

Introduction to Reputation

Created: March 2016

Last Updated: July 2018

Estimated time:	85 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [15 minutes] Activity #1• [5 minutes] Activity #2• [25 minutes] Activity #3• [10 minutes] Activity #4• [30 minutes] Assignment Depending on the time you have allotted for each group meeting, we suggest you engage in the final two exercises of this learning experience (“Activity #4” and “Assignment”) in your second group convening.
Group or individual activity:	Group
Ages:	13-18 years old
Grades:	Grades 8-12
Online / offline elements:	This learning experience contains links to online resources to help facilitate a group-based discussion, with an offline writing assignment.
Areas:	Main area: Privacy and Reputation Additional areas: Identity Exploration and Formation, Information Literacy, Legal Literacy, Positive / Respectful Behavior, Safety and Well-being
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Learning Goal

Participants will consider how publicly available online information helps form others' opinions about them. They will identify audiences for different types of online communication, consider what information they want to appear when someone searches for their name, and learn various ways to respond to Internet content about them they do not like.

Materials

- [One per group of 2 participants] Handout: What Should You Do? [educator version and participant version]
- [For educator] Computer with Internet access
- Projector and projection screen
- [For participants - optional, for the Assignment, depending on age range of participants] Computers or mobile devices with Internet access
- [One per participant] Paper
- [One per participant] Pens or pencils

Resources

- Book chapter: Born Digital: How Children Grow Up in a Digital Age, [Protections chapter](#) - by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser
- Book chapter: Jóvenes, transformación digital y formas de inclusión en América Latina, [Privacy chapter](#) [pages 289-294] - by Sandra Cortesi, Nelson Remolina, and Mariel García
- Video: [Your Digital Footprint: Leaving a Mark](#) - by Cable Impacts Foundation
- Video: [Social Media and College Admissions](#) - by CBS News
- Video: [Do You Have the Right to Be Forgotten?](#) - by PBS Idea Channel

Activity #1: Who Knows Your Secrets?

SAY:

- What is a secret you have about yourself? Keep this secret in your mind. You won't have to share this secret with anyone or write it down.
- Now answer these questions in your own mind — don't speak your answers out loud or write them down:
 - How many people in this room know the secret?
 - How many people in your neighborhood know the secret?
 - How many people that you have never met face-to-face know the secret?
- Imagine that you had to write down that secret on a piece of paper and one random person in this group was to read it. Here are some more questions — again, answer them only in your mind, not out loud or in writing. After one week goes by:
 - How many people in this room would now know the secret?
 - How many people in your neighborhood would now know the secret?
 - How many people that you have never met face-to-face would now know the secret?

SAY:

- You need to think of people who are likely to see a secret or other piece of information about you as “the audience” for that information.
- Having a better sense of the audience may help you more easily determine the information you feel comfortable sharing and what to not share with others. An audience is made up of a person or a group of people that can access a particular piece of information.
- With new technologies today, audiences can grow very quickly. Because of this potential for rapid audience growth, it's difficult — if not impossible — for you to know or limit the audience for your online information and activities. While it's great that audiences can grow quickly when you want to share your work with a lot of people, it's not great when this happens with information that you want to keep private.
- Unfortunately, private information — especially embarrassing information — is often exciting to people when they see it, so once this type of information is out there online, it can be very challenging to control who sees this content.
- Whenever you share information online (even just directly with one person, like in a text or private message), you should be prepared for the possibility that it may spread well beyond the audience you intended to reach.

ASK:

- When you post a status update, photo, or other information on social media, who is your intended audience?
- Does it depend on the social media platform? Or the context?

SAY:

- It depends on your privacy settings as well as the social media platform you choose, but your audience could include just your closest friends / followers / connections, or be broad enough to include anyone who uses that social media platform, or anyone who searches for you online. But no matter who the audience is, information can be copied and posted somewhere else, someone can take a photo / screenshot of the content, or information can be shared through in-person and online conversations.

ASK:

- Who is your intended audience when you add content on social media?
- Who is your intended audience when, for example, you post on someone else's Facebook timeline, or when you add content to another person's social media account (e.g., by commenting on one of their photos, tagging them in a post or photo)?

SAY:

- This will depend on both your and their privacy settings, but often the content will be visible to their friends / followers / connections, which will include people you don't know — this might include their family members, or administrators or teachers at their school.

ASK:

- When you send a message (e.g., text, email, private / direct message on social media), who is your intended audience?

SAY:

- Your audience is the person you're sending it to, but be careful — others might see it as well.

ASK:

- How can your message reach people other than the person you sent it to?
[Possible ways include through photos / screenshots, forwarding, and in-person

phone sharing.] In which cases might reaching a larger audience be useful? [Possible examples include hoping to spread a message to a large audience, mobilizing people, raising awareness.] In which cases could reaching a bigger audience than intended be problematic? [Sharing beyond the intended audience can get someone in trouble, cause embarrassment, reputational harms.]

- What are some situations where maintaining a good online reputation might be important? [Possible examples include school / college / university applications, job applications, and making new friends.]

Activity #2: Researching Your Reputation

[Choose a public figure (e.g., someone in the music and / or film [movies / TV] industry, political figure, business leader) who will be familiar to the participants. Google / look up their name on an online search engine and, with participants, examine a few of the items that come up (please project search results on a screen). Also, explore the public figure's social media presence. After spending a few minutes exploring, ask two participants to act out a hypothetical interaction between the public figure and a fan.]

ASK:

- How does [public figure] _____ feel encountering someone that knows a lot of information about them?
- How would they feel if that information was incorrect?
- How many people can access this information about [public figure] _____?
- How can [public figure] _____ control what information about them is available online?

SAY:

- People you meet will use search engines to obtain more information about you. What they find, good or bad, is going to impact what they think about you. If you want to be able to have control over how they perceive you, it's important for you to know what information they are likely to see.
- These people include future employers and school / college / university admissions officers. Admissions officers may not inform applicants whether or not they looked them up online and / or used the information they find online to help make admissions decisions.

[Organize participants into pairs.]

SAY:

- Brainstorm three things you would want to come up when someone Googles your name / searches for your name online. How likely do you think it is that these things will actually appear in the search results? Share with your partner.

ASK:

- What did you and your partner come up with?
- Raise your hand if you have Googled your own name / searched for your name online. What did you see? What photos come up? Were you able to find information about yourself, or are there other people in the world who share your name? [If they have a common name, ask participants to add a piece of information to their searches, such as their hometown or their school name.]

[You can also ask participants to Google themselves / search for their name online during this activity if computers or mobile devices with Internet access are available.]

ASK:

- When you Google your name / search for your name online, ask these three questions:
 - What are the first few results?
 - Are you comfortable with this information?
 - What do the other results suggest about who you are as a person? As a student? As an employee?
- What impression might someone who doesn't know you develop upon seeing these results? What impression might they have if they clicked and read the information contained in the first few results?

Activity #3: Responding to Complex Information

[Pass out the What Should You Do?: Participant Handout. Organize participants into pairs. Ask participants to discuss the scenarios on the worksheet and come up with two strategies / solutions for each scenario and think about the potential consequences of their actions. Give them 15 minutes to do this.]

ASK:

- What should you do when someone posts content about you that you don't like and / or find inappropriate in that context?
- What should you think about before posting content about someone else?

Activity #4: Responding to Negative Information

ASK:

- If you find negative information about yourself when you search for your name online (e.g., through a search engine, or on social media), can you do something about it?
- What are some examples of content you might not want others to see?

SAY:

- There are different approaches as to what can be done if you encounter online content about yourself that you don't like, depending on the context and the type of information, among other factors.
- One approach is "counter-speech," which means to draw attention / give more visibility to positive stories about yourself by creating and managing content that reflects you in a positive light. You can do this, for example, by creating a social media presence when appropriate, starting a blog, or registering a website based on your name.
- A second approach includes different measures to have negative content removed. For instance:
 - If you see content you do not like (e.g., a photo of you), you can try to reach out directly to the individual who posted it (particularly on social media and / or messaging apps) to ask them to remove the content.
 - Many platforms also provide interfaces to flag information that you feel is annoying or not interesting; content (e.g., photos, videos, text-based posts) that shows you in a negative / unflattering light; shouldn't be on the platform (e.g., seems offensive, violent, or prohibited); appears to be a scam — and the platform then checks it against its terms of service and community norms.
 - In some cases, you might have legal remedies and can, for instance, file a lawsuit in a court of law, depending on jurisdiction and applicable law (for

example in some cases of invasion of privacy or false statements that damage someone's reputation).

- Some countries have specific laws that require platforms to take down certain types of unlawful content upon notification [e.g., [Network Enforcement Act](#) in Germany].

Please also note that sometimes attempting to suppress / remove / correct content might inadvertently [draw greater attention to it](#).

SAY:

- Additionally, people living in the European Union (“EU”) have a legal “right to erasure,” more commonly known as a [“right to be forgotten”](#) (this right still applies even when they are traveling or living outside of the EU). Under this right in the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”), people in the EU can ask “data controllers” to delete certain types of information about them. (“[Data controllers](#)” are businesses, people, government agencies, and others who make decisions around how information about you is processed.)
- There are [six reasons](#) that people in the EU can ask for information about themselves to be erased. Each of these reasons covers a range of circumstances. For example, one of the reasons that a [data removal request](#) can be made is that the information was collected about a [“child”](#) who later decides that the [risks of sharing this information](#) are too great. That reason is very general. There are probably countless reasons that a twenty-five-year-old might decide they want to remove information they shared when they were sixteen!
- There are also important limits on the right to erasure. There are [five reasons](#) why a request for erasure will be denied. Just as with the reasons for requesting erasure, the reasons for denial are broad, covering many types of situations. We’ll talk more about one important reason for denial — to protect free speech rights — in a few minutes.
- The GDPR went into effect on May 25, 2018. The more time that goes by with the GDPR in effect, the more we will learn about how people in the EU are using their right to erasure and how companies, government agencies, and others are responding.

Assignment

[Option 1, for participants ages 13-15] SAY:

- Now that we have talked about how publicly available online information helps form opinions about other people, let's apply what you've just learned.
- Over the next 30 minutes, individually, engage in the following activity:
 1. Choose a public figure (e.g., someone in the music and / or film [movies / TV] industry, political figure, business leader).
 2. Search for publicly available information about that person online and explain, in a short paragraph, how this information has helped you form an opinion about this person.
 3. If you could provide this individual with four recommendations around how content about them could be available online differently (e.g., in terms of a change in privacy settings, a change in audience, a change in the substance of the content) and / or not be available at all (e.g., deleted, have taken down) to improve how this person presents themselves / is perceived by others online, what would they be?

[Option 2, for participants ages 16-18] SAY:

1. Pretend that you live in a country that does not have the right to be forgotten. What are 2-3 arguments you could make in support of having that country adopt that right? Please also identify the 2-3 strongest potential counter-arguments to your position.

Note: Some countries grant citizens the right to free speech, or the right to communicate ideas without the threat of government retaliation or censorship. How do you think a “right to erasure” or “right to be forgotten” would work in countries that also have free speech rights? The [General Data Protection Regulation](#) in the European Union says that the “right to erasure” should not apply when removing information would keep citizens from “exercising the right of freedom of expression and information.” Can you think of a situation where one person would want their personal information removed, but a second person would argue that the removal would violate that second person’s free speech rights (e.g., a student writes a blog post that contains unflattering information about a teacher; after the student is no longer in the teacher’s class, the teacher wants the post removed because the information is not relevant anymore; the student claims a free speech right to talk publicly about their past educational experiences)?

[Give participants 30 minutes to finish the assignment.]