhetoric and scholarship around cyberbullying and cyberviolence before we can begin to have more informed conversations around gendered cyberviolence. While some scholars are currently trying to reclaim technological determinism as a potentially helpful tool in parsing the “autonomous and social-shaping tendencies of technology” (Dafoe, 2015), simply blaming SNS and telling young people, specifically girls, to ‘unplug’ is neither a tenable nor a productive solution for addressing online misogyny. Moreover, girls and young women tell us that these types of adult-centric solutions do not work (Cyberbullying Hurts: Respect for Rights in a Digital Age, 2012; Dixon et al., 2015).

Research Aims

The original focus of this research was quite different from the form it currently takes. When I embarked on the topic of CV, I was interested in examining girls’ gaming communities, due to the alarming accounts of harassment being reported in these spaces (Archer, 2016; Consalvo, 2012; Ore, 2017; Prebble, 2014). However, after I began working with a research team on the issue of CV, my discussions with young women brought a change in focus. As I began talking with participants in my study, many of my utopian theoretical commitments were challenged, and the radical resistance I had anticipated encountering eluded me. I had assumed at the outset that cyberviolence was an overblown phenomenon represented by a few exceptional cases in the media. What I learned from the young women with whom I spoke turned my

assumptions on their head. Participants discussed many challenges they faced in digital culture, particularly the daily social pressures in SNS that informed their perspectives on CV. When I asked participants what CV meant to them, they focused on the often-toxic social norms that structured their social networks. I began to develop very broad research questions that would allow me to understand how girls and young women aged 15 to 18 described and conceptualized CV and how these perceptions might clash with or reflect the (gendered) assumptions underscoring the existing literature and programming around CB. Finally, in centring girls' perspectives, this research is meant to be of broad relevance to researchers, educators and policy-makers, while contributing original knowledge on gendered cyberviolence from a sizable sample of young people.

From 2014 to 2016, I participated in the Status of Women initiative “Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond: Preventing and eliminating cyberviolence against women and girls” (Dixon et al., 2015). This was a collaboration between Concordia University's Technoculture, Art and Games Lab and the Atwater Library and Computer Centre in Montreal, Quebec. The study, led by principal investigator Mia Consalvo, Canada Research Chair in Game Studies and Design, conducted consultations with over 600 individuals. These consultations – half of them with girls and young women under the age of 25 – included group discussions, writing exercises, community conversations, focus groups and interviews with video game designers, educators, experts in sexual violence, law enforcement, and school board members. Consalvo and her research partners decided to incorporate an arts-based method in the investigation; I pitched the idea of bringing in my background in documentary video production and to use participatory video (PV) methods in order to work with youth to gain a deeper understanding of CV, CB and the challenges they faced from their perspective(s).

Methodologically, I employed participatory video (Blazek, 2016; Haynes & Tanner, 2015; Lomax, Fink, Singh, & High, 2011) alongside qualitative feminist research methods (Hesse-Biber, 2013). I drew from grounded theoretical methods to analyze the data, following Charmaz (2014) as well as Strauss and Corbin (1990). This approach allowed me to ask very broad, exploratory questions of participants and allowed for the creation of a theoretical approach and literature review that would anchor the patterns I began to identify in my participants' work, narratives, discussions and responses in a feminist new media approach. Moreover, I located myself as a feminist researcher/videographer in relation to the PV workshops, videos and focus groups that make up the data corpus. I used these scholarly and artistic commitments to privilege participants' voices while contextualizing the impossible contradictions and double standards they articulated as crucial context for approaching the social norms that give rise to gendered cyberviolence. Visual arts-based methods such as PV and other alternative modes of data collection (Bailey & Steeves, 2015) play a crucial role at this stage of the development of critical cyberviolence studies. Moreover, visual arts-based methods such as PV allow for youth of varying communication abilities to participate more fully in the research process than they might be able to through other methods. For example, methods that ask young people for written responses would have prevented many participants from sharing their perspectives.

The Frankfurt school, very progressive for its time and still the bedrock of many cultural and media studies, used a generic girl subject as the ultimate dupe of mass cultural consumption (Driscoll, 2013) from the 1920s through the 1940s. Although some scholars claim that we have moved beyond the moment of the 'cyberbole' (Woolgar, 2002), many public intellectuals

continue to pin all of young people’s challenges on smartphones and digital devices.⁹ Much like video games in the 1980s and mass production of television before then (Cohen, 2002; Sammond, 2015), the iPhone and social media continue to be placed at the centre of a moral panic around connecting technology to increasing depression and mental health concerns among young adults. For example, in the September 2017 issue of *The Atlantic*, Jean Twenge asks, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” (Twenge, 2017). It is clear that social media and smartphones play a large role in young people’s social lives (boyd, 2014; Kearney, 2011; Mazzarella, 2010; Simmons, 2011). However, articles such as Twenge’s neglect to account for the ways in which social media amplifies existing challenges while being bound up in emerging social norms that require more study and examination. Ideally, future research will include young people themselves across economic, ethnic, racial, urban/suburban and rural demographics.

Research Contributions

In this dissertation, I draw on the data I collected with “Cyber & Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond”. This is the first doctoral dissertation in Canada employing participatory video (PV) through a feminist new media lens in order to address CV with a sizable number (N=112) of young people. In the work that follows, I put findings from my participants into conversation with the lens on online misogyny in feminist new media and girls’ digital culture studies. This original research contributes to a small but growing body of work that includes young people’s perspectives on the challenges they face in digital culture (Bailey et al., 2013; Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Karaian, 2014). While cyberbullying has been a subject of inquiry in the academy for over two decades, the surge of scholarship

⁹ The term ‘cyberbole’ refers to the overvaluing of the impact particular technologies have on a society (Oxford Dictionary, 2017).

addressing it as a unique phenomenon (separate from traditional bullying) did not begin in earnest until the early 2000s. The extant literature documenting the prevalence, predictors and outcomes of cyberbullying is “fragmented and lacks theoretical focus” (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattaner, 2014). The field of cyberbullying and cyberviolence studies would benefit from incorporating feminist frameworks for study, prevention and capacity-building around CV and CB.

The picture the participants painted while conceptualizing cyberviolence in their video work and focus groups reveals that SNS are fun and important spaces for participants. The participants also discussed their struggles with confusing and hypocritical social norms that increasingly normalize misogyny (Jane, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014), limiting the possibilities available to them for representing themselves safely in the social media spaces they frequented. Comments made by the participants about the ubiquitous nature of CB led me to reflect on how insufficient the term ‘cyberbullying’ is to describe the challenges they explained navigating in their daily social realities. The findings I examine in subsequent chapters point to the reductive nature of the current frameworks structuring debates around cyberbullying in North America. Among the primary research outcomes are youth-produced short documentaries around the prompt ‘what cyberviolence means to me’, in which young people produced their own narratives, creating a bricolage about gendered cyberviolence.

This dissertation answers the call for innovative methods with which to address CV by examining original findings from 112 (N=112) young women to contribute to emerging work in girls’ digital culture studies that addresses the existing gap(s) in academic studies of cyberviolence. Specifically, this research puts feminist new media studies (Croeser, 2016; Jane,

2016; Leonard, 2006; Magnet, 2006; 2011; Phillips, 2015; Prebble, 2014; C. Todd, 2014) into conversation with girls' digital culture studies (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016). I draw on this theoretical framework, alongside Hall's concept of shared meanings (1997), to put participants' perspectives into conversation with the extant CV literature. It is my hope that this research will be accessible to a diverse group of stakeholders, including young people, digital platform and game designers, front-line workers, teachers and policy-makers. The findings that emerge from my participants' descriptors and conceptualizing of cyberviolence act as an urgent call to include young people's voices in cyberbullying and digital culture policies that impact them. The themes I interpreted from their video work and discussions highlight the importance of making linkages between research and policy (Dwortzon, 2017; Ginsburg & Gorostiaga, 2003). I have written and organized the themes and findings in an accessible manner in order to contribute to making these linkages between research and policy in the hope that the findings and recommendations presented may be of use to better the material lives of young women.

While nearly all of the participants had experienced some form of cyberviolence, and some had experienced extreme cyberviolence, I do not mobilize any extended discourse of victimization in the analysis of my findings. None of my participants self-identified as victims, and all demonstrated a tremendous resilience as they navigated a digital environment that has become increasingly hostile towards them (Sales, 2016). As Toronto-based journalist Septiembre Anderson, a woman of colour who has been targeted with death threats continually on Twitter, stated, "It happens because misogyny is real and the internet [and] social media is not fake" (Singh, 2016). Victimization and disempowerment are obviously not coterminous. I chose not to concentrate on victimization because my participants did not use this type of language.

Moreover, even though I am investigating the negative side of digital culture, my participants often reminded me that, as Sabrina (18) said, “there is so much that is good” on platforms such as Tumblr and Facebook. Further, I do not wish to contribute to the risk discourses that are appropriated by those who would restrict girls’ access to technology and justify increased surveillance of girls. As scholars such as Jenkins and boyd (2006) note, the potential risk of predators (e.g., ‘stranger danger’) in physical and digital publics is regularly held up as a justification for restricting young people’s access to these spaces.¹⁰ This justification is not only problematic but inaccurate. Statistics demonstrate that the greatest risks to youth safety continue to be in their own homes and those of their friends – not on social media (Cassell & Cramer, 2008).

Chapter Organization

The rest of this dissertation is divided into seven chapters. I have organized the substantive analysis chapters around three key areas of concerns I identified in the themes and patterns that emerged through qualitative thematic analysis (QTA) of participants’ conceptualizations of CV. Participants continually returned to three dominant framings in their discussions of CV. The findings are presented through these three categories in the order in which they were emphasized by participants. The categories are: 1) the social context and social norms in which CV unfolds; 2) the platforms and practices through which participants encountered CV; and 3) why some strategies are unhelpful, and which approaches may be more productive. Each chapter addresses a different set of core themes I identified in participants’ descriptions and conceptualizations of cyberviolence. Throughout the chapters, I address the

¹⁰ For example, several participants were monitored via keystroke software by the adults in their lives (personal communication recorded in field notes, April 2015).

participants' notable lack of discussion around issues such as how racialization, whiteness and class impact the experience of CV.

Chapter Five examines the misogynistic social norms that participants outlined in their descriptions and conceptualizing of CV. The major themes identified in their descriptions of the social contexts structuring themes of descriptors revealed that social norms were the most significant feature in their experiences of cyberviolence (Chapter Five). New social norms that normalize misogyny and gendered double standards structured participants' favourite platforms and mediated their communication practices (Chapter Six). Throughout the research process, participants offered insightful critiques of existing strategies and were enthusiastic about the chance to offer what they believed were better suggestions for future strategy building and cyberviolence and cyberbullying prevention (Chapter Seven).

In Chapter Two, the literature review, I outline a distinct genealogy of feminist new media studies by examining a binary approach between utopian and dystopian approaches to technology that characterized cyberfeminism in the 1980s and 1990s. This offers context for understanding how this binary continues to inform feminist discussions of digital culture. I also put the extant cyberbullying literature into conversation with the emerging literature on girls' digital culture in order to situate this research project within a broader body of feminist critiques of traditional bullying scholarship. This is important, as it allows us to trace the assumptions around girlhood and bullying (e.g., relational aggression) that continue to present problems for contemporary research and public debates around cyberbullying.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework I employ to make sense of the themes and patterns that emerged through the qualitative thematic analysis (QTA). Following a grounded theoretical approach (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), I draw from existing

areas of cyberviolence literature, feminist new media studies, communication and criminology that address concepts and challenges in the themes I identify in the participants' conceptualizing of CV. I sketch out the ways in which I employ Stuart Hall's concept of "shared meanings" (1997) and Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital (1984) to understand participants' descriptions of CV as part of a broader system of meaning. For example, concepts from cultural studies highlight the ways in which CV and CB, as conceptualized by participants, must be understood through toxic, sexist norms and online misogyny in digital culture.

The discussion of methodology, in Chapter Four, outlines the mixed-methods approach I employed in order to collect data, as well as how I built an integrated methodology grounded in arts-based participatory research and (feminist) focus groups. I discuss key concepts related to participatory video, youth participatory action research (YPAR), qualitative thematic analysis, grounded theory, and feminist research practices. The research design, ethical issues and ethics clearance, confidentiality, participants, transcription and coding are all examined.

Chapter Five is the first data analysis chapter. It examines the themes of appearance and visibility, operationalized by participants as self-representation in SNS. The sub-themes explored include the figure of the 'good' girl and victim-blaming paradigms that were mobilized by participants at both locations. The findings discussed in Chapter Five examine the role that sexist social norms played in participants' conceptualizing of CV and normalized misogynistic practices, as well as popular strategies embedded in anti-CV programming. In Chapter Five, I posit that research and programming addressing CV should be informed by the realities that participants articulated around self-presentation and content production in SNS. While researchers of girls' digital culture are highlighting the importance of understanding social contexts when studying issues such as online 'drama', the participants' overwhelming focus on

the toxic social norms they navigate daily points to the importance of research addressing online misogyny in young people's digital culture.

In Chapter Six I turn to the themes of publicity versus privacy and context/audience specificity that cluster around the concept of platform architecture. For example, participants described that they would consider some content, such as misogynistic jokes, as CV on some platforms, but not on others (e.g., such as in a private message on Facebook). I examine the themes of anonymity, 'drama' versus jokes, and mobbing; my participants' descriptors complicated mainstream notions of anonymity while illustrating the ways in which all these practices work to normalize gendered forms of cyberviolence.

Chapter Seven examines the themes of empathy and education – concepts participants returned to repeatedly when describing CV and the contexts that gave rise to it. Chapter Seven examines the contradictions in participants' critiques of popular prevention strategies and recommendations. I examine participants' critiques of common tropes in anti-cyberbullying curricula, as well as their suggestions for more productive ways of addressing this phenomenon.

In the concluding chapter, I review the major themes analyzed in the preceding chapters. I then weave these themes through the recommendations for policy-makers and researchers I present with the goal of outlining productive avenues for future research and CV interventions. Importantly, these recommendations draw heavily from the suggestions that the participants called on us to implement.

I now turn to a review of the literature on feminist new media studies (Part One) and cyberbullying (Part Two) – specifically, the bullying in which girls engage and are targeted by – and put it into dialogue with the emerging body of literature on girls' digital culture. I assembled the literature review according to the tenets of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss &

Corbin, 1990). Accordingly, I discuss the issues I identified as being particularly relevant to my participants' conceptualizing of CV in their video work and focus group discussions, including content production on social media, teen 'drama', 'mean' girls, and vulnerability.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Part One

Reading and ‘Doing’ Gender in Digital Culture: Feminist New Media Studies¹¹

In order to understand the terms currently structuring the debates(s) around girls’ usage of social media, ‘cyberbullying’ and ‘cyberviolence’, it is critical to understand the way that gender has been theorized in new media studies. The history of feminist engagement with technology and the application of feminist thought to technology are diverse, perhaps as diverse as feminist scholarship (Braidotti, 1996; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1987)¹². However, there is an affinity between feminisms and postmodernism and post-structuralism, specifically the shared interrogation of identity as discursive and contingent, and further, the claim that gender, sex, and the body are constructed through/in language (Braidotti, 1992; Butler, 1989; 1992). These theoretical tenets are crucial for moving past grand narratives, which position the Western white heterosexual (able-bodied) male subject as the natural subject.¹³ Therefore, it is possible to locate competing and contested feminist engagements with new media within cultural studies

¹¹ Following intersectional feminists (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989, 1990; Lorde, 1984), I understand gender to be one social/cultural category inseparable from race, class, age, sexual orientation, ability, or religion in understanding how this particular category contributes to the lived experience within interlocking systems of oppression. Throughout this chapter, I will refer to gender and highlight those (few) interventions that include an intersectional approach to reading constructions and performances of gender in new media and digital culture. It is important to note here the long history of “white, cisgendered, middle-class feminism” (Tanczer, 2015, p. 9) that has excluded women of colour and trans people. It is also worth noting that scholars such as bell hooks still value the word feminism, insisting that it must refer to dismantling all systems of oppression. Following bell hooks, I use the term feminism(s) with the belief that it remains a politically useful category.

¹² I do not mean this as a value judgment. Here, I am referring to both the disparate philosophies of feminists engaged with technology and the criticisms of early cyberfeminisms that refused to define one singular field of study. This same criticism has been directed toward postmodern feminists who refuse “to assume a shape” (Bordo, 1989, p. 144).

¹³ Halberstam’s (1991) working definition of postmodernism is useful in highlighting how feminisms can productively engage in postmodern work in the academy. Halberstam’s model demands “a historical dimension, a political perspective and a cultural domain” (1991, p. 446), which works well for reading cyberfeminism and current feminist new media studies.

(McRobbie, 1991; Williams, 1983), representation studies (Gilroy, 1996; Hall, 1980; hooks, 1992; Mohanty, 2003; Mulvey, 1975) and the postmodern turn (Baudrillard, 1994; Jenkins, 2003; Poster, 1995). In Part One of this chapter, I trace the utopian/dystopian binary in feminist (and mass media) readings and performances of gender during the 1980s and 1990s that continue to inform feminist new media studies. I trace a distinct body of postmodern (Hall, 1992; Lyotard, 1984; Nicholson, 1990) feminist scholarship, art and activism that attends to the intersection of gender, technological change (Bolter & Gruisin, 2000; Jenkins, 2003, 2006; Thornburn & Jenkins, 2004), and emerging technologies – topics that have too long been considered the exclusive province of mainstream/malestream new media studies. I trace some significant debates, ideas, and examples of feminist new media studies that allow me to demonstrate that this is a significant body of scholarship within new media studies with its own distinct genealogy. This also allows me to locate new media scholars and artists whose interventions – particularly over the past four decades – have troubled straightforward utopic/dystopic readings of gendered subjects and gendering practices in new media. Examining the utopian/dystopian binary in feminist studies of new media and emerging technology is important because this problematic binary continues to inform much feminist work on young people’s digital cultures, social networking sites (SNS) and experiences with conflict and cyberbullying. Moreover, it offers context for understanding the current debates and concepts in the area of girls’ digital cultures, examined in Part Two of the literature review.

I identify key thinkers and moments that inform the current state of feminist new media studies. These scholars attempt to demystify the assumption that new media are masculine spaces (Abbate, 2012), and that racism and sexism are just the effects of the network (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Croeser, 2016; Jane, 2016; Leonard, 2006; Magnet, 2006; 2011, 2013; Nakamura

2002, 2011; Prebble, 2014; Phillips, 2015; C. Todd, 2014), and are continuing to chart a path between utopian/dystopian discourses (Brophy, 2014) by attending to the possibilities and pitfalls of (neoliberal) participatory culture (Hasinoff, 2013; Portwood-Stacer, 2014). As the study of new media is bound up with scholarship and praxis (Hansen, 2006; Jones, 2003), textual examples from popular culture, science fiction, and video will be used to illustrate how gender has been read and ‘done’ by cyberfeminists and their continuing legacies in the digital present. Further, I (1) outline a definition of new media and brief discussion of the historical relationship between representations and constructions of gender and emergent media technologies; (2) trace the way in which Donna Haraway is often decontextualized by looking at how she charted a course for navigating the utopian/dystopian dichotomy that informs present feminist studies of new media (Sawchuk & Stabile, 2012); (3) situate significant intersectional interventions in new media debates (e.g., digital divide) with regard to characteristics such as interactivity and access; and (4) turn to the possibilities and limits of participatory culture within the context of convergence and networked society. I conclude with a brief discussion of current projects that offer significant challenges to these frameworks for understanding girlhood (e.g., Dames Making Games), sexuality, gender, and race, both in academic and public spaces (e.g., Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0, the works of Frigon and Jenny [2014]).

Feminism, Gender and (New) Media Technologies: Historicity

In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams (1983) notes the term *media*, which was popularized in the mid-1950s, to refer to a singular phenomenon that reflects a convergence of three major meanings. Williams (1983) traces the cultural and social history of the word *media* as referring to:

- (i) the old general sense of an intervening or intermediate agency or substance; (ii) the conscious technical sense, as in the distinction between print and sound and vision as

media; (iii) the specialized capitalist sense, in which a newspaper or broadcasting service—something that already exists or can be planned – is seen as a medium for something else, such as advertising (Williams, 1983, p. 203).¹⁴

For foundational cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall and groundbreaking media theorist Marshall McLuhan, media, culture and representation are inherently tied; as Hall theorized, media are “involved in forming and constituting the things they represent or reflect” (M. Radford & G. Radford, 2003, p. 56; Hall, 1997). For McLuhan, “media” and “technologies” are synonymous and extend humans’ physical, intellectual and social functions. For example, David Bobbitt (2011) explains that, for McLuhan, “the computer extends our brain, and electronic media, in general, extend our central nervous system” (Bobbitt, 2011, section 4). These definitions are useful in reminding us that there is nothing inherently ‘new’ about the social, mutually constituting processes and practices that construct gender and new media technologies: what is important, however, is parsing what exactly the ‘new’ in ‘new media’ constitutes and attending to the various ways in which gender intersects with those phenomena. Gender and media have collided in the past and continue to do so, although these collisions have traditionally been relegated to peripheral studies in the academy as distinct from studies of new media ‘proper’.¹⁵ The major preoccupations of new media studies (e.g., theories of technological change, emerging technologies and networked societies) have always been the purview of feminist research as well.

¹⁴ It must be noted that Williams’ (1983) definition also marks a transition to technology as an application of science (Williams, 1983 referenced in Hand, 2008, p. 47) which differs from the earlier definitions of technology as applications of mechanical arts, which, as Leo Marx points out, simply meant something practical or useful (Marx, 1997).

¹⁵ I wish to be clear that this is not a technological determinist argument. Following from the work of post-structural feminists such as Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous, Butler, Spivak and Wittig, I mean to acknowledge that gender and technology are constructed through social practices, their meanings (both interpellated and self-fashioned) shifting through time, and that these intersections have been theorized by feminists for decades, although they are often overlooked in mainstream new media scholarship.

As Ann Balsamo notes in *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Foucault (1979) begins using the word “technology” to refer to the “process of connection between discursive practices, institutional relations, and material effects that, working together, produce a meaning or a ‘truth effect’ for the human body” (Balsamo, 1996, p. 21). This emphasizes the way seemingly common-sense notions of body/gender/machine are constructed through culture and eventually institutionalized (Balsamo, 1996; Hayles, 1999); it is consistent with postmodern understandings of technology. For example, Ian Bogost (2015) recently defined technology in *The Atlantic* as “the diverse, array of people, processes, materials and machines that really carry out the work we shorthand as ‘technology’” (2015).

These definitions, read alongside Williams’ (1983) genealogy of media, reflect a postmodern recognition of technologies of gender (De Lauretis, 1989) and technologies of sex (Foucault, 1978; Springer, 1996).¹⁶ Diverse feminist new media scholars who find consensus on little else also share this recognition. Technologies of gender and gendering technology are central to my research on digital girlhood. This research explores how girls ‘do’ gender and aggression in digital culture through a poststructural framework that mobilizes participatory video as a research tool in order include (marginalized) girls’ voices in the production of knowledge about a topic that affects them (see Kilty et al., 2014). In order to succinctly (albeit broadly) map the emerging field of feminist new media studies and its precursors, a brief summary of new media studies is essential.

¹⁶ This point is emphasized in van Loon’s (1996) discussion of Haraway’s (1985, 1991) postmodern feminism. Cyborg feminism rejects strict distinctions between human and machine while examining the possibilities of challenging patriarchy through emerging technologies (see Haraway, 1985). Van Loon proposes that postmodern cyborg feminism has far-reaching implications for social and cultural theory; she argues cyborg feminism is an “effective way of working through the challenge of postmodernity without either surrendering to ‘anything goes’ liberal pluralism or the romantic desperation of nihilistic fatalism” (Van Loon, 2006, p. 231).

What constitutes the field of new media is hotly contested, and there is no single “canon” of new media (Hansen, 2004; Lister et al., 2008).¹⁷ The field of new media is a topic that undergoes constant change (Blakeborough, 2014); however, it is rooted in the historical understanding of new media objects and texts (Flew, 2008). There are key texts (e.g., *The Language of New Media*) and concepts (e.g., interactivity) that new media theorists (Flew, 2008; J. Murray, 2017) agree inform the history and current state of the field. The field of new media refers to both the study and practice (e.g., design) of new media and emerging technologies. Fields as diverse as cybernetics, computer science, sociology, political economy, psychology, economics, history, and the visual arts are concerned with the study of new media (Flew, 2002)¹⁸. The academic study of new media often builds on traditional schools of media theory and studies (e.g., see Bourdieu, 1984; Hall, 1980; Innis, 1950, 1951; McLuhan, 1951, 1964, 1967), yet it is preoccupied with categories and terminology from computer science, from media theory to software theory (see Manovich, 2001, p. 48). In contrast, the trajectory of feminist new media theory and praxis reflects a continuing engagement with the cultural and social aspects of technology (Hasinoff, 2014), often rooted in art and activism (Barnett, 2014).

Scholars of new media are concerned with digitization (Flew, 2008)¹⁹, convergence (Jenkins, 2006), networking (Castells, 2007; Negroponte, 1996), the Internet, human-computer interface, digital gaming (Consalvo, 2005; 2012; Flanigan, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins & Cassell; 2008; Kafai, 2008), software (Manovich, 2001), virtual communities, virtual identities,

¹⁷ New media studies is a relatively new academic field and emerged from post-structural thinkers. The origins of the field and definitional questions around which objects count as new media is perhaps another reason that the notion of a ‘canon’ of new media is so vigorously contested (Manovich, 2001, 2003).

¹⁸ My approach to this chapter is informed by the concept of genealogy, a popular approach to history in cultural and media studies that emphasizes historical contingency and specific knowledge(s) rather than grand/master narratives (Williams, 1976).

¹⁹ Manovich (2001) refers to digitization as a myth, arguing that using the term to distinguish between digital and analog is too broad to be useful. I am including these particular terms, as they are the ones with which new media studies scholars are most preoccupied. However, I acknowledge that the use and meanings of these terms and their relevance to new media studies are heavily contested.

and interactivity²⁰. Further, not all of new media studies are focused exclusively on the ‘new’, but rather, as Flew states, “the idea of ‘new media’ captures both the development of unique forms of digital media, and the remaking of more traditional media forms to adopt and adapt to the new media technologies” (Flew, 2002, p. 11). Therefore, new media studies also encompass studies of technological change (Gitelman, 2006; Thorburn & Jenkins, 2003) and technological determinism (Flew, 2002; Hayles, 1999; Marx, 2010). Finally, users and identity (Bailey, Steeves, Burkell, & Priscilla, 2013; Consalvo, 2007; Gillespie, 2006; Hearn, 2010; Laurel, 2001; Magnet, 2006; 2011; Nakamura, 2007; 2011) are central to new media studies, even though feminist new media studies have been relegated to the periphery (Hasinoff, 2014).

Feminist new media studies which have examined the costs and benefits of participation with new media for decades (Paasonen, 2014; Portwood-Stacer, 2014) borrows heavily from the earlier cyberfeminist movement although this link is often not made in contemporary work. Instead, cyberfeminism is often discussed at arms length and minimized as overly utopian or dystopian through reductionist histories. The field, which is gaining in institutional power, evidenced by a special issue in *New Media and Society* as well as a journal (*Ada*), examines emerging technologies “in the context of their production and consumption” (Shaw, 2014, p. 274). The utopian/dystopian discourses that inform feminist new media studies must be understood in historical context as extending the theories that preoccupied feminist technology studies and the popular rhetoric of the 1980s and 1990s. An understanding of the art practices of the cyberfeminist movement is crucial to understanding contemporary feminist new media praxis. Evaluating works fifteen to twenty years after their production begs the question as to

²⁰The notion of interactivity is also hotly contested amongst theorists such as Manovich (2001), who insist that to be an object of study in new media studies, interactivity is a requirement for new media studies. I have excluded globalization from this list, which is a significant aspect of new media, due to the fact that interactivity – rather than globalization – is an area of interest for my research on cyberbullying. However, it is an important element in digital (youth) culture studies and informs some of the critiques of early cyberfeminism which will be referenced.

how to properly contextualize them (Barnett, 2014, para. 3, sec. 1). However, as Barnett argues in an essay on cyberfeminist media and activism, “Developing a way of thinking both historically and immediately about the works is crucial especially because of the rapidly changing theoretical frameworks that arose to complement quickly changing technologies” (Barnett, 2014, para. 3, sec. 1). Revisiting these texts is as much a project of the moment as a historical one, as these works “illuminate a trajectory of cyberfeminist thought around the affordances of language for gender work but also the affordances of language for gender play, and, ultimately, social change” (Barnett, 2014, para. 3, sec. 1). There is a long history of feminist engagement with technology and public space (McLaughlin, 2004).

Early formal feminist movements (Moses, 1984) occurred at a time when the term *medium* entered use in the English language to refer to newspapers (Williams, 1983, p. 203). References to a feminist group (1894) and feminist doctrines (1895), as well as the current understanding of the term *image* as it is used in painting and film (Williams, 1983), all appeared around the nineteenth century. The recently recovered work of Ada Lovelace, including the first algorithm designed to be processed by a machine (1843), was also produced in the nineteenth century (Fuegi & Francis, 2003). Although one could view these events as mere coincidences (Bromley, 1990), it is instructive to see them as contributing to a context and historicity of the relationship between feminist thought in the public sphere, gender and new media platforms. Fast-forwarding from nineteenth century collisions of gender, feminism and communication technologies (Essinger, 2014) to feminist documentary and video art in the 1980s (Fatopoulou & Riordan, 2014; Klein, 1982), we begin to see a broad trend of dialogue between feminism and emergent technologies. Specifically, there is clearly a genealogy of feminist new media studies that is characterized by a critique of masculinist technoculture and a feminist art/activist praxis

(Fatopoulou & Riordan, 2014) which can be traced through the use of video art in the 1980s, cyberfeminism in the 1990s and Fembot²¹ in the second decade of the 21st century (Fatopoulou & Riordan, 2014).

Approaching feminist new media studies through a genealogical approach we can see how media criticism was intimately bound up in the institutionalization of academic feminism (e.g., see Mulvey's (1975) seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", published in *Screen*), which, in turn, was embedded in art and activist production that created an archive of women's voices and experiences. Women and feminists have long used media-based art to gain access to the public sphere²² (e.g., Maya Deren, *Women Make Movies*). Understood dialectically²³ (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002), the discourses around gender and technology have not transformed entirely since the 1980s and 1990s. Feminisms' approaches to emerging technology have, however, shifted. Haraway, Plant and several other scholars and artists (e.g., Melinda Rackman's *carrier*, 1996) created space and language for feminist engagement with emerging technologies (beyond utopian/dystopian binary) and Gajjala and Oh (2012) revived the term 'cyberfeminist' in *Cyberfeminism 2.0* (2012) to "locate the power and monstrosity of the cyberfeminist movement in the contemporary moment" (Barnett, 2014). The anthology *Cyberfeminism 2.0* (2012) is significant, as it signals a shift in feminist studies of digital culture. By examining everything from the blogosphere and gaming communities to diasporic youth, the authors examine the ways in which feminists can intervene in online/offline relationships,

²¹ Fembot is an online collective of scholars, researchers, graduate students and artists with an interest in feminism and new media affiliated with *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology*.

²² Second-wave feminists, such as Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (2000), later critiqued the extent to which these techniques were truly liberatory, pointing to the largely white middle-class focus and exclusionary tendencies of second-wave avant-garde and academic feminism.

²³ Dialectics, theorized in many political and philosophical schools of thought, is the synthesis of real or contradictory truths by weighing a thesis, mounting a counter-argument and working to arrive at a logical resolution (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). In this chapter I argue that contemporary feminist new media studies must be understood through and against cyberfeminist art and theory.

arguing that online bodies are influenced by offline hierarchies and power relations. In this anthology, they continue the work of charting a path between utopian/dystopian discourses, by attending to both the possibilities of and problematic nature of the relationship between feminisms and digital technologies. It is productive to acknowledge that this important work was begun by feminist scholars and artists that participated in the cyberfeminist movement although they are rarely credited as doing so (Paasonen, 2014).

Academics, artists, and activists involved in cyberfeminist work have attached a wide array of meanings to the term ‘cyberfeminism’ (see Paasonen, 2014). Audre Lorde critiqued racist white feminism, as did Alice Walker and bell hooks. Cyberfeminism (Wajcman, 2004) has often neglected to attend to the ways in which the material, political, psychic, and sexual conditions of women intersect with media like the Internet that is already “socially inscribed with regard to bodies, sex, age, economics, social class and race” (Wilding, 1998, p. 9). The real and perceived lack of intersectional analysis in the cyberfeminist movement is one of the reasons that contemporary feminist new media scholars have moved away from the term (Paasonen, 2011). While they are still informed by the dominant discourses of cyberfeminisms, current work that actually constitutes a shift in reading gender and girlhood in digital culture (Gajjala, 2011; 2014, Magnet, 2011; Steeves, 2014) demonstrates an application of intersectional analysis to the study of information communication technologies (ICTs), the Internet and emerging technologies. This is important, as strategies underpinning contemporary projects, in which feminists engage with digital technologies, must “develop nuanced studies of technology that prioritize social context” (Hasinoff, 2014, p. 270) if we are to address the “uneven impacts of new technologies on the way social differences are written into how we understand these effects” (Hasinoff, 2014, p. 270).

This task calls for much more than distributing technology to populations perceived to be on the opposite end of the digital divide (Eubanks, 2011; Hasinoff 2014; Shade, 2003). It calls for us to attend to the many ways in which inequality is built into our networks and networked systems (Magnet, 2011; 2013; Nakamura, 2008) and the complex ways digital tools may offer agency. Tools inherently neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ afford marginalized subjects agency and voice in some instances, but they are often coupled with surveillance and the pressure to be a consumer rather than a user (Steeves & Bailey, 2015). This is important because “much participatory and activist culture is rarely positioned outside of commercialization” (Couldry, 2012, p. 57) or neoliberal logic. This means that scholars, artists and activists who use these tools must not lapse into utopian thinking, believing that simply having access to the means of production will mean that marginalized voices will be heard or valued. This ethical concern is central not only to my theoretical framework, but must inform my data collection with youth, as I use participatory video (Haynes & Tanner, 2013) as a research method.

One could argue that Donna Haraway (1991) initiated intersectional analyses of cyberspace (now more often referred to as digital space) in her seminal work “A Cyborg Manifesto” (first published in 1985 in Berkeley’s *Socialist Review*), as cyborg feminism entails demystifying the social hierarchies derived from ‘natural’ binaries (e.g., male/female, homosexual/heterosexual, human/non-human animal) (Clarke, 2007; Haraway, 1991; Milford, 2011) underpinning white Western feminism. The publication of Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” both extended earlier work on human-machine hybrids and social studies of science and introduced language and offered an ontology for feminist and social theorists’ engagement with emerging technologies and the gendered body.

Utopian/Dystopian Discourses and the Space in Between: Haraway, VNS Matrix, and Cyberfeminism

Although Haraway, whose work was an intervention in socialist feminism of the 1980s, never wrote on cyberfeminism, her work is routinely held up as representative of cyberfeminism (Paasonen, 2014, p. 341). Most scholars of digital culture (see Wajcman, 2004) locate Haraway's landmark "A Cyborg Manifesto" as one of the only founding texts of what is referred to as "cyberfeminism" (Balsamo, 1996; Consalvo, 2003; Hayles, 1999; Matrix, 2001; 2006). However, Haraway did not emerge from a vacuum, and feminist new media theory continues to read gender and conceive of 'doing' gender in digital culture through discourses that are still largely informed by utopian/dystopian discourses: the landscape in which Haraway intervened. The artist collective VNS Matrix and Sadie Plant were the first to name their practice and scholarship cyberfeminism²⁴. The first international feminist gathering of cyberfeminists in Kassel, Germany (September 20-24, 1997) produced "The 100 Anti-Theses of Cyberfeminism" – a playfully ironic twist on their refusal to define cyberfeminism,²⁵ which included statements such as "cyberfeminism is not an institution" and "cyberfeminism is not a fashion statement" (OBN, 1997). One of the defining traits of cyberfeminism has been the refusal by those who practice it to define or delimit it. Despite cyberfeminists' best efforts to resist codification, it is now safe to say that many cyberfeminists identified the body as a key site for negotiating "new media theories, practices and behaviours" and saw new media as possible tools for re-coding gendered social norms (Barnett, 2014, section 1). In retrospect, this lens offers an alternative

²⁴ Toronto-based media artist Nancy Patterson is the other central figure positioned as the third pioneer of cyberfeminism. Her essay titled "Cyberfeminism" was published in 1992 (Paasonen, 2011, p. 338). Paasonen (2011) argues that Patterson's contribution has been forgotten because she was not reprinted or referenced as widely as VNS Matrix and Sadie Plant.

²⁵ This was written in a combination of languages, including Croatian, English, Serbian, Dutch and Polish.

reading to the overwhelming tropes in advertisements, science fiction, and popular culture that genders technology as feminine.

In Apple's "1984" Superbowl commercial, directed by Ridley Scott, the personal computer was feminized, branding it as unthreatening (Friedman, 2005; Halberstam, 1991). Apple introduced the Macintosh computer by continuing the trend of using a sexy female robot to sell high-tech gadgets and techno-toys: 'toys for boys'. From Maria in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) to the recent film *Ex Machina* (2015), the fetishizing of female automata is a common trope. Writers such as Claudia Springer and Judith/Jack Halberstam have noted that the fear of autonomous machines often translates into a representation of the machinery as feminine (Halberstam, 1991, p. 444). One might think of the sexy android on a killing spree in the film *Eve of Destruction* (1991), or the master computer 'Mother' in the film *Alien* (1979), whose abject maternal embodiment has been theorized at length by Barbara Creed (1993). In the 1970s and early 1980s, feminists were engaged in recovering lost histories of women, such as those of Ada Lovelace and Patti Maes, involved in developing the first computers (Consalvo, 2003; Friedman, 2005; Senft, 2003; Stein, 1987), broadening access, getting more women into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions (Consalvo, 2003), and theorizing science as social relations.

In 1985, when Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" first appeared, so did Cynthia Cockburn's (1990) *On the Machinery of Dominance*.²⁶ The same year that "A Cyborg Manifesto" was reprinted, Judy Wacjman's (1991) *Feminism Confronts Technology* was released. While the Manifesto is often discussed in isolation and held up as a symbol of

²⁶ Cockburn addresses the intersection of patriarchy and technology as a medium of power in relation to the reproduction of capitalism (she critiques the unquestioned 'he' in Marx's *Capital*). Her thesis begins to point to the notion of technology itself as gendered. Haraway also examines gender and 'the woman question' in *Capital* in her essay "Gender for a Marxist Dictionary" (1991).

cyberfeminism and current new media studies, Haraway was not working in isolation, and while she has been interpreted as utopian (Friedman, 2005), a close reading of the Manifesto reveals a theoretical map for navigating utopian/dystopian discourses around gender and emerging technologies. What Donna Haraway did with the cyborg was new: it gave feminists interested in interrogating gendered representations in, and practices of, new media language with which to navigate the technological determinism of the utopian/dystopian discourses that were particularly polarized in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Wajcman, 2004). The object/hybrid body of the cyborg, however, was certainly not new nor gender neutral.

The notion of a human-cyborg assemblage as the next evolutionary step dates to Ivan Sutherland's essay, "The Ultimate Display" (1965), although the "corporeal metaphor (body-machine; body politics)" (Frigon & Shantz 2014, p. 85) itself can be traced much farther back, to the works of Aristotle and Plato (see Frigon & Shantz 2014, p. 85). As early as 1970, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* was taking up the feminist possibilities of the cyborg figure. Sutherland anticipated experiments with virtual reality (VR) and toyed with the notion of computers changing the condition of human embodiment. Tim Lenoir (2004) also cites Leroi-Gourhan's writing in the 1960s as an early instance of imagining cyborg/human assemblages. In the Manifesto, Haraway (1991) responds to the climate of technophobia among feminists at the time, due to militarism and patriarchal science, specifically biomedical technologies. Popular culture texts, such as the classic science-fiction film *The Stepford Wives* (1975), reflected and refracted cultural anxieties around shifting gender norms through robotic imagery. Haraway offered a path for feminist engagement with emergent technologies, an engagement she identifies as necessary for the future of feminism because, for Haraway, "we are cyborgs" (Haraway, 1985, p. 2). Our bodies are integrated in technology (e.g., medical prosthetics, *in vitro* fertilization,

vehicles, the Internet) and in this way, we are all “theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism” (p. 150) although “who cyborgs will be is a radical question”²⁷ (1991, p. 153). It is easy to see why Haraway and “The Cyborg Manifesto” developed a cult following. The debate over the microelectronic revolution (how it would impact health, labour, and privacy) and the ‘science wars’ were in full swing, and the predominant sentiment in socialist feminism was that women were doomed (see Wajcman, 2004).

Many feminist studies in the 1980s followed the logic of technological determinism (Friedman, 2005; Marx, 2010), focusing on the effects of technology on society, rather than on the effect society has on technology (Mies et al., 1993). This view was shored up by feminist studies of science that emphasized the objective observer of Western science as white, patriarchal, and male: the invisible witness (see Haraway, 1988). While this is the same ontology that Haraway breaks down, she also builds a space for engaging with technology, insisting that it is essential for feminist work in the context of high-tech late capitalism. When read historically, it is evident that Haraway was not utopian, but rather adopted a postmodern position which carved a space apart from dystopian discourses around gender and technology (Daly, 1978; Griffin, 1978; Merchant, 1980) and the utopian technofetishism that it inspired (Eubanks, 2011). The perception by many feminists interested in emerging technologies in the mid-1980s and early 1990s was that ‘old-style’ (1970s) feminism was often guilt-inducing, anti-sex, and most importantly, irrelevant to women’s experiences with contemporary technologies (Wilding, 1998, p. 7). Wajcman (2004, p. 63) suggests that the cyberfeminism of the 1990s should perhaps be understood as “a reaction to the pessimism of the 1980s feminist approaches that stressed the inherently masculine nature of technoscience” (Wajcman, 2004, p. 63). The possibility for a

²⁷ This collapse of nature and machines offers a counterpoint to traditional ‘Western’ ontology that is predicated upon nature/culture being what Haraway refers to as a border war.

feminist media and technology epistemology also explains the energy with which “The Cyborg Manifesto” was welcomed. Instead of understanding Haraway’s Manifesto as emerging from a vacuum, it is more productive to see it as a point along a continuum of feminist engagement with emerging technologies and critiques of technoculture. While the narrative of feminist new media studies has insisted that, since Haraway, reading gender has shifted, it is productive to locate the actual shift precipitated by Haraway in her insistence that feminism and technology can not only coexist but also offer productive possibilities in their intersection.

Haraway offers up the cyborg as a fictional and experiential figure through which feminists can and must form a political subject position in the highly technologized world of late capitalism. Haraway’s major moves were to resist a totalizing theory (specifically a technological determinism that sees women aligned with nature and technology as inherently oppressive), focusing instead on the social relations of science and technology and to offer a figure through which to explore what it means to be embodied in a high-tech society (p. 173). She unpacks the machine/human, nature/culture binaries and explicitly resists the essentializing categories of ‘woman’ and ‘women’s experience’ outlined by Catherine MacKinnon’s school of radical feminism (Haraway, 1991). Haraway resists the position in ecofeminism that insists on privileging the organic, natural body that is equated with a natural femininity and acknowledges that contemporary communication technologies and microelectronics emerged from the “Cold War military-industrial-university complex” (Denbar-Hester, 2010, section 18). However, much like current scholars of feminist new media who continue to chart a path between utopian and dystopian approaches to technology and media (Barnett, 2014), Haraway urges the need to embrace the possibilities as well as the negative aspects built into these apparatuses. She boldly suggests that they can and should be used by women. While she places her cyborg myth

alongside “postmodernist strategies” (1991, p. 152), she argues that, far from empty dematerialized ‘textualization’ – a critique often launched at postmodern theory – the cyborg allows us to negotiate a different ontology. This ontology centres largely on the body, which is a primary site of cyberfeminist and feminist new media inquiry (Balsamo, 1996; Cardenas, 2015; Hayles, 1999; Fiani, 2015). The shift that occurred after *Cyberfeminism 2.0* reinvigorated attention to the digital body as a material and symbolic site (Barnett, 2014; Gajjala & Oh, 2012).

Insisting on attending to technologies in their intersections and extensions of the lived body (rather than on the utopian erasure of the body), the work of Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles (1999) provided the language with which to return embodiment to discussions of (gendered) digital subjectivity. This thread of embodiment is central to the work of contemporary intersectional feminist theorists of digital culture that take as their research object women’s embodied experiences of gender, race, class, sexuality and ability (Bui, 2015; Cardenas, 2015; Matrix, 2006; Springer, 1996). While they lacked an intersectional approach, the VNS Matrix collective, a self-described post-human insurrection, “an alliance of women and machines” (Bassett, 1997), was a significant force in the cyberfeminism movement. Their work encompassed many of the themes that art and theory in the 1980s and 1990s explored in more nuanced ways than they are often credited for, such as the stereotypical imagery of women in technoculture, the appropriation of technoculture language and space, and the possible pleasures of the text (Flynn, 1994). The aesthetic of “All New Gen” (Flynn, 1994) was achieved through design software and programs such as QuickTime.²⁸ The aesthetics of the VNS Matrix are significant from a feminist new media perspective because they are taken up in the praxis of many intersectional scholars in the field today (Bui, 2015; Cardenas, 2015).

²⁸ “Gen” stands for gender; the All New Gen Installation took the form of an arcade video game, and the heroine of the same name was on a mission to “terminate the moral code” (i.e. the militaristic, individualistic ethos of video game culture) (Flynn, 1994).

VNS Matrix pushed back against the future of cyberspace envisioned in William Gibson's (1998) short story "Burning Chrome" (1982) and popularized in his novel *Neuromancer*²⁹ (1984), in which keyboard cowboys "jack in" and the body is nothing but "meat" (6). VNS Matrix released *A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* in 1991, which was created for the Internet, reposted to websites, and distributed via 'traditional' means, such as television, posters, radio, and magazines. In 1993, the collective, cited by cyberfeminist scholars throughout the 1990s (Barnett, 2014), debuted their computer game/installation "All New Gen" at the Experimental Art Foundation Gallery in Adelaide, Eastern Cape, South Africa. When visitors to the gallery interacted with the installation, they were asked to choose a gender: male, female, or neither. 'Neither' was the correct option. These playful tactics of appropriation reflect the beginning of a school of cyberfeminism which was characterized by "activism-oriented and social conscious [sic] internet art" (Barnett, 2014, section 8). Historicizing cyberfeminism is important because feminist new media scholars and artists such as Juhasz, for whom feminist new media praxis is "the making and theorizing of media towards stated projects of world and self-changing" (Juhasz, 2014), continue to extend and respond to the concept today. This work can be a vital prong of feminist and/or queer political action (Fotopoulou & Riordan, 2014) and therefore must not be lost in reductionist narratives of past cyberfeminisms. In fact, VNS Matrix shares much in common with feminist media in game studies since the early 2000s (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000; Consalvo, 2007; Kafai, Heeter, Denner. & Sun, 2008), although it should be critiqued for neglecting to address the ways in which multiple identity categories intersect with gender and technology: for example, the racio-visual logic of the interface (Chow-White & Nakamura, 2012; Nakamura, 2008) and the surveillance of racialized and maternal bodies under the biometric logic of late capitalism (Fixmer-Oraiz, 2014; Magnet, 2011).

²⁹ Gibson's *Neuromancer* is acknowledged as ushering in the genre of cyberpunk.

The current framework for understanding how cyberfeminism imagined futures for ‘digital women’ in technoculture, outside of Haraway, stems from the work of Sadie Plant, the 100 Anti-Theses, and VNS Matrix. Sadie Plant, an early advocate of cyberfeminism, is credited with coining the term in 1994 (Consalvo, 2002; Paasonen, 2011). Plant, who founded the Cyberculture Research Unit at the University of Warwick, argued that the system or logic of a computer was essentially female.³⁰ Plant was published widely, with her name becoming almost synonymous with the term cyberfeminism (Paasonen, 2011). Consequently, later criticisms of her work were extended to the cyberfeminist movement as a whole – namely, those of being depoliticized or techno-utopian – giving the false impression that these threads were not being picked up at the time (Paasonen, 2011:338). At the time that Plant was writing her work, “[she] was extensively critiqued by her fellow cyberfeminists” (Hawthorne & Klein, 1999; see also Paasonen, 2011, p. 338; Squires, 2000). This is important because today’s feminist new media scholars often critique cyberfeminism as a reductive moment. However, as Tully Barnett (2014) argued, the dismissal of cyberfeminism is likely based on how it is narrativized as a homogeneous theory.³¹ The works of such figures as Nancy Patterson, who was engaged in transgender politics, were not nearly as widely distributed or printed as Plant’s work, for example.³² Understanding the current literature through dialectics (Sawchuk et al., 2012) allows us to navigate these discourses that are still being used today and to embrace the productive elements of cyberfeminism (Barnett, 2014).

³⁰ Plant argued that both computers and women are non-linear, self-replicating systems concerned with building connections, and that the Internet should be a positive space for women to experiment with identity and new forms of work and play: a place to claim power and authority (Consalvo, 2003).

³¹ In “Monstrous Agents: Cyberfeminist Media and Activism”, Barnett stresses the importance of “developing a way of thinking both historically and immediately about the works” because of the rapidly changing theories that developed to examine swiftly changing technological developments (Barnett, 2014, section 3).

³² Ada Lovelace’s work continues to be discredited in our present moment by authors who question the authenticity of her notes and work (as well as Babbage’s, which credit her) with far more fervour than male scientists are subjected to.

Plant's (1997) *Zeros & Ones*, critiqued for its essentialist narrative (Paasonen, 2011), makes an important step in recovering the history of women in computing. She begins by chronicling the work of Ada Lovelace, designer of the world's first computer program, whose contributions to Charles Babbage's difference engine (later analytical engine) prefigure contemporary computer science (Alderman, 2014); Lovelace, like most women in computing, was largely written out of computing history (Consalvo, 2003; Essinger, 2013; Tool, 1998).³³ While her work failed to account for race and ability, and was essentialist in assuming that computer networks were essentially female (read: collaborative, non-linear), Plant's theories continue to inform cutting-edge art and activist works projects (see the Ada Project online).³⁴ As Barnett (2014) notes, while the cyberfeminist movement is often historicized as utopian, the critiques that are used to dismiss cyberfeminist movements were launched at the time by Wilding and others such as Plant, Braidotti (1992) and VNS Matrix (1991) (2014, section 2).

When the dot-com bubble burst in the late 1990s, the utopian discourses of feminist scholars and artists began to fade, as did the broader rhetoric around digital culture (Barnett, 2014; Friedman, 2005). This is partly why it is a mischaracterization to narrativize cyberfeminism as constituted by a monolithic group of scholars who uncritically embraced the notion that access to and mastery of technology was a route to empowerment. There were a significant number of feminist media scholars in the mid-1990s who took diverse positions with regard to the intersections of gender, feminism and new media. These thinkers are now referred to as the utopians (Danet, 1998; Haraway, 1991; Hawthorne & Klein, 1999; Plant, 1997), while those who are remembered as being leery of technology or anti-technology tend to be identified as technophobic (Springer, 1996). While feminists' work on new media and technology from the mid-1980s and 1990s is often discussed solely in terms of the technotopian/technophobic binary,

³⁴ See the Ada Project at <https://www.women.cs.cmu.edu/ada/>.

there were scholars (e.g., Blair & Takayoshi, 1999; Haraway, 1991) and artists (e.g., VNS Matrix) who resisted these extremes.

The utopian/dystopian binary and, less often, nuanced critiques that challenge that binary, continue to inform the framings of feminist new media literature. By dismissing cyberfeminism as a whole, we risk neglecting to attend to the ways in which “these texts continue to circulate along with their use of subversive and progressive possibilities of language and the opportunities for forging meaningful understandings through the appropriation and combination of digital signifiers” (Barnett, 2014). Situating current intersectional interventions (Gray, 2013; Nakamura, 2008) alongside this work on female digital subjectivities, gender, and cyberculture allows us to better understand the genealogy of the field in which we work, and to contextualize the method used by current scholars and activists in digital culture who are challenging the dominant neoliberal framework of Web 2.0 (Miller, 2005), such as *Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0*.³⁵ Members Carmin Karasic, a woman of colour, and Micha Cardenas, a trans-woman of colour, are self-identified ‘hacktivists’ who challenge the public perception of the young white, middle-class male hacker (Tanczer, 2015). The work of the hacktivists in the *Electronic Disturbance Theatre 2.0* (2015) represents an important (intersectional and international) shift in feminist new media studies since the millennium (Gajjala, 2011; Barnett, 2014). Their work reflects continuing negotiations of gender, feminisms and technology.

As has been discussed, the dominant frame for viewing feminist new media studies often begins with Haraway (1991), followed by a dismissal of cyberfeminism as a limited moment of overly utopian rhetoric, and fast-forwards to the present day (Barnett, 2014; Wajcman, 2004). However, scholars such as Judith/Jack Halberstam (1991) and Rosi Braidotti (1996) were

³⁵ Web 2.0 is a term used by industry and academics that describes the Web network “as a platform, spanning all connected devices” that includes an “architecture of participation” characterized by “rich user experiences”, rather than the single-page model of Web 1.0 (Miller, 2005).

negotiating the terrain between advocating outright rejection of new media and promoting an uncritical acceptance of it. In their work, we see the recognition that technology is a central aspect of the postmodern condition for everyone (Haraway, 1991), and that rather than ‘choosing a side’, we must enter into a negotiation with the various forms of new media. In “Automating Gender”, Halberstam (1991) argues:

Cultural critics in the computer age, those concerned with social configurations of class, race, and gender, can...no longer afford to position themselves for or against technology, for or against postmodernism. In order to not merely reproduce the traditional divide between humanist and mechanists, [we] must rather begin to theorize [our] position in relation to a plurality of technologies and from a place already within postmodernism (p. 441).

By 1991, Halberstam had already realized that feminists would have to engage with technology, which is significant because this fact is often lost in outright dismissals of cyberfeminism (Barnett, 2014). It was not only since *Cyberfeminism 2.0*, however, that feminists who engaged with new media attempted to chart this path.

The mid- to late 1990s did, however, produce an overwhelming amount of theory and experimentation that fetishized VR – and later the Internet – as sites of limitless potential for liberation and freedom from the oppressive constraints of the marked and gendered body (Wajcman, 2004). As we have discussed, there were feminists (even at that time) who feared uncritical acceptance of the Internet as a pro-feminist utopian space (Kramarae, 1998; Stabile, 1994). Scholars such as Susan Luckman and Anna Munster believed that the ‘empowering’ rhetoric of feminist media scholars was reductionist and led to an overly simplistic conflation of access to technology and political power. However, these views are not as widely associated with cyberfeminism, as the most vocal and widely published scholars of the time tended toward utopian frameworks or were at least read and taken up as such (Paasonen, 2011). Popular rhetoric of the mid- to late 1990s was also utopian. *Wired*, still a popular publication today, was

created by “ex-bohemians Louis Rosetto, Stuart Brand and Howard Rheingold [who] had embraced Silicon-Valley style capitalism as a force of positive social change, grafting 1960s-style utopian rhetoric onto their business coverage” (Friedman, 2005, p. 171). The publication exemplifies the ideological contradictions of academic and public discourses around gender and digital culture in the 1990s.

**The Possibilities and Limits of Participatory Culture: Interactivity, the Network Society
and the Digital Divide in the Age of Convergence**

“If you should think this is utopian, then I would ask you to consider why it is utopian” – *Theory of Radio*, Bertolt Brecht (quoted in Enzenberger)

The “cybertopian bible” *Wired* offers a touchstone for public discourse on technology, both reflecting and refracting the contradictions of feminist technology scholarship of the 1990s, which, whether ironic or utopian, tended to rely on similar investments in cyberspace as an alternative space where bodies are no longer marked by race, age or class, etc.³⁶ (Volkart, 2004, p. 103). While the notion of disembodied cyberspace has given way to recognition of the ubiquity of the Web and social media in online/offline cultures (see Hasinoff, 2014), the utopian/dystopian debate that reached its peak during the digital revolution informs current debates around gender, girlhood and digital culture. For example, the current scholarship and public rhetoric around girls’ and young women’s use of the Internet and social networking sites (SNS) often take the form of a utopian/dystopian model. As danah boyd argues, more often than not, what emerges from fears and hopes about young people’s use of digital technologies “takes the form of utopian and dystopian rhetoric” (boyd, 2014, p. 15), discourses based on

³⁶ *Wired* was created by the left-wing “appropriate technology” movement and founders of *Whole Earth Review*.

technological determinism (Marx, 2010) which are unhelpful when trying to understand what actually happens when technologies are broadly adopted (boyd, 2014, p. 16).

These contradictions are also ongoing within current feminist new media debates around the efficacy of participation within the context of media convergence³⁷ and the network society.³⁸ Critical feminist interventions in new media are highlighting the need to attend to multiple axes of power and identity within mainstream new media theories of participation, interactivity, access, the digital divide, and networked media. These current, and often intersectional, approaches to new media extend earlier feminist theory on gendered user cultures of ICTs, digital media (Patterson, 1992; Springer, 1996; Squires, 2000) and “the social hierarchies and divisions involved in their production and ubiquitous presence” (Paasonen, 2011, p. 340). Current intersectional approaches also build on the legacy of art production, activist, and *artist* (Sandoval, 2011) engagement undertaken by early cyberfeminisms (Barnett, 2014).

Mainstream/malestream new media scholars such as Jenkins (2006, p. 3) urge us to “worship at the altar of convergence”, unabashedly declaring that “every important story gets told” in our age of media convergence. While Jenkins’ approach to participatory culture rightly affords consumers/users agency in their negotiations with the text, it fails to properly address the conditions which shape new media interfaces. That is, Jenkins’ framework neglects to account for the individuals who interact with these texts and identity factors such as race, age and gender that impact the type and quality of participation possible, if at all.³⁹ That the content produced through convergence often continues to render people of colour as objects rather than subjects of

³⁷ Jenkins defines convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences” (2006, p. 2).

³⁸ In this chapter, I am referring to the network society as defined by Manuel Castells. For Castells, the network society refers to more than social networks; it refers to “social networks which process and manage information and are using micro-electronic based technologies” (Castells quoted in Kiesler, 2008).

³⁹ This is particularly true in Jenkins and Castells’ studies of gender and computer games and gamer girl culture.

digital culture (Nakamura, 2008, 2002; Magnet, 2011), for example, is left unaccounted for. In other words, as Marina Levina (2014) argues:

Feminist new media studies have always been concerned with materiality. We need to continue this conversation in the experimental domain of new media, especially as a boundary between the virtual and the actual deployment of bodies, identities and communities. In other words, feminist new media studies have to consider the materiality of participation as a moral and ethical enterprise of citizenship (2014, p. 278-279).

Feminist new media studies now, thankfully, works largely from the understanding that, similar to the ‘real’ environment we move through, participation virtual environments is an embodied experience in a material culture that is structured by power and inequality (Nakamura, 2011).

An important task for feminist new media studies lies in extending feminist media studies’ continuing engagement with materiality into the domain of new media and digital technologies (Levina, 2014). In “Methodology of the Oppressed”, Chela Sandoval discusses the ways in which Fourth World citizens negotiate their object-ness in digital culture toward creating subject positions (Nakamura, 2008, p. 475). Moving beyond basic questions of access already complicated by many scholars (Weber et al., 2007) allows us to address the lopsidedness of who has access to the digital culture (Nakamura, 2008). Another key intervention in traditional new media scholarship revolves around the digital divide debate (Eubanks, 2011; Jones, 2003).

Virginia Eubanks, who changed her theoretical position after twenty years of scholarly work on the digital divide, is a key figure in feminist new media studies. Following the evolution of her work, we are able to trace the move from conceptualizing the digital divide as a monolith (those with access to the Internet versus those without) to a more nuanced examination of the uneven effects of technology attentive to “how inequalities can be reproduced and even magnified by the deployment of new technologies” (Hasinoff, 2014, p. 270). This fits well within the broader project of intersectional feminism because, as Lorde (1987, p. 138) argues, “There is

no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives.” As an academic oriented toward social justice and activist practice located in California during the dot-com boom, Lorde (1987) recalls how she was taken in by the false utopian belief that simply widening access to technology would lead to the increased empowerment of marginalized individuals and groups – a belief, she notes, that was shored up by popular rhetoric in publications such as *Wired* (and, earlier, *Mondo*).

As Eubanks (2011) notes in *Digital Dead End* (2011), her fieldwork with women at the YWCA Troy-Cohoes revealed different realities of the digital divide that diverged from decades of scholarship on access (such as that of Bimber, 2000). Reading Eubanks alongside Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White, who also extend the notion of the “digital divide”, complicates simplistic notions of the digital divide (Light, 2009), providing a map that suggests directions for future study. Feminist new media scholars are now more interested in nuanced issues of “the complex interplay of inequalities of access” (Mitchell & Sokoya, 2007) pertaining to the gender gap (e.g., hardcore/‘soft’ sites, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexual, asexual [LGBTQQ2IA], play and social spaces) (Gray, 2013). Women globally are increasingly using the Internet for a variety of applications and reasons, including leisure (see Gajjala et al., 2012). We must not forget that there are many ways in which the network society (Negroponte, 1996) and the Internet could have developed. One alternative is open source. Ted Friedman gives the example of Linux software, developed collaboratively and copyright free (Friedman, 2005). He looks at the debate between those interested in using Linux as a new economic model for intellectual property, etc., and those who wish to incorporate it. This example is worth mentioning as it denaturalizes the current understanding of the corporatized Internet, thereby giving credence to the voices of Eubanks’ participants who

expressed that, contrary to much digital divide scholarship, women are *not* afraid of computers, and design affordances would do a great deal to make technology relevant and useful within the lives of marginalized populations (Eubanks, 2011).

Women in the Global South engage in complex uses of digital technologies, including, for example, leisure, access to the global economy, and political organizing (Arora & Rangaswamy, 2013; Gray, 2013). However, there remains an implicit binary in development research that is also present in much contemporary feminist scholarship on ICTs: that of Woman and Other Woman (Gajjala, 2014). Gajjala (2014) illustrates this phenomenon through the example of the woman entrepreneur. When Western women sell their work on Etsy.com, they are often represented as independent agents in stark contrast to the subaltern business-minded woman who enters global ecommerce through portals such as Novica.com. Here, the woman in the Global South is “staged as exotic through microfinance portals” (p. 289). Both parties, then, embody “the irony and double-bind of access”, as the very point of entry also becomes a site of their marginalization (289).

Literature Review

Part Two

Regulating Girls: Approaches to Girls' Digital Culture and Content Production in the Context of Cyberviolence⁴⁰

I think it important instead of telling kids to 'stay off the Internet', threatening or scaring them, maybe use a different approach. Instead, teach children about how to be safe on the Internet, how to use it wisely and how to make a positive difference on the Internet. – Tanya, 15

Look at Tumblr. So many smart people are on Tumblr and if you put some sort of feminism issue or anything on Tumblr you get so many, like, responses that are congruent with the issue at hand and then if you put it on any other platform it gets disregarded very easily but those are the people that should be hearing it so it's like don't give up on Facebook we're all using it we all see it even if we don't want to let you know that we see it we see it. – Sabrina, 18

In Part Two of this literature review, I examine some of the major gaps in the existing research on cyberbullying, putting this literature into conversation with girls' digital culture studies. The work being done on girls' digital culture demonstrates that including girls as respected agents in the research process will get us closer to nuanced and contextualized understandings of gendered cyberviolence. I argue that it is crucial that we reframe the very terms of the debate about cyberbullying and that gendered cyberbullying should be anchored within analyses of gender, race, class, youth, and the contradictions surrounding femininity. This productive reframing of the issue of gendered cyberviolence should also contribute to the ongoing effort to tackle the preoccupations with girl-on-girl violence that have emerged since the 1990s (Jiwani, 1999; Ringrose, 2008). Through a critical feminist lens, I demonstrate that there are two major gaps in existing cyberviolence research. Too often cyberbullying literature excludes girls' voices, which have much to teach us about contemporary constructions of

⁴⁰ A version of this section appears in *Jeunesse: Young People, Cultures, Texts*, Vol. 8, No. 2.

girlhood. It also lacks analyses of how identity markers such as class, race and age impact girls' experiences of the phenomenon. I review these gaps in the (relatively new) field of cyberviolence studies, putting it into conversation with feminist new media studies on girls' digital culture. Bringing these largely separate bodies of literature together offers a way to attend to the impact of cyberbullying as it intersects with multiple axes of identity. Furthering this theoretical dialogue is important because it provides the necessary context for understanding how participants conceptualized CV.

Contemporary debates about cyberbullying and its gendered dimension both reflect and refract earlier debates around bullying and gender difference. Moreover, it is instructive to place current debates, discourses and policy initiatives centering on cyberbullying in historical context. The anxiety around and management of girls and women's participation in public space and popular culture – specifically the use of emerging technologies – is nothing new. In fact, since the late nineteenth century, the regulation of girls and women in visual culture has been a structuring principle of socio-legal responses to the development of mass media. In *The Whiteness of Privacy: Race, Media, Law* (2009), Eden Osucha notes that the article, “The Right to Privacy” (1890), published in *The Harvard Law Review*, was predicated heavily on the figure of the violated object of the technologized gaze (2009, p. 70). This text is regarded as the first implicit declaration of a right to privacy in the United States. Moreover, as Osucha and other cultural historians of privacy (e.g., Lake, 2016) argue, Warren and Brandeis, who wrote the text, call on “the latent potential of injury to illustrate the general hazards of media reproduction for female subjects” (Osucha, 2009, p. 70). Furthermore, the wounded female idealized in the text as the symbol of the private domestic realm is constructed through race and class codes. Osucha argues that this early text, taken together with legal case examples such as *Roberson v. Rochester*

Folding Company (1902), points to race, class and gender logics underpinning the earliest responses to photography and mass media.⁴¹ The legacy of mobilizing of white femininity in the nineteenth-century debates over privacy and women in visual culture is clearly seen in discourses around cyberbullying that often result in the constraining and regulating of girls and their online content production. Early regulations that formed around photography and its mass reproduction called upon problematic configurations of the white female as a vulnerable and victimized subject. Keeping this history in mind offers context for the protectionist discourses that currently structure the mainstream dialogue and news coverage of girls' use of social media.

In the 1950s, Konrad Lorenz produced one of the earliest instances of bullying research and coined the term “mobbing” after his lifetime of animal observation (Kuykendall, 2012). Lorenz's early interests emerged from a preoccupation with avian behaviour, as well as from his experiences with Nazi Germany. As a prisoner of war, Lorenz “developed the concept of mobbing after watching a gaggle of geese attack a fox” (Kuykendall, 2012, p. 10). Researchers began to use the term mobbing rather than bullying to get away from its associations with Nazi Germany. Per the *Oxford Dictionary*, the word bullying originates from the mid-sixteenth century, “probably from Middle Dutch *boele*”, meaning lover (Kuykendall, 2012). One popular theory of the meaning of *boele* in vernacular culture holds that the word was used to refer to a pimp's protection and, invariably, the abuse of sex workers. As Kuykendall notes, “thus the term eventually developed from a positive meaning to a derogatory meaning, referring nowadays to a person who abused people who are weaker or unable to protect themselves” (Kuykendall, 13).

⁴¹ *Roberson vs. Rochester* (1902) involved a young white woman whose picture was sold by a photographer to a flour company and used without her consent to market prepackaged flour mix. The decision in the case resulted in a large public outcry. This instance is one of many. For example, in 1890, actress-singer Marion Manola went to a court in New York to confront the issue of photographs taken by the theatre manager without her consent (Lake, 2016).

As early as the 1960s, laboratory experiments on bullying sought to account for differences in how aggressive behaviour develops in men and women (Kuykendall, 2012, p. 11).

Bullying behaviour is recognized as a subset of aggression. Dan Olweus defined it as a “specific type of aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause harm, through repeated actions carried out over time, targeted at an individual who is not able to defend him/herself” (Olweus quoted in Langos, 2012, p. 285). Because this has been the official definition in scholarship on bullying since the early 1970s, many scholars who study cyberbullying use it. In doing so, they assume that the definition of and approach to traditional bullying can form the starting point for interrogating bullying that happens in online spaces. This notion is beginning to be challenged. While there is still no universal definition for cyberbullying (Arntfield, 2015), one widely accepted fact is that it takes place along a continuum of bullying behaviour alongside behaviours that may better be described as peer victimization, harassment or bias-based discrimination (Levi, Cortesi, Gasser, Crowley, Beaton, & Nolan, 2012). One commonly cited definition of cyberbullying in the extant literature is: “the intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices” (Chisholm, 2006, p. 78). As attention to cyberbullying in popular and scholarly discourse grows, much of it examining girls as victims, it is increasingly important to study the framing of girls and girlhood in cyberbullying narratives, academic and otherwise. Moreover, emerging literature in girls’ digital culture studies is attending to the gendered dynamic of the power differential inherent in mainstream definitions of bullying. This is a fundamental step, as it is important to attend to gender as a dimension of power that informs cyberviolence between young people and adults, a fact that gender-neutral approaches leave out (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Bailey, 2014, 2015; Dobson, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2014; García-Gómez, 2011; Ringrose & Barajas, 2011; Ringrose & Renold, 2016).

Girlhood, Digital Culture and Cyberbullying

In 1976, when Angela McRobbie demonstrated that *Jackie* (a UK teen magazine) was an object worthy of scholarly inquiry, she established girl culture as a site in need of exploration. Before then, studies on youth subculture focused exclusively on the perceptions of working-class boys and men; McRobbie and Garber's ground-breaking essay "*Girls and Subcultures*" (1976) established the spaces of working-class girls' culture as an important site of inquiry. Following McRobbie's theory of girls' bedroom culture, many scholars approached this domestic space as a unique and important site of gossip, friendship, and entertainment. More recently, bedroom culture has extended to digital spaces of sociality, such as Facebook (Harris, 2012; Livingstone, 2008; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2013). A significant number of contemporary girlhood scholars have widened these inquiries to look at how girls make sense of media and information communication technologies (ICTs) in their daily lives (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Dobson, 2015). As Kelly Boudreau notes, three scholarly themes have emerged around girls' digital culture: the Internet as a space for testing identity and self-expression (Gross, 2005); the Internet as an alternative space for girls to form social circles (boyd, 2014; Simmons, 2011); and technology, broadly, as a tool of empowerment (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2012; Shade, 2007). A growing body of scholarship now addresses the nuanced ways in which girls and young women create and produce media content (Kearney, 2011; Mazzarella, 2010). For example, in their examinations of graffiti communities and girls' vlogging practices on YouTube, Light et al., (2011) suggest that the popular video-sharing sites operate for some as a space in which they can engage with like-minded individuals to collaborate in creating forms of vernacular culture.

With the growing emphasis on girls' supposed "meanness", often reproduced in psychological research on cyberbullying, it is instructive to consider the history of moral panics

around girlhood, or what Catherine Driscoll calls “girls today” (2008, p. 13). “Girls today” articulates a history of “modern girlhood entwined with anxieties about cultural norms and cultural change” that reflects a set of recurring tensions in popular and scholarly discourses around the category of girl and the construction of girlhood (p. 13). As Driscoll notes, girl culture “is as contained and productive, as predictable and contingent, as the category of ‘girl’ itself” (p. 28). A dominant thread in the mainstream news media around young people’s digital culture is that there is something wrong with “kids today”. Kids are accused of not being able to communicate face to face, preferring instead to hide behind a screen, yet empirical evidence from studies conducted with girls on digital culture suggests that many girls move fluidly between online and offline platforms (Boudreau, 2007). Girls often communicate with their friends on websites while in the same room with them, or while texting friends across the globe (2007). Some argue that, rather than lacking social skills, the digital youth of today may be “redefining the very nature of sociality” (Dixon, 2011, p. 3). The merits of young people’s digital practices aside, girls’ social communication, temporally and spatially, extends far beyond the end of the school day, with daily conversations often continuing in digital spaces (Boudreau, 2007, p. 68).

Digital space is now more commonly recognized as a public sphere (Habermas et al., 1974), a site for leisure, commerce, and sociality, as well as political and civic participation (Saco, 2002). The exclusion of girls from online spaces perpetuates the marginalizing and silencing of girls in public space. Further, addressing cyberbullying as it is experienced and lived in situated contexts by girls may move us closer to facilitating the creation of safer space(s) for girls’ voices and politics, and for their increased participation as full and ideally equal digital citizens (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Milford, 2015). When we parse out these dominant discourses

around girls and cyberbullying, however, we must be careful, for they can sometimes lead to further restriction of girls' participation in these important social spaces. For example, risk discourses often portray the Internet as a space full of predators (Beck, 2014; P. Todd, 2014). Similarly, representations of digital technologies often reiterate the notion that they are corrupting children (Giroux & Pollock, 2010; P. Todd, 2014). Both points of view construct the Internet as a dangerous place for vulnerable (read: victimized) girls (Livingstone, 2008; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Shade, 2007). When educators and policymakers inadvertently, and likely with good intentions, set the stakes of engaging in digital culture too high, some of the participants I worked with in video workshops and focus groups told me that it could scare them into going offline. Much like old discourses around un/safe city spaces (Nord, 1995, p. 117), these polarizing conceptions of risk versus empowerment can be devoid of nuance or complexity and mirror familiar moral panic frameworks that construct (and help maintain) public space as a dangerous place for girls and young women. These narratives that discourage young women's participation in and use of digital space build on older discourses that once circulated around girls and the city.

Over the past few years, mainstream news media representations of adolescent girls' use of technology have fallen into two distinct categories: 1) girls are in constant danger from online predators, and 2) girls are dangerous "loose cannons" when it comes to technology. For example, since 2014 *The Globe and Mail*, *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* have all run multiple stories warning of the dangers of sexting⁴² and apps used by young people that often trade on girls as variously at risk or risky. This binary between existing as dangerous and in danger is, of course, not new; it has been mobilized in discourses around girls' (and women's)

⁴² In "Sexting as Media Production", Amy Hasinoff defines "sexting" as "the practice of sending sexually explicit images or text through mobile phones or via Internet applications" (2013, p. 449).

violence since at least the nineteenth century (Kilty & Frigon, 2006; 2016; Gelsthorpe & Worrall, 2009; Hudson, 1989). Rather than portraying girls as helpless victims, it is more instructive to follow the lead of scholars of girls' digital culture who value girls' voices and approach them as "users and producers of innovative online content" (Shade, 2007, p. 240). As we know, digital spaces offer positive possibilities for girls, such as engaging in educational activities (Steeves, 2014), play (Grimes, 2003), self-expression (Doster, 2013), and activism. A significant body of literature within digital girl culture studies challenges the negative connotations and moral panic that circulate within dominant mass media narratives of young people and digital technologies. Scholars working in this area are recuperating social networking sites rather than ridiculing them as spaces in which girls are "doing vain things online" (Abidin, 2016, p. 1), such as posting selfies.

As Dobson notes, while several scholars are now taking girls' content production seriously, research is still needed to nuance the binary discourses around girls' digital culture and ICT use. As scholars have demonstrated (Shade, 2007), it is important to move beyond the risk/empowerment binary to understand how girls negotiate gender and aggression through experiences both on- and offline. Instead of dismissing ICTs, it is crucial to explore how girls use social networking sites (SNS) and games spaces. Emergent technologies – for instance, young women's use of telephones (Marvin, 1998; Shade, 2007), bicycles (Bailey et al., 2013), and even books (Bilston, 2008) – have historically been thought to corrupt girls and women. These discourses are rooted in fears around female sexuality, shifting courtship rituals, and female autonomy. In her book, *Sexting Panic: Rethinking Criminalization, Privacy and Consent*, Amy Hasinoff suggests that we recognize girls as content producers, a move that effectively decouples consensual "sexting" from moral panic discourses.

Many girls are content producers; in fact, girls make up the largest demographic of people creating online media content (Hasinoff, 2013). Like Hasinoff, Dobson (2015) argues we should take girls' production of political and creative media seriously. She focuses on practices that continue to be framed as problematic and under-theorized in studies of girls' digital culture, particularly the "selfie", sexualized profiles on SNS, and sexting. Her research offers a valuable model through which to explore the opportunities (as well as risks) in girls' use of and participation in SNS, game spaces, and the vlog/blogsphere.⁴³ It is also important to acknowledge that the activities of girls and young women (including sexting) are taking place in largely corporatized spaces (Bailey & Steeves, 2015) that are highly gendered, classed, and racialized and, as such, reflect offline power imbalances (Nakamura, 2008). Approaching gendered and "sexualized online bullying" through a lens of equality rather than criminalization that pathologizes girls' behaviour clears a space for attending to the structural inequalities that inform gendered cyberbullying (Bailey et al., 2013, p. 709).

One of the major binary oppositions that plays out in the current debate over cyberbullying is the notion that when they are online, young people, and particularly girls, are either passive and vulnerable or actively engaged in risky behaviour (Asquith et al., 2011). Besides scholars and public figures, girls and young women often insist on accounting for online space as "real" space.⁴⁴ One sixteen-year-old participant told me, "I think that the Internet is only just another aspect of the real world, websites are similar to real places – like something written

⁴³ A vlog is a blog in which video streaming is the primary mode of transmitting information. There are many different genres of vlogs (also referred to as video blogs) such as video diary, educational and interactive vlogs. A webcam and basic editing is all that is required to produce a vlog (Burgess & Green, 2013). Vlog culture is closely linked with the widespread 'confessional culture' which is a genre of youth-made videos in which young people reveal secrets or document their experiences through confessional videos. We know that the video sharing platform YouTube is the most popular website among young Canadians (Steeves, 2014).

⁴⁴ For example, investigative journalist Paula Todd recently turned her attention to cyberabuse, including cyberbullying, trolling, harassing, cyberbullying, and extortion. Her book *Extreme Mean* (2014) examines several prominent cases to question, among many other issues, how these experiences impact victims' offline lives.

anonymously in a bathroom stall in school – we have to look at it as part of the real world [even though] you can be anonymous.” (Laurel, 16) There are far-reaching benefits to listening to the nuanced ways in which girls describe their negotiation of “girl” through on- and offline encounters with aggression, and many teens report suspecting that their peers say certain things in Internet spaces that they may not say in “real space” (Subrahmanym et al., 2004). By incorporating girls’ voices in research and policy discussions we begin to correct a harmful trend of patronizing and silencing girls and young women.

Media production offers an excellent instance of girls negotiating complex identities in digital culture. The YouTube vlogger Franchesca, for example, produces a large volume of video addressing popular culture from an anti-racist and social justice perspective, which she posts on her channel Chescaleigh. Social media has taken over where malls and coffee shops left off as the dominant site of teenage social interaction for many young people in the Global North and increasingly in the Global South. Moreover, young people are not forming their relationships with digital culture in school settings, as was the case in the 1980s and into the 1990s. Rather, young people are negotiating their interactions with digital media largely in the realm of popular culture (Buckingham, 2007). We would do well to place girls’ negotiations of online social spaces within the broader context of girl culture studies. In bringing cyberbullying literature into dialogue with girls’ digital culture studies, we can move beyond myths and moral panic, unhelpful discourses that continue to structure not only the terms of debate around girls’ use of new media and recurring themes in academic “risk” literature (e.g., Baldry et al., 2015) but also new media discourse around youth and digital technologies (boyd, 2014; Shade, 2007; Simmons, 2011). This turn toward girl-centred theories of cyberbullying enables an understanding of girls

as agents helping to construct meanings of contemporary girlhood (Driscoll, 2008; Hasinoff, 2015).

Young people's online communication often flows seamlessly with their offline lives (Ogersby, 2004). In a 2010 Pew survey, 93 percent of the 800 adolescents surveyed reported using ICTs in their daily interactions (Lenhart et al., 2015). A more recent national survey of Canadian secondary students found that by grade four, students often sleep with their phone under their pillow so as not to miss text messages (Steeves, 2015). Communication and information sharing via ICTs is thought to be particularly popular among young people because it offers a sense of privacy (Chun & Friedland, 2015; Gross, 2006), thereby providing a venue separate from adults that allows for greater sharing and personal expression than face-to-face interaction (Chisholm 77; Gross, 2006). This may also suggest why girls engage in (or at least self-report) greater usage regarding SNS and applications than boys do (Chisholm, 2006). Adolescence is recognized as a time when girls begin to "struggle with [a] loss of voice, gender socialization and relational authenticity" (McClung, 2006, p. 141), which we now understand is rooted in patriarchal socialization rather than any essential feminine quality (Gilligan, 1983; Ringrose, 2008). Moreover, we can trace a significant development in literature on digital girls' culture from 2000 to the present: a growing number of scholars such as Claudia Mitchell and Amy Shields Dobson are invested in girls' voices and accounts of their lived experiences. In bringing cyberbullying literature into conversation with this body of work, it becomes clear that cyberbullying studies need more grounding in feminist and participatory approaches that give voice to young people. How experiences of cyberbullying intersect with racialization and sexuality, or social constructions of girlhood and girls' aggression, is still largely absent from studies of both girls' digital culture and cyberbullying. With the exception of work from a

handful of scholars (Ringrose, 2008; Ringrose & Renold, 2012; Bailey & Steeves, 2015), intersectional and/or participatory research is missing from the extant cyberbullying literature.

Youth digital culture has often been studied in isolation as “virtual reality” or as a subculture (Bennett, 1999; Hall & Jefferson, 2006), but recent scholarship is broadening the approaches we can use to study youth digital cultures. We are beginning to understand that the line between the offline and online experiences of young people is either blurred or disappearing entirely in our increasingly digitized world (Shariff, 2014, p. 58). This lack of distinction between online and offline life was referenced by many young people with whom I spoke during my field research. For example, girls explained to us that they do not think of conversations and activities in which they engage as occurring either offline or online. This finding suggests that it may be productive to resist the online/offline dichotomy as a significant site of inquiry with youth participants. For example, Sarah Banet-Weiser’s work on girls’ self-representation on YouTube, Mary Celeste Kearney’s research on girls’ evolving media cultures, Amy Shields Dobson’s recovery of girls’ content creation, and Sharon Mazzarella’s attention to girls’ use of online platforms all model methodologies that enable better understandings of the production contexts of girls’ everyday situated media, as well as the multiple meanings these texts produce.

The 2007 Pew report *Cyberbullying and Online Teens* found that approximately one third of the 935 teenagers aged 12 to 17 surveyed reported being targets of harassing or upsetting behaviour online. Girls reported more instances of being targeted than boys, with girls aged 15 to 17 accounting for the most overall. The more active a participant is online, especially via SNS, the more likely it is that he or she will be a target of cyberbullying (Lenhart et al., 2010). This is worth examining further because it is overwhelmingly in SNS and gaming sites that privileged

and marginalized teens in the Global North now go to interact (see boyd, *It's Complicated*, 2014).

Films such as *Cyberbully* (2011), *Men, Women and Children* (2014), and *Unfriended* (2014) suggest the importance of viewing cyberbullying as a social phenomenon, that is, as something experienced within a broad digital culture rather than by a few “deviant” individuals. The relationship between girls and relational bullying⁴⁵ is well documented (Crick & Nelson, 2002; Olweus, 1994; Simmons, 2011). When girls act aggressively, it has been shown that they often do so indirectly (Simmons, 2011). Ringrose critiques the trend in the psychological and education literature on bullying (Bjorkqvist, 1994; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Jackson et al., 2010) that pathologizes girls’ bullying behaviours and essentializes relational aggression as a feminine mode of bullying, which is typically measured against the normative forms demonstrated by boys (Li, 2006). Exploring cyberbullying as a social phenomenon helps facilitate the move away from programming built around punishing individual ‘bad apple’ bullies – as is the case in many anti-bullying programs.⁴⁶ Many of these programs institute zero-tolerance policies that do not address the root causes of bullying behaviour. Not surprisingly, many of them prove to be ineffective (Rivers & Duncan, 2013).

Since 2013, researchers seem to have arrived at a consensus that targets of cyberbullying are disproportionately adolescent girls and young women (Slonje et al., 2008, p. 28; Tokunaga, 2010). A recent Canadian Senate standing committee report on cyberbullying (2012) found that belonging to or being aligned with a marginalized identity group such as LGBTQQ2IA also increases the risk of being a target (Kowalski et al., 2012; Raskauskas & Stolz, 2007; Bailey & Steeves, 2015). Studies are also beginning to show that, contrary to the belief that cyberbullying

⁴⁵ Relational aggression is indirect and includes behaviours such as spreading rumours, as well as excluding and ostracizing an individual (Chisholm, 2006, p. 79; Simmons, 2011).

⁴⁶ For a review of anti-bullying programs, see Galloway and Roland (2004).

only impacts middle-class and affluent young people, poor and working-class youth may experience increased instances of online bullying (Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012). These findings are paving the way for girlhood scholars to move beyond mass media stereotypes and reductionist, developmental discourses. Studying cyberbullying through an intersectional lens allows us to understand this phenomenon by exploring what Lyn Mikel Brown calls “new versions of girlhood connected to social and cultural context, history, and the material condition of girls’ lives” (Brown, 2003, p. 14). How do girls marked by class, race, and sexual orientation navigate misogyny, femininity, and ‘doing girl’ in digital culture?

“Teen Drama” or Cybermisogyny? Missing Voices in Cyberbullying Literature and Policy

A central theme that emerges in qualitative studies of cyberbullying is the communication breakdown between adults and youth when attempting to develop strategies to combat cyberbullying. The communication barrier between youth and adults is caused in part by the generation gap and is exacerbated by a notable absence of girls’ voices in scholarly (Bailey & Steeves, 2015) and policy discourses (e.g., Bill C-13)⁴⁷ on cyberbullying. For example, young people told me that a common solution offered by adults to combat cyberbullying is to “unplug” or shut down their online accounts. Generational differences and insufficient immersion in youth culture often blinds adult researchers and front-line workers to the fact that “unplugging” is not an option for youth whose social lives blur the boundary between on- and offline (Wilson & Atkinson, 2005). The communication breakdown between adults and youth (Weber & Dixon, 2007) is often due to exceptionalism based on the concept of what sociologist Marc Prensky termed the “digital native” (2001).⁴⁸ This notion informs not only mass media discourse around

⁴⁷ See Bailey (2013) for a detailed analysis of the ways in which criminalizing cyberbullying through laws such as Bill C-13 and gender-blind policy is not a productive solution.

⁴⁸ For reasons related to Indigenous politics, I do not advocate using this term. I use it here as it forms a key (and problematic) part of the history of digital culture studies.

cyberbullying but also much of the academic literature on the role of digital culture in young people's lives (Weber & Dixon, 2007). The notion of the "digital native" borrows from earlier depictions of the "nerdy whiz kid" who is thought to have an innate facility for digital tools.⁴⁹ Unhelpful stereotypes that construct youth as innately skilled with technology reinforce the notion that ICTs are 'toys for boys' and devalue the potential of digital literacy curricula.

Digital native exceptionalism fuels the binary opposition that constructs girls and young women as being either in danger or precocious dangerous agents. In other words, ICTs are portrayed as vehicles that offer youth spaces where adults cannot follow or which they cannot understand (Shade, 2007; P. Todd, 2014), or as spaces where youth have the power to manipulate and control others (Simmons, 2011). Just like the representation of girls as either "at risk" or "risky", this discourse follows technological determinist frameworks (Marx, 2010) that overemphasize the objects of digital culture, thus fuelling the knowledge gap between the myths and realities of girls' digital citizenship.⁵⁰ This knowledge gap is further compounded by the social norms and complexities that attend research on girls (Driscoll, 2008). With the exception of a handful of scholars (Bailey et al, 2013; boyd, 2014; Ringrose, 2008; Ringrose & Renold, 2012), many studies focus on how to "manage" young people rather than considering how young people utilize these technologies, what design features they identify as problematic, and how they define the terms of the issues that directly impact them in everyday life. As García-Gómez contends, "examining the persistent gender-blindness in bullying draws a mixed picture

⁴⁹ The whiz kid in the film *Galaxy Quest* (1999) is a satirical rendering of this stereotype famously embodied in the character Wesley Crusher on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994). The fact that this stereotype normalizes young, white, adolescent males as technologically precocious further demonstrates the gendered and racialized nature of adult perceptions of young people's digital culture (Nakamura, 2008).

⁵⁰ Technological determinism, described by danah boyd (2014) as "magical thinking", is the process whereby causal-historical narratives are created through the concept of technology as initiating and activating social changes (see Marx, 2010 for a full discussion).

regarding conflict management reasons on the one hand and more feminism-related reasons on the other” (García-Gómez, 2011, p. 245).

Incorporating the voices of girls and young women in research about gendered cyberbullying is not only ethical but also central to deciphering important questions regarding how young people define cyberbullying and perceive its impacts. Many studies have found that adults and young respondents differ in where they draw the line between harassment and cyberbullying: young respondents, for example, often use the word “drama”⁵¹ to describe sexist and racist comments or personal attacks (Dixon et al., 2015; Kilpatrick & Joiner, 2012; Shariff, 2014). A dialogue between this body of work and existing literature on cyberbullying may indeed be productive (Dobson, 2010; Mazzarella, 2015). It will only be through bringing girls’ voices into dialogue with technology and education theory and policy that we will understand the complex and varied ways in which they negotiate digital environments (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Kearney, 2011). Significantly, only 19 percent of 800 teenagers aged 12 to 17 in a recent American survey reported being bullied, but 88 percent of those same adolescents reported having witnessed mean or cruel behaviour online (Lenhart et al., 2010). This discrepancy suggests that it is important to consider young people’s definitions of the key terms in delineating cyberbullying and its online/offline impacts. The role that bystanders might play in an online environment (Dillon & Bushman, 2015) and the ways in which identity factors contribute to cyberbullying experiences (Stoll & Block, 2015) are also crucial registers to explore.

⁵¹ Defining cyberbullying as “drama” is a gendered construct that reproduces normative conceptions of gender and aggression (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). Clarifying terminology will help us avoid recycling the gender-blind zero tolerance school policies that often extend paternalistic traditions of criminalizing girls’ behaviour, supposedly for their own protection and welfare (Gelsthorpe & Worrall, 2009).

It is well documented in the literature on women and girls' violence that the trend toward criminalizing their behaviour has almost always gone hand in hand with the sexualizing of their deviance (Carrington, 2013; Gelsthorpe, 1989; Gelsthorpe & Worrall, 2009). The "good" girl, "bad" girl, and "mean" girl are repetitive tropes about femininity (Ahmed, 2010; Butler, 2011; Jiwani, 2006) that pervade mass media and scholarly work on female violence (Gelsthorpe & Sharpe, 2006, p. 47). Girlhood scholars must therefore work to unpack these tropes and how they are mediated by intersectional identity markers in cyberbullying studies (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). Moving forward, scholars will need to draw on theories that recognize girls' aggression as existing in lived experiences and through negotiations with girlhood that are always "produced and negotiated (by all of us, but especially by girls) in particular historical and political moments" (Griffin, 2004, p. 29). This is important as we move closer to shifting the terms of the cyberbullying debate and as we unpack binary discourses around girls and meanness.

From Mean Girl to Passive Victim: Popular and Scholarly Discourses around Girls and Cyberbullying

Popular trade books such as Paula Todd's *Extreme Mean* and recent media coverage of the statistically rare violence committed by girls – the Wisconsin "Creepy Pasta" stabbings, for example – promote the belief that girls' aggression is unique.⁵² Girls' meanness is represented as somehow uniquely conniving (see Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2004; Simmons, 2011) and damaging (Brown, 2003). Girls' expressions of aggression and violence are also marginalized and represented as monstrous. These trends are well documented in feminist criminology and

⁵² As Mirko Bagaric (2016) notes in *The Guardian*, coverage of women's violence and punishments continue to receive disproportionate publicity, even though it is a statistical rarity; we see this extending to girls' violence. The "Creepy Pasta" stabbing incident was a "very unusual" (Hanna & Ford, 2014) case that involved three twelve-year-old girls in Wisconsin. Two of the girls attempted to kill their friend after a sleepover to please a fictional online character called Slenderman that is popular on horror genre websites. This case was given an unusual amount of press in the United States.

feminist theory (Gelsthorpe & Worrall, 2009; Kilty & Frigon, 2006; 2016) and provide context for understanding the ways in which representations of girls' aggression are informed by patriarchal judicial, cultural, and legislative framings (see Jiwani, 1999; 2006). Conventional scripts of femininity are fundamental to reading girls' aggression as they are often bound up in representations of girls' bullying (Kilty, 2010; Ringrose, 2008; Ringrose & Renold, 2012) in ways that pathologize sexual risk-taking (Godfrey, 2015) and transgressions of traditional femininity (Kilty & Frigon, 2006; 2016). This larger discursive context is crucial when examining girls' voices in cyberbullying research because "the talk of girls both constitutes and is constituted by the construct of girlhood" (Brown, 2012, p. 68). We must contend with mainstream constructions of girlhood and the ways in which young people internalize them as we work with girls to define the terms structuring the cyberbullying debate.

Current girls' digital culture scholarship on bullying suggests a productive way forward for attending to the unique contexts and impacts of cyberbullying for girls in ways that resist old tropes of femininity and girlhood. For example, repeatedly deploying the concept of relational aggression to explain girls' bullying (e.g., girls' supposed unique capacity for spreading rumours), can reinforce stereotypes rather than examining the specificities that shape their bullying experiences. Bringing digital girls' culture research into conversation with cyberbullying research with an intersectional lens offers a concrete way to study this far-reaching phenomenon while avoiding the pitfalls of pathologizing girls' behaviour. Often the most visible cases of female violence, now flourishing in representations of cyberbullying in the public sphere, focus on anxiety around white middle-class girlhood (Jiwani, 2006). These cases tend to exceptionalize girls' violence while ignoring the context of violence among racialized girls who

are disproportionately victims of violence (Rajiva & Batacharya, 2010). Marginalized girls' voices are pushed to "the margins of social life and social discourse" (Brown, 67).

Unfortunately, it is not only representations in popular culture and mass media that normalize "meanness" as a natural element of female sociality (Simmons, 2011). Much of the early literature in social science reflects similarly reductionist or decontextualized analyses of relational bullying (see Simmons, 2011). When studies of bullying began to turn to girls and young women, the "good girl" and "bad girl" stereotypes crossed over into psychological and psychosocial research on girls, aggression, and bullying (Crick & Nelson, 2002; Olweus, 1994; Smith et al., 2008). For example, Terri Apter and Ruthellen Josselson argue that female friendship is a "school of correction" (Apter & Josselson, 2010, p. 211) in which strict norms around femininity and body image are not simply enforced but created, arguing that acceptable codes of femininity are "established anew in each generation" (p. 211). Apter and Josselson go so far as to attribute food obsession and negative body image to the norms of the friendship circle (p. 66), thereby reinscribing the notion of girls' inherent "meanness" rather than exploring how the internalization of misogyny and sexism "contribute . . . to a unique context for girls' experience of, and participation in, violence toward girls" (Brown, 2012, p. 66). The "mean girl" is a pervasive theme in the popular discourse around girls and bullying (McClung, 2006). The popular film *Mean Girls* (2004) is a case in point. In the film, Ms. Norbury (portrayed by actor Tina Fey), the teacher appointed to resolve the conflict that arises when the mean girls' gossip is exposed, offers a warning to all the girls of the school: "You all have to stop calling each other sluts and whores. It just makes it OK for guys to call you sluts and whores" (Waters, 2004). With this comment, Ms. Norbury rehearses stereotypes of girl-on-girl violence without taking into consideration how girls' aggression may have roots in culturally prescribed gender roles.

Ringrose and Renold suggest that a “range of normative cruelties” (Winch, 2013, p. 11) underpins one’s recognition as a gendered subject. In other words, they argue that for girls who engage in normalized practices such as policing other girls’ sexuality, performances of femininity are often the only institutionally acceptable forms of aggression. Similarly, in his work on personal blogs, García-Gómez points to relational aggression as a discourse through which girls narrate broken relationships by either performing or challenging traditional gender roles. For example, his discourse analysis of girls’ Facebook pages demonstrates how girls often adopt a masculine subject position to express anger, especially as it relates to their experience with sexual relationships; this discursive strategy challenges heteronormative feminine sexuality (2011, p. 251). García-Gómez also found that new communities formed through computer-mediated communications such as blogs construct institutions that maintain a cult of femininity in which girls’ behaviour is mediated through other girls’ policing of femininity scripts as well as girls’ own negotiations of “appropriate” gender performances. Girls may take up relationally aggressive dialogue to challenge “proper” performances of girlhood as maintained by heterosexualized competition (2011). As with the work of Ringrose and Renold, García-Gómez’s study is instructive about how to analyze girls’ negotiations of online/offline aggression.

The contradictions around girlhood must also be understood within the context of friendship and relationship. As we know, the dominant culture often presents these as mandatory (boyd, 2014; Simmons, 2011), with “niceness” operating as a prerequisite for continued membership in friendship circles and social networks (Ringrose et al., 2012 p. 587; Ringrose, 2008; Simmons, 2011). As previously discussed, it is becoming clear that, more often than not, it is precisely the subjects who fail to properly perform and embody the contradictions of heteronormative femininity (e.g., pretty, but not sexy) that are most often revealed in first-person

interviews to be targets of bullying (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012). In the Canadian context, as in the US, it is clear that the likelihood of becoming a target of cyberbullying is heavily linked to one's membership in identifiable groups, such as those of racialized (non-white) individuals and/or LGBTQQ2IA, whether one self-identifies or is perceived to be a member of these identity groups (Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012; Langos, 2012). Future cyberbullying research with girls must attend to sexual orientation, gender identity, race, class, and ability if we are to move beyond dominant bullying frameworks that too often rely on racist, heterosexist, and classist logic. As Yasmin Jiwani (1999) argues, the erasure of race in the press and in judicial framings of fourteen-year-old Reena Virk's murder in 1997 reflects a broader denial of systemic racism in Canada that renders immigrant and racialized girls' bodies particularly vulnerable to violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided evidence demonstrating the lack of youth voices and perspectives included in academic, popular and policy discussions on cyberviolence, highlighting how my project is located within feminist new media studies efforts to put girls' conceptualization of CV into conversation with girls' digital culture and noting the gaps in the extant CV literature and anti-CB curricula. The claim that the tools of digital culture offer the potential for new 'radical' articulations of gender rehearses technological determinist arguments that feminist and technology scholars strive to decentre (Gittleman, 2008; Marx, 2010). Claiming that the current tools available in dominant digital culture can be successfully reappropriated by feminists would also necessitate fetishizing the objects of new media (Bogost, 2012; Magnet, 2011) as though they are neutral and operate in isolation, which we know to be untrue. However, as is clear from the history of cyberfeminist interventions and current cutting-edge qualitative

research (Kilty et al., 2014; Frigon & Shantz, 2014), these arts-based methods offer a means to privilege marginalized voices and negotiate traditional researcher/researched power relations.

Critical feminist perspectives are particularly marginalized in the field of new media studies (see Hasinoff, 2014, p. 270; Shaw, 2014). Understanding the dialectic between utopian/dystopian discourses that inform cyberfeminism sheds light on the current state of the field and the theoretical legacies of those scholars charting a different path through theory, art and activism. It is clear that the intersectional interventions since the millennium (Gajjala & Oh, 2012) have marked a shift in reading and ‘doing’ gender and girlhood (Weber & Dixon, 2007) in digital culture, with digital feminisms extending their scope to problematize simplistic notions of the digital divide (Jones, 2006) and to consider artist and activist networks in non-Western countries (Barnett, 2014; Eubanks, 2011; Gajjala & Oh, 2012). As I have argued, understanding the genealogy of the field is crucial for the direction of future work of feminist new media studies. Current scholars contend that a genealogical rather than a teleological approach to new media history (Kember, 2012; Sawchuk & Stabile, 2015) allows us to intervene in media discourses in ways that “take us from dissent to dialogue to what Derrida calls dissension – the internal revolutions or overturnings that might afford us non-entrepreneurial opportunities or spaces for some serious play” (Sawchuk & Stabile, 2015). Entering these “serious” spaces of play, attentive to the genealogy of feminist new media, offers far-reaching possibilities for reading gender in digital culture.

As I argued in Part Two, as we begin to frame future intersectional research on girls and cyberbullying, it is necessary to note that just having access to experiences of girlhood is a privilege, as transnational feminist scholars remind us (Kirk et al., 2010).⁵³ The national study

⁵³ While a few scholars (Slonje & Smith, 2008) still argue that there are only minimal gender differences observed in cyberbullying behaviour, empirical evidence suggests that boys are often perpetrators of cyberbullying (see Jaffer

Young Canadians in a Wired World (Steeves, 2014) provides an example of an intersectional approach to the study of digital youth culture that seeks to account for the ways in which socioeconomic and identity factors inform young people's experiences of digital culture and their lives on- and offline. Recent reports produced for MediaSmarts (2013) offer data on the ways in which Canadian youth encounter and perceive racism and sexism. The data, collected to examine the role of networked technologies in the lives of youth, reveals that young people in Canada frequently navigate racist and sexist content online.⁵⁴ It is also important to note that much of the moral panic around the "mean girl" in mass media really concerns middle-class white girls who fit normative definitions of femininity and whose bodies, as Judith Butler has argued (Butler, 2011), matter more than others: the majority of stories publicized in venues such as *Newsweek* and *New York Times* in the 1990s and early 2000s featured white adolescents from middle-class homes (Brown, 2012). By putting the growing literature on girls' digital culture in conversation with cyberbullying literature and by devoting critical attention to the social networking sites and digital spaces where girls and young women act as content producers navigating aggression, racism, and sexism, we can learn a great deal about how girls 'do' gender and aggression in digital culture. Meanings around gendered cyberbullying, produced with girls as co-creators and research collaborators, have a lot to teach us about contemporary girlhood, the possibilities of participation in the public sphere, and the politics of performing 'girl' online.

In Part One and Part Two, I have offered a feminist genealogical approach to understanding how contingent turns in historical feminist thinking about new media -rather than

& Brazeau, 2012). There is broad consensus in the extant studies that young women use social media in greater numbers, are disproportionately targeted, and experience cyberbullying and online harassment differently than do boys and young men (O'Connell et al., 1999; Mishna et al., 2012; Navarro & Jasinski, 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

⁵⁴ The *Young Canadians in a Wired World* data was collected in 2013 through a classroom-based survey of 5,436 students in grades four to eleven in every Canadian province and territory.

a traditional linear narrative- help us to think about how the utopian/dystopian binary continues to inform feminist new media studies. Moreover, in revisiting key figures such as Haraway and Hayles, we can see how reductionist readings of cyberfeminism minimize the important maps they offer for navigating these same binary discourses currently underpinning both moral panic around young women's social media usage and many feminist media responses to it.

In the next chapter I outline a theoretical framework that draws on feminist media, criminology and critical youth studies approaches to girls' aggression and bullying to consider girls' participation in social media, digital culture and content production and their experiences of online misogyny. I focus on the elements in the existing cyberbullying (CB) literature devoted to girlhood and bullying, as well as emerging critical approaches to girls' digital culture, that will help us better understand the issues my participants emphasized in their conceptualization of cyberviolence (CV).

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

“Cyberbullying is kind of like background noise”: Feminist Approaches to Girlhood, ‘Cyberbullying’ and “Networked Misogyny”

So, I'd use the word silent because when you're cyberbullied it's not like an actual form it's not like typical bullying that happens in the schoolyard where everyone can hear about it, knows about it, cyberbullying is kind of like background noise so no one really knows about it unless you speak about it so that's why I'd say silent – Edith, 15

I think it becomes cyberviolence when it silences something as in stops you from speaking up – Gillian, 17

In order to understand the significance of how young women conceptualize cyberviolence, it is important to first examine how their navigation of digital culture is shaped by gender, racialization (e.g., whiteness) and class.⁵⁵ Young people's networked cultures are varied, messy and constantly shifting, which is reflected in how participants worked through creating meaning(s) around cyberviolence. The multiple ways in which participants made meaning around CV targeting them on SNS did not “fit neatly into conventional social, ethical or communication frameworks” (Driver, 2017, p. 299-300). Therefore, I have assembled an interdisciplinary “theoretical toolbox” (Kilty, 2008, p. 41) composed of concepts from media, cultural studies, feminist, whiteness and criminology theory in order to analyze the themes I identified in participants' video work and focus group responses. Specifically, I draw on feminist theories of new media (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2016; Leonard, 2006; Magnet, 2006; 2011; Prebble, 2014; C. Todd, 2014) and online misogyny (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Croeser, 2016; Phillips, 2015) in order to put my participants' voices and emerging

⁵⁵ The two institutions attended by participants are located in two very different socioeconomic realities. The drop-in centre at the community-based organization works with poor and working-class youth. The private school charges a high yearly tuition and caters to upper-middle-class and wealthy Canadians as well as international students.

literature on girls' digital culture (Bailey, 2015; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014; Steeves, 2015) into conversation with extant literature on cyberbullying and cyberviolence (CV).

I use Stuart Hall's (1997) concept of "shared meanings", Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate Miltner's (2016) approach to "networked misogyny" and feminist new media research on "online misogyny" (Chess, Evans & Baines, 2017; Chun, 2016; Magnet, 2006; Mortensen, 2016) in order to examine the interlocking factors that shape participants' conceptualizations of CV. I also draw on this framework to put my participants' voices into conversation with the literature on girlhood and bullying in order to contribute to girls' digital culture work (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Banet-Weiser, 2015; García-Gómez, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014) that is addressing the current lack of qualitative research with young women in the CV literature. I also borrow from Pierre Bourdieu's approach to "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1984), particularly as it has been theorized through a feminist lens (Butler, 1997; hooks, 1982; Lovell, 2000; Skeggs, 1997) in order to contextualize the themes and patterns in how participants conceptualized CV as something deeply bound up in sexual politics. That is, this toolbox offers a way to contextualize participants' descriptions of CV within a broader reality of new media spaces which we know are predicated upon "highly masculinist norms" (McGing quoted in Democratic Audit UK, 2013). In other words, the participants' navigation of social media platforms must be understood within a broader context of sexism normalized through online/offline social networks. As Claire McGing argues, while many tout social media as a "new dawn" for democracy with traditional political engagement down (like voting), "online misogyny is real and highly corrosive of women's participation in public life" (McGing, 2013, pg. 1; Paikin, 2017). The themes I identify in participants' conceptualizations of CV also contribute to current thinking about online harassment that offers an alternative to the free speech versus hate speech paradigm (Croeser,

2016). For example, the dialogue between feminist new media studies, girlhood and cyberviolence literature offers a theoretical framework for thinking through how participants conceptualized CV beyond hate speech in the context of criminalization. Theorizing gendered CV in ways that operate outside of this binary is important. The CV experiences participants described included multiple and overlapping forms of ridicule, sexual violence, and what Bourdieu describes as symbolic violence (2001) that, in tandem with physical violence, oppresses women and girls. Before outlining a multi-faceted theoretical approach to bear on online misogyny, it is necessary to first turn to a brief overview of the legal landscape of cyberviolence, online harassment, and cyberbullying in Canada.

‘Cyberbullying’ or Harassment? Unpacking Hate Propaganda, Online Harassment and Cyberviolence in the Conceptual and Legal Landscape in Canada

In the Canadian context, much of the utopian rhetoric around the Internet in the early 1990s (see Chapter Two) focused on young people. There was a great deal of government investment in knowledge and information infrastructure, much of which was geared towards connecting youth to the Internet, or the “information superhighway”, as it was frequently referred to at the time. Although the Internet was imagined as being the key to young people’s future success and ability to compete in the global economy, by the late 1990s the negative consequences of digital communications were beginning to be addressed. As Jane Bailey (2016) notes, “[i]ssues relating to online hate speech, luring, online child pornography, and more recently, sexting and cyberbullying, soon began to make their way into Canadian policymaking and debate” (2016, p. 4). These historical moments point to the ways in which youth have been at the centre of the push for Internet access for all Canadians and the face of the need for restrictions and, often, punitive criminal measures to regulate Internet usage. As Bailey argues,

the term cyberbullying has become an umbrella term for behaviours ranging from “repeated insults about someone’s shoes to invasive attacks on the personhood and identity of those targeted” (2013). In response to the Canadian federal government’s introduction of Bill C-13, the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*, Bailey notes that “many people have called for development of a national strategy that breaks down the umbrella term” (2013). A paradox exists in feminist calls for the need for law enforcement to develop better digital literacy and take issues such as online rape threats and cyberviolence targeting girls and women seriously, while being deeply critical of the prison industrial complex and the criminalization of new behaviours.

As Bailey argues in her work on the legal landscape of cyberbullying and cyberviolence in Canada, the term ‘cyberbullying’ is often applied to a variety of behaviours and situations (2016, p. 1). The umbrella term ‘cyberbullying’ must be approached critically since, as Bailey (2014; 2016) and others (e.g., Arntfield, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015) argue, it obscures differences between online behaviours and their impacts. For example, when we apply the term ‘cyberbullying’ to instances of racial, sexual and other forms of identity-based harassment, we overlook systemic forms of discrimination that render certain individuals more vulnerable to experiencing violence. Bailey (2016) describes the reason that researchers and policy-makers concerned with cyberviolence should complicate the term ‘cyberbullying’ in this way:

Using the term “cyberbullying” to describe violent and discriminatory harassing behaviours carried out through technology risks obfuscating, and/or minimizing underlying issues of prejudice and hatred disproportionately experienced by members of equality-seeking groups, including women, members of the LGBTQ communities and racialized people. (Bailey, 2016, p. 6)

Criminal prosecutions of actions better described as cyberviolence than as cyberbullying are an option; however, the burden of proof is high (Bailey, 2016). Moreover, girls (including some of my participants) describe a fear of being charged with child pornography for images that

they took of themselves within the context of consensual relationships. These types of issues compound the challenge of developing appropriate strategies with which to combat gendered cyberviolence that do not result in punishing young people, whether as targets or perpetrators of CV (Hasinoff, 2015).⁵⁶

While there have been high-profile changes to the *Criminal Code* in direct response to highly publicized cases of cyberbullying targeting girls, several provisions already existed that pertain to a range of behaviours that are too often problematically referred to as cyberbullying. As Bailey (2016) outlines, in Canada there are three *Criminal Code* provisions that pertain to hate propagation (Criminal Code, RSC, 1985, c C-46): 1) advocating genocide (s 318-1); 2) publicly inciting hatred (s 319-1); and 3) publicly communicating statements willfully proposing hatred against an identifiable group (s 319-2). On October, 18, 2016, the Parliament of Canada passed Bill C-16. It will:

...extend protection against hate propaganda set out in that *Act* to any section of the public that is distinguished by gender identity or gender expression and to clearly set out that evidence that an offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate-based on gender identity or expression constitutes an aggravating circumstance that a court must take into consideration when it imposes a sentence” (42nd Parliament, 1st Session, Bill C-16, Third Reading).

Bill C-16, which proposed amendments to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Criminal Code*, and which received Royal Assent on June 19, 2017, will add “gender identity or expression” to the definition of what constitutes prohibited grounds of discrimination (Subsection 3(1)) in the *Act* as well as to the definition of an “identifiable group” in subsection 318(4) of the *Criminal Code*. Bill C-16 is compounding the difficulties of thinking through legal

⁵⁶ As we know, these categories are often overlapping; many young people surveyed in cyberbullying studies report being targets of CV as well as perpetrators (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012; Völlink, Trijntje, Bolman & Dehue, 2013).

responses to misogynistic hate propaganda. Until recently, gender identity was not an “identifiable identity” category under the *Criminal Code* in Canada.

The debate around how best to reform criminal justice matters surrounding VAWG is long entrenched in feminist and criminological theory (Smart, 1989). As Shoshana Magnet and Rachel Dubrofsky put it in *Feminist Surveillance Studies* (2015), we must be mindful of problematic links between some schools of liberal feminist thought and the state, which result in what Bernstein refers to as “carceral feminism” (2010). Criminalizing versus not criminalizing cyberviolence and cyberbullying is a tension that runs throughout the feminist literature on VAWG and cyberviolence, underscoring the need for alternative modes of addressing cyberviolence directed toward girls and women. This tension around how to manage VAWG online underscores the contribution of girls’ digital culture studies. The promise of developing feminist frameworks for understanding online misogyny in conversation with girls’ digital culture studies is an important move for thinking about CV and CB outside of the hate speech versus free speech paradigm. Feminist frameworks for addressing online misogyny and racism are important because hate speech, violent threats and harassment directed toward those who identify as women, particularly women with marginalized identities, is on the rise in SNS (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Crooks, 2016; Huntemann, 2015; Jane, 2014; 2016). As I learned from the participants in my research, strategies based on misinformation about the reality of their lives fail to account for the situational, contextual and cultural specificities of the social media environment in which all interactions play out, including cyberbullying and violence. As Chesney-Lind and Irwin argue, the current moral panic over the risks associated with (certain) girls’ use of digital technologies – rather than with the misogyny and racism they encounter daily – are actually part of a larger backlash against women and girls seeking social and political

equality (Faludi, 2009).⁵⁷ It is important to understand what is at stake for my participants as we “begin charting the blurry parameters of this discursive field” (2014) of cyberviolence targeting women and girls, namely, the ways in which cyberhate impacts their material lives. For example, many women – including those whose careers are online – are self-censoring, writing under pseudonyms, or withdrawing completely from the Internet (Jane, 2017, 2016, 2014).

Silencing and Censorship as Social Control: “Networked Misogyny”

As I outlined in Part One of Chapter Two, the literature review, many (white) cyberfeminists unequivocally championed the Internet in its infancy (Brophy, 2010). The utopian enthusiasm for this new space (cyberspace) – where they believed the body was absent – was largely predicated upon their belief that the Internet would free the subject from the oppression of race, gender, age, and ability (Nakamura, 2002, 2008; Magnet, 2007). This vision was the same one represented in mass culture. For example, Ridley Scott’s “1984” commercial, produced for the Superbowl, introducing the Apple Macintosh personal computer, as well as the Telecom commercial spots in the 1990s (Daniels, 2015) and the *New Yorker*’s famous cartoon depicting a dog surfing on the Web: “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog” (Chun, 2016): a reality quite different from the one cyberfeminists envisioned exists today. In fact, as Jessie Daniels argues, racism and misogyny persist online in ways that are both new and unique to the Internet (Daniels, 2015, p. 5) “alongside vestiges of centuries-old forms that reverberate significantly

⁵⁷ In the fifteenth-anniversary edition of *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women*, Susan Faludi argues that the marketplace and commercial culture are deploying “the language of liberation as a new and powerful tool of subjugation” (2009, p. xiv) targeting women. Although Faludi is referring to the subjugation of adult women through the appropriation of feminist discourse by market forces, this argument is equally true of girls and their experiences in digital culture. For example, several scholars of girls’ content production argue that girl-power discourses are heavily commercialized and often trade on notions of girls’ empowerment, doing nothing to change structural inequalities facing girls online and offline (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Hasinoff, 2015).

both offline and online” (p. 5). Adult women, especially self-identified feminists, regularly experience revenge porn, stalking, ‘doxing’⁵⁸, harassment and death threats online.

It is important to understand the broader context of online misogyny when beginning to think through online bullying and the relationship between girlhood and cyberbullying. Brianna Wu, just one of many major female video game developers attacked regularly by cyberhate mobs and bombarded daily with death threats, argues that online abuse exposed the limits of law enforcement ability to police predatory behaviours and abusers as they migrate online. Wu claims that she loses at least a day each week “explaining the Internet” to law enforcement (Wu quoted in Jason, 2015). Jason explained it this way:

[S]he’s had to convince numerous officers that Twitter isn’t “just for jokes” but is in fact her primary means of marketing her business. In February, Wu pulled Giant Spacekat from the mammoth PAX East conference in Boston after police declined to beef up security, even though she’d shown them the death threats she’d received via email and social media (Jason, 2015).

In recent years, the sheer amount of vitriol and hate speech directed toward women online has garnered headlines. Rather ironically, a recent example at the time of writing involves a woman in Britain who recommended that Berkshire police consider approaching online harassment targeting women as a hate crime (Bennett, 2016). Further, the case of GamerGate is yet another example of the increasingly hostile environment facing women online. The term GamerGate was coined by actor Adam Baldwin (*Firefly*) in August 2014; he created a Twitter hashtag that he and other participants (mostly male gamers) used to harass writers and women in the gaming industry who support Quinn and Sarkeesian as well as those who champion greater

⁵⁸ ‘Doxing’ is the revealing of an individual’s offline identity by connecting it to that individual’s online persona, and often involves posting information such as the target’s (or their family members’) home and personal email addresses. This harassment is often intended to encourage others to threaten them with the loss of their job or home (Mantilla, 2013, p. 564). When women are doxed it is often done in conjunction with rape threats, including the individual doxing inciting others to rape the target (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2016, 2014, 2017; Marcotte, 2012).

diversity in gaming (Dockterman, 2014).⁵⁹ While the Internet is often conceived as a mass form of communication that would usher in a more peaceful turn toward globalization,⁶⁰ government censorship, state control, culture wars, and fights over patents and technology quickly dampened the utopian vision of cyberspace. While at least some are using the Internet to promote greater tolerance and cross-cultural understanding, ironically, as Aumueller argued in 2000, “the introduction of the Internet has provided a means of sparking a revitalization movement for many hate groups” (Aumueller, 2000, p. 94). The issues highlighted by GamerGate are important because they point to two major issues that the current literature around girlhood and cyberbullying reveal: namely, we need to nuance and define the terms of the language that we use to describe online abuse and cyberbullying (Dixon et al., 2015), and we need to incorporate girls’ ideas in our research so that future solutions are realistic. Despite recent widespread public attention devoted to cyberbullying, online aggression, victimization, gendered cyberviolence and cyberbullying have received little conceptual development (Fairbairn, 2015; Runions, 2013).

The current moment marks another new configuration of the gender wars in which the Internet allows an enormous scope and reach of aggression targeting women. The social contexts and double standards participants outlined in their conceptualizations of CV can be understood as what Emma Alice Jane describes as “a (new) articulation of (old) sexualizing misogyny” (Jane, 2014, p. 559). Jane’s configuration is particularly apt when it comes to situating the digital culture participants described when I asked them about cyberviolence, which operates as a kind of “double bind” where participants struggled for language to articulate their experiences. One of

⁵⁹ Feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian (Feminist Frequency) and Zoe Quinn, an independent games designer, became targets of a misogynistic hate mob of mostly white male-identified gamers from 4chan, 8chan and Reddit users using the hashtag #GamerGate. The backlash against Sarkeesian and Quinn focused on their work to include women and minority groups in game culture and production.

⁶⁰ The information age is marked by the conversion of the old network (a traditional form of organization) into the digital network that allows unprecedented expansion and reconfiguration. The nature of the digital network means that it crosses nation-state borders, resulting in a global network which is characterized by new forms of globalization (Castells, 2011, p. 151).

the central issues that their confused descriptions outlined has a long historical precedent; that is, social media is amplifying the mode of gendered oppression that “reduces women to their sexual – or lack of sexual – value and then punishes them for this self-same characterization” (Jane, 2016, p. 1). The framework of online or networked misogyny (Marcotte, 2012) is a productive way to approach the *ad feminam* attacks on women that tend to target women’s appearance and sexuality (Jane, 2017; 2016; 2014; 2012; 2002). Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate M. Miltner (2015) use the phrase “networked misogyny” to describe “an especially virulent strain of violence and hostility towards women” (2015, p. 171). Jane uses the term “e-bile” to name the “hostile misogynistic rhetoric” she argues is proliferating in cyberspace (Jane, 2014, p. 588) and that is characterized by *ad hominem* thinking. The framework that these scholars developed is an important tool that feminist researchers can use to attend to the broad interplay of cultural factors (rather than individual contributing factors such as anonymity) that make up the landscape of CV.

After the murder of Reena Virk by her teenage peers in Victoria, British Columbia in 1997, the dominant depictions of girls in the news increasingly cast them as risks to themselves and others (Fyfe, 2014). As Alison Fyfe puts it, the “raced, classed and gendered moral panic over bad girls” that began after Virk’s murder has persisted into the age of social media (Fyfe, 2014, p. 46). Misinformation about girls’ usage of digital technologies is frequently adopted by those who have a great deal of influence on the lives of young women, such as teachers, policy-makers, and counsellors. These discourses about “risky girls” neglect girls’ actual needs, which results in increased policing of girls, particularly girls of colour, thus reinforcing systemic inequalities such as patriarchy and racism (p. 46). As in earlier decades, anxiety around girlhood manifests in constraining and punitive regulations directed toward young people that now focus

on girls' access to digital culture (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Hasinoff, 2014). Left unchallenged, employing these types of strategies to address cyberviolence and protect girls and young women limits girls' ability to fully participate as media content producers and digital citizens. Girls are content producers with unique aesthetics (Ivashkevich, 2017; Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017). Young women are more likely to encounter many forms of harassment, bullying and abuse on social media (Duggan, 2014), where they make up the largest group of content producers (Chun, 2015; Hasinoff, 2015; Steeves, 2015; Kearney, 2011). The cultural, social, language and law enforcement gap when it comes to violence against women and girls (VAWG) online was dramatically revealed by the recent events surrounding GamerGate described above.

There is an increasing recognition of the need to look at how identity factors and inequality structure youth (and adult) vulnerability to cyberviolence (Senate Standing Committee on Cyberbullying, 2012). Recent top-down changes to anti-bullying curricula, law and policy aimed at protecting young people often attempt to scare them into going offline or are embedded in punitive and criminalizing frameworks that target individual "bad apple" youth (Chun, 2015; Shariff, 2014). For example, we threaten girls with charges of child pornography as a way to deter them from practices such as sexting (Karaian, 2012). Moreover, the tension and debate between the desire to see better law enforcement around this growing issue and the desire not to criminalize individuals often distracts us from grappling with the broader social realities that structure the terms of the cyberbullying debate. Therefore, it is important to envision alternative ways of being in digital culture and incorporating situated understandings of young people's digital cultures into the development of potential strategies (Dixon, Craven, Crooks, Fisher, & Weber, 2015). Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States suggested that the term cyberbullying be used only in the context of young people rather

than adults, and should exclude behaviours between siblings and current dating partners (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016, para. 2). The type of suggestions being offered by reputable organizations such as this one from CDC underscore the trend to make CV a children's issue when in reality, of course, CV has even reached the White House (Ingram, 2016a). The toxic elements of digital culture form a crucial part of the context for understanding the challenges that girls face, navigate, and amidst which they create content (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). Online misogyny, which many girls are actively addressing, is informed by the broader rates of harassment and violence directed toward adult women and feminists online (Keller, 2012)⁶¹.

Some of the most common responses by public intellectuals when the issues of online misogynistic and racist harassment are brought into focus are grounded in the discourses of free speech (Croeser, 2016). Free speech is, of course, essential for a healthy society, public sphere, and social justice activists who use the right to free expression to advocate for the marginalized and to push for social change (Croeser, 2016; Fish, 1994). However, a recent trend in public commentary around cyberviolence targeting women is to call upon free speech to justify a lack of action on hate speech and other forms of online/offline violence directed toward women and girls (Franks, 2013). Putting feminist new media scholars (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Croeser, 2016; Haraway, 1990; Karaian, 2014; Levina, 2014; Magnet, 2011; Raman & Komaraju, 2017) into conversation with work in girls' digital culture (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; García-Gómez, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013) offer ways of theorizing online harassment, cruelty and ridicule targeting girls beyond the free speech paradigm versus hate speech binary (Croeser, 2016). As the participants quoted at the top of this chapter suggest, many

⁶¹ In her article "Virtual feminisms: girls' blogging communities, feminist activism, and participatory politics", Jessalynn Marie Keller argues that girls' contributions to the feminist blogosphere remain an understudied area (Keller, 2012).

forms of cyberviolence are not criminal in nature. Moreover, further criminalization of CV alone is unlikely to reduce the culture of misogyny and racism flourishing online broadly and on social media platforms specifically. Thinking beyond hate speech versus free speech, then, is crucial for theorizing the silencing and harassment participants described encountering, which often works as censorship (Bernstein, 2016). Situating the participants' descriptors and conceptualizing of CV within a broader culture of VAWG is also important, because many of the popular anti-CB strategies they critiqued involved telling them to go offline (see Chapter Seven). Stuart Hall's notion of "shared meanings" (1997) is helpful for unpacking the digital culture that participants described as normalizing practices such as 'slut-shaming' and victim-blaming, allowing researchers to locate CV within these social contexts rather than contributing to fearmongering around girls' usage of SNS and apps, and the risks associated with their usage.

Applying Pierre Bourdieu and Stuart Hall to Girls' Conceptualizing of Cyberviolence

Many cultural studies theorists have contributed to the great body of work on culture, power and representations offering framework(s) for understanding culture (Radford & Radford, 2003). This body of work offers important tools for examining how dominant meanings circulate through mass media, shoring up the status quo and dominant ideologies in a society. During the 1970s, a formative moment in the diverse and contested field of cultural studies, a great deal of emphasis was placed on youth and youth cultures (Driscoll, 2002, p. 174). Although cultural studies often excluded girls from their examinations of working-class youth cultures, the field offers productive tools for understanding youth culture(s). Hall's notions of "shared meanings" (1997) and Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" (1984) are particularly useful for examining the set of social norms that participants described as structuring CV.

For Stuart Hall, culture is constituted through a set of practices and “texts”; in other words, culture is a language that makes collective meaning(s) possible (Radford & Radford, 2003, p. 56). Hall argues that culture is produced through a shared language (a system of representation which includes words and images) through which specific meanings, while fluid, are attached to “people, objects and events” (p. 57). This is useful for theorizing participants’ descriptions and strategies outside of an ideological framing that would see them criminalized. For example, Hall explains that the status quo – a set of social and political discourses that normalize the bourgeoisie (or dominant class) – encourages individuals to maintain the focus of their discontent over social, political and cultural norms and structures at the personal level rather than directing their focus toward the source(s) of their oppression (Hall, 1986). In “Girls Action Network” (2016), Tatiana Fraser, Nisha Sajani, Alyssa Louw and Stephanie Austin outline how working with girls on actual issues they face results in culturally specific strategies, because that is what results from working from the ground up (Fraser et al., 2016). In other words, the lives of young women and their communities are impacted by “internalized (e.g., self-harm), relational (e.g., bullying, dating violence) and systemic violence (poverty, racism, sexism)” (Fraser et al., 2016, p. 156) that are best understood by beginning with meanings that communities attribute to their own lives.

Culture, for Bourdieu, is also rooted in practices; however, Bourdieu distinguishes between culture in the anthropological sense and culture in the “restrictive, normative” sense (Weininger, 2002, p. 99). He argues that the latter is a means by which taste functions as a marker of class. Put another way, class is a fluid and complex category that is grounded in status and lifestyle, which are both manifestations of cultural capital. Stated plainly, cultural capital is simply “a culturally specific ‘competence’, albeit one which is efficacious as a ‘resource’ or a

‘power’ in a particular social setting” (Weininger, 2002, p. 126). Bourdieu’s theories of class are distinct from (what were until then) the prominent ways of understanding class in sociology (Weininger, 2002). That is, his approach to class, rather than being purely economic, is more invested in cultural capital and status that work to maintain cultural hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu’s is a useful way of reading the cultural contexts that participants described, particularly the boundaries they drew between “good girls” and “bad girls”. For example, culture, through a Bourdieusian lens, is fluid and made up of fields (e.g., the economic field, the field of cultural reproduction) in which social actors struggle for position, prestige or profit (Riley, 2007, s. 7).

‘Good Girls’ and ‘Good Old Girls’: Girlhood, Subcultures and Class in Social Theory

As the area of girlhood studies has developed, and newer sub-fields like girls’ digital culture emerge, it is clear that, as Mazzarella puts it, there is no one ‘girl’ in girlhood studies (2008, p. 76 quoted in Rentschler & Mitchell, 2016). We know that young women’s identities are shaped through experiences of age, race, gender, ability, and class. My participants’ work on CV came from their perspectives as a largely white population in areas located within two distinct socioeconomic realities in a large urban centre. Feminist approaches to girlhood include a healthy amount of skepticism when it comes to any kind of generalization. Although my findings are not generalizable regarding teen girls and class, it is important to note that many of the discourses my participants mobilized when they described their perspectives about CV were entrenched in notions of class and, more ephemeral notions of cultural capital. Current girlhood scholars are using tools from cultural studies to understand what Connie Morrison refers to as “virtual cultural capital” (Morrison, 2016, p. 253). The notion of cultural capital was a powerful thread in the participants’ discussions of the self-representation in SNS.

One of the most glaring cultural identity markers that I identified alongside the themes that emerged in the participants' work was class. Class emerged as a cultural identity and a system of discourse through discussions with the economically privileged participants at the elite Quebec private school and the participants in the lower-income neighborhood at the community-based organization where I conducted this research. Participants articulated class both as a socioeconomic factor and as a form of social capital that flows through self-representation on SNS, something that they often cited as leading to CV. For example, participants described self-representation on social media as a form of social currency eliciting reactions from peers that are then quantified and commoditized (Bailey, 2015; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingston, 2013; Steeves, Burkell, & Regan, 2013). The stereotypical construction of the 'bad girl other' by the economically privileged participants highlights the need to attend to the specificity of class contexts in which cyberviolence plays out. The participants with whom I worked often used different logics and frameworks to explain the same topics and themes that emerged organically (without prompting) in both locations. For example, as I examine in Chapter Five, a victim-blaming discourse ran throughout the discussions of cyberviolence at both locations. However, the way in which victim-blaming was employed while participants talked about gendered cyberviolence often pointed to the divergent class identities of the youth involved in the research. Although the way that the participants conceptualized of cyberviolence was remarkably similar, so much so that the same themes emerged across locations, the way that participants framed victims and identified in relation to the 'good girl' identity was markedly different between the locations. Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital" (1984) is a productive way of making sense of the ways in which class figured in my participants' responses and the SNS they described when conceptualizing CV.

For Bourdieu, one's social identity is performed through bodily practices, speech, taste, etc. (*habitus*), which are beyond conscious control and self-surveillance but which make one appear 'natural' in a particular social setting (Riley, 2002). Bourdieu's innovative notion of class sees it as a result of *habitus* rather than being tied to property such as "volume and composition of capital" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 105 quoted in Riley, 2002, section 18). Bourdieu is ontologically distinct from the school of feminist theory represented by Judith Butler in that, for Butler and postmodern feminists, identity is never fixed (*habitus* is fixed, in that a stable identity is assumed to exist under the oppressive performances) (Lovell, 2000, 14). However, as is made clear in feminist readings of Bourdieu, both schools of thought allow us to address the power of social institutions in the construction of the social self. Understanding social capital through a feminist lens allows us to keep two threads in place as we unpack participant descriptions of the social contexts that structure their experiences of SNS. That is, "*social* reality is of a different kind from that of [the] natural world, but it is social *reality* in spite of its arbitrariness and dependence on continued reiteration in performance" (Lovell, 2000, p. 31).

While Bourdieu's notion of "social capital" may seem a quixotic element to bring into a poststructuralist approach to gendered cyberviolence, Bourdieu offers a helpful way of keeping "within the frame the difference that social class makes" (Lovell, 2000, p. 27). Participants' responses reflected a struggle to unpack the (sexist) social norms that they described as structuring the SNS in which they navigated cyberbullying behaviours such as ridicule, harassment and sexual violence. I draw on Bourdieu as a complement, not as a central analytic frame, as feminist theories of new media and girls' digital culture allow us to avoid the pitfalls of privileging social class above gender, age, race and sexuality (Adkins, 2004; Lovell, 2000). Moreover, Bourdieu's idea of "social capital" is inherently tied to social networks; as he argues,

it is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47-51 quoted in Quinn, 2010, p. 66).

After years of post-subcultural studies stressing “a loosening of social structures such as class” (McCulloch et al., 2006, p. 542 quoted in Hollingworth & Williams, 2009, p. 467) – a consequence of the increasing responsibilities of the individual and pathologizing of those marginalized by inequality in the broader social arrangements that structure their lives – there has been a resurgence in attention to class in youth studies. Pfadenhauer (2005) contends that “making working class subjectivities pathological, so that class relations are not just economic relations but also relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgment/shame” (p. 469) is one of the ways in which class inequality is reproduced (Pfadenhauer, p. 468). Several scholars examine the ways in which discussions of sexuality and gender centre on stereotypical constructions of the poor ‘other’, most commonly referred to as the ‘bad girl’. As Hollingworth and Williams (2009) articulate, the poor and working classes are constructed “in opposition to the normative middle-class subject” who comes to “represent everything about whiteness that the middle-classes are not” (p. 479).

The foundations of youth research in the United States were established in the 1920s, when the study of youth subculture emerged out of research regarding juvenile delinquency and deviance (Pfadenhauer, 2005, p. 3). At the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, U.K., the notion of ‘deviance’ was tied into inquiries on poor and working-class identities. While this early research identified (masculine) working-class subjectivities as a topic worthy of study, it also shored up stigmatizing and pathologizing tendencies of ‘delinquency’ studies. Significantly, one of the most oft-cited texts to emerge from Birmingham is Dick

Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), which makes that case that youth subcultures and specific styles (e.g., mods, teddy boys, and punks) are counter-hegemonic and politically resistant. Hebdige, who looks at race and class relations in post-war Britain, leaves out girls entirely.

Until the late 1970s, girls were usually completely missing from studies of youth culture; in fact, "in most subcultural studies, girls are either invisible, peripheral or stereotyped" (Brake, 2013, p. 137). For example, as Julie Bettie argues in her critique of Peggy Orenstein's (1994) study of schoolgirls, Orenstein points to the importance of class and includes girls from varied class locations in her study, but fails to incorporate any substantive discussion of class beyond the introduction (Bettie, 2014). As Bettie articulates it, "Her choice of one school that is populated primarily by suburban white middle-class students and another that is populated primarily by urban working-class students of color reifies the false dichotomy that all white students are middle-class and all students of color are urban working-class" (2014, p. 35). This example is worth noting, as it illustrates two of the significant ways in which Western (including feminist) political and academic discourses on youth culture continue the erasure of class (Adkins, 2004). Increasingly, feminists are turning their attention to whiteness as a racial category that shapes white women's lives in the same way that gender and sexuality inform both women's and men's experiences. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates in *Distinction* (1984), the issue of class is composed not just of economic realities but also a set of social practices and signifiers. Class operates at the symbolic level as well as the material, and is a cultural identity composed of several types of capital. That is, economic (salary or inherited wealth), cultural (the books one reads and music one listens to), and social (the amount of societal power and prestige attached to a subject) forms of capital work to construct an

individual's class identity (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125). That class is often policed through notions of whiteness came into focus during my work with participants on cyberbullying.

The participants in this exploratory arts-based research largely neglected the role that whiteness plays in digital culture and were largely silent when it came to discussing racialization and CV. The silence on this issue that permeates the data is problematic and it is important to consider whiteness when analysing the themes of how participants described and conceptualized CV (Braun & Clarke, 2006).⁶² This is also important, as participants' silences highlighted the way in which mainstream CB discourses and Western elementary and high school curricula continue to normalize the privileging of whiteness, neglecting substantive engagement with race and class (Charania, 2015; Milner, 2014, 2015; Morrison). The massive gap in education on racism and classism often begins at the level of preschool education (Milner, 2014). In fact, recent surveys of public school teachers in the United States highlight the reticence on the part of teachers to discuss issues of racism, especially violence against black and brown bodies, even when they agree that racism should be a topic in the classroom (Anderson, 2017; Milner, 2015, Milner & Laughter, 2015). All too often, in scholarship that is packaged as intersectional, issues of race and racism are relegated to cursory mentions (e.g., tokenism) in introductory remarks or manifest only in "apologies" (Bilge, 2011; Morrison, p. 1988, p. 126). This peripheral incorporation (or appropriation) of intersectionality within disciplinary feminisms is what Sirma Bilge refers to as "ornamental intersectionality" (Bilge, 2011, p. 3). The majority of my participants were white. In order to probe their notable silences around issues of race, racism and whiteness, I identified patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990); further, I

⁶² Alongside the themes I identified in participants' descriptors of CV (that I analyze in Chapters Five through Seven) I discuss whiteness and privilege in relation to participants' silences. I also discuss the implications of my research for future directions in intersectional studies on 'cyberbullying' in the Concluding Remarks (Chapter Eight). In Chapter Eight, I propose strategies that attend to intersecting identity factors.

returned to both field sites in order to invite participants to engage specifically in discussions about race. For the most part, while participants did occasionally reference racism or homophobia perhaps due to systemic racism and white privilege manifesting in a lack of language, participants did not engage in substantive discussions about race and racialization.

Feminist and Critical Race Approaches to Digital Culture Studies

Social media, which is as old as or older than the Internet (boyd & Ellison, 2007), is the focus of the same utopian and dystopian (Hansen, Schneiderman, & Smith, 2010) theorizing to which the Internet is subject. For example, reductionist technological determinist work tells us that social media directly impacts our communication practices (Carr, 2011; van Dijck, 2013). These studies neglect to account for offline inequalities and social norms. Rather, technological determinists argue that social media alone affects agency (Kennedy & Moss, 2015), activism (Bennett, 2012; Juris, 2012), identity (Bennett, 2012), young people's political engagement (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014), the predation upon children (Albert, 2014; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008), and young people's development (Hur & Gupta, 2013). However, little qualitative research has explored how girls conceptualize the relationship between CV and platform design. The findings generated by this research respond to this gap by helping to paint a clearer picture of how tools produced in Silicon Valley often directly conflict with equality in gendered digital citizenship. For example, the challenges and struggles examined below are mediated and shaped by digital tools built by software engineering teams composed predominantly of white men.⁶³ In fact, adult women working in the technology industries report a continuing barrage of misogyny and harassment at conferences and in person, including

⁶³ According to the United States Department of Labor, "70 percent of the workforce of the top 10 Silicon Valley firms in 2012 was male and 63 percent white. Of the executives and top managers at those companies, 83 percent were male and white" (Sales, 2016).

comments about their “gender, looks and technical expertise” (Sales, 2016, p. 12).⁶⁴ Some of the original programmers and engineers behind YouTube and Mark Zuckerberg’s Facemash (the precursor to Facebook) emerged from the photo-rating site Hot or Not. This context is important, as participants often drew on gendered (racialized and classed) codes, such as the notion that girls are victimized because they have done something wrong, to describe their experiences of CV on social media. Further, there are notable tensions and contradictions in how participants described misogynistic social norms structuring CV experiences. For example, participants frequently mobilized sexist stereotypes such as the ‘bad girl’ in their conceptualizations of CV and their critiques of popular anti-CB strategies (see Chapters Five and Seven). My findings highlight the reason that understanding the situated social contexts that participants described in their conceptualizing of CV is crucial.

Since the 1970s, psychoeducational and developmental psychology researchers have devoted a great deal of attention to specific social contexts (e.g., school settings) where peer harassment and bullying take place. The social contexts of peer settings, particularly within schools, have been posited as sites of empathy, mutual help and support that foster learning and ‘healthy’ development or as sites of unjustified aggression and unethical behaviour that negatively impact learning and development (Ortega-Ruiz & Núñez, 2012).⁶⁵ Over forty-five years of largely gender-neutral (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Bailey, 2014; Ringrose, 2008, 2010) bullying research has focused on typology, categorization and identifying victim and bully “types” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Olweus, 1993, 1994; Finkelhor, Turner, & Hamby, 2012;

⁶⁴ Since I began fieldwork in 2014, some of the platforms mentioned are now defunct, not frequented as regularly, or are now used in new and different ways by young people.

⁶⁵ The assumptions underpinning these approaches are the same ones that inform media effects theories that focus on media technologies as social ills or social goods for passive children that consume them. Following this logic, childhood is understood as a linear process which constitutes a foundation for adulthood and the appropriate transition is figured as a social good. These popular developmental theories are called upon often during moments of moral panic such as those around rock music, video games and the Columbine massacre. Examples include Piaget’s cognitive categories, Spock’s child-centered approach and Sears’ “attachment parenting” (Sammond, 2015, p. 31).

Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008). When gender or other social identity markers are referenced in traditional bullying literature, it is often superficial at best and harmful at worst. For example, Olweus, the Scandinavian psychologist largely regarded as the quintessential expert on bullying, dismisses girls' bullying as (confusingly) both invisible and sneakier than boys' behaviours (Olweus, 1993).⁶⁶ In traditional bullying literature, when a social context is explored, it is most often peer status, such as how well a child 'fits in' (for an example, see Price & Dodge, 1989). A smaller subset of bullying literature addresses the structural social inequalities that shape young people's lives inside and outside of school settings (Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koenig, 2012) and that inform bullying, harassment and VAWG online (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; Phillips, 2015; P. Todd, 2014). Moreover, with the advent of cyberbullying, early studies tended to exceptionalize information and communication technologies (ICTs) and quickly categorized them as a concrete example of relational aggression (as opposed to verbal or physical), the form of bullying that is most often gendered as girls' bullying style (Batacharya, 2004; Simmons, 2002). However, more recently, researchers are acknowledging the importance of addressing cyberviolence as a "social problem" (Ortega-Ruiz & Núñez, 2012) involving "harassment, intimidation and bullying" (p. 604) and "aggression that occurs in the networks of interpersonal relations which have turned into social networking" (p. 605). The participants focused most often on the social pressures they navigated in digital culture when conceptualizing CV. Young women highlight the importance of attending to the social contexts, specifically the way misogynistic double standards and sexist norms underpin cyberviolence as it unfolds in their digital cultures (Chmielewski, Tolman, & Kincaid, 2017). In other words, to understand what cyberviolence meant to my participants

⁶⁶ For another example of a reductive approach to girls' bullying, see Crick & Grotpeter (1995). For more literature and discussion of the ways in which girls and young women are minimized in traditional bullying literature, see the literature review (Chapter Two).

involved situating their perspectives within the social norms in which (Coleman, 1990; Hechter & Opp, 2001; Geertz, 1994[1973]) they lived and described. The concept of social norms operationalized in this chapter is broadly understood as “cultural phenomena that prescribe and proscribe behaviour in specific circumstances...[and are] at least partially responsible for regulating human behaviour” (Hechter & Opp, 2001, p. 5).⁶⁷

While there is a growing tendency within critical theory to suggest that class differences are in decline, turning a blind eye to class means we risk producing reductionist studies of cyberbullying that do not attend to the specificities of how identity factors such as class and whiteness structure cyberbullying and current understandings of CB. In fact, scholars such as sociologist Bev Skeggs argue that “class is so insinuated in the intimate making of self and culture that it is even more ubiquitous than previously articulated, if more difficult to pin down, leaking beyond the traditional measures of classification” (Skeggs, 2005, p. 968-969). Although it has been four decades since Angela McRobbie (1978) began to include working-class girls in cultural studies of youth, cyberbullying literature largely neglects how intersecting identity markers shape girls’ usage of SNS and experiences of digital culture.

Whiteness is constructed and read differently across and through class locations and distinct geographical (and social) spaces and times. It is crucial to examine the ways in which whiteness and racism structure the experiences of white communities as well as those of communities of colour (Frankenburg, 1993, p. 21). Putting Frankenburg in conversation with Smith (2004) and Isenberg (2016) reveals significant distinctions between the working-class poor and the cultural group referred to as ‘white trash’ – a category mobilized by both the upper classes and the working poor. For example, white individuals and groups from the working

⁶⁷ Long before the Internet, sociologists recognized the relationship between social networks and norm creation (Fine, 2001; Hechter & Opp, 2001). Drawing from participants’ descriptors, the potential usefulness of working to shift sexist and cruel social norms in digital culture will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

classes often look down on ‘white trash’ to shore up their own economic identity (Lott, 2002). This is important to understand when approaching cyberbullying, as participants with class privilege often invoked these tropes and engaged in interpersonal and institutional distancing. For example, the classed and raced figure of the ‘good girl’ emerged in the definitions and terminology participants used to define cyberbullying and its contexts. The ‘good girl’ is constructed in opposition to the ‘slut’ – a figure historically constructed to describe poor or working-class girls and women (Attwood, 2007, p. 234). This tendency to engage in what Richard Dyer refers to as the “intra-racial boundary work” (Dyer, 1997, p. 121) of whiteness often intersects with gendered stereotypes and tropes that are central to dominant representations of cyberbullying.⁶⁸

One of the most significant political contributions of Black feminism has been the expansion of the recognition that the personal is political (P. H. Collins, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015). This recognition is carried out through insisting upon articulating “the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives” (The Combahee River Collective, 1995, p. 235). The political contribution of Black feminism is that it has “in many ways gone beyond white women’s revelations” because the analyses deal with the “implications of race and class as well as sex” (The Combahee River Collective, 1995, p. 235). It is important to remember the historical oppression of the voices of women of colour within academic (institutionalized) feminism when applying a feminist lens to our work. That is, there are material stakes to feminist research in the lives of women and girls and a political necessity

⁶⁸ Richard Dyer argues that gender, class and aesthetics produce hierarchies of whiteness and that economically privileged white people police the precarious borders of whiteness through gendered and classed practices. Dyer is focused on how this unfolds in visual culture. For example, he argues that women are photographed with brighter lights to produce a whiter image and that mass media constructions of beauty are articulated through whiteness (1997).

to substantively engage with intersecting identity factors that structure the lives of women and girls. As Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, it is important to find way to examine how multiple identity factors such as gender and race intersect in ways that are often lost in dominant feminist and anti-racist discourses:

The concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific raced and gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the entire group (Crenshaw, 2005, p. 535).

There is no single intersectional method, and debates among feminist scholars regarding how to conduct productive intersectional work that fully analyzes multiple social locations abound (Nash, 2002; McCall, 2005). As Leslie McCall argues, "Despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major paradigm in women's studies and elsewhere, there has been little discussion as to how to study intersectionality", in terms of a methodological approach (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). The contested nature of intersectionality is particularly true when it comes to research design. The backlash against discussions of race within "humanist" and postmodern disciplines has been severe. Toni Morrison argues that this backlash stems from the "segments of scholarly and artistic labor in which the mention of 'race' is either inevitable or elaborately, painstakingly masked", and as we address the ramifications of analyzing race and its attendant implications, "the basis of Western civilization will require rethinking" (Morrison, 1988, p. 126). This is a particularly important point in understanding my research "scenes", including participants' notable lack of language to describe how whiteness, race and class (and, to a lesser extent, gender) structure CV.

Conclusion

As I examined in this chapter, feminist theories on emerging technologies and public illusions about the Internet as a great equalizer have evolved since the early theorizing of cyberspace. However, there is a plumb line throughout the literature on gendered cyberviolence, namely, the ongoing tendency to approach the issue through a utopian/dystopian lens. For example, most of the literature on girls' digital culture divides into two distinct themes. Cyberbullying literature either focuses on the tools of the digital culture as potentially empowering (e.g., regarding expanded access and knowledge) or denounces them as inherently risky (e.g., a space used by pedophiles that offer the potential to see content that is pornographic or not age appropriate). However, since the mid-2000s, scholars have suggested that we must look beyond social networking sites as sites of either risk or opportunity, to explore the ways in which these spaces are actually used by young people. Furthermore, scholars point to the need to situate peer-peer networks and user-generated content within the broader context of the postfeminist media-scape, particularly social media architecture, that so many participants argued amplifies the objectification of girls' bodies (Ringrose & Barajas, 2011, p. 132; Steeves, 2015, p. 161). Scholars of this tradition also ask us to accept as a starting point that digital technologies are a large part of many girls' lives. Working from the assumption that social media platforms and digital tools are here to stay means recognizing that strategies that limit access to these technologies effectively silence girls and foreclose the possibility of their achieving equality as digital citizens. This recognition also pushes us forward and allows us to situate cyberbullying studies in youth digital culture; in so doing, we will come closer to understanding social media as embedded in digital culture and informing cyberbullying and cyberviolence.

Now that I have outlined the theoretical tools I used to analyze and understand participant descriptors and conceptualizations of CV in their video work and focus groups, I move to outline the methodology. In the next chapter, I outline my research design and process, introduce participatory video and discuss specific issues that arose doing arts-based research with young women.

CHAPTER FOUR

Turning a Lens on Cyberviolence: Methodology and Study Design

Working on the documentary was really fun and the most interesting was when someone had a different opinion and something like a new angle that you didn't know and although it didn't quite change my opinion of how I view cyberbullying it did make me realize the full extent of how intensely it is all over the net and how desensitized a lot of people are to it on social media. – Josie, 16

It's sexist to only focus on girls since boys can be bullied too. – June, 15 (participant offering a critique of my focus on girlhood)

It's great to actually get to talk about these things and that you're talking to the people that know about it. – Lisa, 15

This chapter offers the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how* regarding the details of the research and analysis process and describes the context through which I generated the findings. The term methodology is used to refer to how “we approach problems” and “seek answers” (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, p. 4). As Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault put it, when boiled down to the essential ingredients, all debates over methodology are debates around assumptions, investments, and purposes; in other words, these tensions revolve around differences in “theory and perspective” (p. 3). Interrogating the process that was used to produce the knowledge allows the reader and researcher to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach; this kind of reflexivity fits well within the tradition of feminist research practice. Given the lack of standard definitions of cyberviolence and cyberbullying, which forecloses researchers' ability to make cross-study comparisons (Espinoza & Juvonen, 2013), this chapter offers as much detail as possible regarding my data collection processes, research methods and analysis tools.

This chapter serves as a ‘backstage’ view of the research project, including how my “epistemological beliefs and theoretical commitments” (Hesse-Biber, 2013, ix) influenced the

study design and analysis. I begin this chapter by locating my positionality in relation to the study, then turn to a discussion of epistemological commitments and definitions of key terms. Next, I review the methods most commonly used to study cyberviolence before describing feminist arts-based research and participatory video in detail. Following a brief consideration of my dual role as researcher/filmmaker and the ethics of undertaking a participatory video project with young people, I outline the process of building relationships with organizations and locating participants. I also describe the ‘scenes’ where participant groups are located. The final section describes how I carried out the analysis of the data I collected, including transcribing, coding and qualitative thematic analysis (QTA) procedures.

Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond

Video workshops and focus groups were conducted with youth in two field sites during the fall of 2014, winter of 2015 and spring of 2016 through the project “Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond” (2014-2017). I also draw on responses regarding gender-based CV from youth at a Quebec CÉGEP gathered by the research team between the fall of 2014 and fall of 2015. I received ethics approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee at Concordia University, along with the other members of the research team. I also submitted my study for secondary use of data approval, along with a letter from Dr. Mia Consalvo (Principal Investigator of the Cyber and Sexual Violence project) granting me permission to analyze the data set generated by the study, to the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Ottawa. Because this research involves video work with young people, I devoted a session at each location to informed consent and walked participants through every aspect of the project, including the investments and intentions I outline here. Consent forms acknowledging informed consent, along with parental assent forms, were collected from all

participants. Unfortunately, some young people who wanted to participate could not secure parental consent and were not able to participate due to the rules set by the university ethics boards.⁶⁹ The design and processes for the participatory video (PV) component of the study constituted a small but significant subsection of the broader study which conducted consultations with over 690 (N=690) people, including 369 (N=369) girls and young women under the age of 25. The larger study employed a mixed methodology approach and was conducted by a research team primarily from Concordia University led by Principal Investigator Mia Consalvo, Canada Research Chair in Game Studies and Design at the Technoculture, Art and Games Lab at Concordia University, Montreal. The data gathering for the needs assessment prepared for Status of Women Canada included interviews, a documentary, focus groups, community discussions (including school boards and the games design community), anonymous e-surveys, and questionnaires.

Researcher Reflexivity

Two major threads motivated my interest in gendered cyberviolence and my desire to explore these research questions with young people. First, when conducting research on women in gaming, I found that online harassment, racism and misogyny came up repeatedly in the news, feminist game literature, and anecdotal accounts. These stories ranged from receiving death and rape threats during game play to being bullied offline, and seemed to be commonplace and quite normalized in the gaming world. My growing interest in exploring gendered cyberviolence with young people solidified when I began working on the Cyber and Sexual Violence project in Montreal. The research team spoke with 690 (N=690) individuals. Participants included women in the technology and gaming industries, front-line sexual violence workers, counsellors, educators, school boards and 369 (N=369) girls and young women under the age of 25. I became

⁶⁹ This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

intrigued by the fact that so many of the youth we spoke to seemed to be drawing on dominant cultural discourses as well as distinct institutional discourses (for example, anti-bullying curricula) in their discussions of gender and cyberviolence. I was surprised by contradictions that emerged around girlhood. For example, many participants framed their discussions of bullying and harassment through the use of dominant sexist stereotypes. On the other hand, the participants also demonstrated a keen ability to point to the ways in which young women are disproportionately targeted and impacted by violence online. Often, these two threads were simultaneously present in participant narratives.

In this research project, I set out to understand how both economically privileged and marginalized young people in an urban community defined cyberviolence, as well as if and how they made meaning of it in their daily lives. I also wanted to learn if and how these young people conceived of cyberviolence targeting women and girls. After recognizing that I could apply knowledge gained through my background in non-fiction film and television production to my research practices, I decided to explore the possibilities of visual methodologies for data gathering with young people. I settled on using the platform of video for several reasons. First, digital video is popular and commonly used by many young people. Second, video would allow me to make the research accessible to youth with varying literacy levels, and it offered them a way to communicate their perspectives using their own voices. Third, collaborative documentary work provided the means by which participants could create their own narratives and meanings around cyberviolence (CV), filming their thoughts and thinking process. This was ideal, as this exploratory study was designed to understand the dominant meanings that participants attributed to CV. Lastly, what originally drew me to participatory video is that it is a method that offers a venue for girls' and young women's participation in media production. As I learned more about

the application of PV in child and youth studies and children's geographies, I realized this could be a unique tool and lens not only for collaborative data gathering with youth on the topic of cyberviolence, but also for social justice advocacy.

Cultural theorist Angela McRobbie articulated a double burden bearing down on the formation of girls' subjectivities today (2011). Namely, McRobbie argues that feminist discourses on young women and gender equity have been appropriated by the neoliberal project. This is particularly evident in popular culture, including social media, positioning of girls as a significant source of human capital. In other words, the "governmentality of the female population [is] predicated less on motherhood and on reproduction but on unleashing productive capacities" (McRobbie, 2011, p. 3). This Western narrative about young women is also used to portray Western values as superior, which automatically positions different cultures, such as Muslim cultures, as backward (Butler, 2016; Puar, 2007). The dominant Western assumption that girls have been liberated (McRobbie, 2011) is why "doing" girls' studies now necessitates "exploding what constitutes method, evidence, consciousness, and activism" (Fine, 2004, p. xiii). Following Gretchen Brion-Meisels (2013), I refer to this project as collaborative research and as distinct from youth participatory action research (YPAR). I do this because, although the youth spent time working in groups and contributed sub-questions and sub-topics of their own, the two central research questions emerged from current gaps in the cyberviolence literature, namely, the lack of feminist analyses of cyberbullying discourses and the absence of girls' voices. Subsequently, I presented alongside some of the video workshop participants on a symposium panel held at McGill University's Participatory Cultures Lab, sharing their thoughts on the research process as a strategy to address gendered cyberviolence (Minding the Gap, 2015).

As an adult Western white woman and academic with the cultural capital and authority that attends pursuing an advanced degree, I was aware from the outset that negotiating my relationship to the participants, particularly regarding the collaborative video work, would be ongoing. Throughout the research process, I continually foregrounded acknowledging and working through the power imbalance between the young research participants and me. This became especially important to negotiate as we embarked on the PV portions of the project. Engaging with participatory research through video-making involves “messy relational dynamics” (Kesby, Kindon, & Pain, 2007). These dynamics are compounded by the fact that, as Blazek (2016) argues, adult researchers often find themselves temporarily becoming informal educators (Blazek, 2016), advocates (Garrett & Brickell, 2015), or even therapists (Blazek, 2016). I set clear boundaries for myself ahead of time and communicated to the youth workers and teachers that I would intervene in the participants’ flow of dialogue and filming choices only if necessary. I intervened only in the case that the research process risked becoming unsafe and/or unethical as defined by the requirements set out in the core principles (1. B) of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TPS2, 2014). In other words, if a young person or people were being put into an emotionally unsafe or unethical situation, I would intervene in the conversation or filmmaking process.⁷⁰ It is of note that I did not have to halt the discussions or the video production work, although I did have to intervene once during a focus group. This occurred when participants at the community-based organization (CBO) were speaking very critically about bystander intervention strategies for cyberbullying and the youth workers asked me to stop the conversation so that they could intervene. While it

⁷⁰ I should note here that this refers to any situation I interpreted as being unethical or egregiously emotionally unsafe for my participants. It goes without saying that this included any scenario in which one or more participants expressed feeling unsafe (which did not occur).

would not have been my choice to interrupt this discussion, I was at the CBO with the permission and generosity of the front-line workers and needed to respect their request.

At the beginning of every focus group and at the first session of every video workshop, I explained in jargon-free language that I wanted to learn what cyberviolence and cyberbullying meant to the participants. I explained that I was also interested in learning if they perceived identity-based factors such as age, race and gender as impacting young people's experiences with violence and bullying online. I made it clear that I was most interested in hearing their perspectives because they were the experts with rich firsthand knowledge and daily experience with social media. It was at this point that most, if not all, of the participants began to pay more attention. This was particularly evident at the early sessions at the community-based organization, when participants would stop talking over each other and would begin listening in earnest to the description of what I would be asking of them. I observed a similar reaction on a subtler scale at the private school. I attribute this to the fact that the participants were in a classroom setting, and that by being in such small classes they were more likely to have their voices validated or at least heard more frequently. Throughout both the focus groups and video work I was careful to assume the role of feminist researcher and videographer, not teacher, friend, or counsellor. For example, there were at least two conversations involving 'slut-shaming' that took a direction I would have challenged or tried to turn into a 'teachable' moment had they occurred in a formal classroom context or traditional educational workshop.

While I strongly disagreed with the discourse which I found problematic, I did not interrupt and continued listening and observing, as the participants were very engaged in the conversation and nobody appeared distressed. I decided that it was more important to understand the ways in which dominant discourses, specifically around cyberviolence and gender, are

actually taken up and thought about by young people, rather than teaching what *I believed* were better questions.⁷¹ These conversations offer an instructive lens into the context of sexism on social media as it intersects with and structures cyberbullying and cyberviolence. These conversations also highlight that participants identified dynamics and contexts of misogyny, using different language or terminology to articulate what it is they observed. For example, when relaying a story about how her mother often policed her wardrobe choices due to the “risk” they posed to her, a 15-year-old participant at the CBO noted that whether or not that is true, there is a cultural perception that what girls wear renders them more vulnerable to violence. This exchange laid bare not just the critical approach that many participants arrived at on their own, but also which distinctions between interpersonal and broader social pressures participants were thinking through when it came to violence against women and girls (VAWG) online or offline. While it is possible to build curriculum into the YPAR process, practitioners have noted the difficulty young people often articulate when trying to express their ideas through specific researcher-imposed discourses (Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017, p. 417). To be sure, structuring workshops around a large curriculum is a significant and worthwhile approach to YPAR; however, in the spirit of an exploratory study, I made the decision to remain as non-invasive as possible in order to understand the specific (sub)texts through which participants conceptualized cyberviolence.⁷²

Recognizing individuals’ expert knowledge about their own lives (as distinct from outsider ‘expert’ knowledge) is well documented in the work of contemporary qualitative researchers (e.g., Fillmore, Dell, & Kilty, 2014). Child and youth researchers, particularly those

⁷¹ I should note here that, when I returned to the CBO and private school after the workshops were over, I asked the front-line workers if we could revisit the conversations about slut-shaming and initiated a discussion about problematic assumptions underpinning blame-the-victim narratives.

⁷² This is also the approach of the broader umbrella study “Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond”, through which my data was collected.

engaging with YPAR and arts-based methods since the early 2000s, have demonstrated that young people are experts in their own lives (Brannen, 2002; Clark & Statham, 2005; Mason & Danby, 2011; Yardley, 2011). Moreover, from my standpoint as a feminist researcher/videographer, I believe the most ethical way to conduct this research was through minimal imposition, in order to hear and respect young people's "actual opinions, perceptions, evaluations, and aspirations" (Casas, González, Navarro, & Aligué, 2013, p. 195). Even more in the case of youth, it is important to use this collaborative research critically so as not to, as Kyung-Hwa Yang argues, "guise power differentials between the academic researcher and participants that may exist in participatory research" (Yang, 2015, p. 448). There is always a power imbalance between even the most reflexive researchers and research participants. This power imbalance is more pronounced when participants are minors. However, recognizing the ability of participants themselves to be reflexive agents of inquiry is one way to engage them in meaning- and decision-making, making full use of "their role as knowledge producers" and the "cooperative nature of participatory research" (2015, p. 448). This is particularly important, as youth are often approached as objects rather than active subjects when it comes to meaning-making in research about them. In April 2016, I brought the rough cut of a 20-minute video back to the community-based organization to watch it with the front-line workers and some of the participants who made the video, inviting them to discuss initial themes with me.

Epistemological Approach

As I have discussed, I set out to design a mixed methods approach that would allow me to learn about how participants described and made sense of cyberviolence. I drew from feminist frameworks for approaching participation in social media to examine how we can locate these situated definitions within their specific cultural contexts. I drew from work on digital content

creation, as well as the growing body of critical literature on girls' bullying. My use of arts-based methodologies is a response to girls' digital culture literature that has emerged since the early 2000s and to Bailey and Steeves' (2015) call for the use of innovative methodologies in cyberbullying studies. I decided that PV and focus groups informed by a critical feminist lens would be the best way to approach the research problem(s). This multi-pronged approach would help centre the participants' voices and ensured they would be central to the investigation – subjects rather than objects of my researcher's gaze. I assembled an interdisciplinary methodological toolbox to examine gendered bullying via insights from the fields of feminist new media studies, critical youth studies, and feminist criminology, and this research draws from the epistemological frameworks underpinning feminist visual methodologies and youth participatory action research (YPAR). While I do not employ YPAR, many of the same epistemological concerns that inform YPAR guided my research. These epistemological reference points, outlined in the next section, helped me in situating myself as a researcher and articulating my approach to knowledge creation within the context of PV. I also offer a brief description of what a feminist approach to research entails.

Youth Participatory Action Research

More often than not, youth participatory action research is discussed as a method rather than as an epistemological position. However, as Brion-Meisels states, “its underlying assumptions also serve as [an] epistemological stance toward research about (and for) youth development” (2013). The descriptor “youth participatory action research (YPAR)” was widely adopted after the publication of Julio Cammarato and Michelle Fine's 2008 book, *Revolutionizing Education* (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2016). YPAR is most frequently used in the field of children's geographies (Lomax, 2012) and increasingly in education. At its most

revolutionary, YPAR offers a way of both acknowledging the “full humanity of young people” and respecting them as “authors and experts” (Mirra et al., 2016, p. 19) of their own experience, while challenging the problematic historical positioning of children as “incompetent, unreliable and incomplete...objects to be studied” (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010, p. 175). However, we must also avoid representing youth in our research as all-knowing, wise and liberated; it is vital that we not lose sight of recognizing knowledge as partial, situated and co-constructed (Haraway, 1991; Lomax, 2012, p. 106). I am aware that the notion of ‘giving voice’ to youth is not without contestation, and I agree with Lomax’s (2012) warning regarding romanticizing young people’s discourses. Reminders such as Lomax’s keep feminist researchers accountable to the developments of post-structuralism regarding knowledge production. For example, it is crucial we acknowledge our research findings as constructed and not ‘objective’.

I was not concerned about overvaluing young people’s voices. I do not claim to do YPAR (which places even more emphasis on young people’s analysis); my theoretical framework is grounded in feminist approaches to new media and critical girlhood studies, which helped me to balance youth participation and findings alongside my own theoretical interpretation of the data. Others have also found that engaging youth in hands-on creative activities allowed youth to voice their experiences in ways that did not require specific levels of literacy/written language competencies (Hunleth, 2011; Lomax, 2012, p. 106). Therefore, the participatory video method offers a powerful corrective to large-scale quantitative research with children that often excludes youth with varying ‘abilities’ and literacy competencies.

Moving beyond simply elevating voices, recent YPAR practices emerging from critical youth scholarship reorient “youth participation and action...outside of birth rights, age or developmental paradigms” (Cerecer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013, p. 218; Ginwright & James,

2002). As many research projects that have incorporated YPAR have demonstrated (Haynes & Tanner, 2015; Morrell, 2008), this method allows us to challenge what constitutes legitimate knowledge production, as well as who can produce knowledge. Traditionally, young people have been the objects rather than subjects of social science research and have rarely been consulted about policies, findings, and initiatives about and for them. YPAR projects engage youth in working together with members of the community toward identifying issues and offering suggested improvements, which some identify as opportunities for “radical inclusion” (Cerecer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013, p. 216). Moreover, bringing the broad epistemological underpinnings of YPAR to video work opened my eyes as a researcher to the ways in which arts-based formats can be a more inclusive method. Significantly, in practice, arts-based projects are appealing to young people because they offer a way to voice their opinions on a more flexible timeline than other methods. The format allows young people with diverse literacy and comfort levels to participate in the research process and share with adult researchers and, ideally, policy-makers, exactly what they want to communicate about their experience and when. For example, at some sessions a young person may not wish to talk or participate at all. Conventional wisdom holds that young people have little to teach their elders. This diminished interpretation of the value of young people’s knowledge is especially true when it comes to youth in poverty, the working poor and youth of colour (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2016). YPAR, however, begins with “the understanding that people – especially those who have experienced historic oppression – hold in-depth knowledge about their lives and experiences and should help shape the questions [and] frame the interpretations” of research (Torre & Fine, 2006, p. 458). In fact, findings from YPAR work have taught us that young people, particularly those who are most silenced and

marginalized, have much to teach adults and policy-makers about the issues that impact them and potential strategies to combat those issues.

Finally, YPAR emphasizes supporting youth to gain valuable skills (e.g., communication, organization – and for this project, videography, editing, interviewing and project planning) that can help them to create meaningful dialogue and change moving forward. The element of praxis that is crucial to YPAR played a significant role in my research and project design, as I felt it important to exchange something with participants that they could use or build on after the workshops ended. Often situated by practitioners as Freirian in nature, those collaborating in youth-led research are invested in supporting young people addressing real-world problems and working to effect change.⁷³ Youth-led topics addressing institutional and cultural contexts that constrain young people are at the heart of traditional YPAR projects (Ardoin, Castrechini, & Hofstedt, 2014).

The primary data used in this research came from a project that deviated from traditional YPAR approaches in several ways. For example, as mentioned earlier, the overarching research questions and impetus behind the workshops were initially my own. I do not refer to this project as YPAR, but rather as collaborative video research, because YPAR projects are typically designed around the issues and inequalities that are selected by the youth themselves.

Critical Feminist Lens

Critical feminist theory is the lens that informs my methodological ‘toolbox’ (Kilty, 2008, p. 41). My integrated theoretical and methodological approach is informed by the guiding principles of feminist research practice, specifically as they apply to arts-based research praxis

⁷³ In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), Paulo Freire defines praxis as both reflection and action. Freire argues that it is only through praxis – theory combined with action – that people can create transformation and change. For Freire, education is either a tool of oppression or one of liberation. He argues that the banking model of education in which the (powerful) teacher transmits facts that support the dominant regime serves only to shore up race and class domination (Freire, 2000; 2014).

(Brannen, 2002; Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017; Frigon & Shantz, 2014; Ivashkevich, 2017; Kindon, 2003). In *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986) and *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* (1988), Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway reconsidered objectivity as “feminist objectivity”. They argue that “knowledge and truth are always partial and inseparable from the lived experience of the research; that is, subjective, power imbued and relational” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 5). Through feminist research practice, categories such as experience are centred and valued, which leads to new methodologies that enable the researcher to uncover new ways of knowing (Scott, 1999). Since the mid-1970s, Western feminist criticism has interrogated the androcentric foundations of science and its attendant value judgments. This necessarily involves feminist interventions in the academy where “traditionally what can count as knowledge is policed by philosophers codifying cognitive canon law” (Haraway, 1988, p. 575). Central to this effort is to consider how to improve male-focused scientific assumptions and epistemologies to include women. More broadly, this effort involves creating intellectual, physical, and emotional space in universities for women, individuals with different abilities, people of colour, and the economically disadvantaged.

As Harding (1986) notes, the question of “What is to be done about the situation of women in science?” evolved into a different question: what Harding refers to as the “science question” in feminism (1986, p. 9). With the new question, “Is it possible to use for emancipatory ends sciences that are apparently so intimately involved in Western, bourgeois, and masculine projects?”, feminist thinkers challenge the ways in which sexism, racism, and classism are built into the very fabric of experiments, applications, and research designs. Following these critiques, the ways in which “their analyses of how gender symbolism, the social division of

labour by gender, and the construction of individual gender identity have affected the history and philosophy of science” are illuminated (p. 9). Critiques of Harding and Haraway’s foundational work point to the continuing reliance on the assumptions of androcentric methodologies:

In the past, feminist empiricists had worked to improve the accuracy, objectivity, and universality of mainstream positivist research by including women in their samples. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, feminist researchers began to question this very same strategy. These feminists argued that knowledge is achieved not through “correcting” or supplementing mainstream research studies by including women, but by paying close attention to the specificity of women’s individual lived experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 4-5).

This focus on situated knowledge(s) emerging from the lived realities of women and girls is important, as it offers researchers an approach with which to uncover knowledge from women and girls, who continue to be oppressed and marginalized by their place within (male-centered) dominant structures of power. Feminist research practice also invites us to reconsider the place of experience in research (an example would be emotion, which is historically gendered as female). Since emotion is so gendered historically, it is thought of as non-cognitive and non-rational and is therefore how women are subjugated within androcentric research designs (Kilty, Fabian, & Felices-Luna, 2014).

There is no one distinct feminist methodology. However, several underlying principles guide feminist research (see Brayton, 1997, p. 9-10). While there are many feminisms, one commonality has been that women and gender are at the centre of the analysis rather than constructed in opposition to the ‘normal’ (masculine) subject.⁷⁴ In feminist research, the

⁷⁴ It should be noted that feminisms are constantly evolving, and the concepts, viability and legitimacy of categories such as ‘woman’ and ‘girl’, including gendered pronouns, are currently being reevaluated in most contemporary academic feminist thought. For example, the recent project of un-fixing narratives around gender, sex and embodiment in order to expand the range of pronouns available to individuals (Halberstam, 2018; Phillips, Smith, Cook & Short, 2016) continue ongoing feminist work of “decontaminating” sexist language (e.g., Cameron, 1985). I am using the term “girls” because it is regularly used in popular cyberviolence narratives and continues to hold a strong pejorative connotation which invites critical engagement. “Girl” is also a term many of the participants used, and I do so throughout with their permission.

recognition of the researcher as being part of the research process is paramount. The relationship between the researcher and researched is foregrounded in feminist studies to balance for different levels of power and authority (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 3). Finally, there is a concern for the ethical obligations of the researcher to the individual participants, as well as for the broader applicability of the research findings to the material lives of women and girls. Indeed, one of the central goals of feminist research projects is to “study and redress the many inequities and social injustices” that continue to undercut the well-being of women and girls, and to “support social justice and societal transformation” (p. 3). One of the central investments of feminist research is engaging with participants through “an ethic of respect, collaboration and caring” (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 775 quoted in McAlister & Neill, 2007).

Popularized in the fields of sociology and philosophy (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015, p. 3), phenomenological approaches are often taken up by feminists. A phenomenological approach “is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective” (p. 3). Bringing the lives of girls and women into research involves reconsidering traditional research methods and centring points of inquiry in the lived realities of girls and women. There are two central tenets of traditional social science research (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 4) that feminism complicates: first, the expansion of feminist empiricism in the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged positivism, that was predicated upon the notion of ‘value-free’ objectivity, and second, the concept of universality, where the researcher locates a ‘truth’ about social reality that is generalizable. Feminist interventions into the androcentric canons of new media, cultural studies and criminology informed not only my theoretical framework but also the participatory visual methods and analytic tools that I used.

A Note on Intersectionality

Because many of the participants possessed either racial (white) or class privilege (or both), the contribution that this research makes to intersectionality primarily relates to whiteness, age and class. While feminists have long acknowledged the need to move away from male and bourgeois ways of knowing, white middle-class feminists often have difficulty coming to terms with the ways in which they contribute to the oppression of ‘othered’ women and girls (Delaney, 2002; Frankenberg, 1993). In this spirit, I have done my best to strive for “epistemic humility” (Kilty, 2008; Schaefer, 2013), attending to the ways in which whiteness and class inform the context and research “scenes” (Pfadenhauer, 2005) where I investigated cyberviolence and cyberbullying.⁷⁵ Further, I attend to the silences around racism, classism, ageism and sexism that permeate the findings. I outline ongoing critiques of “ornamental intersectionality” (Bilge, 2011; Morrison, 1988) from feminists of colour, as well as my specific engagement with critical race theory in the literature review (Chapter Two) and theoretical framework (Chapter Three) chapters.

Research Design

The history of the academic study of cyberbullying is a little less than two decades old, having emerged in the late 1990s.⁷⁶ Because the field is so new and CB and CV lack an agreed upon definition, survey methods that gather descriptive data dominate the field. However, more recently scholars have begun to employ focus groups and interviews as research questions have evolved (Espinoza & Juvonen, 2013, p.112). A growing number of surveys and questionnaires

⁷⁵ Scene research is closely aligned with the tradition of research on youth subcultures. In research on community-building, the term “scene research” is often interchangeable with “youth cultures” or “subcultures” (Pfadenhauer, 2005, p. 6). There are many schools of thought regarding what constitutes a research “scene”; here I use the term to refer to “symbolically, aesthetically and thematically located ‘territories’ in social space” (p. 6).

⁷⁶ The earliest published studies on cyberbullying appear predominantly in the fields of education and psychology and approach the issue as a school violence problem in classroom settings. For an early example from developmental psychology, see “Cyberbullying Research Summary” (Hinduja & Patchin, 1998).

have been conducted to study factors such as the prevalence of cyberbullying among children and adolescents (Cowie & Colliety, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010), and young adults (Wang & Kraft, 2010; Walgrave & Heirman, 2011).

The rapid proliferation of social media technologies, information communication technologies (ICTs), and their uses have made meaning-making from quantitative studies difficult. Following Bailey and Steeves' (2015) call for new forms of data gathering to attend to the "interplay between power and control in digital spaces [that are] complex and multifaceted" (p. 11), I used an arts-based methodology. Due to the fact that research on young women's descriptions of and perspectives on cyberviolence is relatively new, I opted for participatory video and focus groups. Group work allows for a richer understanding of how the groups are articulating norms and assigning collective meaning(s) to cyberviolence (Bloor et al., 2001; Ouvrein, Vandebosch, & Backer, 2017). Further, combining these particularly methodological tools is well suited to identify general trends shedding light on important areas for future researchers to focus (Ouvrein, Vandebosch, & Backer, 2017). I use an arts-based qualitative methodology to incorporate participants' voices and perspectives on the issue of gendered cyberviolence and on proposed and existing strategies to combat this problem. Moreover, PV provides a way to gather very different data from that gathered through surveys and questionnaires, which are also necessary for tackling cyberviolence.

Feminist Arts-Based Research Methods

Frigon and Shantz contend that "since the early 1990s, researchers have been developing new methodologies that transcend theory/method divisions, research categories and disciplinary backgrounds" (2015, p. 81). The methodological and epistemological plumb line throughout this research lies in privileging the voices and perspectives of girls and young women. As recognized

scholarship in the field of feminist arts-based research demonstrates, the qualitative approach to individuals' experiences places the participant at the heart of the research (Frigon, 2010, p. 181). This approach challenges positivist methods by examining how power relations and identity-factors (e.g., race, class, gender) contribute to anti-social behaviours, victimization, and criminalization (Shantz, 2012; Smart, 1990). My specific visual methodology (PV) is located within a broader tradition of feminist arts-based research (Biehl-Missal, 2015; Frigon & Shantz, 2014). Employing an arts-based method from a feminist standpoint necessitated negotiating my role in relation to the participants. My goal was to cultivate relationships with fellow filmmakers, the youth workers, and teachers through a feminist ethic of reciprocity.

Turning the (Female) Gaze on Cyberviolence: Participatory Video (PV)

Studio D at Canada's National Film Board (NFB) and the NFB's "Challenge for Change" program suggested that community media-making has a rich history rooted in feminist and social justice activism (Winton & Klein, 2010).⁷⁷ Reflecting this point, acknowledging girls as content producers and centring their voices are the motivations behind the arts-based video component of this project. The combination of focus groups and weekly video workshops allowed for a "thick description" (Geertz, 1994) of the digital culture in which cyberviolence plays out in the material experiences of the participants.⁷⁸ Following in the tradition of feminist artist/activist scholars, I employ videography as a method to allow for community-based art creation by participants that incorporates their voices (Harding, 1986; Shantz, 2012; Smith, 1987; 2005). The participants produced video work that addressed the ways in which their gendered identities intersected with

⁷⁷ Studio D was a studio created by the NFB in 1974 with the mandate of producing films by, for, and about women. Studio D was shut down in 1996 during a series of budget cuts (Waugh, Baker, & Winton, 2010).

⁷⁸ In Clifford Geertz' theory of social anthropology, specifically ethnography, he uses the term "thick description" to refer to the interpretation of practices, structures and meanings that constitute culture. Following Gilbert Ryle, Geertz argues that a "thick description" requires not only 'facts' but also interpretation (1994, p. 214). One example Geertz uses to illustrate this point is interpreting the difference in meaning between a twitch and a wink (p. 215). This is important, because a deep understanding of a situated practice is necessary in interpreting how meanings take hold in cultures.

daily lived experiences of digital space, misogyny, and cyberviolence. The participatory video component, as well as the focus groups, actively included young women in conversations around cyberviolence. In contrast to a polished social issue documentary with normative production values, the emphasis is on the process as much as the product.

The PV method has an established track record of efficacy for eliciting collaborative work (Haynes & Tanner, 2015). PV offers a powerful means of interacting with and including people in the research process who, due to marginalization, are often ignored or silenced. Most studies published on PV exist in the geography and development literature, and the method has been used to study issues with youth such as climate change (Haynes & Tanner, 2015; Plush, 2009), sexual violence (De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012; Mitchell & De Lange, 2011; Molony, Zonie, & Goodsmith, 2007), and HIV/AIDS (Mitchell & De Lange, 2012; Waite & Conn, 2011; Walsh, 2012). The goal of the PV process is that the video-making is conducted by a group or community rather than by an individual or filmmaking team producing content about them (as is often the case in normative documentary filmmaking). PV emphasizes the visual as self-representation “where community members use...moving images to share their perspectives and lived experiences around a topic or issue of concern” (Sitter, 2012, p. 541). As is the case in other forms of video production, PV involves many activities, including filming, editing, and directing. In the case of narrative film, activities such as storyboarding and scripting are also involved.

Participants are not required to have any prior technical videography or editing training; they review footage and make editing/content choices; at the end of the process, if appropriate and agreed upon, the videos produced are screened for the community. As Haynes and Tanner (2015) note, a central aspect of PV is that these steps are iterative. What makes the process of

community participatory video production even more complex is working through what Miller and Smith (2012) refer to as the collective ownership over a PV project. As Miller and Smith rightly note, the production process often requires constant reconsideration of the progress made at each stage and how it contributes to the goals of the project (2012). Because I worked with youth and conducted workshops through an organization, youth workers were present throughout; I also separately reviewed the footage with the youth workers, so that the front-line workers had a chance to discuss the videos.

Participatory video is one of several visual methodologies (e.g., photovoice, collage) that offer a non-confrontational way to approach sensitive topics with youth (Berry, 2003; Lomax, Fink, Singh, & High, 2011; Mitchell & de Lange, 2012). Since the mid-1990s, researchers have been working through the limitations of PV while demonstrating its benefits for conducting quality research with young women as well as for consciousness-raising and social change (Mitchell, 2008). Jo Spence and Joan Solomon's *What Can a Woman Do with a Camera?* (1995), Caroline Wang's photovoice work with Yunnan farmers (1996; 1997) and Claudia Mitchell's work (2007; 2011) have demonstrated the power of participatory visual methodologies for exploring feminist ways of looking as well as constructions and experiences of girlhood globally (Kendon, 2003).

Research Context

Field Sites

Over the fall of 2014, winter of 2015 and spring of 2016, I conducted a series of PV workshops and focus groups on the topic of gendered cyberviolence at a community-based organization and at an elite private school in Quebec. I chose these organizations due to their interest in discussing issues of gendered violence. I asked participants if they would work with

me to produce short videos in small groups on the theme of “what cyberviolence means to me”. This consisted of one-minute videos and a longer piece at the community-based organization, which ended up being a 20-minute collaborative documentary edited by an eighteen-year-old Concordia University journalism student. During the process, the participants were very proud and excited about the work they were producing and expressed a desire to post it online. I explained to them that the last thing I would want would be that they receive cyberharassment due to a project invested in addressing the issue. The young people remained eager to share their work, and to date two community screenings have taken place; the work has also been shown at academic conferences.⁷⁹

The community-based organization and drop-in centre has a mandate of creating programming for Anglophone and Francophone youth aged 15-18 who have been victims, perpetrators, and/or witnesses to violence, including self-harm. The organization’s stated mission is to create peer-peer messages of non-violence, to create youth leaders who take these messages into schools. The private school field site offers Grade 7-11 education. The school has an integrated technology program. Each student is required to have the latest model of iPad at the beginning of the school year; the school provides this iPad to them on the first day of class as part of their tuition fees. Faculty and students send homework and communications to each other via the school’s web portal, and the school strives to integrate technology in all subjects taught. There is a parallel between the field sites with the implementation of technology at both locations. The community-based organization uses media technology to initiate peer-peer conversations and facilitate youth worker-youth dialogue; the private school uses it to enhance the education and prepare students for a networked economy.

⁷⁹ Two screenings for the broader Quebec community were held: one at John Abbott College and one at McGill’s Participatory Cultures Lab, where two participants accompanied me on a panel to reflect on the process of filmmaking.

Participants

I worked on the eight video workshops with a total of 56 (N=56) youth aged 15-18 at the private high school and the community-based organization, and conducted focus groups with 112 (N=112) young people, a total of 78 (N=78) with four groups at the Quebec private school, and a total of 34 (N=34) with two groups at the community-based organization. At the community-based organization, four boys were very interested in participating, and after watching the respectful dynamic they had with the girls in the group, I decided it would be unethical to exclude them, considering they were actively engaged in discussing VAWG online, and my position that boys and men need to be engaged in solutions to VAWG. However, given that this research focuses on girls, and given the small sample of boys, I chose to exclude the boys from the analyses contained herein. I endeavour to analyze their perspectives and the data they produced in a separate project. Participants were recruited through the Cyber and Sexual Violence project by the youth workers and teachers at the private school and community-based organization. The youth workers at the community-based organization granted permission on the understanding that young men would not be excluded if they were present and wished to participate.

The participants in both the video workshops and focus groups included members of diverse class, ethnic, racialized and linguistic groups. Due to the doubly sensitive nature of the subject matter and the video work, I did not set out to collect and document individual experiences of cyberbullying or victimization. Rather, I was focused on trying to find the most empowering ways to facilitate discussions that would allow us to unpack the ways in which cyberbullying is constructed, in order to better understand the ways in which participants' explanations of cyberviolence may challenge or reproduce mainstream cyberbullying discourses.

It was also important to offer a space for ownership over these discussions. For these reasons, I did not collect demographic information about the research participants; however, the Cyber and Sexual Violence (2013-2017) study, with which I collaborated, did collect this information (i.e., age, gender, ethnic, racial, religious heritage, linguistic and/or cultural group) through anonymous surveys and questionnaires.

At the community-based organization, 34 (N=34) young people aged 15-18 participated in the weekly drop-in workshops, with a core group of seven (N=7) filmmakers returning each week. It was clear which groups of students were engaged in the activity and which groups and individuals chose to use the time for other pursuits. I recorded rough numbers, along with observations of engagement levels, in my field notes. Over the course of eight weeks, the youth and I spent 18 hours on the research problem, beginning with my invitation (“what cyberviolence means to me”, with an additional question about PV’s intersection with gender) and working through the topics suggested by the young video makers. Many hours were spent on the video-making workshops; approximately 36 hours of video footage was shot by the youth participants. Additionally, an eighteen-year-old first-year undergraduate student at Concordia University who was interning with the Cyber and Sexual Violence Project took a few stills and approximately two hours of footage with the teenaged participants (filming the filming).

Data Collection Processes

Youth voices are located at the heart of the filmmaking workshops. In each workshop, PV functions as a research tool as well as a production practice. I conducted eight two-hour video workshops at the community-based organization and private school for girls, and six focus groups in total. Two focus groups were conducted at the community-based organization: one with 29 (N=29) participants and one with 5 (N=5). Four focus groups were conducted at the

private school with 18 (N=18), 16 (N=16), 24 (N=24), and 20 (N=20), participants respectively. The same broad research problems were addressed at each location for symmetry.

Each workshop began with a short (10- to 15-minute) technical exercise. During the first couple of workshops, these included production basics such as using the equipment and framing a shot. Volunteers would act as a videographer; I would demonstrate different ways to frame a shot and basic lighting ideas so we could clearly see everyone in the frame and not lose anyone in shadow. Each week I screened a short documentary from a different historical period (e.g., Lumière Brothers' *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, 1895) and outlined different styles of documentary (e.g., cinema vérité, experimental, observational). As the weeks went by, we often began with a topic that was prominent during the previous week; I would sometimes bring in a YouTube video pertaining to the topic to discuss before we moved into breakout groups. Each small group decided what issue they were going to focus on for that day and they would shoot interview footage on the community-based organization's digital single-lens reflex (SLR) cameras. During any given workshop, there were four or five SLR cameras in use, including the one handled by the Concordia University student. All footage was uploaded by a youth worker at the organization to a password-protected storage space; I downloaded the footage to a password-protected external hard drive and then securely deleted it from the cameras. In the last session, I did an introduction to post-production at Concordia University's Technoculture, Art and Games (TAG) Lab. The participants reviewed the footage as a group. Twelve (N=12) participants, one (N=1) from the community-based organization and 11 (N=11) from the private school assembled one-minute videos from the footage they shot in groups. These one-minute videos were downloaded to the project's password-protected hard drive and then deleted from TAG computers. At the private school, the participants sent one-minute videos to me through the

school's internal portal; the videos were stored on a password-protected hard drive and then deleted from my computer.

Focus Groups and Transcription

Since the early 2000s, focus groups have been growing in popularity among feminist researchers, largely due to the productivity of the focus group format, the privileging of marginalized viewpoints and experiences, their value in contextualizing data, and their ability to engage a collective perspective (Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 234). Focus groups are also helpful when examining sensitive subjects, as the collective nature of dialogue facilitates the sharing of and reflection on stories (p. 239). As Ringrose and Renold (2014) demonstrate, focus groups with girls allows for the unsettling of normalized discourses and concepts such as victim-blaming and 'slut' tropes. Their reflection on a focus group conducted with girls in a high school sheds light on how the space opened by focus groups can also be quickly foreclosed. Ringrose and Renold describe how a discussion about the SlutWalk movement caused the girls to become animated and how it was not long before teachers re-drew boundaries around the young women's participation – and in doing challenged their autonomy – by suggesting that the girls would not likely be attending the SlutWalk in their U.K. city and that teachers would go on their behalf (2014, p. 775). Focus groups are becoming more appealing to feminist researchers as a way to facilitate discussion between participants that illuminates meanings that have been unclear. For example, intergenerational confusion around terminology has made digital culture studies with youth particularly complex (boyd, 2014). The collective nature of the focus group appeals to feminist researchers, as it encourages girls to realize that experiences are not just individual but socially structured, and often constrained through patriarchal structures (Hesse-Biber, 2013,

p. 242). In other words, focus groups allow for the linking of feminist praxis to the research process through potentially empowering exchanges.⁸⁰

Although focus groups have historically been used to measure consumer satisfaction with marketing products, their use in social research can be traced back to the World War II era (Latendre & Williams, 2014). The information gained from a focus group is, of course, performative and rooted in group dynamics. The collective information gained in focus groups “often mirrors the social context where the phenomenon of interest is experienced” (Latendre & Williams, 2014, p. 11); this sheds light on the common-sense meanings normalized in the setting, enabling a multilayered understanding of the problem to emerge (p. 11). It is well documented that youth are often excluded from the research process, which omits the social and experiential realities of young people and weakens the validity of findings (Schelbe, Chanmugam, Moses, Saltzburg, Williams & Latendre, 2015). This lack of voices is compounded when it comes to research involving girls; facilitating girls-only focus groups and/or focus groups centred around girlhood is one important way to mitigate the ethical and academic conundrums that result from this gap. There are several reasons why girl studies scholars use focus groups, including: empowering voices subordinated through age, race and gender, (Hyams, 2004), challenging traditional power relationships (Ringrose & Renold, 2014; Wilkinson, 1998), and listening for meaningful silences (Hyams, 2004; Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1997). One thing these scholars agree on is that focus groups are an ideal method for research with adolescent girls (Gilligan & Brown, 1992) and often make the research process more interesting and enjoyable for girls

⁸⁰ It should be acknowledged that some researchers refer to “consciousness raising” as a component of focus groups. This term stems from the second wave of the feminist movement and is now widely critiqued. For examples, see Pini, 2002 and Montell, 1999. Rather, I am suggesting here, following Hyams (2004) and Ringrose and Renold (2014), that focus groups with girls offer insight into performative group dynamics, as well as the opportunity to understand the relevant meanings of digital practices from girls’ perspectives. Focus groups also provide a space for voice and the opportunity for potentially empowering peer-peer engagement among girls.

(Latendre & Williams, 2014). There are some distinct differences between conducting focus groups in school settings and in conducting them in community-based organizations and drop-in programs. The differences became clear over the course of data collection for this project, and while focus groups proved effective in both locations, the shape they took and the group relationship dynamics among the groups were distinct at each location.

As Joan Letendre and Lela Rankin Williams (2014) note, conducting focus groups in school settings requires developing a positive relationship with teachers and school officials while being attentive to ensuring that space for expression is possible. I had to navigate many of these dynamics, such as negotiating institutional discourses (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). However, because I was collecting data as part of a much larger research project, the research team had already established rapport and consent had been obtained for the project through the school's parent-teacher portal, which I reviewed with the school administrator. This allowed me more time to develop a positive relationship with the teachers whose classrooms I would be entering, enabling me to communicate the types of issues I wanted to create space for. For example, if the word 'slut' was used, I did not want to shut down those conversations. It is well documented that adolescence is a time when the social, cultural and even physical voice recedes and is repressed (Rodenburg, 2015).⁸¹ Focus groups are one way to challenge this phenomenon.

Qualitative researchers typically prefer transcripts over solely relying on field notes or memory (Edwards & Lampert, 2014, p. 3). Transcription does involve a "change of medium" from a verbal narrative to a written record (Kvale, 1988, p. 97). However, careful attention to detail results in an accurate account of what was told to the researcher. As I will discuss later,

⁸¹ In *The Right to Speak: Working with the Voice* (2015), speaking in a North American context while making reference to other sites such as Japan, Nancy Rosenberg notes that during adolescence, girls' "posture and breath" suffer a decline due to socialization, often resulting in diminished vocal production. For example, Rosenberg points to social imperatives for girls not to sound "coarse" or to "shriek", arguing that this results in a 'feminine' sound that is difficult to unlearn (p. 76).

facial expressions, body language and tone of voice are particularly important when evaluating video footage; this is why I analyzed the transcripts and video side by side in NVivo 11 for the initial pass at coding. While many scholars (Kiyimba & O'Reilly, 2016; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Tilley, 2003) rightly complicate the constructed nature of transcription (namely, that it comes about through a series of decisions), transcription remains an important tool. This is particularly true with the transcription of video footage. For example, the transcription process for video work allows for significant insight into group dynamics, as well as who is speaking, when, and how they are physically occupying the space.⁸² During transcription, I did not alter the participants' grammar and/or sentence structure so as to capture the range of oral communication ability that existed within the groups; I did not alter participants' comments, other than adding my own punctuation for ease of reading. All quotations appear in this manuscript as they are recorded in the transcripts. For instance, many groups of participants spent quite a bit of time giggling, and I have made note of when this occurred in subsequent chapters. In the 1950s, Goffman used still photographs for insight into self-presentation as well as specific moments of interaction (Grady, 2015; Pounders, Kowalczyk, & Stowers, 2016). Today an increasing number of critical scholars across disciplines employ visual data collection methods such as video (Powell, Francisco, & Maher, 2003). Video allows not just for multiple viewings but also multiple points of view and input from participants during analysis, since they can watch and review footage (Lesh & Lehrer, 2000). Video is also particularly popular for reviewing data with young people due to its accessibility (Haynes & Tanner, 2015).

⁸² It is important to note that, following a constructionist approach, I view video data as a construction rather than as an unbiased representation of relationships, as some positivist, quantitative or anthropological modes of research suggest (for a more detailed description of this distinction, see Powell, Francisco, & Maher, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Feminist researchers who engage in participatory action research (PAR) actively work toward subverting power relations embedded within many traditional social science methodologies. The two major tenets of feminist PAR that guide the research process are the focus on community-based and community-driven inquiry, and collaborative knowledge production that leads to understandings that bring about change (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014). The ethics of PAR research complement the theoretical investments as well as the ethical commitments of feminist research. For example, feminist research is always invested in “bringing new or seldom heard ideas, images, conversations and voices into the public forum” (Simmonds, Roux, & Avest, 2015). The ethical guidelines of feminist PAR emphasize placing the agency of participants as a central concern and necessitates caution in romanticizing marginalized subjects (e.g., those labelled vulnerable, socially excluded, ‘voiceless’), lest we end up reifying these oppressive categories (Peron, Holmes, & Jacob, 2014). The positive outcomes attributed to feminist PAR are enhanced credibility of the research generated, greater community ownership of research initiatives, and “enhanced uptake of actionable messages” (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014, p. 999; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007).

Participatory action research (as with all research methodologies) becomes far more ethically complex when the subjects are children or youth. Many researchers have pointed out the tensions that arise between the official ‘protection’ discourses enshrined in university ethics boards and the institutionalized practices of PAR (Butz, 2008; Cahill, 2007). As Amy Ritterbusch argues, in the case of Bogotana street girls, “Although well intentioned, 45 CFR 46 [the federal regulation governing human subject research in the United States] is a bureaucratic discourse that positions youth in problematic ways and is out of place in the world of *Bogotana*

street girls” (2012, p. 18). As Ritterbusch explains, institutional protection discourses approach young people not as social actors but as dependent human “becomings” (Skelton & Valentine, 1998, p. 6 quoted in Ritterbusch, 2012, p. 18). For example, when conducting fieldwork with vulnerable girls, specifically street-identified in Ritterbusch’s case, “obtaining consent does not just happen in one place or in one moment; rather, it happens over time and in multiple spaces through the enactment of care ethics and communicative research relations” (Ritterbusch, 2012, p. 20). While PV with youth is ethically complex (Ali, 2009), the voice afforded youth through PV is evidence of the potential for PV in advocacy and activist projects that may empower girls and community members (Sitter, 2012).

The tools needed to produce and disseminate documentary videos are more accessible than ever (e.g., smartphones, digital video cameras, YouTube), allowing us to increase the public visibility of ethical and moral issues that typically go unrepresented in the mainstream media. When thinking through the ethics of documentary making, we must ask: “What is the issue being focused on in this documentary and why?” (Butchart, 2014, p. 84) We must also ask how is the story being told in this documentary, and from what perspective? (2014).

Crucial to my use of the documentary genre in the research process is recognizing the history of women’s and girls’ bodies on film. What does it mean for girls to put their bodies in front of a camera? When so much of the history of film was built on the objectified bodies of girls and women, it is vitally important to think through the ramifications of using documentary as a method. The history of objectification in cinema informed my decision to ask the participants if they wanted to be behind the camera operating it and driving content, and/or to be on screen. I also secured informed consent, handed a large amount of production and content control over to participants, and started a dialogue around the medium of video itself.

It is a matter of feminist ethics that public and academic discourse and debate around girls and cyberviolence include the voices of girls. As girlhood scholars such as Mitchell and Reid-Walsh have demonstrated, facilitating the creation of self-images through visual arts “meets a key goal of anti-colonial feminist approaches in providing tools for recognizing and better understanding the multiple shifting identities and related intersecting experiences of marginalization and oppression” (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2013, p. 3). The video content at both the community-based organization and the private school was produced only after parental consent, teacher and youth worker ‘gatekeeper’ consent, and most importantly, informed consent on the part of the young people participating was obtained. Drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (The United Nations, 1989), informed consent when conducting research with youth entails outlining exactly what the researcher’s purpose is in a language youth can understand.

The need for parental consent caused quite a delay for several of participants who wished to participate at the community-based organization; it was difficult to explain to them that this was a requirement of the university ethics board. I had to explain several times that participants’ consent and the consent of the organization were not enough for them to participate. That some young people’s voices were effectively silenced by well-intentioned institutional ethics provisions was an eye-opening experience. Interestingly, obtaining parental consent from the affluent, predominantly white, participants at the elite private school was straightforward and happened quickly. This underscores the assumptions and privilege inherent in university ethics boards’ understanding of youth and informed consent and highlights some of the reasons that white, middle-class youth problematically continue to be privileged in academic research initiatives. Obtaining parental consent also illustrates the ethical tension between seeing young

people as a vulnerable population and recognizing how they can be inadvertently restricted from participating in research about them.

Analysis of Qualitative Data and Introduction to the Findings

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was originally developed to build theory based on findings. However, not everyone “who uses its strategies intends to develop theory” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 20). When I embarked on the data collection journey, I did not intend to develop a new theory, but rather to build an exploratory study and employ an interdisciplinary feminist theoretical framework to analyze a (relatively) new area. Because I was conducting my data collection as part of a larger study, I also needed to ensure that my research questions fit within the scope of the umbrella project. This task made drawing on the tools and concepts of grounded theory a logical choice. I follow a constructivist approach to grounded theory as identified by Charmaz, who argues that it “views research as an emergent product of times, social conditions, and interactional situations” (2008, p. 160). Rather than assuming we can remove ourselves from the research process (Glaser, 1992), constructivists suggest that we make our investments and assumptions an explicit part of the investigation and analysis (Charmaz, 2008, p. 160).

In grounded theory, the researcher is constantly interacting with the data and engaging in analysis from the early stages of the project (Charmaz, 2006). For example, the initial use of very broad research questions increased the validity of my findings regarding the contexts that structured and informed participants’ experiences of gendered harassment and gender policing in social media spaces. The usefulness of broad, open questions in grounded theory became apparent during the data collection process and even more so during the coding and analysis process, as findings reflecting a host of issues and terminology that I would never have linked

directly to cyberbullying emerged from the participants. For example, during one focus group, three participants began a long discussion about girls' clothing, "sexy pictures", and the ways in which their clothing choices (and those imposed by parents – mothers were mentioned specifically) could render them susceptible to becoming victims of sexual violence. This extended conversation, which at first glance was not necessarily about cyberbullying or cyberviolence, was not unique to either that focus group or the video workshops.

That several themes emerged seemingly disconnected from explicit examples of cyberbullying suggests that in order to understand how girls negotiate harassment and hostility in these spaces in relation to boys, other girls, and adults, more needs to be learned about youth digital culture. Understanding the contexts in which these incidents and experiences occur will contribute to an understanding of what cyberviolence consists of and how to go about addressing the issue in ways that are relevant for real, not hypothetical, young people. If I had not used broad questions, I would not have understood how CV and CB are connected to and born from rape culture and misogyny. The initial questions that inspired my research and shaped the design of the study were:

- What is cyberviolence?
- What does cyberviolence mean to you?
- Does gender (identity) impact online experiences?
- Do you think there is a relationship between identity- factors such as race, age, or ability and experiences of cyberviolence?

In the spirit of feminist ethnography, the major sub-topics that emerged as themes acted as the starting point for the video groups each week. This strategy, called *theoretical sampling* (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007), refers to gathering more data that focuses on an emergent

category, and brings explicit checks and refinement into the analysis (Charmaz, 2014). These categories often emerged from what the participants had focused on the previous week, and the participants would tell me whether I was ‘on the right track’ or not. For example, in multiple workshops at both locations, participants used the term “drama” as a substitute for words such as meanness, cruelty, harassment, bullying or ridicule. Following Charmaz (2014), the following week I brought this theme of “drama” back to the participants to see if they agreed that this was an important term in their conceptualizing of cyberviolence and cyberbullying.

Kathy Charmaz explains that “grounded theory starts with inductive logic but moves into abductive reasoning as the researcher seeks to understand emergent findings” (2008, p. 160). For example, as mentioned earlier, the topic of “sexy pictures” came up repeatedly, and a collective decision was made to add this topic as a category for further data collection. Interestingly, participants at both field sites suggested examining girls who “sexualize” themselves as a category of analysis, although the discourse of slut-shaming was markedly stronger at the private school. One of the most obvious benefits of Charmaz’ approach to theoretical sampling has been the way in which it allowed me to deal with variation within a category (2008, p. 207). To paraphrase Charmaz’s unique approach to grounded theory, it is the initial coding that gets the researcher started, the theoretical sorting that points the researcher in a direction to move toward, and the theoretical sampling where variations emerge (2014). Distinct from sampling in positivist research, theoretical sampling in a constructivist grounded theory approach requires collecting additional data to flesh out the categories that are emerging, and pertains to the “conceptual development” of the researcher’s analysis, rather than to generalizable findings about a population (2014). As the weekly video workshops went by, participants were noticeably more comfortable with me and with the group dynamic, and often initiated conversations around

topics related to the research problem(s) on their own. In fact, the teacher with whom I liaised at the private school told me that her class had formed a discussion group on cyberbullying and was doing a research project of their own. That the participants formed their own project suggests something about the level of confidence and engagement that participants felt regarding their collaborative video work and in dealing with the issue in their own voice and from their own perspective.

In sum, my intention was to design a study in which young people were actively involved as both participants and co-creators of knowledge. By using a mixed methods approach, participants and I developed a better understanding of how a group of Quebec adolescents (aged 15-18) defined cyberviolence and a more nuanced understanding of the various narratives that they used to discuss and think through specific examples that occurred in their daily lives. The participants acted as knowledge brokers and worked collaboratively with me by reviewing the previous week's transcript and confirming or 'tweaking' what I had identified as the major topics and themes. If participants were intrigued by a particular topic but were more enthusiastic about discussing a related issue, the workshop followed their interest in that subtopic. As time went on, the participants became comfortable enough to tell me what they thought might be a better way to phrase a question or begin a conversation.

Open Coding and Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most popular ways to analyze qualitative data, and involves pinpointing, examining and recording patterns (referred to as themes) within sets of data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Due to the personal nature of qualitative research and the vast array of approaches and systems used to make sense of qualitative data, it is necessary to review the processes used to analyze the data collected (Sinclair, 2002, p. 81). As my research

design privileged young people's knowledge, experiences and perspectives, I engaged thematic analysis because it is well suited to inquiries pertaining to subjective considerations of representation and interpretation. Moreover, qualitative thematic analysis supports the notion that participants' subjective perspectives are a valid and important source of data (Wuest, 1995). In line with the conventions of an exploratory study as outlined by Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012), specific codes and categories were not predetermined, no hypotheses were created in advance, and the codes I generated were derived from the data. As Scott-Myhre (2009) argues, when conducting participatory research, it is necessary for the researcher to bring her academic world together with the world(s) of the participants with whom she works (2009). Occupying this liminal space required that I provide and delineate descriptions of cyberviolence. In order to identify patterns in participants video work and responses, I followed Scott-Myhre's guidelines by putting the descriptors of CV and its social contexts as offered by my participants into conversation with my own academic (and personal) reflections on the workshops and focus groups (Scott-Myrhe, 2009, p. xiii).

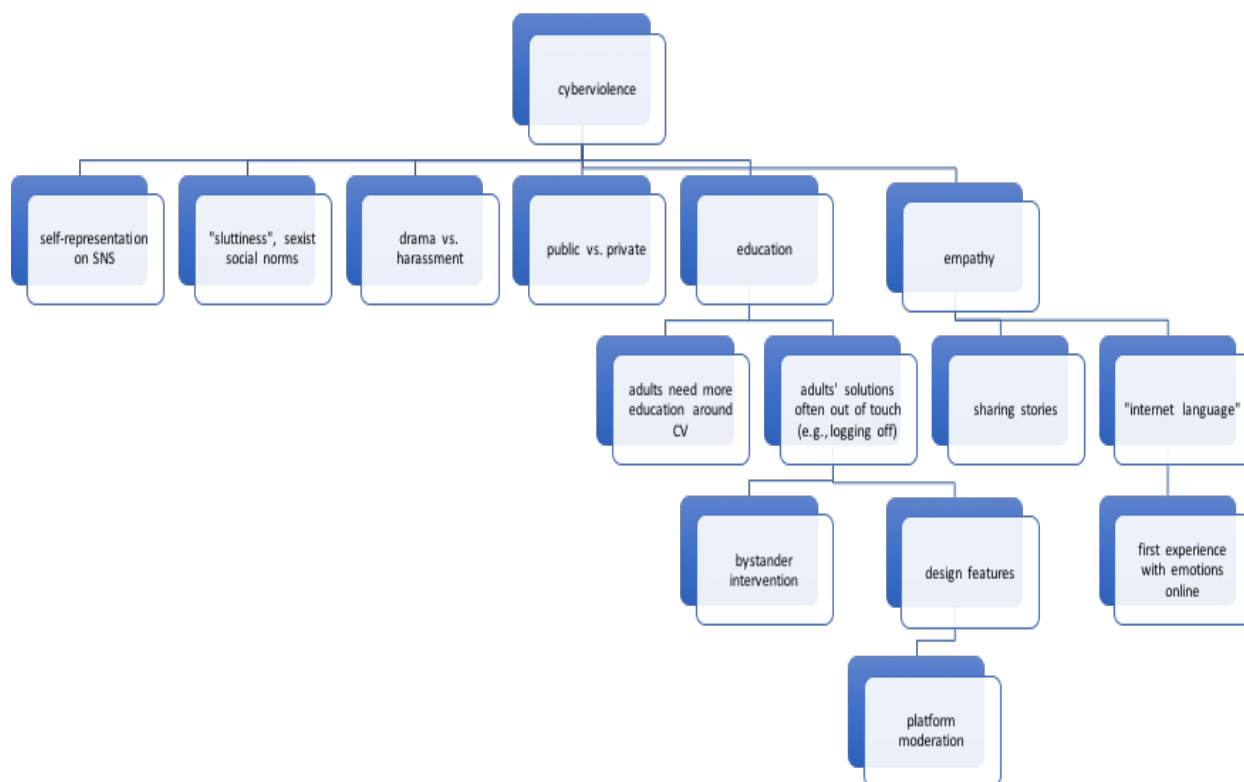
I followed the procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and adapted by Kathy Charmaz (2014) as a supplemental approach to thematic analysis, which does not offer a specific formula or preset structure for open and axial coding (Charmaz, 2014). After importing all my Microsoft Word transcripts into NVivo software, my initial open coding resulted in 68 themes (nodes in NVivo) I identified, and 121 sub-themes. I then employed axial coding where I worked to merge and consolidate sub-themes which fit within six over-arching themes. I identified six central themes in participants' descriptors and conceptualizing of CV and cyberbullying (CB). The six themes participants mobilized were: 1) CV most often connected to self-representation through social media imagery; 2) CV is tied to the figure of the "slut" and "sluttiness"; 3) the

blurring of public and private on social media facilitates CV; 4) CV is normalized through “drama” and “jokes”; 5) education is at the root of potential solutions to CV; and 6) empathy is at the root of potential solutions to CV. The major themes clustered around three central concepts: social contexts and norms (Chapter Five), online platforms and practices that normalize misogyny (Chapter Six), and anti-CV strategies (Chapter Seven). Participants overwhelmingly focused on a set of misogynist practices and social norms that shape their experiences of digital (and analog) culture. Rather than producing a homogeneous description of cyberbullying, the participants with whom I spoke and filmed outlined their social realities on social networking sites (SNS), while challenging and nuancing adults’ perceptions of the root causes of cyberviolence and best practices for addressing it. The findings highlight the need to understand CV as structured by systemic (online) misogyny. After I transcribed all video footage and focus groups, Microsoft Word documents were imported into a password-protected NVivo 11 file on my password-protected desktop computer. This strategy allowed me to ‘see’ all my data at the same time, including the video footage which I could see parallel to the transcripts of what was said by participants. With a large volume of data, NVivo was useful in facilitating my initial labelling and memo writing for the hundreds of codes that resulted from my initial search for repeating patterns and meaning. I also imported any reflections and memos I had recorded during and after individual video workshops and focus groups.

Following Charmaz (2014), I did not adhere to the specific structure of axial coding as prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Charmaz acknowledges that the temptation for students and new PhDs is to impose a procedural rule-bound application of grounded theory on their data. Although Charmaz admits that this is understandable, she argues that “learning to tolerate ambiguity permits the researcher to become receptive to creating emergent categories and

strategies” (2008, p. 168). I did not impose a structure to my analytic process; however, I did develop subcategories of the emerging themes and worked out what was linking them as I filled in the missing pieces with the voices of the participants. This approach to coding allowed me to see connections between the participants’ opinions and experiences of cyberbullying and how these were situated in the broader contexts of their online/offline social worlds. As Charmaz (2014) outlines, this analytic approach differs from Strauss and Corbin’s axial coding in that the analytic strategies are emergent, rather than procedural, applications. The sample coding frame I used to organize themes and sub-themes below demonstrates the way the coding approach, drawing from Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis and Charmaz’s (2014) approach to grounded theory, was used to analyze the data set.

Figure 4.1 Sample Coding Frame



After I explained that I valued their firsthand experience and knowledge as experts on the issue of cyberviolence, the participants became more engaged. As discussed in previous chapters, however, at the private school this engagement often took the form of trying to convince me that they did not have firsthand experience of cyberviolence. I suggest that because participants were invited to discuss cyberviolence as a social issue and not as a personal one, the conversations flowed freely, including when participants chose to personalize the issue. Many of the central themes that emerged from the data were interconnected and were often expressed together. For example, the following excerpt from the transcripts demonstrates how participants wove multiple themes through peer-peer discussions:

Zan (15): do you think being a girl or boy online affects how we talk to other people and treat?

Brianna (15): I went through cyberviolence personally and I think that girls are attacked more than boys by negative comments, insults and rumours like harmful, abusive and bad messages like demeaning pictures and hurtful comments.

Dawn (15): It happens online because there is nobody monitoring what goes online. I think it's mainly parents' fault if kids post something racist or discriminating in any way. Parents need to control their kids and their use of technology like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. At my work, I see three-year-olds and four-year-olds on their parents' iPhones there is no control over kids and technology.

Avery (16): I've had friends that are girls that know about cyberviolence and they still send nudes to guys. I mean as long as us, women, don't respect ourselves no one else will.

H.R.C.: Where do you most commonly encounter these types of CV?

Brianna (15): Mostly in pictures, comments, verbal confrontations, recordings, messages, posts like memes and chatrooms.

In this excerpt, it is clear that some of the central themes and subthemes (e.g., victim-blaming, a double standard around self-representation on social media, and the need for more regulations) are interlocking. Moreover, participants incorporated several popular (sexist) themes from anti-CB curricula in their discussion.

Analysis of Video Footage

The visual image continues to be overlooked in qualitative research (Silverman, 2006). To be sure, there are some good reasons for this, including the fear that a focus on the image will “detract attention from the social processes involved in image production and reception” (Silverman, p. 241). However, there are valuable elements that offer ingredients for rich analysis in visual image work, such as who is looking at whom, and body language cues. Visual data is neither better nor worse than any other form of qualitative data, but it must be attended to carefully and with attention to the specificity of the visual image. For example, one cannot apply the same analytic tools as one does for a transcript from an interview or an observational memo.

Incorporating visual recordings into a research project allows the researcher to consider a material record of the interactions and conversations that take place in the research scene. As Heath and Hindmarsh (2002) argue, besides offering important environmental cues, the visual image can play an important role in the researcher’s construction and interpretation of the meanings created by participants:

Communication in most environments hinges on an interplay of tactile and spoken cues: In face-to-face interaction, social actions and activities are accomplished through a variety of means, spoken, visual and tactile, and in many cases, talk is inextricably embedded in the material environment and the bodily conduct of participants. So, for example, gesture often works with and within particular utterances to accomplish a particular action, and turns at talk are delicately coordinated with the visual conduct, such as visual alignment, of the co-participants. Participants point, refer to and invoke objects in interaction, they use tools, artefacts, and technologies and the immediate environment provides resources for making sense of the actions of others (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002, p. 11).

This passage intimates the value of visual data, which allows for a richer understanding of how “shared meanings” (Hall, 1997) circulate and the work they do within a specific cultural context. Visual analysis conducted alongside traditional coding gave me a greater insight into understanding the gendered significance of practices such as the selfie in young people’s digital

cultures. For example, it was through reviewing a conversation during which two participants acted out the process of taking a selfie that the complex negotiations that take place when girls strive to articulate the ‘right’ girl image crystallized for me. Although numerous participants described the pressure to be perceived as ‘perfect’ when conceptualizing cyberviolence, this specific conversation in their video work led me to understand how the pressure to perform the ‘right’ type of girl is linked to cyberviolence. In other words, this pressure participants were describing was not a side issue, but rather a feature that they identified as being central to their experiences and perceptions of cyberviolence. The mainstream media and anti-cyberbullying curricula mobilize a great deal of scare tactics that target girls and aim to change their behaviour and presentation of self (Hasinoff, 2015). Therefore, engaging with girls through the tools of digital culture offers a way to begin to balance the image bank of cyberviolence and resist the technophobia that continues to inform academic and popular discourse around girls’ use of ICTs and social media.

The Role of Listening in Feminist Analysis

I drew on some of the major underlying tenets of the listening guide approach during the analysis process. The listening guide approach was originally developed by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan in their foundational book *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development* (1992). Since its early development in social psychology, the listening guide has now taken on a distinctly sociological form (Walby, 2013, p. 146). As it was not necessary for addressing my research problems, I did not follow the listening guide procedures, which involve removing the “I” in all transcripts and reconstructing flows of text to identify narratives. These “I poems” (Gilligan, Spencer & Weinberg, p. 259), it is suggested, allow the researcher to bring the participants’ talk about the self to the fore and to separate individual

participant narratives from the grand narratives found in the transcripts. However, I worked from the two distinctive epistemological standpoints assumed in the listening guide analytic method. Firstly, I approached the thematic analysis through a relational understanding of the social world “which posits that selves are always enmeshed in relations with others” (2013, Walby, p. 146). Secondly, I continued my commitment to reflexivity and awareness of power relations regarding the participants. These tenets form the core of the listening guide (p. 146) and informed my critical feminist lens. Participants were consulted at every stage of the analysis process. After I had taken my findings back to some of the participants at the community-based organization and the private school, I took my initial findings to eight participants between the ages of 16 and 18 to ask for their feedback on them. I did this to ensure that I had heard the participants and that I had interpreted their perspectives in a way that made sense to young people. I also did this to make sure the variation on themes, as well as the terminology that emerged, rang true for them. After these consultations, I was satisfied that I had reached theoretical saturation, and I finalized the analysis with six major themes across three concentrations.

Throughout the data collection process, it was my intention to help cultivate participants’ confidence in developing their voices, something activists and community leaders are doing effectively with social justice programming and arts-based activities (Knowlton, 2017). Throughout the following three chapters, I mobilize the words of the participants. In a few instances, where participants’ words were unclear, I have added words in parenthesis for clarity. There were a few times where I probed during a focus group or video workshop, and in quotations where I was engaged, I have added those comments; these are denoted with my initials, H.R.C. While there were differences in participant responses, the major themes focus

primarily on the patterns of similarity that emerged, except for examining some differences between discourses and terminology that varied within themes and between the two locations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reflected on my positionality and dual role as researcher/filmmaker in relation to the study, before turning to a discussion of the epistemological commitments that informed its design, as well as the process of data collection. I then reviewed the multi-pronged methodology I used to explore how participants described and conceptualized cyberviolence and cyberbullying; that is, I described the epistemological and practical concerns of carrying out feminist arts-based research and participatory video. This was followed by a consideration of the ethics of undertaking a participatory video project with young women. Finally, I described how I went about building relationships with organizations and locating participants, and described the “scenes” where participant groups were located. In the final section, I provided details regarding the analysis of the data, including the steps I took to carry out the transcription, coding and qualitative thematic analysis (QTA).

In the following three chapters, I analyze and unpack the meanings and content that the participants produced and shared with me. I examine the central themes that emerged from the video work and focus group responses by bringing studies of girls’ digital culture (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Davies, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; García-Gómez, 2011; Karaian, 2014) into conversation with the existing literature on online misogyny and cyberviolence (Buni & Chemlay, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Massanari, 2017; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014) in order to explore the connections the participants drew between platforms, practices and gendered cyberviolence. These connections form a “bricolage” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966); that is, participants did not offer a single description of how social media

spaces and practices contribute to cyberviolence, but rather “made visible the multifarious and contradictory processes” through which multiple meanings are created and circulated (Best, 2000, p. 12). Including girls in research, policy and program development around cyberbullying and cyberviolence is crucial, as programming often neglects the specific needs of girls “who are marginalized by their gender among children and their age among women” (Bailey, 2015, p. 23). I approach the themes I identified in participant responses through the lens of feminist new media studies (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2016; Leonard, 2006; Magnet, 2006; 2011; Prebble, 2014; C. Todd, 2014) in order to contribute to the gap in attention to the unique ways in which CV works to silence and censor girls’ self-expression in digital culture (Bailey, 2015; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014; Steeves, 2015) and normalize “networked misogyny”. In the next chapter, Chapter Five, I examine the double standards around self-representation on social media, which is the most significant instigator of the cyberviolence that participants and their peers experience. Specifically, I examine the role that Photoshop and selfies play in participants’ conceptualization of a set of sexist social norms that structure CV. The participants outlined a set of misogynistic social norms that hinge upon tropes about ‘good girls’, the ‘slut’, and blame-the-victim culture in their conceptualizations of CV.

CHAPTER FIVE

**“We’re Just Good Girls”: Contradictions in Participants’ Conceptualizing of the
Social Contexts of Cyberviolence**

“Our culture is very selfie-oriented” – Gill, 16

“You’ll never be a good girl for everyone” – Sandy, 18

In October 2012, 15-year-old Canadian Amanda Todd died by suicide after being exploited and stalked online by Aydin Coban, an adult man in the Netherlands.⁸³ Todd experienced a spectrum of identity theft, harassment and bullying in several school settings after Coban created a false Facebook account that featured a picture of Amanda’s bare breasts captured via webcam. The tragic case of Amanda Todd is one of several cases of middle-class (and normatively attractive) girls whose supposed “bullycide” (Marr & Field, 2001), along with that of Rehtaeh Parsons, makes her one of the most recognizable faces of cyberbullying in North America. The prolific press coverage of this case (e.g., Bell, 2017; Chen, 2017; Corder, 2017; Culbert, 2015; Hager, 2014; Omand, 2016; Woo, 2017) most often frames it as a cautionary ‘bullying’ tale while blaming Todd’s victimization on her “risky Internet usage and overt sexuality” (Fyfe, 2014, p. 47; Bronskill, 2017; P. Todd, 2014).⁸⁴ For example, Christie Blatchford of Canada’s *National Post* published a so-called think piece on the gang rape of Rehtaeh Parsons, images of which were circulated throughout Rehtaeh’s high school. In this piece, Blatchford suggests that “any sex was consensual” and cites a partygoer who “told police Rehtaeh was being flirtatious and egging the boys on” (2013). Moreover, the dominant framing(s) of public debates, and too often, scholarly inquiry, around cyberbullying mobilize the

⁸³ The suicide of Megan Meier, and the legal case that followed, resulted in the first ‘cyberbullying’ verdict in the United States (Steinhauer, 2008). This case is also usually framed as a school bullying story focusing on peer bullying, despite the fact that an adult woman targeted Megan by creating a fake Myspace page.

⁸⁴ It should be noted that Paula Todd, author of *Extreme Mean: Trolls, Bullies and Predators Online* (2014), cited here, bears no relation to Amanda Todd.

increasingly popular ‘bad girl’ hypothesis (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008 cited in Fyfe, 2014; Fine, 2015; Offman, 2013; Watts, 2015) to narrate the Internet as a dangerous place for (dangerous) young women.⁸⁵ These arguments, however, are troubling misframings that are reductionist and belie broader issues facing girls’ and young women’s online safety while neglecting systemic inequalities structuring digital culture and social media platforms (García-Gómez, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Drawing from the data gathered with 112 young women who participated in this study and the feminist new media studies literature on online harassment (Jane, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014) I argue that, rather than being rare, cyberviolence and misogyny are ubiquitous in digital culture and shaped by classism, misogyny and racism (Braithwaite, 2014; Horsti, 2017).

In Chapters Five through Seven, I present the main themes that form the patterns I identified in the data corpus after performing QTA (Braun & Clarke, 2006) informed by a feminist new media studies framework (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Croeser, 2016; Haraway, 1990; Karaian, 2014; Levina, 2014; Magnet, 2011; Raman & Komarraju, 2017). The PV process resulted in extended peer-peer conversations that likely would have been more difficult to elicit in more conventional social sciences approaches (Haynes & Tanner, 2013; Lomax, Fink, Singh, & High, 2011; Weber, 2008). Extended conversations that the PV work allowed for provide context about how young people mobilize dominant anti-cyberbullying messages. These moments were often captured in the footage and I journaled reflections on them after each session in fieldnote memos. During video work, in contrast to the focus groups, participants engaged in many extended conversations, often veering far off the issues at hand. What at first glance appear to be tangential discussions generated a primary finding around the efficacy of PV

⁸⁵ Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2008) use the ‘bad girl’ hypothesis to describe the common trope that posits modernity (e.g., tools of digital culture) and girls’ liberation as the cause of risks facing girls such as sexual harassment and other forms of victimization (rather than structural forces such as patriarchy and white supremacy).

for understanding the social context(s) of cyberviolence. As mentioned in the introduction, the data corpus includes transcripts from eight PV workshops, including two youth-led short documentaries and six focus groups.

The central themes participants mobilized in their descriptions and video work on CV articulated it as bound up in a ‘double bind’ around self-representation in SNS that is amplified by platform architecture and played out through ‘drama’ and mobbing that normalize CV targeting girls. Finally, young women connect a lack of empathy and education to both the roots of the problem and its potential solutions. I have structured the analysis of the central themes around three broad concepts. These concepts, which mirror the patterns I identified in participants’ 1081 descriptors, are: social contexts (Chapter 5), platforms and practices (Chapter 6), and prevention strategies (Chapter 7). I reject the realist view that researchers can simply ‘give voice’ (Ely, et al., 1997; Fine, 2002, p. 218) to their participants; therefore, I must note that the patterns I identified were brought back to the participants and finalized in consultation with them to ensure they approved of the way I interpreted the themes I identified. This chapter addresses two central themes and four sub-themes that I identified during the QTA of the video work and focus group transcripts. These themes point to the enormous role that social contexts play in the participants’ conceptualizing CV. I examine the themes of a double standard surrounding physical appearance on social media and self-representation, specifically through the ‘selfie’, as an empowering and limiting text, as they figure in the participants’ video work and focus group discussions on cyberviolence. The sub-themes clustering around these two central themes are: 1) the ‘good girl,’ 2) policing peer content, 3) the figure of the ‘slut’ and ‘sluttiness’, and 4) the need to protect one’s digital identity (victim-blaming).⁸⁶ It is important to

⁸⁶ As Alyson Shontell (2013) notes, the Oxford English Dictionary defines a selfie (its “Word of the Year” for 2013) as “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via

note that these are not independent categories but instead are mutually informing. For example, although I have separated slut-shaming and victim-blaming into distinct categories, participants articulated these themes through and against each other.

It is important to note that many of the descriptors offered to me by the participants with whom I spoke discursively aligned with mainstream anti-cyberbullying pedagogies and discourses that emphasize individual responsibility and the dangers of ‘leaky’ femininity (e.g., *Common Sense Media* (2018); *Connect Safely* (2015); Chun & Friedland, 2015; Chun, 2016; Katz, 2012). In fact, the central themes I identify and explore in this chapter – sexualized self-presentation and appearance – are issues that participants explicitly and repeatedly linked together as major factors putting them at ‘risk’ for, and leading to, bullying and harassment from friends, acquaintances, and strangers. My participants often framed online conflict as “drama” rather than employing the cyberbullying rhetoric used by “parents, teen advocates, and mental health professionals” (Levy, Cortesi, Gasser, Crowley, Beaton, Casey, & Nolan, 2012, p. 10; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Nearly all the resistant and critical readings of social norms around gendered cyberviolence and gender stereotypes occurred during peer-peer tangents during PV workshops and focus groups. For example, very often while filming, the young women would engage in discursive digressions. These digressions – for example, long discussions about selfies – were common during video workshops and semi-structured focus groups. Although participants would sometimes mobilize anti-cyberbullying phraseology, in this chapter I focus on

social media” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2017). Participant definitions are included in Section 3 of this chapter.

themes that cluster around the issue of social contexts that I identified as a major theme at play during these digressions.⁸⁷

The sheer volume of responses that centre the social context of CV highlights that, while participants often used popular cyberbullying tropes (e.g., suicide), the lived experiences they described outlined a different set of problems. For example, the most frequently cited examples of cyberviolence included a range of ridicule, hostility, and harassment targeting young women's appearance, sexuality and social media profile pictures. Only twelve (N=12) participants referred to extreme examples (e.g., sexual violence, including the non-consensual filming of sexual activity) and one (N=1) recounted the suicide of a friend as related to cyberbullying. This issue is important because mainstream narratives of 'cyberbullying' often hinge on extreme cases such as suicide risk for young white women. However, we know that that suicide is far from exceptional and is the second leading cause of death among young Canadians aged 10-24. LBGTQQ2IA-identifying youth, especially transgender youth (Egale Human Rights Trust) are at greater risk (Wozolek, Wooten, & Demlow, 2016), as well as First Nations, Inuit & Métis youth, who are 11 times more likely than non-Indigenous youth to die by suicide before reaching adulthood (Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention, 2016).⁸⁸ Besides agreeing that cyberviolence is something that causes harm and often involves a form of 'hate', participants explained that the same behaviours could impact young people in very different ways. For example, a participant, Anna, says, "Sometimes I'll be really surprised by how one thing that might not upset someone really upsets another person" (Anna, 16). This extends to possible solutions. Speaking about

⁸⁷ I engage with my participants' mobilizing of common anti-cyberbullying terminology in more depth in Chapter Seven ('It's a Space No One Can Govern or Control': Young Women's Conceptualizing of CV Prevention Strategies).

⁸⁸ The public horror over the suffering of victims most often revolves around "good", "enclosed", or, more disturbingly, "dead girls" (Chun & Friedland, 2015, p. 3). We know that suicide is never the result of just one cause; of course, bullying can have long-lasting effects on suicide risk and mental health, particularly among LBGTQQ2IA youth (Kim & Leventhal, 2008).

possible CV prevention strategies, Eunice argued there is no singular approach but, rather, strategies must be rooted in peer contexts and cultures: “I think that everyone depending on their level of social media use and their inner circle’s use of media should vary” (Eunice, 15).

Drawing on a feminist new media theoretical framework to unpack the themes identified through qualitative thematic analysis, I highlight two central gaps in the mainstream and scholarly discourses around cyberbullying. Popular cyberbullying discourses continue to rehearse antiquated media effects models that have been defunct since the 1990s in the communication literature. For example, respected mainstream publications continue to churn out narratives that blame smartphones for bullying and the general ‘ruin’ of young people (e.g., Jean Twenge’s (2017) article in *The Atlantic*, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?”).

This chapter examines the social contexts and social norms (e.g., the normalizing of systemic misogyny on social media), outlined by participants, which are lost in the ongoing popular and scholarly debates around CV. Specifically, I present findings from participants who describe that a “double bind” around self-representation structures sexualized bullying and cyberviolence (operationalized here as hostility, harassment and sexual violence).⁸⁹ Additionally, I examine how the figure of the ‘good girl’ shifts across locations. Finally, I address how my participants’ silence around whiteness underscores the ways in which social media architecture perpetuates racist ideologies and limits opportunities for teens’ self-representation (Chess, Evans, & Baines, 2017; Dietrich, 2013; Kafai, Cook, & Fields, 2009; Kafai, Heeter, Denner, & Sun, 2008; Martey, Stromer-Galley, Banks, Wu, & Consalvo, 2014; Mortensen, 2016).⁹⁰ My

⁸⁹ See Appendix A for a description and discussion of the term cyberviolence. It must be noted here that a small number of participants (12 of 112) referenced sexual violence as a form of cyberviolence.

⁹⁰ The work of critical race and feminist (video) games studies scholars since the early 2000s has been particularly productive in leading the way for unpacking how racism, and more recently, whiteness (e.g., Archer, 2016; Brock, 2016), are literally coded into VR and digital culture spaces.

participants' lack of conceptualizing race points to important avenues for future research and intervention in cyberviolence research and programming.

I begin this chapter by briefly outlining the twelve most frequently referenced descriptors from the data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006) around which my participants' conceptualizing of cyberviolence cluster. The first part of this chapter examines the role that a double standard around self-representation in digital culture plays in girls' conceptualizations of CV. This includes an examination of the ways in which the figure of the 'good girl' is woven throughout the young women's video work and focus group data, often through references to victim-blaming narratives. In the first section, I explore the possibilities and limits that participants described when portraying themselves on social media through the content they produced. This helps to situate the second part of the chapter that explores the complex and often contradictory explanations participants offered regarding the ways in which self-presentation and sexualization play in their experiences of cyberviolence. This discussion speaks to the enormous role that sexist stereotypes and, in some instances, sexualized harassment play in structuring the social contexts in which cyberviolence occurs. Gendered cyberviolence, as outlined by my participants, is better understood within a broader context of online misogyny and harassment (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Buni & Chemlay, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Massanari, 2017; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014).

Youth Descriptors

“Cyberviolence is when the harasser threatens the person's life, tells them they are going to kill them themselves or tells them to commit suicide” – Suzanne, 15

My use of the term 'social contexts' is inspired by the participants' conceptualization of cyberviolence, as well as recent findings in cyberviolence literature (Bailey & Steeves, 2015;

Karaian, 2014). The set of sexist and misogynistic codes that the participants described as informing CV can be examined as a set of what Stuart Hall refers to as “shared meanings” (1997). I use the phrase ‘social contexts’ to refer to the misogynistic codes (Hall, 2001) and myths (Barthes, 1972) normalized through a wide variety of behaviours (ranging from rude comments to sexual violence) participants described as mediated, not caused, by ICTs and digital devices (Ortega-Ruiz & Núñez, 2012). As one of the participants eloquently articulated, “I don’t think technology itself is bad but it does facilitate violence” (Cathy, 16). The descriptions that participants used most frequently to conceptualize CV anchor it as a reflection or extension of interpersonal dynamics unfolding in their broader peer culture (boyd, 2014; Ortega-Ruiz, Casas, & Del Ray, 2014). Moreover, participants describe a set of misogynistic social norms playing out on platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat, discourse communities that amplify offline sexist tropes and double standards (Helles, 2013; Sammond, 2015). Nicholas Sammond (2015) describes this concept as “intermediated adolescence”, which approaches adolescence as a “process that unfolds across a range of social and mass media [and involves] a politics of intermediated social life” (Sammond, p. 30).⁹¹ In other words, for my participants, addressing CV involves attending to its multi-modal nature that shifts across social contexts.

There was agreement that cyberviolence is occurring if someone fears for her physical safety, or is experiencing diminished self-worth because of being targeted on social media, whether it be privately or publicly. As I outlined in the methodology chapter, one of the central research problems I invited participants to work through in the PV and focus groups was ‘What is cyberviolence?’ It is not surprising that there was a great deal of overlap between this descriptive question and another major problem I presented to participants: ‘what cyberviolence

⁹¹ Intermediality is a concept used to theorize the relationship between multiple forms of media, particularly mobile communication, that allows multiple modes of communication on SNS like Facebook, texting and emailing (Helles, 2013). For more on intermediality, see Pailliotet, Semali, Rodenberg, Giles, & Macaul, 2000).

means to me.’ Table 5.1 presents the central thematics at play in the 1081 descriptors participants used in their conceptualizing of cyberviolence.

Table 5.1

The 11 Central Thematics Mobilized by Participants (N=112) in Conceptualizing Cyberviolence in Response to the Problem ‘What is CV?’

11 Central Descriptors in Participants’ Descriptions when Conceptualizing Cyberviolence as Identified in the PV and Focus Group Transcripts	Number of Times Descriptors were Mobilized by Participants
Double standard (“double bind”)	370
Amplified by social media platforms	245
Lack of empathy in digital culture plays a role in CV	107
Causes harm, pain or fear for physical or emotional safety	82
Anonymity plays a role in CV	58
“Hate” (including identity-based), “nasty”, “mean”, “bullying”, or “rude” comments	78
Lack of education around CV	53
Contextual (e.g. the same events impact people differently)	28
Committed by people you know	24
Caused by anonymity	23
Posting or circulating photos without consent	13
Total	1081

The literature on cyberbullying does not adequately address the role of gender discrimination (or sexual orientation or race-based discrimination) as a structuring principle of cyberviolence (Arntfield, 2015; Schneider, O’Donnell, & Smith, 2015). I address this gap in the cyberbullying literature by putting my participants’ conceptualizing of CV into conversation with feminist new media and girls’ digital culture approaches to online misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Croeser, 2016; Davies, 2015; Jane, 2016, 2017; Magnet, 2006, 2011; Marcotte, 2012, 2017; Phillips, 2015; Shade, 2007). Except for a handful of studies (e.g., Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; García-Gómez, 2011), academics have largely ignored the unique social contexts that girls describe as informing their digital culture and

cyberviolence, a gap this research helps to fill. The themes I identified in participants' collaborative video work and focus group discussions reveal the fluidity of their social media and 'offline' lives and highlight why understanding the social contexts girls describe as structuring CV is crucial to building conceptual frameworks for understanding the phenomenon of cyberbullying (Pieschl et al., 2013). This is important because "social networks also appear to extend the social context and peer culture" (boyd, 2008, p. 107). For example, participants devoted many 'asides' and digressions while filming during PV workshops to discussing what they framed as a double standard when it came to representing themselves on social media. As outlined below, participants describe social media as extending daily face-to-face peer culture as well as amplifying challenges around (sexualized) self-presentation.

"We all have to take out our phones and do this and show a bit of that":

Social Media Photographs and the Double Standard

"It is so important to look good to look better than the other girls. I take a picture when I feel good, so if someone says something bad about that then that is really bad because you tried to look good." – Jessica, 16

One focus group participant at the private school referred to the double standards girls face on social media as a "double bind", which perfectly conveyed the contradictions and struggles I observed in girls' work and responses as they often grasped for language to explain CV. My participants' discussions and video work reflect the way in which girls' self-produced images on social medias operate as commodities that help them gain or lose social capital in digital culture and on social media (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Albury, 2015; Dobson, 2016; Hasinoff, 2013; Milford, 2015; D. Murray, 2015; Ringrose, 2011). The participants with whom I spoke cited physical appearance and self-representation as two of the major factors that put them at risk for cyberviolence. This was a central theme that emerged continuously throughout the

data, with almost total consensus. The topics of mental health and online safety regarding children's and youth online safety often focus on cyberbullying. While behaviours that are often named 'cyberbullying' were concerns for my participants, the situation they described was far more complex. For example, reflecting the findings from a poll conducted by GirlGuiding (UK) in 2017 with over 1,900 young women aged 11-21 regarding their biggest worries online that found that one in three girls reported that feeling the need to present themselves and their lives as 'perfect' (Connick, 2017) was a central stressor for participants. Significantly, the young women reported that they were most concerned with how their photographs could be altered and taken out of context, and a third worried most about how they look in their photos (Marsh, 2017).⁹² This is important because many of my participants believed that adults in their lives were aware of the risks on social media but were unfamiliar with what they find to be the greatest pressures.

The significance of both self-representation on SNS and the precariousness of the social capital assigned to these images was a topic of conversation that many of the participants engaged in. Many participants used phrases that align with mainstream definitions and those found in mainstream anti-cyberbullying frameworks, including curricula, to describe CV. During the first session, several participants' responses sounded more like common advice from teachers and government PSAs. Janice's early response regarding advice she would give to a teenager reflects this tendency. She says:

If I had a teenager I would tell my teenager to be careful with what they do online because once it is out there you can't delete it. I would tell them never to engage in cyberbullying, to not be a bystander, defend the victim, and if they are ever being bullied they should go to an adult and ask them for help.

⁹² These findings are from the Girls' Attitudes Survey conducted by the UK charity GirlGuiding and can be found here: <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/social-action-advocacy-and-campaigns/research/girls-attitudes-survey/>.

Further, as is common in dominant news coverage of CB and CV (e.g., Chen, 2017; Corder, 2017; Culbert, 2015; Hager, 2014; Omand, 2016; Woo, 2017), participants often link girls' victimization to "self-esteem deficiencies" as a cause rather than a potential result of CV (Chmielewski, Tolman, & Kincaid, 2017). One participant put it this way: "Women and girls have more sensitive self-esteem than men and boys. Girls usually take the statements more seriously and we need to talk about it." (Ursula, 18) The notion that it is girls' responsibility to ensure they do not endanger themselves offers another such example. In extended digressions during focus groups and the participants' documentary work on the research questions, my participants continued to return (both implicitly and explicitly) to the importance of the social norms and social contexts in which cyberviolence plays out.⁹³ These casual tangents occurred more often during video sessions when the young people were focused on each other, the cameras and setting up the shots in the way they wanted to. The participants with whom I spoke overwhelmingly agreed that girls and young women face different challenges online from those faced by boys and men, noting that girls and young women are disproportionately the targets of cyberviolence (Belsey, 2011; Connell et al., 2014; Craig, 2011; Mishna, 2011; Navaro & Jasinski, 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). According to participants, one of the major causes of the cyberviolence they witnessed and experienced was the "double standard" that exists for girls and young women on social media and in digital culture. In fact, participants referenced this double standard 370 times; Table 5.2 breaks down the categories cited in relation to the notion of a gendered double standard.

⁹³ For a detailed explanation of how the documentary filmmaking workshops unfolded, what PV consists of, and how I locate myself as a researcher within the video work, see my chapter on methodology (Chapter Four).

Table 5.2

The “Double Bind” Girls and Young Women Identify as a Context for Cyberviolence

Categories of (Gendered) Double Standard	Number (N) of References
Physical appearance	175
Victim responsibility/ believability	50
App use	42
Gender roles	35
Slut-shaming	27
Expressing opinions (through posts or messages)	21
Displaying accomplishments (through posts or messages)	14
Effectiveness of bystander intervention	6
Total	370

The participants linked the double standard that structured and informed the cyberviolence they experienced to physical appearance and visibility (e.g., “to-be-looked-at-ness”) (L. Mulvey, 1975). All but four of the one hundred and twelve participants (two at each location) pointed to a double standard around self-presentation as one of the leading causes of cyberviolence. Moreover, 175 (N=175) references to cyberviolence tied their physical appearance on social media websites and applications to CV. Definitions clustered around 4 separate categories: 1) to look “slutty” (N=79); 2) to look “pretty”, “good”, “perfect”, “gorgeous”, or “attractive” (N=55); 3) to look “sexy”, “hot”, and to “show skin” (N=26); and 4) the results of looking “bad” (N=15). Table 5.3 represents the number of times each category was referenced to define cyberviolence by linking physical appearance to cyberviolence.

Table 5.3*Categories Linked to Physical Appearance Contributing to CV*

Categories	Number of Times Stated (N)
To look “slutty” or like a “slut”	79
To look “pretty”, “good”, “perfect”, “gorgeous”, “attractive”	55
To look “sexy”, “hot”, or to “show skin”	26
The results of looking “bad”	15
Total	175

One of the most frequently repeated points was that when girls are singled out for cyberviolence, the bullying or harassment often targets their physical appearance and sexuality. Moreover, several participants mobilized the term ‘appearance’ to refer simply to taking up space, in other words, being present on social media. Participants’ descriptions stress the significance of appearance, objectification and the male gaze in understanding their status in the visual culture (Berger, 2003; Mulvey, 1975) of social media. Participants pointed to the sexist stereotypes that continued to inform the imagery they produced, even for themselves (Berger, 2003; Regan & Steeves, 2010; Stewart, 2015).⁹⁴ Kacie’s (17) comment cuts to the centre of the “double bind” that participants articulated experiencing in digital culture: “Because we have boobs, if they show you are considered a slut, if you have a big butt that equals hot but if you have none of that you are a nerd or loser. There is a negative to everything we do. Some guys will judge you, pressure you, harass you to fit the status quo” (Kacie, 17). Echoing the majority

⁹⁴ I must note here that Laura Mulvey’s work is situated at (and responding to) the historical moment of second-wave feminism, which sought to end female sexual objectification. Many feminist theorists of the gaze and women in visual culture have built on and resisted Mulvey’s neglect of the woman’s agency in her theories of the male gaze and female spectatorship. Mulvey argues that the history of Western visual culture portrays women and girls as passive objects for consumption through an active (heterosexual) male gaze (1975). Because the SNS participants used most frequently encourages a male heterosexualized gaze, Mulvey’s work is particularly relevant and helpful in understanding how participants’ definitions and narratives highlight the gaze functions in young people’s digital culture. This is especially true in the case of the findings that cluster around sexualization and (constrained) practices of self-presentation.

of participants' emphasis on appearance and sexual stereotypes, two participants at the private school put it this way during a focus group:

Claire: Yes, it's different being a girl online. Like; when talking to the guys – my friends – they joke around about girls, and in person they don't. Also, when going through my photos the ones with the most 'likes' are the ones when I am wearing the most makeup, cleavage etc. Whereas the guys, yes, they get the same pressure but not as much as girls. (16)

Susan: Yeah, sometimes people forget that girls aren't sexual objects and that commenting rude sexist things aren't okay (16).

The exchange between Claire and Susan also helps contextualize girls' social media use as content production (García-Gómez, 2011; Hasinoff, 2015), in which images produced for gendered consumption play a significant role (Steeves & Bailey, 2016, p. 57). This is important, as participants frame the “wrong” type of pictures presented in self-produced and curated SNS profiles and posts as contexts that lead to CV incidents. Interestingly, Mina (15), like many of the other participants, equated the simple sharing of opinions as visibility – a form of self-representation participants equated with receiving ridicule and sometimes harassment (Jane, 2013). Mina said: “The most cyberviolence is on social media where you can post videos and pictures and websites where you can write your opinion. That attracts violence because not everyone will agree with you.” (Mina, 15) The way participants illustrated this double standard stands in stark contrast to the experience of boys, whose visible self-representations online are not scrutinized or sanctioned in the same ways (Croeser, 2016; Dryden, 2014; Karaian, 2014; Salter, 2015). The participants' conceptualizing of CV is bound up in how they described negotiating digital subjectivities through (often sexualized and objectified) hyper-visibility (Fox, Bailenson, & Tricase, 2013). This hyper-visibility often renders them invisible, especially women of colour (Noble, 2013; Switzer, Bent, & Endsley, 2016).

Several participants made an effort to remind their peers and me that social networks are a significant site of testing out different identities and ways of being in digital culture (Livingstone & Bober, 2006, p. 104). For example, during a group video session at the community-based organization, Sabrina (18) said to her friends:

There's kind of like two pieces to the story here there's good and there's bad like I want to delete Facebook every single day but there is so much on Facebook that is good that I can't; I could but I don't want to give up. (Sabrina, 18)

However, for the overwhelming majority of my participants, the possibilities for representation are limited and constrained by the toxic social norms described as often silencing or sanctioning them. In one focus group at the private school, a participant offered an opinion that incorporated visibility as a way to articulate how simply taking up space on social media often leads to ridicule for girls: "I would say that it is different for girls online because stereotypically we are not seen online. So many people are trash talked for doing so. Boys – at least some – don't mind telling their opinions" (Lily, 15). In this quote, the term "invisibility" is used to describe the prescribed gender construction that ideally allows one to 'get by' without experiencing hostility. This quote then points to the challenge of identifying as a girl online, even when one presents a normative girl identity, without experiencing bullying and harassment. These tensions and contradictions around visibility that emerged strongly in the data are consistent with findings from recent research with girls on the topic of digital culture and cyberbullying (Bailey & Steeves, 2016; Ringrose, 2008; Skeggs, 2005).⁹⁵ These problems are also well documented in critical feminist interventions in psychology, school violence and family therapy (Merkin, 1992/2010). In fact, in many discussions that began with explicit discussions of

⁹⁵ I often use the term 'emerged' to refer to the themes and topics I identified through qualitative thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Following Charmaz (2014), I use the term to refer to themes and patterns I identified in my participants' work and discussions. This term is not meant to imply that unbiased knowledge was simply uncovered from participants, as insinuated in neo-positivist traditions.

cyberviolence, the group ended up in long and involved conversations about sexualized images (particularly selfies). This points to the importance of understanding the contexts that normalize cyberviolence and the meanings young people attach to them. The participants returned to the notion of appearance and visibility, linking self-representation through photographs to CV.

Participants suggested that their experiences of cyberviolence on social media most often stemmed from self-created imagery. As one participant told her friend behind the camera, “Women are stereotypically ‘thin’ and if you post a picture online and you are not that ‘perfect’ woman they’ll be called a whore, slut etc. This does not usually happen to men.” (Deanna, 16) While participant discourses revealed complex and varied understandings of the connections between self-presentation, social media and cyberviolence, most agreed that girls face a double standard when it comes to representing themselves through ICTs and social media. Participants repeatedly returned to the fact that when they are targets for cyberbullying, the harassment typically centres on their sexuality and gender identity. In response, these participants highlight a contradiction, namely, that they want to be online but being there is often a problem. The urgency to be on SNS was made clear when, after I asked a participant, “What if you’re not online?” I was told simply, “Then you don’t exist.” (Bianca, 18) The notion of needing to be on SNS was held by participants at both locations, and both the economically privileged and underprivileged young people put (social) visibility in these terms. The tension between visibility, invisibility and what visibility means on social media caused varying levels of confusion for the participants with whom I spoke. It is important to note that participants’ notable silences around the role that racialization plays in visibility highlights the ways in which whiteness and white supremacy are normalized online (Mason, 2016; Richey, 2016). Moreover, these silences underscore the ways in which a struggle for visibility is even more challenging for

girls of colour, who are continually rendered invisible through hypersexualized racist stereotypes (Noble, 2013). This is important because my mostly white participants did not engage in discussions of racialization; future studies and anti-CV strategies will benefit from research and theorization regarding how the social context(s) my participants described are informed by hegemonic racial configurations (Dubrofsky & Wood, 2014; Noble, 2013).

Often, when participants linked cyberbullying with visibility and self-representation, they noted that social media is usually an extension of the pressures they felt offline. For example, during a filming session at the community-based organization, Sharon (17) offered this observation:

I think one of the reasons is like you get all this pressure in your life to be a certain way and you can't always conform to it even if you want to and then online it's easier to do that so then you take that opportunity to like to not embellish but build up your online persona to feel this way and then it kind of makes these super sexy girls and super tough guys normal 'cause that's what everybody portrays themselves as even if it might not be true and I think that might be one of the problems why it's so common. (Sharon, 17)

This is important because prominent alarmists and technophobes would have us believe the oppressive pressures girls feel will disappear if they log off of Facebook or throw away their smartphones (e.g., Drury, 2017; P. Todd, 2014; Twenge, 2017). One 17-year-old girl articulated the need to perform a specific (hetero)sexualized identity to be visible in this way: "You have to look good to look better than the other girls but boys don't like stupid girls anymore you have to be smart but not smarter than them" (Carol, 17). In other words, as in Sharon's comment, we see that for Carol, even when girls are visible, they describe the ways in which they are rendered unseen unless they perform within a constrained set of practices coded in visual culture (Steeves, 2015). These posting practices normalize a hyper(hetero)sexualized white, middle-class, able-bodied girlhood (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013, p. 308) through text and imagery. There is a contradiction here. The types of performances outlined by participants that allowed

them visibility (and intelligibility) are the exact ones that they identified as rendering them most vulnerable to bullying and harassment (Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Ringrose et al., 2013). The data suggests that, at least for the participants with whom I spoke, failure to comply with the social norms around self-presentation in their network results in their feeling unintelligible. What is important in these participants' formulation of online visibility is the internal contradiction at the heart of most of their descriptions of how being seen, of their "to be looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, 1975), is complicated by the interactive environment on social media (Arntfield, 2015; Bailey, 2015; García-Gómez, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013, 2016; Helles, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2014; Regan & Sweet, 2015; Sammond, 2015). It is clear that many girls' efforts to be intelligible as a 'good' or proper girl were used to ridicule or negatively socially sanction them. This contradiction was a source of much confusion. Unpacking the contradictions outlined by participants through a dialogue between feminist new media studies and girls' digital culture highlights the way in which panic around cyberbullying belies the daily challenges that young women describe facing.

It is becoming clear that the participants' responses highlight the tremendous emphasis they placed on the social norms and peer contexts that structure CV. A feminist new media lens on online misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Davies, 2015; Jane, 2016, 2017; Magnet, 2006, 2011; Marcotte, 2012, 2017; Phillips, 2015; Shade, 2007) allows us to mine the impossible contradictions young women are wrestling with. That is, tension between girls "competing desires to be seen and to see" (Steeves & Bailey, 2016, p. 2) as well as to "draw boundaries around what can be seen and how it is interpreted" (p. 2) collide with social imperatives to be 'seen' and to be 'visible', or, to borrow Bianca's words, to simply 'exist' in social life (Bianca, 18). Interestingly, at the high school, pockets of resistance existed side by side with traditional

bullying narratives and problematic constructions of the ‘bad girl’. As mentioned previously, participants were markedly silent around how race impacts cyberviolence. When I returned to both sites in the spring of 2016, I tried a second time to invite participants to consider how racialization shaped their conceptualization of CV; however, they did not engage race substantively, or even, for the most part, superficially.⁹⁶ Several participants at the high school did demonstrate a recognition of identity-based factors that contribute to one’s likelihood of being targeted for cyberviolence (Joshi, Overton, & Cole, 2016; Poland, 2016). Significantly, a few participants at both locations identified factors besides gender that may compound a young person’s likelihood of encountering online harassment or hostility. For example, several pointed to greater risk for those who fall outside of white, heteronormative femininity, with one participant arguing that “gay people, people of colour and slutty girls” were at a greater risk of receiving hate on social media”.⁹⁷ The following comment from a focus group participant reflects this:

We live in a society where we are always judged because we may not be “perfect” and men, guys especially if you do not fit their standards which is idiotic! It depends on who the girl is like her colour, background etc. It happens verbally and through social media especially Askfm that is a terrible site (Amy, 15).⁹⁸

Although Amy acknowledges that racialized girls are more likely to experience cyberviolence, whiteness seems to structure her notion of the “perfect” aesthetic she describes (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015; D. Murray, 2015). For example, Amy points to a young woman’s

⁹⁶ For a full discussion of my research questions and how I approached them with participants at both locations, see my chapter on methodology and study design (Chapter Four).

⁹⁷ This quote is consistent with what we know about LGBTQ2IA status increasing one’s risk of encountering cyberviolence (Chisholm, 2013; Joshi et al., 2016). It is important to note that the same identity groups that receive disproportionate harassment on social media are also being pushed out of their jobs in the technology industries creating media amid ongoing reports of abuse and bullying (Levin, 2017; McGirt, 2017; Pao, 2017). Moreover, we know that the social context(s) of young people’s digital culture, particularly SNS usage, is structured by the ‘common-sense’ logic of what bell hooks refers to as white supremacist capitalist [hetero]patriarchy (2014).

⁹⁸ Several specific platforms that aggravate cyberviolence through design affordances were identified by participants. These platforms are discussed at length in Chapter Six. ASKfm was commonly cited by participants as being conducive to cyberviolence; it is a platform that allows users to send anonymous questions to other users.

“colour” as being a factor that could exclude her from the “perfect” aesthetic. She then goes on to say that not being “perfect” renders one more vulnerable to “verbal” abuse on social media (Jane, 2016; Leonard, 2006; Prebble, 2014; C. Todd, 2014). Amy’s comment underscores the ways in which anti-CB rhetoric aimed at this group of (largely white) young women could benefit from the inclusion of a critical race framework. My participants’ silence around the role of racialization in their digital culture and CV highlights the broader reality that white, middle-class femininity is centred in SNS (Chun & Friedland, 2015; Keller, 2014; Magnet, 2007) and post-girl power media cultures (Kearney, 2015).

In their responses describing CV, many participants discussed the need to present oneself as a (hetero)sexual subject, what Kanai (2015) refers to as “heterosexiness” (p. 93), to attain social capital and visibility (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). The sexualized representation that participants described as being demanded of them was almost exclusively articulated in heterosexual terms and clearly intended for the male gaze or the (hetero) female gaze (Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015). When gay or queer identities came up, these references were largely made through jokes or distancing. For example, during a video session, two participants were setting up a camera for a still picture of their friend. I had asked if identity- factors besides gender impacted their experience online; one of the participants suggested that if someone is perceived as gay, that could lead to bullying. Tamara said: “Yeah, gay women are more victimized.” (Tamara, 17) The other participants agreed; Tamara added this comment, to which all three responded with an outburst of giggling: “I am very straight though let’s just get that out of the way.” Only one participant self-identified with a non-normative gender presentation (this participant identified as gender fluid). Girls and women are traditionally coded in visual culture as objects to-be-looked-at (Mulvey, 1975), which perpetuates a binary of man/male/active and

woman/female/passive (Butler, 1990). During one of the smaller focus groups at the high school (N=16), three 16-year-old participants emphasized the fear of receiving hostile comments if they do not look ‘perfect’:

Janet: I think being online for girls is different for than for boys because girls feel that they’re always being judged and the pressure is more on girls to be the perfect shape.

Melonie: I think girls are under a lot of pressure to impress guys which cause a girl to be mean and I see girls think that if they’re not perfect in their pictures people are going to cyberbully.

Muriel: I think that girls are more likely to be harassed than boys because they are very stereotyped and feel a lot of pressure to have certain traits that they don’t necessarily have or the pressure of setting a certain image to represent themselves to become known or popular.

This exchange sheds light on the ways in which girls experience a social imperative to be both visible (and attractive to the male gaze) online, and situates this pressure within a heterosexualized competition between girls. This is significant, as girls widely recognize “perfection as a normative requirement of femininity” (Jackson & Vares, 2015, p. 352). We also know that traditional school violence literature approaches to bullying, particularly within the fields of education and developmental psychology since the 1970s, has largely neglected to account for the racialized “heterosexualized, en-cultured and classed” contexts that structures girls’ experiences of bullying (2008, p. 509). Many of the participants with whom I worked shared a common and painful experience, namely, that of a boy or another girl sending a picture of them to another friend or to them directly (less frequently) through a private message (most commonly through Facebook Messenger) to tell them that they are ugly.

One 16-year-old participant, in a quiet moment during filming, expressed to the small group, “I haven’t seen as much girls posting things like you are so ugly publicly on girls’ pages,

but they will screen shot to say OMG you're so ugly in a private message.”⁹⁹ (Astrid, 16) When I asked the group to expand on this, many participants shared that this was a practice girls and boys engaged in to target girls for ridicule based on (predominantly) selfies shared on their social media profiles. Many participants explained that they engaged in building up the number of “likes” on their pictures and in “liking” other girls’ photos to boost their feelings of self-worth. These types of public and private comments are the cause of daily anxiety and emotional distress for girls. The same participant who brought up this practice explained, “If someone says you’re ugly that would be really bad if you’re trying to boost your self-esteem” (Karen, 16). Another participant echoed this sentiment: “I take a picture when I feel good, so if someone says something bad about that then that is really bad because you tried to look good” (Jessica, 16). However, while there was near-total consensus that physical appearance (particularly through self-produced images) is a major factor in cyberviolence and bullying targeting girls, the participants were at a loss to describe how to present themselves in such a way that minimized their risk of being targeted for harassment or bullying. My participants are not alone; experts studying cyberbullying studies continue to incorporate outdated concepts into their study designs such as assessing girls’ “risky self-representation” as a risk factor for receiving “negative peer feedback” on social media (for example, see Koutamanis, Vossen, & Valkenburg, 2015, p. 490).

Many of the ways in which participants described the social contexts that lead to cyberviolence presented a picture of girls logging on as the impetus. In other words, simply being online results in ridicule for a girl, “especially if she [has] violated traditional feminine norms around publicity and privacy” (Steeves, 2015, p. 162). One participant at the community-

⁹⁹ OMG means “Oh my God”.

based organization recounted a time when a boy in her class made fun of her for posting about baking on Facebook:

Yeah, once I was bullied online for saying that I was proud to make 48 cupcakes in one day...I said it because I was so proud of myself I made 48 cupcakes in a span of 2 hours and this guy starts bashing me about it calling me an idiot (Claire, 15).

Claire's comment aligns with a common descriptor of cyberviolence used by my participants, namely, as something often carried out in response to posting something they felt proud of or that they viewed as an accomplishment. As Claire's comment makes clear, being visible through posting about what she publicized as an accomplishment on social media rendered her vulnerable to cyberbullying (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015; Steeves, 2015). Claire's comment illustrates one of the eight descriptors that participants outlined as structuring the "double bind" that informed their social media practices and cyberviolence. Fourteen participants (N=14) made explicit reference to the fact that posting about their accomplishments on social media led to hostility or ridicule. To work with girls and (boys) to combat this issue, we need to contextualize the pressures and contradictions that often foreclose the possibilities for girls' online participation.

Photoshop and Airbrushing: From Celluloid to Pixels, Ones, and Zeroes

Some participants mentioned photo editing, filters and airbrushing as tools that they enjoyed using. Participants described these tools as both helpful in achieving a 'perfect' aesthetic and tools that aggravated their risk for being targeted for mean comments or even harassment. Several of the participants with whom I spoke made explicit reference to photo editing software and filters, tools that are normalized when it comes to altering and constructing one's appearance

and image in girls' digital culture.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, many participants brought up the issue of editing pictures in the context of how much pressure they felt to look 'good' or 'perfect' online.

Kaylin's comment is one example:

I mean it's so incredibly easy to take like take a picture of yourself like a selfie or whatever that you really that you kind of like. Then you're like ok I look pretty good and then it's even easier to just kind of edit it and just go crazy and then when you put it up there and people are liking it it's sort of like this self-validation (Kaylin, 16).

The digital age has brought about pressing concerns for feminists, including critical race feminists, concerned with new media and representation (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016; Shaw, 2014). In the age of digital effects, Laura Mulvey's phantasmagoria of the female body (1991) has become a real phantom composed of computer code. The indexical nature of the body has vanished, leaving only the spectacle of feminine performance.¹⁰¹ Film theorist Laura Mulvey says:

The digital processes of dematerialization have also affected the female body. The masquerade of cosmetic femininity has been superseded by simulacra from which even the fetishized female body has faded; the residual, physical intractability of the body ends up air-brushed into the ethereality of artifice... The magic of CGI easily fuses with the long-standing dream of the beautiful female automaton, but now without unseemly mechanics hidden inside her (Mulvey, 2006, xiii).

¹⁰⁰ Filters are often bound up in a nostalgic, even fetishistic, longing for the past evidenced through the numerous filters that allow users to map aging or tactile effects (water stains, scratches, etc.) onto a digital image (Caoduro, 2014). At the same time, filters are commonly used to remove signifiers (e.g., acne scars) of the 'real' body, suggesting the female body is edited to be looked at (Mulvey, 1975) in Web 2.0. Feminist critical race scholarship sheds a light on how the social contexts outlined by my participants are normatively raced and gendered (Nakamura, 2008, 2015; Noble, 2013; Osucha, 2009). Most recently, companies such as Unilever continue to code race and ethnicity as signifiers to be erased from the female body in digital culture (Levin, 2017).

¹⁰¹ The notion of the index is often used in film theory, specifically theories of post-cinema, to describe the shift from analog to digital cinema. The indexical relationship between material referents and photography is theorized as being fundamentally altered by the processes of CGI and digital cinema. It is argued that these technologies render images "processual" and "inextricably bound up in computational processes" (Leyda, Galt, & Jarrett, 2016, p. 200). The implications of these technologies for theorizing the representation of femininity is an emerging area of inquiry; many feminist scholars located dangers and possibilities in the era of post-cinema/digitality (for examples, see Ehlin, 2015; Matrix, 2013; Ringrose, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013).

At the time of writing, Unilever issued an apology for their Dove brand body wash commercial in which digital effects show a woman of colour using their product and transforming into a white woman, who then transforms into an Asian woman (Schmidt, 2017). This demonstrates how digital culture continues to centre whiteness, particularly through platform developers, who continue to be called out in Silicon Valley and elsewhere for ongoing misogynistic and sexist harassment of adult women and people of colour in the technology industries (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Carney, 2016; Clinton, 2017; Horsti, 2016; Levin, 2017; Pao, 2017).

These digital tools allow girls to manipulate their online images to move them closer to ‘perfection’; participants told me one of the most common daily insults is “she’s a fake one she looks so different on social media [than offline]”. The ‘perfect’ look participants described most often referred to women who present a thin, white, Euro-centric aesthetic. The fact that many participants expressly noted Kim Kardashian, known for her “mirror selfies” on Twitter, as a point of reference may suggest that the ‘perfect’ aesthetic is shifting to include certain racialized women. However, as many celebrity studies scholars argue, mass media focus on Kim Kardashian’s curvaceous body as both a site of “realness and artificiality” (much of it created by Kardashian herself) works to “flatten race, class and sexuality in her image” to position her as accessible, as well as a unique commodity (Sastre, 2013). This argument is broadly made regarding the commodification of other ethnically marked female bodies in North American media culture (Molina-Guzmán, 2010). While the girls connected the use of Photoshop and editing to cyberbullying, the girls at the private school were more focused on the negative aspects of the reactions that questioned the ‘authenticity’ of their images – in other words, how much the photo looked like them in offline life. Girls at the private school focused more on how

hurt they felt when someone told them they looked nothing like their crafted or filtered profile photos. Several participants repeated comments summed up by this 17-year-old participant: “It is really hurtful to have someone say about your selfie she looks good on social media but not in real life.” (Sharon, 17) Another participant echoed this, stating, “Girls have to live up to a stereotype of an airbrushed model, and if they don’t they feel they are hated on, and they feel discriminated against.” (Carol, 17) On the other hand, a small group of participants at the community-based organization presented an alternate view, saying that although they posted pictures to “feel good”, when someone brought them back down to earth by telling them that their picture did not resemble their ‘real’ or offline appearance, they sometimes appreciated it. This occurred during a filmmaking workshop, when one participant expressed a contrary opinion regarding the common insult that one’s picture may not be “authentic”. Aileen (16) said,

When you edit and edit and get likes it is sort of like this self-validation kind of thing and it kind of takes this one person being like, yeah but you don’t look like that, to kind of just bring you right back down to Earth to be like yeah that would be because I edited it a lot. So, I don’t know I feel like a lot of the issues comes from people scrolling through Facebook wondering ‘why don’t I look like that?’ (Aileen, 16)

Aileen clearly made a distinction between being brought “back down to Earth” in a polite way versus being harassed because of an image she had posted. Whether or not Aileen and participants who agreed with her framed the reality check they described in this way to downplay hurt feelings, it is important to recognize the variety of readings posted self-produced content receives (Bailey et al., 2013; Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Ivashkevich, 2016; Karaian, 2014; Keller, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013).

One participant explicitly referenced how the widely-adopted practice of photo editing impacted her experience as a content producer. She described how the pressure to apply filters and digitally alter images of herself spoiled her experience on Instagram – a platform on which

she had previously enjoyed sharing her artwork: “I find that the need to be one of the pretty girls of Instagram is ruining it for me.”¹⁰² (Sharon, 17) Even when a girl managed to perform as the “pretty girl of Instagram”, she was often targeted for ridicule based on the level of ‘sluttiness’ that image was said to exude.¹⁰³ If we understand social media as an extension of peer culture (boyd, 2008, p. 107), then the following participant’s observation offers insight into how social media platforms extend and amplify the challenges girls face daily:

There’s all this pressure in life, in general, to be all these manly slash womanly things and that just because the internet is so malleable you can put it up to a whole new level that you can’t in real life, and then you can fake it, and then it brings up that hype so much more online and then that created this whole universe of you need to be this certain way, and it actually makes people think that people are that way which they are not (Jessica, 16).

Jessica’s comment illustrates why girls may have embraced working on their videos so enthusiastically – they were the producers, the ones behind the camera with control over their representations. In fact, there were twenty-six (N=26) references to how the absence of boys and men positively impacted the discussions.

Rosemary Garland-Thompson’s commentary on the disciplining commercial-cultural rhetoric that constructs disabled and female bodies is particularly apt when thinking about the contradictions of the “double standard”. Garland-Thompson argues that the “twin ideologies” of beauty and normalcy posit female and disabled bodies as “not only spectacles to be looked at, but as pliable bodies to be shaped infinitely so as to conform to a set of standards called normal and beautiful” (2002, p. 11). Sabrina (17) articulated her thoughts on this:

¹⁰² Instagram is a photo-sharing application designed for use on mobile phones. Instagram markets itself as a “fun and quirky” (<https://www.instagram.com/about/faq/>, para. 2) application that offers the user “awesome looking filters [to] transform your photos into professional-looking snapshots” (para. 5).

¹⁰³ I use this term, as it was used numerous times by my participants, to describe online imagery and performances that they argued put girls “at risk” for experiencing cyberviolence. Interestingly, as discussed throughout this chapter, participants simultaneously articulated the pressure to present oneself in a “sexual” manner and the danger and ‘risk’ associated with this presentation. They often used the word “sluttiness”, however, to demarcate an image in which one showed “too much” skin or wore clothes that were “too” revealing.

I've spent probably seven hundred hours of my life looking at people on Facebook and probably easily like 20 hours looking at my own profile. I want to say "Keeping up with the Kardashians" but no it's just keeping up with everything and then let's bring in the gender like the bros on Facebook. You got the selfies with the six pack abs; you're going to the gym, you gotta have some babes like some babes under your arms here [gesturing as though she has a girl under each arm with her arms around them], right? Um, and then as a girl I mean it's so obvious what we see on the Internet and girls and what we have to do like we all have to take out our phones and do this and show a bit of that [gestures toward cleavage by holding her t-shirt] and take a nice little selfie and be the woman [in air quotes] that we ought to be am I right? (Sabrina, 17).

This points to girls' awareness of the social norms that constrain options for self-expression on social media platforms. A participant at the private school also identified social constraints, namely heteronormative competition, as a cause of bullying and ridicule: "Girls have a lot of pressure to be a certain way and look perfect, so that's why sometimes girls are mean to each other" (Fay, 15). The following exchange from a short group video also challenged the 'mean girl' framing when they articulated the practices and images that they perceived as having rendered them targets of bullying, harassment, or rude comments:

Genevieve: Do you see men make more harsh comments to other men or women?

Crystal: Hmm from where I stand I think men do make more harsh comments than women because men they usually like to comment especially on women's photo they comment that women maybe their appearance and lacks and they never realize how rude they are when they make these kinds of comments but women, I rarely see them do these kinds of comments.

Allen: Actually, I've never been a boy so I can't compare, but I think maybe it is just because I'm a girl many boys and many men will want to know what I look like, my appearance. It's like I don't use Facebook but I have many social apps so when I make my whole-body picture they will say oh why are you fatter than before? Those kinds of things.

This exchange is significant, as it situates gendered cyberviolence within the socio-political context of patriarchy and challenges the dominant narrative that girls are the primary aggressors engaged in victim-blaming and slut-shaming. For example, rather than centre mean

girls, as many public commentators and bullying scholars do (e.g., Csanady, 2016; García-Gómez, 2011; P. Todd, 2014; Lippman & Campbell, 2014), Crystal (16) argues that “harsh comments” are usually from boys and men. Further, Allen calls on her standpoint as a girl-identified person on social media to drive home the fact that she experienced SNS differently from the ways in boys and men do. This resistance is important, because sensationalized stories involving cyberbullying often frame the issues as a matter of girls being mean to one another while ignoring the structural inequalities and heteronormative imperatives that structure their digital identities (García-Gómez, 2011; Renold & Ringrose, 2011; Steeves & Bailey, 2016). Evangeline’s comment about the double standard anchors what many participants described in offline culture and suggests that SNS amplify offline challenges. For example, she remarked:

It’s [CV] really different since women have to face all of the same double standards they usually do but even worse. For an example, when you’re silent they take you for a prude but with this it takes one move and you’re a slut. (Evangeline, 18)

One of the most apparent contradictions in the data emerged around the good girl/bad girl dichotomy mobilized at both locations as both a reason and an explanation to describe the contexts that lead to cyber-victimization.

“We’re Just Not the Crowd to Play that Role”: Good Girls Versus Bad Girls

There is a very clear pattern in the data that demonstrates how participants at both locations created narratives about victims of cyberviolence through a distinction of ‘good’ girls versus ‘bad’ girls.¹⁰⁴ It is important to unpack this common rhetorical trope as it underpins the overlapping themes of slut-shaming and victim-blaming examined in this section. At both locations, participants’ behaviour was cited as a contributing or instigating factor leading to

¹⁰⁴ Several authors have argued that increasing anxiety over “bad girls” and the supposed educational successes of middle-class girls beginning in the 1990s coincided with a preoccupation with discourses around educational systems “failing boys” (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Francis & Skelton, 2005). In other words, participants’ rhetoric dividing girls into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is a noted distinction in mainstream discourses around girlhood.

cyber-victimization. For example, a common factor given for why some girls may experience slut-shaming or harassment was their ‘choice’ to send intimate photographs. As one participant put it: “With past experiences, normally it [CV] comes up like ‘this girl did this’, the conversation doesn’t occur in the same way outside and inside the classroom – rumours being spread” (Naomie, 16). One focus group participant at the high school offered a reflection on the research setting that alludes to the gendered dimension of how cyberviolence plays out through sexist stereotypes in peer culture:

This school [a private school for girls] provides a good setting to talk about this issue, we all have similar opinions, but maybe at a co-ed school no one would talk about this, everyone would be too scared to say what they thought, no one sees the point in having these conversations (Karen, 16).

However, participants at the private school tended to frame these behaviours as practices engaged in only by ‘bad girls’, whereas those at the community-based organization tended to frame these modes of self-representation (e.g., cleavage shots) in terms of risk and safety (e.g., posting a revealing photo or simply posting too much information about oneself). Across both locations, the word ‘vulnerable’ was used 146 (N=146) times to describe the status of girls and young women in digital culture. Participants at both locations believed that they were more vulnerable online, although they differed as to how they conceived of this vulnerability and how they should manage it. The affective register of how the word ‘vulnerable’ was used by participants breaks down into two categories. When participants used the word, it was most often within one of two contexts. The first was their belief that girls receive more “hate” on social media. For instance, 16-year-old Leona said, “I don’t think all people are equally as vulnerable to cyberbullying, I think girls are more likely to be harassed.” (Leona, 16) The second most frequent use of the term ‘vulnerable’ referred to something essential about girls and young

women that renders them more prone to being targeted online. The way in which some participants articulated this essential quality, however, gestures toward a structural analysis of how power is functioning in SNS. For example, Karlina put it this way: “Women are more vulnerable because they are also victims offline and with so much access to technology everyone is connected” (Karlina, 18). There is a very clear distinction between ‘good’ girls and ‘bad’ girls that permeates the data from the high school and near-total consensus at both locations that girls and young women are somehow responsible for their own victimization. While this was the consensus, there were differences in how ‘fair’ this was deemed to be. For example, a few young women pointed to structural reasons behind being targeted more frequently. One participant said: “Women are more at risk because men objectify them” (Sharon, 17). The ways in which participants at the private school distanced themselves from cyberviolence while revealing knowledge of the issue is captured in the following comments from a peer-peer video interview.

Julie: I’m going to say no but I definitely know people who have been friends who have been harassed and offended definitely on Facebook, Ask.fm, and Instagram. These friends that are getting affected are mostly girls but thankfully I haven’t been but you never know behind the scenes, it could be word of mouth everything on the internet gets judged we are judgemental people so maybe behind the scenes I have been hurt (15).

Marissa: Our group doesn’t experience it [CV], but we can see it online. We have a lot of friends who are at different schools so we can easily recognize online when we see it. We’ve been talking about it this week amongst ourselves we might be involved personally but as a grade we don’t have it (15).

Julie and Marissa’s comments highlight the contradiction that emerged from focus groups and PV workshops at the private school, which was that participants often distanced themselves from knowledge of the phenomenon by discussing girls at other schools or distant friends. Interestingly, Julie resisted this trend by explicitly gesturing to the fact that “maybe” she had been “hurt” on social media, as did Marissa in suggesting that some of her peers may have

“personally” experienced cyberviolence. Another participant in a PV workshop resisted the notion that the young women at this school do not have knowledge about the issue of cyberviolence. As she looked directly into the lens of the camera her friend was holding, she stated, “It’s all over...in pop culture, in everyday life, in this classroom there’s cyberviolence so I just want to say with that, beware.” (Astrid. 16) At the high school, participants drew more frequently on discourses entrenched in traditional ‘cyber safety’ pedagogies to explain and, in some instances, justify why supposed ‘bad’ girls’ self-representation attracts hostility online (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013).

During one focus group of 20 (N=20), participants at the private school offered numerous examples of the “type” of girl or “bad” girl who becomes a victim of cyberviolence. Twelve participants (N=12) explicitly defined the typical victim as a girl who posts “revealing” photographs of herself on social media or sends them in a private message or text message. For instance, a discussion between participants during a quiet moment filming captured the way in which many participants perceived themselves as responsible for their victimization:

Annie: Girls are more likely to be harassed than boys because in my opinion they usually put more revealing photos of themselves online (16).

Jennifer: Girls are more likely to be harassed because they most of the time post racy pictures to get attention but it will get them just bad attention. (16)

Participants at the community-based organization also drew on these tropes normalized through prolific press coverage of VAWG online and anti-cyberbullying discourses embedded in many school policies (Blatchford, 2013; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013; Fyfe, 2014). The set of impossible contradictions that Annie and Jennifer described structuring their experiences of content creation and self-representation on social media have been well-documented by scholars of girls’ digital culture (for example, see Dobson, 2011). The social context of the “gender

market” necessitates hypersexualized representations, while at the same time “control of one’s sexuality [means] performing sexual constraint” (Kanai, 2015, p. 94). This is another example of how a dialogue between cyberbullying studies and girls’ digital culture studies will allow researchers and policymakers to address how misogynistic social norms and systemic sexism are structural principles of CV targeting girls. Anxiety around how the implications of not taking appropriate precautions could impact employment was brought up at both locations.

Slut-Shaming

Participants at both locations engaged at length, directly and indirectly, with the notion of slut-shaming, a relatively new phrase for an old phenomenon amplified and heightened for young women on social media (Gong & Hoffman, 2015; Karaian, 2014; Ringrose et al., 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2012; Tanenbaum, 2015). Moreover, while this approach existed side by side with explicit recognition of a double standard in both locations, participants at the private school used the figure of the ‘slut’ to distance themselves from “trashy” low-status girls in a way that shored up class advantage (Armstrong, E.A., Hamilton, Armstrong, E.M., & Seeley, 2014). Participants described negotiating their subjectivities through hyper-visibility and objectification (Fox, Ralston, Cooper, & Jones, 2015). This is the case whether these identities are figured through resistance or not. For example, the discourse of ‘ruin’ was pervasive at the high school. One participant summed it up this way: “It crosses a line when someone shows something bad about another person they don’t like then that person’s life is kind of over, and people stop liking her. It could also happen with teachers.” (Constance, 15) As one participant at the high school articulated it, “Girls aren’t allowed to love themselves it’s almost frowned upon to think you look good or like things about yourself whereas this is not the case for boys.” (Astrid, 16) The notion of “leaking” is one that Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland (2015) identify as being central

to the representation of the networked girl in the age of social media. They argue that “leaking” is a central logic underpinning the widespread shaming of “sluts” in Web 2.0. That is, that the individual (woman or girl) is responsible for containing and protecting the privacy of her imagery and personal information in an inherently public medium. In fact, it is the networked nature of slut-shaming that is often ignored in debates around the phenomenon in favour of a focus on individual girls’ “habits of leaking”. These narratives work to expose girls’ experiences of ridicule and harassment (2015, p. 3; Karaian, 2014; Tanenbaum, 2015).

Jillian: Girls are more likely to be harassed because they have to walk a thin line and if they do something that’s not perfect there’s hate. (Jillian, 16)

Lindsay: Men tend to view themselves as more powerful than women in society. They think they have control over women. A boy will force a girl to send him a revealing picture, and when she finally does, he calls her a thot or slut.¹⁰⁵ (Lindsay, 16)

As Fiona Attwood explains in her genealogy of the word ‘slut’, although the origins of the word are unknown, the term ‘sluttish’ was applied to both men and women in the fourteenth century to mean ‘dirty’ and ‘untidy’ (Attwood, 2007, p. 233). By the twentieth century, it had become “a widespread term of abuse for women who did not accept the double standards of society” (Mills, 1991, p. 223 paraphrased in Attwood, 2007, p. 233). Several of the girls’ references to “thots” at the private school evidenced slut-shaming and showcased the racial and classed connotations attached to the term (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013) and sexuality (Hess, 2014). It is significant to note that the 10 (N=10) participants who used the word “thot” to describe one of the ways in which girls are ridiculed online were all at the private school

¹⁰⁵ Several participants at the private school used the word “thot”, which they differentiated from “slut”. The term was popularized by the rapper Wash in a popular meme on Instagram and Twitter in 2014 (Langmia & Tyree, 2016). It is an acronym for “that ho over there”. Significantly, the term is “wielded to indicate class status as much as it refers to sexual activity” (Hess, 2014). So-called thots are identified primarily through their consumption habits, which makes it possible to “denounce them on sight even when their sexual histories remain private” (Hess, 2014).

location. Most of the participants did not agree with the label “thot” and explained that girls risk being called this when they “reveal” too much.

The connection between slut-shaming and consent in digital culture emerges most often in discourses around the non-consensual circulation and or distribution of intimate images. One group member summed up the process of having an intimate photo leaked thus: “If someone leaks it [sexy or nude image] you have to feel terrible there’s no other option” (Sarah, 16).¹⁰⁶ As Fraser (1997) suggests, “Nothing in principle precludes the possibility of being *both* culturally produced *and* critically aware (Fraser, 1997, quoted in Jackson & Veres, p. 214). Sarah’s comment highlights that, far from being simply ‘vulnerable’ or naïve consumers of culture, girls are both caught up in these gendered practices but also reflective about the content they produce.

As discussed earlier, participants at the private school identified as “good girls” who did not send or post “sexual” pictures of themselves through social media or ICTs. As an extension of this identity, they policed one another’s social media posts. As one participant described it, “I’ve never witnessed it ever at our school, not once. Everyone is so close, that if someone did do an act of cyberviolence, that girls [sic] friends would defend her and the person bullying would be ostracized” (Janine, 16). Janine’s comment is typical of the approaches to self-surveillance and policing that many participants at the private school described employing in order to monitor others and as a reason for self-censorship. Other researchers of girls’ digital culture have identified similar patterns in conversation with girls who apply a “surveillance lens” (Regan & Sweet, 2015) to understand the meanings that young women construct around “drama”, including as a form of “norm-setting” that is “facilitated by the architecture of the online world” (p. 179). This application of a surveillance lens further highlights how a productive dialogue

¹⁰⁶ Here the participants used the term ‘leaking’ to mean the non-consensual distribution of an image that was self-produced or taken without consent.

between girls' digital culture studies and CB studies will allow us to move closer to developing research and strategy-building approaches that align with girls' lived realities, including engaging the existing social norms that normalize VAWG (Bailey & Steeves, 2015).

A participant at the high school suggested, "I think girls are more likely to be harassed because some girls want attention and more likes, so they'll post a picture on Instagram being a little more 'slutty' and will get a lot of hate." (Carol, 17) Interestingly, participants at the community-based organization did not construct a 'bad girl' figure. As Brake argues regarding "slag" sexuality, poor and working-class girlhood is often constructed as always-already "bad" (Brake, 2013). What it means to be "sexual" or to "sexualize" oneself was complicated by a few of the participants after two focus groups and video workshops at the private school. One group of three openly questioned the notion of what a sexualized representation consists of. One participant's comment in a one-minute video captured this argument well. Emily stood confidently in front of the camera, looking at her friend to the side just out of frame and said:

If a girl wants to post a picture from her vacation and she is in a bathing suit that is suddenly not ok and risky and very sexual and just not ok to show on social media. But, if a guy wants to take a picture at the gym with his shirt off that's totally fine that's cool nothing is wrong with that so I definitely think there's a huge double standard (Emily, 15).

Here, Emily explained what was considered acceptable content for a girl to post on her Facebook timeline. The double standard frequently cited by participants is consistent with the literature on girls' digital culture that explores the possibilities and limits of creating sexualized self-presentations. Research examining 'sexting' (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Jackson, 2003; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Ringrose, Gill, & Livingston, 2013) and slut-shaming (Tanenbaum, 2015) has found that the pressure to create such performatives is pervasive. The mass media moral panic surrounding teenage sexting (Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2012; 2014), coupled with

the lack of attention to young people's digital culture contexts in the CV literature, continues to silence young women's voices, particularly those of girls of colour, regarding the challenges and possibilities they identify in sexting practices.

Surprisingly, aside from a handful of studies (Ringrose, 2008; 2010) sexual double standards are not tackled in the cyberbullying literature and are broadly neglected in studies on cyberviolence, which tend to focus on typology and categorization (See Gradinger, Strohmeier, & Spiel 2009; Wadian, Jones, Sonnentag, & Barnett 2016). Significantly, by the last sessions at the private school, a couple of participants explicitly admitted that they had experienced some form of "drama" or bullying at their school. For example, Emily (15) suggested that cyberbullying may be a bit closer to home than the group initially represented. One participant put it like this: "I think that we don't see it often here, the only time you would see it is if a girl posts a picture on Instagram in a compromising position, someone might say oh my god did you see that, but that's the furthest we would go." (Constance, 15) Also, addressing the "drama" at her school, another participant offered this comment:

Someone who would cyberbully at [this school] would be stupid because it's so hard not to be caught – everyone in our grade would see it if we committed cyberviolence, it's pointless because you would get caught right away, your reputation would be ruined right away (Lila, 15).

It is important to note that this discourse of ruin was pervasive in the data, particularly at the private school, where school curriculum required students to be versed in technology.¹⁰⁷

Attempts to account for gender and identity-factors from 2000 to present often focus on identifying the number of girls victimized, gender differences in victimization and individual

¹⁰⁷ The discourse of ruin is mobilized by both mainstream anti-cyberbullying curricula and public intellectuals and commentators in the dominant media (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Chun, 2016; Hasinoff, 2013). For an example, see P. Todd (2014).

behaviours (Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015).¹⁰⁸ We know that young people's norms have shifted through social media affordances such as “invisible audiences” (boyd, 2014; Mascheroni, Vincent, & Jimenez, 2015). We also know that the pressure to perform a limited version of ‘sexy’ complicates the ways in which girls adhere to and the resist ‘good/bad girl’ tropes (Bailey et al., 2013) that underpin mainstream cyberbullying discourses. Situating my findings within this literature highlights one of the most pervasive ways in which digital culture normalizes cyberviolence.¹⁰⁹ Norms around girlhood and physical appearance in young people's digital cultures often have material consequences.

For example, 13% of participants (N=12) discussed regularly encountering repeated shaming and hostile commentary, behaviours that are problematically defined as ‘cyberbullying’ (Bailey, 2014). A few participants recounted experiences in which intimate images circulated without their consent. One recalled a story recounted to her by a friend from a different school, in which intimate selfies intended for one recipient were then circulated through the school:

One of the boys had a phone full of lots of photos from lots of girls and someone took it while he was in the library. When the teacher was gone a group of boys started sending them to a bunch of other people in the class, and my friend was one of the pictures (Lin, 16).

Twelve (N=12) participants across both locations (13%) linked the non-consensual sharing of images to the issues of self-produced imagery and appearance in relatively large groups of their peers. While there was a significant disparity between locations regarding

¹⁰⁸ For examples of studies that focus on individual behaviours and gender difference in cases of cyberbullying, see Snell & Englander (2010). Most such studies fail to account for the social contexts in which these behaviours play out or the meanings attributed to normalized practices such as slut-shaming that young people themselves identify as daily challenges.

¹⁰⁹ The normalizing of gender-based harassment, including slut-shaming, is certainly not limited to female-identifying young people; however, I draw on these studies to contextualize the theme of appearance and the specific challenges unique to girls and young women.

attitudes toward ‘sluttiness’, the term was used consistently at both locations to refer to girls who presented themselves in a ‘sexual’ or revealing manner.

While some participants were more critical in their framing of girls who posted sexualized imagery online (which they all agree there is tremendous pressure to do), there was near-total consensus at both locations that, as one participant put it, “sluts put themselves in danger” (Monica, 17). However, there is a clear disjuncture in many of the responses at both locations that demonstrates a large gap between what girls identify as normalized practice and the way they challenge or view these practices. Slut-shaming, which Chun argues emerged as “the prototype of the dangers – or for some, the pleasures – of Web 2.0” (2015, p. 3), did not go unchallenged in either location. For example, at the private school, one participant mentioned a friend who used Twitter to “post cute outfits” to “overcome her sense of being shy” and to become “confident”, She went on to say, “When people say wow you’re so hot can I DM you?” she explained that this is a good thing as it may increase that friend’s confidence (Constance, 15).¹¹⁰ At the community-based organization, one 17-year-old participant mentioned that the “sheeple on Facebook like [sexy] profile pictures because it doesn’t require any thinking.” (Emily, 15) Another praised a friend who posted self-produced imagery of her larger body in revealing clothes on her own body-positive Instagram account, even though she received “daily threats” of violence and various degrees of harassment (Abby, 18).

Feminist researchers have long argued that misogynist rhetoric is embedded in sexual assault prevention programming, for example, “rape avoidance” programs that directly or indirectly blame the victim (Banyard & Moynihan, 2007) and normalize VAWG. I found that participants internalized messages from primary and secondary anti-cyberbullying curriculum.

¹¹⁰ “DM” stands for direct message; direct messages allow one to have a ‘private’ conversation with another user.

The Burden on Girls to Protect their Digital Identities: Victim-Blaming

Like, my little sister, I really want to punch her ‘cause of the stuff she posts on Facebook ‘cause people bully on her because you post things nobody needs to know. That’s what people will bully you on, it’s not fair, but that’s what happens – Avery, 16

“They post stuff to grab attention, or she’s harassed for some unknown reason, and she wouldn’t be strong to say no” – Dawn, 15

The language of victim-blaming was pervasive in the data. Most participants were quite clear in articulating that they did not deserve to be bullied or harassed. However, there was a strong consensus around the fact that when girls are harassed or bullied, it is because of a ‘mistake’ or something they had done ‘wrong’. An overwhelming sentiment among participants was that girls who experience bullying, harassment or worse “put themselves out there” or “post a lot” or “post too much information and too many photographs”. (Emily, 15, Astrid, 16, Constance, 15) One focus group participant at the high school put it this way: “I think that everyone is susceptible to cyber harassment but when people put themselves ‘out there’ willingly they should be able to stand up for themselves.” (Astrid, 16) Only four (N=4) of the participants stated that their gender identity as girls and young women had little to no impact on cyberviolence or their online experiences. One 15-year-old participant at the private school told me it was “sexist” to focus only on girls because boys also deal with bullying. This was unusual for two reasons. Direct language to address issues of system sexism (e.g., feminist vocabulary) is not common in the transcripts. This lack of language available to young women to discuss systemic sexism has been noted through ongoing feminist critiques of postfeminist education (McRobbie, 2008; Ringrose & Renold, 2015). Even though participants lacked a language for discussing systemic sexism, we see that the majority of them unpacked a double standard facing them in digital culture. Secondly, the impossible contradictions many of the participants were working through how to articulate were centred in their conceptualization of CV. Muriel (16) put

it this way: “Girls get harassed because they have a stereotype that they have to live up to and if they live up to it they get harassed because they are ‘slutty’ and then the harassment gets worse.” (Muriel, 16) While a few participants, like Muriel (16), explicitly attached these contradictions to CV, the majority were more clearly working through them with a greater level of confusion. For instance, one of the three participants who stated that gender had no impact on their online experiences said, during a PV session, that her gender identity had impacted her from “day one since birth” (Sabrina, 18). During a PV workshop, this participant pointed to the fact that a group of Facebook friends who had collectively harassed her in the comment section of one of her posts had made markedly different comments when she changed her gender identity on the social networking platform.

The most tragic story I heard was told by a 16-year-old participant at the private school during a PV workshop. Elsa’s story cuts to the heart of how deeply entrenched victim-blaming discourses are in dominant cyberbullying discourses. To capture Elsa’s story, the group chose a visually appealing frame by placing Elsa in front of an art project displayed on the wall as she recounted details for her two friends off camera. Pieces of filmstrip were taped to the white canvas in abstract shapes backlit by the sun; Elsa was visibly sad but met the lens with her eyes as she spoke:

I knew someone who was being cyberbullied. This happened years ago and what happened is she was getting hate messages from people that she didn’t really know and she didn’t talk about it to me and said if you say this to anybody we’re not going to be friends anymore. She would tell me all these crazy things and I told someone because she was having suicidal thoughts and she went into serious therapy. What happened was she ended up killing herself a few years ago because she didn’t deal with it properly so yeah, that’s who I know (Elsa, 16).

Elsa’s story highlights the way that well-meaning educators and adults conflate cyber-victimization with ‘risky’ or simply bad or ‘stupid’ online practices. Elsa, while shocked and

obviously upset by these memories, narrated her friend's death by suicide as a direct result of both cyberviolence and the fact that her friend did not "deal" with the violence she encountered "properly". Even in the cases where participants expressed sympathy for victims and condemned gender-based violence, they simultaneously perpetuated, justified or excused it. I identified this pattern throughout the data. For example, Laney said:

It is over the top when the victim is being attacked whether she did something or not she does not deserve to be tortured and cyberbullied. She will learn if she made a mistake another way but no person deserves to be deliberately made fun of or hurt. (Laney, 17)

Versions of Laney's remark, especially referring to victimization as being a result of making "a mistake" were repeated numerous times throughout the transcripts. While Laney condemned gender-based violence (whether she did something or not, nobody deserves CV, she said), she perpetuated the common-sense notion(s) that something the victim had done resulted in her victimization. Further, whatever this action was, it might have been her "mistake" that led to being "tortured and cyberbullied". (Laney, 17) The insight that Laney's comment offers regarding the social norms that structure CV is instructive, considering these harmful tropes continue to be incorporated in existing young people's digital literacy and anti-cyberbullying curricula such as 'Respect Yourself' (Karaian, 2014).

The contradiction participants demonstrated regarding victim-blaming similarly applies to the various spectrums of behaviour that were discussed – ranging from taunting and bullying to non-consensual filming and sexual violence. Some participants (N=32) stated that they would use the word "harassment" to describe the non-consensual filming of sexual activities (which a few girls said is "common at parties"), yet they also re-inscribed a victim-blaming narrative. For instance, Jenny explained, "I learned a while ago about parties there is always a phone so someone can take a picture of it like if you're kissing in a corner a lot of people will take pictures

and post that on Snapchat” (Jenny, 17). Jenny went on to explain that non-consensual filming was very common and often led to extensive slut-shaming (Henry & Powell, 2016; McGlynn, Rackley, & Houghton, 2017).¹¹¹ This contradiction appears throughout the discussions of cyberviolence at both locations. While participants acknowledged that harassment and photos, videos and posts made without consent constitute a violation, they continued to place the onus on themselves and their peers to prevent such actions. This discursive tendency ranged from simply linking content production (even when they were not the producers) to their vulnerability for victimization to outright blame for “sluts” who endangered themselves (Monica, 17). The following exchange from a focus group reflects the prevailing sentiments participants expressed regarding why some girls and young women experience more harassment than others.

Susan: Some girls put themselves in really risky situations and do things to get a rise out of people, and they get a lot of hate for that. (Susan, 16)

Grace: Yeah, I think that everyone is susceptible to cyber harassment but when people put themselves “out there” willingly they should be able to stand up for themselves. (Grace, 16)

The approach to consent that the participants have internalized is not surprising; it informs the dominant discourses we use to educate young people about cyber-safety. We know that intimate photos, even if privately sent, are framed as fair game to be circulated and shared without consent. This narrative is institutionalized. It is solidified through online social norms, school curricula (Chun & Friedland, 2015; Chun 2016) and in college rape culture. For example, as Lara Karaian (2013) notes, the ‘Respect Yourself’ campaign mobilizes slut-shaming in order to “responsibilize teenage girls for preventing sexting’s purported harms” (p. 284). The persistent

¹¹¹ The ethical and legal implications of these practices are beginning to be unpacked by feminist legal scholars, often within the context of revenge porn and sexual violence in the digital age (e.g., see Litcher, 2013 and Pina, Holland, & James, 2017). However, further research is needed on how young people perceive and are impacted by these types of behaviours.

fear of girls' sexuality in the age of social media is ironic when situated within the reality that girls are victims of CV and sexual violence in disproportionate and staggering numbers (Gelsthorpe & Worrall, 2009).

Most of the participants described their social media presence as ubiquitous (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Sales, 2016). As one said, "I don't really know anybody that isn't on social media" (Sharon, 17). At the same time, almost all of the girls agreed that their gender identity rendered them more 'vulnerable' to encountering danger and hostility online. Girls in both locations mobilized discourses of risk, responsibility and victim-blaming when it came to being a girl on the Internet and representing oneself as a sexual subject. This reflects police narratives, for example recommending that Amanda Todd stay off the Internet if she wanted to avoid harassment, which as Wendy Chun argues, "is analogous to telling women not to dress provocatively or go out in public if they want to avoid harassment" (Chun, 2016, p. 320). Unfortunately, girls have received the message that their actions, social media posts, and often simple visibility result in ridicule, taunting, harassment, rape threats or death threats online.¹¹²

Participants had heard these messages and wrestled with the contradictions that they create. Interestingly, many girls resist hegemonic bullying discourses even if the dissonance around what it means to be and perform 'girl' online is often profound. Secondary school environments are not the only locations where problematic vernacular cultural framings of youth ICT practices are flourishing. For example, most studies published on consensual sexting in PsychINFO and PubMed since 2009 refer to it as a deviant high-risk practice for youth, particularly girls, and often recommend abstinence (Doring, 2014). While the participants with

¹¹² While participants made these connections, they were largely in agreement that they did not perceive social media as problematic or dangerous. In Chapter Six, I discuss how participants described design affordances, rather than apps or platforms, as amplifying cyberviolence.

whom I spoke did not discuss using digital technologies in resistant ways as frequently as cultural studies scholars may expect them to, it was surprising to learn that much of the resistance I encountered was in the way participants critically parsed out the meanings, stereotypes, and motivations that they negotiated online every day. For example, during a conversation among five young people at the community-based organization, Austin (16) pointed to the ways in which digital tools facilitate gendered performances:

There is all this pressure in life, in general, to be all these manly slash womanly things and that just because the Internet is so malleable you can put it up to a whole new level that you can't in real life and then you can fake it and then it brings up that hype so much more online and then that created this whole universe of you need to be this certain way. (16)

This comment demonstrates Austin's critical reading of digital culture and prescribed gendered performances. Comments such as Austin's, read alongside narratives that shore up and normalize victim-blaming, allow us to appreciate the contradictions that participants highlighted in their descriptions of the social contexts that inform cyberviolence.

During several weeks of PV work, the overwhelming majority of participants, understandably, mobilized the terms of which they were often critical to discuss victims. However, during the last weeks in both locations, there were moments of insightful theorizing around victim-blaming in which many participants offered some thoughtful questions regarding how to approach leaked, intimate and sexualized photos online. For instance, a participant at the community organization offered the following framing:

How should we react to pictures like that having a place on the web? Like, how should we go about it? 'Cause I think a lot of the time those pictures are a source of a lot of bad stuff and just like pictures in which people take selfies and accentuate their sexuality like or just like pictures of people messing up it creates so much anger often (Jessica, 16).

Situating the ‘leak’ as the troublesome object is noteworthy, especially as Jessica suggests that girls’ pictures “create so much anger” (Jessica, 16) While participants were often at a loss to articulate why they encountered harassment, ridicule, or worse online, they repeatedly placed the onus on themselves and centred girls and women as the location for prevention techniques.

The contradictions embedded in the participants’ struggles around how best to represent themselves while avoiding ridicule are mirrored in their confusion regarding how to prevent CV. Perhaps Katrina (16) unwittingly summed this up best in her attempt to pinpoint a reason why girls and young women experience disproportionate levels of harassment online (Belsey, 2011; Connell et al., 2014; Craig, 2011; Mishna, 2011; Navaro & Jasinski, 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Setting out to describe what causes cyberviolence, she said, “Well for me, I don’t really go into social media much – so like it depends on the person if she wants to get attention or show off or is being too shy they are the people to get most harassed.” (Katrina, 16) As Katrina’s comment demonstrates, girls are understandably conflicted when trying to think through which behaviours put them at risk; well-meaning adults and teachers often compound this confusion with their online safety advice. As online misogyny expert Emma A. Jane puts it, “It [online misogynistic harassment] belongs to a far older tradition of gendered abuse and oppression: one that reduces women to their sexual – or lack of sexual – value and then punishes them for it” (2016, p. 891). The themes that my participants’ responses underscored highlight that myths about (young) women, sex and consent continue to impact girls’ lives on and offline.

The fact that young women are struggling to make sense of how to engage more meaningfully and safely within social media is not surprising. At the time of writing, several newly appointed federal judges in Canada were undergoing seminars, colloquially known as

“judge school”, the purpose of which is to review the laws around sexual violence and consent after several Canadian judges made comments suggesting that women are responsible for preventing sexual violence, including rape (Mansbridge, 2017). For example, Justice Robin Camp recently asked a rape victim in his courtroom, “Why couldn’t you just keep your knees together?”, and Justice Gregory Lenehan stated that “Clearly a drunk can consent” (Mansbridge, 2017). The myths that continue to inform sexual violence reporting and rulings in Canada (Doolittle, 2017) are the same ones that participants pointed to as structuring notions of consent and victimization leading to cyberviolence.¹¹³ As Canada begins more nuanced national discussions around rape culture and sexual violence (CBC, 2014; CBC, 2016; *Maclean’s*, 2014), it is important to reframe the dominant discourses used to address cyberviolence targeting women and girls.

The connection between cyberviolence and rape culture is particularly relevant for my participants’ age group as some of them move onto college campuses, which we know are locations with particularly high rates of sexual assault (Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys, & Jozkowski, 2017; Quinlan, Clarke, & Miller, 2016). The often-seamless overlap between online and offline sexual violence was acknowledged by several participants in their narratives of non-consensual distribution of intimate or graphic sexual images, some taken without consent. For example, participants referred to two videos that had been uploaded to Snapchat and Facebook respectively before being removed after peers had already taken screen shots. This connection was also drawn by Evangeline (18), who brought up the case of a group of dental students at Dalhousie University who used a private Facebook chat to discuss which girls in their class they would like to rape. The following section is part of a lengthy on-camera dialogue the youth at the

¹¹³ Recent findings from a 20-month *Globe and Mail* investigation of more than 870 police forces revealed that police dismiss 1 in 5 sexual assault claims as “baseless” (Doolittle, 2017).

community-based organization had with eighteen-year-old Concordia journalism student Evangeline.

Evangeline: I remember like a few weeks ago I don't know if you heard about the Dalhousie story?

Anna: Yes.

Evangeline: These dentistry students created this online kind of Facebook page and it was called gentleman's only page you know back in the day when you had gentleman's clubs where women weren't allowed [Anna puts her face in her hand and is laughing a lot] and so they made it private but what they were doing got leaked but um they were ranking women in the program of they [sic] would like to quote unquote [she's also gesturing to indicate air quotes around this word] "hate fuck".

Judy: Hate fuck?

Anna: I've never heard of that.

Evangeline: I hadn't either.

Anna: What is it?

Evangeline: It's who they would rape.

Judy: Oh. [the group looks serious now and Anna has stopped laughing]

Evangeline: So, they were talking about using chloroform from the dental school because I guess you have chloroform at the dental school. So yeah, so they put their female students talking about girls in their classes and um so it was a huge thing because the school wasn't very severe or strict with them and so I remember it bothered me so much. I like changed my profile picture the same night that I wrote what I thought was a very articulate post [lots of laughter especially from Jane who is laughing very loudly] with the link to the petition and I was like so geared up about this like people I need to mobilize my friends and we need to sign this petition and then like I got zero likes people I know had like looked at it but and then my profile picture which is a selfie in fact got so many more likes it got like forty likes whereas the thing I thought was reflective of like my intelligence my beliefs you know like activism ...no one cared.

Jane: They got caught, and they weren't severely in trouble? [everyone visibly surprised and laughing] I'm sorry [laughing] what?

Jessica: [in a mocking tone] It's like we're planning which girls we're going to rape ok, don't do that anymore, but it's ok [everyone laughing].

Anna: Oh no! No!

Evangeline: That's pretty much how it was like you're saying. They all got them together and the women has to be with these dental students who were in the classes with them and try to work through their issues.

Jane: Ok, say I'm a female dental student. How is it my problem if some guy online decides that he wants to hate fuck me? That's not my problem I shouldn't have to talk to him. [aggravated sound]

Evangeline: And that's where I find that culture of slut-shaming kind of comes up because they're like hey let's do some restorative justice where all eyes are on you and if you don't say well it's ok and I give you guys justice and I forgive you then what does that mean right?

Judy: That's not ok.

Evangeline: My point exactly. Should you be in a room? Like for me you were a victim to this right? And it was not even part of your knowledge and then its brought to your attention and you're asked to be in a room with people who want to harm you.

The use of chloroform by dental professionals in sexual assault cases has been an issue of concern since the drug was introduced in the mid-19th century (Bourke, 2007); its reference in the Dalhousie case points to VAWG being mediated, extended, and in some cases, amplified by social media rather than created by it. Most of the participants who discussed issues of consent and sexual violence in the context of digital culture had, to some degree, internalized dominant rape myths. However, it is clear from the exchange above that many also problematized these narratives. Moreover, exchanges such as this one speak to young women's political astuteness and ability to critically approach online/offline misogyny, emphasizing the need for better education and more productive language with which to discuss consent and sexual violence, where rape culture overlaps with digital culture.

Directly after this lengthy exchange, Anna (16) and Judy (16) both nodded silently and the group was mostly quiet when Evangeline (18) offered a final remark that explicitly located the Dalhousie incident and the administration's handling of it within a broader culture of misogyny.

Evangeline: People will think wow you're blowing this out of proportion say or you're being like a bitch or well they'll judge you pretty much no matter which like which way you interpret how you feel and I feel like personally that would be the worst idea for me to be in that situation to be put into that situation and to be uncomfortable so that was their plan of action and they didn't even suspend them they didn't even expel them.
(Evangeline, 18)

In stating that "You're blowing this out of proportion say or you're being like a bitch or well they'll judge," Evangeline is challenging the dominant misogynistic tropes that girls and women are hysterical, which we know to be extended in popular and scholarly discourses around

girls' relationship with new media (Sammond, 2015; Stuber, 2015) a challenge particularly heightened for racialized girls (Bradley, 2015), especially Indigenous girls in Canada and African American girls in the United States, who are more often "stereotyped as sexually promiscuous and morally unreliable" (Heyes, 2016, p. 363).¹¹⁴ She was also addressing sexism as continuing to structure the way we deal with VAWG in the digital age (Arntfield, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015; Karaian, 2014). Britney's remark cut to the heart of this issue:

In [another school] there was a boy in grade 10 whose phone was stolen. A group of boys went into it and looked through the pictures and found a naked one. One of the guys sent it to all of his friends. The principal suspended the guy but also blamed the girl. The principal told her she shouldn't have those kind[s] of pictures on her phone and that she could be accused of child pornography (Britney, 16).

Britney accurately pointed to the complicity of the young men who received the photo and the blame the principal placed on the victim whose photograph was stolen and circulated without her consent. Of course, as we know, recent legal changes in Canada allow for minors who send nude photographs consensually to be charged with child pornography (Bailey, 2014; Hassinof, 2013; Karaian, 2014). In Britney's story, the principal used a straw man to misrepresent recent punitive strategies to keep youth from 'sexting' and mobilized the portion of the law that blames young people (most often girls) for sending consensually produced imagery. A few participants referred to experiences along a spectrum of race- and religious-based harassment, as well as sexual violence they or their friends experienced. One participant recounted the experience of a close friend whose boyfriend filmed intimate activity without her consent and posted the video on Facebook for ten minutes before removing it. As the participant recalled, ten minutes was long enough for several classmates to take screen shots from the video

¹¹⁴ It must be noted that sexual assault cases involving racialized girls and women also receive less (if any) press coverage, are less often pursued by law enforcement and are less likely to result in a conviction (Benedet, 2010; Hayes, 2015; Sheehy, 2011).

and distribute them. Narratives such as Britney's highlight the need to move away from age-old sexist stereotypes and the conflation of sexual violence with cyberbullying.

Validation versus Policing Peer Content

On my first day at the private school for girls, I checked in at the front desk and received a visitor pass. As I made my way up the central winding staircase, I was distracted by papier-mâché art projects suspended from the ceiling by wire, until a loud bell rang out. Suddenly I was swept up by a crowd of uniformed girls and rushing to find the Grade 10 classroom where I would conduct my first focus group. As the session was about to begin, the school librarian informed me that the young women were very “sophisticated”, at a very “advanced” level, and that I should not talk down to them because they had heard several speakers discuss cyberbullying. I mention this to note that this group was being encouraged to speak up and to understand that their voices (at least on some topics) were valuable.

After a brief introduction to the topic and research problems, a silence fell on the room. One participant in the front row then began the conversation by telling me, “You came to the wrong place; we don't know anything about cyberviolence – we're good girls” (Brianna, age 15). Immediately after this remark, the class began to look a lot more interested, but an uncomfortably long silence persisted. I decided to shift my approach and asked the group why they thought other girls might encounter CV. One participant articulated how girls may be harassed on SNS more frequently because there is “a lot of pressure to create sexy photos” (Zan, 15). This comment illustrates an interesting contradiction: even the group that told me they knew nothing about cyberviolence began by mentioning the pressure to produce sexualized imagery. Despite their initial overtures to the contrary, as I unpack throughout this chapter, my time at the private school demonstrated that the participants at this did know a lot about cyberviolence and

the contexts that structure it. As one participant put it, “We have all witnessed some form of cyberbullying but not to the extent of Amanda Todd, but everyone has seen a little bit of it.” (Emily, 15) I learned that this group seemed to be the one to have most deeply internalized the often-repeated message in anti-cyberbullying curricula as it pertains to selfies and sexting: *Once you post it, it’s there forever*. In other words, “once you have exposed yourself as a slut – as a consenting spectacle, as shameless– you deserve no protection, no privacy”, and you can be re-shamed continually as an example of the bad or stupid user (Chun, 2015, p. 3; Cross, 2015). For instance, Brianna parsed out this explanation for why this group suggested that they do not know much about cyberviolence, which she tied to bad girls:

We’re not that type of grade, we are not what you say, what you think, we are just good girls, I know these girls. I’ve known them for four years I have them on Facebook nobody has sexy profiles, nothing we post on Instagram or Twitter really sexualizes us we have guy friends from childhood we just don’t have that pressure; you’ll find we’re just not the crowd to play that role (Brianna, 15).

It is important to note that I did not suggest that these young women possessed firsthand knowledge of CV, as I never asked for any personal testimonies regarding victimization. Significantly, Brianna, like many girls at this location, ties experiences with CV, particularly victimization, to something ‘bad’ girls encounter. This remark reveals a primary contradiction. This group tied cyberviolence to a sexualized self-presentation on social media, explaining that girls feel a lot of pressure to present themselves in this way, and did their best to convince me that they did not feel any pressure personally to present themselves in this way. Interestingly, discussions of cyberviolence across locations identified physical appearance and self-representation (notably practices of validation and policing) as the leading causes of CV (Dryden, 2014). At the private school, participants described the system that they argued prevented cyberviolence from occurring but which also shored up their ‘good girl’ identities.

During the same focus group the participants explained that they engaged in group surveillance (Kanai, 2015; Regan & Sweet, 2015). As one participant articulated it, “The private school community is very small, so everyone would see it [a sexy post or profile picture]” (Sharon, 17). Another echoed, “It’s pointless because you would get caught right away, your reputation would be ruined right away.” (Carol, 17) Interestingly, as I spent more time at the school and the participants began discussing more personal examples of cyberbullying, the stories would often be framed as unfolding at other schools (e.g., gossip that had filtered over). For example, Katherine (16) had transferred from another school and framed her experiences as occurring in spaces other than her current school. Discussing her experiences in an online gaming community, she said:

I don’t know about anyone else but if I think here if you tried that [CV] it’s like a flame. It would be snuffed out right away offline. I dip in sometimes to see [other young people’s online cultures] and it’s totally different where everyone will be at each other’s throats if you mention certain topics, you were either on one side or the other side; I got death threats. (Katherine, 16)

This reflects the notion that middle-class girls often engage in damaging self-regulation that constitutes their agency as ‘fitting in’ (McRobbie, 2009; Hey, 2009, p. 19). However, we also know that racialized and white working-class girls encounter “external authority antagonistically where their bodily performances are disqualified as ‘unladylike’ and all ‘too loud’”. This border work of class as ‘affective contagion’ serves the dominant narrative well, because in objectifying ‘the other’ it seeks to individualize” (Hey, 2009, p. 19; Jones, 2006). Significantly, several participants at the private school contextualized their knowledge of cyberviolence similarly, as stemming from observer knowledge of some ‘other’ group of girls.

The participants differed in the perspectives they used to think through how (visible) female sexuality and cyberviolence relate. For example, the participants at the private school

engaged in more ‘othering’ and distancing from ‘bad’ girls who sexualized themselves online (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013; Salter, 2016) than did youth at the CBO. Participants at the community-based organization took it for granted that normative expectations structured the images one would post, that there could be pleasure in performing this (hegemonically) “attractive” and sexualized image (Bailey, Steeves, Burkell, & Regan, 2013), and that different platforms provided varying levels of safety. This is significant, as we know that the stakes for failing to perform (hetero)sexualized femininity are higher for marginalized girls: “the masquerade may contain distress for some privileged young women but so much more is likely to be at stake for those unsuccessful losers” (Hey, 2009, p. 19). Participants at the private school also pointed to the pleasure in validation. For example, as discussed earlier, the number of ‘likes’ they received from their friends and peers on social media profile pictures was mentioned many times in both locations as important social currency (Bourdieu, 1984). Participants argued that if one posted the ‘right’ type of pictures, receiving validation is positive and improves one’s “self-esteem”.

Participants at the community-based organization were much more critical in unpacking what the validation did, how it worked, and the reasons offered for ‘liking’ people’s photographs. Interestingly, even at the private school, participants pointed to some resistant practices that would go completely unnoticed if we were to believe that girls ‘liking’ and validating each other’s photographs was a purposeless exercise in vanity (Abidin, 2016). By posting positive comments, girls block out negative and hurtful ones, forming a kind of positive ‘bubble’ around the image. This is illustrated by the following exchange between Kelly (17) and Susan (16):

Kelly: One of the reasons we constantly say you’re so gorgeous so stunning is because that fills up the comments and pushes ones down that are mean and it covers them up.

Susan: We sometimes flood another girls picture with comments like that [you're so pretty etc.] since that distracts from any negative comments and they move down.

Unpacking participants' perspectives on the contexts of self-produced images and their intersection with cyberviolence using a girl-focused lens allows us to mine those moments of rupture in which girls challenge the more harmful elements of mainstream cyberbullying discourse and mobilize more productive practices. This exchange works to counter the pervasive 'mean girl' framing that situates girls as perpetuating cyberviolence against one another.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the primary descriptors participants used to conceptualize the social contexts they argued informed cyberviolence. Describing social media platforms as risky spaces that perpetuate girls' endangerment (boyd, 2014; Hasinoff, 2015) obfuscates and amplifies the challenges participants faced. This research revealed that girls are engaging in productive, critical, and resistant thinking around these technologies; however, the extent of resistance did not meet my original assumptions. The participants' descriptors and narratives point to the role of misogynistic social norms as a significant context of cyberviolence on social media. Many new media and communication scholars continue to celebrate social media as the first form of mass media that sees girls and young women as "equal" participants (Ahn, 2011), producing content at greater levels than boys and men (Salter, 2015). To be sure, these platforms offer new modes of communication, social support (Hasinoff, 2013), and identity play (Kafai, Heeter, Denner, & Sun, 2008), and can be used in resistant ways by young women. However, dominant cyberbullying discourses distract us from the broader issue: girls and young women face systemic barriers to full and equal digital citizenship (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). It is crucial to understand girls as content producers and to examine how they use these platforms without

ignoring or silencing the challenges that they articulate facing. Many of the participants I interviewed tie self-produced imagery to cyberviolence. However, this does not mean that scaring girls off social media or placing the burden to prevent cyberviolence on them are productive solutions.

These scare tactics continue a troubling tradition of suppressing girls' digital literacy. We know that "threats and warning[s] of sexual violence have historically demarcated the public sphere as unsuitable for girls and women, effectively privatizing femininity by constructing the private and domestic sphere as the safest and most appropriate place for girls and women" (Gorden & Riger, 1989 cited in Salter, 2015). Emerging literature on girlhood and new media rightly critiques the configuration of girls as mere consumers of media that objectify girlhood and girls (Hasinoff, 2013; 2015). My participants referred to issues such as objectification numerous times. However, rather than being passive consumers of social media, the participants with whom I worked demonstrated a high level of critical awareness regarding the constraints they faced in digital culture. Contrary to once-familiar rhetoric that youth have an innate understanding of technology (Davies, 2015; Livingstone, 2010; Ng, 2012), participants understandably grappled with the platforms and contradictions that structured their digital subjectivities. The participatory video (PV) work produced by these young people suggests that girls are aware of – but not defined by – these challenges, and that we would do well not to twist their words to suit our theories. The videos also highlight the potential that digital tools hold for amplifying girls' voices in productive ways when there are safe and equitable spaces in which to use them.

In the next chapter, I examine the specific platforms and practices that participants identified as being harmful or helpful to avoid, or cope with, cyberviolence. Specifically, I

address participant discussions of the roles that specific platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and practices (the difference between “just jokes” and “drama”) had in their conceptualization of cyberviolence. Finally, I introduce the role of empathy, unpacked further in Chapter Seven, as something that participants pointed to as being especially complicated by digital culture.

CHAPTER SIX

“The Hate on Women Thing Online is Actually Happening”: How Participants Describe Platform Architecture and Networked Practices Amplifying Misogyny

“I find that the people who made Ask.fm are brilliant, for them teenagers like drama and are attracted to drama so they will make a profit from them.” – Evie, 15

“‘Go make me sandwich bitch’ is a term that is pretty famous now and is used often.” – Peggy, 18

As a feminist researcher, I am aware that (hetero)sexism, along with ageism, racism, classism, and ableism, is intrinsically bound up with constructions of girlhood, thus structuring the possibilities for self-expression, and safe and equitable digital citizenship that exist for girls in digital culture. However, perhaps naively, I had not realized how pervasive sexism is in the lives of even the most privileged girls in Canada until I began working with young women around cyberviolence. When, after learning about my research, an adult woman told me at a social function that Rehtaeh Parsons “had it coming”, it served as a harsh reminder of the particular challenges at the intersection of age and gender that work to silence girls on and offline (Smith, Thompson, & Davidson, 2014).¹¹⁵ As mentioned previously, during PV sessions and focus groups, when participants began to discuss cyberviolence, they often quickly moved away from individual examples into discussions of the broader realities that they faced online. The conundrum is that when girls use the platforms and apps they often profess to love, they also experience an excessive level of mean, cruel and hateful behaviour.¹¹⁶ When the idea of not

¹¹⁵ Rehtaeh Parsons died by suicide in April 2013. A cell phone photograph taken of Rehtaeh being sexually assaulted while vomiting out of a window circulated through her school in Nova Scotia and others in the area. Rehtaeh was inundated with cyberbullying, harassment and a continual barrage of girls and boys labelling her a slut. This targeting, which persisted after two school transfers and a move to Halifax, was done via social media, BBM (BlackBerry messenger) and text message, and began after the party at which the incident had taken place in November 2011 (Gillis, 2013).

¹¹⁶ Descriptors and terminology are a central concern in cyberviolence studies, and no universally accepted definition of cyberbullying currently exists (Arntfield, 2015). As mentioned in footnote one (Chapter Five), I often

being in these spaces was raised, as Bianca put it in Chapter Five, it feels as though girls simply “don’t exist” (Bianca, 18). The themes I identify in participants’ narratives, responses and video work cluster around three core concepts: the social contexts and norms that inform CV, the platforms and practices that structure it, and strategies with which to combat it.

As examined in Chapter Five, from the perspective of young women, cyberviolence is inextricably linked to the social contexts and norms that they identify as informing and constraining their experiences of digital culture in their social media networks (Bailey, 2015; Steeves & Regan, 2014). This context is crucial for understanding how they conceptualize cyberviolence. The second most common type of descriptor participants mobilized when conceptualizing CV refers to the specific platforms (including specific elements of design). Moreover, many participants, in their conversations, examples, and stories, pointed to networked practices that amplify or exacerbate CV. Alarmist headlines often tie suicidal ideation to social media usage, reproducing the idea that most youth who die by suicide experience disproportionate bullying, without contextualizing or analyzing what this represents about the broader cultural contexts that shape teens’ interpersonal dynamics (Arntfield, 2015; Bailey & Steeves, 2015; boyd, 2014). As danah boyd argues, “Untangling these dynamics is essential for understanding what is at stake and for developing intervention strategies.” (2014, p. 131).

Surpassed only by references to the social norms and contexts that structure cyberviolence,

write ‘cyberbullying’ in single quotation marks to denote that this is a contested and muddy term often misapplied to instances of harassment including race, sex and gender-based hate. Throughout this chapter I follow Pew Research Center’s definitions of the terms “mean” and “cruel” behaviour (Lenhart et al., 2011). For example, I use the words “mean” and “cruel” to refer to incidents that led to an offline confrontation, incidents that caused participants to feel threatened or fear for their safety, an experience where they identified someone as being intentionally unkind or targeting them with what they perceived as bullying behaviours. I use the word “ridicule” to refer to experiences and online encounters participants identified as causing them anxiety and confusion or as leading them to police themselves and their peers’ posting practices. I use the word “harassment” whenever my participants do so, to refer to behaviours that fall under the definition in Canada’s *Criminal Code* (R.S.C. 1985, c C-46). I use the term sexual assault when participants did and when I am describing events such as non-consensual sexual activity or the non-consensual filming of consensual sexual activity.

examples relating to specific platforms and social media practices were frequently cited by participants when conceptualizing cyberviolence.¹¹⁷ The participants devoted a great deal of attention to toxic social norms around girls' self-representation that are exacerbated by social media architecture (Bailey, 2015; Bailey et al., 2013).

In this chapter I address the major themes that participants identified most frequently in their descriptions of cyberviolence that clustered around the mutually informing categories of platform architecture and SNS practices. I address the most frequent ways in which participants complicated adult approaches to defining, counteracting and responding to cyberviolence. That is, girls' narratives complicate the notion that CV is a homogeneous phenomenon that unfolds in public spaces by anonymous perpetrators. I examine how the participants with whom I spoke described CV as being amplified through social media content as 'private/public' and context specific. The participants used many examples of platforms that incorporated design affordances which encouraged blending between private and public content such as Facebook and Instagram. The narrative the participants told about CV underscores how systemic sexism in design architecture facilitates misogynistic practices coalescing as norms in these spaces. My participants complicated traditional approaches to anonymity in digital culture, and argued that the most significant misogynistic practices on SNS stemmed from familiarity rather than anonymity and centre on "jokes" and mobbing. The themes examined in this chapter are as follows: 1) certain platforms (such as Facebook) exacerbate cyberviolence through problematic constructions of 'public' and 'private'; 2) the architecture of social media forms a 'grey zone' between 'drama,' harassment and mean or cruel 'jokes'; 3) anonymity is a mediating factor that

¹¹⁷ The potential benefits for academics and policy-makers of understanding how young people conceptualize their practices in digital culture has been demonstrated in the recent literature on young people's understandings of privacy as something that is negotiated socially; that is, girls were found to conceptualize privacy as an inherently social practice (Steeves & Regan, 2014).

plays a role in cyberviolence – it occurred regularly among people the participants knew and often impacted them more; and 4) digital practices such as ‘mobbing’ and ‘drama’ normalize online misogyny.¹¹⁸

Addressing the gap around girlhood and online misogyny and VAWG research is important, as the needs of girls and young women are likely unique “particularly in a society that prioritizes adults” (Bailey, 2015, p. 23). The constructionist view of childhood (Corsaro, 2014, p. 371) recognizes children and youth as citizens who are actively engaged in attributing meaning to their lives and environment (Hart, 2013; Jans, 2004; Roche, 1999).¹¹⁹ This is a relatively new concept in the Western popular and academic social imaginary. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, however, these meanings often differ from those assigned by adults, further complicating accurate knowledge translation. Participants’ collective descriptions of cyberviolence targeting themselves, peers and the women they followed online were consistent with the Birmingham School approach to popular culture; that is, the meanings participants assigned to these moments formed a set of what Stuart Hall refers to as “shared meanings” (1997) around cyberviolence in digital culture. Once again, it is important to note that participants did not separate these themes into discrete categories. Moreover, I examine the sexist codes (Hall, 2001) and misogynistic myths (Barthes, 1972) that informed many of the narratives participants called on to describe CV (e.g., ‘good’ girl), as well the social norms they outlined in SNS that facilitate cyberviolence (Chapter Five) and are exacerbated by platform architecture (Dunbar-Hester, 2014; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Rossie, 2015; Steeves, 2015).

¹¹⁸ Platform architecture was often cited as something that complicates empathy. The cultivation of empathy and the need to develop social media-specific empathy-building strategies through design is discussed at length in Chapter Seven, which examines participants’ critiques of existing strategies and cyber-safety policies, as well as potential strategies they identified for future development.

¹¹⁹ Of course, it must be noted that the concept of childhood in its common usage is relatively new, in flux, and contested. Moreover, the concept of girlhood has a distinct genealogy separate from, and usually conceived in opposition to, boyhood (Driscoll, 2008; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007).

Part One: The Role of Platform Architecture in Participants' Descriptions of Cyberviolence

Feminism, from the Latin for “don’t read the comments.” – @RheaButcher

Although social media sites may be a relatively new genre of social networks, they belong to “a long lineage of networked publics” (boyd, 2008, p. 92). Teenage girls are the number one users of social media, and this usage pattern applies to young women regardless of race, ethnicity, class, rural and urban lines (Pew Research Center, 2015; Sales, 2016). Participants called upon various social media platforms and aspects of design in their descriptions of cyberviolence. Participants frequently intervened during the flow of these discussions to remind me that they enjoyed these platforms, that they needed to be in them, and that, often, the good outweighed the negative. As Jessica (16) put it, “It is the way it is utilized, at least in my opinion, that affects people. It can be used for either good or bad. However, it does facilitate violence because it just makes it so much more simple.” (Jessica, 16) Comments to this effect were offered during two focus groups and nearly all of the video workshops, and remind us of the stakes for feminist scholars, policy-makers, educators and youth workers engaged in cyberviolence research.¹²⁰ That is, it is important to encourage and take girls’ content production seriously while resisting moral panic frameworks that continue to dominate media coverage of girls and technology. On the other hand, we must acknowledge the real risks that young people now navigate through digital technologies that “exacerbate a problem – bullying – that has been consistent with youth culture for decades” (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012, p. 196). Moreover,

¹²⁰ In a subsection of Chapter Seven I outline the positive points pertaining to digital culture and social networking platforms such as Facebook and Tumblr that received the most consensus. I include these in order to reflect the way in which participants themselves incorporated the positive side of social media use and production into their conversations, comments and interjections.

improved digital literacy education for girls will necessitate a broad understanding of the specific risks and opportunities girls say come about from their participation on social networking sites.

Participants cited recent modifications to existing platforms as elements that they believed could give rise to cyberviolence. These included the ‘secret inbox’ ” of messages that many Facebook users discovered after the company made another significant change to its filter policies in 2016. This change involved how the platform responded to messages sent from users not connected to the recipient through “friendship” (Griffin, 2016). The addition to Snapchat that allows users to be ‘invisible’ is another example of constantly changing modifications that form the platform architectures through which girls navigate cyberviolence.¹²¹ Many participants in Grade 10 at the high school discussed a platform called ASKfm that they saw as fostering some particularly toxic exchanges that took place when they were in Grade 8. Many young people continue to phase out their use of Facebook at “an estimated rate of up to a million a year” (Lang, 2015) as parents and adults move into this space. At the time of writing, young people favour platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and Vine (Villanti, Johnson, Ilakkuvan, Jacobs, Graham, & Rath, 2017).¹²² Most of the platforms mentioned are still popular with young people. While the spaces of digital culture are shifting at a rapid pace, the primary challenges identified by participants (e.g., how to safely present themselves and how to cultivate empathy and safer designs) are urgent and ongoing struggles. The lessons we learn from the young people

¹²¹ One participant described what she identified as a recent and problematic design feature on Snapchat that enables a user to receive and view text and/or a video message. The feature is known as a “snap”. The sender does not see notification or confirmation of receipt. This is of course, in addition to the platform’s defining feature, that is, that messages are deleted from the app twenty-four hours after they are sent. Due to the timeline of my fieldwork, this participant was likely referring to a service provided by a third-party software designer which can be added to an individual’s smartphone – a Snapchat “hack” or workaround that enables users to temporarily override the signal that is sent back to Snapchat when a message is viewed (Technology Reporters, *The Telegraph* October 12, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/the-best-hidden-snapchat-features/>).

¹²² Although teenagers are moving off Facebook, an American survey conducted at the University of Chicago found it to be among the top three social media platforms (after Snapchat and Instagram) used by youth aged 13 to 17 in 2017 (NORC, University of Chicago April 21, 2017, “New Survey: Snapchat and Instagram are most popular social media platforms among American teens”).

who are growing up with these platforms will help us to intervene better and navigate the networked platforms of the future. As a teenager named Stan from Iowa told danah boyd during a homecoming football game, “You’d actually be surprised how little things change. I’m guessing a lot of the drama is still the same, it’s just the format is a little different. It’s just changing the font and background colour really.” (boyd, 2014, p. 1) We know that there are always new and specific challenges, such as encroaching commercialization, in spaces where many girls, until recently, enjoyed posting their artwork (e.g., Instagram). However, Stan’s comment reflects what so many participants articulated about their negotiations of digitally networked publics. It speaks to how age-old struggles are mediated, amplified, and (re)produced through social media platforms.

A recent trend in social media scholarship sees SNS as subversive. The tendency to assume SNS are inherently subversive is particularly present in the work of many cultural studies scholars (e.g., Jackson, 2016). Through this lens, social media is often envisioned as inherently disruptive, for example by producing/disseminating counter-hegemonic discourses or imagery (Juris, 2012). Moreover, social media is assumed to be resistant, often through reductionist claims of its “revolutionary potential” (Lim, 2017) which are decoupled from the broader contexts of inequality in digital culture.¹²³ This dominant framing may explain the shortage of research that considers “the continuities and conservative schemas that are reproduced by these platforms” (Lentz, 2017). The descriptors and experiences participants used to explain the role they saw platforms playing in cyberviolence reveal that my participants did resist technological determinism. They also demonstrated a capacity for critical engagement with their posting

¹²³ Although there is genuinely counter-hegemonic work being done in digital culture (e.g., Black feminist blogging sites such as “Racialicious” & “Jezebel”), any assessment of the roles social media can play in social change must account for the broader context in which these platforms operate. For example, engaging with digital technologies necessitates contending with increasing corporatization (Wight, 2014), digital (and material) divides (Eubanks, 2011; Hasinoff, 2014; Shade, 2003), and Western neoliberal logics and ideologies.

practices. Many participants sought out content that went against the grain of the hegemonic sexist discourses they were faced with daily, displaying what Stuart Hall refers to as counter-tendencies (Hall, 1985 quoted in Dines & Humez, 2003). However, the findings demonstrate why girls are finding that creating social resistance (Hall, 1977) on social media is immensely challenging and far from reach.¹²⁴ Two participants in Grade 10 situated gendered CV within a broader context of offline gender inequality:

Penelope (16): Why is cyberviolence and bullying targeted toward women?

Janet (16): There's no true response to that because men and women should be equal but in our society, today men and women are still not equal. So, in a way cyberviolence is somewhere, we can still see that men and women still are not equal in society because women receive more hate than men. So, until we can make men and women equal in the world cyberviolence will still be targeted on women.

The two communities of participants with whom I worked mapped complex negotiations in these spaces that they placed along a continuum of normalized misogyny, hostility and violence – or, as Janet put it, “Cyberviolence is somewhere we can still see that men and women still are not equal.” (Janet, 16) The participants conceptualized CV through examples which pointed to social media as mediating and (re)producing offline stereotypes and inequality (Magnet, 2011; Nakamura, 2008).¹²⁵

Since Angela McRobbie centred girls' experiences in her approach to cultural studies, 'voice' has rightly been a central concern in girl studies (Blazek, 2016). However, in the post-Prensky age of social media, girls can produce content with relative ease and have the potential

¹²⁴ I use the term 'social resistance' to mean counter-hegemonic posts, comments or discourses that resist what my participants described as being the dominant ideological framework – a framework in which misogynistic myths and codes normalize gendered cyberviolence – of the spaces that populate their digital culture.

¹²⁵ Although this study focuses on youth who have been immersed to various degrees in digital technologies throughout their life, we know that the social issues participants identified are urgent concerns for adults as well. Understanding how youth frame practices and participation in adopting new media technologies will help us better understand how engagement is “likely to have a broader impact on any given sociopolitical ecosystem” (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014, p. 36). In fact, like several participants, Katie remarked that “adults cyberbully too” (Katie, 16).

to reach large audiences (Lange & Ito, 2010; Middlaugh, 2012). It is critical not to unquestioningly conflate voice with agency and participation (Caron, Raby, Mitchell, Théwissen-LeBlanc, & Prioletta, 2017). Far from demonstrating an innate facility for digital platforms (Prensky, 2001), participants frequently pointed to the need for more education and tools with which to navigate the platforms that populated their digital culture.¹²⁶ As one participant put it:

I think it is important instead of telling kids to ‘stay off the Internet,’ threatening or scaring them, maybe use a different approach. Instead, teach children about how to be safe on the Internet, how to use it wisely and how to make a positive difference on the Internet (Carol, 16).

Putting the participants’ voices into conversation with emerging work on young people’s digital literacies, it is clear that educators have an important role to play in moving beyond the protection/preparation binary currently structuring dominant media literacy frameworks for youth (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012).¹²⁷ Counter to the majority of studies and policy debates around online risk and opportunity as discrete or opposing, there is actually a positive correlation between the two.¹²⁸ As Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Helsper (2010) argue, “The tendency in research to study either opportunities or risks, often as part of quite separate literatures, misses the important connection between the desirable and risky outcomes of internet use” (p. 323). The

¹²⁶ In the 1970s, sociologist Marc Prensky created a widely accepted paradigm for understanding generational differences in technology adoption. He argued young people born into these technologies are “digital natives”, while he referred to later adopters as “digital immigrants”. For reasons related to Indigenous politics, I do not advocate using this term. I mention it here because it forms a key part of the history of digital culture studies. As Prensky’s paradigm became increasingly passé, he began to argue that facility for digital technologies is adaptive and enhances the individuals that adopt them.

¹²⁷ Contemporary scholars of youth media literacy have observed a binary in young people’s media education that either purports to “prepare” them through technological instruction or “protect” them from the dangers of the digital technologies (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). Education and empathy formed the cornerstones of strategies that participants suggested may be most productive in addressing cyberviolence as a social problem. These two concepts, as conceptualized by participants, bridge this binary and are examined further in Chapter Seven.

¹²⁸ One national survey of 789 (N=789) teenagers in the UK found an unexpected positive relationship between online opportunities and risks (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010).

more activities young people engage in online, the more risk they navigate. The two cannot be separated. Moving beyond this binary posited by many researchers is also important in the case of fostering girls' digital literacy, as this binary has become particularly gendered over the last decade (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). Recent studies on platform design that incorporates girls' perspectives find that – contrary to popular opinion – young women do care a great deal about platform architecture. For example, young women describe how complex user agreements often disrupt their self-help strategies by mystifying privacy settings (Bailey, 2015, p. 37). Table 6.1 below presents all of the platforms and apps that were referenced in participants' descriptors of cyberviolence by frequency in the transcripts.¹²⁹

Table 6.1

All Platforms and Applications that Participants Connected to Cyberviolence, Listed by Frequency of References in the Transcripts

Platforms Participants Linked to Cyberviolence Through their Descriptors	Number of References to Platform in the Transcripts
Facebook	105
Twitter	29
Instagram	28
YouTube	23
Gaming platforms, game and role-playing communities	20
Snapchat	15
Texting	12
ASKfm	10
Club Penguin	2
Tinder	1
Total	245

The most commonly referenced platforms (collected between 2014 and 2016) were Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Interestingly, references to Twitter came up most often when participants referred to second-hand examples of gendered cyberviolence targeting celebrities

¹²⁹ The short form “apps” refers to social media applications.

whom they follow (Halder & Jaishankar, 2016; Massanari, 2015).¹³⁰ We know that girls use visually-oriented social media platforms in larger numbers than do boys and men (Pew Research Center, 2014; 2015), so it is unsurprising to find that these are the spaces that participants cited most often in their descriptors of cyberviolence.

Participants at both locations overwhelmingly agreed that social media spaces were where they encountered and observed CV most frequently. One eighteen-year-old's comment captured a common viewpoint; she said a person is most likely to face CV "on social media because people can make someone look really bad and spread rumours and hate words so much faster and more openly" (Sabrina, 18). Participants were also in agreement that certain platforms were particularly problematic due to their infrastructure. For example, several Grade 10 participants at the private school referenced a platform called ASKfm, which had caused a lot of "drama" for their class in Grade 8. ASKfm has not existed in its original form or under its original ownership since August 2014; it is a question-and-answer social networking site that links to users' other social media profiles. ASKfm allows the user to send identifiable or anonymous questions to other users. If the recipient answers a question, both the question and response are posted on the recipient's 'wall'.¹³¹ One participant who offered me methodological advice during a focus group succinctly pointed to the significance of platform architecture in her linking of cyberviolence with the platform ASKfm She said:

I think to fully understand cyberviolence would be to be involved with the situation. Let's say if Ask.fm was still a thing and you wanted to know more about cyberviolence, the researcher should make an account and experience it firsthand (Tanya, 16).

¹³⁰ The role that examples from popular culture play in the narratives and examples offered by participants, particularly as they contribute to normalizing gender-based harassment in these spaces, is examined in a later section of this chapter.

¹³¹ In August 2014, ASKfm was purchased by a company that focuses on Internet safety for young people.

Like several other participants, Tanya connected the design affordances of specific platforms (such as the now defunct ASKfm) directly to cyberviolence. Another participant decried the anonymous feature as aggravating the possibility for conflict: “When it wasn’t hurtful there was a thrill to asking someone an anonymous question, the fact that you can ask questions anonymously makes it easier but it can cross the line easily” (Margaret, 16). This is an excellent example of how “structural features of software can force articulations that do not map well with offline social behaviour” (boyd, 2008, p. 225). Another compelling element of Tanya’s comment is the emphasis she placed on the role that experience plays in grasping what cyberviolence is.

Just as Tanya did above, many participants emphasized the issues of context and lived experience when describing how they navigated cyberviolence on their favourite platforms and apps. Many participants explained that cyberviolence was context specific, or exacerbated by various design affordances, which is unpacked later in this chapter. The app ASKfm was invoked several times, as its design encouraged performances of anonymity. Other participants pointed to specific elements of architecture, such as the comments section on YouTube, as being particularly problematic: one participant said, “Even scrolling through the comments of a YouTube video can bring you down cause [sic] there’s so much hate” (Aideen, 16). Sienna (18) put it this way: “Comment sections with no rules on commenting are rampant with hate.” (Sienna, 18) In this same discussion, participants remarked that they believed these spaces to be more challenging for girls to navigate because “their image is really important” and “so they have to be careful” (Natasha, 18 and Sienna, 18). Once again, the notion that girls have to be “careful” was connected with receiving ridicule, this time within a discussion of how girls are “mean” to each other. Natasha said, “I think a lot of guys encourage it, they like that we fight;

it's fun to see those girls fight with each other" (Natasha, 18). Many participants described girls' meanness toward each other as being amplified by the encouragement by they received from boys for this behaviour, "which makes it ten times worse" (Sienna, 18). Still another participant described the pressure to compete with other girls for 'likes' on Instagram as "putting woman against woman instead of supporting each other" (Claire, 16). One participant succinctly addressed the temporality of social networking platforms as exacerbating offline social conflicts in her description of the relationship between social media platforms and cyberviolence (Bowler, Knobel, & Mattern, 2015; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Karen said:

There will definitely be a connection between the two [social media and CV]. It's like bringing homework home after a day of school. Bullying used to be avoided by missing or changing schools, but now the situation follows you twenty-four seven (Karen, 16).

Many of my participants connected features that we know from emerging research in cyberviolence studies with youth to be linked with CV, including repetition, temporality, anonymity and design (Barlett, Gentile, & Chelsea, 2016; Dunbar-Hester, 2014; Sticca & Perren, 2013). Participants' attention to these details underscores the unique challenges they faced at the nexus of youth and girlhood (Dunbar-Hester, 2014; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Rossie, 2015; Steeves, 2015).

It is significant to note that the examples and descriptors participants offered point toward the unique challenges they faced in navigating a heterosexist culture (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Jane, 2014). For instance, when discussing CV, many participants added a qualifier regarding why they thought digital culture to be more challenging for girls to navigate. Serena and July's comments provide a useful example:

Serena: Online violence is a lot more present in our society because it is easier to insult people online than face to face. You hear more situations involving women and girls and

they become targets easier than boys. Women and girls sometimes try to fit an image in terms of social standards which can lead to bad decisions and serious consequences. (17)

July: Having to be a pretty girl of Instagram has ruined it for me. [July used to enjoy using Instagram as a venue for sharing her art work] (18).

In the context of the discussion, it was evident that Serena was not linking the impossible contradictions girls face to their experience on social media intentionally. Rather, this connection becomes apparent through participants' common-sense language, for example, in Serena's reference to the "serious consequences" that can result when a girl does not present herself 'appropriately'. Sexist inequalities embedded as underlying assumptions structured the logic of most of the conversations in which participants engaged. Ironically, participants described how they and their peers set themselves up to be targeted by attempting to adhere to the "standards" demanded of them. As Jenna suggested, "girls are more likely to get harassed" on social media. She went on to connect CV to offline life: "It definitely affects their life offline because it affects their moods, thoughts, ideas" (Jenna, 18). As I discussed in Chapter Five, participants articulated the lack of separation between online and offline life when reflecting on cyberviolence, suggesting SNS are an 'extension' of offline interactions.

Participants described misogynistic norms that were facilitated through platform design. This is clearly illustrated by the social contexts participants mapped (as outlined in Chapter Five). One participant pointed to the social pressure on platforms whose design encourages the accumulation of "friends", as in the case of Facebook, or "followers" on Twitter to an increased chance of encountering CV. She said:

When I see an account with more followers, a lot more hate is directed at them. With a friend, you might notice rude things on it [their social media profile]. When people direct hate it's to larger accounts where the person can't manage their comments (Julie, 15).

Many participants suggested that various aspects of design compound cyberviolence, for example, architecture that allows the user to reach a large number of followers rapidly (e.g., ‘mobbing’). One participant described how platform construction can make it more difficult to point to or name violence against women. She said:

It’s in a sense undetectable. The focus is more on here instead of online when you get home from school. Cyberviolence is also a lot more concentrated toward women. We are shamed for everything. If you cover up too much, you’re a nun, and if you don’t cover up enough, you’re a whore (Kelsey, 17).

Participants explained that the extreme pressure to be considered “hot”, “perfect”, and “gorgeous” often leads to CV. They described this as occurring due to either a lack of “successful” visibility (Bailey, 2015) and social success (Bailey et al., 2013) online or being targeted for mean or cruel comments based on their self-representation. This pressure to perform a stereotypical brand of femininity is situated within what Jane Bailey (2015) refers to as a “perfect storm” of “personal preferences, social norms, gendered marketing practices, and technical architectures” that constrain girls’ choices (p. 34). Sexist social norms and platform designs incentivize girls to continually share pictures of themselves (Bailey, 2015; Sales, 2016), which the participants with whom I spoke told me are often used to ridicule and judge them.

Many participants described the pressure and subsequent validation they felt when photographs (often selfies) they shared on Facebook received many ‘likes’. They also articulated the confusion they felt when their pictures or posts went unnoticed. The following extended exchange between two sixteen-year-old participants during a video workshop at the community-based organization (CBO) underscores the axis that participants repeatedly mapped between aspects of platform design, social norms structuring femininity and their descriptors of cyberviolence:

Jessica: Well I know I take pictures offline if they don't get likes compared to my other pictures which normally get a certain amount. If that one gets like which normally is like fifteen because I'm not that great, but if that one gets like three I'm like, no, that one is going away that picture doesn't exist anymore [giggling]. (16)

Aideen: I don't know I take things down but not always for that reason [Jessica is still giggling and covering her mouth] it's more like it happens to me if I'm not getting the amount of likes that I had thought I might get. I get really like, 'why?' What did I do wrong? Like what's happening? [Aideen is now laughing a lot, and Jessica is still laughing] It's just a weird feeling because you tend to like looking at the stuff you've previously posted you tend to get a general idea of what people like, what people think is cool. I don't know, like, so when something doesn't live up to your standard you're kind of like did I totally misjudge my Facebook friends? Does no one care? It's a weird sort of feeling. (16)

In Jessica's statement to the group during this video session, she pointed to the number of 'likes' she received for pictures of herself as something she monitored closely (Ringrose et al., 2013; Twenge, 2017). Jessica and Aideen's exchange underscores the context structuring the more problematic realities of girls' participation online. Many participants described the 'like' feature on Facebook as a design affordance that impacted their self-esteem, subjecting them to a continuous stream of judgments while putting them into competition with other girls (Brown, 2003; boyd, 2014; Ringrose, 2008; Simmons, 2011). The social and peer environment facilitated by specific platforms such as Facebook encourages girls to share certain images and to share them often. As one seventeen-year-old participant put it, this context contributes to girls being "mean to each other" and to "guys encouraging it [competition between girls]." (Everett, 16) Another participant at the high school put it this way: "Most of the time it's actually girls who are slut-shaming other girls." (Sarah, 16) Many participants explained that this feature influenced what type of pictures they posted and the frequency with which they posted them. This connection is not surprising when situated within an analysis of the architecture as it is mobilized by users to "rate" girls (Sales, 2016) based on gendered and heteronormative expectations

(Bailey, 2015). The number of ‘likes’ they receive on Instagram and Facebook is something that the majority of participants quantified daily. They pointed to this feature as significantly influencing their usage of these platforms. For example, when Dana posted a profile selfie and it received only a few ‘likes’, she said: “I delete[d] it.” (Dana, 16) Participants at both locations expressed approaches similar to Dana’s, monitoring the number of ‘likes’ they received on new pictures and how quickly after posting they received them.

Participants described connecting self-worth to the comments they received on sexualized pictures of themselves, which one participant described as an “identity” that she felt compelled to perform due to “social pressure,” arguing that “everybody does it, and it’s normal” (Mackenzie, 16). Such comments reveal a significant linkage between the social norms outlined in Chapter Five and social media platforms that amplify this pressure. Several participants referred to selfies as a “self-esteem boost” and two others independently referred to them as “a way to boost your self-esteem” (Mara, 15 and Gill, 16). The fragile and hypocritical nature of the social norms participants outlined offers a meaningful context for understanding the intersecting and unique challenges they navigated through the social media imagery participants referenced in their descriptions of cyberviolence. When Aideen referred to the number of ‘likes’ her selfie typically received, she said it was “like fifteen because I’m not that great” (Aideen, 16). Studies demonstrate the links between self-esteem (Connell 2013; Patchin & Hinduja, 2014), depression and hostility (Levy et al., 2012) in social media environments. However, few scholars map the “perfect storm” of social norms and platform environments that girls describe navigating in digital culture (Bailey, 2015). During the conversation above, Aideen (16) mentioned perceived vanity as another repercussion that arises when girls post the ‘right’ type of imagery, highlighting the impossible contradictions around performing ‘appropriate’ femininity,

Once, I got uh someone made a comment that was like oh so are all of your Facebook profile pictures like selfies or something? And I realized that most of them were and for some reason even though our culture is very selfie-oriented at this point I just felt really embarrassed because of the nature of the comment. And, just like it was a comment in person but then uh but I ended up spending like a long time on Facebook just deleting pictures 'cause I was embarrassed. (Aideen, 16)

Aideen's comment reflects the constant self-regulation to which participants subjected themselves in order to evaluate which posting practices constituted 'acceptable' femininity and which did not. While struggling to account for why she thought girls' profile pictures on specific platforms became targets for rude or hateful comments, Aideen's confusion was palpable. This is clear, for instance, in her earlier comment: "Did I totally misjudge my Facebook friends?" (Aideen, 16) Genevieve (16), in conversation with Susan (16), echoed this dissonance while struggling to account for why she thought girls' profile pictures on specific platforms were more likely to be targeted for rude or hateful comments:

Susan: Have you ever been affected by cyberviolence?

Genevieve: No, not me but some of my close friends are, they are victims of cyberviolence, and that's not a little thing that's very important.

Susan: Oh, like how?

Genevieve: Each time my friends post a photo on Facebook or even Snap they are criticized, and they don't feel well after you know? You don't love [it] when someone says you are fat or ugly. Not my Facebook photos, all the girls' Facebook photos yeah yeah [nodding] men criticize a lot they want like a perfect girl in photos but we are girls, and we're not perfect, and I don't think men understand this um, so women are more criticized than men.

The majority of participants expressed this type of confusion while explaining the pressure to produce a specific style of imagery of themselves and in terms of sexist behaviour targeting women and girls, while simultaneously denying that sexism occurs. As the weeks and months went by, it became evident that many participants lacked the language to describe the

role that sexism played in their challenges on social media. For example, Emily (15) stated that everyone is “equally vulnerable to cyberviolence” before sharing that phrases such as “get in the kitchen” were directed at her in many social media spaces. Although Susan and Genevieve’s comments did not outline extreme comments, they are central to documenting the increasing normalization of dismissing, silencing and targeting girls on social media. Their comments are significant as “even minor incidents of harassment or verbal abuse operate as a reminder to subjugated groups that they may be targeted for more serious violence” (Mason, 2008, p. 187). The straightforward tone used by many participants when describing a range of sexist behaviours directed toward them on social media suggests the ubiquity of cyber-misogyny in their digital culture. Admitting feeling ashamed was often a source of shame for individuals:

It may be somewhat paradoxical to refer to shame as a “feeling” for while shame is initially painful, constant shaming leads to a deadening of feeling. Shame, like cold, is, in essence, the absence of warmth. And when it reaches overwhelming intensity, shame is experienced, like cold, as a feeling of numbness and deadness (James Gilligan, quoted in Ronson, 2015, p. 249).

It is significant that so many participants conceptualized gendered CV in common-sense terms. Many started discussions from the assumption that they received disproportionate hostility simply due to their presence in social media spaces. When describing how platform architecture related to CV, participants pointed to issues that fit within a long history of coded representations of girls and women in Western cinema, print media and portraiture: that Western visual culture codes (ideal) women and girls as passive sexual objects “to-be-looked-at” is well established (Hall, 2001; Mulvey, 1975; 1996). Reading my participants’ descriptors alongside this history through a feminist new media lens allows us to contextualize the ways in which existing social media architecture limits possibilities for resistance and self-expression by exacerbating age-old hypocritical sexual politics and contradictions around femininity.

What participants outlined in their comments about platforms while describing cyberviolence decentres the ‘new’ in new media, pointing to the way that old codes are recycled in visually-oriented SNS (Bailey et al., 2013; Magnet, 2011). The type of ‘acceptable’ self-representation described by girls is governed by seemingly impossible rules, around which they express anxiety. One main source of anxiety for participants was being perceived as vain or narcissistic, which is a popular narrative in broader digital culture (Gregorie, 2015; Hasinoff 2014; 2015; Savastio, 2014). This ‘acceptable’ mode of feminine representation (either ‘beautiful’ and unaware of it, or vain) precedes social media and the ‘selfie’, of course. The sexist codes participants pointed to as structuring the context in which CV unfolds form a significant part of the history of Western visual culture. John Berger, in his foundational *Ways of Seeing*, summarizes this state of affairs thus: “Men act and women appear” (Berger, 2003). Berger argues that Western visual culture has normalized the conflating of women’s appearance with their social presence:

A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself [...] from her earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance to what is normally thought of as success in her life (Berger, 2003, p. 46).

In many ways, participants caught in the nexus of sexist social norms and social media architecture navigated the same constraining classed, racialized and ageist discourses as did young women in Victorian-era England. For example, the same contradictory discourses around ‘appropriate’ femininity were mobilized in the nineteenth-century advice manuals for women on etiquette, courting, and comportment. In *Advice to Single Women* (2015 [1899]), Dr. Haydn Brown wrote:

It should be fully understood once and for all, that a woman looks her best, whether she be pretty in face and fine in form or not, when she is not thinking about herself, or when she is engaged in some kind of occupation that makes her forget herself and compels her to show that natural grace and unconscious exposition of beauty that is so conquering and irresistible to men... Women should, therefore, appreciate the simple fact that if they have any beauty at all, it will certainly show itself the best for all purposes and ends, not for temporary or mere flirtation use, remember, for all this is genuine, honest, and lasting-when the possessor is lost in realms of distant and independent thought (2015 [1899], p. 149).

It is important to situate my participants' confusion around how to safely present themselves (expressed as bafflement in the conversations above) within a long tradition of impossible contradictions for women and girls in pre-digital social networks.

This history offers a way to contextualize the feminine performatives that participants overwhelmingly pointed to as both a social necessity and a form of self-representation that often resulted in harsh judgments, and sometimes mean or cruel behavior, from peers. During this same workshop, I asked the group if they ever noticed a connection between stereotypes and social media architecture. Many participants pointed to the design of platforms like Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram that incentivize rapid and frequent disclosure (Bailey, 2015, p. 34) as contributing to social pressure to post the type of stereotypical imagery for which they were then ridiculed (Bailey, 2015; Bailey et al., 2013). One participant suggested that girls are not taken “seriously”, to which Aideen responded:

Yeah, I feel like the whole idea of no one will take them seriously because they're a girl is kind of a big thing online and offline. Um, I don't know it's really interesting. I hadn't personally noticed that but like but it does make sense because a lot of the time it's like a very stereotypically masculine thing to do I guess and yeah, I don't know. I feel like going back to Facebook, it's the pictures thing. It's very interesting if you're looking at a guy's profile versus a girl's profile it's pretty well across the board it's a similar pattern the girl's picture will be like this [striking a typical 'selfie' pose].¹³² I don't know there's

¹³² The facial expression made in this frame is what many young people and commentators refer to as “duck face” (Steeves, 2015). The pose known as “duck face” is one that many young women profess finding obnoxious and is most often found in a selfie in which the person posing turns to the side while sucking in their cheeks to form a pout

usually cleavage and the whole like the facial expression that's made it more of a seductive thing... (Aideen, 16)

Placing participants' descriptors of CV within this context highlights the fact that girls' negotiations of SNS form part of a much longer history of discriminatory standards that structure their participation in public space (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Cele, 2016). Moreover, as Berger has argued, "relations between men and women" can be understood through visual terms (active men look and passive women are looked at) (2003, p.47). What the participants described encountering on Facebook and Instagram was in many ways an extension of this relationship. As feminist theatre director Carrie Cracknell described it, "We live in a culture in which the way we represent women is becoming narrower. I think we have a generation of women growing up who understand that power is linked to how we look." (Rustin, 2013, para. 11) Media and childhood scholars too often underestimate the pressure and interlocking constraints young women face as they rightly embrace girls' content production and push for increased access to digital technologies. For example, the push for greater access to digital tools often falls into one of the two predominant discourses that have organized debates around girlhood since the 1990s (Gonick, 2006). These debates follow seemingly contradictory discourses of 'girl power' on the one hand and the post-*Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 2005) discourse of vulnerability on the other. The findings in this chapter contribute more evidence of how both discourses work to "participate in the production of the neoliberal girl subject with the former representing the idealized self-determining individual and the latter personifying an anxiety about those who are unsuccessful in producing themselves in this way" (Gonick, 2006, p. 2).¹³³ Participants' complex

(Steeves, 2015). In *The New York Times*, Sarah Miller described duck face as a "pout-producing, cheekbone-enhancing pose featuring pooched-out lips and sucked-in cheeks" (Miller, 2011, para. 1).

¹³³ *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 1994 [2005]) is a problematic text and is often taken up in reductionist ways within popular and academic discourses around girlhood. However, Pipher does well in situating contemporary girls'

descriptions of how social media architecture mediates cyberviolence through normalized practices such as slut-shaming, call for us to move beyond reinscribing these limiting frameworks in youth digital culture studies. For example, by listening to girls' descriptors of digital culture and cyberviolence, we can understand how to support their participation in these spaces, which they told us were important and often positive places for them (Steeves & Regan, 2014).

The participants showed some awareness about heterosexism and racism, although they rarely named sexism and misogyny. Some participants were aware that sexism informs cyberviolence. The Kardashian sisters were an important reference point for several participants; they cited cyberbullying efforts targeting the Kardashians to illustrate their point that sexism informs CV. One example of the disparity of awareness is captured in a conversation between three participants at the private school.

Lucille: Something I believe in is that, as women, we are already so over-sexualized but there is a difference between an appropriate picture and a picture that is not to the norm but that you like of yourself. Like, look at Kim Kardashian's butt when she posts selfies and a Jonas brother grabbing his crotch. He's being more crude but she gets more hate [sic].

Ethel: Even Kardashian selfies or naked selfies, a naked body isn't just about sex, it's actually ironic since we're wired to reproduce; the human body is one of the most amazing machines.

Regan: Wow, look at this philosophy professor over here!

It is significant that Lucille (16) situated her perspective about what constitutes an "appropriate" picture within the broader context of women in visual culture, whom she believed to be "over-sexualized". Ethel (16) and Lucille (16) rightly pointed to the hypocritical nature of "hate" directed toward their favourite women celebrities. It was clear that when many of the

struggles within social and structural issues, particularly in the section in which she situates her case studies within the broader issue of sexual violence.

participants drew examples from popular culture to describe cyberviolence, they were thinking through the role social norms played in these platforms and practices. This work serves as a much-needed reminder to redirect our attention from the individualizing processes of high-profile cyberbullying news stories that focus on personality traits and individual “mistakes” to the structural reasons for inequality in these spaces (Gonick, 2008). For many participants, having open discussions about sexism was a new experience and something they found rewarding; this was especially notable when they made links between sexism and CV. Some participants alluded to cyberviolence as existing within a broader culture of VAWG in digital culture – or, as eighteen-year-old Sabrina (18) put it, “Does gender affect my life online? Well, maybe from day one from birth.” (Sabrina, 18) Participants narrated their experiences with cyberviolence as being bound up within broader systems of sexism such as the SNS affordances that facilitate “quantifying popularity” (Twenge, 2017) and aggravate the problem of their value based largely on external approval for how they look and present themselves. Participants engaged in an extended conversation during a video workshop after one participant brought up the types of stereotypical imagery required for social success. One of the participants put it this way:

Back to kind of what you were saying when people comment all those good things on like Instagram or Facebook or something, it can kind of be like a getaway card from where people then say to you like you’re unattractive or you’re this or that. (Susan, 16)

It is well documented that design affordances such as algorithms, governance, and culture play a large role in the amount of hate speech observed on platforms (Massanari, 2015).¹³⁴ For

¹³⁴ In Canada, we refer to hate speech as hate propaganda. Bill C-16, which had passed a first reading at the time of writing, aims to amend the *Criminal Code* to include “gender identity” and “gender expression” as prohibited grounds of discrimination. This would broaden the scope of what constitutes an “identifiable” group. This is an important factor in what counts as hate propagation. As Jane Bailey notes, a provision in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (13) 1) that helped with pursuing identity-based cyberviolence was repealed in 2013. This provision made

participants, the blurring of publicity and privacy was described as strongly related to cyberviolence targeting girls (Horeck, 2014). As presented in Table 6.1, Facebook was the platform most frequently cited in participants' discussions and examples of the blending of privacy and publicity.¹³⁵

“The automatic response is that it’s public, for everyone and anyone to see”: Complicating Adult Constructions of Publicity and Privacy

Near the end of the research process at both locations, I asked participants where they believed girls were most likely to encounter CV.

H.R.C.: Where do young women encounter cyberviolence most often?

Peyton (17): Social media because the majority of people have profiles that are interconnected with one another like Facebook friends. It affects the nature of cyberviolence because it provides a way to publicly and privately harass someone without having them in front of you.

Participants were in agreement that when they encountered or experienced a form of cyberviolence, it occurred most frequently on social media and specific SNS. Many participants pointed to the blurring of concepts around publicity and privacy that they argued heightened these encounters. Peyton (17) connected both publicity and privacy to Facebook in her description of the “nature of cyberviolence”, highlighting the complex terrain that young women navigate when they try to negotiate which content is private or audience specific in what are inherently public platforms (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015).

it a discriminatory practice to use “among other things a computer to repeatedly communicate any matter likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt” based on their membership (or perceived membership) in an identifiable group (Bailey, 2016, p. 9).

¹³⁵ The recent leak of Facebook’s hate speech policies (published in *The Guardian* (Moore, 2014) outlined in manuals given to moderators, reveals the arbitrary nature of the way in which moderators are instructed to identify misogynistic content. While the ethos behind Facebook is strongly connected to free speech, the leaked documents demonstrate “a confused set of guidelines” for dealing with extreme content (Moore, 2014) and the need for greater transparency in how moderators define hate speech (which they do arbitrarily).

Participants linked an interplay of privacy and publicity to cyberviolence in their descriptors, which clustered around two threads. On the one hand, (presumed) privacy was cited as a design affordance (e.g., Snapchat's disappearing videos) that made determining whether something qualified as CV difficult. Participants explained that one has to know one's audience; each platform has a different audience. In other words, some content is not "Facebook material". On the other hand, 'private' that was ill suited to a particular platform. For instance, if one was interested in interrogating gender inequalities, participants argued that one had to know "where to go for your feminism", also described as "the whole feminism thing" or "feminism issues", or risk receiving backlash (Astrid, 16, Sharon, 17, Carol, 17). In other words, for participants, 'private' content encompassed far more than intimate imagery and included content that was political, displayed accomplishments, was too personal or was not audience-specific. As online social networks (OSNs) such as Facebook become increasingly integrated into social life (Livingstone, Kirwil, & Ponte, 2014), misogynistic stereotypes often constrain girls' choices regarding self-presentation.¹³⁶ The complex relationship between privacy in SNS and CV that participants mapped is significant. Girls "will not only be more harshly judged than boys for the content of their online profiles, but also for their degree of publicness" (Bailey et al., 2013, p. 107). Further compounding these challenges is the fact that the ways in which participants conceived privacy do not align with commonly accepted adult definitions of privacy (Steeves & Regan, 2014).

¹³⁶ As discussed in Chapter Five, participants frequently drew on their self-representation practices and those of other girls and women in their descriptors of cyberviolence. Most often, self-representation was tied to ingrained victim-blaming at both locations and what is best described as internalized sexism (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014; Szymanski & Henrichs-Beck, 2016). However, as discussed in Chapter Five, participants are highly aware that they are sanctioned in these spaces in ways that boys and men are not. For example, they also pointed to the "double standard" or "double bind" they identified as constraining their ability to represent themselves online, particularly on social networking sites.

While adults might find the notion that a public post is ‘private’ counter-intuitive, this was not the case for participants. A common refrain among the participants revolved around the hostility they and their peers encountered when they shared ‘private’ content in the ‘wrong’ place on social media. For example, during a discussion participants had regarding sites where they were more likely to encounter CV, they described how girls should not post ‘private’ content on social media. For example, despite the pressure to post “sexy” photos, participants explained that photos that are “too sexy” are private. One participant’s comment perfectly captures the way in which participants linked ridicule and meanness to navigating context-specific and audience-specific platforms. I told this group that many participants with whom I had spoken so far referred to girls who receive harassment as “bad girls”. Kelly (17) stated:

If you posted a picture on Facebook, we would use the word slut instead of bad depends on what school. There are stories at other schools. Every group has their slut who knows they are considered sluts it’s not necessarily bad. It depends on context like it could be ‘such as slut ha’ it depends what they do and with how many guys. (Kelly, 17)

For many young people, as Kelly’s comments suggest, the task of identifying and naming CV is contingent upon situating mean or cruel comments or behaviours. Participants told me that determining what counted as cyberviolence often involved considering what was appropriate for that platform or in that social setting. Bianca (18) also pointed to the issue of context while discussing the blending of privacy and publicity by some participants on social media to CV. She said:

I think social media has a bigger reach because everybody can see it. Sharing has no limit whereas a private chat on a video game is private. People see something on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and the automatic response is that it’s public, for everyone and anyone to see (18).

Bianca's words demonstrate how the line between private and public content is blurred on SNS, which led to negative experiences for many participants (Hasinoff, 2015; Chun, 2016). For many participants, platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat were semi-private spaces, and for some of them, mean comments, threats or slurs that occurred in these spaces did not necessarily qualify as cyberviolence if the target was unaware.

Anxiety over the blurring of public and private that attends new forms of mass media (Osucha, 2009), including SNS, often manifests through a focus on the figure of the middle-class white adolescent girl. This media and policy focus results in uneven and out-of-touch solutions and education programming that emphasizes risk and increased regulations centred on the normative (white, heterosexual, middle-class) girl child. Besides being inherently problematic and ineffective, this rhetoric further marginalizes girls of colour. Even when the participants would later re-categorize a behaviour that they had previously described as bullying or CV, they were often conflicted about whether something was actually violent if the 'target' was unaware. One participant explicitly articulated this at the CBO. During a sparsely attended focus group, Lainey (17) shared a story that illustrates how the blurring of privacy and publicity on social media disproportionately impacts the most marginalized youth by exacerbating offline sexism and racism. She stated:

It had to be really bad to be called harassment. There was a girl in school a few years ago in school who wore a sari and had canes to walk. Some kids took video of her changing at the pool and posted it on Snapchat where it disappears. I didn't realize it was bullying. She didn't know about the videos, so I didn't think it was bullying. (17)

As Lainey explained, because the young woman who was the target "didn't know" about the Snapchat videos, Lainey and her friends did not classify the non-consensual filming and publication of this video by their peers as bullying. Significantly, Lainey specifically referenced

the Snapchat design that causes videos to ‘disappear’ after twenty-four hours in her narrative, linking this to a certain degree of privacy. Lainey made it clear to the group that she would now, in retrospect, classify this as either bullying or harassment.

The confusion regarding what counts as public and private was a common refrain tied to identifying CV, with privacy often invoked as a reason why online violations targeting girls may not be considered CV. For example, Patricia said:

The football team at my school had its own Facebook group where they shared pictures of girls who had sent them sexy selfies. To them, in their minds, it is not bullying or wrong its ok because she doesn’t know about it (Patricia, 18).

Although the blurring of boundaries between private and public content in social media spaces was a common refrain among participants, there were a few notable examples in which they demonstrated that they often realized an invasion or harassment had occurred, but lacked the language to describe it or feared the social repercussions of naming it. For instance, when one participant mentioned an increasingly normalized practice of non-consensual filming of consensual sexual activity, the group was divided as to whether this crossed the line from ‘drama’ to harassment. Joanne stated:

He took video of it [consensual sexual activity] on social media it was on there for twenty minutes it was viewed a lot, but there was also secondary pictures [screen shots] from the video that went around (Joanne, 18).

Reticence on the part of young women to call out sexual harassment is understandable, considering the normalization of victim-blaming that adult women, including victims of ‘revenge porn’, face for ‘leaks’. As mentioned above, celebrities such as the Kardashians often figured into the participants’ descriptions. In a skit participants spontaneously performed, one group

pointed out how Khloe Kardashian, whom they follow on Twitter, is regularly referred to as the “ugly Kardashian on social media” (Lainey, 17).

Existing strategies to protect young people online often focus on the issue of privacy through a combination of legislation and education modules (Steeves & Regan, 2014). However, existing anti-cyberbullying policies neglect to situate gendered cyberviolence within the broader realities of VAWG. The notable silences around race and class in the transcripts further complicate traditional distinctions between public and private. We know that white supremacist “historical contexts and political logics ground this presumed opposition” between publicity and privacy (Osucha, 2009, p. 71). Since the formalizing of the first American privacy laws, discourses of race and class have structured concepts of privacy (Chun & Friedland, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Tran, 2015). For example, as critical race scholars have established, white women and girls are presumed to be entitled a right to privacy, where women of colour are represented as hypersexual and as property for consumption (Arat-Koç, 2012; Noble, 2013; Osucha, 2009). This is important, as gender and race continue to be approached as side issues or relegated to the notes sections of studies on cyberviolence, rather than being considered as structuring principles of CV. Participants pointed to SNS as networks composed of specific practices and “shaped by the discourses that surround them”, rather than as a mass media monolith (Osucha, 2009, p. 70). Implementation of gender-neutral policies and anti-bullying programming come up short in addressing the specificities of gender- and identity-based harassment that structure many young people’s risks and lived experiences online. One participant referenced privacy education, remarking that “adults tell us not to send images and to be really careful about not sending pictures, but they don’t tell boys not to share them” (Patricia, 18). This critical observation underscores how the current anti-cyberbullying privacy discourses

build on existing gendered notions of privacy rather than challenging them (Chun, 2016; Osucha, 2009).

At the CBO, participants' descriptors of CV that incorporated concerns around privacy also pointed to the material consequences and heightened stakes for self-presentation faced by marginalized youth. Socioeconomic pressures often compound the challenges for these participants. For example, participants at the private school seem habituated to surveillance in familial, friendship and education settings, but they also possessed a great deal of social capital and economic privilege.¹³⁷ However, participants at this location explicitly articulated the negative economic stress and impacts to which they were vulnerable through participation in social media networks. For example, Aideen said:

I feel like lives are ruined sometimes and not even just because of like pictures and sending things to people but also because your Facebook is never as private as you think it is. Like I know people that I have on Facebook that will post [making silly deeper voice] like 'oh I got so drunk last night and nah and this, that and the other.' And just like posting all these things that they do and sure that's your lifestyle but potential job employers do go on your Facebook. I've had people not get jobs because of that and have known people that have been fired because of something they posted or just lost respect in a lot of places and from a lot of people because of the things they post. Honestly, I feel like if you're going to be posting those types of things, you have to be sure that that's the type of person you want to be present to the general public (Aideen, 16).

¹³⁷ Young people are currently subject to an ever-increasing amount of surveillance through digital technologies online and offline (Lee & Crofts, 2017). Perhaps the most common of these surveillance technologies is the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) installed as a form of visual surveillance in schools (Taylor, 2017). In the Western context, the use of CCTV in schools is a widespread practice in Europe (particularly in England) and the United States (Kupchik, Green, & Mowen, 2015). Mainstream 'cyberbullying' discourses and policies are a key site where the broader trend toward digital surveillance of children and youth are unfolding. Moreover, the issue of 'cyberbullying' is the one most often invoked by politicians and policy-makers across the political spectrum to justify the increasing surveillance of children and youth, including the regulation of young people's ICT usage practices (Suski, 2014). For example, existing and new child pornography laws are applied to manage and control young people's sexting practices (Lee & Crofts, 2017; Ringrose et al., 2013). Importantly, one of the issues so often left out of the debates around the use of surveillance technologies to 'protect' young people from online risks, including 'cyberbullying', is the gendered nature of the practices themselves, the risks they pose (Navarro & Jasinski, 2013), and the strategies proposed to address these issues (Bailey & Steeves, 2015).

This finding is consistent with what we have learned from the digital divide debates of the 1980s and 1990s¹³⁸, that is, the old assumption that poor and working-class young people in North America access digital technologies or social networks less frequently. This type of divide was not the reality that participants at the CBO outlined, which is an important reminder regarding the communities of youth that bear the brunt of the most negative impacts of cyberbullying laws and policies. Moreover, marginalized young people are often absent from cyberbullying debates. This absence is another reason that there is a pressing need for cyberviolence programming that attends to the diverse realities of young people on social media while resisting criminalizing their usage (Hasinoff, 2014). We know that the push for access and participation often becomes an unregulated experience that leads to greater surveillance of poor, working-class and racialized individuals (Selwyn, 2014). Blanket strategies to broaden access to digital technologies render poor, working-class and racialized youth more vulnerable to cyberviolence as well as to negative implications such as the material impacts for working-class youth that Aideen (16) identified. These findings suggest the need to understand not just the broader social norms that the participants articulated, but also how they mobilized context to understand and explain CV.

“Cyberviolence is Contextual”: The Role of Platform-Specific Audiences in Cyberviolence

Platforms that facilitate or give rise to CV were described by participants at both locations as being context specific. For example, one participant’s comment regarding how to determine whether something is cyberviolence or just “drama” reflected this: “Drama depends upon who posted it, why they posted it, who it was about, if it was a sexual photo or something that was posted without consent then it is breaking the boundary” (Ursula, 18). The notion of

¹³⁸ Inherent in these debates is the assumption that “access” to ICTs and “participation” mean the same thing for everyone rather than rooting our understanding of what access means in cultural, economic and social capital specificity (Selwyn, 2004).

context was an issue participants returned to when describing how to determine which spaces are safest. As mentioned earlier, context was something participants considered when deciding what counted as cyberviolence. Several participants referred to context when describing which ‘audiences’ and content one should expect to encounter on any given platform. This is important, as posting the content on the ‘wrong’ platform was described as rendering one more vulnerable to hostility and social censure. Bianca (18) offered an itemized list that nicely summarizes how several participants described platforms as context specific:

Some [platforms] are better than others. You can be anonymous on Tumblr everyone is public, Instagram is more the selfies, Snapchat is where you send naked sexy pics to someone in particular not so much on text anymore. With Snapchat, it tells you if someone took a screen shot, but if they have an app that blocks that, then you can’t see if they took a screen shot a lot of people have that (Bianca, 18).

The majority of participants invoked the issue of context in determining what type of content one was most likely to find on a platform and how posting messages or pictures for the ‘wrong’ audience could lead to an increase in hostile messages one might receive. Sandy (18) stated:

Yes, girls are really mean to each other and compete with each other. I’m seeing more now about how girls need to stop being mean to each other, I saw that on Facebook, but I follow a lot of feminist things on Facebook so that might explain it. There are spaces where you go for certain things. (Sandy, 18)

In one video workshop, participants discussed the broader issue of ‘audience’ in their digital culture. At the CBO, the group engaged in a long conversation about a case at Dalhousie University involving a group of dentistry students who had a private Facebook group devoted to cataloguing young women in their class whom they wished to assault.¹³⁹ During this

¹³⁹ This case, which is discussed in Chapter Five, involves a group of fourth-year young men in the School of Dentistry at Dalhousie University. A number of the students belonged to a private Facebook group called “Class of

conversation, one participant discussed how upset she was when she received no ‘likes’ for her Facebook post about the situation. The following is an excerpt from this conversation:

Evangeline: So yeah, I remember I like changed my profile picture the same night that I wrote what I thought was a very articulate post [lots of laughter especially from Jocelyn] with the link to the petition and I was like so geared up about this, like people. I need to mobilize my friends and we need to sign this petition and then like I got zero likes. Then my profile picture which is a selfie, in fact, got so many more likes it got like forty likes whereas the thing I thought was reflective of like my intelligence my beliefs you know like activism got nothing. (18)

Jocelyn: I think you just put it on the wrong social media like Facebook is like you see something that is from the news or something actually relevant in society that’s on Facebook like you want to go on Facebook you’re going to find selfies if you want to get a word out Facebook is not the space for it like you’re not going, no offence, you’re not going to get noticed on Facebook. (16)

Violet: I truly believe like there are so many people on Facebook like yeah there are better media platforms to get word out like look at Tumblr, look at Tumblr there’s so many smart people are on Tumblr and if you put some sort of feminism issue or anything on Tumblr you get so many like responses that are congruent with the issue at hand and then if you put it on any other platform it gets disregarded very easily but those are the people that should be hearing it, so it’s like don’t give up on Facebook. (17)

This conversation supports recent findings from qualitative work with girls on ‘cyberbullying’ that suggest visually-oriented SNS designs encourage girls to adhere to a hegemonic self-representation (Bailey, 2015). In doing so, they often expand their networks to include people they do not know offline to accumulate ‘likes’ or social success. That CV is context specific was repeated with near-total consensus across groups and locations. For example, Claire (16) said that “what counts as cyberviolence may not be cyberviolence to someone else” (Claire, 16). The following exchange from the last video workshop at the CBO summarizes this connection. When I asked these participants if they enjoyed working on the video project, they connected CV to context:

H.R.C.: Did you find working on the documentary a positive experience?

DDS 2015 Gentlemen”. The students used this group to discuss specific young women at the school that they wished to engage in “hate sex” with, using chloroform (CBC News, 2015).

Bridget: Yeah, it's also interesting to find out that depending on the context the same act of cyberviolence can affect different people in different ways. (16)

Carrie: Yeah, because you know some people can just sort of brush it off and not even see it as cyberviolence but other people are like, Woah, like Armageddon. (16)

Cynthia: Or just like how harmful comments can be taken differently if it's against a thing that was not harmful to start with, against a video that was harmful, just like or depending on how the person would react to it if it continues, if it escalates. (16)

Participants raised the issue of anonymity frequently when discussing how platform designs facilitated gendered cyberviolence. Participants were split down the middle regarding whether or not they believed anonymity facilitated cyberviolence.

Part Two: Social Media Practices that Normalize “Networked Misogyny”

Young Women Complicated the Role Anonymity Plays in CV

As Table 5.1 in Chapter Five demonstrates, anonymity was an issue that participants drew on frequently in their descriptions of cyberviolence; however, only a small subsection of participants suggested anonymity made it easier to target someone through cyberviolence; rather, specific design elements that enabled anonymity (Scott & Orlikowski, 2014) were thought to facilitate CV. For example, participants demonstrated a nuanced analysis of how the architecture of the anonymity-based site ASKfm mobilized anonymity in a way that facilitated and encouraged bullying and harassment. Participants were also divided in their opinions regarding whether or not CV occurred more during interactions with people they knew offline or in interactions with anonymous strangers. It is significant to note that many participants' comments about anonymity aligned with the dominant approach to online anonymity as synonymous with disinhibition and harassment (e.g., see Knack, Eimerbrink, & Young, 2015). For example, Kat put it this way:

I feel like a lot of people scroll through Facebook and spend a lot of time on Facebook and they're like Oh why can't I look like that? And 'oh my god this person blah blah blah.' But like in reality, it's a lot harder to fake it like in the real world. Whereas online you can be whatever you want to be and a lot of people feel like they have a greater level of anonymity than they do and they say things that they probably shouldn't because, you know, it's just the online world nothing is going to happen to me (15).

When participants' responses addressed anonymity, they offered a more nuanced contribution that is often missing in studies of the role that anonymity plays in online cyberbullying or harassment. For instance, influential studies over the last decade have suggested that anonymity is what makes cyberviolence particularly "insidious" (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 9). Participants brought up anonymity as an important issue; many suggested that the CV they experienced was just as often a conflict with someone they knew offline. Moreover, the many references participants made to CV directed toward adult women and celebrities they followed pointed to how second-hand violence in popular culture contributed to the normalizing of cyber-misogyny in their own digital culture (Dixon et al., 2015).

Interestingly, participants often alluded to a liminal zone of semi-anonymity (Hosseinmardi, Ghasemianlangroodi, Han, Lv, & Mishra, 2014) in their discussions of specific platforms they identified as playing a role in cyberviolence. Participants' descriptions of semi-anonymity complicate the dominant approach to the role anonymity plays in online harassment. For instance, participants discussed an episode from years prior, when peers they knew would ask them questions 'anonymously' through ASKfm. However, due to small class sizes, they described how everyone often knew who was sending messages to whom. The following excerpt from a focus group discussion best captures how many participants tied platform and application designs to CV. The following exchange highlights how certain apps are structured to encourage "drama" through performances of anonymity:

Megan: I find that the people who created Ask.fm are stupid because do you really think that society is so perfect we're just going to ask nice questions, they have to know, since they made it anonymous then it is setting you up for cyberbullying. (16)

Taylor: I find that the people who made Ask.fm are brilliant. For them teenagers like drama and are attracted to drama, so they will make a profit from them. But I find we can't just sell ourselves to this cyber world, at the end of the day there will always be an opportunity, but you can't fall into the trap, you need to make your own boundaries. (15)

Naomie: You don't keep anonymous on because you want drama when it wasn't hurtful there was a thrill to asking someone an anonymous question, the fact that you can ask questions anonymously makes it easier but it can cross the line easily. (15)

This way of conceptualizing CV drew a picture of social networking sites as spaces of semi-anonymity (Hosseinmardi et al., 2014). This finding suggests that, while anonymity certainly has a role, additional factors are at play in CV incidents (e.g., asynchronicity, design elements, invisibility) and can just as easily occur in non-anonymous contexts on social media (Bowler, 2014; Suler, 2004). ASKfm stood out as having a design that incorporated anonymity in a way that led to what participants identified as particularly egregious behaviour. As Naomie's comment indicates, participants described a "thrill" that came from being able to ask anonymous questions of people one knew and saw every day in school. Jessica (16) also complicated reductionist cause-effect ties between CV and anonymity:

It is the way it is utilized, at least in my opinion, that affects people. It can be used for either good or bad. However, it does facilitate violence because it just makes it so much more simple that somebody that does have that idea of harming someone emotionally can, you know, often you have 'is it worth going through all the trouble all the backlash that can happen?' and in that case, it is no trouble because it's so accessible and there's no backlash because it's so anonymous, so it does facilitate and bring forward the bad very easily. (16)

While 105 (N=105) of the descriptors employed by participants to describe cyberviolence made reference to anonymity, a little less than half of these involved pointing to whether or not

anonymity facilitated CV. In twenty-four (N=24) references, participants conceptualized CV as being more likely to arise from identifiability rather than anonymity. Twenty-three (N=23) references identified anonymity as something that facilitated cyberviolence. As presented in Table 5.1 in Chapter Five, the top fifth and sixth of the nineteen most cited descriptors of cyberviolence suggest that it occurs more with people “you know” (N=24), followed by the opinion that anonymity facilitates it (N=23). Anonymity is given a great deal of attention in cyberbullying studies; it is often cited as an issue that amplifies the impact (Atkinson, 2008; Bauman, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) and increases the frequency of cyberviolence (Barlett, 2015). Participants’ contribution to thinking about the role that anonymity plays in CV makes this finding particularly significant. That anonymous aggression has the most harmful impacts is a dominant narrative in popular and scholarly accounts of cyberbullying (Sticca & Perren, 2013). Scholars frequently invoke the theory that those who perpetrate cyberviolence do so because they are free of “normative and social constraints on their behavior” that would otherwise subject them to social or legal punishment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, Li, 2007; Moore, Nakano, Enomoto, & Suda, 2012). Participants (N=112) were divided on this, but the majority did state that taunts, mean comments, and threats were worse when they came from someone they knew. As Ashley (15) at the private school put it:

Some of it happens on Facebook or Instagram with people you know personally. It could also happen on Tumblr or Twitter with total strangers. But I think it is even worse if the bullying is happening by people you know. (15)

Participants turned the accepted relationship between social sanctions and anonymity on its head. Rather than observing negative social sanctions for those who target others, participants accepted that if a girl is targeted, she will be the one to experience the negative social impacts.

That targets are actively or passively constructed as the flawed ‘bad’ girls who are victimized was a consistent theme throughout.¹⁴⁰

Perhaps the most important finding that emerged around the issue of anonymity was the way in which participants nuanced its relationship to CV. Some participants suggested that anonymity simply mediated offline sexism, making social media platforms spaces in which it is easier to target girls:

If the insult disappears after it is said it’s not any less hurtful. When you say it on Facebook others see, comment, share and make the situation worse (Annabelle, 18).

Online there’s no repercussions, there’s no there’s no filter it’s just they can say whatever they want so if they saw some girl on the bus and they wanted to say that but didn’t because it’s a social like a public setting and it’s not really socially accepted they can just go and spread their hate online (Cindy, 16).

The way Annabelle described being called a slut on different platforms highlighted how certain platforms amplify misogyny. Sabrina (18), an enthusiastic and articulate participant at the community-based organization, was comfortable on camera from the beginning of the PV workshops, and she offered a story that supports this framing of anonymity. During one of the first workshops at this location, participants offered their initial descriptors of cyberviolence to find where they share common ground. Sabrina (18) told a story to the group (which, that day, included seven other participants and two youth workers) to illustrate her perspective on the issue, worth quoting in its entirety.

Ok, I have a story, I’m going to make it quick it’s a story regarding cyberviolence in my experience. Now, typically I’m immune to cyberviolence, and I have been at a young age. There was one situation a couple of months ago where I commented, this is on Facebook, where I commented on someone’s post. Whatever, basically I wasn’t doing anything it

¹⁴⁰ The framings that participants used at both locations used to discuss victims of cyberviolence is examined in Section Three of Chapter Five, which explores the social norms and contexts that participants described as informing CV. This section also outlines the way in which participants at the private school drew on the figure of the “bad girl” and the “thot” to discuss cyber-victims.

was a joke. But the people whose post I commented on took it as an attack to their, like, masculinity and then all of his ‘bros’ came in the comment thread, and then all of them immediately started ganging up on me and saying like whatever horrible things they have to say to me. I found it hilarious the whole time. However, the very next day in real life I’m sitting on the bus, and these boys get on the bus, and I don’t know them, but I have a weird gut feeling that they were involved in the comment thread. Ok, and somehow, I managed to like casually mention my name and then one guy perks up and goes ‘you’re Sabrina?’ And I just turned to him and said ‘yes, I am Sabrina’, and I pause as if I don’t know and I say ‘Oh, you’re the boy from the Facebook comments aren’t you?’ And he’s like deer in the headlights he’s like ‘yeah’, and I go to shake his hand and I say, ‘I’m Sabrina, how’s it going?’ and he hesitates, and I say ‘listen up dude it’s totally ok like that’s Facebook, that’s the Internet who cares?’ So, I had this magical, brilliant opportunity to take cyberviolence from the Internet and within twenty-four hours later meet the person who was responsible, well said some things, to my cyber character and say something face-to-face. Just show that I’m a human being, and he was so scared. He was so totally not the person that he was on the Internet, and it was crazy the rest of the bus ride he was very uncomfortable, he shifted away from me it was amazing I was so grateful for that opportunity; it needs to happen more often. (18)

Sabrina showed a great deal of enthusiasm about what she referred to as a “magical, brilliant opportunity” to confront someone she felt had directed cyberviolence toward her. Sabrina told us that she took this opportunity to remind the boy that she was “a human being”. Although she was obviously proud of this decision, she chose, in that moment, to say “Who cares?” and to minimize the event. In her story, she described telling the boy in question that this decision was because the event did not matter since it had occurred online, and that is “just the Internet”. Of course, Sabrina and her peers all had sophisticated commentary on the daily struggles with cyberviolence they navigated in their digital culture. Many of Sabrina’s comments are captured in Chapter Five. The reticence to confront this person offline and the emphasis regarding how “hilarious” the situation was illustrate a certain degree of distancing from the impact online encounters can have. In fact, Sabrina outlined some of these challenges, particularly as they relate to girls’ online lives. Perhaps Sabrina’s trepidation indicated the same

type of hesitation and fear for their offline safety that other participants sometimes expressed.

For instance, Lia has this to say:

In my experience of being a female who spends a large percentage of my time online it's kind of difficult depending on what you get because sometimes you can have people who just brush it off, and then you have people who are like 'Oh you're a woman,' and so it's like 'Nah Nah Nah sexist comments go back to the kitchen' or sometimes you have men who do respect women in that way but they just see you as a sexual object. When I just started my Facebook page I was ten, and I looked older, than what I was actually and from ten to thirteen I was still young, and I looked older and I had adults come to tell me how beautiful and how sexy I was and me having to tell them I was just a kid it was frightening at the time [pause.] It really depends on to this day it still is terrifying to have just random adults being like 'hey there beautiful' it doesn't matter if its [sic] face-to-face or behind the computer screen it's still something that is unsettling (16).

Lia described being “unsettled” and finding these anonymous comments “frightening”, but revealed an important misunderstanding of sexism. That is, she rightly identified explicitly sexist comments, while in the same breath referring to “men who do respect women” but who see them as mere “sexual objects”. In Chapter Five, I discussed the broader culture of misogyny that resulted in participants describing victims as “bad girls” or girls who made “mistakes”. This context compounds the impact of violence or cyberbullying from strangers because they often fear being blamed themselves or receiving social sanctions or exclusions if they speak up. Their fears of negative social and legal sanctions are logical, given the fact that popular discourses continue to assume cyberbullying is a mean girls issue (Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015), regardless of the fact that girls are disproportionately targeted by boys online. Further, as discussed in Chapter Five, it is not unusual for school administrators and parents to inform girls that they may be charged with child pornography if they share intimate images of themselves. Lia (16), one of the regular and most enthusiastic participants in video workshops at the CBO, suggested that there were certain types of conflicts and aggressive interactions that were more likely to happen through platforms that had more anonymity built into their communities through platform

design. After a fellow participant asked her in an on-camera peer-to-peer interview in a group of three if she had had any personal experiences of cyberviolence, Lia (16) had this to say:

Quite a few. Basically, from people that I'm not fond of at school just randomly messaging me and saying weird things which could have been miss-sent messages because sometimes friends call each other like oh you bitch or like other things like that what I realize that it wasn't in the context of a miss-sent message like oops, the wrong person so that's offending. I do a lot of online role-playing, not in a sexual way, get that out of the way, little things that I'm personally proud of accomplishing, not in this field, there's a slim chance that you are going to have friends from your everyday life doing this with you. It's basically strangers so you can say one little thing and then oops you look like a horrible person. And you're a dumb ass for doing something that you are generally proud of doing, and people just shun you for it. Call you bad names or oh just bash on you for things you were talking about with someone else. (16)

While participants' comments seemed to differ from some of the dominant arguments around anonymity in the literature (particularly in many of their responses indicating that being targeted for cyberviolence by people they knew impacted them more), their descriptors aligned strongly with one of the central logics, namely that offline misogyny is often amplified through the cover of anonymity offered by social media platforms including MMOG.

“When the Tone of the Jokes Gets Too Violent”: Cyberviolence, Harassment or “Just Jokes”?

At the beginning of one video workshop at the private school, I asked the group about harassment on social media, and the second of the two major instances of silence I experienced during my research settled on the room.¹⁴¹ The silence was broken by one participant, who offered a story about “drama”; participants proceeded to have another fast-paced and engaged conversation. Lacey (16) recalled a story from Grade 8, saying, “It has to be really bad to be called harassment.” (Lacey, 16) Another participant put it this way: “[The] drama thing is a big thing; we would never say harassment we would say drama or gossip” (Constance, 15). I am not alone in this finding; several scholars have found the usage of the word ‘drama’ to describe

¹⁴¹ As described in Chapter Five, the first silence I encountered was at the private school, when I introduced my research problem and the participants claimed they knew nothing about cyberviolence.

harassment and conflict. In fact, many studies have found that where adults draw the line between harassment and cyberbullying is different from how young respondents distinguish between these two types of behaviour. Young people often use the word ‘drama’ to describe everything from interpersonal conflict to personal attacks, including sexist and racist comments (boyd, 2014; Dixon et al., 2015; Kilpatrick & Joiner, 2012), to the sharing of videos representing sexual violence. Current research suggests that young people do not relate to the cyberbullying terminology employed by mental health professionals, educators and parents (Allen, 2012; Levy et al., 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Participants used the term ‘drama’ to describe a range of behaviours ranging from interpersonal conflict to the sharing of videos representing sexual violence. The fact that girls often conceptualize CV through an interpersonal lens of ‘drama’ is unsurprising, given the dominant cultural focus from the early 1990s to the present on the ‘mean girl’ as the primary site of relational aggression (Jiwani, 1999; Ringrose & Barajas, 2011; Simmons, 2011). However, many participants also demonstrated resiliency and a keen ability to work through which behaviours ‘crossed the line’ into territory that they believed counted as CV.¹⁴²

It was clear in conversations at both locations that participants thought a lot about when ‘drama’ became harassment. It was not until a great deal of time had been devoted to discussing ‘drama’ that this became apparent. The following comment shows a typical response to the question of when something ceases to be ‘drama’ and becomes CV.

Once an argument turns into insults or threats then it becomes cyberviolence. Drama would be having a mature argument or discussion. Once someone moves away from the

¹⁴² The critical approach to distinguishing which actions count as cyberviolence was particularly obvious at the CBO organization, where young people were much more open to discussing violence. This may partly be explained by the fact that a disproportionate number of the participants at this location had experienced offline violence as victims, perpetrators and/or witnesses.

actual discussion and begins to attack the person personally then it becomes violence (Risa, 16).

Another participant echoed Risa's concern that fear for one's offline safety crosses the line between drama and harassment. In order to determine whether an event constituted CV, Leanne (18) asked, "Is someone directly targeting a person or group of people? Are names and personal information associated with posts online?" (Leanne, 18) The following exchange highlights the ways in which so many participants parsed out context when identifying what counted as cyberviolence.

Claire: When the jokes get too violent or distasteful including rape jokes, racist jokes and uncomfortable sexual comments then it's not just drama. (16)

Brianna: It depends. I can make jokes at my friends and they will understand that I'm joking. (15)

Ursula: Umm, I would say more of like um 'what's your point of view of the line of harassment?' Harassment is from different points of view sometimes it could be a small thing or it could be a big thing that you will take extremely seriously. (18)

Jessica: Oh, I think it also comes from well it's from something that's a bit different when they're it actually threatening to harm you when they see you in public I mean just because they're not in front of you doesn't mean that it's not something that's dangerous because what they could be doing like when they say something to you they could be meaning it as a joke and obviously you can't tell so it's hurting you but something that's even more worse is when they're coming like oh I'm going to come kill you or tell you to kill yourself online, that's another form yeah... (16)

As the exchange above reflects, the way in which participants described drama shifted in the context of social media, especially when they were trying to discern whether something was 'more than drama'. Jessica claimed that interpretations of meaning in these spaces were complicated by the platform, and when someone wrote something cruel or threatening, "they could be meaning it as a joke and obviously you can't tell so it's hurting you" (Jessica, 16).

Many participants identified jokes as an example of a lack of empathy in digital culture and how this lack of empathy is facilitated by social media platforms. These 'jokes' contribute to

the increasing normalization of practices we should identify as cyber-misogyny (Citron, 2011; West, 2014). Becca (18) reflected this in her comment:

I have seen misogynist comments made on Facebook but usually they are of course “jokes”. I think a lot of people get accustomed to the “jokes” and don’t stand up for themselves. Most girls just accept the “jokes” and think they need to laugh along (18).

Participants argued that something that begins as a ‘joke’ could escalate rapidly and, in extreme instances, accumulate a massive volume of responses and commentary. Participants repeatedly referenced jokes as a common practice that participants argued worked to mask CV, making it difficult to name. The following conversation highlights how participants pointed to how sexist or misogynistic ridicule was framed through humour or the veneer of “just joking”:

Cynthia: An example of humour that crosses the line is lots of jokes that are anti-feminist, racist, homophobic, if it’s offensive to me. It doesn’t matter if it’s a joke or not, it’s offensive. Just joking is stupid. (16)

August: You’re covering up. You just spoke about something that people may disagree with so you cover up by saying “just joking” – expressing yourself and others don’t agree so you want to cover up. If they don’t catch on it’s better to say just kidding. (16)

Carrie: When you say something offensive and you say you’re just joking a part of you believes what you just said – it slips your mind that that’s offensive, it’s harsher. (16)

Vanessa: It’s an excuse people use but they also use it as way to make the person who says that’s not ok to feel bad. What’s your problem? It makes them feel bad? (16)

That Cynthia and her peers are connecting CV to joking and humour is important. We know that misogynistic humour is used in many areas of dominant culture (e.g., comedy) to obscure the power relations intrinsic to dominant patriarchal culture (Pérez & Green, 2016). The charge of being humourless is an engrained one levelled at feminists (Ahmed, 2010; Weber, 2017). One example of a practice that is facilitated by SNS is mobbing, a common cyberviolence practice many participants used as an example of how conflicts play out (Citron, 2014).

Notably, several participants shared stories of encountering a high level of threatening racist, sexist and homophobic language in gaming and role-playing playing communities. Bianca (18) illustrated this in her comment:

I see it every day on Facebook in my role-play gaming groups. I see hacks, people harassing each other. I could go on my phone right now and I would find something like that to show you. Game companies should ban you if you do something over the top.
(18)

One group of participants at the private school brought up the example of thirteen-year-old Rebecca Black, who quickly became the “most hated person on the Internet” after releasing her song “Friday” in 2011 (Todd, 2014). One of the practices that participants pointed to as being particularly harmful was how certain social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook offer a way for a large group of people to mobilize commentary and discussion at rapid speeds. While we know this can be positive, it can also exacerbate the targeting of specific girls and young women. Aideen (16) offered this illustrative comment:

Like Jessica said, the scale is so much larger. If some guy makes a sexist comment on a bus maybe to one woman there’s like maybe five other people three of them jump to her defence, sorted, done. On the Internet, it could be people from tons of different countries, people from tons of different cities in those countries, millions, billions of people could be reading that and, because of the scale, more people are going to agree. And so, then it just turns into this big hate fest with people ripping each other to shreds for being on opposite sides of this issue and it’s so much more difficult to make yourself heard. Because if you come to someone’s defence like she was saying who is going to hear that? A few people will be like ‘yeah’ but tons of other people will be like ‘well no, you bitch’ yeah, it’s just it’s harder (16).

As Aideen described, the ease with which mobs can form on SNS contributes to cyberviolence. Recent widely reported incidents involving the mobbing of feminists and women of colour highlight how platforms such as Twitter are often used to harass women (for examples, see Marcotte, 2016; Williams, 2016; Woolf, 2016). The conversation about mobbing began with

Jessica's (16) initial link to bystander intervention during one of the workshops at the CBO's drop-in program:

The big thing is how do you get involved on the Internet? It's much harder to come and defend somebody and then that can get torn apart and like it's so much easier to rip something apart than to protect someone on the Internet. (16)

Platforms that facilitate mobbing contribute to CV targeting girls and women. This is an important and timely finding. Studies show that platforms which facilitate mobbing show increased instances of cyber-mobs targeting women and feminists (Buni & Chemlay, 2014; Jane, 2014, 2016). Instead of answering the call to attend to and curtail this practice, some platforms are making it easier for users. For example, at the time of writing, Twitter was adding a feature that allows individual users to include as many followers in a message as they wish.¹⁴³ Twitter developers argue that this will "allow for richer public conversations", although advocates for women online such as WAM! and emerging research demonstrate that these features intensify the activity of cyber-mobs targeting women. Legal scholar Danielle Citron (2014) suggests that we should affix the 'cyber' label to behaviours such as harassment that occur online, because if we do not add the 'cyber' we cannot come up with strategies that address cyberviolence.

Conclusion

The potential risks that young people encounter online (e.g., predation) are often called upon to justify expanding surveillance of young people, as well as changes to law and policy governing their online participation. These top-down approaches are perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in digital literacy discourses and public debates around the issue of cyberbullying. Sweeping policies aimed at reducing cyberbullying are problematic due to the

¹⁴³ In 2016 Twitter is removing "usernames and attachment URLs" from the 140-character word count of posts known as tweets (<https://dev.twitter.com/overview/api/upcoming-changes-to-tweets>). At the time of writing the character count has now expanded to 280).

pernicious gendered myths they often perpetuate. As examined in this chapter, girls struggle with how age-old sexist tropes are circulated through, and often coded into, the platforms. Participants outlined the ways in which navigating their favourite social media platforms and apps informed both their understanding and experiences of cyberviolence. Further, they pointed to practices such as performances of anonymity and ‘drama’ that normalized cyber-misogyny.

Participants reminded me that social media spaces were places they enjoyed and that were important for them to occupy. Further, they were clear that challenges they faced offline were often amplified on social media, where sexist norms are becoming more entrenched. For example, “just joking” and mobbing facilitated through platform designs were common ways in which participants described CV. These findings support a feminist constructionist approach to youth digital culture studies. That is, while these tools mediate communication practices, social organization, and information dissemination (boyd, 2008, p. 92), they do not determine practices (Albury, 2015; Broadhurst, 2006; Ringrose et al., 2013). However, designs and architectural features do play a role in shaping the ways in which people interact (Bowler et al., 2014; Lenhart et al., 2011). As the participants outlined, designs could and did amplify their encounters with hostility and mean and cruel behaviour online. Moreover, many participants suggested that cyberviolence is a more significant challenge for girls and women because it occurs within a broader context of offline VAWG.

My findings reflect large-scale studies over the last three years, such as those summarized in the Pew Research Center’s “Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview” (2015), showing that young people are continuing to incorporate social media into their daily communication. Qualitative and arts-based data provide a lens for understanding the logic(s) that young people draw on to explain exactly how they are using these platforms and how their descriptors of

cyberviolence fit into a broader media ecology (boyd, 2014). While outlining the features that they found particularly conducive to facilitating gendered cyberviolence, participants often pointed to existing strategies (sometimes offering critiques), and suggested strategies that they felt would address the issue more productively.

In Chapter Seven, I examine the tensions in participants' critiques of existing strategies (e.g., logging off and bystander intervention). Chapter Seven also addresses the interconnected themes of education and empathy that participants used to frame both their critiques of existing anti-violence strategies and their recommendations for better ones. That is, many participants mobilized sexist stereotypes and tropes while critiquing popular anti-CB strategies that do just that. I also examine strategies they suggested may help in preventing cyberviolence that is targeting them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“It’s a Space No One Can Govern or Control”: Tensions in Participants’ Mobilizing of Education and Empathy in their Conceptualizing of Cyberviolence and Critiques of Popular Prevention Strategies

“Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.” – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

“Parents in a way are the ones that need to learn more, we’re learning about cyberviolence every day.” – Katie, 15

Through their video work and discussions, the participants with whom I worked offered a glimpse into the complex social context(s) that they argued structure cyberviolence. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six I demonstrated how participants described a set of misogynistic social norms and practices that structure digital (and analog) culture. These social contexts that normalize misogyny, racism and classism are coded into the architecture of the online platforms themselves that participants described as exacerbating on/offline conflicts. The strategies suggested by the participants for conceptualizing cyberviolence will necessitate re-evaluating the traditional patriarchal frameworks we use to assess safe space and ‘free’ (gendered) expression on social media (Croeser, 2016). The participants’ video work and discussions suggest we need to re-orient our approach to the issues of cyberbullying away from exceptional cases and toward the ubiquity of misogyny in digital culture. One of the most significant differences between the participatory video findings and the focus group data was that the video allowed for extended peer-peer discussions. Participants exhibited a tremendous amount of pride in and ownership over their video work, which offers a glimpse into the complex social context(s) that structure how girls are conceptualizing cyberviolence. This approach will add nuance and context that is too often missing from extant cyberviolence studies that produce varying, inconclusive and

contested statistics (Gradinger, Yanagida, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2015).¹⁴⁴ This analysis points to the need for prevention and intervention strategies capable of addressing the intersecting elements participants identified about their digital culture that normalize gender-based cyberviolence. Many of the participants shed light on the limitations and possibilities of existing strategies while mobilizing popular anti-cyberbullying phrases such as “once you post it it’s there forever” (Chun & Friedland, 2015; Chun, 2016; *Common Sense Media*, 2018; *Connect Safely*, 2015).

In this chapter, I draw on the themes of empathy and education that clustered around the strategies for addressing CV that the participants critiqued, as well as the ones they recommended. Empathy and education were central to participants’ descriptions of both CV and the strategies they proposed for addressing it. This chapter makes a case for taking seriously the participants’ suggestions of education and empathy as productive avenues for future girlhood CV research and programming focusing on CV strategy-building by academics, policymakers, educators and parents. In Part One I examine the roles that empathy, education, and the issue of self-esteem played in participants’ critiques of popular CV strategies. I address the tension between participants’ mobilizing of popular (read: sexist/gender neutral) anti-CB strategies (“logging off is not a solution” and “bystander intervention does not always work”) on the one hand, and their critiquing of these strategies in their discussions around empathy and education on the other. Additionally, I examine the theme ‘adults are out of touch’ – a plumb line that ran through the participants’ critiques of popular CV prevention strategies, which they often

¹⁴⁴ Large-scale studies that have produced ‘cyberbullying’ statistics vary greatly. The statistics produced so far regarding how age and gender impact cyberbullying are inconclusive (Gradinger, Yanagida, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2015). See the following examples of the varying statistics applied to cyberbullying including differences in victimization/perpetration rates attributed to age (Kowalski et al., 2014; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011; Tokunaga, 2010) and gender (Gradinger, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2009; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008; Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009).

connected to their calls for more empathy and education addressed in Part Two. Participants described SNS as important spaces to be in but also as places, they argue, that lacked empathy and personal connection, thus contributing to CV. Moreover, participants argued that a lack of education for youth and adults around CV compounded the problem. Part Two examines the strategies that participants recommended we implement to address violence against women and girls online (Fairbairn, 2015; Jane 2015; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; C. Todd, 2015; P. Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014). In Part Two I examine what participants called “Internet language” – a concept they drew on to explain the communication breakdown that resulted in ridicule or worse. Participants argued that “Internet language” facilitated sexist double standards while amplifying offline disconnection. I also address the theme of sharing stories, something that many participants discussed in relation to the groups’ experiences of producing video work. Participants made powerful arguments for sharing stories of CV as a productive way to raise awareness about it and to promote healing for its targets. As in Chapters Five Six, I situate the central themes within popular cyberbullying narratives and alongside feminist new media studies literature (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Croeser, 2016; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014; Phillips, 2015). Table 7.1 shows the frequency with which participants discussed the themes of education, empathy (often operationalized by the girls as a lack of judgement or negative social sanction), and legal or platform regulations.

Table 7.1

The 3 Strategies Referenced by Participants as Recorded in the Transcripts

Strategy	Number of References in the Transcripts
Empathy	107
Education	53
Legal strategies or regulations	16
Total	176

The tendency in cyberbullying studies is to focus on bully/victim typologies and quantifying bullying incidents (Kytiacou, 2015; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Kessell, O'Donnell, & Smith, 2015), which can work to obscure the underlying issues – such as misogyny and racism – that structure cyberviolence. That is, my participants reported misogynistic meanness, cruelty and harassment as becoming increasingly normalized in the broader digital culture (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Crooks, 2016; Huntemann, 2015; Jane, 2014; 2016). Their conceptualization of cyberviolence serves as an urgent call to attend to everyday forms of gender-based violence targeting young women on their favourite social media platforms. Aside from a handful of examples (see Angrove, 2015; Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015; Meyer, 2014; Regan & Sweet, 2015), cyberviolence scholarship has yet to substantively engage a feminist new media or equality lens in the analysis of the cyberbullying phenomenon (Bailey, 2013; Crooks, 2016; Meyer, 2014).

The Internet, specifically social media platforms, is a central site of the contemporary gender wars in North America; there is an enormous amount of violence and vitriol directed toward women and girls online (Fairbairn, 2015; Hess, 2014). This trend, referred to by Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2015) as “networked misogyny”, is often lost in academic and public debates around cyberbullying. That is, the framing of these debates is unhelpful in challenging what Mary Anne Franks refers to as “cyberspace idealism” (2013).¹⁴⁵ Lia (16) described the complexity of creating different framings for discourses around cyberviolence this way:

The fact that society isn't very educated on some of this stuff, like about feminism, with all due respect this is the way I think it works. I think if certain topics were more

¹⁴⁵ Mary Anne Franks (2013) uses the term “cyberspace idealism” to refer to the dominant parameters for debates around online harassment targeting women: free speech versus hate speech. Free speech is often invoked by misogynists and apologists as a justification for neglecting to address VAWG online. Further, when we neglect to address these forms of violence, we lose sight of the ways in which harassment and violence targeting girls and women are silencing them and compromising possibilities for equitable digital citizenship (Bernstein, 2016; Turton-Turner, 2016).

discussed about in schools or just in general with like adults or something like that with parents and their children I think that more people would get a better understanding of stuff. They would actually care to learn about certain things that are actually important. (16)

Although more CV studies are rightly focusing on the roles that technical and platform design elements (Jeong, 2015), anonymity (Stoeffel, 2014), and legal elements (Citron, 2014) play in amplifying online misogyny, very little work exists that locates these contributing factors to online misogyny in the “deeply embedded contextual factors that legitimate the logic of misogyny” as a normalized component of Western culture (p. 171). In other words, prevention strategies should focus on deconstructing the misogynistic social norms that participants described (Chapter Five); as long as these norms remain unchallenged, no prevention strategy will allow us to unpack the acceptance of gender-based cyberviolence as “business as usual” (Dixon et al., 2015; Marsh, 2017; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014). The critiques my participants offered of existing strategies, as well as their call for education and empathy, highlight how existing strategies such as platform moderation will work only if they are combined with a multi-faceted approach that recognizes networked misogyny (Barker, 2016).

Part One: “Support Us!” Participants’ Critiques of Existing Strategies

Participants at both locations described wanting more support and less judgment from adults who are better equipped to help them navigate social media and cope with cyberviolence. Participants frequently articulated their desire for non-judgmental support from adults; in their critiques of anti-CB strategies, they said adults frequently recommended such actions as logging off and intervening in CV events. As one focus group participant put it, “We want you to support us without judging us” (Bronwyn, 15). This is another important way in which participants challenged popular discourses around cyberbullying that represented them as in danger, dangerous, or exceptionally mean and conniving (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013; Connell, 2013;

Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Kilty & Frigon, 2016; Ringrose, 2010). As one participant put it, “I think adults and teachers should let the child know that they’re there for them no matter what and if they need to talk that they’re always there” (Claire, 16). When discussing how adults might best support girls dealing with cyberviolence Kennedy (16) said:

Parents shouldn’t be over-reacting over mistakes made online they should just be supportive and not hold it over our heads. Parents and teachers need to know not to snoop around if someone is being cyberbullied and is unstable. They just need to be a massive source of support and help take their minds off their troubles. (16)

Kennedy’s comment emphasizes the connection between a strong presence and support from adults and young people’s desire for adults not to judge or rush to intervene in their online conflicts. As Bronwyn (15) put it: “Parents must not overreact but they should be there for their kids, they need to never yell at their kids during this because it can be so painful.” (Bronwyn, 15) The sub-theme that “adults are out of touch” mobilized by participants such as Bronwyn and Kennedy highlights why CV programming, rooted in an understanding of the social norms participants described, may help adults avoid what participants perceived as victim-blaming.

Participants identified social norms as embedded in their usage of social media platforms and apps (Chapter Five). These norms provide the context for understanding why a strategy that involves education for adults that does not reify existing misogynistic norms that currently structure so much anti-bullying programming delivered to young women (Johnston, 2015). For example, many participants explicitly tied girls’ usage of social media to their vulnerability to harassment and ridicule, while other participants emphasized that more understanding of how negative experiences on SNS impact girls will lead to adults being better equipped as allies.

Joanne (18) said:

Girls have different experiences than boys because a lot of girls use social media in different ways. Like, girls will share a lot of personal things and feelings and also a lot of

pictures of themselves. These girls are the ones who tend to be affected by cyberviolence because there is so much personal things online that can be used against them, and people take advantage of that. (18)

As several participants explained, girls are often blamed when their own images are circulated without their consent. The participants with whom I spoke illustrated the way these platforms amplify the existing blaming-the-victim social system that demands that girls perform ‘appropriate’ femininity for external recognition and validation (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015; Lawson, 2017).¹⁴⁶ For example, Eunice (15) said, “Try to ask what really happened. Support us, we don’t want them to judge us, they need to ask were you aware? They need to know we didn’t ask for it!” (Eunice, 15) Carrie (16) agreed:

I think adults need to know that when girls are being cyberbullied they don’t necessarily feel comfortable coming forward and that it’s hard for them so adults shouldn’t react negatively. Also, if a parent sees an inappropriate picture of their kids they should confront them and make sure that nobody is being mean because it may really affect them. Also, parents shouldn’t be too involved in a situation but they should help in small ways. (16)

Participants at the private school expressed this particular concern about judgment from parents and adults far more often than did their peers at the CBO. As discussed in Chapter Six, participants at the private school self-identified as “good girls”, which distanced them from knowledge about cyberviolence or victimization. In their critiques of anti-bullying strategies, participants added nuance to the popular suggestions of just ‘logging off’ and the bystander intervention approach.

Nuancing Advice to “Just Log Off” and Bystander Intervention

Participants’ critiques of bystander intervention and advice to ‘just log off’ add further nuance to this increasingly important framework at the heart of many contemporary feminist

¹⁴⁶ For an example, see the examination of a story that Britney (16) shared about an incident at her high school in which she identified victim-blaming in the way in which the principal of her high school addressed the situation involving pictures circulated without the consent of the people photographed.

anti-violence movements (Bumiller, 2010; Creative Interventions, 2012; Kim, 2011). The participants' critiques are particularly important at this historic moment when feminist new media scholars are problematizing straightforward understandings of bystander approach in digital spaces (Nakamura, 2015), and women of colour activist communities are pioneering anti-carceral modes of bystander intervention and witnessing in contrast to university-based bystander intervention programming (Myerson, 2014; Rentschler, 2017). The way that participants conceptualized CV reveals a tension between how they critiqued popular adult strategies on the one hand and how they often mobilized the logics underpinning the very strategies they critiqued on the other. The participants added nuance to problematic strategies, underscoring the importance of incorporating young women in the creation of cyberbullying programming and research. Including girls offers a way to address how gendered, racialized and classed assumptions underpin CV and anti-CV programming. Sally (18) brought a gendered lens to help her problematize the message that "once you post it it's there forever":

Whose responsibility is it? A large part of it is men, a lot of schools you can't wear a tank top because some guy won't be able to control himself because of a shoulder. Girls need to be educated. If a girl posts a picture it might not mean she's asking for attention or wants to be harassed. At the same time girls need to be aware that if they post a pic that can happen. They should be educated about feeling confident in themselves.¹⁴⁷ (18)

Similarly, the following comment from a focus group at the private school reflected this message:

Eunice: I think that something that kids should learn to combat CV is that once you press the send or post button that everything stays online forever. Even if you're angry in the moment, talking it out in person is better than sending it out onto the Internet where anyone can see it. (15)

¹⁴⁷ It is important to keep in mind, as discussed at length in Chapter Five, that the participants with whom I spoke often described cyberviolence by connecting diminished self-worth and confidence to sexualized performances of (acceptable) femininity in social media profile pictures (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). In other words, if others did not 'like' their performance(s), they often expressed the negative feelings about themselves that emerged.

Significantly, Eunice (15) mobilizes the popular anti-CB strategy (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015) – “Careful what you post...it’s there forever” – while arguing that these approaches would be more effective if they were grounded in a deeper understanding of the lived realities of young women’s online lives (e.g., why girls post what they post) (Eunice, 15).

Berkley (16) and Amy (15) offered these comments:

Something that scares me though when you post something online regardless of what it is it’s there forever [Aideen nodding] you can’t get rid of it you can get rid of it from your profile so people won’t see it but it’s always going to be there somewhere floating around on the Internet and you can’t get rid of it like that’s why even that’s why even like some guys and girls need to be really careful about what they post online if they regardless if it’s a shirtless picture or you were sending something to someone that’s supposed to be private if you’re sending it on media it’s going to be there and that person can do anything with that picture [Aideen nodding vigorously and agreeing] and it could completely ruin you or could just it could make you feel good in the moment but it’s there forever so you have to be careful (16).

It’s different for girls because boys have expectations and pressure girls sometimes to send them intimate photos and some girls who feel not [sic] accepted and more vulnerable girls send photos because they want to feel loved. It [Cyberviolence] crosses the line if it will potentially be hurtful to someone and if it could damage someone’s future (15).

The way that Berkley and Amy framed their descriptions of the actions they told me led to being a target of CV reflected many of the participants’ critiques. That is, participants often mobilized problematic assumptions underpinning popular anti-CB strategies they critiqued – notably, “logging off” and bystander intervention. For example, Berkley placed the onus on girls to monitor their own ICT usage, saying, “It could make you feel good in the moment but it’s there forever.” (Berkley, 16) Amy linked the idea of a young woman sharing “intimate photos” with “being vulnerable”, an action that may “damage” a girl’s future. A good example of how participants also challenged these sexist underpinnings is the way that they often called for less judgement from adults. Specifically, although many participants like Becky (16) framed

victimization as resulting from their “mistakes”, their call for less judgement was an important way they challenged this configuration.

My participants connected adults’ lack of understanding about young people’s digital culture to adults’ ignorance around what cyberbullying is. This disconnect between adults and young people on the issue of online harassment and cyberbullying is being documented in many parts of the world (Li, 2008; Noh & Rahman, 2013; Yanagida, Gradinger, Strohmeier, Solomontos-Kountouri, Trip, & Bora, 2016). Many participants described this as a problem. For instance, the pressure they felt to be perceived as ‘perfect’ online and their bewilderment regarding how to present themselves in a way that would minimize risk was a significant way in which participants described CV. This pressure had a far more profound impact on their lives than most adults and researchers who focus on specific cyberbullying events might realize. It is unsurprising that participants were so confused, especially as their generation has seen a surge in the corporatization of campaigns ostensibly aiming to improve girls’ self-esteem and body-image (Banet-Weiser, 2015) – the very issues participants articulated struggling with and that are amplified in the age of social media.

That so many participants from both research sites suggested the need for self-esteem building for girls as a strategy for approaching cyberviolence points to the ways in which the broader climate of misogyny online informed their experiences of social media (Beck, 2014; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2015; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014). This is significant to note because participants at each location reminded me that there were many positive sides to social media, despite the fact that daily interactions may cause struggles with self-worth.¹⁴⁸ The participants with whom I spoke

¹⁴⁸ For descriptions of the types of practices my participants described, such as profile ‘liking’, picture rating, and mobbing, see the examples in Chapters Five and Six.

described the struggle over self-worth as emerging from a set of normalized misogynistic practices. For example, some participants, like Jessica (16) and Charlie (15), pointed to actions that impact a young person's self-worth as a distinguishing feature of CV:

Jessica: For me, um, teen drama crosses the line into harassment when its repeated because harassment is already something that happens multiple times and like a singular [event] even though it can hurt you can normally heal afterwards but if its repeated multiple times you can't really get over that as easily and it really starts to mess up a person's sense of self-worth (16).

Charlie: The desire to please causes problems with self-esteem and the images that are portrayed don't help that (15).

Participants at both locations returned to the notion of working on self-esteem as a strategy for dealing with cyberviolence. Sandy (18) framed it like this: "Making kids delete their social media won't help because it becomes addicting to know what people are saying about you." (Sandy, 18) I devoted several memos to this during the research process, as participants' comments about self-esteem often occurred in what seemed like digressions in conversations about specific examples of cyberviolence on social media. During the reflection and analysis process it became clear that these seeming digressions were at the heart of how participants conceptualized cyberviolence. That is, the importance they placed on the social contexts of their digital culture located the challenges in gendered social norms that structured and constrained their self-representation on social media, be it sexual, personal, or purely mundane.¹⁴⁹ This is especially significant, as the misogynistic practices the participants outlined, such as quantifying 'perfection', are organized through social media architecture that facilitate CB by positioning young women as objects to be approved of and desired by others (Bailey et al., 2013; Bailey, 2015). Participants described experiencing increased self-worth when they received 'likes' on their Facebook and Instagram pictures. It is important to locate the aggression and violence girls

¹⁴⁹ Due to space constraints, I do not explore this sub-theme in isolation, because it is so closely linked with other findings on self-expression on social media platforms explored at length in Chapters Five and Six.

encounter online in structures of misogyny, rather than in the girls themselves. It has been well established that, in this neoliberal moment of post-feminism, the tendency to place the onus on individual girls to manage the challenges they face is increasing (Gill & Scharff, 2013; Gonick, 2015; Ringrose, 2013; Jackson & Vares, 2015).¹⁵⁰

My participants' critiques of the most common strategies they reported hearing highlight how we would do better to address the misogynistic elements in digital culture they pointed to as normalizing gender-based harassment and violence, leading to uneven and inequitable forms of digital citizenship (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). For example, zero-tolerance policies are ineffective in reducing incidents of bullying and school violence (Borgwald & Theixos, 2013), because young people are usually entirely left out of the design of punitive zero-tolerance policies and anti-cyberbullying programming. These approaches, therefore, are not informed by or grounded in an understanding of the misogynistic social norms outlined by the participants with whom I spoke who are impacted by this phenomenon (Crooks, 2016). For example, as researchers of girls' digital culture have found when speaking with young women about cyberbullying, there is a large gap between how young women conceive of the dangers facing them online and how policy-makers conceive of them (Bailey & Steeves, 2015). While policy-makers tend to focus on exceptional cases of 'stranger danger', my participants demonstrated a far more complex understanding of danger that revealed their daily lived experience with digital culture to be rife with challenges (Bailey, 2015).

Most of the research done in the relatively new field of cyberbullying studies continues to be carried out by developmental psychologists. As discussed previously, much of this work

¹⁵⁰ Post-feminist literatures are each distinct from each other, as well as from the literature that examines the political-economic and social practices understood as neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007). Although they are distinct, neoliberal and post-feminist discourses are mutually constituting. Neoliberal, post-feminist discourses place an emphasis on the individual to maintain and protect herself or himself, rather than on the social inequities that hinder those most marginalized by the status quo (Bent, 2013; Gonick, 2015).

builds on traditional bullying studies, which tend to focus mainly on “personality variables and other individual characteristics” (Kelly, 2016, p. 538).¹⁵¹ The literature built around empirical studies done on cyberbullying and gender have found variously that 1) boys are more likely to be perpetrators (Li, 2006), 2) girls are both perpetrators and victims (Slonje & Smith, 2008), and 3) that there are no measurable differences regarding how gender impacts a young person’s encounters with cyberbullying (Campbell, Butler, & Kift, 2008). In other words, extant CV literature is limited in helping us to understand how CB manifests, as well as how it impacts girls. Some scholars attribute the absence of a consensus in the literature to the lack of a definition of cyberbullying (O’Higgins, Norman, & Ging, 2014). While individual factors are important, this body of work regularly neglects the social contexts in which behaviours termed cyberbullying take place. The importance that participants attached to social contexts and double standards in peer culture suggests that dialogue, rather than definitions, is what is most needed (Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, 2009; Dixon et al., 2015). Dominant cyberbullying discourses address issues of violence; however, the generic framing of cyberbullying as a problem between individuals forecloses substantive attention to the complex intersections of sexism, racism, and ageism that structure the phenomenon (p. 538). Furthermore, despite a recent explosion in cyberbullying studies, few studies attempt to unpack how factors such as race, class and ability impact cyberbullying experiences (Low & Espelage, 2013). As Jane Bailey argues, “[young people] ought to be considered experts in their everyday lives, be understood as educators of adults about their lives and be afforded meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions, policies, and programming that affect them” (2015, p. 22).

¹⁵¹ See the Literature Review (Chapter Two) for a lengthy description of the history of the relationship between the history of cyberbullying studies and developmental psychology.

“Adults Are Out of Touch”: Logging Off is Not a Solution

That participants mobilized anti-cyberbullying rhetoric (e.g., “what you post is there forever”) (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015) adds much-needed context to our current understanding of cyberbullying as both a form of school violence and a social issue (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Cho, Shim & Kim, 2017; Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Lalonde, 2014; Ortega-Baron, Buelga, Cava, & Torralba, 2017). Participants like Kate (16) highlighted the gulf between the assumptions underpinning suggestions adults offered them for dealing with CV and the realities they described. Problematizing discourses that minimize conflict between young people online, Kate (16) said this:

Normal teen drama is not actually a thing. In society, they discuss teen drama as a normality. This is not a subject that we should be discussing because in our society there should be no normal teen drama. But there is. So, I believe that a line is drawn at a point of despair. If a comment is seriously threatening that is where the line is drawn. (16)

Participants at both locations shared a similar desire when it came to how they hoped adults would deal with cyberviolence, with many echoing a version of Janet’s (16) “We want you to support us not judge us!” or Becky’s (16) “Don’t judge us and know that you shouldn’t over-react over mistakes”. Although participants in this study engaged in complaining that adults are out of touch, it is clear that the majority hoped for more support from adults in navigating digital culture in general and cyberviolence in particular, especially as it impacted them. Participants, particularly at the private school, vocalized their desire for adults to learn more so that adults could support them more productively. Significantly, participants stressed that both adults and young people needed to be better educated about navigating and recognizing cyberviolence. For example, Katie (15) said:

I feel parents in a way are the ones that need to learn more, we’re learning about cyberviolence every day. We need to have information and education about it...scaring

people works, helps them not to do stupid things but what we really need is information. (15)

During a PV session, Gina (18) used PV as an example to describe how anti-CV education rooted in an understanding of young people's lived realities may be a helpful strategy in addressing CV. Gina put it this way:

The video is useful as it gathers information about cyberviolence through people's opinions and thoughts. It is important to gather other people's input and thoughts about cyberviolence because it is a big issue and there are several thoughts and opinions from students as often, people believe that adult strategies are not affective because they are unrealistic. Gathering information and opinions from students can be helpful because it will enable others to create strategies against cyberviolence that can be effective. (18)

Another significant way in which participants challenged the dominant paradigm that placed the onus on them to protect themselves was by emphasizing the need for more empathetic connection, both in SNS and from the adults in their lives, when they asked for guidance around CV events.

One of the examples the participants frequently returned to, to explain why adults needed to learn more about cyberviolence, was their critique of the popular suggestion, 'just log off' (Machackova, Cerna, Sevcikova, Dedkova, & Daneback, 2013).¹⁵² Participants' critiques of this popular suggestion for addressing cyberviolence (Chun & Friedland, 2016; Hasinoff, 2015) clustered around two central notions. They argued that the suggestion of going offline was unproductive because it was not relevant to their social lives, which are both online and offline (Doster, 2013; Hasinoff, 2015; García-Gómez, 2010). Many participants argued that this strategy did not account for the offline ramifications of online conflicts, and could actually make them less safe by limiting their knowledge regarding what was being said and posted about them on

¹⁵² This solution is more commonly phrased as "deactivating accounts" in anti-cyberbullying curricula and in cybersafety tips directed toward the public (e.g., "How to Deactivate Facebook to Prevent Cyber-bullying (2017), advice for "Parents and Guardians" on <http://antibullying.novascotia.ca>).

social media. Alice (16) said, “It’s not easy to just turn off your computer and log off your account. Ask girls if it would be as simple as deleting your account because going offline is not a solution.” (Alice, 16) For the participants in the video workshops and focus groups, ICTs, especially SNS, played a significant role in their lives (Price & Dalglish, 2010). Kirsten and Miley, two focus group participants in Grade 10, put it like this:

Kirsten: I think the strategy of unplugging is so ridiculous and not feasible at all. Just because one person is harassing you, does not mean you should delete your entire Facebook page or Instagram account. It is not realistic to expect teenagers to detach themselves from social media when it plays such an important role in their life. (16)

Miley: My parents always seem to be negative about the Internet too much time on it adults need to give us the information, not tell us not to go back on tonight or go offline that day. They don’t realize there’s a whole world we’re missing then. As teenagers, our life is online. (16)

Telling young people to ‘unplug’ is not a viable or ethical solution to VAWG online (Fairbairn, 2015; Chun, 2016) because it does not account for the extent to which young people’s social, leisure, and educational lives are online.

The daily experiences participants outlined reflect neither the dystopian characterization of a world composed of pedophiles and predators behind every corner, nor an equitable democratic space where young women are able to freely express themselves. Participants described the suggestion of logging off as an example of how detached adults are from youth digital culture (Crooks, 2016). Dina (16) put it this way:

I think this is a topic that should be discussed at schools and at home. There’s no way of preventing cyberviolence except to be safe when using technology but if this was a topic that was further discussed at schools, people may have strategies as to how to avoid being involved in cyberviolence. The only strategy I have been given is if I ever get cyber bullied, I must delete my account that I have gotten bullied on. This may stop someone from getting cyberbullied on that particular social media, but it doesn’t really solve the problem. (16)

The themes of empathy and education that participants articulated through critiques of existing prevention strategies contribute to filling a large knowledge gap about the ways in which social life moves fluidly between offline and online experiences. As Jenny (17) put it, “Someone always has a phone.” (17) Pictures and video from daily activities are often uploaded to Snapchat without the consent of the individuals in them. During a video workshop, Katrina (16) tied her critique of this popular suggestion to the notion of empathy, including the need to cultivate a concern for others by activating individuals’ “thoughts and opinions”, rather than just providing facts about cyberbullying.

H.R.C.: What do adults such as teachers, policy-makers and parents need to know about cyberviolence?

Katrina: Raising awareness about cyberviolence is important to address this issue. People need to further explore getting more insight on this subject from people that have been impacted by this issue and perhaps even the instigators. Another type of strategy would be making social media users more aware of the effects of this type of harassment because it seems like many are not aware of the negative impact. It would be important to trigger their emotional thoughts and opinions rather than informing them constantly because people, including myself, have been informed about this issue ever since elementary school and from what I hear and what I have been told, as a society, the informing method still doesn’t seem to have an impact on the individuals. Teachers and parents are often unhelpful in this issue as they just tell the victim to “unplug” themselves from their social media and to ignore the issue which is unrealistic. (16)

Interestingly, ‘logging off’ is also a solution commonly offered by the far right to deal with the online harassment of women. It is obvious that such a strategy would not allow for equitable participation in digital culture. For example, an infamous right-wing commentator (Milo Yiannopoulos) at *Breitbart News* suggested that opting out of digital culture is the best way for young women to avoid harassment (Yiannopoulos, 2016):

Here’s my suggestion to fix the gender wars online: Women should just log off. Given that men built the internet, along with the rest of modern civilization, I think it’s only fair that they would get to keep it. And given what a miserable time women are having on the Web, surely, they would welcome an abrupt exit...The internet can’t cope any more with such strenuous tension between the sexes. I mean there’s a reason that male golfers don’t

compete against female golfers...it's time to apply this logic to the online world (Yiannopoulos, 2016, para. 6-7).

This popular commentator's ideological investment in the notion of logging off is seemingly a world apart from that of well-meaning teachers and parents that suggest young women deactivate social media accounts for safety. However, this strategy – whether promoted by ideologues or by the adults who care for girls – ultimately places the onus on girls to protect themselves from harassment and proposes censoring their voices by cutting off the channels to public space (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015; Hasinoff, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013).¹⁵³ This finding is important because many participants described cyberviolence as a form of censorship. That is, when they were targeted online, it limited their full engagement in digital culture in powerful ways. The fact that many of the participants with whom I spoke described CV as a form of censorship underscores the importance of avoiding strategies that uncritically encourage girls to suppress their participation in SNS. This silencing is captured in Gillian's (17) comment: "I think it becomes cyberviolence when it silences something as in stops you from speaking up". One strategy participants described actively applying to counter silencing involved a communication style that favoured an "ethics of care" versus an "ethics of justice" (Gilligan, 1982; Spader, 2002). Participants suggested burying negative comments with positive ones, which aligned with their focus on empathy and education.¹⁵⁴ Their comments show that it is not the case that young people are not capable of critical thinking, impulse control or reflection (Hasinoff, 2013).

¹⁵³ This problematic construction of violence prevention – in which girls are told to remove themselves from public space to protect themselves – is similar to strategies offered to women in previous generations. For example, discourses around domestic violence and sexual violence have often placed the onus on women and girls to either remove themselves from spaces where they encounter violence or protect themselves through how they dress, take up space, etc. This formulation of CV prevention further normalizes the assumption that VAWG on social media is inevitable (Fairbairn, 2015; Dixon et al., 2015).

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter Six for the description of this strategy that participants described during discussions of posting practices.

The following comments about this solution are just a few of the explicit critiques of logging off as a strategy offered by participants at both locations. The following comments highlight the reason that so many young people argue this strategy is ineffective:

Emmy: Not just turning off electronics will solve the problem. It's hard to talk about. It doesn't just end in 2 days. (15)

Jessica: Adults need to know it isn't always that easy to take down your Facebook or anything but it will still stay with you. (16)

Claire: Parents and teachers need to know that it is very hard to escape bullying online or offline. It is not so simple to just delete it. (15)

The participants' critiques of logging off sheds light on an issue that is largely absent in the girlhood, digital culture and cyberviolence literatures.¹⁵⁵ Participants revealed why suggestions such as logging off as a solution to online bullying are not relevant: everyone navigates harassment, hostility and cruelty as a normalized part of digital culture. For example, Serena (17) says:

It's a dangerous place and you have to be careful with how you present yourself. Cyberbullying shouldn't be something that you hide. It's important to know about it and what's happening. If you're being abused online you need to tell someone.¹⁵⁶ (17)

The second finding that emerged from participants' critiques of shutting down social media accounts as a solution is that sometimes removing oneself from social media spaces could make the situation worse, as one would lack knowledge about things being posted. For example, some of the participants argued that the more knowledge one had, the better one might be able to protect oneself. For instance, Amy (17) stated: "You need to know what is being said about you

¹⁵⁵ This is also a finding that emerged in the larger data corpus from "Cyber & Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond" and is presented in the needs assessment "Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence toward Women and Girls" prepared for Status of Women Canada (Dixon, Craven, Crooks, Fisher, & Weber, 2015).

so that you are aware if it comes up later”. Brianna (15) referenced an incident that many participants discussed, the Dalhousie University dental students’ rape threats on Facebook: “With the Dalhousie things, a friend of hers told her about it and it changed the whole situation” (Brianna, 15). The onus placed on girls to be armed with knowledge to protect themselves further underscores the need for the recognition that cyberviolence be placed along a continuum of VAWG rather than as an issue individual girls must manage (Fairbairn, 2015; UN Women, 2015). The sentiment that logging off may actually do more harm than good is similar to the ways in which participants framed their critique of bystander intervention strategies for cyberviolence. One of the most obvious demonstrations of the challenges posed by the generation gap, when it comes to the piloting of successful strategies, occurred during a video workshop at the CBO when participants were discussing bystander intervention strategies. Katherine (16) offered a particularly nuanced reflection on the ‘log off to protect yourself’ strategy:

I think that by laying out the facts to young women it is more achievable for the teachers, parents and researchers to combat cyberviolence. In my opinion, by showing videos that tell you the facts about cyberviolence against women, young women are able to understand more the depth of this issue. I honestly have not been offered too many strategies when it comes to cyberviolence. The one thing I always abide by is that if I want to have a meaningful conversation with a friend, I will never do it by text because what is in writing stays forever. By putting everything in writing, people are making themselves more prone to receiving cyberviolence. Certain measures like these can prevent cyberviolence and hopefully end it once and for all (16).

Katherine offered a way to think about significant distinctions between the current configuration of social media and empathy (or connecting face to face) that espouses neither logging off social media nor blaming targets of CV for conversations they have online.

Participants further complicated the ‘just log off’ strategy by arguing that simply deleting harmful comments did not always guarantee harassment or meanness they encountered

would stop. Participants suggested that even when accounts of those harassing or threatening others are ‘shut down’, this is usually only a temporary solution:

Emmy: If someone would make an anti-Semitic comment I’m not the type to jump in. On social media it’s always there, I would step back. People should delete bad comments (15).

Gertrude: If it is very offensive like I’m going to rape you, like the Dalhousie thing, placed back to totally out of range, you can report it if it is really really bad, if the account is shut down they’ll probably make a new one (15).

Millie: It requires self-confidence to respond to comments like that, some people might do something drastic which is unfortunate or add fuel to fire which could make it worse for you a big problem is confidence I think a lot of girls and maybe boys too lack confidence, if there’s a way to build self-confidence a lot of cyberviolence could not disappear but have less impact (15).

A few participants argued, like Emmy, that deleting or ignoring specific comments may be more helpful in preventing escalation rather than intervening. However, the majority of participants stressed that, as Karen (16) put it, “the Internet is space nobody can govern or control”; blanket suggestions that suggest young people should always intervene in CV incidents are unrealistic, according to my participants. Comments like Karen’s and Emmy’s add nuance to strategies most commonly explored in the school violence and bullying literatures (e.g., see J. L., Bush, H.M., Bush, Coker, Brancato, Clear, & Recktenwald, 2017; Franklin, Brady, & Jurek, 2017) and point to why they are often out of sync with lived experiences of young women and the specificities of cyberviolence scenarios they describe.¹⁵⁷

Participants’ Conceptualizing of CV Complicates Bystander Intervention Strategies

As has been discussed, participants stressed how important it is to them that adults understand that CV is contextual and audience specific. Participants like Arianna framed their

¹⁵⁷ To be sure, studies on bystander intervention in the last decade have included gender as a factor (usually measured in terms of prevalence or difference) in ‘traditional’ and ‘cyberbullying’ bystander scenarios. However, these studies often leave how gender, race and inequality structure bystander frameworks unquestioned. For more examples, see Jenkins & Nickerson (2017) and K. Mulvey & Killen (2016).

critiques of bystander intervention with a compelling argument: the fact that CV is contextual. For instance, participants argued that broad sweeping strategies like bystander intervention might not help in addressing CV, because what they considered CV shifted from platform to platform and peer group to peer group. Further, they argued that the norms around what is considered acceptable when it comes to sexist, mean or cruel comments are constantly changing. As Arianna (16) said:

For me, I feel that there definitely is a line between drama and just not okay, but the line is always changing. More stuff is becoming okay and other stuff isn't really allowed so it's hard to describe what the line is. (16)

A group of participants at the drop-in centre were filming while talking about bystander intervention as a common anti-violence suggestion received from adults. This conversation began when Jessica (16) introduced the commonly suggested strategy of bystander intervention during one of the later workshops at the community-based organization's weekly drop-in program. She said:

The big thing is how do you get involved on the Internet? It's much harder to come and defend somebody and then that can get torn apart and like it's so much easier to rip something apart than to protect someone on the Internet. (16)

Participants suggested that this strategy was not practical in all cases and could make online conflicts worse; they repeatedly turned to bystander strategy as an example of a solution that falls short when it comes to dealing with cyberviolence. Although my findings align with some popular strategies, one significant point of departure was around the popular strategy of bystander intervention.¹⁵⁸ The participants with whom I spoke explained that, in cyberbullying

¹⁵⁸ For example, *Common Sense Media's* Grade 6-8 module "Cyberbullying: Be Upstanding" illustrates how suggestions are often out of sync with the realities the participants described on social media. In this module, part of the lesson on bystander intervention outlines a hypothetical situation in which a video belonging to "Kevin" is uploaded to social media without his consent. The lesson plan suggests that young people engage in "writing public

scenarios, sometimes the bystander approach can make the problem worse. Furthermore, many participants pointed to how bystander intervention in online spaces can unwittingly reduce the target's agency. For example, during an on-camera session, Donna (16) said:

The whole thought of defending someone, like whether it's online or in person, like it's normally a male thing to do. Like when you're defending someone you normally think like, oh, damsel in distress [waving her arms around] is the girl and then the guy comes in and kind of just saves her kind of thing and that could not be that at all like a girl could easily defend someone. But I mean that's just like normally I see that online when a guy will just jump in and defend someone like if a girl will do that no one will take them seriously because of their gender and I mean like I don't know I see that sometimes. (16)

Participants argued that bystander intervention in online harassment scenarios is complex (Jones, Mitchell, & Turner 2015), especially because bystander intervention can sometimes lead to online harassment of the bystander.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, several participants discussed the fact that a well-meaning bystander can end up having an impact opposite to the one they had intended by drawing more attention (and conflict) toward the original target. One episode that occurred at the CBO illustrated the miscommunication that often occurs when strategy-building across a generation gap (Allen, 2008; Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Gruber, & Solnet, 2013; Broll 2014; Crooks, 2016; Dehue, 2013; Dixon et al., 2015). Popular anti-cyberbullying curricula (e.g., *Common Sense Media* 2015; *Connect Safely* 2018; Katz, 2012) often contain lessons on bystander intervention. Participants at the CBO were animated in complicating this strategy and highlighted the communication breakdown between them and the youth workers at the drop-in centre. This episode, which I unpack below, also highlights the tensions that can arise in research with young people (Camino, 2005).

comments on the video" in order to support Kevin and discredit José, the 'bully' who posted it (Common Sense Education, Digital Life 101, 2015, p. 3).

¹⁵⁹ Bystander approaches are rooted in the behaviours of bystanders when bullying events occur (reinforcing bullies versus defending the victim). Interventions that encourage bystanders to empathize with and defend victims are a central component of many traditional anti-bullying programs (Polanin & Espelage, 2012).

The participants argued that intervening as a bystander can make the situation worse (Byers, 2016). At times, their critique moved between using examples of violence that occurred offline and that which occurred online. In fact, participants complicated the usefulness of an approach such as bystander intervention for addressing violence online and offline. For example, the following exchange is a good example of how participants at both locations used examples rooted in both offline and online contexts to problematize bystander intervention:

Eunice: In a PSA we saw a couple having dinner and you hear violence next door. In the commercial the guy hands the guy overhearing a baseball bat and says “if you’re not doing anything you’re contributing.” (15)

Suzanne: It’s nice to say that if I was the person in that situation I would help, in action it’s a lot harder. (15)

H.R.C.: What about with cyberviolence?

Julie: I tend to be more sensitive so I don’t get that people are joking. It’s hard to intervene when it’s not physical violence. It depends what that person’s limit is. I might just think that person is joking. Are we not allowed to joke anymore? (15)

Marissa: I think that there are certain lines that when you cross it becomes obvious to everyone that it’s not funny anymore. Important to ask am I putting myself at risk? (15)

Annie: Yeah, in school you say what you think you need to say. Of course, I would want to help but then it comes to the real thing and, for example, if someone was being picked on the internet I’m not going to stand up for them but at school you say you would stand up for them. (16)

Aideen (16) connected bystander intervention to the practice of online mobbing, which is a tactic often used to target women and girls on social media platforms (Citron, 2014).¹⁶⁰ Aideen complicated the application of bystander intervention strategies when it comes to conflicts in digital culture:

Because if you come to someone’s defence like she was saying who is going to hear that? A few people will be like ‘yeah’ but tons of other people will be like ‘well no, you bitch’ yeah, it’s just it’s harder. (16)

¹⁶⁰ Aideen’s comments regarding the practice of mobbing are also examined in Chapter Six.

This is important as it highlights the fact that the specificities of social context are often neglected by policy-makers and researchers working on this issue, by excluding young people's input. The conversation cited above – and pushback from the youth workers – highlights the stakes for taking young people's voices seriously, even when what they are suggesting may be read as controversial. After all, the bystander approach is well enshrined in anti-violence programming, including anti-bullying approaches (Anderson, 2011; Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Salmavali, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). The notion that the bystander approach may not be mapped directly onto online conflict – and can be problematic offline – is a controversial one. However, it is important to listen to the participants, because, as they describe, the approach to bystander intervention developed in school anti-violence programming may be ineffective in online conflict scenarios and, in some instances, may even make a situation worse (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008).

The youth workers at the CBO did not like this conversation; this is likely why the front-line workers did not want to listen long enough to hear what participants were saying. In fact, although the workers had granted permission for me to analyze this footage in my dissertation, when I told them I wanted to analyze these findings, they requested that the video footage not be used in any screenings. The youth workers explained that, from their perspective, the participants were displaying values that the youth workers did not agree with and which they felt condoned violence. I disagree; rather, this comment reflects one of several sophisticated critiques given by participants with regard to existing strategies offered by adults in anti-bullying programs (e.g., *Connect Safely*, 2015; Katz, 2012). That is, even organizations that show concern for youth voices “can mask a more subtle [sic] form of regulation, one that does not enable youth

democratization as much as it regulates youth agency to fit the status quo” (2013, pp. 93-94). Censoring young people may cause us to miss crucial details regarding how they would like to address harassment in the spaces in which they spend so much of their time.

As has been discussed, most participants mobilized sexist assumptions embedded in mainstream anti-cyberbullying rhetoric (e.g., when someone is a victim, they have made a “mistake”) when conceptualizing CV. Further, participants outlined a set of what Stuart Hall calls “shared meanings” (1997) around a range of mean and cruel behaviours (e.g., drama) and practices (e.g., mobbing) they described as rooted in contextual, audience-specific platforms.¹⁶¹ The two concepts underpinning participants’ recommendations of strategies they argued would anchor solutions in the problems they described were education and empathy.

Part Two: The Role of Education and Empathy in Participants’ Cyberviolence

Programming Recommendations

“There is someone just like you, maybe, who went through something similar.” – Katrina, 16

Participants frequently referred to education and empathy, particularly when discussions turned to potential strategies with which to address cyberviolence. They pointed out the lack of empathy in digital culture, the lack of education about the causes, effects, and impacts of cyberviolence, and the lack of effective strategies with which to address it. In conceptualizing productive strategies to respond to CV, participants overwhelmingly agreed that any approach should be rooted in empathy building and education. Several current media theorists, particularly digital sociologists, refer to these concepts as digital empathy (Coulton, Huck, Hudson-Smith, Barthel et al., 2014) and digital literacy (Orton-Johnson & Prior, 2013). For example, Carla (17)

¹⁶¹ See Chapter Six for an examination of how participants conceptualized and described these practices in relation to CV.

described the need to cultivate empathy in SNS in order to address the connection between harassment behaviours and the emotional toll it takes on individuals who encounter it:

Raising awareness about cyberviolence is important. The types of strategies people need to further explore are: getting more insight on this subject from people that have been impacted by this issue and perhaps even the instigators. Another type of strategy would be making social media users more aware of the effects of this type of harassment because it would seem that many are not aware of the negative impact. It would be important to trigger their emotional thoughts and opinions rather than informing them constantly. (17)

Carla also alluded to the over-saturation many participants felt when it came to information about cyberviolence they reported as out of touch with the reality they lived every day. As Carla put it, productive strategies would engage with young people's "emotional thoughts and opinions" rather than simply repeating recommendations that participants told me were detached from their lived experience (i.e., logging off). The need for strategies to engage with young people's realities was echoed by many participants. For example, Annabelle (16) had this to say: "It helps you learn about how real people react to the whole problem and all, giving you a real-life sort of perspective." (Annabelle, 16) Participants' insightful suggestions aligned with cutting-edge theories of digital empathy. Indeed, even the blending of education and empathy reflects the view that cultivating empathy in digital spaces requires approaching how empathy can be promoted as an ability and a process in computer-mediated communications (Friesmen, 2015). Empathy and education were interconnected for participants, and their recommendations were often articulated through a combination of the two. In the sections that follow, I examine these two themes.

“Kids Nowadays Experience their First Contact with Feelings Online”: Empathy

Empathy was the concept that participants referenced most frequently when discussing strategies to address CV.¹⁶² The participants connected a range of behaviours, including bullying, to a lack of empathy (Cilleessen & Mayeux, 2004; Estell, Farmer, & Cairns, 2007; Kahn & Lawthorne, 2003). In this section, I examine the participants’ focus on empathy. Drawing on their voices alongside the literature on digital empathy (Friesem, 2015) and girls’ digital culture studies (Banet-Weiser, 2015; García-Gómez, 2011), I argue that empathy is an important starting point for dialogue and capacity-building with young people around CV. Moreover, participants described the connections between empathy and SNS broadly in ways that often mirrored mainstream narratives around CB and the possibilities for empathy in SNS. It is important to remember the ways in which more marginalized populations and individuals are already successfully mobilizing SNS in many instances to create public archives and awareness around issues of inequality through “new mediatized publics” (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015, p. 5). For example, African American activists are continuing to use the proliferation of video-enabled smartphones to document and circulate otherwise suppressed imagery of police shootings of unarmed Black men, women, boys and girls in the United States and Canada (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Carney, 2016). The circulation of videos of police brutality and state violence carried out on African

¹⁶² Empathy has become a political buzzword (this is supposedly the ‘age of empathy’), yet it remains ill-defined. There are numerous approaches to empathy, ranging from neuroscience to philosophy. These definitions construct empathy as everything from an intrinsically pro-social tendency that is hardwired into our brains’ “empathy circuit” (e.g., the amygdala and anterior cingulate cortex) (Honigsbaum, 2013) to a learned ability for perspective-taking regarding the experiences of people we would otherwise not consider (Pinkerton, 2012). A common critique of the rise of empathy in public discourses is that the numerous meanings circulating result in “a vague understanding of the concept” (Tettegah & Esplage, 2015, p. 39; Bloom, 2014). Moreover, a recent focus by researchers in the social sciences on empathy burnout, particularly in the caring professions, has shed light on the dangers of uncritical acceptance of the proliferation of empathy-based proposals for social problems (Atwood, 2016; Hannem, 2014). A marked lack of empathy is what then-United States presidential hopeful, Barack Obama, was referring to in his commencement address at Northwestern University in 2006. Obama argued that the educated privileged elite of the United States should be more concerned with what he referred to as the “empathy deficit” than with the budget deficit (Pesca, 2007). Some of the most common and widely publicized spaces demonstrating an obvious “empathy deficit” are SNS, the spaces through and against which participants contextualized their descriptions of cyberviolence.

American citizens through SNS and *hashtag activism* exemplify some of the possibilities (and limits) of social media platforms for feminist pedagogy and empathy building (Bonila & Rosa, 2015). Specifically, many Black feminists use social media platforms to highlight the silences around violence perpetrated upon girls and women of colour during the contemporary (post-Trayvon Martin) era of civil rights work (Lindsey, 2015; Williams, 2015).¹⁶³ Moreover, many young people of colour have played an active role in the social media activism surrounding the tragic deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner (Carney, 2016). As Black feminists argue, awareness-raising, one type of empathy my participants suggested, is a crucial first step in addressing the inequalities that structure our society and SNS (Taylor, 2016, p. 217).¹⁶⁴

Many Western authors blame the Internet and digital technologies for a widespread empathy gap (Carrier, Spradin, Bunce, & Rosen, 2015; Coulton, Huck, Hudson-Smith, Barthel, Mavros, Roberts, & Powell, 2014; Konrath, 2012; Todd, 2014), particularly among youth (James & Jenkins, 2014; Turkle, 2016). While there is little empirical evidence to prove this, time spent on social media certainly leads to a decline in face-to-face time in which we learn empathic skills (Carrier et al., 2015). This was emphasized by Mara (15) when participants discussed and

¹⁶³ Critical race and feminist scholars identify the 2012 shooting of an unarmed 17-year-old African American boy named Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in Florida as a major turning point in American activism (Hon, 2015, p.1). A groundswell of protest largely facilitated by social media, which received mainstream media coverage, is credited with putting pressure on federal and state law enforcement to arrest Zimmerman (Hon, 2015, p. 309).

¹⁶⁴ It is important to note that white people often use social media platforms to posture anti-racist attitudes that often result in more positive social affirmation for themselves than in the creation of effective activist strategies (McLaren, Monzo, Powell, Jay, Farrie, DeRouen, Grant et al., 2016). As has been noted by critical race scholars of digital culture, white anti-racist activists often engage in “racialized slacktivism”, in which they amass social capital without performing the necessary and difficult work of social justice activism (Engles, 2016). This is important to mention, as young people are also encouraged to participate in white “slacktivism”. For instance, Engles cites the “Kony 2012” phenomenon in which Jason Russell, a white American man, rallied American youth support via social media to urge policymakers and celebrities to pressure the US government to send military personnel to track down Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army. Of course, Russell’s narrative left out basic details, such as colonial contexts more broadly, and specifically, the fact that the Ugandan military was already working on this and US President Barack Obama had sent eighty special forces personnel to work alongside the Ugandan military in 2011 (Tapper, 2011). In these types of targeted social media (mis)information campaigns (e.g., Kony 2012, A Million Hoodies), white adults and youth are centred “in personalized versions of what has come to be known as the ‘White Savior Complex,’ a contemporary iteration of the colonialist White Man’s Burden” (Engles, 2016, 97).

reflected on the process of video production: “People are more prone to listen when the speaker them self [sic] has a personal connection”. Many participants discussed the power of peer-produced video work to “share stories” that are educational and healing for girls who have encountered meanness, cruelty and other forms of violence online. Mackenzie (16) said: “I think videos could be really helpful if they use real life examples in the video.” The repeated references to empathy demonstrate how participants connected fostering empathy to positive social change.

If we put emerging work on girls’ digital culture into conversation with the vocabulary developed in feminist new media and critical race studies for addressing structural inequality (Balsamo, 2011; Phillips, Smith, Cook, and Short, 2016) into conversation with technology writers such as David Rushkoff (2010) and Sherry Turkle (2015), we see design of social media spaces is a place where interventions can insert different values into the spaces where participants with whom I spoke enjoy spending so much time. Arianna’s (16) comment points to how structural inequalities are built into the platforms girls enjoy spending so much time on:

If the gender is not required online sites, people tend to not put it. Most sites that I’ve been on, I’ve seen no harsh words to others. I know if I would dig deeper, I could find worse things. I think that sites that want to connect users are more sexist because people expect you to be free and send pictures. (16)

The challenges participants outlined highlight the way in which SNS provides spaces for misogyny to flourish. A small group of “ethically questionable”, largely white, men in Silicon Valley design the games (Chess, Evans, & Baines, 2017; Magnet, 2006; Mortensen, 2016), platforms and spaces (Chun & Friedland, 2015) that now also act as news sources by determining which content makes it into users’ Twitter or Facebook feeds (Sanderson, 2017). A culture of unchecked sexism in the technology industries ensures that misogyny is able to

flourish and become increasingly normalized on social media platforms (Judd, 2016; Dixon et al., 2015). Now is an opportune moment for feminists and critical race activists and scholars to intervene in platform design.

We know that the intersection of social media and ICTs such as smartphones have transformed the way many people, young and old, communicate with one another by offering the opportunity to “share thoughts, feelings and behaviours in seconds” (Terry & Cain, 2016, para. 2; Fox & Raine, 2014; Walther, 2011). While studies on empathy come to different conclusions as to whether or not there is a direct link between empathy and moral motivation or action (Bloom, 2017; Brooks, 2011; Prinz, 2016, 2011), participants focused on empathy as a crucial component to any effective anti-cyberbullying strategy. For example, Arielle (17) described the difficulty of discerning the emotions of other users on social media when conceptualizing CV:

Um, I think we can't really say when someone is hurt online because since it is in a computer you can't see the emotion of someone and I know many people that like when someone insults them they just like they just write 'hahaha' or 'lmao' but actually they're really pissed so like, we can write something we're not feeling so I think that you can never know like the only way you can know is by asking the person, like, how do you feel about it? (17)

It is well documented that empathy training can motivate prosocial behaviour (Bloom, 2017), and feminist scholars of new media and technology continue to argue that attention to emotion and affect should be a crucial aspect in the design of SNS, digital applications and video games, as well as scholarly analysis of these platforms and attendant practices (Consalvo, 2012; Martey, Stromer-Galley, Banks, Wu, & Consalvo, 2014). During a video reflection, I asked the two participants to reflect upon the experience of working on the documentary, since the workshops were coming to an end. The following excerpt from this reflection session connects to

the participants' notion that sharing stories is a particularly effective mode of empathy-building when addressing cyberbullying:

H.R.C.: If you were talking about the issue of cyberviolence with your friends, say in a coffee shop, do you think the conversation would look different?

Jessica: I don't know, it depends, like in my friends group I notice two types of people. They're the types that have experienced either bullying or cyberviolence or some type of violence themselves are very sensitive to that kind of thing and then when you bring it up they have their own story, they have their own opinion they have already a set of mind about it and like they want to help or they want or they want it to stop and that can start one angle of a discussion and there's other people who don't really concern themselves with it because they haven't personally lived it, it hasn't affected them because they're not the type of person who gets affected by that or they just don't notice it as something that is abnormal and then the conversation with them would be more like why are you talking about this? Who cares? Just ignore it and go on with our Facebook whatever or Youtube videos and blah blah bah. (16)

Jessica's comment not only addressed empathy-building as a crucial component of addressing CV, but also underscored the ways in which social media interactions sometimes amplify existing feelings of isolation for young people struggling with online conflict or challenges. Participants' comments expanded on this connection between alienation on social media and a lack of empathy which facilitates CV:

Arwin: When you're young and you first start understanding feelings and you say or do something to someone that hurts them, there's an immediate negative reaction from the other person and that will probably make you feel bad about doing something wrong. With the evolution of technology, kids nowadays experience their first contact with feelings online and can't know how the other person reacts therefore they feel invincible and maybe like they're not doing anything wrong (17).

Kelly: I believe there is a lot more cyberviolence in social media. Men use social media to get photos of women and then harass women. The Internet provides a sense of disconnection so you don't see how you are actually affecting the person (17).

Arwin (17) and Kelly (17) articulated what many participants connected in their description of CV: a lack of empathy facilitated by the alienation of SNS. Specifically, many

participants argued that conversation on SNS and on social media, what one participant called “Internet language”, was challenging in ways that created more distance and less feeling for what peers and strangers might be experiencing in interactions on these platforms.

The Role of Conversation and “Internet Language” in Participants’ Descriptions of Cyberviolence

A significant sub-theme regarding how participants employed empathy in their conceptualizing of cyberviolence relates to the role that ICT-mediated communication plays in amplifying cyberviolence. For my participants, social media platforms were sites in which language had a different relationship to emotion than it might have offline. In an early video workshop at the CBO, Celine (16) and Jessica (16) articulated this argument concisely:

You can’t really tell when someone is hurt online. Because, like, it is on a computer you can’t see someone’s emotions, and I know many people that when they are upset, they just write “hahaha” or “lmfao,” but they’re actually they’re really pissed. We can write something that we’re not feeling. So, I think you can never know how someone’s feeling, like, the only way you can know about it is to ask the person, ‘how do you feel about it?’ (Celine, 16).¹⁶⁵

I don’t think you can tell if someone’s feelings are hurt because it is written and there is no emotion behind that well no there is because books exist and those convey emotions but, um like, it’s very simple. They have those emoticons which are supposed to be the way you convey your feelings because it’s very hard in writing and even those you can lie with them so easily you can just use a random one that you want the person to think what you’re feeling and not what you’re actually feeling (Jessica, 16).

These comments are similar to conclusions made by previous generations of sociologists and anthropologists concerned with language who centred their studies of emotion in the politics of cultural life rather than in the individual (Keitel, 1993; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990; Paul, 1993). Building on these foundations, many contemporary feminist scholars interrogate the relationship between emotion and the politics of culturally specific language (Ahmed, 2010,

¹⁶⁵ “lmfao” stands for “laughing my fucking ass off”.

2014; Cvetkovich, 2012). These scholars critique seemingly common-sense notions in mainstream Western discourses that shore up a status quo which normalizes whiteness and masculinity. Approaching the participants' concept of "Internet language" through this lens highlights the way in discourse communities (Pratt, 2008) like Facebook are amplifying the misogynistic discourses that are flourishing.¹⁶⁶ Many participants suggested that the distance between individuals created by the screen made conversations more confusing and difficult to navigate (Turkle, 2015). For instance, as several participants argued, reading emotions as they were mediated through "emojis" (Sabrina, 18) and screens made discerning when someone was upset difficult. Many participants argued that the mediating effect of being "behind a screen" amplified gender-based harassment with both their peers and strangers. For example, several participants at both locations used the examples of "hiding behind a screen", "hiding behind a keyboard" and "crying behind a screen", articulating a relationship between language and the cluster of behaviours often referred to as cyberbullying. Alex used the phrase "Internet language" in her conceptualization of the role that language plays in cyberviolence:

I don't see cyberviolence ever ending just because violence begins with judgement and judgement is in our nature. But, I see ways of hopefully teaching kids at a younger age what kindness is, what the definition between being rude and being mean is, like funny comments that seem mean to the naked eye. I feel like that's something we could learn with Internet language (Alex, 15).

Many participants drew on the concept of "Internet language" to conceptualize CV and several linked the worst effects of cyberviolence to encounters that resulted from a misperception or miscommunication. For example, during a break-out video session, Sabrina (18) argued that text messages and social media facilitate a lack of connection:

¹⁶⁶ In the early 1980s, several literary scholars began theorizing the connection between social contexts of writing and literacy to the concept of community (Heilker & Vandenbergh, 2015).

Honestly, who can tell who is feeling sad or hurt online? You could put an emoji of a sad face and that would be blatantly obvious but if it comes to words and someone being responsible for reading those words that someone has written with no vocal tonality, no body language. You don't know, you don't know! Have you ever heard the quote regarding body language? I believe it's like 55% of the message is body language the next bigger number is vocal tonality and then like 7% for the words themselves? That's basically where the Internet it's just that 7% of the message. (18)

Emily (16), who also drew on empathy, argued that when a young person anticipates peer reactions to their message it may help them to distinguish “drama” from “actual cyberviolence”. She said, “We can try to put ourselves in that person’s place and try to feel their reactions. If it might offend them, it has crossed a line” (Emily, 16). While a few participants suggested punitive strategies, including law enforcement approaches, the majority focused on better platform moderation that is calibrated to address VAWG and empathy-building, which they often articulated through the power they professed as existing in sharing stories of CV incidents.

Fewer Laws, More Connection: Building Empathy through Sharing Stories

Many participants I spoke to illustrated their recommendation for empathy-building as a CV prevention strategy by drawing on the PV process as an example of sharing stories. For many participants, the most powerful educational tools were those that featured subjects who shared their perspectives or experiences with CV. Jennifer (16) connected what she believed would be effective CV strategies with empathy through sharing stories in this way:

I think using film is a useful technique to teach women and girls about cyberviolence because instead of something being read or listened to, they are able to put words to a face. I think it is helpful knowing there is someone just like you who maybe went through something similar. (16)

The use of arts-based data collection (PV) was something participants embraced and suggested would be helpful in cyberviolence education, particularly around empathy building. Although it often overlapped with other themes such as empathy, and sub-themes such as the

need for legal regulations, education emerged when participants turned to both their discussions of possible prevention strategies and reflections on the educational potential of the video work they were involved in producing. The discussions that video-making sparked centred on the potential of the video production process to create awareness through the education that comes about through sharing stories. For example, this excerpt from the final video workshop at the CBO captures the spirit of generous inquiry with which participants at this location engaged with their peers:

Jessica: Working on the documentary was really fun and the most interesting was when someone had a different opinion and something like a new angle that you didn't know and although it didn't quite change my opinion of how I view cyberbullying it did make me realize the full extent of how intensely it is all over the net and how desensitized a lot of people are to it on social media. (16)

Lia: I also did find I really did enjoy working on it. I mean it didn't have my opinion but it expanded it and it made because you know because before you can have an opinion but it can be just a one-dimensional thing which is kind of sad about that aspect of an opinion and but you know I find it's cool when you can always expand it. I've found a lot of it has expanded and grown in it and it's pretty interesting in that sense. (16)

Participants at both locations were also adamant about the potential for positive impacts that result when young women share personal stories with each other. They suggested that this could be especially positive for those who have been both targets and instigators of cyberviolence. Moreover, many of the participants argued that while they had been exposed to anti-cyberbullying concepts in school, they identified being in need of relevant education on the topic. Moreover, as is discussed throughout this chapter, participants made it very clear that adults have a lot of learning to do about the social context of youth online engagement before they can be productive allies in addressing CV. Frances (15) put it this way:

I think that parents and teachers should definitely be more aware of cyberviolence, and understand that telling your kid or student to just turn off their device isn't as easy as it

sounds because it's essentially cutting out a part of your life. I feel as though we need to talk more openly about it too. (15)

The following excerpt from a video workshop reflects one of the most popular ways in which participants mobilized the concept of education during discussions of CV. Participants stressed the need for education intervention for CV aligned with directions emerging in the study of girls' digital culture that situates girls' experiences of social media within a broader media ecology accounting for their lived realities and the politics participants outlined as structuring these spaces (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Bennett, 2014). Julie (15) and Amy (15) framed cyberviolence as a broad VAWG issue, arguing that nothing other than education would work to prevent it:

Julie: But don't you think that we need more ways to flag things? (15)

Amy: Yes and no cause the Internet is so varied and so massive that it's always going to be hard to monitor. Like even if we encourage sites to always have 'flag this' options and its encouraged and all that there's still going to be a lot going on that's cyberviolence. The only thing that's going to stop that is education, and that does not just apply to cyberviolence that applies to all kinds of violence and in all areas people still need to be taught these things. (15)

Many of the comments that connected education and empathy focused on sharing stories as a strategy that offers potential in combating CV by helping to build empathy for peers, especially those who have been targeted. Many participants who discussed the process of filmmaking in groups argued that humanizing girls who have experienced cyberviolence may act as both an educational tool and a healing process. The way in which participants both embraced and reflected upon the PV process suggests the potential efficacy of arts-based approaches, particularly media production, with regard to research on cyberviolence with youth that results in strategies for improving policy and regulations in Canada.

The following excerpt from “Independent Media, Youth Agency, and the Promise of Media Education” (Poyntz, 2006) advocates moving past the protectionist/preparation binary in media education in order to “develop young people’s competencies with the media they already use” (p. 156). As Poyntz explains, this type of approach to youth media education, such as encouraging young people’s production of independent media, supports young people’s agency. Moreover, inciting young people to collaborate on media production work offers a way to invite them to imagine more equitable ways of living (p. 156). Drawing on student-produced work made at Pacific Cinémathèque’s Education Department, Stuart Poyntz examines the student-produced documentary “Meg’s Father” to highlight the usefulness of peer-produced work for generating meaningful peer-peer dialogue in social justice advocacy with youth.¹⁶⁷

Students’ responses to these questions can then feed into how young people generate new characters in their own work...The more young people watch original work by their peers, the more they aim toward similar kinds of creative expression. As students reconsider their own uncertain responses to the people in “Meg’s Father”, in other words, they reflect on and begin to see how social stereotypes structure their understanding of what it means to live a meaningful life. By this, one peer-produced documentary acts as a catalyst that can expand how young people understand possibilities for their own and others’ agency and engagement with the world (Poyntz, 2006, p. 169).

Several participants explicitly referenced the value of arts-based strategies to aid in perspective-taking in their reflections on video production work:

Sylvia: I think that these videos can be useful because when women and girls see other people like them, in similar situations talking about something close to their situation it may make them feel better about their situation. (16)

Karen: Our youth seems to forget that we’re all humans which leads us to constantly judging others. While filming, I realized that this documentary is showing the victim’s perspective that helps society realize the effect we have on others. (15)

¹⁶⁷ As well as in research with youth, in environments such as classroom settings, peer-peer programming such as mentoring is also a productive way to develop safer spaces for young people, when paired with adult support such as increased funding for arts and recreations programs and mental health services (Aitkenhead, 2016; Weale, 2016).

Naomie: This helps address the issue by showing how the victims feel about cyberviolence especially because teenagers are showing their perspective on it considering they are the most affected by it. (15)

Emphasis on the ability of this type of work to give voice to what Karen referred to as victim narratives was common amongst participants. Karen (15) and Naomie (15) discussed cyberviolence broadly as something that they and their peers needed to reflect on as both targets and instigators. Jenna's (16) opinion also highlighted the utility of methods such as PV that could move fluidly from being a research tool to a potential education and prevention strategy:

Through the filmmaking process, the participatory video and documentary will be helpful tools at addressing cyberviolence against girls and women because the thoughts being expressed about this issue are coming directly from members. This could be helpful at addressing this issue because the students are addressing the issue intimately through the video to the viewer (16).

Zana (15) echoed this statement in her comment: "It could help this group to come together and speak out. If someone is afraid to speak out because they think they are alone, then the group can make a strong power [sic] to the society." (Zana, 15) Education was a theme that participants returned to when describing how researchers and educators might do better at identifying and addressing cyberviolence.

The recommendation for more productive cyberviolence strategies focused specifically on the role of educators in providing more relevant content; as one participant said, "Maybe it will be addressed more in school" (Jenny, 17). Julie (15) also stressed the need for more CV education in school curricula:

There's no way of preventing cyberviolence except to be safe when using technology but if this was a topic that was further discussed at schools, people may have strategies as to how to avoid being involved in cyberviolence (15).

As discussed previously, some participants possessed a great deal of social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) due to class/economic privilege, and as the majority of participants were white, they experienced privilege in relation to race. For example, participants underscored the value of media production strategies for representing girls “like them”. The need for digital literacy training that includes feminist and critical race approaches to digital culture is evidenced by the participants’ blind spots around whiteness as an identity category. Further, these blind spots reflect those in dominant CV discourses, anti-bullying programming and digital literacy training in schools that neglect whiteness as an identity category (Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012; Stoll & Block, 2015). This is especially important, as participants’ disproportionate silences around race highlights how ‘whiteness’ “is assumed to be a default option” which, as Lisa Nakamura argues, “[creates] a guided reading of the web that assumes the reader is white” (2013, p. 105). This need to attend to whiteness as an identity category that shapes girls’ experiences of cyberviolence is discussed in the recommendations offered in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Participants’ comments regarding education highlight how productive educational modules and programming will denaturalize the logics they articulated that, up until this point, have structured a digital culture that normalizes violence against women and girls. bell hooks draws on her experience of a working-class, racist, desegregated school in the American South to explain why schools are primarily political places: “We were mainly taught by white teachers who reinforced racial stereotypes” (hooks, 2014, p. 1). This is important because the participants embraced the participatory media-based research approach, which has been found to cultivate empathy and may foster pro-social behaviour (Mistry & Beradi, 2012). These methods can be used in the development of modules for education around cyberviolence and can work to centre and share the stories of women in their own voices while putting faces to cyberviolence in ways

that the participants argued may work to build empathy. These participants articulated an approach to cyberviolence that embraces empathy and education (including arts-based approaches) as the foundation for more equitable digital citizenship and social change (hooks, 2014; West, 1993).¹⁶⁸

Although an increasing amount of work is being done in the area of CV around cybersafety and education policies, it rarely attends to gender-specific guidelines for cybersafety practices (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Thompson, 2016). The participants' focus on risk avoidance, which many expressed doing by performing as the 'good girl', highlights how cyberviolence impacts girls differently. For example, Angie (16) said:

If I had a teenager I'd tell them to be careful, don't post something you wouldn't want your elders to see. Talk about stuff. If I had a boy I'd tell him to treat everyone like you would want to be treated. If I had a girl I'd tell her the same thing but also be careful and don't get yourself into bad situations. (16)

Participants described navigating toxic gender norms that limited, and in many cases, silenced them in SNS, chat rooms and game spaces. The social context they outlined navigating in SNS (Chapter Five and Chapter Six) demonstrates these challenges and points to why future curricula and anti-cyberviolence programming must include education for adults and young people around VAWG online.

As discussed, participants were overwhelmingly focused on prevention rather than punishment in their approach to strategy building. During these conversations, a few participants argued that governments and schools should implement laws that specifically address cyberviolence, which should be taught in school. In addition, participants suggested other

¹⁶⁸ While both hooks and West are advocates of education as a means to social change and anti-racism work specifically, it must be noted that their view of education is critical of what counts as knowledge production within the academy, which they suggest is experiencing increasing corporatization and suffers from a white supremacist logic (West, 1993).

strategies that clustered around regulations, including formalizing social sanctions through fines and improving content moderation practices on the platforms participants found the most conducive to cyberviolence.¹⁶⁹ Several participants focused more on the role of social norms and the importance of approaching CV as a social issue. For example, Rebecca (15) said:

I think it is the society or world as a whole that should resolve this problem. The people active in the online world should act up but we need governmental help to get it started, or it needs to become a social role. (15)

Rebecca echoed the opinion held by the majority of participants, who focused on prevention strategies rooted in empathy and education for addressing the forms of cyberviolence that impacted them. Of the participants who were in favour of regulations, site rules and platform moderation were the most frequently recommended options for combating cyberviolence. While Karen (16) embraced regulations on speech with far more zeal than other participants, the importance she attached to platform regulation reflected what many participants said:

In social media, we should have a system where we're not allowed to swear because this is a way of preventing cyberviolence for example Club Penguin has a similar system which enforces our youth to be less vulgar and arrogant (16).

That these participants desired regulations responsive to the specific concerns of girls and young women is logical when we know that one of their most pressing concerns was photos taken or altered without their consent (Marsh, 2017).

¹⁶⁹ Despite the silences around racialization and whiteness, a few participants demonstrated some awareness of systemic issues such as racism and heteronormativity in their conceptualizing of cyberviolence. However, young women lack language with which to address these issues. This lack of language to describe racism, classism, and misogyny is a finding that permeates the data. Many participants resisted the notion that punitive measures or legal and government-imposed regulations would be helpful in addressing cyberviolence. Their capacity for critical engagement points to how these young women would benefit from the inclusion of feminist and critical race theory as part of a CV education. Silences are also examined in this chapter in the note on silences, in the section on education, and are addressed in the conclusions and recommendations.

Participants were clear that the design affordances of platforms (Chapter Six) influenced the severity and likelihood of cyberviolence in some instances (Barker, 2016). Karen (16) offered this potential solution:

I think that it's important to delete these mean comments. I know on YouTube this isn't possible, but on Instagram and Facebook it is. I think most people who comment rude things do it because they've seen other people do it. But if you take it away, no one will think it's okay. YouTube should make deleting comments a thing (16).

Karen's comment speaks to how a lack of control over mean, cruel or threatening comments leads to the likelihood that young women will move out of these spaces if they encounter CV. For participants, platforms that did not offer a mechanism for "deleting" comments that are hateful or "mean" could result in censorship and silence. The bafflement they expressed when it came to safe self-representation was logical, given that anti-CB strategies (e.g., logging off) often result in victim-blaming and work to silence the young women they are supposed to protect (Karaian, 2014). For example, recent laws have expanded the power of law enforcement to charge girls under eighteen who send intimate photos consensually, with child pornography (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Hasinoff, 2013, 2015; Karaian, 2014; Salter, Crofts, & Lee, 2012). The threat of punishment by these types of laws (e.g., Bill C-13, colloquially known in Canada as the cyberbullying bill) was cited by some participants as a form of re-victimization, which demonstrates how these types of laws are used to fearmonger by parents and high school administrators.

A small group of participants was strongly in favour of criminal punishment as a strategy for dealing with egregious cases of CV. For instance, Penelope (16) stated:

I think that there should be further consequences to cyberviolence than there is currently. Instead of just getting a tap on the hand, and being told not to do it again, if the bully is in school, maybe suspension would be a suitable consequence. If the bully is over 18 years old, maybe he/she should have to pay a fine. I think cyberviolence should be treated like

any other crime, as it is very serious, and some that experience cyberviolence even attempt suicide. Cyberbullying has been talked about very often in school, and although I think it's good to raise awareness and to educate people on the topic, I really don't think that speaking about it does much help. As said earlier, people that cyberbully have their own reasons for it, and adults telling them that it is wrong most likely won't encourage them to give second thoughts to their actions. (16)

In the same vein, Talia (15) connected a desire for legal repercussions to the broader theme of education, suggesting that “laws should be enacted on social media and should have security just like in schools and we should be taught the laws in school” (Talia, 15). While Penelope and Talia are in the minority of participants who suggested legal measures would help address CV, Talia's recommendation for education around laws that impacted her and her peers reflected a shared focus on prevention. Most participants, however, advocated strategies that would focus on prevention, social regulations (such as changing social norms), and policy guidelines (better rules in school), rather than punitive legal strategies.¹⁷⁰

An excerpt from video footage at the CBO demonstrates how participants mobilized the notion of informal social sanctions as a way to enforce ‘safer’ posting practices on social media. All three participants (between 16 and 18) discussed CV in this excerpt, revealing not only their ability for critical engagement and reflection regarding their posting practices but also an awareness of the “anger” and “bad stuff” that so often resulted from their visibility on social media (Croeser, 2016). Jessica (16), Evangeline (18) and Lia (16) unpacked what social regulations might look like while wrestling with the “anger” that arose from posts that “accentuate their sexuality”:

Jessica: I'm thinking [laughing]. I don't know. When we talked about the slut shaming we focused a lot on the pictures that are put up that would lead to slut shaming and I think a question could be like how should we react to pictures like that having a place on the web like how should we go about it cause I think a lot of the time those pictures are a

¹⁷⁰ Many feminist theorists are also skeptical when it comes to advocating for punitive legal frameworks to address VAWG; see the discussion of carceral feminism in Chapter Three.

source of a lot of bad stuff and just like pictures in which people take selfies and accentuate their sexuality like or just like pictures of people messing up; it creates so much anger. (16)

Evangeline: Where is that anger coming from? (18)

Jessica: I don't know; like somebody posts a picture of somebody doing something stupid, and they didn't know. It was photographed, and then people make fun of it maybe not and it can, and then you try to be like oh please don't do that and then it escalates and whenever something escalates people get angry. (16)

Evangeline: Do you think it's better maybe not to post pictures like that? (18)

Jessica: Yeah just to have a way to regulate the pictures online. (16)

Lia: Definitely if you're going to post a picture that's embarrassing that isn't of yourself get permission first. I mean unless it's some random stranger I'm not going to. I mean if it's a really priceless photo of where you can, and it's not humiliating to the point where it's not going to shatter your world, but they're going to have a few giggles with their friends then okay maybe. Because I'm not going to scope out someone in a huge city but you know it's just like if you know this person and if, like, you're trying to ruin their reputation shame on you, but if you're not even trying to do that just ask permission. Because it's okay to put stupid photos of yourself but not everyone might have the same opinion on stupid photos of themselves... (16)

Besides highlighting how social context limits girls' expression on social media, Lia (16) also pointed to issues of consent and context when it came to the ethics of posting pictures of other girls saying "it's ok if it's not going to shatter your world". (16) This issue of context is central to the idea of working with conversation or "Internet language" when discussing possible strategies.

During the final video workshop, two participants reflected on the process of working on the video. I asked them if there was anything they wanted to add to the discussion of cyberviolence – if there was anything they felt had been left out of the discussion. Karlene (15) emphasized the need for intergenerational communication because cyberviolence is not an issue that affects only young women:

It's not a myth and it's not something like mediocre that some people make it up to be it's actually a huge, well not that huge, but it's still like a pretty big problem that most people face. Like I even feel like this doesn't just apply to teenagers it can even go to adults so it's not something that just affects us but it can affect adults so we really shouldn't close the boundary and be like oh whatever. And you know what, also for us teenagers, this is probably going to happen to our kids in the future too. Well not probably, I don't want to say probably but it could happen to our kids. We're not going to be educated? And we're not going to be able to go, okay, don't worry. It's probably for our parents this is a whole new thing they never had to deal with this when they were kids. So, you know of course it's like ok here's the steps that we could take but now is the time for us for future generations. (15)

Karlene nuanced her evaluation of the generation gap by pointing out that cyberviolence is a widespread phenomenon (Privitera & Campbell, 2009). Moreover, she pointed to CV as a specific issue that “is a whole new thing” that participants’ parents “never had to deal with when they were kids”. Because of this, it is important that we listen to young people as we try to contend with this phenomenon, especially in the development of anti-cyberviolence strategies and policies. As Karlene put it, “Now is the time for us” to work on prevention strategies that may help young people navigate digital culture in the future. As has been discussed, participants devoted much time in their footage and focus groups to the idea of cultivating empathy through education and “Internet language”. The excerpt below, from a youth-produced short documentary, created with the “Cyber & Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond” (2014-2017) project, highlights the possibilities participants saw in education:

H.R.C.: Do you guys think it is valid that I'm asking you – young women specifically – about how you perceive cyberviolence?

Joan: It was a valid question it's something I hadn't contemplated a lot beforehand but then I was thinking over it and I realized the Internet does interact with people of different genders differently and you're faced with different situations and different reactions for the same things based on your gender or categorized differently and also I feel like a lot of the Internet is very male orientated with all the ads for video games with scantily clad girls, porn everywhere [laughing] and I don't know. (16)

H.R.C.: So, girls and women have different challenges on social media?

Joan: Yeah (16)

Jessica: Definitely (16)

Lia: Yeah (16)

H.R.C.: Do you feel like this [working on the videos] was a positive process?

Kelty: Yeah, like what's not positive about it? Well unless you have these horrible flashbacks that make you want to stay in for the next week or month than, ok, that's not very positive but like [laughter] but what is negative besides that that's going to come out of this? (15)

Lia: We're just learning and knowledge is power. (16)

I close this chapter with these words, as they emphasize the humour, complexity and intellect that these resilient participants brought to discussions about cyberviolence. The belief these participants held in education and empathy as strategies to approach CV underscores what listening to young people and their peer-peer produced work may mean for the future of cyberviolence studies. Significantly, participants pointed to broad challenges at the intersection of digital culture and contemporary girlhood. This highlights the promise of the arduous but necessary social justice work that advocates for cultural change: creating norms in digital culture that resist misogynistic harassment as a default setting (Misener, 2016).

Conclusion

Tension in participants' framing(s) of potential anti-CV strategies ran through their critiques of popular anti-CB strategies. On the one hand, participants critiqued both the judgmental approach of existing strategies and how detached these strategies were from their lives. On the other hand, participants with whom I spoke often mobilized the (sexist) logics underpinning these very same strategies. We know these strategies typically reflect the figure of the white, middle-class youth (Ringrose et al., 2013) and place the onus on individual young women (Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012) to log off. Participants outlined a set of misogynistic social

norms that structure the discourse communities on platforms such as Facebook (Morrison, 2015) and are often literally coded into the platforms themselves (Bailey, 2015; Chun & Friedland, 2015; Sales, 2016; Osucha, 2009; Magnet, 2011). These norms, which clearly restrict options for self-representation through hegemonic forms of girlhood and femininity, informed both their understanding of CV and descriptions of everything from ridicule to sexual violence, demonstrating the reductive nature of cyberbullying discourses (Chapters Two, Five and Six). Moreover, putting critical sociocultural approaches to online harassment into conversation with approaches emerging in digital sociology literature (such as digital empathy) and feminist new media studies offers a promising way forward for cyberviolence studies. Arts-based methodologies such as PV (Haynes & Tanner, 2013; Lomax, Fink, Singh, & High, 2011; Weber, 2008) suggest productive directions for future educational strategies to address CV. The critiques the participants offered of existing CV strategies pointed to the major gaps in current cyberbullying research and programming. The strategies participants suggested may be productive ways to tackle the structural issues that continue to limit and suppress young women's access to full and equal digital citizenship (Bailey & Steeves, 2015).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Concluding Remarks and Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

I think the videos are useful because they can be done privately which relieves some of the pressure and stress people may feel when someone else films them. I think they are a way to get testimonials without making the subject uncomfortable. A lot of the times, women and girls may feel uncomfortable speaking out so this is a way to hear their voice without forcing them to speak. – Stephanie, 15

Cyberviolence towards women is very harsh. People are very judgmental to each other. Women especially have strong beliefs and stand for what they believe in, but if something is extreme and direct towards them, it brings them down. – Celeste, 16

On September 13, 2017, a Twitter user named Mike with the handle @Fuctupmind posted a GIF depicting current United States President Donald Trump swinging a golf club. In this GIF, Trump sends a fast-moving golf ball into the back of his opponent in the 2016 US Presidential Election, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.¹⁷¹ Real footage of Clinton tripping as she enters her campaign airplane is used to depict her falling to the ground from the force of the impact. The image is titled “Donald Trump’s Amazing Golf Swing #CrookedHillary”. On September 18, 2017, President Trump retweeted this image, posting it on his own Twitter account before his first appearance before the United Nations General Assembly. In a bizarre plot twist, the First Lady of the United States, Melania Trump, was quick to take up cyberbullying as the issue she would focus on during her time in the White House. This story offers a clear and obvious example of what the participants’ discussions highlighted, that is, digital culture is a site where VAWG is becoming increasingly normalized and institutionalized (in Silicon Valley and through misguided law and policy). Moreover, although cyberbullying is framed differently by adults and politicians on the left and right of the political spectrum, these framings are often unhelpful in understanding the complex landscape that girls

¹⁷¹ A graphics interchange format (GIF) is a format that was developed in 1987 by the Internet Service Provider (ISP) CompuServe in order to “bring a little color and movement to the Web” (Williams, 2013, para. 6).

and young women navigate on social media. This is especially true when cyberbullying narratives continue to frame online harassment as exceptional incidents involving ‘mean kids’. As I have argued, this trend in public commentary and traditional CV scholarship furthers a troubling narrative that negates the structural and systemic inequalities that are literally coded into the platforms we use. Moreover, these narratives perpetuate the harmful tropes around girlhood and femininity that are too often mobilized to restrict girls’ access to technology and to silence their voices in the public sphere.

In these concluding remarks, I summarize what we know and what we have learned about CV and young people’s digital culture from the patterns and themes I identified in participants’ conceptualizations of CV. I also extend this discussion of what we *know* into a reflection on what we might *do* with this newfound knowledge (Shantz, 2012, p. 308) by proposing eight recommendations for researchers and policy-makers. These recommendations draw heavily from strategies that the participants suggested for addressing CV.

In Chapter Four I located myself within this study, revealing my feminist commitments as a researcher/videographer and how these commitments informed the research design and analysis. In this chapter, I return to the central problem around which I invited participants to collaborate: ‘what cyberviolence means to me’. Significantly, the ways that participants conceptualized CV shed light on potential directions for future research. In addition to their critiques of adult discourses around CV, as I described previously, many participants shared their perspectives regarding the type of strategies they believed would be fruitful avenues for researchers and policy-makers to pursue to combat CB and CV.

This was the first study in Canada to employ participatory video through a feminist new media lens in order to address CV with a sizable sample (N=112) of young women. Building on

important work in feminist new media studies and girls' digital culture, the theoretical contribution of this dissertation offers a way to approach CV beyond the hate speech versus free speech paradigm. Using feminist approaches to online misogyny as a cornerstone, I explored the misogynistic tropes that structure the experiences participants described, behaviours that are often problematically labelled as 'cyberbullying'. This dissertation also contributes to feminist theories of new media (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2016; Leonard, 2006; Magnet, 2006; 2011; Prebble, 2014; C. Todd, 2014) and online misogyny (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Croeser, 2016; Phillips, 2015), and puts my participants' voices and emerging literature on girls' digital culture (Bailey, 2015; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014; Steeves, 2015) into conversation with extant literature on cyberbullying and CV. I also drew from Stuart Hall's idea of "shared meanings" (1997) and Pierre Bourdieu's definition of "social capital" (1984) to argue that we cannot productively develop CV programming without understanding that it is inextricably bound up in the social context(s), platforms, practices and relationship with digital culture that is often hostile and alienating. If these conversations had occurred in a classroom rather than in a research setting, perhaps these moments would have afforded greater possibilities for the power of PV to work as social justice pedagogy. Stuart Poyntz, who studies the radical democratic potential of youth media production, argues:

If media educators are to take full advantage of the opportunities this work [youth produced work] affords for developing young people as critical, sophisticated and active citizens, it is also crucial that students learn to identify how their productions inadvertently challenge and engage with power. By doing this, media educators work with the tensions in youth media as part of a pedagogy of hope. Such a pedagogy is not naive; rather it locates the promise of classroom-based media education in the critical voices and practices alive throughout society (Poyntz, 2006, p. 171).

The data reveal that CV is not exceptional, but rather indicate the ubiquitous misogyny and sexism that structure the norms that inform digital culture. The ways in which participants

conceptualized CV underscore how important substantive dialogue on gender and identity based factors such as age, race, class, and ability will be in effective anti-CV research and programming. Arts-based interventions and other qualitative CV studies are productive methods for contributing to this dialogue, which may be more important than generating universal definitions of CV and CB at this formative moment in cyberviolence studies.

Strategies: A Note on Silences

Silence is a thread that weaves throughout the chapters that make up this dissertation. Participants' responses highlight how CV works to silence girls and young women when self- and peer censorship are encouraged. Silence also echoes through the limiting 'girl power' identities that are available to some girls that inform e-safety curricula (Karaian, 2014) and are supported by educational institutions, corporations and governments (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Dobson, 2015; Koffman & Gill, 2015).

Participants came from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and abilities and were marginalized due to their age (eighteen or younger). However, most of them were white and benefited from the privileges of whiteness. Participants outlined a range of online cruelties, occasionally including behaviours that are illegal under Canada's *Criminal Code*. We know that cyberviolence is amplified by intersecting oppressions and impacts those belonging to or identified as belonging to marginalized communities differently (Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012). This is important, as critical race scholars of girlhood argue girls' experiences of socialization in SNS involve different challenges for girls of colour. Kyra D. Gaunt draws on Wesch (2008) in her analysis of African American girls' self-produced YouTube dance videos. Gaunt argues that vloggers' relationships with both self-awareness and audience through YouTube have "important implications for how we understand ourselves and our relations with others in mediated social

spaces online” (Wesch, 2008, p. 27 quoted in Gaunt, 2015, p. 246). As Gaunt notes, the whiteness of the “hegemonically non-black” audience is made invisible in the space of YouTube (2015, p. 246). We know that cyberviolence, like all forms of violence, impacts the most marginalized girls differently and that violence against marginalized girls is rarely reported in the media, never with the same urgency as that directed toward girls who embody white, middle-class heteronormative identities.

Participants described a complex reality in which cyberviolence unfolded. That is, understanding the social norms of their favourite social media spaces is as important as addressing mean, cruel, and harassing online behaviours, including the phenomenon usually referred to as cyberbullying. These findings underscore the need to attend to how relationships, forms of communication, and interaction are mediated through SNS as our sociological imaginations are necessarily expanded by new digital landscapes (Orton-Johnson & Prior, 2013).

Developing productive solutions and programming will require us to anchor studies of CV within broader understandings of inequality. For example, youth with disabilities and youth of colour do not experience, and may not describe, CV in the same way as those with white privilege do. Moreover, youth of lower socioeconomic status, such as the participants at the drop-in centre, do not conceptualize CV using the same language that class-privileged young people do. For example, participants were largely silent around whiteness and often struggled for language to discuss systemic inequalities including racism, misogyny, and class.

PV offers a creative way for young women to engage in research. However, like the mainstream education system, it still asks them to express themselves using patriarchal language (Hall & Bucholtz, 2012; Kann, 1998, p. 30; Marlatt, 1988; Talbot, 2010, p. 35). This language

supports what hegemonic ideology feminist scholar and public intellectual bell hooks refers to as “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2014, p. 47). Dale Spender puts it this way:

Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: our means of manipulating reality. In its structure, we bring our world into realisation, and if it is inherently inaccurate, then we are misled. If the rules which underlie our language system, our symbolic order, are invalid, then we are daily deceived (Spender, 1980, para. 7).

The creativity of PV is important to consider because the young participants were asked to conceptualize CV using language we know to be structured through oppressive assumptions. As discussed in Chapter Four, girls begin to struggle with voice as they enter adolescence (Rodenburg, 2015). It is well documented that visual arts-based methodologies such as PV are flexible and accessible to young people, as they are invited to share their opinions in their own voices through media production (Bery, 2003; Brannon, 2002; Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017).

It is accordingly important to remain especially attentive to silences in research with girls (Hyams 2004; Taylor et al., 1997). The themes I identified in participants’ responses reveal a notable silence around the ways in which whiteness structures the girls’ favourite social media platforms, CV and the broader digital culture.¹⁷² My participants’ silence on issues of race, racialization, ability, and class persisted when I returned to the two locations to try to engage them regarding how they perceived racialization as contributing to cyberviolence. It is not surprising that the mostly white participants were largely silent on the issues of race and class. Both the participants who sporadically attended school and those who attended an elite private school were immersed in curricula structured around a settler-colonial logic of white supremacy (Charania, 2015; hooks, 2003, 2014). Fifty years ago, in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or*

¹⁷² The social media platforms that my participants discussed the most (in 2014 and 2015) were Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Table 6.1).

Community (1967), Dr. Martin Luther King articulated what is now, in critical race studies (Coates, 2017; Gillborn, 2006), a well-accepted description of white supremacy. King argued that “the doctrine of white supremacy was embedded in every textbook and preached in practically every pulpit. It became a structural part of the culture” (King cited in Newkirk II, 2017). Moreover, as bell hooks (2003; 2014) argues, formal educational settings are the scenes of some of the most notable silences around racism and classism. While hooks examines the United States, her argument applies to Canada, since the ways in which racism and classism are reproduced in education settings are not unique to the United States context. In *Teaching to Transgress* (2014), she argues:

Class is rarely talked about in the United States; nowhere is there more of an intense silence about the reality of class difference than in educational settings. Significantly, class differences are ignored in the classrooms. From grade school on, we are all encouraged to cross the threshold of the classroom believing we are entering a democratic space – a free zone where the desire to study and learn makes us all equal. And even if we enter accepting the reality of class differences most of us still believe knowledge will be meted out in fair and equal proportions (hooks, 2014, p. 177).

Participants were able to access (a very limited) language to discuss sexism, as issues of (post)feminism are most often addressed in their schools through a focus on upward mobility via career and education (Bailey, 2015; McRobbie, 2008; Ringrose & Renold, 2015); however, substantive engagement with whiteness, racism, and class is neglected (Charania, 2015; Stack, 2017).¹⁷³ The silence around racism in digital culture that I encountered during my field work is similar to the silence that hooks describes in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003). She argues that her white students, as well as students of colour, often repudiate race as a marker of privilege. After an anti-racist classroom exercise, she describes how her students reveal an

¹⁷³ While post-feminism is a contested field, it has been theorized broadly as a set of “political practices and discourses that are grounded in the assumption that gender equity has been achieved” for girls and women, from education to the domestic sectors (Ringrose, 2017, p. 386; McRobbie, 2008; Gill, 2007).

(un)conscious understanding of white supremacy. As hooks outlines, these “illusions” must be shattered before “meaningful conversations about race and racism can take place” (2003, p. 26).¹⁷⁴ The reluctance to discuss the systemic privileging of whiteness in group settings (hooks, 2003) highlights the loaded meanings that race and racism continue to hold in our society.

A few participants, however, explicitly acknowledged that they believed identity factors or membership in marginalized groups increased young people’s risk of being targeted for harassment or ridicule online. For example, Gail (16) pointed out that “not all people are equally vulnerable to cyberviolence”; she added that “the groups most at risk are girls that are teens, lower class, someone who is something other than heterosexual” (Gail, 16). Likewise, Mildred (17) called upon identity factors to distinguish between what she would call online violence and “drama”:

Cyberviolence to me is basically anything violent you can do online. Not necessarily physical violence, but emotional. Like social media and chat websites are more where cyberviolence can be found. Online drama is more kiddish threats like “you’re lame” or something and cyberviolence is more like directed threats towards race, sexuality, gender. (17)

Another participant at the private school pointed to abuse targeting identifiable groups as a marker of cyberviolence:

What a lot of people have trouble seeing is it doesn’t have to be exactly sent to you. If it’s violence towards other women or something I believe in, it’s cyberviolence. Like if that’s something that’s directed as anti-Semitic then it’s directed at me because it’s a group related to me (Cynthia, 16).

¹⁷⁴ It should be noted that while a discussion of white privilege may be a helpful future step for CV education with this age group, some contemporary critical race scholars argue that the focus should be placed on white supremacy instead. As David Gillborn (2006) argues, while discussions of unearned privileges are useful for critical educators, “there has been a tendency for talk of privilege to mask the structures and actions of domination that make possible, and sustain, white racial hegemony” (p. 3). Moreover, the tendency to focus on privilege in many whiteness studies that Gillborn identifies often, inadvertently, re-centres dominant voices, conjuring up images of domination “happening behind the backs of whites, rather than on the backs of people of colour (Leonard, 2004, p. 138 cited in Gillborn, 2006, p. 3). Unpacking white supremacy allows us to focus on how it structures everything from housing to higher education and digital media. In other words, my participants’ silences around race point to a need for CV education to address the ways in which logics of white supremacy are coded into digital media, including SNS (Chun, 2012, 2016; Daniels, 2009; Magnet, 2011; Noble, 2013).

Although only a few participants made explicit reference to harassment based on identity factors such as ethnicity, race and sexual orientation while conceptualizing cyberviolence, the strategies they suggested point to productive areas for future intersectional research on cyberviolence.¹⁷⁵

While participants lacked vocabulary for their discussion of whiteness and white privilege, in their focus on empathy as a possible solution for addressing cyberviolence they gestured toward grappling with broader systems of oppression that work to limit, and often silence, their voices. For example, Tanya (17) suggested that we should ask: “Why women? What promotes it? Who are the easiest targets?” These are the same questions Jordana Navarro and Jana Jasinski (2013) ask in their study of gender differences in cyberbullying in terms of prevalence. In fact, although my participants were largely silent on race, the role that misogyny plays in their digital culture is very similar to how whiteness functions on social media.¹⁷⁶ That is to say, the way participants described cyberviolence as embedded in specific social contexts points to the way in which social media platforms often work to amplify offline social divisions: “race matters in cyberspace precisely because all of us who spend time online are already shaped by the ways in which race matters offline and we can’t help but bring our own knowledge, experiences, and values with us when we log on” (Kolko, Nakamura, & Rodman, 2013, p. 4-5).

Common refrains among participants were that adults are out of touch when it comes to understanding digital culture and especially the significance of social media in young people’s

¹⁷⁵ I mention this here because participants’ top suggestions – education and empathy – are central to many anti-VAWG and anti-racism interventions (UN News, 2013).

¹⁷⁶ See also the discussions of the intersections of whiteness and racism with cyberviolence in the Literature Review (Chapter Two), Theoretical Framework (Chapter Three), “The Hate on Women Thing Online is Actually Happening”: Social Media Platform Architecture, Networked Practices & Cyberviolence” (Chapter Six). These issues are also addressed in the recommendations and conclusions.

social lives (Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Daniels & Zurbriggen, 2016; Doster, 2013; Hasinoff, 2015; Lenhart et al., 2010), and that adults need to educate themselves in order to address the issue of CV targeting girls.

I have done my best to address participants' silences around whiteness and class without misrepresenting their narratives or further silencing their voices. My attention to silences involved considering how to frame the knowledge produced by participants, as they are marginalized through differential intersections of age, ability, class and gender, as it is essential to acknowledge "marginalized groups as experts" while "supporting their choices about how and when to share their knowledge" (Croeser, 2016, para. 26, lines 22-23). As bell hooks (1984, p. 110) argues, "To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality." I have attended to these silences by drawing on feminist new media and girlhood thinking on whiteness and class (Jane, 2014; Magnet, 2011; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015) in my analysis (presented in Chapters Five through Seven) of the relationship between cyberviolence and the contexts, platforms and practices participants drew on to conceptualize CV. Silence is often theorized as a speech act (Fellman, 1992). However, because I conducted qualitative thematic analysis (QTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I engaged with silence only insofar as it pertained to the central concepts I identified in participants' responses and video work. I also addressed the lack of language participants seemed to have to discuss systemic racism. From what my participants described (despite their lack of language to unpack structural inequalities), it is clear that the adults who design social media platforms and software to surveil young people will need to rid themselves of numerous oppressive illusions in order to develop productive anti-bullying

policies and educational modules, including those designed for use inside traditional classroom settings (hooks, 2003; 2014).

Dialogue is important, as it provides feminist scholars with a significant opportunity to challenge the dominant framing(s) of cyberbullying discourses, paving the way for more accurate and productive definitions. This dialogue must account for the ways in which intersecting identity- factors such as gender, age and class impact young people's experiences and perceptions of CV. While sensationalized stories of cyberbullying emphasize the extreme experiences of a handful of young people, the participants described a complex digital culture that normalized and amplified a range of ubiquitous misogynistic practices – practices that nearly all the participants said they navigated daily in social media spaces. Listening to participants and taking their content production seriously will bring us closer to developing critical frameworks for understanding the interlocking challenges they articulated, namely, that toxic social norms in SNS normalized misogyny and constrained their opportunities for self-representation. They described an impossible double bind, but also spoke of opportunities for exploring identity and socializing. Moreover, attending to the problematic practices and platform architecture that amplify CV, that participants described as context-specific (within the unique social contexts they outlined), is a crucial step to understanding how girls navigate content production. The results of the video work point to productive directions and possibilities for girls' participation in the production of counter-narratives (Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017; Ivashkevich, 2017).

Moving toward equitable digital citizenship for girls will require acknowledging that girls are politically astute and demonstrate a tremendous capacity for engaging critically with the problematic discourses that structure and often contain their digital subjectivities and

performances. This work also requires attending to the unique challenges facing girls, whose needs are often considered last in a sexist culture that prioritizes adults (Bailey, 2015, p. 23). In other words, girls are “marginalized by their gender among children and their age among women” (p. 23). In continuing this dialogue between feminist new media studies and girls’ digital culture, we may move toward identifying actionable possibilities for the creation of productive strategies to prevent gender-based CV and to address its aftermath.

We know that online violence often has offline implications, and that when women report extreme experiences of cyberviolence, including revenge porn, technologically-facilitated sexual violence, rape and death threats, their reports are often dismissed by law enforcement (Citron, 2014; Eckert, 2017; Pina, Holland, & James, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2016). Moreover, women who work in the technology industries are continually harassed in their workplaces, and this harassment is often more frequent for women of colour (Braithwaite, 2014; Horsti, 2017). When women and members of marginalized communities are represented and involved in designing the online infrastructure we all use daily, we can begin working toward the type of fundamental changes my participants called upon us to make.

A growing number of brave women commentators and scholars, who are often harassed and threatened for doing this work, are formulating frameworks for addressing online misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; boyd, 2014; Chess & Shaw, 2015; Consalvo, 2012; Croeser, 2016; Davies, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015; Hess, 2014; Jane, 2016, 2017; Marcotte, 2012, 2017; Phillips, 2015). However, substantive attention is not paid to girls in discussions of systemic, institutionalized misogyny in digital culture. This will mean fighting the mainstreaming of age-old tropes such as the ‘good’ (victim) girl and the ‘mean girl’. Many participants described the positive validation that they received when they were mean and that

was encouraged through ‘likes’ and ‘drama’ when they said something mean to their friend(s) online. More disturbingly, several participants described the shaming they received from other young women if they shared the ‘wrong’ photo or were labelled a ‘slut’. The bafflement so many of the participants reported when it came to understanding what they could do to avoid ridicule or harassment points to the need for a reframing of the current assumptions that underpin the cyberbullying debates. Moreover, programming around how gender and racialization, class, or being outside the heteronormative ideal plays into digital culture, cyberbullying or cyberharassment, and mean and cruel behaviour online. It is obvious by now that the participants in this research were often repressed or silenced in both subtle and extreme ways.

The sheer enthusiasm so many participants brought to this project was encouraging and confirmed that gendered CV is a pervasive and ongoing problem that deserves greater attention. As I have mentioned previously, during our discussions and filming, participants often reminded me that the Internet was full of positive things, that they enjoyed spending time online, and that social media also offered wonderful opportunities to socialize with friends. Moreover, a few participants argued that the trouble on SNS is worth it because social networks let them experiment with identity. For example, eighteen-year-old Sabrina (18) said: “I don’t think I’d be embracing my gender today if it weren’t for people through Facebook [where] you can connect with people and connect with certain lifestyles and mindsets.” (Sabrina, 18) That is to say, participants were equally enthusiastic about the fact that they wanted, needed and enjoyed being in these spaces; some enjoyed publishing content that promoted their work and passions (e.g., a few used Tumblr to share their art) and curated their experiences for friends and contacts. Some participants searched for jobs online. Participants such as Gina (18) were clear that suggestions that include limiting their access to these spaces are “not effective because they are unrealistic”.

While a great deal of feminist activism and consciousness-raising efforts are gaining traction in digital culture, such as through hashtag activism (Rosewarne, 2017; Weiss, 2014), the success of this work in bringing about social change is contested, and the voices of girls continue to be marginalized in broader discussions of online misogyny and harassment targeting women (Bailey, 2015; Heath, 2015). An ongoing recommendation among vocal public commentators regularly cited in the dominant news media is to increase surveillance of young people's access to technology, specifically their smartphone usage (Twenge, 2017), or to restrict it entirely (Collins, 2017; P. Todd, 2014). Yet this point opposes existing research on VAWG, which teaches us that changing the culture and social norms that normalize misogyny is an arduous but necessary element of effective anti-violence programs (Ellsberg, Arango, Morton, Gennari, Kiplesund, Contreras, & Watts, 2015; Fulu, Warner, Miedema, & Jewkes, 2013; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015).

Six Recommendations for Educators, Policy-Makers and Researchers

The field of critical girlhood studies is necessarily reflexive (Gonnick, Renold, & Ringrose, 2009; Hey, 2010). The political commitments of girlhood scholars involve not only centring participant voices but also advocating for meaningful social change that will better the material lives of girls and young women. The political imperative of this research intimates that girlhood scholars have a commitment to “hear the voices of girls for the purposes of [our] own research...[while] ensuring that [we] take appropriate steps with policy-makers or with any other body that can have an impact on girls' lives” (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh 2009, p. 223-224 quoted in Caron, 2015, p. 123). Applying a meaningful policy lens means that we assess the digital environment, social media platforms and practices girls describe from their perspectives (Bailey et al., 2013; Bailey & Steeves, 2015; Shariff & DeMartini, 2015). As Jane Bailey (2015) argues,

in order to honour the rights of the girl child, as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, girls must be consulted in the development of policies and programming that directly affect them (Bailey, 2015, p. 23).¹⁷⁷

Addressing Structural Inequalities

We need to change the culture online. The participants who shared their thoughts and experiences for this research described a pervasive set of norms and practices in digital culture that perpetuate the assumption that misogynistic ‘jokes’, ridicule, harassment and even sexual violence targeting girls is acceptable, even expected. Perhaps more disturbingly, young women are often held responsible when they are targeted. This notion that girls are responsible for protecting their own digital identities by avoiding ‘mistakes’ is often built into anti-cyberbullying curricula (Chun, 2016; Chun & Friedland, 2015; Fairbairn, 2015). The task is daunting; however, only a few decades of activism has seen the introduction of the concept of sexual harassment to describe the workplace harassment that was (and often still is) the price a woman paid for going to work (Jeffries, 2006; MacKinnon, 1979). We now have language to address this pervasive problem. Online misogyny is not inevitable. It is systematic, culturally constructed and sustained by platform architecture (Bailey, 2015). The Internet does not have to look the way it does right now to women and girls. Participants described social platforms as alienating and isolating, and gave examples of negative social sanctions they received. We know that certain marginalized individuals, including those belonging to racialized, LGBTQQ2IA, or lower-socioeconomic-status communities are at greater risk of experiencing violence online and offline (Dixon et al.,

¹⁷⁷ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child acknowledges gender inequality by specifying that girl children are often given less access to their rights. For example, over seventy percent of people living in poverty globally are women and girls, and girls are often denied the right to a basic education. It is important to remember that poverty and lack of access to education exist in Canada and the United States as well. For example, girls and women, particularly women of colour, are systematically discouraged from pursuing scientific and technological training, as is evidenced by their underrepresentation in STEM fields (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2015; Boucher & Murphy, 2017). These facts are easy to forget when we hear that message that the work of feminism has been done (Douglas, 2010).

2015). These specificities must be taken into account in future research, programming and policies related to anti-cyberviolence work.

Future digital literacy work that must engage privileged white youth in extended discussions of race, class and gender and must be careful not to recycle self-aggrandizing displays of what critical race scholars often call “the big emotional experience” that often attends ‘white saviour’ campaigns online and offline that validate white privilege through sentimentality (Cole, 2012; Shringarpure, 2015). When white adults encourage white youth to participate in ‘clickbait’ ‘slacktivism’, they continue the harmful trends of appropriating and ‘starring’ in ongoing social justice movements and neglecting the broader systemic inequalities that structure these platforms in the first place (Engels, 2016; Nakamura & Chow-White, 2011; Njoroge, 2016; Magnet, 2011; Massey, 2015; Prendergast, 2016).

PV and design-based approaches are particularly useful for feminist new media scholars invested in unpacking the unique and complex inequalities that structure social media architecture (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Mantilla, 2013). Games and apps that traditionally facilitate or amplify antisocial behaviour are among the platforms where women and girls report the most virulent and persistent forms of online harassment (Jane, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; P. Todd, 2014; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014). However, digital technologies, including virtual reality, have the potential to be excellent tools in empathy training (Pereya, 2017). Game design companies such as Minority Media and Disparity Games, as well as groups such as the Pixelles and non-government organizations such as Black Girls Code, address the hegemony of white male designers through coding and design. In doing so, they illustrate the possibilities of using digital tools for social justice work through empathy-building. The majority of my participants focused on social sanctions and platform regulations to address

CV, and expressed skepticism about the ability of law to prevent cyberviolence targeting women and girls (Offman, 2013). As Karen (16) put it, “It’s a space that no one can govern or control it’s impossible to provide governmental or legal solutions to address the issue, the individual has to be responsible to be safe.” (Karen, 16)

Empathy and “Internet Language”

Engaging girls in design while addressing deep systemic inequalities through empathy building will be productive steps toward designing SNS that facilitate pro-social values such as cohesion, teamwork and social justice. It is crucial to note that encouraging empathy among individuals on different sides of a conflict does not adequately address systemic injustice and unequal power relations. However, rigorous studies over the past fifty years have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of anti-racism programming for children that focuses on dismantling stereotypes while neglecting empathy building (Bigler, 1999 quoted in Belman & Flanagan, 2010, p. 8). Innovative designers are employing video games in the service of empathy building. For example, games such *PeaceMaker*, *Papo & Yo* (2012), *Hush* and *Layoff* are designed “to engage players’ capacity to empathize” (Belman & Flanagan, 2010, p. 5). The creative team at Montreal’s Minority Media has created a game that tackles high school bullying. The “isometric puzzle game” follows an Indigenous teen protagonist, and the player moves through the environment from that teen’s perspective (Peel, 2014).

The themes of education and empathy that my participants described underscore the need for programming and digital literacy that address how to communicate effectively and ethically (see Chapter Seven). Understanding spaces such as Facebook as “contact zones” (Beech, 2016; Pratt, 1990), that is, separate, defined spaces with their own “distinct discourse communities”, may help to address the ways in which discourse communities differ from platform to platform.

This will allow designers, programmers, researchers and policy-makers to create best practices for addressing how systemic misogyny manifests differently on individual platforms such as Facebook and SnapChat, as well as across communities such as massively multiplayer online gaming platforms (Beech, 2016). One technique participants described and had already implemented was burying negative comments on their friends' social media posts by "flooding" them with positive comments. As discussed, this allows girls to minimize negative content on their friends' pages while supporting them and giving them validation through a demonstration of community and empathy. Recently, an (as of yet) one-of-a-kind platform called HeartMob has appeared online. Designed by Emily May, the platform allows the user to report incidents of online harassment and join a community for support. May describes the platform as a place where users will receive "positive, supportive comments...as a kind of antidote for online abuse" (May, quoted in Misener, 2016).

Values-Based Design

As foundational games studies scholars such as Mia Consalvo argue, social network researchers have largely ignored the rich body of games literature offering theoretical and methodological tools with which to approach social media platforms (O'Donnell & Consalvo, 2015). SNS such as Facebook are marketed as spaces that allow the user to connect and interact online with the people in their lives. While disinhibition is a popular theme in cyberviolence studies (e.g., Hinduja & Patchin, 2014; Udris, 2014), several theorists argue that digital technologies may be tailored to cultivate empathy rather than the disconnection participants reported regarding the feelings of others online (Turkle, 2015; Rushkoff, 2010; Tettegah & Espelage, 2015). Putting feminist new media theory into conversation with this work and girls' voices highlights how values-based design may help us to reject the notion that "online abuse

and harassment is an unfortunate and inevitable feature of girls' and women's existence" (Fairbairn, 2015, p. 229) while working toward alternatives. A commonly expressed sentiment is that if people could see the effects of their negative actions on another person, they might be hesitant about behaving that way again. The participants in this study were not alone in this belief. A significant body of research in digital sociology supports this hope and confirms that we would do well to develop strategies that incorporate a consideration of emotions (Coulton et al., 2014).

Working on CV prevention strategies necessitates understanding how platforms like Facebook structure discourse communities and social norms. Recent studies and projects in values-based design are establishing the promise of "conscientious designers" (Flanagan & Nissenbaum, p. 141; Turkle, 2015; Quinn, 2013; Parkin, 2014). For example, the Grow-A-Game resource developed by Mary Flanagan and Nissenbaum (Belman, Nissenbaum, Flanagan, & Diamond, 2011) is a card deck that works as a brainstorming tool for game design students. Separated into categories such as sustainability and trust, the cards offer ways for design students to think of strategies to incorporate pro-social values in the games they design. Flanagan describes initiating discussion around a card with the group. For example, if the "integrity" card is pulled, the group will contemplate how the card has "potential tensions, references, mechanics and play associated with it" (p. 145). This important turn in mindful game design should be instructive for social network scholars and those who work in the technology industries. We know these spaces are not neutral, and that it is important to involve girls in the design process. Some organizations (e.g., She Makes Games, Ladies who Linux and Miss Make Codes) and games (e.g., *Papo & Yo*, *Silent Enemy*) are illustrating the potential of including girls in the construction of platforms on which they spend time, as well as the power in media(ted)

technology to promote ethical values (Consalvo & O'Donnell, 2015). While the work ahead is not as simple as including girls and women in coding and platform design, this is an important step in a multi-faceted approach to addressing CV. Designing for values is one important component of addressing the structural inequality and sexism that are the status quo in the design and tech world: the places where the participants, who produce the most content on these platforms, encounter daily challenges to equitable citizenship.

Education/Curriculum

As one participant said, “The only thing that is going to stop it [cyberviolence] is education” (Claire, 16). We have to start with a critical digital literacy approach to cyberviolence studies, which should be a central component of media education for young people and their allies. A digital media literacy approach to gendered cyberviolence should also be a required aspect of training for law enforcement. Constructing learning modules for adults around structural inequalities in digital culture will be a vital development in addressing the CV that disproportionately impacts women and girls, and an important step toward the development of programming that attends to the challenges the participants discussed. Future learning modules should focus on combating patriarchy, sexism, racism and white supremacy in young people’s digital culture, rather than simply discussing cyberbullying, a limited term few participants related to. The cluster of behaviours often referred to as cyberbullying are age-old social ills that have moved online and are flourishing in some social media environments, such as Twitter (Jane, 2014; Manivannan, 2013; Mantilla, 2015; Nakamura, 2015; Todd, 2015; Tate, 2016; Taylor, 2014).

Alternative Social Media (ASM)

At the moment, it is still necessary to use commercial platforms in order to communicate with a critical mass of individuals. However, activists are beginning to explore alternative platforms (e.g., Diaspora and The Global Square) that operate outside of heavily commercialized platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This is important when it comes to exploring the limits and possibilities of emerging online architectures. Feminist arts-based research offers examples of the efficacy of participatory digital media production for raising awareness of the unique challenges that girls who are marginalized due to age, class, race, gender and sexuality encounter online and offline (Croeser, 2016; Magnet, 2011). The data set, especially the transcripts from video work, underscores the need for prevention strategies to be multi-pronged to include relevant curricula addressing social norms and identity factors alongside user-based design interventions (Ingram, 2016b). Numerous studies, particularly in the fields of media and health, have tied every issue from diminished self-worth (Harris, 2004; Mazzarella & Pecora, 1999) to eating disorders (Field, Camargo, & Taylor, 1999; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Hesse-Biber, 1996) to popular and digital culture (Dias, 2013). These technophobic narratives rehearse the same arguments made about technology that Socrates once suggested about the book ruining the human brain's capacity for memory and that 19th-century physicians made about "the pelting of telegrams" triggering mental illness (Lehrer, 2010, para. 2).¹⁷⁸ Some prominent experts on digital culture are beginning to strike a productive balance that aligns strongly with what participants suggested (e.g., reprogramming our platforms with empathy in mind). As many participants argued, now is the time to intervene, shape and design these platforms in better, safer ways. The misogyny and racism flourishing in SNS do not need to dictate the future of girls' social media

¹⁷⁸ This Western mainstream historiography of technology scares, of course, operates along a different chronology than do the ones focused on girls and women. The notion of books 'ruining' minds was, and in many cases continues to be, applied to girls and women (Bailey et al., 2013; Bilston, 2008).

usage. For example, Harass Map (harassmap.org) and Hollaback! (ihollaback.org) “address street harassment through the crowdsourcing of online maps that identify sites of risk, harassment and safety, and in so doing, they give voice to girls and women” (Hart, 2016). Although technologies alone will not prevent VAWG, new applications that are designed around anti-violence principles offer productive examples of how ICTs can better serve marginalized populations (Hart, 2016; Gaunt, 2015; Magnet, 2006, 2011; Wajcman, 2004; Winters-Evans & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017).

Cyberviolence Education for Law Enforcement

Criminalization is likely not the best approach to tackling online misogyny, and it is clear that law enforcement is behind the times. When women choose to report CV to law enforcement, they are often met with basic knowledge gaps on the part of law enforcement. For example, when Amanda Hess called the police in 2014 to report the death threats and doxing she was experiencing online, the police asked, “What is Twitter?” (Hess, 2014). Although more attention has been devoted to online harassment targeting women in recent years, little has changed since the *Michigan Law Review* published a paper in 2009 that found reports of online harassment are regularly dismissed as “harmless locker room talk” (Citron, 2009 quoted in Hess, 2014).¹⁷⁹ Game developer Zoe Quinn, journalist Jessica Valenti, comedian Leslie Jones and numerous others have reported a similar problem (Valenti, 2016; Williams, 2017). The lack of information in the law enforcement community is particularly obvious when it comes to cases of revenge porn targeting women and girls online (Snowden, 2017). Rather than creating new laws, such as the flawed and over-reaching Bill C-13 or Canada’s (now defunct) first cyberbullying law in Nova

¹⁷⁹ It is worth noting that this exact language, that of “locker room talk”, was used by then United States Presidential candidate Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign to dismiss a recording in which he had bragged about being able to sexually assault women whenever he wanted to (Heller, 2016; Saletan, 2016).

Scotia, we must make sure we can use existing laws to report CV and to update existing laws so that they are technology neutral (Bailey, 2016; Citron, 2009, 2014).

The sacrifices and bravery of generations of feminists offer us the tools to examine the systemic inequalities that structure our digital culture, including cyberviolence and the contemporary discourses surrounding it. These feminists paved the way for naming sexual harassment and implementing anti-violence programs that produce material results in the lives of women and girls. The participants in this study highlighted how many of the challenges they faced had not changed much from previous decades, contrary to what the postfeminist project would have us believe. One of the most significant strategies my participants called for in addressing cyberviolence was empathy. Building empathy into anti-cyberbullying education and education more broadly will offer a way to ensure that young people can read well, use computers well, and relate well (BBC News, 2018). We know that “without empathy we cannot relate to each other” (BBC News, 2018) whether it be in social spaces online or offline. In a new project, I collaborate with two women programmers based in Toronto, Canada; one is a software engineer, the other a website designer. These women volunteer their time to work with racially, ethnically and economically diverse groups of girls who want to learn how to code. As Sophia, one of the programmers, told me, one girl “seeing the confidence of every girl build over the day as she learns how to create and design” (personal communication, October 2017) is what keeps her volunteering. These women and girls who gather around computers and enter into intergenerational dialogue while designing digital spaces together are changing the world. Working across generational divides with the common goal of teaching girls computer language represents just one of a million small steps toward generating a more equitable digital culture.

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Appendix 1

Ethics Certificate from Concordia University



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Dr. Mia Consalvo

Department: Faculty of Arts and Science \ Communication
Studies

Agency: Secretariat Inter-Conseil

Title of Project: Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence
Against Young Girls and Women

Certification Number: 30003316

Valid From: October 15, 2014 to: October 14, 2015

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2

Ethics Approval from University of Ottawa

File Number: 06-16-45

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/13/2017



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
 Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Sylvie	Frigon	Social Sciences / Criminology	Supervisor
Hayley	Crooks	Social Sciences / Women's Studies	Student Researcher

File Number: 06-16-45

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: Qualitative Research and Participatory Video (PV) as a Lens on Gendered Cyber-violence

Renewal Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
08/03/2017	08/02/2018	Renewal

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A

Appendix 3

Consent/Assent to Participate in Research on Cyberviolence – Focus Group/Digital Media Activity

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Mia Consalvo, PhD, of the Department of Communication Studies of Concordia University L-CJ 4.407 , 7141 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H4B 1R6 Phone Number: in collaboration with The Atwater Library and Computer Centre's researcher Shanly Dixon, PhD, Researcher and Needs Assessment Coordinator, Atwater Library & Computer Centre, Cell Phone Number:

A. PURPOSE

This is to state that I have been informed and understand the purpose of the research is as follows: to explore understandings of cyberviolence and to develop potential strategies to eliminate it.

B. PROCEDURES

The data collection will occur over 8 sessions (1 per week). Each session will start with a brainstorming activity at the end of which the participants will establish a theme or topic for the day. The participants will be given basic instructions on the use of cameras, interview skills, basic editing skills (trimming scenes and sequences, adding sound, adding still shots, adding titles), and then a discussion afterwards to talk together about the themes that come out of their discussions. The participants will also have the opportunity to document the group sessions through still photography.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Potential benefits of participation for stakeholders are the opportunity to explore issues of cyberviolence, and upon reflection, to increase knowledge surrounding cyberviolence. Additional benefits are increased digital media skills. Benefits to the researcher are increased understandings of cyberviolence from the respondent's perspective

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw from the study all of my data will be eliminated from the analysis and destroyed.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

*PARENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Publication of Image and Audio

Participants may be filmed for use in the analysis of the data, possible presentation at conferences or to be used in a documentary film if permission is granted. No students will be filmed without consent.

- I **agree** to allow my image (still or videotaped) and speech to be captured and used in publications.
- I **agree** to allow my image and speech to be capture for internal research, but not to be used in publications.
- I **do not agree** to allow my image and speech to be captured and used in publications.

I GIVE CONSENT TO BE FILMED DURING THE STUDY.

STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

* PARENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

* Required if student is a minor

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:

Mia Consalvo, PhD
Professor of Communication Studies
Concordia University
L-CJ 4.407
7141 Sherbrooke Street West

Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H4B 1R6
Email address:

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, Phone Number: email address:

Appendix 4

Key Terms and Definitions

Technologies: I use the term to refer to cell phones, smartphones, game consoles, and computers– in other words, audio-visual devices and platforms that come under the umbrella of information communication technologies (ICTs) and are networked to allow users to store, send and alter information.

Cyberbullying is most frequently defined as any intentionally aggressive message that is repeated over time through electronic communication against a person who is not in a position to defend himself or herself (Smith et al., 2008). This definition is complicated by the fact that, often, young people report perceiving as a joke something that would normally be understood as intentional harm (Talwar & Shariff, 2014). Many scholars approach cyberbullying as an extension of traditional bullying, while others suggest that it is a unique phenomenon. This is because crucial elements of traditional bullying, such as repetition, become complicated in the context of the Internet, where one image can be continually re-posted (Chisholm, 2014). There is no universal definition of cyberbullying (Arntfield, 2015); the term is used to describe a range of behaviours including harassment, defamation, identity fraud and revenge porn. Many of these behaviours are better described as cyberviolence (Bailey, 2016).

The term ‘cyber’ is used to refer to Internet-facilitated communication through computers and smartphones. It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of young people with whom I spoke were explicitly referring to experiences on social media; therefore, most of the time, I use the terms cyberviolence or cyberbullying to refer to aggression or hostility as it was observed or experienced on a social networking site (SNS). Although I do not use the term to refer to virtual reality (VR), technology such as that produced by Oculus Rift (the VR gaming company), it is

likely that the future of cyberviolence research will be concerned with VR. Specifically, the use of Oculus Rift's VR technology, a company recently acquired by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, may impact how girls navigate social spaces online.

I use the term 'violence' broadly to include behaviours such as bullying, stalking, harassment, hate propaganda, threats of offline physical and sexual violence, luring, and sending or posting rude comments over the Internet. The term, as it is most frequently used by the participants in the study and therefore in my analysis, is frequently operationalized to describe hostility.

Cyberviolence: Cyberviolence is online behaviour that threatens or leads to physical and/or psychological harm against an individual or group. Examples of cyberviolence include hate speech, luring, stalking, death and rape threats, child pornography, the non-consensual distribution of sexual images, blackmail, identity theft and more (Dixon et al., 2015).

Girl: The question of how one comes to be defined as or represented as a 'girl' is an issue within the field of girl studies that is beginning to be examined more carefully and critically. The category of girl is a problematic and contested one. Because norms around race, ability, and class shape the category, the term girl has "prioritized the white, middle-class and non-disabled, and pathologized and/or criminalized the majority outside this category of privilege" (Harris, 2008, p. xx). Even the age of a 'girl' is under debate and is no longer assumed to denote simply a female between the ages of 12 and 20. Rather, the term girl "has been complicated by both the 'tweenies' phenomenon and the 'Girlie' movement, which together 'girlify' 7-year-olds in midriff tops and 40-year-olds with Hello Kitty barrettes" (Harris, 2008, p. xx). In this project, the term 'girls' is used to refer to young people who identify as girls and young women who are 18 years old or younger.