

PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING CYBERVIOLENCE INITIATIVE

Needs Assessment Findings

Atwater Library and Computer Centre

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Needs Assessment Findings --
Press Test Draft

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Introducing the Needs Assessment: Purpose and Context

Purpose

This document serves to consolidate the results of our consultations with a broad segment of the Montreal Anglophone community which included: young people (mostly but not exclusively girls and women), college students and faculty, high school students, librarians, counselors, teachers, university students, school board personnel, the video game community and industry, technology/digital culture scholars and other academics, community organizations and law enforcement. These consultations were conducted in a variety of formats, from open-ended interviews and questionnaires, to focus groups and video documentary. The research process also included interactive activities and community conversations.

Goals

The goals of the needs assessment were to:

1. Gain a broader, deeper more nuanced understanding of how cyberviolence against girls and young women is defined and experienced and how it is manifested in girls and young women's everyday lives
2. Identify factors that contribute to gender-based cyberviolence
3. Examine the broader contexts in which gender-based cyberviolence occurs; for example, inquiring about the types of online spaces where girls and young women might be most likely to witness and experience cyberviolence and exploring how the online space might affect the nature of the cyberviolence
4. Explore how design affordances might impact the safety of online spaces
5. Learn more about the relationship or interplay between on and offline violence. For example, does violent or misogynistic online behavior normalize that behavior, potentially making it seem more acceptable offline?
6. Identify potential strategies as described by our stakeholders that they believe would be effective in preventing and eliminating cyberviolence against girls and young women and identify barriers that might work against those strategies

We consulted a wide range of stakeholders using a variety of methods designed to take into account their differing contexts and circumstances, but it is important to note that we explored similar questions with all of them in order to triangulate the data, highlight similarities and disparities, and arrive at some broad-based conclusions. The findings generated from this needs assessment will be used to develop strategies that girls and young women agree are effective and meaningful in the context of their daily engagement with digital culture.

Context surrounding the needs assessment

While cyberviolence doesn't only impact girls and young women, it disproportionately impacts them and the way it manifests towards them is unique, targeting their gender and sexuality. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center (PEW) published in October 2015, young women are particularly vulnerable to the most severe forms of harassment online, including stalking and sexual threats. Twenty-five per cent of women aged 18-24 reported being the target of sexual harassment online, while 26 per cent said they had been stalked. Whether in social media or video games, girls' and young women's voices are being silenced through online attacks.

Current research and strategies designed to deal with cyberviolence are too often focused on how to 'manage'

young people and what to tell them, depriving them of agency and input. The approach embedded in the Atwater Library and Computer Centre's project looks instead at how young people utilize and experience digital technologies, what design features they identify as problematic, how they define the terms and the issues that directly impact girls and young women in everyday life, and what kinds of strategies or support girls and young women would consider useful.

Because girls and young women do not live in a vacuum, it is important to examine both the specific problems girls face as well as the context in which they experience cyberviolence. This led us to gather some data from the boys and men they interact with, the educators who teach them and the counselors who help them to manage situations of cyberviolence. Our goals also lead us to speak with law enforcement officials and organizations that address issues of cyberviolence and people in technology and video game communities who research and create the online spaces they interact in. Additionally, we looked at some specific spaces where cyberviolence occurs.

Montreal is a key center for both video game industry and scholarship. From the inception of this project we have partnered with Technoculture, Art & Games Research Centre (TAG) at Concordia University to examine the role of video games in cyberviolence directed at girls and young women. One might question what the landscape of the video games industry has to do with girls and young women's experiences of cyberviolence but it became evident that video game culture is a microcosm of the broader online culture and that by examining the phenomenon of women in games and "Gamergate" we could learn a great deal about what is happening to all women online. Many of the researchers and stakeholders for this project have ties to the video game community in Montreal. These affiliations are reflected in the literature review, research and the findings that emerged from the needs assessment.

An important focus in our assessment process was determining the interrelationship between sexual violence against women on and offline. Questions have been raised regarding whether allocating limited resources to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence might negatively impact the resources available to address violence directed at girls and women in the 'real' world. The young women and girls who were participating in the project overwhelmingly insisted that what happens online is the 'real' world. There is no distinction and therefore cyberviolence is 'real' to them and has profound consequences in their everyday lives.

Who we consulted

During the course of the yearlong needs assessment process we spoke to 690 people through both engaging in a variety of activities involving data gathering and knowledge sharing.

The project stakeholders represent a wide spectrum of Montreal's Anglophone community:

- Video Game Research, Design and Industry
- Educators and School Board Personnel
- Community Organizations (both facilitators and youth participants)
- High School, College and University Students
- Guidance and Sexual Assault Counselors, Youth Outreach and Law Enforcement
- Academics (researching cyberviolence and gender issues)

Acknowledgements

This research was conducted by the Atwater Library and Computer Centre as part of Status of Women Canada's *Cyber and Sexual Violence: Helping Communities Respond* project, under the theme of *Preventing and eliminating cyberviolence (e.g. cyberbullying, Internet luring, cyberstalking) against young women and girls*. We wish to thank all of the participants (too numerous to mention) who shared their experiences, perspectives, and ideas with us along the way. However, there were several individuals who devoted significant time and resources to the project who need to be acknowledged. We would like to especially thank the Director of Technoculture, Art & Games Research Centre at Concordia University, Bart Simon and Mia Consalvo (Canada Research Chair in Games Studies, Concordia University) who were partners and collaborators on this project from the beginning. Thank you for generously sharing your wealth of research experience, your research spaces and your brilliant students with us and for all the guidance and encouragement along the way. Also, the facilitators at LOVE, Kisha & Andrew for allowing us to spend time with the wonderful young people they work with and for collaborating so generously and of course our gratitude to the creative youth who shared their insights through their documentary film work. Research assistants Alexandra Beauchemin for her video editorial help and Cassandra Jones for her outstanding contribution facilitating with participants and her ethnographic video data gathering and Carly Moore for her assistance gathering data with students in schools. Thank you to research assistants Rebecca Sharratt, Allison Murphy and Camille Richard for your dedication to the project. Thank you to all the professors at John Abbott who participated in the project, Roger Maclean, Wendi Hadd, Jessica Legere, Tanya Rowell-Katzemba and a special thank you to Eileen Kerwin-Jones, Coordinator of Women's Studies and Gender Relations for championing the project, helping to organize and conceptualize and participating in every event every step of the way. A special thank you to Lina Gordoneer for her insights and theorizing on the topic as well as her writing and presenting which have made invaluable contributions.

Finally, a warm thank you to the 690 people who have spoken to us, listened to us, attended meetings and focus groups, community conversations and shared their perspectives, concerns and insights on this important and timely topic.

Note to Reader

For a more detailed description of the methodology employed in preparing this needs assessment please see the accompanying methodology report which can be found on the website: *Forthcoming*

For a more detailed exploration of the theoretical framework and a description of related work please see the literature review report from the needs assessment which can be found on the website: *Forthcoming*

Chapter 1

Findings

What we report in this section are the most relevant highlights from our research organized according to stakeholder groups. This section will be followed by a section of general findings that triangulates the data to summarize and assess the needs identified across the groups of stakeholders.

Stakeholders in video game/technology, design, research and industry: Findings from individual interviews, focus groups and community conversations

The findings reported below are based on open-ended interviews conducted individually with 15 stakeholders who work in various aspects of video game design (Participants included 14 women and one man). Additionally, the data from a focus group with a video game organization, one with adult organizers at a youth coding organization and the data from 3 Community Conversations about video games is included (Data from 111 participants was analyzed to prepare the findings below).

1. PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED THAT PROBLEMS STEM FROM THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE, BEGINNING WITH REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AND RACE IN VIDEO GAMES.

The objectification and sexualized portrayal of women in games serves to reinforce an already misogynist space. Representations of women in games contribute to the problematic ways in which women are treated in game spaces. Marketing caters and defers to a target market of young, white males who are perceived by marketers as occupying a culture of misogynistic masculinity. Therefore games are created to appeal to the perceived tastes and interests of this target market.

2. HIRING PRACTICES WITHIN THE INDUSTRY FAVOR EMPLOYEES THAT REPRESENT THE TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC.

Hiring practices within the industry favor employees that represent the target demographic. Lack of diversity and inclusiveness in the video game industry cultivates a culture of misogyny and because the people who work and play in the technology industry live much of their lives online the misogyny is often enacted online as cyberviolence. One way to mitigate this would be to increase diversity within the video game industry.

3. LONGSTANDING POWER INEQUITIES EXIST WITHIN THE SYSTEM.

Longstanding gender related power inequities exist within the system particularly in terms of technical knowledge and skills. Because men are so much more established in fields relating to technology they have an advantage in terms of having the skills necessary and the supporting community to enact extreme forms of cyberviolence.

4. CYBERVIOLENCE IS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CONTROLLING WOMEN'S VOICES.

Because acts of cyberviolence are such an effective way of controlling women's participation in online space it becomes increasingly pervasive. Women stay silent because they are afraid of becoming targets of harassment. Situations like the ones that have unfolded throughout "GamerGate" potentially deter women from entering the video game industry while silencing or forcing the women who are already working in those spheres out. Women in the industry who are targeted (or speak on behalf of someone who is) are afraid to speak out because they are concerned about getting a reputation as being difficult to work with or as being a feminist and therefore becoming unemployable. Communities

like “GamerGate” reinforce a rhetoric of misogyny and cyberviolence in order to shore up a sense of solidarity within various online communities (e.g., certain boards on 4chan.org), which makes them appealing.

5. ONLINE MISOGYNY IS OFTEN DISGUISED AS HUMOUR.

The idea of what is acceptable as a joke needs to be re-examined. Misogynistic comments and violent content about women are often justified as being ‘just jokes’, but humor that demeans friends and colleagues need to be challenged. Participants overwhelmingly reported that cyberviolence directed at girls and women is different than for men and boys because it’s situated in a larger context of violence and discrimination against girls and women that exists offline. Young people as well as adults told us that someone that perpetuates misogyny online often hides behind the phrase that the target simply does not have a sense of humour or cannot take a joke. This of course is a similar rhetoric to what we hear offline from misogyny apologists.

6. ONLINE SPACES CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN OFFLINE ONES.

When discussing the relationship between on and offline violence it was raised that online violence is different from offline violence for several reasons including the reality that the affordances of the Internet allow for people to come together and mobilize very quickly against an individual in ways that are usually not possible offline. Sometimes anonymity (and detachment from victims) is offered as an explanation for why some people act in ways they never would offline. Populations that are at risk for violence offline are also at greater risk for violence online, for example individuals from LGBTTIQ communities, visible minorities, and women.

7. AFFORDANCES OF DESIGN ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER.

The design of online spaces can contribute to making them safer spaces for women or more risky spaces. Values are embedded in the design of online spaces. A potential strategy to combat cyberviolence against girls and young women would be to teach young people to consider the values they are encoding with their design choices. This is particularly important, as most youth are both creators of content and consumers. We should be helping young people to understand that every choice they make when creating a Facebook profile, a YouTube video, or posting a comment is an act of creation and has inherent values and results in consequences to others. The stakeholders agreed that this also holds true within the professional community. Some video games are designed to make players support one another which results in safer spaces. We need to teach content creators that design choices impart specific values and that their choices have significant real world consequences. Choices such as reducing anonymity, increasing accountability, fostering collaboration amongst players, having moderators in game spaces are all design choices that contribute to safer video game spaces. As one of the participants put it, *“One of the ways the differences will be made is through intentional, thoughtful design.”*

8. VIOLENT OR MISOGYNIST ONLINE BEHAVIOR NORMALIZES THAT BEHAVIOR AND MAKES IT MORE ACCEPTABLE OFFLINE.

There was overwhelming agreement amongst the research participants that the pervasiveness of violent or misogynist online behavior normalizes that behavior and makes it more acceptable offline. Violent misogynistic content is justified as something that is to be expected if you speak out online; women who speak up are often dismissed with “that’s just the way it is”. There is a culture of blaming the victims for making themselves visible in the first place. Victim-blaming removes the culpability from the person who is enacting the cyberviolence and places the burden on the woman who is targeted for making herself visible in an environment in which violence happens.

9. ONLINE ANONYMITY WAS RAISED AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO CONSIDER IN ANY DISCUSSION OF CYBERVIOLENCE.

In all of the discussions with stakeholders, anonymity was raised as a contributing factor. Anonymity makes cyberspace seem like an ideal space to vent frustration. It was suggested that anonymity contributes to violence in games, and that if people were made to use their offline identity, for instance tied to their credit card to play a video game online, people would be less inclined to engage in cyberviolence.

10. BELOW SOME OF THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERVIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS ARE LISTED.

Participants expressed feeling vulnerable online as well as being afraid to speak out about issues they had strong opinions about at work or within the video game community for fear of being targeted. Even when stakeholders held prestigious careers in academia or technology fields, they reported experiencing a sense of isolation and embarrassment as

a result of being the focus of unsolicited and unwanted public attention. They spoke about having to leave jobs, change research topics, move cities and go offline. Sometimes their friends, families and supporters also had to go offline for fear of being targeted. They outlined the psychological, physical and economic impacts they experienced or that they had witnessed others experience. Feelings of vulnerability, fear, anger and helplessness were themes that emerged in the interviews with participants. There are economic and material repercussions for women who are forced to go offline, or limit their online participation. This is particularly true of women who work in technology related fields. However, during the course of this project several of the participants became targets of cyberviolence because of their positions within the video game community or because of content they knowingly shared despite the risks. Some women are able to choose not to be silenced or go offline despite the cyberviolence they experience.

11. STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY STAKEHOLDERS IN VIDEO GAME/TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN, RESEARCH AND INDUSTRY TO PREVENT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY.

The participants were brimming with ideas they were eager to share about this topic. Below are some of the most popular recommendations:

- Educate young people about the inherent values in design and the basics of design mechanics: mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics (MDA). Teach people about the ways in which mechanics can be a significant factor in how spaces function as safe or unsafe.
- Support small independent design projects, which is where diversity of designers and content is often found. This is also where a more diverse and varied demographic is found. Independent design is where issues of social justice are often taken into account in planning and content, therefore it is crucial to encourage and support women and girls who design in these spaces.
- Make design and workspaces more accessible, inclusive, supportive and welcoming to women (and others). This would lead to a broader range of games.
- Teach young people how to communicate online at a very early age in the same way that we teach them how to communicate offline. Being introduced to digital literacy curricula at a young age might be a powerful strategy to combat cyberviolence.
- The bystander approach was raised by many stakeholders, namely the concept that everyone shares culpability in what happens online. Even if someone is not participating in making a space unsafe, they have an obligation to actively participate in making a space safe. Colleagues and peers in professional environments have a responsibility to act when they see cyberviolence.
- Develop a ranking system for video game players according to in-game behaviors. Respectful players should be publically acknowledged while players who engage in anti-social behaviors should be flagged. However, players should be given clear feedback on why they are being flagged and opportunities regarding how to redeem themselves. Increasing moderating systems within games and asking that game companies take complaints more seriously and address them more efficiently and effectively.
- Bring cyberviolence into the public eye by creating safe spaces for people to be able to speak about their experiences, without blame or shame and get help and resources.
- Peer-to-peer learning is occurring regarding how to protect yourself from and respond to attacks as well as emerging through resources including websites and hotlines. For example, Zoe Quinn's recently launched Anti-Harassment Support Network *Crash Override* a task force devoted to supporting targets of online harassment relying on peer-to-peer sharing. We need to build awareness by informing and educating people, for instance writing articles around the issue is another strategy commonly cited by participants.
- Create solidarity amongst women in the video game industry. The interview participants shared that they are currently afraid to stand up for each other, or to speak out for fear of becoming targets themselves or being blacklisted. There is a need to create a community or organization to provide support among women in the video game industry. It is important to have more women visible as public figures in the video game industry. Having female role models and mentors is key for progress in this environment.

Chapter 2

Community stakeholders: Findings from interviews and focus groups

We set out to better understand the issues that educators, librarians, guidance and sexual assault counselors, youth outreach and law enforcement face on the front lines surrounding cyberviolence against girls and women. We also sought to ascertain the strategies they currently employ in addressing those issues as well as the needs and gaps that they identify as remaining in our community responses to gendered cyberviolence. In order to do this we contacted key stakeholders in the community. Individual interviews were conducted with 12 women and 1 man.

1. THERE IS A LACK OF UP-TO-DATE RESOURCES AND PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS.

Most of the participants lamented the limited or non-existent policies to address cyberviolence at the educational institutions with which they are familiar (from primary school to college and university campuses). College and University counselors, particularly those who address issues of sexual harassment and assault, stress the pressing need for clear definitions around what constitutes unacceptable sexual and cyberviolence in educational institutions and up-to-date resources regarding how to support students who experience it. The participants wish they were better equipped to deal with cyberviolence and see a real need for better and current resources. The acknowledgement that cyberviolence against girls and young women is a social problem, that it's unacceptable and that girls don't have to tolerate it is key. The concept that girls have a right to say no to activities over text messages, websites and social media platforms and are allowed to draw personal boundaries online as well as offline needs to be shared with young people.

2. CYBERVIOLENCE IS A SIGNIFICANT ONLINE PROBLEM WITH OFFLINE CONSEQUENCES.

According to the counselors we interviewed, cyberviolence is a problem at the CEGEP level, most of the harassment that occurred between students in the past year occurred online. Young women in these situations feel disempowered. They lack a sense of control. They often don't feel able to establish personal boundaries. These problems are compounded because there is a serious lack of resources available for both the resource providers, and for victims, witnesses and perpetrators of cyberviolence. What is clear is that it is naive to think of cyberviolence as something that only affects people online. It is in their offline lives that students and counselors deal with the anguish and ramifications.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE OFTEN DON'T RECOGNIZE CYBERVIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS AS PROBLEMATIC.

Gendered violent talk has been normalized to the extent that girls and young women report often becoming resigned to it. They view it as almost inevitable, "something that happens". Because it is either not recognized as a problem or viewed as something that is not 'fixable' they often do not seek a way to address it. Some key problems encountered in dating are: overwhelming or controlling messages on social media from dating partners; girls and young women experiencing social media and technology as a means of controlling their time, actions and behaviors; use of social media for surveillance and privacy infringements; being pressured to share private content. Examples include privacy infringements where one partner pressures the other to share passwords to demonstrate trust and commitment in a relationship. Men, boys and romantic partners often pressure young women to share intimate photos, which can lead to a power imbalance and potential blackmail or incidence of revenge porn. While nobody would presume to claim a direct causal connection, it was suggested that it is important to consider the relationship between online sexual harassment and violence and sexual harassment directed toward girls and women offline. Many of the controlling behaviors described in the online context mirrors what occurs offline and vice versa.

4. SOME STUDENTS ARE MORE AT RISK THAN OTHERS.

Any person who does not conform to the gender binary is more susceptible to being the target of cyberviolence. Self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, queer and/or questioning (LGBT-T2IQ), or being identified by others to be so, can make a young person a target. Counselors spoke of the vulnerability of students out on their own for the first time. According to counselors at a University, young women who are away at school are especially vulnerable because they may be away from home for the first time and are lacking in support and community, particularly if they are foreign students, from small towns, or are belong to an identifiable minority group and not connected to a strongly supportive network.

5. THERE ARE CHALLENGES TO GETTING GIRLS INTERESTED IN CAREERS IN TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE THEY OFTEN PERCEIVE IT AS A MALE DOMINATED MISOGYNISTIC SPACE THAT IS UNWELCOMING TO GIRLS.

Girls overwhelmingly want to work in fields that they view as helping people, making a difference in people's lives, or that are social and collaborative. Participants report that girls don't view technology fields as being those things. We need to re-brand the possibilities of technology and broaden the awareness of video games as teaching technologies, works of art, and tools for fostering social justice and contributing to positive cultural change(s).

6. PARTICIPANTS POINTED TO A LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OWNERS AND CREATORS OF ONLINE SPACES.

Spaces where there is no system of accountability and no way to determine if a user of the application is the perpetrator of violence are more likely to be conducive to cyberviolence. Many systems are designed to create anonymity and limit accountability. While design affordances may foster cyberviolence, design choices can also limit cyberviolence, for instance providing young women with the agency to take down posts or other content that have been used against them. If content posted online is embarrassing or offensive users should be allowed to remove it.

7. STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Clear definitions of what constitutes cyberviolence against girls and young women need to be created and policies in schools and work places need to be visible so that when cyberviolence occurs it can be identified and addressed.
- There is an immediate and urgent need for updated information, resources and training regarding how to address issues of cyberviolence against girls and young women.
- Eliminate victim blaming and reassure victims that they are not responsible for the cyberviolence that is directed at them. An important strategy would be to diffuse the drama and moral panic around these incidents and de-stigmatize young women who get caught up in these dramas. Help young people understand that a single image shared does not have the power to ruin your life. We can initiate this by focusing on increasing education around the issues for educators, parents and young people.
- Counselors were unanimous in advocating the Bystander Approach as a strategy, suggesting that it is everyone's responsibility to step in to understand and learn more about a situation. It should be everyone's role to collectively keep women safe in our communities – whether the violence against them is occurring online or offline.
- Creating social norms supporting positive online behavior. We need to *"norm the positive"*. We need to promote the creativity and opportunities that online tools enable and create pro-social positive norms around online interactions.
- Encourage girls to trust their instincts and to communicate what they feel is acceptable and unacceptable. Girls and young women need to develop the skills to determine where they draw the line regarding cyberviolence and then they need the skills to be able to communicate their boundaries. We also need to help girls to have the self-esteem to define and maintain personal boundaries as well as creating the spaces where they will realistically be able to maintain personal boundaries.

Chapter 3

Youth perspectives: Findings from video documentary project (LOVE)

To gain insights from youth (male and female), we ran focus groups and facilitated the production of a video documentary at LOVE, a community-based organization run for youth. The youth attending LOVE have been witnesses, victims and/or perpetrators of violence and are particularly well positioned to use arts-based research methodologies and peer-to-peer learning to give voice to their perspectives as many of them have prior training in media-based communication. 34 youth (of roughly equal gender distribution) attended various sessions but the core group of film makers consisted of 7 young people (four girls and three boys).

1. LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT WHEN DISCUSSING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE.

While there was a divergence in how youth and adults view and speak about gender-based cyberviolence, there was also a broad range of diversity amongst youth about how gender-based cyberviolence is viewed. The participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding around how their definitions of cyberviolence diverged greatly from those of many adults (e.g., what is considered 'just joking' or 'normal online discourse' by some youth may be considered harassing behaviours from an adult perspective). Young people often use different language and terminology to discuss issues of gendered violence. Many are not familiar with the language used by most adults to describe misogyny and gender-based violence so we are at risk of misunderstandings or missing out on their perspectives on the issue, potentially as researchers not knowing what questions to ask or how to formulate them. However, we observed that in contexts (such as LOVE) where young people work collaboratively with adults to define, theorize and address issues of gender based cyberviolence, the communication, observations and learning was rich on both sides. Albeit, passionate discussions occurred and perspectives sometimes differed radically but overall the young people were very articulate and able to think through the issues critically because they had been mentored and provided with the skills to do so through the LOVE programming. It is clear that knowledge translation when working with youth to define terms is of utmost importance and their valuable insights will get us closer to understanding the strategies that may work best.

2. BOTH GIRLS AND BOYS REVEALED A NUMBER OF CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS OF MISOGYNY AND GENDER PERFORMANCE AS THEY CONTRIBUTE TO CYBERVIOLENCE.

Contradictorily, several youth identified slut shaming as wrong while also referring to some behaviours, such as dressing a particular way as inviting reproach and slut shaming. While they expressed values that condemned slut-shaming they simultaneously observed that to navigate a complex online world with extreme pressure on girls to create an online identity that conformed to traditional female sexuality (or even hyper-sexuality) there was potential to experience slut shaming. We observed the participants struggling to reconcile their own often opposing positions and work through complex contradictions. The values that they held theoretically were often in opposition to the reality of their day-to-day lives.

3. THE DESIGN OF ONLINE SPACES MATTERS A LOT.

Almost unanimously, the youth agreed that *design affordances* (for example, creating safer spaces and applications online) might be a potential solution with which to combat cyberviolence. They discussed the ways in which the design of some online spaces facilitates cyberviolence while other design choices mitigate cyberviolence.

4. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUNG PEOPLE AS EXPERTS ON CYBERVIOLENCE AS A COMPLEX SOCIAL ISSUE.

An observation that might be helpful in researching this issue with young people going forward was that the youth we

worked with were more at ease and more apt to engage freely in discussions about cyberviolence when it was framed as a social issue rather than a personal one. Respecting youth as experts who have agency rather than approaching them or framing them as disempowered or as victims seems key to building trust and opening fruitful dialogue.

Chapter 4

College Students' Perspectives: Findings from focus groups, researcher's ethnographic observations, and questionnaires

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted at a Montreal area CEGEP. Participants were comprised of 56 CEGEP students who were enrolled in Sociology, Women's Studies, and Police Technology classes and an additional drop in focus group open to any interested students. Additionally data was collected from 201 open-ended questionnaires that were completed by the students.

CEGEP Students enrolled in Sociology and Women's Studies classes

Below are the main findings for college students enrolled in Sociology and Women's Studies courses. It is important to note that like Sociology, the Women's Studies classes had a fairly balanced gender enrolment, with almost as many males as females enrolled. The findings across sociology and women's studies were surprisingly similar. Because there was a marked difference in some aspects of the police students' responses, and because more than two thirds of the students in police technology were male, their findings are organized separately in a subsequent section.

The participants reported on in this section included mixed gender groups of students from 3 Sociology classes 2 Women's Studies classes and a drop in focus group hosted at the Women's Studies Department (all of which were mixed gender).

Total number of focus group participants was 140. The total number of questionnaires submitted and analyzed was 104 from Sociology and Women's Studies, (45 participants identified as female, 52 identifies as male, 6 didn't provide gender and 1 responded as other).

Findings from Sociology and Women's Studies students

1. THE NORMALIZATION OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PERMEATES THE DATA.

When the issue of cyberviolence against girls who had shared intimate images with their partners was raised during focus groups, a significant number of participants, both male and female, were confused about why shaming girls might be problematic. Shaming of girls for perceived lack of judgment or sexual promiscuity was normalized amongst these college students. Few of them thought that cyberviolence was a social issue because they viewed it as a normal aspect of their everyday lives – something one just expects and accepts, whether or not one likes it. Basic knowledge around sexuality, gender equality, consent and the right to define personal boundaries both on and offline was visibly lacking.

2. THERE IS A NORMALIZATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE THROUGH THE SECOND-HAND VIOLENCE OF POPULAR CULTURE.

Through their intense engagement with popular culture young people are often exposed to forms of second-hand cyberviolence (e.g. harassment, threats) directed towards celebrities. We used some of the examples raised by students in early focus groups to generate discussion with participants in later focus groups. Many participants suggested that the cyberviolence against girls and women in popular media, whether it be a 'slut shaming' *YouTube* video created by a popular video blogger or the response to intimate images of a popular mainstream celebrity released without her consent, all have a powerful impact on ordinary people in their everyday lives. There seems to be a trickle down effect that normalizes anti-feminist slurs, rape threats, derogatory misogynistic jokes and cyber-misogyny. Ordinary young people start to view various negative and/or harassing behaviours as acceptable and as a result do it to each other.

3. ANONYMITY AND THE MEDIATION OF A SCREEN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CYBERVIOLENCE.

Participants observed that it's easier to get away with saying things online that social norms would never allow offline. Anonymity, or at least the perception that there is anonymity encourages people to transgress in ways they might never have done offline. Having interactions mediated by a digital screen was described as desensitizing young people to the responses of the people they were interacting with. Not being able to see the negative impact these actions have on the victim of cyberviolence was raised as a contributing factor.

4. THERE ARE BLURRED AND VARIED BOUNDARIES BETWEEN OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR AND ACCEPTABLE HUMOUR.

A theme that emerged strongly in the data analysis was how varied understandings are of what constitutes '*joking around*' online. We observed a huge discrepancy amongst participants in some of the mixed gender focus groups. When examples of extreme cyberviolence against women were shown, some students laughed and said that they found the content clever and humorous while other students (mainly female) viewing the same material expressed shock and distaste, appearing extremely uncomfortable. Students also spoke or wrote about how things that may start off as jokes can get out of hand very quickly due to a feeling of anonymity and a lack of accountability because you don't see the target person's individual emotional reaction to what you post online.

5. UNDERSTANDINGS SURROUNDING WHAT CONSTITUTES PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES ONLINE ARE OFTEN CONTESTED.

Some of the participants strongly expressed the conviction that what happens in cyberspace should be treated as a private, not public, activity (what happens in cyberspace stays in cyberspace). Facebook and other social media are viewed as a quasi-private space, with tacit assumptions that what is posted online stays there and has little or no offline impact. Students who held this position asserted that they had the right to engage in violent or misogynistic discussions with peers on social media because it was their private, social space. Discussing peers in violent, sexual or misogynistic ways through social media was often considered "just joking around" or "guy talk" (performance of masculinity).

6. SOME FORMS OF GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE CONSIDERED (ACCEPTABLE) BECAUSE THEY ARE PERCEIVED AS "PRIVATE" AND NOT "REAL" VIOLENCE.

Some students (primarily male) expressed the opinion that if sexual violence is expressed on social media such as Facebook (which these students viewed as a private space) and the target of that violence is unaware of what is happening then there is no victim. In other words, they did not perceive that rape talk or jokes about a fellow student on a social media space amongst friends is problematic as long as the victim is unaware. The additional implication seems to be that abusive behaviour towards girls and women is considered more acceptable online because it is somehow not real and has no impact on the victims. This attitude was much more prevalent among male participants, however it is important to note that the majority of the male participants do not share this view.

7. MIXED GENDER FOCUS GROUPS ABOUT GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE CAN BE FRAUGHT WITH PITFALLS, WITH MALES DOMINATING AND IN SOME CASES INTIMIDATING FEMALES.

While it is important to include boys and young men in the research and conversations, both in order to understand their perspectives and to raise awareness about gender issues, the researchers observed that the male students often dominated the focus group conversations and shut the young women down. Accordingly, we separated subsequent discussion groups by gender whenever possible, although they remained in the same room. Many of the groups made up of young women revealed to researchers that they felt intimidated to speak about these issues in mixed gender groups and were afraid of backlash from the young men. A young woman's comment from a question on potential strategies to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence against women and girls was particularly revealing, "A strategy to approach more honest opinions would be to split up girls from boys when doing these lectures because some girls feel intimidated, or insecure or scared for boys to make fun of them, also if the girls are more comfortable with each other" (Female College Respondent).

8. CYBERVIOLENCE IS EXPERIENCED DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO GENDER.

Participants were asked whether they believed that the challenges regarding cyberviolence online were different for women and girls than for men and boys and why or why not. Students overwhelmingly responded that online challenges are different for girls and women than for men and boys. Some of the ways they said things were different were that girls and women were more often targeted for cyberviolence online, that when girls and women were targeted it was often around their appearance and sexuality (slut-shaming) and gender stereotypes. Young people believed that there are double standards regarding what is acceptable for boys and men online versus what is acceptable for girls

and women. Girls and young women were perceived of as being more vulnerable to cyberviolence and having to be careful of how they presented themselves. Participants reported that when boys and men are targets of cyberviolence it's often directed at their sexual orientation and masculinity.

9. CYBERVIOLENCE OFTEN FOCUSES ON THE FEMALE BODY AND SEXUALITY.

The participants stated repeatedly that cyberviolence directed towards girls and women usually focuses on appearance, critique of their sexuality (slut or prude) and threats around sexual assault. Sexual orientation that deviates from a heterosexual norm is also a frequent focus.

10. SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN OTHERS ONLINE.

There was a general consensus among the students that when you go online you are automatically at risk and the more engaged with technology an individual is, the more susceptible they become. They viewed young people as at greater risk, girls and women were perceived as at greater risk than boys and men. People who act outside of social norms or who stand out from the mainstream in any way were identified as being at an increased risk. Some additional factors that put people at risk were described as, a person's sexual orientation, race, disabilities and social class.

11. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN 'EVERYDAY TEEN DRAMA' AND CYBERVIOLENCE WAS CHALLENGING, AS THE CRITERIA USED TO JUDGE WAS OFTEN SUBJECTIVE.

Students were asked how they thought the difference between everyday online "drama" (acceptable to some) and actual cyberviolence should be determined. In order of predominance of responses, factors that they would use to determine whether an act of aggression online could be viewed as cyberviolence versus teen drama would be: the intensity of the abuse; the impact of the abuse on the victim; the intention of the perpetrator; the context of the situation and frequency of the instances of aggression.

12. YOUTH EXPRESSED AMBIVALENCE ABOUT THE VALUE OF BYSTANDERS INTERVENING ONLINE.

There was a definite divide between students who supported the idea of the bystander approach and those who didn't. Some felt it was an unfair expectation to put on young people, while others viewed it as an effective solution. Some thought that the effectiveness of bystander intervention is related to the context of the situation. Most agreed, however, that it was dangerous to leave a young person who is experiencing cyberviolence feeling alone and unsupported by peers. Opinions about whether support should be provided publically online or privately behind the scenes varied, some suggesting that:

- Public online support of a cyberviolence target can escalate an already volatile situation as everyone jumps into the fray
- When you provide support publically online you are immediately on the defensive (potentially under attack) while offering support privately either offline or online allows you to devote all of your resources to helping the target
- Some youth expressed that they did not feel self-assured enough or emotionally strong enough to provide public support
- Some youth felt it was dangerous to stand up online

Young people agreed that youth need to be made aware of all of the ways a bystander can provide support to a victim such as reaching out either publically or privately or bringing the situation to the attention a trusted adult. They also agreed that getting help from other sources such as sharing resources, contacting moderators of a site, reporting an issue to site administrators, or law enforcement if appropriate could be helpful approaches. If multiple potential options are made available young people will feel empowered to choose the course of action most appropriate for the situation.

13. YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING OR PREVENTING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE.

When asked to suggest strategies to prevent online cyberviolence directed at girls and young women, in order of prevalence of responses, the most popular response was a call for more education about cyberviolence and what type of behaviors are acceptable online. Education would need to directly focus on misogyny online and violence against girls and women. Peer-to-peer education was considered an effective influential model. Students also suggested creating more laws and legislation around cyberviolence and having harsher consequences for those individuals who perpe-

trate cyberviolence. Outside of legal solutions, they believed that there should be increased responsibility online by those who create and control sites in the form of security, creating spaces that are safer or imposing consequences. The youth agreed that sanctions should be employed when cyberviolence occurs. Other suggestions included considering safety and values in designing spaces, and having spaces moderated, banning or closing accounts when violations occur.

Chapter 5

CEGEP Police Technology students

Focus groups were conducted with 116 police technology students in 5 classes. Additionally, 84 questionnaires were completed by students (25 of them self-identified as female and 59 of the students identified as male).

Because the large majority of these stakeholders are male and were enrolled in a program (policing) that has implications for our topic of cyberviolence, we decided to report on them separately from the other college students. For the most part their views echoed those of their CEGEP peers reported in the preceding section, and so we will not repeat them here, but there were also some notable differences, which are outlined in the findings below.

Findings from Police Technology students

1. AGGRESSION IS AGGRESSION; VIOLENCE IS VIOLENCE AND SHOULD NOT BE ACCEPTED AS NORMAL.

When asked about the difference between everyday online “drama” (acceptable to some) and actual cyberviolence, this group stood out from all the others in condemning all expressions of aggression. They claimed not to share their peers’ views that some cyberviolence is just normal teen drama.

2. A RELATIONSHIP EXISTS BETWEEN ON AND OFFLINE VIOLENCE.

The consensus was that there was a relationship between on and offline violence and participants seemed fairly certain that online violence could continue offline. They suggested that anonymity made online violence easier to enact for perpetrators, but that committing violence online might give some the confidence to commit physical or other forms of violence offline.

4. POLICE TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING OR PREVENTING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE.

“It’s going to have to be a team effort from all areas of the community. Police, parents, teachers, citizens, everyone has a role to play if this is going to change. Kids need to be educated on the consequences of cyberviolence and how it can affect their lives and the lives of others.” (Quote from police technology student’s questionnaire)

We asked students to recommend strategies they believed would serve to best prevent or eliminate gender-based cyberviolence. The most popular response was that we should increase education about cyberviolence and what type of behaviors are acceptable online. Other popular suggestions were: creating more laws and legislation around cyberviolence, more police surveillance, and more general surveillance. Another popular suggestion was implementing design-based solutions in the form of filters, surveillance tools, monitoring systems and so forth. Better parental supervision of young people online was also recommended.

Chapter 6

Findings from high school girls

We conducted focus groups with 74 girls in a private all-girls high school. Instead of distributing questionnaires we asked the students to write to us about what they felt was important and to share what they believed we needed to know. We engaged in discussion and raised questions but the girls themselves decided which themes to pick up on, while all the girls were part of the focus group discussions 54 of the girls voluntarily wrote to us and returned comment sheets. Following are some key findings based on focus groups, research observations, & written feedback.

1. POPULAR CULTURE NORMALIZES GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE.

In the focus group discussions the girls provided example after example of cases of cyberviolence directed at female celebrities. These examples generated a great deal of discussion around whether female celebrity behavior justified the ensuing 'slut shaming' and other aggressive responses that targeted them. The high school girls used these examples, along with examples of girls from other schools that were the focus of slut shaming, to attempt to negotiate what types of behavior were acceptable online and what resulted in extreme social sanctions. They attempted to define what seemed like very contextual and shifting boundaries with regard to social norms around acceptable female sexual identity and behavior. They spent significant time critiquing, evaluating and policing online behavior.

2. GIRLS ARE GOOD AT RECOGNIZING SAFE(R) VERSUS LESS SAFE SPACES ONLINE.

The girls spent significant time discussing, which online spaces were safe(r) and which were less safe. They talked about which behaviors were acceptable for which spaces and how they regulated and moderated their behaviors to accommodate the online environments in which they interacted. They are cognizant of the design affordances that make a space safe or unsafe. For example, they pointed to factors such as degree of anonymity, degree of moderation, how comments are filtered or ranked and who interacts in the space.

3. GIRLS WANT SUPPORT WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.

We asked the girls, "What do adults need to know about cyberviolence against girls?" "How might adults help girls?" The most common response was, "support us without judging us". Additionally, it became very clear that girls wanted to be able to come to the adults in their lives with issues of cyber and sexual violence but were reluctant to do so out of fear that adults might "over react" or jump in and try to solve the problem for them.

"Parents and teachers need to know that jumping in can sometimes make the situation worse even if help is needed. Parents should try to get their child to open up with them without being judged" (Student's written response)

4. GOING OFFLINE DOES NOT END CYBERVIOLENCE!

Another significant response was that the most common advice from parents and counsellors "going offline" wasn't viewed as a viable solution because the abuse continues and escalates but the victim feels that they don't have the information they need to protect themselves. Not being aware of cyberviolence that is directed against an individual does not mean it isn't happening.

"Parents need to know, they need to know that just because we can deactivate an account the words can still stay with you. Going offline is not a solution" (Student's written response)

5. GIRLS FEEL VULNERABLE ONLINE.

When asked "Is being online different for girls than it is for boys?", the participants expressed that while it's hard for both girls and boys online in regards to cyber-harassment, it's harder for girls. As one respondent put it, "*not only are*

boys critical of girls, girls are harder on each other than they are on boys" (Student's written response). The girls revealed that they felt pressured by the hyper-sexualization that occurs through representations of girls and women online; they reported feeling pressure to conform to these images. They felt that when they posted content online they were intensely scrutinized and judged based on their appearance and slut shaming was raised as an issue. They expressed feeling pressure to look a certain way and they didn't believe that boys experience the same degree of pressure. The word 'vulnerable' was frequently used to describe the situation of girls online.

6. GIRLS CAN BE HARD ON EACH OTHER AND SOMETIMES BLAME THE VICTIM.

When the girls were asked, "Are all girls equally as vulnerable to harassment? Are there factors that make some girls targets?" The definitive answer was that girls who "put themselves out there" or who "seek attention" are the most likely to be targets online. In focus group discussions the girls expressed the opinion that "good girls" do not step outside social norms or seek attention therefore they were unlikely to be victims of cyberviolence. It follows that girls who find themselves in a situation where they are victims of cyberviolence have somehow made bad decisions that have put them in that situation and are therefore in some part responsible for their position. In this respect their responses echo the contradictions found in conversations with the youth mentioned earlier who often condemn gender-based cyberviolence in one breath while perpetuating, justifying or excusing it with the next.

7. CYBERVIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IS A SERIOUS ISSUE AND SHOULD NOT BE MINIMIZED AS 'TEEN DRAMA'.

Girls reported that incidence of cyberviolence are real and have serious emotional consequences. They should be taken seriously and not be discounted or minimized as 'teen drama'.

(The term) "Teen drama" cannot be used as an excuse for teachers, parents, or anyone to not help someone out or not get involved. Teen drama is liking a boy and not knowing what to do about it. Teen drama is arguments with friends that are later resolved. Teen drama is not harassment, bullying, threats, physical confrontation, posting photos or videos. It is not embarrassing someone for your own pleasure. If this were happening to an adult it would not be labeled 'adult drama'. So why is it this way for teenagers? It is not okay. It is not 'innocent' or 'blown out of proportion' by the victim.

'Just joking' and 'teen drama' are legitimate things however they are not there to be used as excuses. They are not there so people could get out of uncomfortable situations. So do not treat them that way." (Quote from written response of high school student)

8. GIRLS SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING OR PREVENTING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE.

Almost all of the girls' recommendations highlighted the bystander approach. However, they were specific in their recommendations regarding the ways it should be employed, whether bringing in outside help or supporting victims privately or publicly. The second most popular response was to define what actually constitutes cyberviolence more clearly so that girls could easily identify it when it happens. Other responses included having more rules, closer parental supervision, addressing self-esteem and using design affordance such as sites allowing girls greater control over their content.

Chapter 7

General findings and recommendations

In reviewing the findings reported in the previous sections, we can see a great deal of overlap and commonality of concerns across the diverse group of stakeholders. We also see certain suggestions or needs that might not have been expressed by many but that seem to add important insight or offer implications for all stakeholders. This section will report on the most salient general findings, especially those that help define the gaps and barriers that need to be bridged as well as those that point to key elements to consider in designing effective strategies for preventing and eliminating gender-based cyberviolence.

1. THERE IS A NEED TO BEGIN A DISCUSSION ABOUT DEFINING CYBERVIOLENCE AND PUTTING FORTH CONCRETE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING HOW CYBERVIOLENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED.

At the outset of this project we sought academic definitions for gender-based cyberviolence but as data collection proceeded, we became increasingly dissatisfied because nothing we read encompassed the range of perspectives we were encountering in our research with stakeholders. What one young person considered cyberviolence another might consider ‘everyday teen drama’, ‘just joking around’, ‘business as usual’ or ‘just the way things are’. Accordingly, we paired down our working definition of cyberviolence to something minimalist: cyberviolence refers to online behavior that constitutes or leads to harm against the psychological and/or emotional, financial, physical state of an individual or group. Although cyberviolence occurs online it can begin offline and/or have serious offline consequences. More properly understood, gender-based cyberviolence refers to misogynistic behaviour that can flow on and off line.

But to what purpose a definition? On one hand, it was very clear that young people wish to be listened to and be empowered rather than have top down definitions imposed on them. On the other, they acknowledge that they would like some guidance and education about what constitutes cyberviolence, what their personal rights are, and where and how they might set their own personal boundaries of acceptable on and offline behaviours. They also report feeling vulnerable, isolated and helpless when faced with cyberviolence. What our analysis makes clear is that adults and youth view issues somewhat (and sometimes very) differently and do not share a common language for dealing with it. Perhaps the initial purpose a definition can serve is as a jumping point for dialogue. Following from there, it will serve as a tool to aid institutions in acting on incidents of cyberviolence and to create policy or implement consequences with clear guidelines and language.

2. THE NEED FOR EDUCATION, FOR A SHARED LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR DISCUSSING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE WAS ARTICULATED ACROSS THE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS.

Researchers and adult stakeholders (especially educators and counselors) observed that when issues of cyberviolence were raised with their students and questions were asked, even college students lacked a basic understanding of the key issues and they didn’t have the language needed to engage in a meaningful discussion on the topic. Some of them didn’t see gender as an issue that needs to be discussed (even some students in Women’s Studies). It is thus somewhat ironic and noteworthy that it was the marginalized youth of project LOVE who best knew the language and could converse quite eloquently on many aspects of the topic. This might reflect the time they spent exploring these concepts through the innovative arts based programming at LOVE and the active listening and respectful communication skills they had learned. To sum up the stakeholders’ views, young people need to learn more about misogyny and gender-based violence and develop a language with which to broach these topics.

3. STAKEHOLDERS RAISED SOME FACTORS THAT THEY BELIEVED CONTRIBUTED TO THE PERVASIVENESS AND THE NORMALIZATION OF CYBERVIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN.

We see across the stakeholders the ubiquity of cyberviolence as it unfolds in their everyday lives and is manifested in

a wide range of experiences, from slut shaming to revenge porn to online intimidation. So many of them indicated or implied that online misogyny and harassment of girls and young women is so commonplace, it had been normalized and is almost viewed as a rite of passage. Some of the factors that stakeholders suggest are key in establishing and maintaining this normalization of violence against girls and women include:

- The perceived anonymity of online posting and/or the mediation of a screen makes people more inclined to do things online they would not do as easily offline.
- Evolving cyber norms suggest that misogyny that is unacceptable offline is somehow more acceptable online.
- The frequent targeting of female celebrities in popular culture makes cyberviolence seem somehow normal (even celebrities experience it) and sometimes lead to blaming or shaming them for becoming victims. This influences young peoples perspectives of the issues.
- Popular culture and media representations of women and other vulnerable populations in video games and other media are perceived as playing a huge role in maintaining online misogyny.
- The defining of cyberviolence against girls and young women as “just joking around” or “teen drama” excuses and minimizes the seriousness of the issue. Humour should not be accepted as a justification nor should strategies developed to combat misogynistic cyberviolence employ humour.
- There is an understanding of public and private space wherein social media sites such as Facebook are often viewed as somehow private. Many young people feel that threats and slurs posted on Facebook or other social media sites are not examples of cyberviolence. They view it as entertainment and victimless because it’s happening online particularly if the person targeted is not aware of the cyberviolence.
- The notion that online behaviour is somehow less damaging and does not have consequences offline is implied in the ways some participants talk about cyberspace. This contrasts sharply with the views of some of the other participants, including the police technology students, who view violence as violence whether on or offline. This is a problematic contradiction as most young people report that their on and offline lives are inextricably intertwined and that what happens online is as ‘real’ as what happens offline and has implications and consequences.

Strategies to prevent or eliminate cyberviolence need to take these factors into account in ways that challenge young people to think critically and imagine things differently without insulting them or dismissing their views out of hand. They need to be knowledge brokers and consulted.

4. “GAMERGATE”

“Gamergate” is a relevant microcosm, of what is happening in the broader cyber culture and perhaps even encapsulating the features of the misogynistic characteristics of the broader general culture, revealing how gender-based cyberviolence is limiting girls and women’s participation in online communities and activities. The cyberviolence experienced by women in video game culture is an intensified version of what we see happening with girls and young women in everyday spaces. Interviews and focus groups with people in the video game community revealed that women were often silenced, made to feel unwelcome or forced out of these communities and many chose to limit or eliminate their online interactions as a result. Even when women were not direct targets of online cyberviolence, witnessing other women’s experiences of cyberviolence influenced them to curb their own online participation. In the same way, some of the girls and young women who participated in our research revealed that viewing incidents of online harassment, slut shaming and victim blaming has had an impact on their own online decisions and participation even if the cyberviolence was not directed specifically at them. This serves to limit the online agency and participation of many people, including girls in high school, young women in college and adult women pursuing careers in technology related fields.

Across the stakeholder groups there is a desire for safer spaces to be created through better design, and for alternative, less stereotypical and more inclusive representations of gender in video games and other media. Strategies to challenge the influence of the mainstream video game industry and create alternative spaces and more inclusive video games are also viewed as key.

5. FRAMING GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE AS A SOCIAL RATHER THAN A PERSONAL ISSUE HAS IMPORTANT RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS.

Based on our observations during focus groups and other interactive activities, it appears that strategies designed to address cyberviolence should incorporate considerations of how dialogue with youth around the issue will be framed in such a way as to discuss it as a social issue, not a personal one. It is when the participants were not asked directly to

talk about their own experience but invited to offer their advice about a broader social issue that we found that young people are most forthcoming. They opened up and offered a wealth of insight. Additionally, when working with youth we believe that framing cyberviolence as a social issue is a more ethical approach that empowers young people rather than positioning them as vulnerable or victims or subjecting them to blame.

6. WHAT HAPPENS IN MIXED GENDER CONTEXTS? HOW GENDER SHAPES STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES.

Beyond the findings that girls and young women expressed far more vulnerability and uncertainty and are more frequent targets of gender based cyberviolence than boys and men, it was interesting to see how gender was performed within the context of mixed gender focus groups. There was great variability.

All of the participants we worked with at LOVE, including the boys, were very aware of issues of gender-based cyberviolence. The youth attending LOVE have been witnesses, victims and/or perpetrators of violence and have been using arts based methodologies to address violence. The dynamic of the gender interactions in the LOVE focus groups and documentary filmmaking were very different from the interactions between the male and female students in the general college demographic. The male participants in the LOVE focus groups were very respectful of the contributions made by the female participants. They acknowledged their experiences and allowed them space to speak. The facilitators at LOVE had worked hard to create a safe space for the youth to express themselves and as researchers we had time to develop relationships of trust with the participants, therefore the dynamic of the focus groups, peer-to-peer interviews and video work was very open and accepting of diverse points of view. It is important to note that in this context, both males and females seemed at ease and power seemed to be fairly equally distributed.

On one hand it was heartening to see the degree to which the young men we spoke to were invested in the issue of cyberviolence directed at girls and young women. They overwhelmingly participated in the focus group and community conversations, with some male participants expressing their right to communicate any and all form of racism, discrimination and misogyny online while alternately many other male participants argued that this type of activity was as unacceptable online as it was offline.

However, in all of the college classes where we conducted focus groups the male students dominated the conversations. In 2 of the classes, small groups of male students were very vocal about the fact that they believed that Facebook was a private space and that boys and men had the right to make sexist comments, jokes and discuss sexual assault in private spaces. In 1 other class a couple of very vocal male students said they found the examples we shared of blatant cyberviolence against women humorous, they did not see it as violence. In all classes where this sort of behaviour occurred, it had the effect of shutting down female participants' participation in the discussions.

It is important to note that it was only a minority (albeit a vociferous one who may have been performing some macho form of masculinity) of males who acted this way. Many male students (like virtually all of the females) remained silent in the face of this intense performance of misogyny.

When we asked female students privately how they felt they expressed feeling frightened or intimidated about responding. Some male students also expressed feeling intimidated to respond. *This demonstrates that a very small group of misogynistic males can have a disproportionately profound influence.* The participants did not seem to view a college classroom as a safe space to discuss cyberviolence against girls and women.

The demographic of the participants from the police technology focus groups was disproportionately male. Yet they all expressed the firm conviction that there was no situation where talk about sexual assault was acceptable. They saw it as a crime and suggested that discussing sexual assault on Facebook was the same as discussing committing a robbery. They didn't see any context where cyberviolence against girls and women was acceptable. On the other hand, some of these same male police students tended to make remarks suggesting that women were too thin-skinned about some comments about their gender, suggesting that like all of us, they too have conflicting perspectives and ideologies.

All participants in focus groups around video games expressed concern about the lack of diversity and underrepresentation of women in the video game industry. They all expressed that the issues were systemic and indicative of larger social issues. Both the men and women in the focus groups wanted to create a better environment within the video game industry and community and believed that addressing women's issues was an important component of improving things for everyone.

7. CERTAIN ELEMENTS ARE SEEN AS KEY TO DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE CYBERVIOLENCE AND WERE MOST RECOMMENDED BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF STAKEHOLDERS:

1. Call for more education and resources about gender and about gender-based cyber violence.
2. Cyberviolence affects lives offline as well as online and must be addressed both on and offline.

3. Create safe(r) and inclusive online spaces, using thoughtful design as a strategy.
4. Cyberviolence is everyone's concern and responsibility and we need to find inclusive solutions that bring people together, across generations and identities. The importance of the bystander approach to ending cyberviolence was emphasized by the majority of stakeholders as being a key element for future strategy building.
5. Involving young people in developing strategies and respecting their views is seen as crucial.
6. Creative arts-based activities that engage youth and encourage them to think through the issues themselves are very promising.
7. Supporting girls and young women who are targets of cyberviolence, eliminating slut-shaming and de-stigmatizing girls who are experiencing cyberviolence is key.
8. Leveling up girls and young women's technical skills/supporting independent technology related design projects (particularly around video games) that provide opportunities to do things differently in ways that are appealing to girls.
9. Fostering diversity and inclusiveness in video game industry.