

“Make Smart Choices!”: Discourses of Girlhood Responsibilization in Cybersafety Curricula

by

Cara Brand
B.S.W., University of Victoria, 2009

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Social discourses about cybersafety -the ways we teach people about protecting themselves from and reporting risks in new media- reveal a heightened focus on the part of those who work with girls regarding their risk in cyberspace. This thesis investigates the concern as part of a reoccurring moral panic towards girlhood, drawing from critical feminist, girlhood and child and youth care theories to inquire into how girlhood is being discursively produced through cybersafety education. Study findings from a small sample of Canadian cybersafety materials suggest the phenomenon of cybersafety is dominated by fears of girls' exploitation online by strangers, peers, the media, and even themselves. Themes of girlhood invisibility, shaming, blaming and sexualization are identified as prominent in the curricula. Universal, essentialized notions of girlhood and sexual double standards are promoted, simultaneously constructing girls as victims incapable of managing their own risk while also holding girls legally and morally responsible for their experiences with cyberviolence. Discussion considers the influence of neoliberal and surveillance discourses on responsabilizing girls for their choices online, as well as how the focus on girls' choices negates the systemic nature of cyberviolence and its intersection with issues of homophobia, racism, classism, colonialism and ableism among others. Implications underscore the need for alternative approaches that offer critical pedagogy and tools to challenge gender ideologies in cybersafety work with girls, as well as to consider the needs of girls from marginalized backgrounds.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Dedication	ix
Chapter 1: Literature Review	1
Re-occurring Moral Panic towards Girlhood.....	3
The Scope of Cyberviolence against Women and Girls	9
The Intersection of Gender, Sexuality and Technology	12
The Amanda Todd case.	12
The Rehtaeh Parsons case.	14
The Responsibilisation of Todd and Parsons.....	15
Yet, What is Girlhood?	16
Girlhood in Neoliberal Times	18
CyberSafety (Mis)-Education	22
Outline of Subsequent Chapters	25
Chapter 2: Methodology.....	26
Articulating a Post-Structural Feminist Framework.....	27
Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodology.....	31
Analytic Process: Using a Feminist and Dialectical-Relational Approach	33

Stage one: Identifying problematic ideologies.	34
Stage two: Seeking understanding through the literature.....	35
Stages three and four: Reading critically.	40
Ethical and Methodological Evaluation.....	43
Ethical considerations.	43
Crafting validity.	44
Reflexivity and trustworthiness.	45
Methodological Summary.....	48
Chapter 3: Findings	49
Invisible Girlhood	51
The invisibility of girlhood through gender-neutral language.	55
The invisibility of gender-based violence.....	56
The over-visibility of traditional femininity.	60
Shameful Girlhood.....	64
Blameful Girlhood	71
Sexualized Girlhood	79
Analysis Summary	85
Chapter 4: Discussion.....	87
Discourses of Neoliberalism.....	87
Discourses of Marginalization	92
Discourses of Governmentality and Social Control	96
Reimagining Cybersafety	101
Alternatives to gendered and heteronormative discourses.....	102

Alternatives to discourses of girlhood responsibility..... 104

Alternatives to discourses of marginalization..... 107

Alternatives to discourses of panic. 110

Creating a discourse of support..... 114

Conclusion 115

References..... 121

Appendix A 141

List of Tables

Table 1: List of Cybersafety Resources 141

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Dedication

To all the smart women and girls in my life.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Will Online Cookie Sales Put Girl Scouts At Risk?

Google+: A Playground for Predators?

Do You Know Where Your Teens are Online?

The above headlines (Koring, 2012; Scheff, 2014; Tsukayma, 2014) about girls' online safety represent just a snapshot of the concerned conversations playing out in newspapers, schools, family living rooms, parliament hill and the offices of Child and Youth Care professionals over the past several years. Online safety, or cybersafety, represents the way young people are taught the strategies and interventions stated to help minimize or prevent harm online (Barnard-Willis, 2012; Dunkels, 2010). As girlhood increasingly moves into the online world, a space seen as beyond adult control (Meredith, 2010), girls' use of new media has been suggested to have fostered a moral panic around girlhood cybersafety (Cassel & Cramer, 2007; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingstone, 2013; Thiel-Stern, 2014). Online violence has been stated in the media to have overtaken drug use, teen pregnancy, and alcohol as the primary concern among Canadian parents (Battagello, 2015) leading to increased calls for educational programming to prevent and respond to this issue. This study considers what these headlines and the resultant moral panic generated around the response to girls' online activities frequently fail to represent - the layered, gender-based nature of online violence and the increasing responsibility placed on girls through cybersafety education to prevent it.

The start of my graduate program in Child and Youth Care coincided with the widespread media coverage of Richmond area teen Amanda Todd's suicide. As details of her difficult experiences with verbal and sexual harassment, peer violence, and online exploitation were

published, I followed the nationwide debate about young women's online safety with great interest. I wanted to understand how practitioners like me could support young women with their experiences of cyberviolence, struck by the similarity between Amanda Todd and other girls I had worked with. Yet, I soon found my feminist understandings of sexualized and gender-based violence differed significantly from mainstream public and media discourses. Media stories and preventative responses seemed to imply teen girls were not doing enough to protect themselves online, a messaging that reminded me of the importance of feminist efforts to shift blame and responsibility for violence away from victims. Rarely mentioned was the fact that online violence has been found to disproportionately victimize young women (Floros, Siomos, Fisoun, Dafouli & Geroukalis, 2013; Navarro & Jasinski, 2013; Pederson, 2013; Walrave, 2011). Instead of acknowledging the gendered, sexualized, and often racialized nature of online violence, cybersafety discourses seemed to suggest that if adults who work with girls could just help them to make "smarter choices" online, they would be safe. Such framings caused me to question if current cybersafety practices may actually be working against girls, rather than with them by providing the responsive support to online violence they seemed to need.

Foucault viewed discourse as a powerful means for enabling critique and resistance, as discourse is the conceptual terrain upon which knowledge is formed and produced (Hook, 2001). Cybersafety knowledge is itself embedded within complex dominant discourses of gender, sexuality, social control, and neoliberal ideology, as well as shaped by historic and contemporary public fears around technology, girlhood, and adolescent sexuality. As such, I turned to discursive analysis within a critical feminist framework to better understand the terrain of gender, race, sexuality, risk and responsibility under the cybersafety discourse which was causing the feminist and Child and Youth Care practitioner in me to feel unease. I decided to

critique four Canadian cybersafety educational websites to reflect upon: How are issues of gender and gender-based violence addressed within the materials? How is girlhood positioned and what types of girls and experiences are represented? How is risk and safety constructed for girls? How do the materials account (or not account for) larger structural and systemic forces? My specific objective was to see if critical discourse analysis could open up possibilities for alternative cybersafety discourses and generate potentially new ideas for cybersafety practice with girls within Child and Youth Care.

I begin this thesis by providing an overview of moral panic theory to contextualize cybersafety as part of a re-occurring panic towards girlhood in North America. I next explain the international scope of gendered cyberviolence, accounting for it within a Canadian perspective by discussing two well-known cases of cyberviolence against young women. I draw on these cases to highlight some of the tensions and problematic assumptions within the discourse of cybersafety and resulting implications for working with girls. I follow by articulating my position on girlhood, then considering how contemporary political discourses in Canada may be impacting girls' experiences with and responsibility for cyberviolence. I then describe the need to critique the prevention materials produced under the cybersafety discourse, drawing on moral panic theory as well as critical, contemporary Child and Youth Care and feminist approaches. Finally, I conclude with an outline to subsequent chapters.

Re-occurring Moral Panic towards Girlhood

Anxiety over the last two centuries around young people's use of film, television, and music has extended into contemporary concern towards adolescents' use of new technology (Marwick, 2008; Thiel-Stern, 2009), one that is increasingly focused on female youth (Thiel-Stern, 2014). Some of these same anxieties seem to reappear with startling regularity: the

immorality of young people, the absence of parental control, the problem of too much free time leading to crime, and the threat that young people's deviant behaviour poses to social order (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). Girls and women in particular are portrayed throughout history as passive, naïve, incapable and vulnerable in the face of technological advances, a reoccurring image from the onset of the telegraph through to modern use of Internet and social media (Cassel & Cramer, 2005). As Cassell and Cramer (2005) explain:

There has been a recurring moral panic throughout history, not just over real threats of technological danger, but also over the compromised virtue of young girls, parental loss of control in the face of a seductive machine, and the debate over whether women can ever be high tech without being in jeopardy. (p. 54)

In his pioneering research in the 1970s about media representations of youth subcultures in England, Cohen (1972) developed the term moral panic to explain the phenomenon that occurs when a concern, person, or groups of persons emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. Their activities, real or imagined, are then presented in the mass media in a stereotypical and stylized manner, moralized over by "right-thinking people" who demand action to contain or control it (Cohen, 1980). Sometimes, this panic passes over and is forgotten; at other times it has more serious and lasting repercussions that produce changes to laws, social policy or even the way society conceives itself.

For instance, Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) point to moral panic in the late 1990s and early 2000s around school shootings. Research conducted by the Justice Policy Institute in the United States found that a child's chance of being killed in school is a mere 1 in 2 million, yet 71 per cent of adults polled believed a school shooting was 'likely' to happen in their community (p. 9). The notorious events of Columbine High School were given alarmist coverage in the media

as if what happened at Columbine could occur at any school, in any town, anywhere (Faucher, 2009). Though there is no denying the continued loss of young lives in the United States to school based gun violence, mass media has disproportionately focused on the threat of school shooters despite the fact that only one percent of all youth homicide occur at school (Centre for Disease Control, 2012). The result has been harsher sentences for young offenders and the multi-million dollar growth of the school security business (Killingbeck, 2001). Canada has also seen its own share of moral panics in recent years including fear about Islamic radicals, First Nations rights, public surveillance, child allergies, bullying, teen violence among females, ‘hockey parents’, and a myriad of health related concerns such as HPV vaccinations (Hier, 2008; Odartey-Wellington, 2009; Poltzer & Knabe, 2009).

Building upon Cohen’s initial work, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) have expanded the concept of moral panic, establishing a set of criteria that must be met for public concern to be labelled as such. Firstly, there must be a *concern* or heightened level of fear towards a group of persons engaging in a particular behavior and a belief that this behavior causes issue for one or more sectors of society. Secondly, there must be *hostility* towards the group causing the concern. Thirdly, there must be widespread *consensus* that the group’s behavior represents a real and serious threat. Fourthly, there must be *disproportion* in the assumption of the number of individuals engaged in the behavior and in the estimated threat, danger, or damage the behaviors will or has caused. This may include exaggeration or fabrication of figures, as well as rumours of harm either invented or unquestionably believed. Finally, moral panics must possess *volatility* to the point where they either become institutionalized interpersonally and/or socially – or disappear as quickly as they entered public consciousness.

Girls have long been a focus of public anxieties centred on their sexualities and gender performances. As girls began to occupy public spaces over the last century, youthful moral panics have increasingly come to centre on girlhood deviancy and regulating appropriate performances of girlhood femininity and sexuality (Thiel-Stern, 2014; Tsaliki, 2015). Moral panic towards girlhood online highlights similar public and media concern as did girls' involvements in dancehalls in the early 1900s, athletics in the 1920s, rock and roll music in the 1950s, the punk scene in the 1970s, and girl gangs in the 1990s (Barron & Lacombe, 2005; Thiel-Stern, 2014). These panics focused on a "mass policing of gender performance and calling out teen girls when they are not enacting proper femininity" (Thiel-Stern, 2014, p. 11). Longstanding conventions about girlhood, virginity, innocence and the sanctity of the female body become challenged in these moral panics, frequently resulting in policies and practices recommending girls be further disciplined, regulated, and controlled (Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014). Such a focus on regulating deviant female behaviour has been suggested to occur as ideas about girls' purity and innocence often become emblematic in Euro-Western nations (such as Canada, the United States and Australia) for more general anxieties about modern life and the erosion of traditional white, heterosexual, middle-class values in the face of rapid social change and technological developments (Egan, 2013; Tsaliki, 2015). Reoccurring concern over girlhood, is thus only taking new shape in relation to the technical, moral and legal dimensions of cybersafety.

Several cultural studies scholars such as McRobbie and Hall have linked moral panic to the marginalization of not only gender but also other sites of minoritization such as race, ability, and sexual orientation (Thiel-Stern, 2014). Hall et al. (1979) attempted to answer Cohen's question about whose interest is served in the creation of moral panics through linking moral

panic theory with concepts of hegemony and Marxism (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). Hall views moral panic as a conduit for dominant ideologies, operating as an advanced warning system to those in power of unwelcomed moral, political and social change. There appears to be a structured relationship between moral panics maintaining the power of the status quo and in turn constructing reality for those who consume the discourse they produce (Thiel-Stern, 2014). This relationship directs public opinion against the most disadvantaged and victimized and away from the political actions of the powerful that create social stresses such as racialized inequity, unemployment, welfare cuts, and poorly paid labour (Schissel, 1997).

One striking example of the relationship between moral panic and marginalization is the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Estimates as of 2014 state that 1,181 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing and/or been murdered over the past twenty years, resulting in one in four missing or murdered women being Indigenous despite comprising only two per cent of the population in Canada (RCMP, 2014). Gilchrist (2010) found that murdered or missing white females received six times more media coverage than Indigenous females despite notable similarities between their cases and their backgrounds. To Gilchrist (2010), the stories were indicative of the fact that what is considered 'newsworthy' continues to be filtered through a predominantly Western, white, heteronormative, cis, middle-class male gaze.

Today, political strategies tend to manifest as media strategies (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995), with what becomes or does not become news taking an increasingly political agenda. Exclusion of these Indigenous women's stories in the media draws attention away from political issues such as lack of economic opportunities, poor conditions on reserves, gendered colonial policies, the legacy of residential schools, and mistreatment and abuse by the Canadian justice

system and law enforcement officials, issues which require Canada to acknowledge its problematic colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples. Though Cohen (2011) questions whether a moral panic can ever be considered beneficial, the disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada seems an issue that could benefit from the increased public concern, widespread media coverage, and government responsiveness a moral panic brings.

Social anxieties about the rapid changes to modern society have frequently resulted in girls becoming a target of intervention rather than the social inequalities that frequently underlie such public concerns (Gonick, 2006). Hegemonic conceptualizations of girlhood sexuality and femininity over the past century have repeatedly resulted in moral panic towards the behaviours, desires, outlooks, interests, and demeanours of girls that challenge such constructs (Thiel-Stern, 2014), while ignoring other real and serious threats to girls who are marginalized. The power of these moral panics results in whatever the ‘problem’ is with girls (be it their use of the internet or choice in music and dress) becoming widely accepted, with such force and popularity, that it inevitably produces a widely accepted ‘truth’ about adolescent girlhood (Charania, 2010) and a need for a putative or controlling response. The critical feminist and girlhood studies I draw upon in this literature review and throughout this thesis critique the ‘truth’ about girlhood being touted in cybersafety discourse through examination of four cybersafety education materials. In particular, I critique, as do Navarro and Jasinki (2013), the idea that girls are at risk of cyberviolence due to their individual choices rather than their already disadvantaged position in society.

The Scope of Cyberviolence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls is increasingly on the global agenda both as a matter of social justice as well as public health (Temmerman, 2014). The United Nations (2015) estimates globally that one out of three women will experience violence in their lifetime. This already staggering number is expected to increase as violence against women and girls moves into the cyberspace. Once seen merely as “harmless teasing that women should expect and tolerate given the Internet’s Wild West norms of behaviour” (Keats Citron, 2009, p. 373), online violence, or cyberviolence, against women and girls is now recognized by Canada as a “new and emerging issue” (Sinha, 2013, p. 3) for which a more complete picture is needed.

The term ‘cyber’ was originally used in the word “cyberspace” to define the intangible, nonmaterial location of human perception and reality created through human interaction with computers, telecommunications, software and data (Birch & Buck, 1992; Chisholm, 2006). Cyberviolence, then, captures the different ways that violence can be exacerbated, magnified or broadcasted into this virtual space, characterized at times by an anonymity and digital permanence to the violence that can have far-reaching and serious consequences (Chisholm, 2006; UN, 2015; Yar, 2005). The term “cyberbullying” has frequently been used instead of “cyberviolence” to indicate the use of technology to “support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour” intended to harm others (Floros, Siomos, Fisoun, Dafouli, & Geroukalis, 2013, p. 445) and is frequently applied to cyberviolence directed at youth (Chisholm, 2006; Jones, Mitchel & Finkelhor, 2012). However, criticism has been levied that the term “cyberbullying” infantilizes the violence youth face by erasing “the sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and otherwise discriminatory nature of the behavior” and “the power and marginalization in which it

occurs” (Westcoast Leaf, 2014, p. 7; see also Lee & Chatterjee, 2012). That is why the term cyberviolence is used deliberately instead of cyberbullying throughout this thesis.

Broadly, cyberviolence involves any behaviours likely to constitute or lead to assault to one’s physical, sexual, psychological or emotional well-being, and may involve a combination of online and offline violence. Examples range from online harassment (including verbal threats, rape threats, cyberstalking and blackmail), non-consensual intimate photo sharing (including revenge porn and photo-sharing of sexual assaults), to online sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and child luring. Hardly new forms of crimes, cyberspace has instead been stated as creating novel ways for violence against women and girls to be perpetuated (Banks, 2001).

In addition to already being more likely to report offline experiences of physical and sexual violence, women and girls are increasingly reporting experiences with cyberviolence (Navarro & Jasinski, 2013; Pederson, 2013; Walrave, 2011). For instance, Jones, Mitchell and Finkelhor (2013) found that from 2000 to 2010 the number of girls reporting experiences with online violence increased from 48% to 69%. Recent research in British Columbia estimates that one out of every five girls has been adversely impacted by cyberviolence (Smith et al., 2014). This online violence is disproportionately directed towards females with histories of childhood abuse, mental illness, substance use and/or living in poverty (Helweg-Larsen et al., 2012; Noll, Shenk, Barnes & Haralson, 2013; Walrave, 2011).

The need for cybersafety is perhaps most frequently directed towards girls’ use of their mobile phones, specifically the ability of girls to use their mobile phones to take and send sexualized images (or sexts) (Vanden-Abelle, Roe & Eggermont, 2012). Irresponsible, sexual and out of control use of the mobile phone is portrayed as rampant and widespread among teen girls, perhaps spurred on by the widespread coverage of Todd and Parsons’ cases. Yet, in British

Columbia, as few as one in 10 youth report ever engaging in sexting, with adolescent males being the most likely group to send sexts (Smith et al., 2014). However, despite evidence females may be engaging in less sexting than depicted by media stories, girls continue to report frequent requests for explicit images and more online interactions that led to physical or sexual violence offline (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2007).

The increased attention towards cyberviolence against girls has also created public resurgence in the threat of the online sex predators (Clapton, Cree, & Smith, 2012). Fear of victimization by sexual predators is one of the most salient concerns under the cybersafety discourse (Berson, Berson & Ferron, 2002; boyd & Gannon, 2008; Sorbring & Lundin, 2013). Presently, there exists little information about the perpetrators of cyberviolence against adolescent females in Canada (Sinha, 2013). However, research from the United States over the past decade suggests the fear of victimization by strangers is largely media-perpetuated (Burrow-Sanchez, Call, Zheng, & Drew, 2011; Dowell, Burgess & Cavanaugh, 2009; Potter & Potter, 2001; Thiel-Stern, 2009). Though cyberviolence against girls is increasing, there has actually been a decrease in the online sexual solicitation of both male and female youth by strangers in recent years (Pederson, 2013; see also Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian, 2014; Pederson, 2013; Powell & Henry, 2014).

Similar to the perpetration of offline violence, such as sexual assaults (Sinha, 2013), those who commit online crimes against female youth remain largely family members, friends, peers, and intimate partners (Hasinoff, 2013; Pederson, 2013). For instance, Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2005) found from a sample of American law enforcement agencies that a considerable percentage (44%) of online sex crimes were perpetrated by girls' family members. The rhetoric that casts the perpetrators of cyberviolence as largely dangerous strangers falsely

locates the harm and violence girls experience online as occurring outside of their everyday life and intimate relationships (Hasinoff, 2015). In fact, “over a decade of research shows that while youth can and do get in to trouble online, offline settings remain more risky for most youth” (boyd & Hargittai, 2013, p. 262). Cyberviolence is in many ways only an extension of the offline violence girls have been experiencing long before technology was a part of their daily lives, the violence only being amplified and given new opportunities as girls increasingly engage in cyberspace.

The Intersection of Gender, Sexuality and Technology

The issue of cyberviolence against girls has already been brought to the fore of public consciousness through media coverage of a number of high profile stories (UN, 2015, p. 9). In particular, three cases: Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and the Steubenville Jane Doe have come to exemplify the problematic of addressing and responding to cyberviolence and cybermisogyny against girls (Mathen, 2014). I introduce the two cases that occurred in a Canadian context – Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, to highlight the complex intersection between gender, sexuality and technology in the public eye.

The Amanda Todd case.

While chatting on an online web forum, 12 year old Amanda Todd bared her breasts to an adult male who captured the image and then used it to blackmail her. When she refused to perform more sexual acts over her webcam for him, he circulated the photos online and to Todd’s friends, family, classmates and teachers (Chun & Friedland, 2015). In response to her photo being leaked, Todd suffered peer harassment over her sexual reputation and subsequently became isolated and depressed. In September 2012, Todd posted a video to YouTube in which she described through note-cards her “never ending story” of online exploitation and stalking, as

well as offline bullying and harassment. One month later, she was found dead of an apparent suicide in her family home in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia (CBC News, 2013). Her YouTube video would go viral after her suicide, leading to some of the first widespread media coverage in Canada of cyberviolence.

The intersection of technology with Todd's girlhood sexuality sustained public and media interest. People were troubled yet intrigued by the digital permanence of her extortion as images of her child like breasts continued to circulate after her death. Online harassers persisted to shame Todd after her suicide by leaving disparaging comments and images on her memorial pages (Luxen, 2012). The anonymity of the Internet provided protection for the adult male who victimized her, with it taking over two years for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other international authorities to find and charge him (Culbert & Hager, 2014). The common trope of the online predator created a discourse of parental worry, captured by media headlines such as "Adults must get up to speed on online threats, experts say" (Kines, 2012) and "Amanda's mother warns about the dark side of the web" (Shaw, 2012). Other articles such as "Internet culture encourages personal attacks" (Ferry, 2012) emphasized the aspects of technology in Todd's story over the gendered aspects of sexual-shaming and misogyny. Webb (2015) suggests "slut-shaming", the societal process predominately directed at women and girls that publicly shames them for their perceived sexual availability, history or behaviour, has become magnified on the Internet. Through framing Todd as a 'slut', the discursive tone of the case shifted from awareness of cyberviolence against girls to awareness about the riskiness of girls in cyberspace. Lee and Chetwynd (2012) note in particular that the sexualized and racialized aspects of her violence were erased by this framing, with few media stories emphasizing her multi-racial

heritage and how she was punished by female peers for transgressing rigid racial and sexual boundaries on and off line.

The Rehtaeh Parsons case.

In November 2011, 15-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons went to a house party where she reported being raped by four teenage boys. What made her case unique was unfortunately not the reported gang rape of a young girl, but that her perpetrators photographed the rape and then shared the images with Parsons' classmates (MacDonald, 2015a). Like Todd, Parsons would also find herself slut-shamed and the target of extensive online and offline harassment. Police investigated, but mistakenly concluded along with the crown attorney that there were not enough grounds to lay charges. In April 2013, six months after the suicide of Amanda Todd, Parsons too tried to take her life. She died three days later. Following a flood of criticism, her case was reopened. Two of her male peers were charged with child pornography offences in August 2013 and eventually convicted (MacDonald, 2015b). The sexual assault was never prosecuted.

Parsons' suicide brought further media and public attention to the issues of cyberviolence and girlhood risk online. Parsons was framed as traumatized firstly by the rape, and then again by technology through the continued digital circulation of its evidence. What was also unique in Parsons' case was that, unlike Todd, she was not victimized by a stranger but by her white, middle-class peers. Suddenly, cyberviolence -and perhaps more alarmingly - child pornography, was not just perpetrated by monstrous, strange men. Online child pornographers could now be "brave", "bright", "well-spoken" "thoughtful" and "pretty popular" boys next door, who now had to watch their "big high school life disintegrating" (Blatchford, 2015). Headlines such as "Sexting charges 'too harsh'; Kids need education not jail" (Seidman, 2013) and "Snaring bullies in child porn net" (Hutchinson, 2013) framed Parsons' violence as a "sexting case" and one of

youthful indiscretion rather than as a sexual assault. The two young men were charged with child pornography only as there was not enough evidence to pursue charges of sexual assault (Wong, 2013). Public concern seemed to move away from the rape culture that created the initial act of violation, towards the danger the mobile phone and digital culture held for girls to be victimized and revictimized over and over again.

The Responsibilisation of Todd and Parsons.

Despite these cases, popular media discourses of cyberviolence and its counterpart of cybersafety have largely neglected the gendered, sexual and racial aspects of these crimes. In addition to Parsons and Todd, there may be countless other girls in Canada and across the globe whose experiences with cyberviolence remain hidden. Mishna, McLuckie & Saini (2009) found youth self-reported they often do not disclose cyberviolence, because of shame, guilt, and even fear of reprisal. Though cases as extreme as Todd's and Parsons' may not be the norm it does not make the need to address cyberviolence any less pressing, especially for those girls who may not have the resources to seek justice. Chun and Friedland (2015) and Patil and Purkayastha (2015) note marginalized girls, such as Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant girls, poor and working class girls, queer and trans girls' experiences with cyberviolence tends to receive less public and media attention, possibly making it more difficult for these girls to come forward with their experiences of cyberviolence.

A key focus of this thesis is the fact that in addition to ignoring gendered and sexualized violence, these cases have also intensified and broadened the scope of girls' responsibilization (Karaian, 2014). Responsibilisation is a term originally proposed by Garland (1996) to describe the attempt throughout the twentieth century to devolve responsibility for public safety on to the individual. Todd and Parsons have been scrutinized for not only lacking safety in their Internet

practices but also in their daily life. Blatchford's (2015) interview in the National Post with one of the young men accused in Parson's case disputed that the sex was non-consensual and highlighted her underage drinking and smoking of cannabis as a way to defame Parsons' character, judgment and cast doubt about her sexual victimization. In a similar vein, a Vancouver Sun article on Amanda Todd stressed that her risky Internet usage and overt sexuality contributed to her situation (Fyfe, 2014). In a content analysis of international news stories, Thiel-Stern (2009) found the media framed girls who experienced cyberviolence in a way that gave a "sense that 'she asked for it' – a blame the victim strategy that has stigmatized rape survivors throughout history" (p. 31). As international cybersafety prevention campaigns echo this media risk discourse, cyberviolence against women and girls becomes positioned as a problem of under-aged girls lacking vigilance in their uses of social media (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015), rather than stemming from negative and harmful stereotypes about girls, masculinity and sexuality. Critical analysis of these materials thus becomes crucial to ensure that dangerous stereotypes about victimhood, violence and sexuality do not become further perpetuated under the current cybersafety discourse.

Yet, What is Girlhood?

Historically, girlhood has been presented as a physical and emotional stage of development along the linear path to female adulthood that all young women experience in more or less the same ways. This essentialized notion of girlhood is rooted in Euro-Western, Christian, scientific and psychological constructs (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005; Brown, 2011).

Dominant discourses of girlhood tout it as a universal identity or experience, frequently fixed to the particular social location of growing up white, middle class, heterosexual and cis. However, as Aapola et al., (2005) point out, experiences of meaning and what it is to be a 'girl' shift not

only with age but also with race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and ability. That the exact point the transition from girlhood to female adulthood occurs is tricky to define speaks further to the notion of girlhood as a social construct in addition to a developmental and biological one.

The idea of girlhood as a stable category has been further critiqued by scholars such as Butler (1990), who viewed girlhood not as a natural or stable gender but instead as a performance along the heterosexual matrix. Euro-Western dualistic thinking positions girls as ‘not’ boys, and this dualism creates and maintains a hierarchy where the feminine is positioned as the inferior, and thus the position of ‘girl’ as someone incapable of being a mature and serious contributor to adult life (Brown, 2011). This can be seen in the way the word ‘girl’ is applied frequently to women at any stage of development – child, adult or even senior, referencing women’s historical lack of status as an adult even once they reach biological maturity (Aapola et al., 2005).

These scholars suggest that girlhood should not be seen as a universal, biologically-grounded and stable category, but as ever shifting depending upon the sociohistorical, material, individual and discursive contexts in which it emerges. Girlhood is a messy, complicated and problematic category constantly being redefined in historically and culturally specific ways. Addressing the construct of girlhood in this thesis is important as questioning the naturalness of girlhood allows reflection on the dominant and contemporary discourses that continue to define and constrain it. Issues of representation are addressed by applying the term ‘girl’ to the construct of girlhood rather than a universal category of young women themselves, contributing to efforts to de-stabilize the notion of girlhood as a generic and universal identity.

Girlhood in Neoliberal Times

Also underlying this inquiry is a theoretical understanding of girlhood within the context of neoliberal and post-feminist Euro-western culture. Until relatively recently, academic understandings of girlhood were “devalued, trivialized, marginalized if not downright absent” (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007, p. 108) until feminist scholars such as Gilligan and McRobbie turned their attention towards their unique experiences. It would take until the 1990s for the academic field of girlhood studies that this thesis is aligned with to emerge. Such girlhood studies are grounded in feminist, gender, critical and/or cultural theories (Aapola et al., 2005; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007).

Yet contrasting with the academic emergence of girlhood studies in North America has been a collapsing of gender differences into the more general category of “children and youth”. Jiwani, Berman and Cameron (2010) suggest this trend is rooted in the commonly held perception in Western nations such as Canada that progressive human rights frameworks have resulted in gender equality. Scholars such as McRobbie (2009) and Kearney (2015) describe this context as “post-feminism”, an intersection of neoliberal and feminist ideas (Goodkind, 2009). Neoliberalism has been suggested as a dominant social order in Canada that sees individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, self-regulating, and bear full responsibility for their actions no matter how severe the constraints upon their lives (de Finney, Loiselle & Dean, 2011; Gill, 2008). Under neoliberal discourse, Euro-western girls and women are seen as “empowered” and having conquered patriarchy, allowing them to repudiate the need for feminism (Gill, 2008; Harris & Dobson, 2015). Structural problems are denied, and girls are encouraged to understand themselves as capable individuals whose problems are of their own making and resolvable via marketplace choices (Kearny, 2015). The need for girl-centered analyses under neoliberal then

becomes focused only on “backwards nations” (p. 136) that still engage in practices like genital mutilation, child labour, child prostitution, and honour killings. Domestically, neoliberal and post-feminist ideologies can make it appear that girls are vulnerable only when foreign cultural practices are transported to Canadian soil, such as the focus in the 2015 election over the Muslim traditions of Niqab and Burkas being “anti-woman” and “anti-feminist” (Logan, 2015).

Framing only girls in or from developing countries as in need of feminism has been suggested to result in the dismissal of gender inequality and a diminished focus on gendered violence in Western nations like Canada (Jiwani, Berman & Camerson, 2010). The post-feminist discourse characterizes girls and women as having unprecedented “choice, freedom and autonomy” (Renold & Ringrose, 2008, p. 314) with a focus on neoliberal concepts of self-reliance and personal responsibility. This freedom is individualized, apoliticized and abstracted from the complex social contexts and structural barriers that limit the choices available to many girls and women. Central to this version of femininity is that the experiences of girls marginalized by race, colonization and/or socio-economic location are presented as freely chosen and thus, their full responsibility (de Finney, Loiselle & Dean, 2011; Gill, 2008).

Garland’s concept of responsabilisation has become linked with neoliberal ideologies through the proliferation of strategies in which the burden of managing risk is placed onto individuals themselves (Muncie, 2006). The responsabilisation of girls and women under neoliberalism serves to frame girls in contradictory ways. Notions of autonomy and choice sit alongside an aggressive surveillance and discipline of girlhood through the “proliferation of highly restrictive and regulatory discourses of hypersexualized femininity” (Renold & Ringrose, 2008, p. 314). Girls are framed on the one hand as active and empowered agents and on the other as passive victims of hypersexuality. Girls are also framed as freely choosing to do and be

anything they want. Those girls constrained by social, cultural, racial or economic barriers or who experience painful or harmful gendered consequences are then responsabilized for having made the ‘wrong’ choice, even if no choice truly existed in the first place.

Choice for girls becomes further constrained as girlhood online must increasingly be understood in the context of surveillance by parents, social networks, corporations, internet providers, peers, and predators (Thiel-Stern, 2014). Such surveillance is often promoted to help girls manage their individual risk as they continue to produce and share online. Issues of self-surveillance, self-monitoring and self-discipline have thus become prevalent themes in girls’ media culture under neoliberal times (Gill, 2008). Scholarship on girls’ digital practices has tended to theorize them as potentially powerful and promising ways to resist mass culture and sexualization (Brown & Thomas, 2014; Mazarrella & Pecora, 2007) or claim space online to voice their issues and concerns (Kanai, 2015). Much of this feminist media scholarship draws from the original work of Haraway (1991) who theorized the online world as an emancipatory and liberating place not locked into the gender binary. These approaches to girls’ media scholarship highlight girls’ capacities to assert new messages about their self-representation and resist cultural influences. Yet, issues of surveillance, social constraint and gendered stereotypes continue to limit opportunity online much as in the offline world. Cyberspace as an emancipatory and liberating place for girls becomes further challenged by discursive neoliberal framings of girls as complicit when victimized online due to sharing too much information or exposing too much of their private lives (Gill, 2008; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014) such as seen in the case of Todd. This creates a complicated relationship with agency in the work of girls’ media studies, requiring a nuanced perspective that understands subjectivity and social structure, as well as the conditions of neoliberalism and postfeminism in the Euro-West (Harris & Dobson, 2015).

A Child and Youth Care (CYC) perspective on these safety strategies, in addition to the feminist perspectives discussed previously, brings additional opportunity to engage with the messy, complicated reality of gendered cyberviolence prevention and intervention and contest the postfeminist liberal girl subject. CYC is an active and diverse, relatively new field of practice and academics focused on both the individual as well as the social, political and cultural circumstances of their lives (Kouri, 2015; White, 2007). Several Child and Youth Care scholars have critiqued use of neoliberal, individual approaches that undermine and pathologize individuals suggesting instead a focus on politicized approaches that foreground the political, historical, economic, and sociocultural forces that structure people's encounters with colonial systems such as child welfare and residential care (de Finney, 2014; de Finney, Dean, Loiselle & Saraceno, 2011; Sacareno, 2012). Approaches to CYC such as White's (2007) conceptualization of praxis, "an ethical, self-aware, responsive and accountable action" (p. 226), represent opportunities to reflect on, analyze, and recreate professional helping, departing from traditions that ignore the ways in which "whiteness, coloniality, capitalism and gendered oppression constrain possibilities" (Saraceno, 2012, p. 256).

Since White's 2007 praxis framework, a number of CYC scholars have extended or developed their own notion of praxis to emphasize the political and revolutionary aspects of CYC that represent and respond to the realities and experiences of diverse Canadian populations (Kouri, 2015). Loiselle, de Finney, Khanna and Corcoran (2012) state that within the field there is "an urgent need to unravel and disengage the multiple, intersecting threads of minoritization that underscore the contexts of CYC practice" (p. 183). More recently, White (2015) suggests that the field should start claiming a "sociopolitically-engaged" praxis (p. 507) as its defining characteristic. Such an approach recognizes the limits of individualized, decontextualized, and

apolitical interventions. Influenced by these CYC scholars, I attempt to link what neoliberal and post-feminist discourse portrays as an apolitical practice issue (i.e., “how can we help girls develop better safety strategies online?”) with a structural analysis of gendered power relations. I do so through my choice of methodology, a critical approach to discourse analysis that is steeped in feminist and gender studies frameworks. I also attempt to incorporate more radical and social justice oriented approaches through acknowledgement of the historical, colonial, heteronormative, and patriarchal construction of girlhood in crisis. Bringing CYC concepts of politicized praxis together with feminist, post-modern and critical race theories (among others) may provide me with opportunity to approach an issue such as cybersafety from a different stance.

CyberSafety (Mis)-Education

Out of concern and panic about online safety and agency, stakeholders and governments have had to quickly respond to the issue of cyberviolence against women and girls. The United Kingdom, Australia and Canada in particular have been highly proactive in developing educational materials that include interventions for girls such as: education on the legal and social risks of sexting and cyberbullying, healthy relationship strategies, avoiding online predators and unwanted communication, and privacy protection (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016; Henry & Powell, 2015). This push to quickly develop materials and strategies has resulted in: inclusion of risks and strategies based on limited research (Burrow-Sanchez et al., 2011; Jones, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2012); narrow and inaccurate ideas about what dangers girls face online (boyd & Hargittai, 2013; Dowell, Burgess & Cavanagh, 2009; Gannon, 2008; Jewkes & Wykes, 2012); problematic normative ideals of feminine gender and sexuality (Hasinoff, 2013; Hasinoff, 2014;

Powell & Henry, 2014; Thiel-Stern, 2009); and the risk of legitimizing online violence to those that fall outside of mainstream ideals of girlhood (Fyfe, 2014; Karaian, 2014).

White and Stoneman (2012) find that many prevention efforts continue to locate problems in the individual, pointing to a vital need to re-conceptualize prevention efforts to include questions of values, ethics, politics, relationships, human rights and justice, in addition to best practice. Instead, discourses of prevention tend to focus on the concept of evidence-based practice and what does and does not work to produce effective behaviour change. Indeed, the literature frequently approaches cybersafety from such a perspective, focusing on the fact that very little is currently known about what is effective to educate youth of all genders about cybersafety, and there is not a single agreed-upon method or best practice for teaching the topic (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Pescitelli & Horton, 2012).

Despite the fact that little is known about how to approach cybersafety with youth, several prevention strategies have already been developed in Canada. These include government initiatives (such as those put forth by the Government of Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women in Canada, Ontario Provincial Police, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, and the British Columbia Ministry of Education); for profit initiatives (such as the Telus Wise Internet and Smartphone Education campaigns); and not for profit initiatives (such as those produced by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Canadian Centre for Digital Media and Literacy, Safe Online Outreach, and the Canadian Red Cross). Yet, despite production of over a dozen cybersafety strategies, only one additional study (Karaian, 2014) has critically analyzed Canadian cybersafety materials by looking at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection's "Respect Yourself" campaign. This may be because prevention strategies with children and youth are

infrequent and typically unlikely candidates for critique, as “the discourse of prevention, with its promise of healthier minds and bodies, safer communities, and brighter futures for our children, has an irresistible pull” (White & Stoneman, 2012, p. 105). Thus the discourses behind these preventative strategies are too rarely questioned.

Feminist scholars such as Dobson and Ringrose (2015) highlight critical analysis of these cybersafety materials as crucial given their potential to perpetuate discourses of victim blaming, shame, and limitation on girls’ sexual agency. The United Nations (2015) have called for prevention and education materials that explicitly dispute victim blaming approaches focused on girls’ poor personal judgment and social behaviour in regard to their use of technology. Despite the need for such analysis, there has been little critical investigation into cybersafety materials, particularly from a feminist Child and Youth Care perspective, such as that undertaken in this thesis. Additionally, even fewer studies have critically questioned cybersafety materials in a Canadian context, with the majority examining materials in the United States (Hasinoff, 2014), the United Kingdom (Barnard-Willis, 2012; Pederson, 2013; Ringrose et al., 2013) and Australia (Gannon, 2008; Powell & Henry, 2014). Since technology is changing rapidly, so too must cybersafety materials, resulting in even relatively recent examinations of Canadian campaigns (Karaian, 2014) being somewhat dated. Given the neoliberal context of nations such as Canada, educational materials may simply foment victim blaming by highlighting girls’ personal choice, agency and responsibility, and by giving girls and their allies individual safety strategies rather than critical tools to intervene into the structural inequalities that perpetuate online gendered violence. Unpacking and critically investigating such materials potentially offer opportunity to recreate and re-conceptualize cyberviolence strategies to be responsive towards the realities of contemporary girlhood. This thesis thereby adds to critical, contemporary understandings of how

cyberviolence risk and safety strategies are discursively produced, and how girlhood is discursively produced through these materials. I explore what kinds of actions, experiences, and identities are both compatible and incompatible with this positioning through examination of four nationwide cybersafety prevention campaigns in Canada, as explored further in Chapter 3.

Outline of Subsequent Chapters

From my review of the literature, I contend that current conceptualizations of girlhood, technology, adolescent sexuality, and neoliberal individuality presently dominate the conversation around creating cybersafety for girls. Informed by a critical feminist, Child and Youth Care, and post-structuralist framework, this thesis critically examines four Canadian cybersafety campaigns, looking at how issues of gender, race, sexuality, risk, and responsibility are constructed within the materials. In Chapter 2, I present my methodology, research values and approach to conducting a critical discourse analysis of the materials. Thematic findings from my analysis regarding how girlhood is positioned in the materials are presented in Chapter 3. These themes include a variety of concepts and critiques that I further analyze in Chapter 4 in relation to the literature review. I then delve into my reflections on constraint, agency and opportunities to resist contemporary conceptualizations of girlhood and perceptions of gendered cyberviolence such as found within these materials. Finally, I conclude this thesis by providing alternative and possible suggestions for cybersafety practice with girls as well as potential future directions for research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In reviewing the literature, it seems imperative to have cybersafety materials that address the high rates of cyberviolence that girls are experiencing. On the other hand, the literature indicates that many of these materials are based on problematic assumptions of girlhood that unjustly responsabilize girls to prevent cyberviolence and problematic representations of girlhood that render invisible girls' diverse gender, sexual, class and racial and ethnic realities in a Canadian context. Therefore, I wanted to select a methodological approach that enabled me to critically examine how cybersafety materials are conceptualizing and positioning girlhood through investigation of their representations of girlhood, risk and personal safety strategies. Though many methodological approaches would have allowed me to investigate these questions, I selected a method of inquiry that involved applying a critical feminist and post-structural framework to a critical discourse analysis (CDA). Key questions I chose to consider throughout my inquiry included the following:

- How are issues of gender and gender-based violence taken up in cybersafety materials?
- How is girlhood constructed through the materials and what types of girlhood are represented?
- How are risk and safety constructed for girls, as well as issues of responsibility, accountability and consent?
- How are larger structural and systemic forces such as political and economic factors, socio-historical constructions of girls and women, and inequities facing different groups of girls accounted for (or not accounted for?)
- What are the consequences of this positioning for individual girls as well as society at large?

- What are alternative possibilities, curricula and frameworks for Child and Youth Care practitioners to address, understand and respond to online gender and sexual-based violence and harassment?

I begin this chapter by articulating my theoretical framework and the alignment between feminist and post-structuralist theories, my personal values, and the epistemological foundation of this thesis. I next outline my choice of methodology – critical discourse analysis- and how it guided my analytic process. I then discuss the ethical issues I encountered throughout this thesis. Finally, I discuss my approach to methodological evaluation and the extent to which my evaluative criteria were achieved.

Articulating a Post-Structural Feminist Framework

My conceptual approach to this research represents my political commitment to challenging the epistemologies and methodologies that tend to dehumanize individuals and justify social injustice and inequality. Critical post-structural and intersectional feminist theories are consistent epistemologically with both my personal values, as well as the values of this project, to disrupt and displace dominant privilege. Grounding my methodology in this theoretical framework has allowed me to deconstruct the discursive practices that legitimize gender-based violence and narrow gender and sexual roles in a heteropatriarchal society.

I write this thesis firstly coming from an ontological view that reality is constructed through social interactions and social formations, experienced individually as well as collectively. Specifically, I take a post-structuralist approach, a branch of post-modernism that is constituted by a plurality of theoretical traditions stemming from scholars such as Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva (Baxter, 2003). Post-structuralists see subjects produced not only through dominant discourses and regulatory practices but also through language, which acts

as a site for the construction and contestation of social meanings (Davies et al., 2006). Speakers produce fluctuating meanings in relation to how powerfully they are positioned within a range of competing discourses (Baxter, 2003). Post-structuralists also refute the belief in possible scientific objectivity. As such, texts can be interpreted in many ways, allowing the possibility for dominant narratives to be deconstructed and thus contested. I take a post-structural approach to this research in particular to draw attention to that fact that the reported risks and recommended behaviours for girls to follow represent not an abstract and independent truth but are mediated by certain historical, socio-cultural, and political conditions that have deep impact on girls' everyday lives, identities and social interactions. In addition, in line with Willig's (2008) understanding of social constructionist research, the aim of this thesis is also not to gain access to a particular 'truth' about these discourses but rather to generate a more nuanced, intersectional understanding that will be useful in challenging narrow, pre-determined accounts.

I write this thesis secondly as a feminist. Though neoliberal post-feminism has seen a shift away from feminist values and embracement of the label of feminist, it is one I adopted long before I even had a name for it based upon my experiences growing up and witnessing the relationship between gender, power and control. Feminism is a diverse theoretical tradition that in the Anglo-Western world has seen several 'waves', all associated with creating gender equality. The most recent third and fourth waves have focused on deconstructing gender identities, relations, and engaging with colonial, transnational and environmental conditions (Baxter, 2003). In general, feminists believe that the social construction of gender has served as an ideological structure to divide people into a rigid gender binary of male/female. This binary is embedded in a social dichotomy of labour and traits that maintains a hierarchy of domination and subordination (Butler, 1993). The overt ideological goal of feminist research, then, is to correct

the invisibility and distortion of gender experiences in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social positions, in addition to disrupting the hegemony of the gender binary (Lather, 1998).

Though this thesis is focused on conceptualizations of girlhood, I also see my feminist approach to research as advocating for people of all genders to have greater equality and autonomy. This approach to feminist research is also intimately engaged with intersectionality theories (see Crenshaw, 2010; 2012) that recognize the privilege and oppression can come from other intersectional positions besides gender, including race, ability, citizenship, and sexuality, among others.

Both contemporary feminist and post-structural theories have influenced each other, contributing to complex and nuanced understandings of how power and gender relations work within particular social orders (Lazar, 2007). This has resulted in the ideological branch of post-structural feminism, defined by Weedon (1997) as a “mode of knowledge production which uses post-structural theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change” (p. 40-41). Ideas central to post-structural feminist thought include: problematizing truth and the dominant discourses perceived as natural, which also involves critique of who controls what counts as knowledge; rejection of an essential self or core identity, seeing the self as multiple rather than universal; rejecting the essentializing practices that lock individuals in particular subject positions; deconstruction of binary opposites such as white-black, heterosexual-homosexual, man-woman, theory-practice; and increasing capacity for agency and disruption of privilege (Davies et al., 2006; Pierce, 2010; Tisdell, 1998). Strega (2005) states that post-structural feminism is also a useful approach to research examining how power operates through discourse and subjectivity, assisting researchers to take a social justice orientation and create more effective means of

resistance to inequity, sexism, racialization and gender-based violence. A post-structural feminist approach is thus in line with the aims of my research, which will not only identify and critique the discourses operating in cybersafety prevention materials, but also explore ways to resist the dominant framing of the issue and reimagine the conversation of gendered cyberviolence based on a commitment to politicized research and practice.

Both feminist and post-structural theories also fit within my selected critical approach towards research, explaining my choice to do a critical discourse analysis. A critical approach to discourse analysis focuses on the use of language within its social and historical context, as well as sees research as a political act in which one can focus on issues of power, domination, exclusion and silencing (Glesne, 2011). Given that this research is being done within the discipline of Child and Youth Care, a critical approach also allows me to focus on praxis, the relationship between thought and action, theory and practice (White, 2007). Frequently, a critical lens is cast outside of the realm of “authentic CYC” (Loiselle, et al., 2012, p. 179). However, my experiences and application of feminist values in my praxis have resulted in me seeing a critical lens as essential. By engaging with critical theories, my approach to discourse analysis provides tools to “unravel and disengage the multiple, intersecting threads of minoritization that underscore the contexts of CYC practice” (Loiselle et al., 2012 p. 183) in the area of gendered cyberviolence. Grounded in the emancipatory stance of feminism and the deconstructive purpose of post-structuralism, this entanglement with critical theory will allow me to deconstruct current approaches to gender-based cyberviolence and illuminate collective possibilities to work with critical language, tools and conversations to disrupt the dominant discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodology

I explore cybersafety through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of four prevention websites. My approach to CDA is primarily concerned with examining how language around girlhood in the chosen materials politically and socially constructs and represents their experiences to serve vested interests. Over the past three decades, CDA has been influenced by and influenced post-structural and feminist thought, representing a strong match with my theoretical framework. It is a particularly relevant methodology to interrogate discursive formations of gender and sexuality because it questions the underpinnings of norms and ideologies as they are both constituted by and constitutive of social discourses.

Discourse analysis represents the many traditions by which discourses of talk and text are analyzed. The theoretical framework of discourse analysis is eclectic and unsystematic (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Rather than a single methodology, discourse analysis contains a widespread collection of methodological approaches (Morgan, 2010). What all forms of discourse analysis do have in common is an exploration of language within relevant social contexts. Language is seen as a mode of social practice that represents particular ways of viewing and understanding our world and ourselves (Janks, 1997) and is reflective of the rules, ideologies, and hegemonies that exist in our society (Kumar, 2000). By focusing on language as social practice, researchers are able to explore the “human meaning making” that is occurring (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2002). Originating in the philosophy of Marx, Foucault, Habermas and the later work of critical linguistics in the 1970s into how language and grammar can be used as ideological instruments, CDA came to prominence through the works of Fairclough, Wodak, and van Dijk (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Machin & Mayr, 2012). CDA is found within a variety of fields such as anthropology, sociology, education, and the human services. Morgan (2010) finds that the focus

on power makes this methodological approach useful for critically analyzing and evaluating health and social care phenomena; it has been applied previously to Canadian and provincial prevention materials such as Tupper's (2008) evaluation of drug education curricula in British Columbia secondary schools and Reynold et al.'s (2015) critical analysis of British Columbian online parental education materials.

Though there is no single, homogenous understanding of CDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012), the defining features according to Weiss and Wodak (2003) are a concern with power as a central condition in social life and development of a theory of language which incorporates this as a major premise. Close attention is paid not only to the notion of struggles for power and control but also to the intertextuality and recontextualization of competing discourses in various forms of talk, media, images and text. In addition to critiquing power and buried ideologies, CDA is also committed to identifying possibilities for addressing social wrongs and improving well-being (Fairclough, 2009). There are many ways to read a text (Willig, 2008) and a CDA researcher does not take a privileged position in claiming their reading as definitive and final, only that the unnamed practices, ideologies, and conventions behind the text contribute to the reproduction of power and that one must raise suspicions about the assumed naturalness of taken for granted practices (Fairclough, 1995). According to Fairclough (1992; 1995), this involves tracing relations between the micro (e.g. particular discursive textual features such as words, syntax, tropes, and conceptual categories) and the macro (e.g. the broader social and political structures that discourses both operate within and that underpin the language structure). Through macro and micro analyses of what discourses are prominent in cybersafety materials, this thesis aims to rethink roles, relationships and practices around cybersafety for girls. This is especially important as the phenomena is relatively new (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and has potentially wide-

reaching implications if accurate information is not disseminated.

Analytic Process: Using a Feminist and Dialectical-Relational Approach

There are many approaches within CDA but I choose Fairclough's (2009) dialectical-relational approach, which is considered by Fairclough to be a methodology as well as a method. As a methodology, the dialectical-relational approach represents a body of practice and general conceptual principles, yet it also provides specific steps for conducting the analysis, allowing it to operate as a method (p. 167). I found the dialectical-relational approach to fit well with my theoretical framework of feminist post-structuralism. It also provided me with the structured yet still flexible approach I was looking for in conducting critical discourse analysis as a graduate student.

Though CDA is known for having an overtly political stance and concern for various forms of social inequality and injustice, not all CDA research involving issues of gender are necessarily feminist (Lazar, 2007). Thus, within the methodological branch of CDA, I also ground my analysis in feminist critical discourse analysis. Lazar (2007) articulates a feminist CDA approach as firstly defined by deconstructing the complex ways in which gender assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in communities. Secondly, there is an interest in not merely deconstructing texts for the sake of critique but also in ensuring that the issues the critique represents have material, phenomenological and practical consequences for individuals in specific communities. This frequently involves critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order –mainly relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women and others (Lazar, 2007 p. 145).

Feminist CDA specifically fits the purpose of this research to critique the power relations

within cybersafety texts that subjugate and responsabilize girls, advocating for new ways to resist and reconceptualise the discourse and its consequences for girls in Canadian communities.

However, Feminist CDA offers no specific method for engaging in analysis. Thus, I also apply the dialectical-relational approach which contains four distinct stages that progress from description through interpretation to explanation. In each of these stages, I also apply a feminist CDA approach through deconstructing gender, patriarchy, and the subjugation/agency given to girls. I describe my step-wise analytic process below.

Stage one: Identifying problematic ideologies.

The first stage in Fairclough's dialectical relational CDA represents a problem-based approach, as the researcher is asked to select a social wrong on which they can focus (Fairclough, 2009). Social wrongs are defined as those "aspects of social systems, forms, or orders which are detrimental to human well-being and which could in principle be ameliorated if not eliminated" (p. 168). My review of the existing literature found two prominent patriarchal discourses that give me cause for concern regarding cybersafety education. The first is the overinflated fear of girls being victimized online by strangers and sexual predators to justify greater acceptance of surveillance measures. The second is a discourse of panic towards girls online activity, which views them as immoral, shameful, and responsible for their experiences with cyberviolence. In both of these discourses, the gender-based and systemic nature of cyberviolence is rendered invisible in favour of framing cybersafety as an individual responsibility. I thus suggest that the present cybersafety discourse represents a form of social wrong through the dissemination of inaccurate information about online risk and subsequent responsabilization, lending itself well to the problem-based approach of dialectical-relation as well as feminist CD

Stage two: Seeking understanding through the literature.

In the second stage, the researcher seeks to understand what structures and obstacles are preventing the issue from being addressed by interrogating its semiotic and discursive aspects. This is accomplished by identifying and selecting one or more relevant texts for in-depth analysis (Fairclough, 2009, p. 169). I asked throughout this stage in choosing a relevant text “what makes this a problem which is resistant to easy resolution” (Fairclough, 2009, p. 170) as well as “what makes this a problem that sustains patriarchal systems” based on feminist CDA principles. As discussed previously, prevention materials are generally absent from critique due to the presumed naturalness of their ability to create positive change. Yet, as White and Stoneman (2012) conclude, many prevention materials are developed under problematic discourses. Previous cybersafety prevention campaigns have been critiqued by scholars such as Dobson and Ringrose (2015), Karaian (2014) Powell and Henry (2014), and Ringrose et al., (2013) among others, for the way in which they position girlhood and girls’ sexual agency, indicating a tendency globally for these prevention campaigns to locate responsibility for the problem of cyberviolence within individual girls. I thus was interested in examining campaigns from a Canadian context to seek better understanding of the tensions and real-world consequences girls face under this dominant patriarchal discourse.

This led me to identify and select four multi-media cybersafety prevention campaigns. Most approaches to CDA do not explicitly recommend sampling procedures as there is no one way of gathering data (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). However, Fairclough (1992) suggests sampling texts at a moment in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong. These moments show the “problematization of practice” (p. 230). Given the widespread public concern and attention around cybersafety yet the continued victimization of young women online, I

suggest that current cybersafety prevention materials represent such a moment. In order to identify appropriate texts, I conducted a Google search using the terms “cybersafety prevention materials Canada”, “cybersafety education materials Canada” and “cybersafety girls Canada” and looked through all of the Canadian-based results. I also informally surveyed peers I know in the field who work with girls, such as outreach counsellors and mental health clinicians, for what cybersafety materials they found to be commonly accessed and consulted in the field. I found overall that many of my peers had received little training or resources in this area to point me towards appropriate resources, despite having many reporting female clients who had experienced cyberviolence. Thus, this informal survey of practitioners who work with girls resulted in only one additional resource. This may speak to the fact that cyberviolence and cybersafety are relatively new phenomena for which few training and resources have been developed, particularly for CYC practitioners. Additionally, given current economic conditions my experience as a practitioner has been that there are few opportunities to receive ongoing training or purchase updated resources to advance such practice.

My online search using key terms resulted in a pool of 14 different cybersafety resources, 13 from the online search and one from the informal survey (see appendix A). After examining each of these 14 resources, I applied a set of five criteria in order for the text to be included. The first criterion was that the material was primarily addressed to young people and their family. Originally, I wanted to only look at materials primarily addressed to girls but too few resources were gender specific so I widened my scope. The second requirement was that the materials focus specifically on issues of cybersafety. I excluded material that only emphasized issues of sexting without other issues such as online exploitation, privacy, etc. as the discourse of cybersafety from the literature review seemed much broader than a singular issue. Thirdly, each

material I selected had to fall into my conceptual definition of being ‘prevention’ based. The webpage, book, or video needed to advise or guide girls and their families about risks online and includes specific instructions and specialized information about creating safety. Fourthly, the materials had to be created for use within a Canadian context so that I could appropriately speak to the historical and social conditions under which the materials were created. Finally, the materials had to be publically accessible and readily available. Materials that required a fee to access or purchase, or a license to be obtained were deemed to be beyond the scope of this thesis, as it is likely girls and practitioners who work with girls would be unable to access them in less taking part in a specific program. After applying these criteria to the materials found from my original search, I selected four relevant cybersafety campaigns which I discuss next.

Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP) is a registered charity whose goal is to “reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public” (CCCP website, 2012). CCCP receives funding from several national telecommunication companies such as Bell, Shaw, and TELUS, as well as from the Government of Canada, working as part of the National Strategy to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet. The organization also operates Cybertip.ca, Canada’s official tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. CCCP has recently developed anti-sexting initiatives through viewing sexting as a form of child sexual abuse and exploitation under the current criminal code definition in Canada which allows the sexts of minors to be viewed as child pornography. The website Need Help Now is produced under this expanded definition of child pornography in order to fit CCCP’s original mandate. The website is directed at youth to address issues of self /peer exploitation. This is the term the campaign uses for sexting and the non-consensual sharing

of intimate photos, strongly suggesting CCCP's approach as anti-sexting. Information is provided on how to stay healthy and in control in relationships to avoid online danger, as well as what to do if something happens online. The website is accompanied by a guide for parents entitled *Self/Peer Exploitation: A Resource Guide for Families*, two accompanying Public Service Announcement videos, as well as a series of nine tip sheets entitled *Parenting Tweens and Teens*. These materials educate families on broader cybersafety issues such as online extortion, cyberbullying, online luring, and tips for smartphone, app, and online safety. These materials were chosen due to their stated focus and breath of cybersafety information addressed to both youth and their families.

CyberSafe Girl.

CyberSafe Girl is a public education program developed by the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women in Canada in 2012 to provide information to girls, parents, and educators about how girls can be safe online (Cybersafegirl.ca website, 2014). The campaign states it selected girls as its primary focus due to research indicating girls to be at greater risk of experiencing cyberviolence (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012). CyberSafe Girl is primarily delivered through the website, Cybersafegirl.ca, which states its aims are to keep girls safe from cyberviolence, sexual risk and harm, and online sexual predators. Though the campaign was not originally produced as a result of her death, the Atlantic Ministers state Retaeh Parsons' suicide as a result of cyberviolence in the Atlantic province of Nova Scotia supported a need for this campaign as "social media played a devastating role" (Stewart, 2014).

Information is available directly for girls, as well as for families and educators, through the form of tip sheets and links to other resources such as videos and games. These include tip sheets about cybersafety in general and online safety agreements that can be signed between

parent and daughter. In 2014, an additional topic was added that addresses issues of hypersexualization and its influence on girlhood online. The website was chosen as it is one of the only campaigns to prevent online risk and harm specifically designed for girls in a Canadian context. Each webpage, tip sheet, and video was used as a basis for analysis.

Social Smarts: Privacy, the Internet and You.

The Social Smarts campaign is produced by the Privacy Commission of Canada, an officer of parliament who reports to the House of Commons and Senate and is given power to act as an advocate for the privacy rights of Canadians (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada website, 2014). The Office stated an interest in cybersafety materials for youth after conducting research and discussions with high school students on the subject of privacy and the Internet. The stated focus of the campaign is to inform youth on how they could “use online tools in a fun way that they won’t regret later in life” (Office of the Privacy Commissioner website, 2014). The Office developed a youth presentation package to be used with students in grades 9 to 12 in addition to a graphic novel, video, and a series tip sheets developed specifically to be used with young people. These cover cybersafety topics such as “How to know if your online friends are who they say they are” and “Sexting: Not Worth it”, indicating their stance also as an anti-sexting campaign. These materials were chosen due to their stated youth-centered focus and breadth of cybersafety information addressed. The presentation, graphic novel, videos, as well as all youth focused webpages were used in the analysis.

Stop Hating Online.

Stop Hating Online is the Government of Canada’s public awareness campaign and comprehensive resource for parents and youth on “cyberbullying and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images that can take place online” (GetCyberSafe.ca website, 2014). The

website was introduced by the Torie government in 2014. The site includes the advertisement “Pass It On” which served as an anti-sexting public service announcement that aired nationally on Canadian TV in 2014, focusing on the legal consequences for minors who share intimate photos without consent. The campaign also has seven information sheets for both parents and youth around cyberbullying and online exploitation. It also offers #wordshurt, an interactive YouTube experience that demonstrates the emotional impact of cyberbullying. All webpages and tip sheets addressed to parents and youth were analyzed, as well as the “#wordshurt” and “pass it on” videos.

Stages three and four: Reading critically.

Fairclough (2009) states next to carry out an interdiscursive and linguistic analysis of the texts. I first conducted a general reading and viewing of the each campaign to get an overall sense of the materials. Specifically, I first looked at how the texts/pages/documents were designed, such as the textual and language use, and aspects of images, layout, and/or music. I then moved on to reading for deeper analysis to understand the materials’ implicit and hidden ideologies and norms.

Before beginning reading, I firstly ensured that I maintained both a digital and paper copy of all of the content used in my analysis. Paper copies of websites, tip sheets and guides were printed and filed away for reference. I also saved digital snapshots of each webpage and uploaded all PDFs and videos to the qualitative software NVIVO for digital storage. This proved a tedious but important process as late in the analytic process one of the curricula, Need Help Now, updated their webpages resulting in several changes to their materials. As I had examined the original materials in my initial readings, I continued to rely on my digital copies of this website given that I was not able to return to the source materials online.

From initial reading I found 23 themes that I thought pointed towards specific discourses apparent throughout the four texts. My first reading was, to say the least, overwhelming in terms of sheer volume of content and analysis and I wanted to be careful to not dismiss any concept or phrases I found indicative of possible discourses at first glance. I next transcribed excerpts and copied images that typified each theme, and then re-read each text with these themes in mind to see if they remained substantial. After this reading, I eliminated several themes which I found to be inconsequential or unsubstantiated by enough information to support my initial thought or which I found at further glance to not be apparent across all texts. These themes were then discarded from the data.

I then engaged in another cycle of reading, looking at how my main research questions related to the themes that I initially identified, as well as my literature review. This reading allowed me to look deeper at the discourses contained within the texts, such as ideologies of risk and safety, ideologies and representations of girlhood, and ideologies of power, agency and constraint. From this reading, I created macro categories with my themes that seemed indicative of five key discourses. I transcribed again the relevant excerpts and images. One prominent discourse centered on parenting and girlhood was discarded given its lack of fit with the initial focus of the thesis. I then re-engaged with each text to find more relevant excerpts and images to exemplify each discourse, as well as eliminate excerpts and images which I found to not be as representative as originally thought when re-read in context. I completed this cycle with four themes, each with relevant examples, which were then sent to my supervisor for further review. This review stage required me to go back to the texts in search of further evidence and examples to support the links I was making or to reconsider if the link was as important or clearly defined as I initially thought. At times, this was tedious given the sheer volume of content but proved

effective in strengthening my overall engagement with and analysis of the data.

This feedback was also appreciated as I found the analytic process to be a solitary endeavour; the texts were filtered only through my own identity, lens, experiences, and biases. I often would take several days away from analysis when I felt myself becoming frustrated or stuck by part of the process, journaling my questions, confusion, and feelings on the texts, only to return to it when I felt in a clearer and more open head space. Through reflecting on feeling solitary or isolated in this part of the research process, I tried to approach analysis as relational, viewing each reading as a dynamic and engaging conversation between the audience, the writers of each text, and myself.

I also engaged deeply with awareness of my own privilege during further stages of analysis, frequently questioning how my own identity as a white, middle class, able-bodied heterosexual, cis-woman might affect my readings. This tension was most acute for me in regards to reading race and ethnicity within the images of girlhood shown throughout the texts. Given the white and settler background I come from, I interrogated many times how I learned to and was reading race and ethnicity, given the colonial history of using racial categories as a basis for subordination. However, I also believed it was important for the aims of the research to examine how the racialization of girls in selected images across the text was indicative of the desired audience and construction of girlhood. I also struggled with voice during this stage and not wanting to feel like I was speaking for or on behalf of girls who might engage with these materials or for victims of cyberviolence. To resolve these tensions, I continually engaged with my personal and research values and theoretical framework to see myself as an imperfect but committed ally and advocate throughout the analytic process, rather than an authority on these texts or this topic.

From these readings, I moved into the third stage, in which Fairclough (2009) considers why the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong. This involves questions such as: “How are various ideologies helping to maintain particular relations of power and domination?”, “Is the social wrong inherent to the social order?” and “Can the wrong be addressed within the social order or only by changing it?” (p. 170). To accomplish this, my critical post-structural feminist framework guided me. I analyzed the four discourses for neo-liberal and postfeminist themes, looking at how the materials’ construction of girlhood may be inherent to the neo-liberal order. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 4.

In the fourth and final stage, possible ways to move past the obstacle are identified, moving the analysis from critical to productive critique (Fairclough, 2009). These possibilities may appear as “silences, gaps and contradictions” in the text, as ideological uniformity is never completely achieved (p. 171). From my analysis of the materials, I present in Chapter 4 my suggestions for change based on the conflicting and ambiguous ideas present in the materials, disrupting the common sense strategies and discourses of cybersafety and girlhood as well as larger structures of heteropatriarchial privilege. I believe this process of multiple readings and cycles of analysis helped deepen my critical engagement with the materials. It also allowed me to create a systematic and transparent process of my engagement with the data as I moved across the analysis, documenting each reading along the way. The result was the identification of four prominent discourses that speak to the presumed natural assumptions and conceptualizations of girlhood that I found problematic across the texts. These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Ethical and Methodological Evaluation

Ethical considerations.

As I only reviewed publically accessible cybersafety prevention materials in Canada and did not conduct data collection with human subjects this thesis required no additional ethical approvals from a human research ethics board. However, I did apply ethical standards throughout the process. Wodak and Meyer (2009) recommend applying ethical standards in critical discourse analysis such as making one's position, research interests and values explicit, and the criteria as transparent as possible without the need to apologize for the critical stances of the work. Before beginning this thesis, I took the position that many cybersafety materials in Canada currently construct risk for young women problematically and unfairly responsibilize them for their own safety without holding those responsible for perpetrating the violence or privacy violations accountable. I also entered this thesis with strong feminist values in changing the culture in Canada of gender-based violence. I make explicit this ethical stance to make transparent my purpose and lens in engaging in the analysis of these texts.

Crafting validity.

The classic concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity used in quantitative research must be applied to qualitative research, and specifically to CDA, in modified ways given their epistemological and ontological standpoints. In critical, qualitative work, higher ecological validity may already exist as the research is occurring in context rather than in the artificiality of a laboratory, however there must still be processes to ensure data collection and analysis procedures are answering the original research question and are congruent with the methodology (Willig, 2008). That is why a 'craftmanship' approach to validity (Kvale, 1995) was taken, focusing on quality, reliability and rigor controls throughout the stages of knowledge production in this research, rather than mere inspection at the end.

To achieve this I committed to accurately reporting the methodological choices I made at

every step of the process, including developing a theoretical and methodological framework, designing the study, selecting, discarding and analyzing materials and data, identifying discursive themes, and reporting findings. In this process I relied on my own personal and professional ethical integrity to engage in a critical, transparent, and congruent reporting of gaps, silences and points of tension throughout the study. I created an audit trail (Rodgers, 2008) through journaling and archiving my work at multiple stages throughout my data analysis stage to later support all claims I make in interpretation.

As part of both my approach to validity as well as my ethical stance, I have also made considerable effort to represent all images and excerpts of texts as accurately and in as much context as possible in order to expand on my own interpretation. Each excerpt is referenced to the page and/or paragraph in the text from which it came from to support its inclusion in my inquiry, as well as my analysis of its content. Though I chose not to contact the authors/creators of each campaign as the materials were all within the public domain, I have engaged in an ethic of scholarly critique by focusing not on the individual authors and campaigns, but on the socio-cultural, political and economic discursive formations under which they were produced.

Reflexivity and trustworthiness.

Strega (2005) also suggests that instead of using quantitative concepts of methodological evaluation, feminist post-structural research can be assessed by three standards which go beyond measures of trustworthiness and instead focus on the political relevance and community usefulness of the research:

- 1) Firstly, what are the political implications and usefulness of what is produced for progressive, anti-oppressive and marginalized communities?
- 2) Secondly, have we managed to represent dominant discourses and unnamed

privilege in the materials using accessible language?

3) Finally, to what extent have we been reflexive, including the extent to which we have considered our own complicity in the topic?

Firstly, I believe this thesis has a political usefulness in that it challenges the dominant discourses of cybersafety and seeks solutions to the problematic positionings impacting women and girls in their communities. Specifically, the Child and Youth Care focus to this topic politicizes cybersafety by considering how practitioners may work differently with girls, youth and families to contest the blaming/pathologizing discourse and complicate conceptualizations of girlhood. I have also approached the thesis through a feminist and critical lens from my choice of methodology, to theoretical framework to analysis of the data and subsequent discussion.

Secondly, I have strived to make explicit the dominant discourses in this materials and be reflexive through practicing critical language awareness (see Fairclough, 1995), recognizing that the words I use to describe this topic and girlhood also construct meaning and represent their own sites of power and oppression. I endeavoured throughout this thesis to make political choices in my use of language that resist hegemonic constructions of individuals wherever possible while still recognizing that my language must be accessible and meaningful to a broader audience in conveying my findings and ideas. For instance, I tried to make explicit in many instances in this thesis the social construction of and problematic notions contained in the words 'girls' and 'girlhood', 'victim' and 'cyberbullying'. However, as is often the case with language, I have nonetheless used these terms throughout the thesis, because they are the terms in use both in Euro-Western culture more generally, as well as in the materials reviewed. I have also sought to de-centre the academic ethnocentrism of western scholarship through language by explicitly naming concepts as white, Anglo-western and Euro-western wherever possible. In this regard, I

was inspired by van Dijk's (1994) suggestion to internationalize the scope of one's research to address the overwhelming representation of such scholars academically. However, I admit that I was unable to include as much research from a variety of international scholars as I would have liked to truly diversify the sources used in my thesis.

Reflexivity also occurred at the epistemological levels as suggested by Willig (2008) by considering how the design of this study constructed the data and its findings, as well as how the research question could have been investigated differently, giving rise to perhaps a different understanding of the topic. Discourse analysis has been routinely criticized for resulting in poor scholarship as it is difficult to operationalize and offers an array of options available that can render issues of methodology problematic (Morgan, 2010). In my heart and in alignment with my feminist and relational Child and Youth Care values, I would have liked to include in a meaningful way girls' voices in critiquing this discourse. Interviews, focus groups or reading critically alongside girls would have offered a much different understanding of this topic and perhaps greater community usefulness. However, I believe my choice of method is consistent with my theoretical framework in investigating my topic, and that I have provided a sound, empirically-based approach with numerous methodological checks and balances. I also acknowledge that a researcher approaching the material from a place of greater estrangement, such as a minoritized social location, might have levelled a more expansive critique of discourses to which I may be blinded given my multiple sites of privilege. Thirdly, the rapid growth of online technologies represents a particular challenge in that this research will only be able to speak for the discourse of cybersafety in a particular place and time, and the materials may no longer be technologically or socially relevant by the time the research is complete.

However, I believe my analytic approach has been effective in examining contemporary

cybersafety discourse. Prominent themes, exemplification and associated analysis outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 make visible my analysis of the data and findings with awareness that there are multiple understandings of this topic beyond my own. By trying to explicitly name my opinions and remain self-reflexive, my commitment to transparency has resulted in a reading of the texts that is ethical, fair and owned as an interpretation based on my epistemological and methodological choices and social location.

Methodological Summary

Throughout this chapter I have identified the theoretical approach on which this study is based. The feminist and post-structural values that shape my personal, professional, and academic life have become the ontologies on which I found my present critique. My desire to come at the topic of cyberviolence from a critical stance has further influenced my choice of methodology, critical discourse analysis. From these epistemological and ontological standpoints, I have outlined the course of my inquiry, subsequent analytic decision-making and trail of evidence in review of the four prevention materials used in this CDA as texts. Though tensions and limitations exist in the use of CDA as a method, I believe my feminist and dialectical relational approach have allowed me to critique the present cybersafety discourse, the subjectification of girls in the materials produced and reproduced by the discourse, as well as disrupt the heteropatriarchial systems of privilege that this discourse stems from, speaking “truth to power” as Strega suggests post-structural feminist research should as a measure of methodological evaluation. This has been further enhanced through discussion of my ethical decision-making and regard for self-reflexivity.

Chapter 3: Findings

Key Ideological Discourses of Girlhood in Cybersafety Curricula

Having summarized the relevant cybersafety literature and positioned this discourse analysis within critical, feminist, and post-structural theoretical frameworks, I now present key findings from my review of the curricula. My online data sources were the following websites: CyberSafe Girl (Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women), Social Smarts: Privacy, The Internet and You (The Office of the Privacy Commissioner), Stop Hating Online (The Government of Canada), and Need Help Now (The Canadian Centre for Child Protection). Following a process of deep immersion in the materials over several months, my analysis of the visual, linguistic, structural and textual content generated four salient discursive themes regarding the positioning of girls throughout the materials.

The four discursive representations of girls' cyber risk I identified focus on their invisibility, shaming, blaming, and sexualization. "Invisible" Girlhood represents the privileging of youth over girlhood, and of white, able bodied, heterosexual girlhood over other diverse representations of gender, race, ability and sexuality. "Shameful" Girlhood emphasizes discourses focused on the regulation and moralization of girlhood sexuality and agency. "Blameful" Girlhood concentrates on a discourse that responsabilizes girls for cyber victimhood. Finally, "Sexualized" Girlhood represents the framing of online risk as a failure on the part of girls to resist or contest hypersexualized girlhood.

The word victim is used imperfectly throughout the themes of this Chapter to refer to girls who have survived an experience with cyberviolence. The cybersafety materials reviewed use the word victim in addition to other phrases, such as the "affected youth" by Need Help Now, to distinguish those targeted by cyberviolence from those that perpetrate it. At times, the

word victim reflects the wording in the texts or the texts' discursive constructions of victimhood. I have intentionally not replaced the word victim with survivor to reflect my uncertainty regarding whether this term attributes girls with unconstrained agency under cybersafety discourses. Kemshall and Pritchard (2000) state the word "victim" when used with intention can reflect the reality that many girls and women continue to live in violent or abusive situations, or continue to live with the long-term effects of such situations. Kemshall and Pritchard (2000) further state that "limited access to appropriate resources and services can severely limit a person's passage from victim to survivor" which use of the word victim can reflect (p. 8). As will be explored, cybersafety materials may be limiting girls' access to responsive resources and services that reframe them as survivors instead of victims. I recognize that girls may wish to distance themselves from victim status after experiences with violence, and perhaps even the word victim itself (Bay-Cheng, 2015; Tolman, Anderson & Belmonte, 2015). Bay-Cheng (2015) points out that the word "victim" can serve not only as a mere descriptor of what has happened to a young woman but come to function as a totalizing identity associated with "weakness, damage and impotence" (p. 285) as will be discussed in this chapter. Harris and Dobson (2015) challenge the agent/victim dichotomy through recasting girls as "suffering actors" (p. 152), a term they believe captures that agency is not just something internal but also impacted by girls' social worlds. I think this term holds much promise but its repeated use would be unclear in the text. Instead, I have chosen to use the term "victim" on occasion in this chapter to refer to girls who have experienced cyberviolence, or to name discourses such as "victim-blaming" rather than as an identity for girls themselves.

Invisible Girlhood

As Gill (2008) states, “representations matter” (p. 434). Given public and media concern towards girls’ online activities, it is vital to understand who are the “youth” and “girls” the four materials I reviewed are speaking to and how girlhood is represented (or not) in these materials. My discourse analysis of gendered messages focused not only on the textual content of each resource, but also on the visual images. In my analysis of the four curricula I found repeated evidence of visual materials used to reinforce normative discursive representations of girlhood. Each curricula displayed stock photos of youth on their webpages and downloadable resources, with 99 images of ‘youth’ found across the four curricula at the time I undertook my analysis in the Summer of 2015. A systemic examination of the visual representations of race and gender in the materials was undertaken, as images often reproduce existing social discourses: “the more natural and uncontested they appear, the closer their fit to a culture’s core assumptions” (Ferre & Hall, 1990, p. 501). Pictures unambiguously show who the creators had in mind in producing these works, so the images in these curricula can be said to reflect core assumptions about the intersectional identities of girls.

Interpreting gender and race in images is, of course, difficult to assess. Images can often be ambiguous. As such, images were only able to be interpreted based on the visual cues of race and gender present in each image, such as phenotype, skin tone, hairtype, body shape, and/or facial features. The codes I have used to identify or profile who is represented and not represented are incredibly loaded, messy and problematic. In many ways, my use of these descriptors reproduces the tokenistic profiling I am critiquing. As limited as this is, these are the codes used to read and represent diverse realities, and these are same codes that youth see and process when viewing the images. Critiquing visual representations of girls is important as

“images constituting a visual or physical culture can offer students fixed ways of thinking about and visualizing their own and others’ bodies as valued or unvalued” (Hill & Azzarito, 2012 p. 265), here the valuation being in relation to whose bodies deserve cybersafety.

When analyzing each webpage across the four curricula, I would take note in a chart of each image I encountered analyzing the gender, race, hair, clothing style, emotive expression, visual context, and surrounding textual information. These images included visual headings at the top of webpages, images embedded in the text of the webpages, as well as the images included in PDF resources and PowerPoints featured on the websites. Of the images I identified across the four curricula, I interpreted 67 as female, 31 as male, and 1 as unknown gender (as the photo was too unclear to identify). Ten out of the 67 images of female came from CyberSafe Girl, which is expected given the site’s gendered focus. Of these 67 images of girlhood, the majority represented girlhood as white, slim, young, and able-bodied, typically attired in feminine clothing and jewelry and with long, straight hair¹.

Only 13 images out of 67 were found of visibly racialized or non-white girls². Again, I make this statement with the understanding that while it is both impossible and problematic to assess someone’s ethnic background based on image, representations do matter in creating a culture of visibility and inclusion of diverse skin tones, body types and ethnicities. The lack of representation of racial and ethnic minority girls in these materials is problematic. The percentage is similar to Karaian’s (2014) findings of an overrepresentation of white girlhood in her review of the 2009 Canadian anti-sexting campaign “Respect Yourself” by the Canadian

¹<http://cybersafegirl.ca/index.php3?number=1044027&lang=E>, https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/emotional_support-seeking_support,https://needhelpnow.ca/pdfs/NHN_InvolvingSafeAdult_en.pdf,
<http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/cbrbllng/tns/prvnt-cbrbllng-en.aspx>

² <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/index.php3>; https://www.cybertip.ca/pdfs/SPEX_FamilyGuide_Web_single_en.pdf p. 9

Centre for Child Protection. Karaian's conclusion was that this indicated a privileging of protecting white girlhood over racialized girlhood in the materials.

Despite a focus on white girlhood, Canadian society is one that is increasingly multi-cultural. Indigenous youth in particular comprise a growing population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Recognizing that the Indigenous community is culturally diverse and that culture cannot be determined by phenotype alone, there were no images of "visible" Indigenous girls or any text that mentioned or represented Indigenous girls, youth, or issues throughout the materials. As all of the materials reviewed were produced in a Canadian socio-political context, the absence of Indigenous girls and issues is problematic given a legacy in Canada of ignoring racialized violence targeting Indigenous girls. Gender-based violence towards Indigenous girls and women has persisted across centuries of colonial framings of their bodies as exploitable colonial property (de Finney, 2015, p.173). Indigenous girls and women experience the highest rates of sexualized violence out of any other group of girls and women in Canada (Sikka, 2009; de Finney, 2015) yet remain largely invisible in both girlhood studies, and in national and public discourses about cyberviolence. de Finney (2015) and Downe (2006) argue that under neocolonial discourses of unworthiness and rapability, Indigenous girls are excluded from dominant socio-legal definition of legitimate victim of sexual violence. The materials I reviewed reproduce these framings by excluding diverse representations of Indigenous girls' images and voices, thereby obscuring their experiences with cyberviolence and their need for cybersafety.

There were also no images of girls that could explicitly be read as gender non-conforming or gender fluid, based on interpreting their physical attributes and social performances of gender such as body shape, hairstyle, clothing choices and facial features. Although again these are limited and imperfect assessments, it is important to articulate a

critique of images consumed by young viewers. A lack of explicit gender diversity was further reinforced by the text accompanying the images that presumed girls were concerned with their appearance and bodies in ways that upheld cisgender and hetero-normativity as discussed later in this theme. The visual and textual information tended to reassert the gender binary (boy/girl) and avoided making any explicit mention of gender and sexual fluidity or diversity. A lack of visual representation of LBGTTQQ+ youth occurred despite the fact that scholars have found they face higher levels of cyberviolence than their straight counterparts, due in part to homophobia (Burrow-Sanchez et al., 2011; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell & Ybarra, 2010). Though little information presently exists about trans-gendered youth and cyberviolence, it also could be suggested similarly high rates of cyberviolence occur due to transphobia. Excluding diverse representations of gender and sexuality reinforces again a narrow idea of who can be considered a ‘legitimate’ victim and renders invisible the vulnerabilities of LBGTTQQ+ youth to cyberviolence.

The 67 images of females that I found also excluded any image of girlhood that featured visible disabilities. McRuer (2006) suggests that “able-bodiness, even more than heterosexuality, still largely masquerades as a non-identity, as the natural order of things” (p. 1). Girls with intellectual, developmental and/or physical disabilities have been theorized to potentially experience high levels of online victimization given the high prevalence of their real world physical and sexual victimization (Martinello, 2014; Normand & Sallafranque-St. Louis, 2015). Despite this theorized vulnerability, girls with various disabilities remained entirely absent from the curricula. Ablest perceptions in regards to cyberviolence may be precluding girls with disabilities from being the subjects and recipients of support, education and prevention. Discourses of disability still exist that view disability as a “deviancy from the norm”, “inferior”,

and “danger[ous]”, perpetuating and legitimizing responses by non-disabled people that include fear, hostility, disgust, pity and patronization (Anderson & Kitchen, 2000, p. 1164). Mainstream cultural representations of disability can preclude girls with disabilities from being viewed as sexually desirable or even able to express sexual agency. This inaccurate depiction of disability as sexless may additionally prevent girls with disability from being viewed as online victims in the same way as their able-bodied counterparts. Such perceptions continue to contribute both to the increased rates of abuse girls with disabilities suffer (Martinello, 2014) and to the lack of public attention paid to this fact.

The invisibility of girlhood through gender-neutral language.

One of my second significant findings regarding invisibility in regards to representation is that a default, gender-neutral category of “youth” is used as the intended audience in three out of the four materials. On their homepage, the Social Smarts website describes its mission as to “advise *youth* about the relevance and importance of privacy when using digital technologies” (para 1). Stop Hating Online is similarly intended to give “comprehensive information on cyberbullying for both *teens* and the adults in their lives” (Government of Canada, 2015). Need Help Now states on their homepage an aim to help “*teens* stop the spread of sexual photos or videos” (para 1). Furthermore, cyberbullying is specifically conceptualized by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP), the organization that created Need Help Now, as the “harm facing *young people*” due to the intersection of “sexuality and technology” (CCCP Kids in the Know, 2015, para 1). This focus on “youth” as a universal default category renders invisible the important role that gender plays in cyberviolence.

Scholars such as Jiwani, Berman and Cameron (2010) and Collier (2012) cite the use of gender-neutral language as an emerging trend in public policy and programming influenced not

by inclusivity but by neoliberal discourse. Neoliberal discourses focus on individual agency and self-determination that exists outside of social formations (Patterson, 2005). Criticism has been leveled at the use of gender-neutral language to describe gender-based social problems.

‘Violence against women’ thus becomes re-framed as ‘domestic violence’ or ‘family violence’ to downplay the role of institutional patriarchy and to position women’s issues within the private sphere of individual responsibility. Collier (2012) states gender-neutral language as additionally appealing to the overwhelmingly male government funders and policy makers due to its “non-threatening” and “appeal[ing]” nature (p. 301). There is growing acknowledgement that cyberviolence is a gender-based crime as girls and women disproportionately represent its victims (Jones, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2012; Helweg-Larsen, Schutt & Larsen, 2012;). For instance, Jones, Mitchell and Finkelhor found that from 2000 to 2010 the number of girls reporting experiences with online violence increased from 48 per cent to 69 per cent. Yet, three out of the four curricula in this study seek to advise, inform and prevent cyberviolence without acknowledging underlying gendered and heteropatriarchal formations.

The invisibility of gender-based violence.

Despite the materials stating a focus on “youth”, each contains paradoxical messaging about girls as victims. In each website, it is girls who are overwhelmingly represented as victims of cyberharassment and male sexual aggressors. There is a unidirectional, causal relationship implied between being a girl, having subordinate status, and being vulnerable to cyberviolence. Exemplification of the implied relationship between femininity and victimhood is found within Need Help Now’s resource guide for families. This guide, entitled “Self/Peer Exploitation: Its Not Ok, A Resource Guide for Families”³ found on the downloadable resource section of the

³ https://www.cybertip.ca/pdfs/SPEX_FamilyGuide_Web_single_en.pdf

website, provides tips for families to respond to incidences of sexting crimes. Notable within the guide is that in contrast to its gender-neutral language, images of females are predominately used to illustrate victimhood. For instance, page four shows the image of a young white girl with blond hair, her head held in her hand as she sits in a school hallway. The girl appears alone, despondent, and distraught. The image is across from a section heading that outlines sexting's "Potential Impacts on Your Child" which cautions parents that young people victimized by cyberviolence may feel "embarrassed and extremely vulnerable". Page nine features what appears to be a young African Canadian female, her eyes closed and head bent down as if in shame, next to a section heading that states "Managing Peers' Reactions/Bullying" after victimization. This text instructs parents on how to manage peer bullying, targeting, alienation and feelings of self-blame and humiliation, including thoughts of suicide. By giving a female face to the consequences and feelings of victimhood, the vulnerability of victimization is associated with femininity.

In the booklet, boys are displayed in positive ways, in contrast to representations of femininity. Images of male youth are notably positioned either before or after information on victimization, as if reinforcing that masculinity is neither powerless nor exploitable. Of the 10 images displayed throughout the guide, none showed young males in victim roles or next to text about victimization. For instance, page 12 shows the image of an African-Canadian adolescent male, smiling as he is embraced by an African-Canadian adult woman under the text "When Talking with Your Child about This Issue". To the right of the image on page 12 are suggestions for parents on how to talk to their child about sexting, but the content is much more neutral and general. Page one contains a smiling white adolescent male, dressed in a blue t-shirt taking a selfie. His image is shown next to introductory text to the guide. The text, as well as his action

(taking a non-sexual self-portrait) seems to position him also as neither victim nor perpetrator. He indicates agency in his actions through his smile– as if taking the portrait because he wishes to, not because he has been sexually coerced, in contrast to the images of young women shown in positions of distress. The one exception found was the Stop Hating Online website, which used African-Canadian male youth to represent victimization of cyberviolence. These images were featured on the webpage “Is Your Child Being Cyberbullied”⁴ directed at parents of a child who has been victimized, as well as on the page entitled “You’re Being Cyberbullied”⁵ directed at youth victimized by cyberviolence.

Many of the images and scenarios used seem to reproduce gender inequality within a (heterosexual) male–female binary. Positioning images of girlhood next to text about victimhood represents heterosexual notions of femininity that position girls as subordinate and vulnerable to violence. The representation of girls as the only victims of cyberviolence negates possible discursive representations of issues facing male youth as well as gender non-conforming youth. Instead, the stereotypical visual representations of masculinity and femininity reinforce the problematic gender norms that contribute significantly to cyberviolence against women and girls.

Heteronormative discourses of gender and sexuality were also exemplified in the materials through several written scenarios depicting cyberviolence. For instance, under the page “Knowing When Things Have Gone Too Far” on the Need Help Now website, four written scenarios are displayed to exemplify peer extortion. These scenarios involve: a 14-year-old girl who exposes her breasts to a male peer over a webcam and is threatened to send more or have the photo posted publically; a 15 year old girl whose ex-boyfriend threatens to post photos of her

⁴ <http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/cbrllng/prnts/chld-bng-cbrlld-en.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/cbrllng/tns/bng-cbrlld-en.aspx>

in a bikini unless she sends him a sexual picture; a 16 year old girl whose ex-boyfriend posts a sexual video of her on Facebook and offers to remove it once she sends him another sexual video, and a 14 year old girl whose female friend uploads a sexy picture of her as revenge for her dating the friend's ex-boyfriend.

Stereotypical and traditional notions of heterosexual femininity and masculinity are again produced in these scenarios through the framing of online safety in terms of females as naïve victims fighting for the attention of men, and of men as sexual aggressors. The one scenario that features a female perpetrator clarifies that her motivation is to enact revenge against the female victim for stealing an ex-boyfriend. In this way, girls' cyber aggression is cast as relational rather than as sexual. Framing girls as relational aggressors perpetuates popular girlhood culture tropes which over the past two decades have framed girls as either in-crisis (Aaopla et al., 2005) or as crisis-causing (Waldron, 2011). Lee and Chatterjee (2012) state that "what looks like relational aggression between girls, is something more deeply rooted and complex" (p. 2) as girls use racial and sexualized violence to punish other girls for stepping outside of rigid racial and sexual boundaries.

An additional six scenarios that identify gender are found on the same website under the pages "FAQ", "Steps You Can Take to Get Your Photo off the Internet" and "Knowing When Things Have Gone Too Far", for a total of 10 scenarios. Of the 10 scenarios, nine feature females as the target of cyberviolence with the violence perpetrated by a male peer (three scenarios), a current male partner (three scenarios), or a male ex-partner (two scenarios). Stop Hating Online's "Pass It On" advertisement⁶, which aired nationally in 2014, displays a similar gendered dynamic. The video opens on a young white teen boy in his bedroom. His phone

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC77psVg3uc>

screen is then shown to the audience, displaying a text with a file attachment that says “Check out pic of Jack’s girlfriend”. The female’s photo is then “passed-on” by three male and two female peers.

A discourse of cisgenderism and heteronormativity is reinforced in these scenarios, images, and videos through “the problematic notion that manliness is tied to physical power and violence, often over girls and women” (Thiel-Stern, 2009, p. 25) and that femininity is tied to submission. Girls become aggressive only when their relationship with male youth is threatened. By erasing the gendered nature of these crimes, the systemic and social problem of gender-based violence is left instead to appear random, unpatterned and individualized (Jiwani, Berman & Cameron, 2010). Such a discursive move not only renders invisible the gendered violence but also allows the ethics of masculinity, boys’ behaviours, and the norms of boys’ digital sexual cultures to remain largely obscured, especially in relation to sexting practices (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016). The focus of sexualized violence is shifted instead onto young girls.

The over-visibility of traditional femininity.

Where girlhood *is* visible in the curricula, there continues to be a problematic privileging of traditional femininity. Current popular and prevalent visual representations of femininity are strongly seen on the CyberSafe Girl’s website, the only material that directly identifies girls as its intended audience and uses gendered language in addressing young girls across the site. CyberSafe Girl content has even been stereotypically ‘feminized’: pages feature traditional colors such as purples and pink; the word “girl” is set apart in cursive writing with a purple flower used to dot the letter “i”; the main banner at the top of the webpage displays the silhouette of four girls in purple jumping and dancing across a background of green and purple hearts and flowers, with several technology symbols such as a laptop, wifi, and @ symbol intermittently

dispersed against the colour pink⁷. On another page of the site, a smiling cell phone greets visitors near a tip sheet for girls, a purple flower tucked near the cellphone's anthropomorphic features as if to decorate its hair and feminize it⁸. Use of aesthetics such as the colours purple and pink represent traditional Euro-Western markers of femininity, frequently used to reinforce the gendered nature of a product or service being offered (Koller, 2008). Kearney's (2010) research into the gendering or "pinking up" (p. 4) of girl's media, such as that found on the CyberSafe Girl website, troubles this aesthetic by pointing out that it operates within a discourse that upholds gender essentialism and, more broadly, heteropatriarchy. These representations narrowly define and universalize the experience of girlhood, resulting in understandings that are "saturated with the invisible privileges of whiteness and the entitlements of the middle to upper classes" (Brown, 2011, p. 111). For instance, though one tip sheet for girls on the site, "Keeping Girls Media Smart"⁹ promotes the idea that "women and girls are diverse, and are not limited to those shown by the media" (para 8), the advice runs contrary to the narrow and stereotypical feminine visuals used on the website and its materials. These visuals carry fairly essentialized assumptions about the kind of gender identity girls should privilege.

The Social Smarts curriculum also reinforces narrow performances of femininity. Popular media and corporations frequently draw on discourses of girlhood that call on girls to buy into and promote a contemporary ideal of female beauty in which their bodies are objects always "in need of transformation" (Pienaar & Bekker, 2007, p. 540). The Social Smarts curriculum utilizes this beauty ideal as a way to help young women understand privacy, safety, and their online reputation. This can be seen in their PowerPoint (PPT) presentation for youth in

⁷ <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/index.php3?lang=E>

⁸ <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/index.php3?number=1044027&lang=E>

⁹ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/H-Info-Girls-En.pdf>

grades 9 to 12 entitled “Protecting Your Online Rep”¹⁰. The PPT’s stated purpose is to help high-school youth learn “what they can do to build a secure online identity while keeping their personal information safe”. Under the heading, “Shaping Your Online Rep”, the presentation reminds the audience that:

You spend a lot of time to shape your physical appearance and how you want people to see and think of you. Let’s call that your physical or real-world reputation. Once you have an online presence [...] you also have an online reputation [...]. Managing your online reputation is just as important as managing your physical reputation (para 6).

The presentation’s emphasis on physical appearance as central to girls’ public life calls up discourses of traditional femininity through stereotypes of a helpless, vain and appearance-focused teenage girl. The stated need for girls to shape their “physical appearance” and to spend “a lot of time” in doing so references a particular form of objectified femininity. This passage reminds girls that this task is “important” and that management of their online reputation needs to become “just as important”.

This discourse is again referenced in the Social Smart’s online video “What can YOU do to protect your online rep”, available under the “Tools and Video” section of the website¹¹. The videos stated focus is to provide “tips and advice on what to consider when you are posting information online” (para 1). Marcus, an African-Canadian male teen, serves as the narrator for the video. He is dressed in typical masculine clothing, including loose fitting jeans, a t-shirt, leather jacket and scarf. As Marcus narrates about the permanency of the internet, the screen flies over several posed photos of Marcus on his Facebook page to a photo of a white female

¹⁰ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/pp/9-12_e.asp

¹¹ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/t-v/videos/rep_e.asp

youth, her hair in curlers while having her makeup applied by a female friend. While the viewer gazes at her photo, Marcus states that:

We spend a lot of time every day picking out clothes and getting our look just right. We know that how we look affects what people think about us. Then we spend just a few seconds writing comments or posting pictures online [...] with a bad hair day, or a day when the clothes aren't quite right – it's just one day and then it's gone. But a mean online comment or an embarrassing picture on social media can live on, and on, and on.

In this excerpt, the Social Smarts curriculum reasserts a construction of young femininity preoccupied by beauty and female esthetics. Showing a photo of a young white girl without her 'look' completed to exemplify an "embarrassing photo" makes it same as if not performing this beauty ideal is cause for humiliation. Comments relating to having a "bad hair day" or "picking out clothes" again re-emphasize a discursive construction of girls as defined by their appearance and conformity to beauty aesthetics.

Several studies have made claims that the stereotypical teen girl culture these materials reference permeates young girls' lives (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). This discourse of femininity asks young women to relate to their bodies as objects that exist for the use and aesthetic pleasure of others, a task that requires continual attention to and improvement of their appearance (Aapola et al., 2005). The discourse of feminine aesthetics referenced in this video is one which is anchored in white, Euro-western notions of beauty (Aapola et al., 2005). Representations of feminine beauty as constituted only by "able-bodied, heterosexual(ized), tall, slender, light-skinned, and with straight hair" (Lazar, 2007, p. 159) furthermore select out diverse representations of girlhood. The primary importance of appearance in teenage girls' lives that is emphasized in the video reproduces a continuation of them as sexual objects for the

pleasure of others (Averett, Benson & Vailancourt, 2008). This objectifying gaze is further reinforced by using a young male as the messenger.

Though feminist scholarship had once looked to the online world as a way to reinvent gender and sexual norms (Gill, 2008), femininity online remains mostly represented through stereotypical gender binaries (Manago et al., 2008) and an invisible privileging of whiteness. The representations of femininity in these curricula mirror “normative material spaces in their trenchant commitment to difference and hierarchy” (Brown & Thomas, 2014 p. 952). The visual and textual representations of girlhood remain entrenched in universalized white, cisgender, heteronormative, and able-bodied understandings. My findings suggest this discursive context renders invisible the lives of girls from a range of other backgrounds and living circumstances and excludes them from the conversation non cybersafety. In doing so, systemic factors contributing to gender-based violence, such as institutionalized sexism, racism, homophobia and ableism, among others, are also excluded.

Shameful Girlhood

In addition to the invisibilization of diverse girls, my analysis found a dominant discourse of sexual shame and messages of self-responsibilisation across the materials. A discourse of shame (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016) continues to frame public conversation and education around cybersafety, particularly about the risks of sexting and sexual exploitation. Angelide’s (2013) research into anti-sexting materials has found that the affective trope of shame forms the basis of most sexting prevention campaigns, which was also found true for these curricula. At first reading, the negative consequences of sexting and other avenues of intimate content sharing for young people communicated in these curricula may appear as natural, obvious and understandably shameful given the intimate, intrusive and personal nature of these acts.

However, it is important to underscore that shame, like gender or sexuality, is socially constructed and culturally mediated. Furthermore, use of shame-based appeals can also be considered controversial given how body shaming and slut shaming continue to be used as part of the sexual regulation of girls' bodies (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Dobson & Ringrose, 2016).

Emotive appeals, such as the shame based appeals I found in the four curricula, are defined as “any communication that is intended to elicit an emotional response from some or all who receive it” (Brader, 2006, p. 28). In most health campaigns for young people, emotive content is built around the premise that youth represent an inherently immature and risky group that need to be “shocked into action” (Gagnon, Jacob & Holmes, 2010, p. 254). Online curricula that espouse this discourse tend to use fear, guilt and shame based appeals to lead to eventual behavioral change (Brennan & Binney, 2010; Thompson, Pearce & Barnett, 2009). In sexting campaigns, the most jarring emotive appeal used is the association that risky online behaviour, especially sexting, could result in death by suicide. Here, the new concept of “sexting suicide” – the cautionary warning and proof about the physic and physical threat that sexting poses to adolescents (Angelides, 2013, p. 672) serves as the ultimate warning to mobilize readers to change their online behaviour. This emotive appeal constructs sexting as the problem and young women as the site of intervention, deflecting attention away from the heteropatriarchal culture that condones the harassment, alienation and abuse of girls and women that underlies such shaming.

Across all of the materials, I found a prevalent discursive subtext presented to girls that sexualized exploitation is endemic and practically inevitable, unless girls carefully follow the procedures outlined to ensure their own safety. Stated consequences of sexual victimization in the curricula range from normalizing feelings of embarrassment and vulnerability to experiences

of sexual harm, harassment (including sexual harassment) from peers and limitations to future educational and career prospects in addition to sexting suicide. Feelings of self-blame and guilt are also normalized to warn against the dangers of expressing sexuality online. For instance, Need Help Now normalizes shame on their webpage “Coping”¹² which gives tips on what to do, think and feel after an image or photo was taken or shared without consent. On this page, the reader is told to expect that they may worry “about what other people think about you and how they will treat you” (para 4) and that “you will not want to face people because this is embarrassing” (para 6). Another webpage on Need Help Now entitled “Dealing with Other Teens” provides information on how to cope with the peer humiliation and abuse that can accompany online sexual victimization. On the page, it is normalized to expect “verbal/physical bullying, harassment or alienation” as a “result of other teens seeing or knowing about your sexual picture/video” (para 8). Opportunity here is again missed to provide readers with practical, youth-appropriate critical tools to question the peer culture that normalizes “harassment”, “alienation” and other forms of sexual shaming for young women. Through mobilizing shame about the “embarrassment” and negative treatment by peers, opportunity is missed to provide girls with concrete, critical information that could help girls understand these issues beyond just individual shame and self-blame. A variety of mobile and online based media tools exist on feminist blogs, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Tumblr sites such as stfurapeculture, “Not Your Baby!” and Hollaback!¹³ that provide young women with suggestions on how to transform rape culture, interrupt shaming and solidify social and cultural support for

¹² https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/emotional_support-coping_tips

¹³ <http://stfurapeculture.tumblr.com/>, <http://www.ihollaback.org/about>, <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/not-your-baby/id545191859?mt=8>

girls who experience violence (Rentschler, 2014). Such tools offer advocacy and critical analysis to deconstruct the misogynistic culture that links women's social status to their sexual purity.

Such messages constitute female sexters "as shamed, humiliated and in need of psychological help, and thus serve to uphold a framework of silence and illegibility around teenage female desires" (Dobson & Ringrose, 2016, p. 13). Normalization of these shameful feelings and expectations of peer harassment and exclusion exacerbate the negative sexual stereotypes society imposes on girls and women. The use of shame based appeals in the curricula is concerning, as they eschew potentially useful advice about sexual health and wellness, such as issues of consent, desire, intimacy, sexual subjectivity, body awareness, and interpersonal respect (Harden, 2014). Instead, shame-based online sexual education solidifies a political and moral discourse in which "feminine body parts are understood as the collective property of others to survey and regulate in complex ways" (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015, p. 209). Like Angelides (2013), I question if girls' experience of alienation, harassment or thoughts of suicide are the result of the risky behaviour of "sexting", or if they are in fact the result of a culture that shames young women for their sexual desires and the sexual aggression of their male peers, while offering few healthy and productive alternative discourses of sexual health, consent and non-violence.

With regard to the issue of consent, the sexual shame discourse is particularly concerning as it uses shame appeals to discourage young women's sexual agency without any nuanced discussion of whether or not sexual content is being created consensually. For instance, sexual shame is employed problematically in a scenario in the speaking notes for the Social Smart's PowerPoint presentation entitled "Protecting Your Online Rep"¹⁴, which focuses on helping

¹⁴ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/pp/9-12_e.asp

youth to better understand privacy online. Slide 15, entitled “What you post on the Internet is not private” includes the following scenario based on the victimization of ESPN broadcaster Erin Andrews (Donahue, 2014) to discuss issues of privacy and sexuality online:

A few years ago, there was an American sports reporter, a woman in her 20s. She was in a hotel room, changing her clothes, and there was a creepy guy in a tree outside her room, taking photos. He posted naked photos of the woman on the Internet. She sued him, and the organizations that posted the pictures, and they had to be taken down. But, even after the lawsuit, she says the photos continue to circulate online. She was quoted as saying something to the effect of “This is my life now. I’m a sports reporter and that’s a hard profession to make a name in when you’re female. And when I Google my name, these are the pictures that come up. (“Speaking Notes for Grades 9 to 12 Presentation”, para 17)

In this scenario, shame and fear are evoked for young women on multiple levels. First, Andrew’s privacy was invaded illegally and covertly while she was engaging in the routine act of changing her clothing. Second, she was sexually victimized first by a ‘creepy guy in a tree’, evoking the fear of a dangerous stranger, and then again by photos of her nude body being widely distributed on the internet without her consent. Thirdly, even though the photo was taken without her consent, she was left without any recourse to regain and control the spread of her photos, likely causing her to feel powerless. Finally, the damage to her reputation is described as permanent, implying not only limited career prospects but also ongoing sexual harassment and alienation amongst her community.

In the materials, fear of shame through sexual victimhood is explicitly and implicitly used to govern girls’ sexual agency (Angelides, 2013) as seen in the above scenario. It reinforces a

sexual double standard in which young women must be careful not only in how they govern their own sexual agency but in avoiding sexual danger both on and offline. This discursive message conveys the powerlessness Andrews had to stop a nude photo from being taken and shared without her consent as well as the shame she continues to endure in her “profession” whenever someone “Google’s [her] name”. The scenario also highlights the problematic relationship between sexual shame and sexual victimhood in North American culture. Fear of sexual shaming can discourage young women from disclosing acts of sexualized violence. To use fear of shaming to teach young women about privacy without any discussion of consent or the victim’s lack of responsibility for the crime that occurred to her could serve to silence girls from disclosing their own sexual assaults, privacy violations, and experiences of sexual harassment.

Sexual shame is also discursively framed as having permanent repercussions on girls’ sexual and social reputation. The Social Smarts website suggests girls who sext may face a shameful future of limited educational and employment prospects. On the online tip sheet “Building a secure online identity”¹⁵, readers are asked to imagine what their photos or comments would look like “attached to your resume when you go to apply for a job?” (para six). The tip sheet also reminds readers in bold print that “years from now, you may have to explain the information and photos that you are posting today” (para 8) such as to a potential employer or university official. This particular message is reinforced again under the discussion topic “Sexting: Not worth it”¹⁶ which reitifies that sexual messages and content can “be widely shared and remain online forever” (para 4). This tip is given even though several scholars (see Angelides, 2013; Hasinoff, 2013; Karaian & Van Meyl, 2015) assert that there is no evidence of widespread dissemination of intimate photos to either sexual predators or prospective employers

¹⁵ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/fs-fi/secure-id_e.asp

¹⁶ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/topic-sujet/dt_05_e.asp

and educational institutions. This framing is situated in a broader discourse that portrays consensual sexting as leading to multiple kinds of risks. These include financial risk (from limiting future educational and employment prospects) and embodied risks (from the emotional and mental harm of a picture being widely distributed). Karaian and Van Meyl (2015) suggest that these risks are repeated under the cybersafety discourse to act as “proxy for moralizing and thus governing youth sexuality” (p. 21), particularly female sexuality.

Several scholars have pointed out the relationship between shame based appeals and neoliberal tenants of self-responsibility (Becheur & Valette-Florence, 2014; Brennan & Binney, 2010; Thompson, Pearce & Barnett, 2009). Three out of the four resources I examined (Stop Hating Online, Social Smarts and Cybersafe Girl) were government based campaigns. A Foucauldian analysis of governmentality and bio-politics links the use of shame and fear appeals in government-based campaigns to the production of self-managing, self-policing subjects (Foucault, 1980) rather than merely for public health and wellness. Foucault (1980) and Ussher (2006) describe self-policing practices as a form of self-induced surveillance and social regulation used to keep young women in line with social norms. Young women who are sexually shamed online are responsabilized then as “bad or stupid users” of technology, who “deserve no protection, no privacy” and thus deserve to be “re-exposed or shamed over and over again” (Chun & Friedland, 2015, p. 3). This occurs instead of responsabilizing the culture that condones the invasion of young women’s privacy and then shames them for it. To reduce online violence against women and girls to the notion that “if you don’t want something shared, don’t post it online” ignores the complex and systemic issue of online misogyny.

The fact that young women are frequently reminded across curricula about the immediate and long-term “reputational damage” in governing their sexuality conveys a form of social

control exercised through girls' heterosexual reputations (Aapola et al., 2005) as well as the ideas of sexual purity and innocence. Outdated yet enduring ideologies of heterosexual femininity and feminine sexuality perpetuate the idea that girls who fail to be chaste and/or diligent in protecting both their sexuality from violation and their sexual reputation on and offline are less reputable, immoral, or even dirty (Weiss, 2010). This logic is further extended to position girls as unemployable and un-trustable. According to my analysis of the discourses in the curricula that shape emotive appeals of risk, danger comes for these young women not from the act of sexting itself, but from the social harassment and reproduction of gendered ideas about female sexual value, agency and victimization that normalizes them as being shameful (Angelides, 2013; Karanian, 2014). As Valenti (2010) summarizes: "young women aren't putting themselves in danger. The people around them are doing the real damage" (p. 187). Jewkes and Wykes (2012) assert that the contemporary panic around girls in cyberspace is merely enabling old fears and attitudes to be represented as new, more significant threats to girlhood. My examination of the discourse of sexual shame highlights concerns about girls' sexual victimization as driven not merely by elevated concern and efforts to change young people's damaging online behaviors, but instead by a moral framing of female sexuality as something that must be regulated and controlled, shaming girls for sexual desires that predate their use of technology.

Blameful Girlhood

Some victims of crimes receive more scrutiny than others, and victim blaming has a long history of occurring in relation to sex crimes (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Female victims of sex crimes are frequently seen as "asking for it" by being seductive, suggestive, and provocative, with their dress, lifestyle, behaviour, character traits and sexual background historically seen as more important factor than the actions of the accused in determining accountability (Canadian

Resource Centre for Victims of Violent Crimes, 2007/2009). I found a similar framing of victim blaming towards girls occurs in the online curricula. Sexual violence prevention discourses are beginning to evolve from early frameworks that tended to focus on what girls can do to prevent rape, such as how to avoid risk in public spaces, towards primary prevention approaches that focus on changing the socio-cultural and socio-structural causes of sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2014). Yet approaches to cybersafety continue to parallel earlier and problematic rape prevention strategies focused on girls' responsibility and behaviours (Henry & Powell, 2014 p. 85).

One area in which a framing of victim blame occurs in the cybersafety materials I reviewed is the frequent attention given to personal safety strategies. All four curricula had at least one youth-focused handout that described personal safety strategies readers should engage in to keep themselves safe online. Within the PDF handout entitled "10 Tips for Girls", produced by the CyberSafe Girl website¹⁷, young women are given 10 tips to stay cybersafe. In the first tip, entitled "Take Cyber-Violence Seriously" girls are warned to "be careful" in routine online tasks such as "Facebook, blogs, online games and emails" or they may risk "sexual exploitation" by "sexual predators" (para 1). No direct strategies for how 'carefulness' can be achieved are given. Tip number seven entitled "Protect Yourself" also approaches safety as a personal responsibility for young women. Girls are encouraged to "be careful online" by adopting vague strategies such as "never reveal(ing) personal information" and "never sending photographs of yourself" (para 7) to strangers without specification about how personal information or photos (sexual or not) could be used by others to create risk. The gender-neutral Social Smarts curriculum takes a similar approach with their online fact sheet entitled "Building

¹⁷ <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/index.php3?number=1044027&lang=E>

a secure online identity”¹⁸ which states its purpose as a “cheat sheet” with “reminders on what you can do to keep your online identity safe” (para 2). Readers are warned in a similar manner to the CyberSafe Girl’s tip sheet to be “careful about the seemingly innocent information you post” (para 10) as “what you post online can affect your personal safety” (para 17). Stop Hating Online’s information sheet for youth on cyberbullying, entitled “You’re Being Cyberbullied”¹⁹, also similarly warns to “be very careful which photos you share online” (para 1) without specific information about “which” photos may place one at risk. The page also warns to keep “personal information, like your date of birth, your cell phone number or photos in a chat room private” (para 2) without stating how or why this information may create risk. Interestingly, there is no nuance of differentiation of risk in these discourses. Everything is presented as equally urgent and in the same tone without explanation and context as to what risks these activities may present. Actions such as posting “attractive photos of yourself” are described as presenting the same level of risk as giving “details about where you are going to be at specific times”.

All three information sheets emphasize individual responsibility for ensuring personal safety. Personal safety is positioned as a choice that girls control and determine through their adherence to the stated educational strategies. Each site reminds girls they hold the ability to individually manage their own risk, thus reifying neoliberal ideologies of the self-governed subject. Neoliberal governmentality has been suggested by Foucault to promote self-governance through the belief that individuals need to be regulated from the ‘inside’ (Lemke, 2001). Foucault rejected the idea of a self-governed subject completely in control of his or her thoughts and actions as it does not take into account how thoughts and actions are influenced by discourse (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Bay-Cheng’s (2015) theorizes such neoliberal discourses of

¹⁸ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/fs-fi/secure-id_e.asp

¹⁹ <http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/cbrllng/tns/bng-cbrbld-en.aspx>

self-governmentality frequently impact girls by giving them no recourse other than to deny their victimization or take responsibility. Such conceptualizations of risk is exemplified by a statement in the CyberSafe Girl's "10 Tips for Girls" information sheet that declares to girls that "You can take steps to prevent all forms of cyber-violence" ("Keeping Girls Media Smart", para 1). This statement, similar to the suggested personal safety strategies, evokes a neoliberal discourse in which risk –and risk prevention- is carried individually. The belief that we live in a "just world" in which one's individual actions will cause them to get what they deserve and deserve what they get, is frequently applied to blame victims of sexualized crimes (Fetchenhauer, Jacob & Belschak, 2005) and is present throughout these personal safety strategies. Girls are called on to believe that if they make safe choices (without specifically referencing how to be "careful" or "safe" online, or what makes a piece of personal information or photograph "risky") they will not be victims of cyber-violence. It follows that when cyberviolence does occur, it can then only be attributed to their careless or risky behaviours. The victim blaming discourse occurs despite research into online risk that has consistently found that posting a piece of personal information online is not, in itself, a particularly risky (Dowell, Burgess & Cavanaugh, 2009; Wolak et al., 2010). This discourse also ignores the behaviours of men and boys who may perpetuate violence on and offline.

The Social Smarts curriculum focuses further on responsabilizing girls for violence through its cybersafety cheat sheet, "Building a secure online identity"²⁰. The sheet states that individuals need to "protect [themselves] online the same way you would out in the real world" (para 10). This individualistic way of understanding responsibility for online and offline violence is saturated with the normative assumption that girls are autonomous beings in control

²⁰ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/fs-fi/secure-id_e.asp

of their own fates and individually responsible for their own outcomes (Anderson & Doherty, 2008). Precautionary cybersafety measures such as not posting “attractive” photos online, never engaging in conversations with strangers, and never revealing personal information such as age or gender can be read as policing and blaming girls in the same manner as telling them not to wear too revealing clothing, never leaving their drinks unattended, and avoiding walking alone through dark places late at night. Henry and Powell (2014) see a need for some victim-focused strategies in cybersafety around protecting privacy and exercising caution online. They caution, however, that when merely used in isolation, “such prevention strategies ultimately reproduce unhelpful victim-blaming narratives and may have the effect of promoting fear and timidity in using technology” (Henry & Powell, 2014, p. 94).

These tip sheets also invoke stereotypical fixations on girlhood and victimization. The image of “girls as naïve victims” (Thiel-Stern, 2014, p. 155) is a stereotype that connects femininity to passivity and weakness such as through the idea that “predators” routinely con and groom girls online (p. 156). A discourse of “naïve girlhood” is perpetuated by all tip sheets through the frequent warnings mentioned above. Social Smart’s “Building a Secure Online Identity”²¹ tip sheet references naïve girlhood through depicting them as not understanding how “seemingly innocent information” (para 10) they post may place them at risk. This depiction of naïve girlhood is also seen through the language used around sexting and extortion crimes. Girls are presented as vulnerable due to some inherently “relational” predisposition they have for needing connection, which is then framed as a key factor in their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Flattery is listed within the PDF resource “Keeping Teens Safe from Online Sexual

²¹ https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/fs-fi/secure-id_e.asp

Exploitation”²² on a table entitled “Common Tactics Used by Adult Offenders with Teenagers” (p. 13). Flattery is referenced in the guide as used by predators “particularly on girls in an effort to take advantage of the societal importance placed on female beauty”. Flattery is referenced again on page 14 as something that parents “raising a teenage girl” should pay “particular attention” to and consider in discussing “what if” scenarios with their daughters. A similar framing of presenting online risk as a problem of girlhood stupidity and naiveté has been found in Australian cybersafety prevention and education resources (Henry & Powell, 2015; Powell & Henry, 2014).

Yet it is not just online predators that girls are constructed as at-risk of. Girls are also positioned as naïvely vulnerable to their peers and romantic partners. For instance, the youth-focused website Need Help Now provides a script on how youth can talk with a safe adult, such as a parent, after an intimate photo has been circulated online by peers²³. The script encourages the reader to state that “I made a mistake – I sent a sexual photo of myself to [name] and now others have seen it”. In the resource guide for families on addressing sexting crimes, those who have had an intimate photo distributed are described as having made “errors in judgement” without reference to consent in the creation and distribution of the image (p. 12). On their webpage for “Ideas to Help You Cope”²⁴, readers are reminded to “challenge and change negative thinking” such as by reminding themselves that “I made a bad decision but I am not stupid” (para 5), the bad decision here referencing the choice to share intimate photos without mention of the peer or romantic partner who decided to unlawfully break their trust and privacy.

²² https://www.cybertip.ca/pdfs/C3P_SaferInternetDay_KeepingTeensSafe_en.pdf

²³ https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/resources_involving_safe_adult

²⁴ https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/emotional_support-coping_tips

A discourse of victim blaming is also evident in the Need Help Now website's reframe of sexting as "Self/Peer Exploitation" (SPEX). The word first appears on the website's homepage as it states its intention "to offer guidance" if "you or someone you know" has been "negatively impacted by a self/peer exploitation incident" (para 1). It appears again throughout the PDF for parents available for download on the website entitled "Self/Peer Exploitation: It's Not Ok. A Resource Guide for Families Addressing Self/Peer Exploitation"²⁵. SPEX is defined in this guide as "youth creating, sending or sharing images and/or videos with peers via the Internet and/or electronic devices" (p. 1). The guide does not go on to further explain what differentiates self-exploitation from peer or adult exploitation, or consensual sexting from non-consensual sexting. This leaves the impression that any time a girl takes a photo of her body in a suggestive or sexualized manner she is engaging a form of exploitation. By definition, exploitation is a relational process in which one uses a situation to gain unfair advantage or benefit over another. The concept of SPEX then requires ideological questioning of whether and under what circumstances girls can be seen as exploiting their own bodies or, taken one step further, of being criminally responsible for exploiting their bodies as their own child pornographer.

The discursive framing of sexting as a form of "Self-Exploitation" has significant social and legal consequences for girls. Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2007) found that many cybersafety materials favour legal scare tactics to remind girls of the child pornography charges they and those they share their image with could face, even if the sexting was done with consent. Though Need Help Now does not state that "Self-Exploitation" could result in criminal charges such as child-pornography, it also does not state that girls who create their own sexual images are unlikely to be charged. This may create fear that reporting an incident to authorities where

²⁵ https://www.cybertip.ca/pdfs/SPEX_FamilyGuide_Web_single_en.pdf

their image was used non-consensually will make girls vulnerable not only to public judgment and humiliation but also potential legal consequences (Hasinoff, 2013), framing her as a sexual aggressor even though she may also be a victim. The link between sexting, self-exploitation and child pornography charges thus criminalizes and blames girls twice, firstly for their expression of sexuality, and then secondly for their experience of harm. Legal frameworks seem to perpetuate such victim blaming by holding girls along a strict binary of victim/aggressor in such cases. Framing sexting (consensual or not) as “Self-Exploitation” further perpetuates blame by attributing the original fault for any harm girls occur due to their own choices without consideration for how choice is constrained by girls’ social contexts. Girls can and do have sexual feelings but a variety of contexts can constrain or make such expression dangerous, difficult or even impossible for girls themselves to discern (Tolman, Anderson & Belmonte, 2015). Blanket framing of girls’ sexual expression as self-exploitation or child-pornography thus denies the complicated context in which these acts occur.

As Anderson and Doherty (2008) explain, “in order to maintain the belief that the world is a basically just and fair place (a world where people deserve what they get and get what they deserve), the rape of a ‘virginal’ girl, who has not done anything ‘wrong’, has to be explained by attributing fault to her as an individual” (p. 31), a framing which seems to occur towards girls who have experienced cyberviolence throughout these resources. Though consideration must be given to the complexity technology creates to reduce and prevent gender and sexual-based violence, change seems unlikely to come by focusing on out-dated and ineffective strategies where responsibility is placed solely on girls. Promise might instead be found in developing prevention strategies across the personal, social and community-levels that work towards “a digital sexual ethics that prioritises full and equal respect and dignity for everyone” (Henry &

Powell, 2014, p. 99). The need to bring much more realistic nuance to discussions of online ethics, as one intervention against the structural formations that maintain violence against girls and women, is an issue I address in further detail in my final chapter.

Sexualized Girlhood

A discourse of panic towards hypersexualized girlhood was also evident in the curricula I reviewed. Warnings about the impact of hypersexualization and sexual objectification in creating online risk occur in three of the four curriculum. Media narratives about girls online frequently equate hypersexualization and objectified sexuality, which appropriates patriarchal language and the imagery of pornography, with the risk of sexual victimization (Thiel-Stern, 2014). Hasinoff (2014) observes that sexting and the creation of other sexual content by girls online is becoming part of a broader context of public concern towards the objectification and sexualization of young girls by popular culture. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexualization (used interchangeably with hypersexualization and sometimes pornification) as when:

A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified – that is made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent actions and decision making, and/or; sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

(Zurbriggen et al., 2007, p. 1)

The process of hypersexualization is stated to produce negative outcomes for young girls such as early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, eating disorders, low self-esteem and depressed mood (Egan, 2013; Zurbriggen et al., 2007).

The sexualization process is conceptualized as operating in a linear and narrow way for young girls:

Pornographic like advertisements, media and objects produce the desire to purchase, which promotes a longing to look like . . . and even more disturbing for many, the impulse in girls to emulate the women in the pornographically inspired images that seduced them in the first place. (Egan, 2013, p. 22)

The hypersexualization discourse universally frames all girls as not taking enough responsibility in managing society's sexual objectification of their maturing bodies. Such literature frequently fails to provide any explanation of what hypersexual images are or the exact process between viewing these images and becoming them. The sexualized girl-object, defined as something passive to be gazed on for the sexual titillation of the viewer, is always gendered under hypersexualization as female and heterosexual (p. 66). Thus, the girl becomes the site of intervention, whereas the problematic male gaze remains unquestioned. Focus on media consumption and sexuality being "inappropriately imposed" on girls frames them as if they have no self-determination, agency or critical control over their actions under this process. Instead, they become cast as merely an object or a pawn.

The link in the hypersexualized girlhood discourse between sexualization and online victimization is especially apparent in the creation of the CyberSafe Girl's website, which devotes a fifth of its content to educating girls, families and educators about the impact of sexualization. The website contains a series of handouts entitled "Keeping Girls Media Smart" aimed at helping girls "make smart choices" in understanding how media messages oversexualize females. As the opening paragraph on the Hypersexualization main page²⁶ explains:

²⁶ <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/Hypersexualization>

Young girls are increasingly exposed to 'sexy' images in advertising, music, social media, magazines, YouTube, etc. In this culture, and given their search for identity and belonging, young girls can become vulnerable to hypersexual images. It's important to begin this conversation with young girls to help them understand the issue and make smart choices (CybersafeGirl.ca, 2014)

Here, “smart choices” represents an ideological version of girlhood in which a socially acceptable version of femininity and sexuality is chosen. An expectation to “make smart choices” conveys a responsabilisation of young girls to load onto their shoulders the messages of a whole society that demeans and objectifies women and girls. This “smart” girl is supposed to remain uncorrupted by the pervasive media influence cited as leading girls into dabbling with “sex bracelets, rainbow parties, and sexting” (Best & Bogle, 2014 p. 141).

Many scholars point to hypersexualization discourse as one that is steeped in white, able, middle-class, and heteropatriarchal approaches to sexuality, gender and childhood (Baird, 2013). For instance, girls with disabilities, gender non-conforming and queer girls are constructed as relatively unimportant in most literature on sexualization (Egan, 2013) due to the focus on hyper-heterosexuality. The PDF tip sheet “What Everyone Needs to Know”²⁷ to keep girls media smart about hypersexualization, available for download on CyberSafe Girl’s website, discusses problematic social messages directed towards girls on desirability, beauty, and thinness, such as those found in women’s magazines. However the tip sheet negates the fact that these beauty ideals and images tend to be predominantly white and that girls and women of colour tend to be stereotypically portrayed as more eroticized and morally loose than their white counterparts

²⁷ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/H-Info-Ev-En.pdf>

(Aapola et al., 2005; Lee & Chatterjee, 2012), marginalizing girls of colour under this discourse as well.

Beneath the above passage from the Cybersafe Girl's website is the image of a middle-class, white, nuclear, heterosexual cartoon family, the Mom and Dad watching television with their son and daughter²⁸. The image's central and prominent position on the site's Hypersexualization main page reinforces a discursive message that girls must be educated by and made to talk with their family about their early exposure to sexualized content in order to avoid the transformation from 'normal' girl to 'sexy' tween or teen. A tip sheet on the page entitled "Media Smart Families"²⁹ provides information to parents about how to avoid this transformation. Parents are responsabilized to help their daughters navigate a sexualized world by limiting exposure to all media images including "sexualized" content (para 1), and engaging with their daughter in discussions about media portrayals of women, and age appropriate sexual health information to help them make "wise choices" (para 8). Parents, which in the some of the materials seemed to serve as a stand-in for 'mothers', are encouraged to become "role models" (para 5) and think about what they "watch and wear and how that can impact your child" (para 8). Downloading responsibility onto 'sexy' and neglectful mothers for producing sexualized daughters, such as by asking them to be careful in what they "wear", reifies problematic hegemonic idealisations of motherhood that responsabilizes them for raising morally (un)sound children. Blaming mothers only serves to further divert attention away from the patriarchal discourses that require girls and women to become sexualized objects in the first place.

While the brother in the image of the nuclear family is being exposed to the same content by gazing at the same TV, he is not a site of focus and concern; under a discourse of

²⁸ <http://www.cybersafegirl.ca/Hypersexualization>

²⁹ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/H-Info-Fam-En.pdf>

hypersexuality, his (hetero)sexual subjectivity “is assumed to be both present and active” (Egan, 2013, p. 64) whereas his sister’s is assumed to be present but passive. In such images, girls are depicted as becoming “unequivocally that which they consume” (p. 100). This framing fits with current approaches in which outcomes of sexualization are often taken as both inevitable and universal, with no direct empirical evidence or reflection upon how and why these effects are restricted only to girls (Hawkes & Dune, 2013).

Girls’ assumed passivity to sexualized media is echoed in another section of the CyberSafe Girl website. The opening passage on the section for families and educators on hypersexualization states that:

no matter how much you try to prevent it, children and youth will be exposed to sexual content. Given this reality, girls need reliable information that will help them recognize messages that over-sexualize and target girls as naïve consumers (CybersafeGirls.ca, 2014, para 1).

Though the passage states that all children and youth are exposed to this content, it is girls who are framed as uniquely “naïve consumers” under the hypersexualization discourse. Their representation as a target for intervention suggests they are uniquely unable to recognize and resist these messages without “reliable” adult guidance. The PDF handout on the CyberSafe Girl website “Media Smart Families: Tips”³⁰, also conceptualizes hypersexualization as operating through girls’ passivity, defining it as a form of sexuality that is “inappropriately imposed on girls through media, marketing or products”. In this passage, the word ‘imposed’ equates sexualization as a force that girls submissively accept without agentic choice.

³⁰ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/H-Info-Fam-En.pdf>

Hasinoff (2014) finds that the framing of girls as passive sexualized media consumers has led sexual education initiatives to download or devolve responsibility onto them as the primary point of intervention. Through their responsabilisation for ending sexualization, a troubling dichotomy is created where “girls are to be seen as passive victims of sexualization yet at the same time strong and capable of solving this social problem” (Hasinoff, 2014, p. 105). This approach to intervention is seen in the CyberSafe Girl’s PDF handout, “Tips for Girls”³¹, which contains 10 tips designed to educate girls on the “unhealthy, negative, and unrealistic” standards created by hypersexualization. The handout suggests a range of complicated tasks to engage in to resist the impact of hypersexualization such as: questioning the messages of TV commercials; questioning gender stereotypes; starting a petition or writing a letter to challenge portrayals of girls that are over-focused on looks; researching how marketers use images of girls to sell products; and/or discussing sexualized media messages with friends.

This is a paradoxical discourse: on the one hand, girls are voiceless, passive victims. On the other hand, they are required to have a critical voice with few supports or tools for how to self-advocate. An understanding of media literacy that reproduces an individualized victim-blaming approach without providing girls and all youth with any critical language or tools to understand or challenge/intervene in the systemic dynamics of gender-based violence and sexism is problematic. The unquestioned assumption is that if a girl becomes media literate, she will somehow be inoculated against the otherwise harmful effects of sexualization, which assumes then that girls all face the same kind of sexualization, in the same way, and have access to the same kinds of interventions. By maintaining there is a distinction between ‘respectable’ girlhood and those girls artificially sexualized by the media (Dobson, 2014), “a moral framework is

³¹ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/H-Info-Girls-En.pdf>

attached to certain styles of dress, self-presentation, and also to desire” (p. 99) that is represented through unpacking the ideological basis of hypersexualization found in these curriculums. This promotes an overly simplistic, diluted, universal or “one size fits all” approach to sexual education, which in turn ignores scholarship that both questions the pervasive effects of sexualization (Egan, 2013) and suggests girls negotiate sexualization differently based on their social location, including their class, race, sexual orientation, personal history, and other factors (Dobson, 2014). The consequence is that an age-old double standard on female sexuality continues to be upheld, framing the conversation around girls “for their failures to adequately resist mass culture or pressure from boys” instead of moving it towards a discussion about sexualization that contains “the structural and community based solutions to ending rape culture that feminists have been advocating for decades” (Hasinoff, 2014, p. 114).

Analysis Summary

My analysis of the visual, linguistic, structural and textual content of the four curricula generated four salient discursive themes regarding the positioning of girlhood with respect to cybersafety. These themes underscore that ultimately, concerns about online safety for girls centers on the consequences of not putting forth the ‘right’ image of girlhood. Girls are framed dichotomously and paradoxically at different points in the curricula: required to submit to the male gaze yet instructed to avoid sexual agency and desire; obliged to be protected online but also shamed; expected to avoid online risk yet to also to take the blame when victimization occurs; and asked to resist a culture of hypersexualization yet ignore the systemic and gendered roots that lead to online violence against women and girls in the first place. These discourses responsabilize girls on and offline to make “smart” choices with strategies presented as universally applicable to all girls, without any exploration of how these strategies might need to

shift based on individual differences and context. While promoting an essentialized, heteronormative, Eurowestern-centric model of femininity (Aapola et al., 2005; Egan, 2013; Karaian, 2014), cybersafety discourses ask girls to remain invisible, as their visibility would require issues of gender-based violence and institutionalized sexism, racism, and ableism (among others) to be addressed in the curricula. Girls that exist outside of white, heterosexual girlhood are especially marginalized despite their greater risk for online and offline violence (de Finney, 2015; Helweg-Larsen et al., 2012; Martinello, 2014; Noll, Shenk, Barnes & Haralson, 2013; Normand & Sallafranque-St. Louis, 2015; Sikka, 2009; Walrave, 2011). In reifying the social exclusion of “other” girlhoods, the very real need for systemic and comprehensive cybersafety that addresses girls’ actual lived realities and intersecting identities is rendered invisible as well.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Reimagining CyberGirlhood Beyond Binaries of Risk and Responsibility

As I have shown in my analysis of four cybersafety curricula, girls under cybersafety discourses are constructed along a strict binary of being either in crisis or as crisis causing. I demonstrated how, in the cybersafety materials, certain online risks such as child predators or hypersexualization are exaggerated and prioritized, while other real and serious threats such as sexualized, racialized and gendered violence are rendered relatively invisible. I linked my analysis to literature that suggests cybersafety discourses unfairly attribute responsibilities to girls and promote narrow and typically white, heteronormative accounts of victimhood. I also contextualized cybersafety within a larger pattern of moral panic towards femininity and girlhood norms over the last century. In my final chapter, I explicate the key overarching themes prevalently identified in my analysis. I then turn my attention towards discursive alternatives for service providers and others who may be supporting girls with their engagements with cyberspace. I conclude with discussion of future research directions that may assist in disrupting and displacing the constraining forces under which girls are placed under the present cybersafety discourse.

Discourses of Neoliberalism

My analysis has shown that girls continue to be tasked with shouldering the blame for cyberviolence. Girlhood cybersafety under neoliberal and post-feminist discourses is being shaped in a context in which girls are constantly asked to make smart choices about their online activity, “choices that rise above the messy realities and affective complexities of her daily life” (Ivashkevich, 2013, p. 323). I have argued that there is a dual effect at play in the materials, one heavily influenced by a neoliberal ideology that degenders the messy reality of cyberviolence by

obscuring the role that gender power formations play in producing it, while explicitly gendering the blame (Berns, 2001). My analysis indicated an almost exclusive focus on the victimization of girls (particularly white, heterosexual, able bodied girls) as seen through their over-representation in scenarios and images of victimhood, without any information provided to contextualize for girls why they may be particularly at risk. When girls do experience cyberviolence, I found them to be viewed as personally responsible. The materials normalized a peer culture that blames, shames and alienates girls for their experiences of victimization. This occurs without the provision of information that challenges the toxicity of victim blaming and sexual shaming, particularly as it relates to gender and sexuality. I identified this as part of neoliberal conceptions of victimhood as being self-made and a choice (Stringer, 2014). Seen through a neoliberal gendered moral panic, girls seen placing themselves at risk are constructed as pseudo-victims and blameworthy agents for not “preventing, resisting, surviving and recovering from all manners for threats to personal safety, psychic stability and economic security” (Stringer, 2014, p. 79).

The panic around cybersafety seems not to challenge but rather uphold the dominant and mainstream neoliberal views of gender and sexual-based violence by focusing on girls’ individual behaviours. Girls’ uses of new technologies are framed as undermining their innate desire for chastity and amplifying their ability to make inappropriate sexual decisions (Hasinoff, 2013). The messaging consistent across the materials was that girls online may “think they know what they are doing, but lack a wider perspective, knowledge, or appropriate level of caution” (Barnard-Willis, 2012 p. 248). Discursively framing girls’ violence online as a problem of girlhood naivety and irresponsibility is further reinforced through the materials’ frequent focus on the consequences of sexting. Many of the materials recommend an abstinence approach to

sexting by surmising that the immediate and long-term risks are just not worth it. Warnings frequently were centred in the curricula around the idea that sexting leads to girls' images becoming widely distributed, resulting in them attracting the attention of online predators, preventing them from obtaining good jobs and educational opportunities, and placing them at risk of being charged for creating child pornography. Yet, there is little evidence that private sexting images are regularly distributed online and no peer-reviewed studies to indicate these images are routinely procured by online predators (Hasinoff, 2014) or by employers and university officials (Angelides, 2013). Existing qualitative data suggests that the vast majority of teenage sexts are shared consensually within existing romantic relationship with peers (Lenhart, 2009 as cited in Vanden-Abeeel, Roe & Eggermont, 2012) and in cases in which they are distributed non-consensually, they are usually shared among teens, rather than adults, and very rarely uploaded to public websites (Hasinoff, 2014). However, even though their images may not be widely accessed and distributed by child predators, many girls still report harm from the non-consensual distribution of their images to peers (Hasinoff, 2013). The materials did not focus on providing any concrete or practical information about this reality, which could help girls to better navigate consensual sexting while also bring boys in to the picture. Such disproportion in the estimation of the threat or danger caused by sexting suggest this information may be influenced by a moral panic (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009) rather than best practice in responding to cybersafety.

Just as in previous moral panics about girls' sexual innocence, accounts of girls' sexual identities in the materials allowed them to be either 'innocent' and vulnerable to sexual predators and hypersexualized media *or* precocious 'vixens' whose overt sexuality is condemned (Kanai, 2015). This 'vixen' image was seen through portrayals in the materials of cyberviolence as a by-

product of a hypersexualized girl culture that is irresponsible and out of control. An impression is given, especially in materials directed at adults, that online sexualization is rampant. However, in British Columbia, as few as one in 10 youth report ever engaging in sexting, with male youth self-reporting higher rates of sexting than female youth (Smith et al., 2014). Yet the materials focused on girls', rather than boys', self-sexualization. Girls were encouraged in the materials to learn and practice self-respect, a moral notion of what femininity and female sexuality should look like as an antidote to sexual victimization. The contradictory framing of girls' sexuality as either virginal or vixen-like may stem from girlhood and girls' bodies symbolizing social order and traditional morality within the white, Christian western culture in which the materials are embedded (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Myers, 2009). Dyer (1997) traces the association of girlhood with purity and chastity back to Christian and Judeo traditions of identifying whiteness and bloneness with heavens and angels. The ideals of virginity and innocence in girlhood are embedded in Euro-Western cultures even if overt connections to Christianity and Judaism have been muted in most mainstream materials (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006). Notably, the assumption of heteronormativity on which traditional notions of virginity are built is increasingly challenged in school-based sexual health curriculum. For instance, recent revisions to the Ontario sexual health curriculum elicited backlash from parents and religious communities, among others, for new content relating to the gender and sexuality spectrum. Despite these shifts, online safety materials persist in their representations of sexual innocence, since, within white, Christian cultural imagery there are few ideas as potent and affectively charged as the sexual defilement of innocence (Egan, 2013).

According to Gonick (2006), girlhood has increasingly served as an expression of the uncertainties, tensions, fear and anxieties elicited by the rapid social, economic, political and

technological changes taking place under neoliberal capitalist policies in late modernity, changes that have resulted in rising inequalities. Social and cultural threats to girls within moral panics, such as new technologies or sexualized media, also then come to represent threats to whiteness, middle class security, Western nationhood, and patriarchal authority, which may be mobilized and moralized for political or economic gain. Moral panics about the trafficking and pornification of Western girlhood (Mulholland, 2013) or HPV vaccinations against cervical cancer (Connell & Hunt, 2010) similarly play on this deep-seated fear of the defilement and sexualization of the innocent. Such fears carry potent public and political power in Canada, while, notably, the “epidemic” (United Nations, 2015) of disappeared and missing Indigenous girls has garnered little media attention in recent decades. Thus, as I explore late in the chapter, some girls were much more visible than others in the materials.

Across the materials, the online interactions of, female youth seemed to particularly create “concern or a heightened level of fear” (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009) as indicative of a moral panic under the cybersafety discourse by framing girls as unaware of the personal safety strategies needed to protect their bodies, reputations and their intimate images. Discourses of dependence and femininity situate girls as vulnerable and needing to rely on others to teach them personal safety practices and morality, such as seen through the proliferation of safety handouts and tip sheets in the materials. The idea that girls can protect themselves from all manners of cyberviolence through these strategies, as suggested by one of the materials reviewed, highlights the rise of postfeminist ideology in the cybersafety discourse. This ideology frames girls’ experiences of success and failures with violence, among other things, as the product of individual effort (Gonick, 2006). Girls are being asked to espouse a postfeminist belief that “anyone who works hard can get ahead” and that “women have made great gains towards

equality”(Gonick, 2006, p. 6). Such an emphasis on personal risk reduction through learning proper behaviours fosters the illusion that girls are “free” to make healthy choices in regards to their positioning as victims, disregarding the intersectional impacts of social, gender, racial, environmental and economic barriers (Phillips & Martinez, 2008).

The resulting impression from the materials is that cyberviolence against girls is occurring within a vacuum. Overall, I have found that more inclusive representations of girlhood seem absent from cybersafety prevention materials and are rarely discussed in the literature. There was no discussion of racialization, gendered or sexualized violence, xenophobia, homo- and trans-phobia, or other content that might equip girls, families, youth and practitioners with practical tools and language to productively address and intervene into these forms of violence in their lives. Rather, the materials offered only individualized strategies and neutral language that put the onus on girls to protect themselves against deeply-seated systemic inequities simply by making “smart” choices. In reality, “while girls may have a perceived freedom within an arena of choices, such choices are still the stuff of social expectations” that occur under constrained agency (Little & Hoskins, 2005, p. 79). “In the context of misogyny, sexism, and racism” the notions of smart choices “proves to be an illusion” (Frazier & Falmagne, 2014, p. 482).

Discourses of Marginalization

Given the historic marginalization of girls and women, particularly those girls who identify as Indigenous, racialized, queer and/or from low income social locations, my analysis of the materials indicates it is vital to understand how moral panics frame gender against other positions of intersectionality in relation to cybersafety. Youth panics, particularly those focused on girlhood, continue to foster an ideology that legitimates social stratification on the bases of race, class, (Schissel, 1997) and gender, further obscuring systemic issues impacting minoritized

girls and women. Another consistent discourse across the literature and in the materials reviewed is that despite the gender-based nature of cyberviolence, only a handful of prevention based research and literature address issues of gender in a direct way. None of the curricula reviewed addressed other sites of marginalization (such as race, ability, class or sexual orientation). The assumption seems to be that a white, heterosexual, able-bodied girl, despite the privilege afforded to her, is as vulnerable as a girl who is socially and economically marginalized (Harris, 2004). Other research supports this finding, indicating that many cybersafety materials are dominated by a gender-neutral, risk adverse, police driven perspective primarily framed in terms of behaviors to avoid, intended for a large and generalized adolescent audience (Barnard-Willis, 2012). As a result, these materials can insufficiently account for how gender, sexuality, race, and class –among other factors- compose risk and are, thus, unavoidable aspects of girls’ realities.

My findings suggest that discourses of responsabilization in the materials particularly incite blaming and shaming of girls, especially those already marginalized by racial and socioeconomic inequities by constructing them as “over-sexed and under-disciplined” (Bay-Cheng, 2015, p. 287). The discourses of femininity privileged in the materials routinely referenced white, middle class ideals of girlhood as the type of femininity that is victimized/victimizable by cyberviolence. Girls associated outside of this feminine ideal may thus be held as more culpable and blame-worthy victims (Phipps, 2009). Inaccurate stereotypes of women of colour, for instance, portray them as jezebel figures – seductive, hypersexual, and sexually manipulative –often accused of provoking or even desiring their own sexual victimization (West, 1995). Stereotypes of working class girls as coming from a culture of unruly, uncivilized, unfeminine and violent behavior can inaccurately blame their sexual victimization on their socio-economic position (Bourke, 2007).

Problematic framings of minoritized girls as unworthy victims are also featured in discussions about the distribution of images in the materials. Though some girls may choose to and enjoy sharing sexual images consensually, many report being disturbed and traumatized by the unauthorized, non-consensual sharing of images they believed to be private (Hasinoff, 2013). Girls who experience this frequently have no recourse against the person who purposefully harmed them, since reporting the incident to authorities can make them vulnerable not only to public judgment and humiliation but also legal consequences (p. 459). Indigenous girls, queer girls, disabled girls and working class-girls among others already state they face under-protection from violence due to the institutionalization of classism, ableism, racism, homophobia and colonization in the criminal justice system (Dylan, Regehr, & Alaggia, 2008; Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Phipps, 2009). Cases of cyberviolence likewise indicate the most publicized cases are those presumed to involve heterosexual, middle-class and white girls (Chun & Friedland, 2015). For instance, few stories on Amanda Todd recognized her mixed-race heritage and subsequent racism as a factor in her alienation and social shaming by white female peers (Lee & Chettwynd, 2012). The problematic effect of constructing minoritized girls as outside of the cybersafety discourse increases possibility for misrecognition of the harms they face online from the dominant culture. It also facilitates the continued erasure of the intersection between gender-based violence and other forms of violence and oppression in favor of centering highly individualized, moralistic and protectionist discourses about white, heterosexual middle class girlhood.

The data I reviewed also highlighted a persistent discourse of panic related to girls' relational violence, such as occurred in Todd's case, as distinct from other forms of violence. One of the most studied moral panics around girlhood in Canada in recent decades has been the

rise of the ‘mean girl’. The discourse of the “mean girl” was seen in scenarios I reviewed that framed girls’ cyberviolence as retaliation for relational reasons – such as to punish a girl for stealing another girl’s boyfriend – rather than sexual ones. Similarly, Barron and Lacombe (2005) point to Canadian news coverage of the 1997 murder of 14 year old Reena Virk, of South-Asian descent, as creating moral panic around violent girls in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In both Virk’s and Todd’s cases, girls’ relational violence was framed as individual crimes indicative of the changing nature of traditional, white girlhood. The dominant discourses of whiteness, Eurocentrism and Christianity teaches that ‘nice girls’ don’t feel rage, much less verbalize it or physically demonstrate it (Brown, 2011). This reflects broader discursive formations related to girls’ relational aggression (girl-on-girl violence) as rooted in essentialized stereotypes about white femininity.

Existing research links the issues of girls’ relational violence to girls’ internalization of dominant, patriarchal culture that values sex and power (Artz, 1998; Jiwani, 2006). The “continued fascination with individually located, psychological pathology as casual bases for violence has prevented understanding of material inequities and structural obstacles in the lives of girls who use violence” (Brown, 2013, p. 77) as well as girls who experience violence. Furthermore, the universalization of cybersafety discourse positions cyberviolence as something that can happen to any girl at any time, despite indications that minoritized girls may face greater violence on and offline (de Finney, 2015; Helweg-Larsen et al., 2012; Martinello, 2014; Noll, Shenk, Barnes & Haralson, 2013; Normand & Sallafranque-St. Louis, 2015; Sikka, 2009; Walrave, 2011) and thus require different, systemic solutions. This emphasizes the importance of deconstructing universalized notions of girlhood and female sexuality, especially as they relate to issues of violence, risk, and safety.

Discourses of Governmentality and Social Control

Cybersafety discourses represent not only the protection of girls but also broader politics of surveillance, crime prevention, and governmental rationalities and techniques (Barnard-Willis, 2012). In Canada, the events of 9-11, the war on terror, and threats to neoliberal globalization have led to an increased government focus on threats to the Canadian state both external and internal (Proulx, 2014). Barnard-Willis and Wells (2012) and Haggerty, Wilson and Smith (2011) suggest the result has been an increase in surveillance measures by the state, measures that mean surveillance has now become a feature of everyday life at work, at home, at play and online.

As identified by Foucault (1995), surveillance allows the state not only to keep track of and discipline its citizens but also to promote internalized discipline and ideal citizenship through the fear of being watched, a form of “self-surveillance” and “self-policing”. Additionally, increased surveillance seems to now be a common response to the targets of moral panics, as observed by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009). Fisk (2014), drawing on the work of Foucault, conceptualizes cybersafety as a pedagogy of surveillance that positions “trusted adults” such as CYC practitioners as final arbiters of risk and appropriateness, while casting suspicion on the everyday online practices of youth. Strategies of social control and surveillance have been suggested by Foucault (1961) to operate as an underpinning of helping professions such as CYC, disciplining large numbers of people through “prisons and correctional institutions, psychiatric institutions, and the psychoanalyst’s couch” (p. 79). Control based strategies have also been stated to have increased in the modern age through the growth of the nation state in which governments are now the sole force of individual protection, endowed with “the power to provide and protect freedom and liberty, as well as impose discipline and order” (France &

Wiles, 1997, p. 60). CYC practitioners and others who work with girls can then become tasked with creating discipline and order in communities by developing a set of working practices that correct girls' deviant behaviour back into modes of acceptability and responsibility (Frances & Wiles, 1997).

In my analysis, I found adults to be positioned as monitoring agents relative to girls' cyber practices. The materials frequently referenced the importance of girls reporting to "safe adults" any instances of risk or inappropriate behaviour on their part or that of others. Suggested scripts for girls to have these conversations referenced their lack of discipline and self-regulation through encouraging them to state that they "made a mistake" or an "error in judgement". Parents, in particular, are further positioned as agents of surveillance by suggestions in the curricula to monitor not just their daughters' cellphone and internet use, but also their exposure to all forms of media due to its sexualizing influence. In both cybersafety literature and media stories, monitoring and surveillance strategies are frequently suggested as beneficial and effective, including such things as checking the history folder on a computer browser, installing tracking or filtering software, as well as having passwords to Facebook, emails and phones for parents to check messages and friend requests (Mathiesen, 2013). Self-monitoring strategies for parents also included suggestions for parents to engage in self-surveillance of their own appearance and media choices as a strategy to interrupt hypersexualization. Though there is evidence that media is both sexualized and sexualizing for girls, there is less evidence about the influence of parenting on the process of self-sexualisation, especially outside of a laboratory environment (Starr & Ferguson, 2012).

The fact that surveillance and supervision are mentioned as central strategies in the first place promotes a "family construction in which parents and children have a supervisor-

supervised relationship” and in which parents have “legal and ethical rights” to invade their daughters’ privacy (Dunkels, 2010, p. 75). This is essentially the same message parents and adults who work with youth received under previous youth panics about rock and roll and sex in the mid- 1950s or again with drugs in mid-1960s, the urban mythology about the dangers of technology aimed at reinforcing “good parenting” and traditional family values in the middle class (Potter & Potter, 2001). Despite some research that indicates online harm can be mitigated through monitoring and surveillance (Berson, Berson & Ferron, 2002; Burrow-Sanchez, Call, Zheng & Drew, 2011; Helweg-Larsen et al., 2012), several researchers have questioned the effectiveness of adult monitoring of children and youth’s internet and cell phone usage in reducing experiences with hypersexualization, cyber harassment and harm (Chisholm, 2006; Mathiesen, 2013; Redondo-Sama, Pulido-Rodriguez, Arena & de Botten, 2014; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) noting that it may in fact be counter-productive. Activities that facilitate guidance and support, open communication, and opportunities for youth to express questions about healthy sexuality and appropriate use of technology as they arise, such as during family activities and meals, have been shown to serve as powerful protective factors against cyberviolence (Elgar et al., 2014). Open, consistent lines of communication promote adult-child relationships built on trust and support rather than control and surveillance. Yet, despite evidence to the contrary, surveillance is still promoted as the preferred tool for discouraging girls from risky online behaviours based on the argument they do not or cannot understand the consequences (Draper, 2012).

Some scholars have suggested that a control agenda has become more dominant in certain CYC settings over the past several years to promote the safety and well-being of young people (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011; Jeffs & Banks, 1999; Newbury, 2013; Skott-Myhre, 2012;

Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2015). Acceptance of surveillance measures are often deployed within narratives of necessary protection done ‘in the best interest’ of ‘at-risk’ populations (Barnard-Willis & Wells, 2012). Surveillance measures under cybersafety continue to highlight the deviant ‘other’, such as child pedophiles, to promote the idea that ‘normal’ and ‘law-abiding’ girls need not fear surveillance by ‘safe’ adults (Barnard-Willis & Wells, 2012). Resources in the materials I reviewed highlighted girls’ inherent risk, naivety and relational disposition as making them open to manipulation by sexual predators and peers. Tip sheets directed at girls frequently reminded them of their intrinsic danger to predation. As the rationale for acceptance of such strategies is protecting girls from harm by sexual deviants, expectations of privacy and sexual agency for girls become diminished as punishment and surveillance are judged instead to be the natural step in protecting the best interest of girls and society at large (Angelides, 2013).

The purpose of articulating such discourses of surveillance and social control in the materials is not to suggest that cyberviolence is benign or to argue that parental, human service, legal or legislative attention towards the harm that can occur is unnecessary. I suggest instead that there must be consideration of the social and legal consequences of such approaches. The entanglement of moral panics with political agendas, public institutions and front-line practice makes moral panics even more crucial to understand. Cohen (1980) points out the responsibility of what he terms “agents of social control” (p. 85) such as parents as well as front-line service providers like Child and Youth Care staff who can further marginalize the target of the moral panic through the creation and implementation of laws, policies, and programs that aim to control, punish and/or rehabilitate the deviant group. For instance, previous moral panic towards girls’ violence in Canada shifted public and media attention away from community based prevention and treatment models for young offenders towards increased social control

measures such as trying youth as adults (Fyfe, 2014). Public perception was powerful enough to result in policy changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act despite it being based on exaggerated and inaccurate depictions of young female offenders (Schissel, 1997). Since then, changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act have had a disproportionate effect on Indigenous girls, who in provinces such as British Columbia now comprise 58 per cent of the population in custody despite comprising less than six per cent of the total population (Artz, 2012). Moral panics, thus, can have the greatest impact on girls from racialized and poor backgrounds as they are the most likely to receive interventions that result in policing, criminal justice, institutional and/or child welfare system involvement (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). This focus on control, management and surveillance obscures the broader social, cultural and economic factors (e.g. racialized poverty) that girls' behaviors may be responding to (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007).

In my analysis, I found that sexting was presented as a form of self-exploitation and that there was a consistent lack of clarification of legal consequences for girls in the materials, whether or not the act was consensual. This framing suggests current responses to the moral panic of cybersafety may be working in concert with punitive, moralistic and "prohibitionist-like" approaches (Angelides, 2013, p. 684) that have the potential to adversely impact all girls, but especially minoritized girls. Care must be taken that minoritized girls do not disproportionately become the targets of such criminalization, social control and surveillance efforts as they did under changes to the Youth Justice Act. Furthermore, girls should not feel that they will be criminalized without recourse against perpetrators in cases where their images are shared non-consensually. Instead, focus by those who work with girls could remain on the fact that no one should be allowed to turn sexual expression, gender, race or sexuality into a source of shame, humiliation, exploitation or cause for punishment and surveillance (Slane,

2013). What is needed instead are solutions and preventative techniques that target the underlying systemic issues of cyberviolence while allowing girls to have privacy and agency in their online and sexual practices. As such, alternatives to such discourses are discussed in the following section.

Reimagining Cybersafety

Those invested in young women's sexual well-being, including girls themselves, can resist the displacement of responsibility for inequality from systems to individuals by shifting focus away from girls themselves. As long as we continue to look at girls – whether as problems or for solutions – we abide by and reinscribe rules that train our focus on individuals. A politicized discourse of girls' sexuality looks not at girls' sexuality at all, but instead turns outward to examine the circumstances of girls' lives, refusing to take part in the almost ubiquitous scrutiny and surveillance of girls themselves.

(Bay-Cheng, 2015, p. 288)

The above quote by Bay-Cheng (2015) describes many of the tensions I encountered in my analysis of the discourses embedded in cybersafety materials. Such analyses are much-needed to counter the hegemony of fear- and pathology-based discursive framings of girls. In turn, these discursive alternatives might help shape front-line practices that promote engagement, sexual wellbeing, justice and responsiveness to the realities of girls.

The four resources I critiqued make their most informed attempt to tackle what is a complex, inherently messy, emerging issue deeply concerning to the lives of girls. There is information in these approaches that is of value and can be used to inform effective cybersafety interventions. In addition to useful content and resources, my analysis did highlight several

problematic discourses of girlhood in the resources and how they intersect with discourses of technology and sexuality among others. Though my analysis points to tensions within cybersafety education, the continued impact cyberviolence has in young peoples' lives indicates cybersafety curricula will likely continue to be an important resource and support for girls. As such, I now turn my focus towards discursive alternatives for front-line practice to explore how those who work with girls in the field of Child and Youth Care (CYC) could deliver cybersafety in more productive and inclusive manners.

Alternatives to gendered and heteronormative discourses.

Drawing on previous research into promising practices in youth sexual health and violence prevention, I suggest that information about the social construction of gender, sexuality and violence could make an important contribution to cybersafety education in Child and Youth Care. Recent qualitative research with girls by the Cyber Self-Defense Project (2015), a peer-led research project in Toronto, concluded that service providers need to address the gendered attitudes in youth that contribute to systemic online violence. Several scholars have suggested that gender role ideologies are “deeply internalized” (Laub, Somera, Gowen & Diaz, p. 186) resulting often in youth not recognizing these ideologies as sources of pressure in their everyday lives and choices (Johansson, Alex & Christianson, 2014; Tolman, Striepe & Harmon, 2003). As such, the ideals young people hold of femininity and masculinity play a key role in creating sexual and gender-based violence (Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt & Zimmerman, 2014).

It seems that front-line CYC practices that decenter and subvert the notion that girls' subjectivities are fixed and singular, and provide alternative views to dominant patriarchal discourses that depict girls' sexually as naive, hypersexualized and inherently victimizable, offer much opportunity. This seems best achieved by approaches to cybersafety that offer critical

media literacy skills and opportunity to deconstruct and challenge dominant gendered, racialized and heteronormative discourses. For instance, Berglas, Constantine and Ozer (2014) found that a rights-based approach to sexual education with youth, which incorporated multiple aspects of critical literacy around gender identities, created opportunity for youth to challenge social and cultural norms that undermine their rights in relationships, their rights to sexual agency, as well as to discuss broader issues around gender equality. From their findings, they suggest rights based approaches could be further adapted to cover nonsexual rights related to the lives of youth, including issues of autonomy, honesty, and privacy which are salient issues within cybersafety education. One such example of a rights-based approach to cybersafety that incorporates discussion on stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation as well as race and ability is the workshop “Trendshift” by the organization West Coast LEAF³². These workshops, available for young people in Grades 8 to 12 in Kamloops, Nanaimo and the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, aim to shift online culture through rights-based education, believing that cyberviolence does not operate independently from sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination which all people have the right to be free from. From a more explicitly politicized framework rather than a rights-based approach, the Canadian-based Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) explicitly links issues of racialized gender violence to the ideologies and practices of colonialism. The Network provides grassroots training to young people around decolonizing sexual health education as a way of promoting Indigenous young people’s self-determination over their bodies and their lands. In their online materials³³, the Network reclaims diverse Indigenous perspectives and teachings on sexuality and gender in order to contest limiting Euro-western gender and sexuality norms (NSHN, 2015).

³² <http://www.westcoastleaf.org/our-workshop/trendshift/>

³³ <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/index.html>

Although they each approach sexual health education from quite different ideological perspectives, a common thread across these resources is articulated by Fine (1988), who argues that when focus is taken away from discourses of risk, danger and victimization in prevention work, space is created for girls to be recognized as sexual subjects with their own needs for desire, pleasure and agency instead of only as sexual objects. Without reliance on the assumptions in the present discourse of heteronormativity, race, female sexualization, and moralization about ‘healthy’ sexuality (Hasinoff, 2015), CYC practitioners could be well placed to advocate against focus on girls’ so called “bad choices” (Hasinoff, 2013, p. 452) and requirements to contain the sexual desires of their male peers (Tolman, 1994).

Alternatives to discourses of girlhood responsibility.

Part of decentering the discourses of responsibility placed on girls to prevent and manage all forms of cyberviolence seems to require a conceptual shift that involves engaging men and boys in particular, in addition to youth of all genders. Though this thesis was centred on dominant discourses of online girlhood and femininity, gendered and heteronormative discourses around masculinity were also found to be implicated in proliferating cyberviolence yet they remained unaddressed in the curricula. The need for work with boys and men in the prevention of violence against women and girls has been emphasized as necessary among front-line service providers, researchers, educators and policy makers over the past decade (Jewkes, Flood & Lang, 2015). The vulnerability of girls to violence is deeply rooted in the greater power and value that society affords men and boys. Simply stated, “to be born a girl in a patriarchal society is a fundamental risk factor for various types of gender based violence” (Michau et al., 2014, p. 1674). Practice and prevention in violence work have shifted from approaches that target only women and girls to ones that seek to transform the norms and systems that sustain gender

inequality and violence. As cyberviolence is merely violence occurring in new, technological ways, it seems that successful CYC approaches involving men and boys could be beneficial in shifting the cybersafety discourse from one centred on the actions and responsibilities of girls to one centred on the actions and responsibilities of all.

Productive, critical sexual health online education could focus on changing the way boys see their gender identities and consequent gendered practices, including the use of violence, sexual coercion or force, and other behaviours towards girls and women (Jewkes, Flood & Lang, 2015). This form of critical practice has been used in a variety of settings including recreational and community based settings, schools, and other institutions in countries such as the United States, South Asia, and South Africa and shown some degree of impact in lessening gender-based violence by changing the ways boys and men see their gender identities and resultant gender practices, including the use of violence, sexual and other behaviour towards girls and women (p. 1583). For example, the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme³⁴ co-created by Jackson Katz engages boys in interactive discussions about issues of misogyny, such as how power and privilege shape their interactions with girls, women and even other men. Through such discussion, they aim to encourage men to not only change their own relationship to gender and sexual-based violence, but to also intervene in gender and sexual-based violence amongst their male peers. The Representation Project, an American based non-profit, offers several critical videos regarding masculinity through their YouTube channel³⁵, including snippets from their documentary, *The Mask You Live In* which can be used to invite discussion on what it means to 'be a man'.

³⁴ <http://www.mvpnglobal.org/>

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo>

Research indicates such critical practice with boys is key to off-line violence as the majority of men who perpetrate sexualized violence will do so for the first time during their teenage years (Heilman, Hebert, & Paul-Gera 2014). In addition, it would be important for CYC interventions to highlight the multiplicity of beneficial outcomes of this discursive shift, beyond merely preventing boys from being seen as or becoming perpetrators. Peacock and Barker (2014) list several additional motivations for boys to engage in alternative discourses of masculinity including lessening and responding to their own suffering as a result of violence against women and girls (for instance witnessing victimization of their mother or sister) and less pressure to engage in violence against other men which continues to be the leading cause of death for young men worldwide. It may also lessen pressure for boys to live up to the narrow norms, gender roles and expectations of masculinity that impact their daily lives, as well as to engage in less violence in all of its forms. Engaging men and boys in such violence prevention must also recognize the intersectionality of men's violence. Through the system of oppression, racialized and Indigenous boys and men are frequently and falsely stereotyped as the perpetrators of violence against girls and women. This context erases the privilege white boys and men have in avoiding responsabilization and criminalization for their own violent behaviours. Such discussions of the impact of misogyny on boys' online practices must also reference the role of white and settler privilege in sexual and gender-based violence

A caveat, however, comes with this discursive alternative to cybersafety for both service providers and policy makers. Care must be taken to ensure that engaging boys and men does not divert funding away from girls and women's programmes and services (Peacock & Barker, 2014). Experience shows that violence prevention cannot be undertaken successfully without the provision of services for victims and survivors. Communities will not reduce violence against

women and girls if necessary funding is taken away from such services to fund programs focused on men and boys (Jewkes, Flood & Lang, 2015). Care must also be taken to not re-center the gender binary instead of making room to address the gender issues of all youth, including those who identify as trans, gender non-conforming, gender fluid and so on. Preventing and responding to cyberviolence in Child and Youth Care practice requires a deeply contextualized, nuanced, ecological approach rather than a singular focus on the actions and responsibilities of a single gender or a single community. Prevention and practice efforts are needed on multiple-fronts: giving boys and men critical tools to deconstruct the gender and sexual norms that create gender-based violence; providing services that remains responsive to the realities of diverse young women; as well as offering opportunities for community organizing and advocacy against the systemic and institutional practices that sustain problematic gendered discourses.

Alternatives to discourses of marginalization.

Creating a broader landscape of cybersafety materials requires CYC practitioners to look beyond white, middle class, heterosexual girlhood to recognize that not all girls are equally at risk for experiencing cyberviolence, and that various communities have different frameworks for gender and sexuality. Under the present discourse, I discussed how few materials seem to address issues of diversity or approach the topic outside of a ‘one size fits all’ normative approach. This suggests that perhaps cybersafety is not being perceived as an important issue in traditionally marginalized communities, such as LGBTTTQQ+ or Indigenous communities.

For instance, in one of the few pieces of research to highlight the need Indigenous youth have for cybersafety, Radoll (2014) investigated cybersafety issues in Australia, a country with a similar history of British colonialism to Canada’s. Radoll found that “the issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face around cyber-safety is not that different from all

Australians however, it appears to have a deeper impact” (p. 11). Much like in Canada, the impact flows from centuries of colonial policies aimed at eroding Indigenous family systems and women’s leadership roles in their communities. Bourassa, McKay-McNabb and Hampton (2006) state that colonial legislation has constituted multiple oppressions that differentially disempower Indigenous girls and women and confer contemporary risks to their health and well-being. In brief, colonization has had a destructive effect on Indigenous gender relations (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004). Healthy relationships were broken down, as were family organization, gender roles, sexuality, child rearing practices, political and spiritual life, work and social activities (Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009). In the Australian context, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls have been found to face high levels of cyberviolence as a result of online racism, sexualisation, as well as lateral violence and aggression as part of the legacy of dispossession and oppression of colonial policies (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). Violence and sexual health interventions for Indigenous girls in colonial nations such as Canada and Australia, thus, seem to require recognition of racialized sexism as a colonial strategy, as well as the loss of knowledge, language, land and rights to self-determination that contribute to stereotypes and shame in Indigenous communities surrounding sex, gender and violence. Such approaches seem to also require restoration of Indigenous teachings on gender and sexuality, such as two-spirit teachings.

To address online violence directed at Indigenous girls, Australia has developed cybersafety programming that incorporates Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander pedagogy and worldviews (Radoll, 2014). Strong Choices³⁶ involves a series of six videos aimed at raising awareness about cyberviolence among Indigenous communities in Australia. Be Deadly

³⁶ <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/programs-projects?pid=1578>

Online³⁷ is an animation and poster campaign developed with Indigenous writers and voice actors to teach cybersafety in a way that honours and respects Indigenous cultural heritage, customs, and beliefs. Canadian organizations are just beginning to produce similar programming which speaks to the online needs of Indigenous girls. Think Before You Share³⁸, a recent three-page guide that offers advice on making “smart decisions” before sharing online, was produced by Facebook, MediaSmarts and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (MediaSmarts, 2015). The guide was translated into three Indigenous languages: Ojibwe, Cree, and Inuktitut. The guide was also updated to feature photos of Indigenous youth.

However, these cybersafety resources are far from perfect in addressing the gendered, racist, and historical conditions that can marginalize Indigenous girls on and offline. None of these resources offer critical literacy tools or name issues of gendered and systemic racism, colonial violence and economic marginalization that continue to sustain Indigenous girls’ isolation and invisibility. Some of the materials also replicated the problematic norms of gender and sexuality found in my review. For instance, the video “That’s Not Team Spirit”³⁹ from Be Deadly Online positioned Aboriginal girls as responsible for managing risk to themselves and their male peers by highlighting how a young Aboriginal teen girl’s topless selfie results in a fight among the male Aboriginal members of a soccer team. These resources suggest that in searching for more inclusive information to use with minoritized girls on cybersafety, CYC practitioners must ensure that they evaluate the discursive messaging and content as well.

³⁷ <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/indigenous.aspx>

³⁸ <http://mediasmarts.ca/blog/new-tools-aboriginal-youth-making-good-decisions-about-sharing-online>

³⁹ <https://esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources/be-deadly-online>

In contrast, the global campaign Take Back the Tech⁴⁰ takes a politicized approach to cybersafety that aims to amplify the voices of queer, transgender, disabled and racialized girls who do not fit the discursive picture of ‘ideal victim’. The campaign was initiated by the Association for Progressive Communications’ Women’s Rights Programme, a network of women in 35 countries throughout the world committed to using technology for women’s empowerment. The website gives girls a variety of critical tools for sharing their stories of cyberviolence, organizing on and offline. It also offers tools for community level interventions, such as a “digital safety roadmap” that girls can create to document the experiences, strategies and resources specific to their community, which, in turn, can help other girls navigate cyberviolence. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network, discussed previously, also gives Indigenous youth a variety of critical tools for learning about issues such as healthy relationships, gender and sexual-based violence, considering Indigenous knowledge and how sexual health has been impacted by colonization. Resources like these could serve as valuable conversation starters for CYC practitioners to use with girls and all youth in approaching cybersafety in a critical and politicized way. Given the value of alternative resources and tools available to girls, a central finding of this study is the importance, for Child and Youth Care practitioners to advocate against “one size fits all” approaches and models in working with girls (Little & Hoskins, 1995) and to broaden current cybersafety narratives to become more responsive to the diverse realities of girlhood.

Alternatives to discourses of panic.

Cyberviolence is understandably deeply concerning in the lives of girls as well as those who care about them. Yet despite the unacceptable actions and behaviours of those who

⁴⁰ <https://www.takebackthetech.net/current-campaign>

perpetrate cyberviolence, populist discourse remains fixated on girls who share sexualized images. The media have proliferated this discourse through dramatizing extreme incidences of sexting ‘gone wrong’, resulting in even consensual sexting becoming synonymous with cyberbullying and cyberviolence (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015). CYC practitioners who work with girls understandably may feel concerned upon learning a girl is sexting, given its alarming association with suicide and other harms (Angelides, 2013). As discussed earlier in this chapter, in their panic adults may turn towards ineffective and controlling strategies to provide protection. Recently in British Columbia, two parents were convicted of assault for hitting their daughter with mini hockey sticks and a skipping rope after learning she had sent nude photos of herself to her boyfriend over the app Snapchat (The Canadian Press, 2016). The case has been highlighted as exemplifying the tension in teaching girls about cybersafety in general and sexting in particular. Girls themselves have also adversely been impacted by youth cybersafety education produced under a discourse of panic. For instance, a Kids Help Phone Counsellor recounts a memorable phone call from a 16 year old female who attended a school assembly which used an abstinence based approach to sexting. The girl stated to her counsellor that she became terrified her future was ruined after hearing about absolute non-salvageable scenarios regarding sexting (Kids Help Phone, 2015). Universalizing and dramatizing the risks associated with cybersafety, thus, can create further panic and fear for girls to self-monitor their own choices, desires and actions.

Karaian and Van Meyl (2015) note that queer frameworks offer alternatives for understanding the practice of sexting, particularly with respect to the role that risqué sexually expressive practices may play in the development of one’s identity, community and sexual subjectivity. Queer theory, which emerged from the intersection of feminism, queer studies, post-

modern and post-structuralism ideas (Kisch, 2000; Richardson, McLaughlin & Casey, 2012). It questions how the self, actions, options for expression (including sexual expression), and behaviours are enforced through socialization, norms and structures of power, especially heterosexuality (Kisch, 2000). Jagose (1998) proposes that to queer something is to assume a zone or spectrum of possibilities along things such as sex, gender and sexual desire, focusing on disabling and deconstructing norms. Applying a queer framework in CYC practice could thus involve reframing consensual sexting for girls as merely a part of the spectrum of adolescent sexual and cultural expression rather than as its current positioning as inherently dangerous and abnormal. Comics informed by queer and feminist theory such as *Oh Joy Sex Toy*⁴¹ and the zine “A Sexy Guide to Digital Security”⁴² by an organization called Coding Rights approach the sharing of nude photos as a risqué behaviour that can be managed by girls through sharing safe and harm reducing practices. Both of these resources re-frame sexting as a form of content creation, not just for sexual pleasure but for sexual agency and self-determination. This reframing is particularly useful in disrupting hegemonic white femininity by supporting images of bodies frequently subjected to racism, sexism, ableism and heteronormativity, among others, that have traditionally been devalued and marginalized. The Kid’s Help Phone⁴³ also offers information on their website about sexting that is realistic without creating exaggerated fears, including information on issues of consent and on how to sext safely. CYC practitioners could offer such resources as an alternative to girls in order to provide concrete, inclusive information and practices.

⁴¹ <http://www.ohjoysexttoy.com/selfie/>

⁴² <http://tissuemagazine.com/a-sexy-guide-to-digital-security/>

⁴³ <http://kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/Sexting/Sending-a-sext.aspx>

Hasinoff's (2013) conceptualization of sexting as a form of media production also offers a promising approach to reframing sexting. Digital media production sites (such as message boards, Tumblr, Facebook, and YouTube) offer youth many benefits in addition to risks, such as social support, and avenues for communication, self-expression and sources of identity (Hasinoff, 2013). As a form of media production, Hasinoff states that consensual sexting can likewise offer youth benefits, such as a degree of control over self-representation, the ability to explore sexual desires, and opportunity to engage in assertive sexual communication with partners. The focus on sexting as not just sexual but also a form of media fosters important discussions about ownership and authorship in relation to consent. Conceptualization of sexting as a form of media production also references alternative discourses found in qualitative research with youth which indicated they produce nude images over media for a variety of both sexual and non-sexual purposes. For instance, Burkett (2015) found that such images might be shared as a source of humour or joke with friends, often of the same gender. Hasinoff (2013) states that alternative frameworks to sexting allows those who work with girls to stop concentrating on forbidding them to use digital media for sexual purposes and concentrate instead on discouraging and responding to non-consensual and abusive image sharing. This allows pressured, coerced, and harassing experiences to be situated as deviant and problematic rather than consensual experiences (Burkett, 2015). Space may then be opened up for CYC practitioners to focus more productively on issues of online privacy, sexual discrimination, trust and consent (Hasinoff, 2013; Burkett, 2015).

Practices to create safety in sexting could also be shared with girls, something that seems to be almost non-existent in present cybersafety research and education despite the topic being covered numerous times in public media aimed at adults. For instance, girls could actively

remove distinguishing features from their nude images (Karaian, forthcoming). The use of various image manipulation tools, filters and privacy settings could additionally be shared with parents by CYC practitioners, encouraging them to hold similar conversations that focus on consent, privacy and safety in regards to creating digital media, just as they would regarding physical acts of sexuality. This likewise could create space for parents to focus on responding to harm occurred from non-consensual distribution rather than punishing girls for imagined harms from consensual acts.

Of course, queering sexting or viewing it as a form of media production relies heavily on there being a clear line between consensual and exploitative/harmful experiences. Young people's understanding of consent is not always consistent. They can misunderstand their own consent as well as their partner's willingness to participate in sexual behaviours (Beres, 2014). Internalized gender, racial and sexual stereotypes that reinforce femininity with submission and pleasing others can particularly lead girls to say yes, or not explicitly decline, unwanted sexual activities (Walker, 1997). Kelly's (1987) influential work saw consent as existing along a continuum from choice to pressure to coercion to force. Abstinence and refusal-skills focused programs that only teach girls how to say "no" to sexual pressures prevent any discussion about the limitations of "yes" and consent as existing along a spectrum (Powell, 2007). Discursive alternatives that assert girls' capacities to say "yes" to sexual desire and pleasure such as those discussed here need likewise to engage in conversations about the ethics, limits and fluidity of consent to effectively prevent gender and sexualized violence.

Creating a discourse of support.

Instead of blaming and shaming girls for the risks, dangers and tragedies associated with cyberviolence, CYC practitioners should be tasked with engaging girls in a discourse of support

and critical reflection. Alvarez (2012) states that those adults who hold open and supportive conversations with girls when they face challenges online are likely to have the greatest successes in preventing and intervening in cyberviolence. Those who work with girls can disrupt the master narrative further by reminding girls with messages such as: “no matter what actions you took this is not your fault”, “this violence is not ok”, “you deserve to be free from all forms of violence and harassment online” and “you deserve choice and agency in how you express your sexuality”. Supporting girls also requires acknowledging to them that “no one should be allowed to turn sexual expression, gender, race or sexuality into a source of shame, oppression or humiliation for girls” that “all girls deserve a culture in which the attitudes, norms and behaviors that propagate gender, colonial, racial and sexualized violence are not tolerated” and “everyone, not just girls, has a role to play in challenging violence and harassment in all forms”. These simple statements offer powerful discursive reinforcements that help name and concretize what critically informed, productive sexuality might look like. Such messages honor and support rather than responsabilize girls for their experiences with violence. A discourse of support is further enhanced by involving the strategies, materials and tools referenced above that focus on the provision of empathy, information, grassroots resources, harm reduction and critical literacy in responding to cyberviolence. Through a discursive alternative of support, CYC practitioners could assist cybersafety discourse to move away from pathologizing girls, to empowering society to revise and reform the societal norms and stereotypes that vulnerabilize girls on and offline.

Conclusion

Cybersafety is a contemporary topic of girlhood crisis in Canada, with morally tinged debates about girlhood risk, safety and personal responsibility in the media informing educational, policy and research agendas. Contemporary public and academic discourses on

cybersafety constitute girlhood in multiple and contradictory ways: as innocent victim, hypersexualized teen, child pornographer, naive user. Several scholars have suggested that these discourses of girlhood are actually nothing new but rather part of a historic pattern of moral panic around girlhood, sexuality and technology (Cassel & Cramer, 2007; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingstone, 2013; Thiel-Stern, 2014).

Following the direction of these critical feminist scholars, I have summarized the link between moral panic theory and problematic conceptualizations of girlhood that frame present cybersafety discourse. Throughout my analysis of the four online cybersafety materials, I argued that both the risk and safety strategies produced are socially constructed and culturally mediated by this narrative. I framed constructions of girlhood within the cybersafety materials via four prominent discursive themes, “Invisible Girlhood”, “Shameful Girlhood”, “Blameful Girlhood” and “Sexualized Girlhood”, which each presenting unique constraints, social norms and ideals of girlhood agency and positioning.

Following my analysis of these four discourses, I considered them collectively, reflecting on the confining, stereotyped ideals of girlhood they uphold. I discussed how neoliberal ideology ignores systemic and structural issues and reduces girls’ agency in gaining cybersafety. I expressed concern towards the highly individualized and protectionist discourse that shelters normative white girlhood. I argued this focus disregards other girls’ experience of cyberviolence, and obscures how online gendered violence intersects with issues of race, class, sexual orientation and ability, among others. I concluded by critiquing the strategies of surveillance and social control emerging from the sustained moral panic towards girlhood online, which I suggested would only serve to further marginalize and criminalize girls. I offered insight into a number of discursive alternatives for CYC practitioners to work with girls, their male peers,

youth of all genders, and parents. Potential strategies included review of a number of grassroots, politicized and critical literacy tools for preventing and responding to cybersafety that could contest the notion that girls simply need to make smarter choices online.

The study findings also highlighted ongoing Eurowestern framings of girls and femininity that are settler in colonial societies such as Canada. These framings reiterate concern towards girls' online safety is not only about prevention but part of a dominant narrative from the early twentieth century to present day that conditions society to see girls as victims "who must be policed and saved" (Thiel-Stern, 2014, p. 17) and that some girls are more worthy of being saved than others. Future research involving cybersafety practice and education may wish to focus on the relative absence of diverse girls' voices in responding, relating, and reacting to such messages of protection and responsabilization in Canadian cybersafety resources. Given the absence of diverse representations of girlhood in the materials, endeavors to understand "how girls respond to the discourses, practices, and policies that constitute them as racialized, gendered, classed, (dis)abled, sexed subjects" are also integral "to developing a more radically engaged and social change-centered CYC practice" (de Finney, Loiselle & Dean, 2011, p. 85). Research on the use of critical tools with girls for interrupting and displacing the master narrative on cybersafety that currently governs them could also prove vital in creating a politicized, counter discourse of practice. Future emancipatory initiatives may also occur through research on more progressive alternatives to emergent cyberviolence policies and legislation in Canada.

Finally, it is important to note that this thesis is not without limitation. As suggested by Taguchi (2012) I believe it is central to recognize that all texts were read through my own lens as researcher. I aimed to provide critical analysis while recognizing that I myself am simultaneously standing outside, against and within these discursive formations. These entanglements reflect my

intersectional positioning as a white cis-female settler on unceded Coast and Strait Salish territories, implicated in the dominant EuroWestern ontology, capitalism and heteropatriarchy which I critique. My professional work in Child and Youth Care also embeds me in the neoliberal and neocolonial structures that sustain the privilege and power I hoped to unsettle. Yet, part of my self-reflexivity involves recognition that I am also someone who feels estrangement from the dominant discourse of cybersafety and the way it frames mainstream girlhood. Janks (1997) states that reading from a position of estrangement with the text in critical discourse analysis is an advantage as the researcher will then not represent an ideal reader, and thus, will not reproduce a dominant readings of the text. Engagement without estrangement represents a form of submission to the power of the text regardless of the reader's own intersectional position. It represents refusal to leave the confines of one's own subjectivity and allow otherness to enter, as "without the entry of the other, can we be said to have read the text at all?" (p. 331). I often felt deep estrangement from the personal safety strategies recommended to girls that I felt made them responsible for preventing their own victimization. I also struggled with the normalization throughout the texts of feelings of shame and humiliation for girls after having been sexually victimized online without acknowledgement that the peer culture that blames young women for their sexuality and sexual victimhood is wrong. I believe that my continuous reflexivity regarding my encounters with estrangement enriched my analysis of the texts and subsequent discussion of the dominant discourses present.

Overall, my critical discourse analysis has emphasized that girls require cybersafety support grounded in the recognition of and transformation of the current socio-political and economic conditions that perpetuate gender inequalities in their daily lives. This requires appropriately situating the intersection between gender-based violence online and other forms of

violence impacting girls, including colonial, racialized, sexualized, ableist, and economic forms of violence. As Chun and Friedland (2015) conclude, there is a need to work towards an online space where girls: “are not victims, but loiterers, actively engaging in its public sphere without a discourse of predators, pornographers, and slut-shamers waiting there to ruin them” (p. 17). I suggest we are unlikely to achieve this unless we stop focusing on the choices of girls and instead turn our focus outward.

This study found that a continued focus on white girls’ cybersafety operates as a stand-in for the privileged status of white middle class girlhood, while blurring the continued systemic exclusion of other girls. Eurowestern-centric cybersafety discourses do not emerge in a historical vacuum, and their focus on protecting white girlhood is not coincidental. In reality, cybersafety discourses are not only embedded in, but also serve to maintain, a settler neoliberal ideology that protects the integrity and future of a white nation. This is achieved through responding only to the types of violence experienced by white middle-class girls – peer to peer, microaggressions that tend to occur in the private/public spheres of home and school. Cybersafety discourse functions to position this as the only type of safety from violence that matters. Such framings ignore the various kinds of systemic, structural violence other girls might experience, including racialized gendered violence, institutional violence at the hands of police and other authority figures, and inter-generational violence borne out of colonial policies such as the residential school system. Preservation of good settler, white middle-class girl sexuality cannot be achieved without the corresponding pathology and blaming of “undeserving” girls, girls who are bad, racialized, Indigenous, poor or working class and hypersexual (Miller-Young, 2010; Karaian, 2014), thus positioning these girls’ bodies as more disposable (de Finney, 2015).

The erasure of systemic violence found in this study begs the complex question of whether cybersafety education can truly be reimagined in Child and Youth Care practices without sanctioning the privilege and protection of white femininity, or if instead the profession needs to foreground refusal to participate in the moralization over cybersafe girlhood entirely. Turning CYC's focus outward involves continuing to politicize the issue of violence and how it not only differentially impacts some girls more than others, but how violence towards certain girls is responded to by some adults more than others. Moving forward, CYC practitioners must consider what such politicized interventions and responses could look like. How could more grassroots, community responses to on and offline violence be shared and disseminated, rather than state funded cybersafety resources that reproduce the status quo? How could such resources be designed by girls for girls with resources and strategies specific to their communities? How could resources engage white men and boys in conversation about the privilege and responsibility they have in producing violence and critical issues like racism and misogyny? How can advocacy be done so that cybersafety and its moralization over the sexuality and femininity of white girlhood does not become further institutionalized?

These questions are not neatly resolved by this study or any other study; rather, they are important critical points to consider in any cybersafety discussion to ensure that state-mandated ideologies do not become the only story available to girls and youth. Cybersafety education currently represents a practice context which is complicit in the marginalization, erasure and silencing of the sociocultural contexts of diverse girls. However, I believe through such questioning there is opportunity for transforming and dismantling the capacity of hegemonic femininity in facilitating violence and other systems of oppression against girls.

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Appendix A

Table 1 – List of Cybersafety Resources

Organization	Campaign	Website
British Columbia Children's Hospital	Youth to Youth Violence	http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/youth-health-clinic
Canadian Centre for Child Protection	Need Help Now	http://www.needhelpnow.ca
Canadian Red Cross	Beyond the Hurt	http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/bullying-and-harassment-prevention/bullying-and-harassment-prevention-programs
Centre for Suicide Prevention	Aboriginal Cyberbullying	https://suicideinfo.ca/library/resources/specialfeatures
Children of the Street Society	I Shared a Photo	http://www.childrenofthestreet.com
Government of Canada	Stop Hating Online	http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/blg/pst-20140109-en.aspx
Media Smarts	Be Web Aware	http://www.bewebaware.ca/english/aboutus.html
Media Smarts	My World	http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/licensed-resources/myworld-digital-

		literacy-tutorial-secondary-students
Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada	Social Smarts	https://www.priv.gc.ca/youth-jeunes/index_e.asp
Ontario Provincial Police	Send This Instead	http://www.sendthisinstead.com
Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick	Safety on the Internet	http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/Internet_Child_Exploitation
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Bullying and Cyberbullying	http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bullinti/index-eng.htm
Vancouver Community Action Team	A Safer Space	http://www.asaferspace.ca/staying-safe-online/