

The eQuality Project

Annual Report 2016-2017

The eQuality Project Annual Report 2016-2017

This report can be downloaded from:
www.equalityproject.ca

Contact Us:

The eQuality Project
University of Ottawa
Room 5005, 120 University Private
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
CANADA

E-Mail: info@equalityproject.ca
Website: equalityproject.ca
Twitter: [@eQuality_ca](https://twitter.com/eQuality_ca)

The eQuality Project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The eQuality Project © 2017

OUR MISSION:

To help young people create a networked environment where they can play, learn, communicate, and participate equally, free from surveillance and identity-based harassment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What's New in eQuality?

Page 1

Year 2

Research at a Glance

Pages 2 – 3

Year 2

Policy at a Glance

Page 4

Year 2

Outreach at a Glance

Page 5

Year 2

By the Numbers

Page 6

In the Spotlight

Page 7

The eQuality Team

Page 8

What's New in eQuality?

We are a seven-year partnership project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, developing new knowledge about young people's experiences of privacy and equality in networked spaces.

What's the Problem?

At the beginning of the eQuality Project, we began to unpack our interest in young people's experiences of privacy and equality in networked spaces by focusing on big data practices on social media and in networked toys. As we did so, our attention was increasingly caught by emerging educational technologies that are driven by big data. As a result we expanded our focus to include educational software.

Certainly, the increased use of networked technologies in classrooms is a major talking point in any discussion with young people about their online experiences. Our research indicates that networked technologies in the classroom have also become one of the leading edges of emerging equality issues in young people's lives. While surveillance has always been a part of the school experience – teachers and administrators have always collected information and kept records on their students in order to evaluate their learning on an ongoing basis – in the past, there were set protocols, social norms and laws that protected student privacy. In addition, there were clear divisions between “in-school” and “out-of-school” contexts and behaviours. With the increased use of networked technologies in the classroom, however, students' public and private lives have blended in new ways (to which protocol has yet to catch up).

Undoubtedly, the integration of networked technologies in the classroom can provide a space for students to develop critical understanding of information and to be creative, but our research shows that it has also, inversely, led to a significant loss of privacy. This is particularly problematic because successful learning requires a certain level of privacy – students need a place where they are able to test out new ideas, make mistakes, reflect and consider what has been learned. Moreover, it is not only students who are subject to a loss of privacy in the networked classroom. While content filters can protect student privacy to some extent by screening out offensive content and communications with ill-intentioned others, they can also expose teachers to surveillance, and often limit their

pedagogical choices through the filtering and blocking of educational material.

The way in which networked technologies in the classroom create a porous boundary between school and the digital marketplace is an equally worrying issue. Commercialization has become increasingly embedded in today's classrooms through the use of these technologies, many of which have become mandatory in learning objectives and evaluation. Not only do advertisements on educational and public interest sites disrupt the learning process, but more significantly, behavioural targeting practices contribute data to algorithms that have the potential to replicate and reproduce real-world discrimination and collect students' personal data on an unprecedented scale.

For example, there is a growing number of corporations that monitor students' social media accounts to help identify students at risk, typically focusing on bullying, sexting, potentially criminal behaviour, radicalization, and mental health issues such as depression and suicide. Schools that purchase the service provide the corporation with the names of all their students and then the corporation uses algorithms to locate and track their social media content. The privacy issues this raises – how long the data will be stored? how long students will be tracked? who the data is linked to? how do these algorithms work? – are complex, especially since students do not have the option to opt out of the tracking.

There are definitely positives to the inclusion of networked technologies in the classroom as learning tools. Social media platforms can be used for accessing and interacting with social justice issues, in addition to creating a sense of community within the classroom. Access to networked technologies can also inspire students to feel that their voices are heard outside the walls of their schools and classrooms. But it is also essential that we critically interrogate the implications of big data algorithms in these spaces to protect privacy and promote equality for all.

Year 2

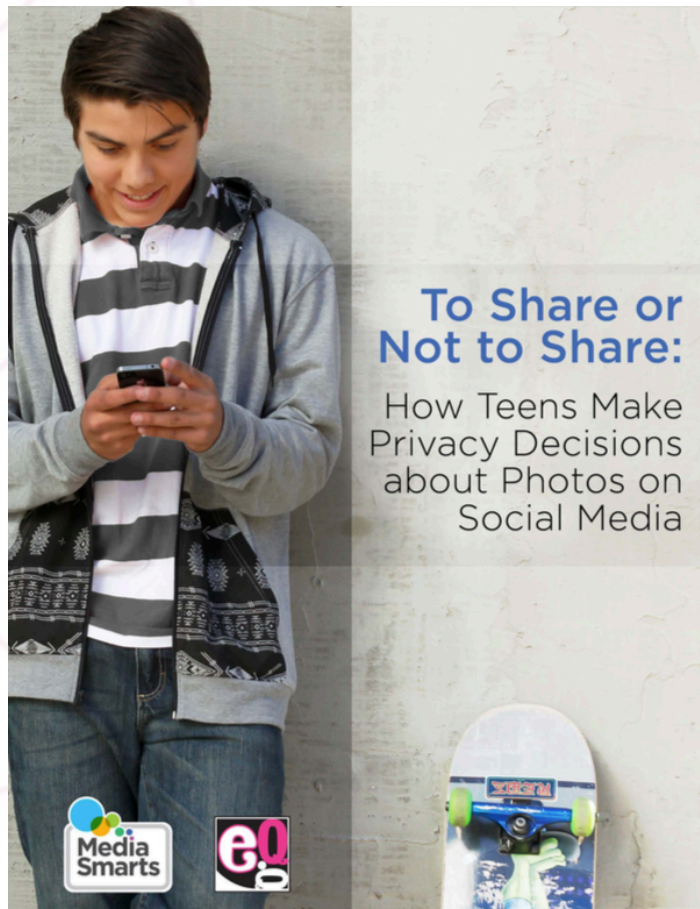
Research at a Glance

Creating new knowledge about networked technologies, online discrimination and identity-based conflict between young people online.

Report on Decision-Making and Privacy: How Youth Make Choices About Reputational and Data Privacy Online

This past year, we worked with eQuality Partner MediaSmarts on a research project exploring the ways in which young people make decisions about their privacy on social media platforms. We recruited 18 teenagers between the ages of 13-16, and asked them to complete photo-diaries for seven days over two weeks – up to three photos per day over five school days and two weekend days. A researcher then interviewed each participant in order to discuss the choices they made with respect to which photos they posted on which social media platforms.

The photos were divided into three categories: comfortable sharing with lots of people; comfortable sharing with a few people; and, not comfortable sharing with anyone. Surprisingly, given the common rhetoric around selfie-culture, we found that our research participants were far more likely to share a photo on a public site like Facebook or Instagram without any people in it because they didn't want to have their faces or the faces of their friends out there for people to judge them (group shots were also favoured over photos of individuals for the same reason).



In addition, sharing photos was less about expressing themselves and letting other people know what they were interested in, and more about posting content that appeals to 'everyone.' For example, one girl posted photos of horses on Instagram – not because she liked horses but because they made a good Instagram 'theme' that appealed to 'followers'. These photos then take on a transactional character as they are designed to provide evidence that the user meets the status quo, with success being measured by the numbers of likes and comments. Interestingly however, users tend to maintain this transactional character for their notional audiences, as opposed to their close friends. When they want to connect with friends – i.e. be both social and networked – they select 'private' media like instant messaging or texting, precisely because the private nature of the platform means they can relax and be themselves.

Year 2

Research at a Glance

Creating new knowledge about networked technologies, online discrimination and identity-based conflict between young people online.

Defamation in the Internet Age

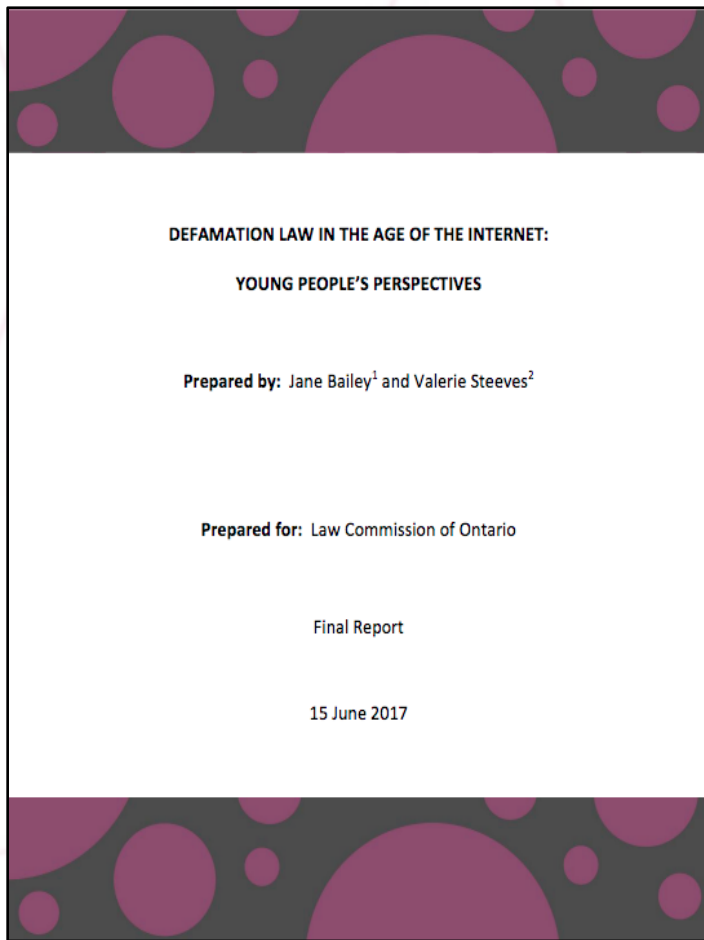
We recently completed a project funded by the Law Commission of Ontario (LCO) on Defamation Law in the Age of the Internet, focused on young people's perspectives about defamation. We conducted interviews with 20 participants between the ages of 15-21 about their online experiences with truth and falsity, reputation, anonymity, and the quality and utility of existing mechanisms for responding to defamatory attacks.

We received a ringing endorsement of the importance of privacy, as well as privacy protections to support the transparent management and protection of users' information. In addition, informational control was seen as



essential to the ability to build different reputations for different online audiences. For example: LinkedIn profiles tended to be professional; Instagram was 'artsy'; and Facebook tended to be more 'family-oriented.' Participants noted that their different self-presentations were often driven by a desire to satisfy the requirements of varying social media platforms, and that the different profiles they construct also help them to protect other important rights, such as equality and free expression.

Especially important from a policy point of view, participants felt that while untrue statements can hurt their reputations, true statements that violate confidentiality and privacy can be just as harmful. The true, but harmful situations described by our participants often involved cases of non-consensual disclosure of intimate images of girls and young women. Defamation law, which focuses only on remedying harms arising from false statements, does not address the latter harm, whereas privacy protections do. Except in the most extreme cases of online attacks, such as those involving racism and sexual violence, young targets prefer responses that maintain privacy and confidentiality, while preserving transparency and accountability.



Year 2 Policy at a Glance

Creating digital media policies that respond to young people's needs.

Privacy Implications of the Networked Classroom

The eQuality Project co-hosted a one-day workshop on “Privacy Implications in the Networked Classroom” with the Alberta Teacher’s Association, the Big Data Surveillance Project, and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta. The workshop grew out of three eQuality initiatives. First, our analysis of qualitative data collected as part of a Canadian Teachers’ Federation survey of over 4,000 teachers across the country provided a snapshot of the ways in which networked learning tools embed surveillance into the classroom, often disrupting the social relationships at the heart of education. Second, our examination of educational software that uses algorithms to “sort” students for learning underscored the need for clear privacy guidelines to help school boards negotiate appropriate privacy standards when they are licencing new learning programs. Third, our examination of the transition in Ontario’s education policy from “zero tolerance” to “safe and accepting” revealed an ongoing emphasis on surveillance and monitoring to address issues such as cyberbullying, rather than proactive initiatives to address underlying issues such as discrimination.



Over 70 people—including teachers, school administrators, school board officials and privacy officers—attended and participated in discussions on the privacy implications of: the use of technology in schools; educational software in and outside of schools; and education law and policy on cyberbullying. We concluded the workshop with a panel discussion highlighting tools to help educators promote privacy in the classroom and in board policy. After the workshop, over 80 members of the

general public attended an evening lecture on new Canadian and American research on the privacy challenges raised by networked classroom technologies and educational software, as well as insights on education law and policy designed to protect students from cyberbullying.



Legal Briefs Module

eQuality recently created an online module to inform Canadians about the legal ramifications of cyberbullying and cyberviolence. Breaking down the provincial, territorial and federal laws, and Canadian constitutional challenges, the module addresses issues such as: human rights law; educational law; civil litigation; administrative and regulatory law; and, criminal law, providing a thorough examination of Canadian legal responses to cyberviolence.

The module opens with definitions of cyberbullying and cyberviolence, and through a series of leading questions covers current legal responses to cyberbullying and cyberviolence. A variety of legal responses have been proposed and adopted to address these issues at all levels of government, and while some of these responses have been based on pre-existing laws, others have had to be created directly in response to Internet-related developments. As discussed in the module, the complexity of these issues, and the underlying equality issues that are often at stake, necessitate the adoption of a multi-pronged approach. Furthermore, when these issues affect young people, responses ought to be weighed more strongly in favour of human rights and educational approaches rather than criminal law responses, except in the most serious cases.

Year 2

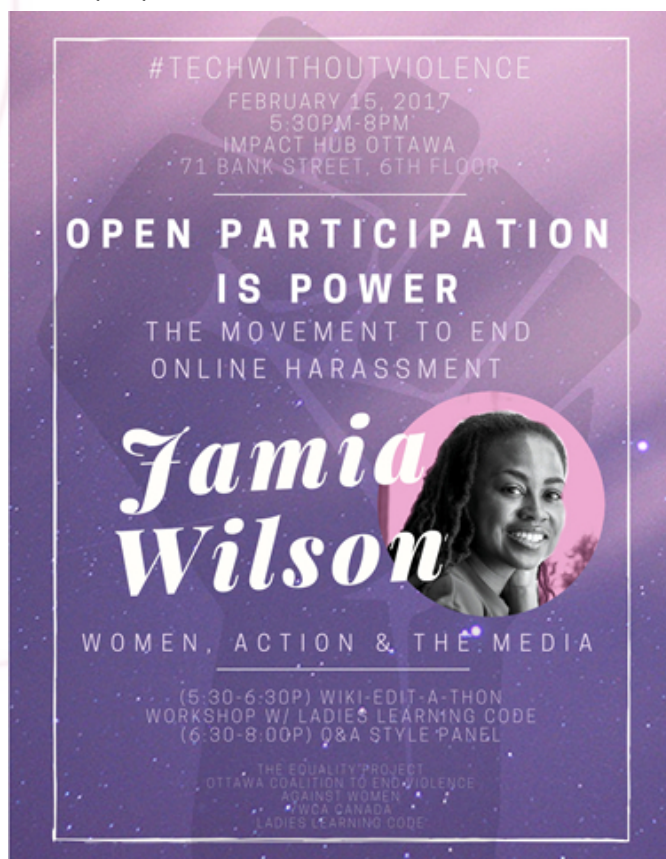
Outreach at a Glance

Creating and disseminating educational and outreach materials to help Canadian youth make the most of their digital media experience.

Online Harassment Panel & Workshop

On February 15, 2017, The eQuality Project, in partnership with OCTEVAW, the YWCA, the CLTS, and HRREC hosted a public lecture entitled “Open Participation is Power: The Movement to End Online Harassment.” Designed to inform and engage the audience about the use of technology and gender as a platform to combat gender-based violence and end online harassment, the keynote address was presented by Jamia Wilson, Executive Director and Publisher of Feminist Press at City University of New York. We had 35 participants in attendance for the keynote address, and the event was also live-streamed.

We followed this event with a community workshop attended by 42 participants featuring a WIKI-edit-a-thon with OCTEVAW and Ladies Learning Code, who showed the audience how to edit Wikipedia pages, followed by a panel discussion featuring Dillon Black, Raine Lilliefeldt, and Emily Flynn-Jones.



The Disconnection Challenge

As a project, we're committed to listening to young people and giving them a chance to articulate their own needs for better online policy and practice. So when we were contacted by a group of eight teens who were interested in exploring the impact of their own social media use on their sense of connection to themselves, to others and to nature, we jumped at the chance to work with them. After reviewing our research, the group decided to go on a one week media fast: avoiding social media platforms, Internet browsing (except for schoolwork), texting (save for their parents), and listening to music with headphones.

They discovered that taking a break from social media gave them a chance to spend more time with friends and family, get their home work done well in advance, 'think deep thoughts', and spend more time outside. After the fast, they chose to cut back on some disclosure practices (such as feeding Snapchat streaks) and were much more deliberate and thoughtful about the information they shared online. The group was excited by what they had learned, and wanted to share their experiences with others. We worked with them to create a three-minute video entitled #DisconnectionChallenge detailing their experiences, and the surprising results of their weeklong media fast. In the video, they challenge other youth to undertake their own media fast to see how disconnecting can have its upside.

Year 2
By the Numbers

Project
Partners

24

& Interested
Stakeholders

1,753+
Tweets

Over
\$73,000

In Additional
Funding
for Research
with Youth

6

Appearances
Before
Legislative &
Policy
Committees

22

Presentations at
National and
International
Conferences

Media

8

Appearances

6

Areas of Law
Covered in New
Online Legal
Resource
Module

150

Participants in a
Privacy
Workshop for
Educators

24

Publications
Produced

20

Student
Research
Assistants

In the Spotlight



Interview with Kathleen Pye,
Director of Research and Policy,
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

What brought you to working with young people?

I am always in awe of the resilience of young people, particularly those facing marginalization stemming from their identities and experiences. I have and continue to learn so much from young people! To see their commitment to human rights and inclusivity is inspiring and gives me a lot of hope. That is why I work with Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (Egale), a national LGBTQI2S organization that works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. Egale provides direct support to LGBTQI2S youth through Egale Youth OUTreach (EYO), which provides individual counselling as well as homelessness and suicide crisis services to LGBTQI2S youth up to age 29. We are also in the process of opening the Egale Centre, a transitional and emergency housing facility exclusively dedicated to serving homeless LGBTQI2S Youth. Outside of direct service, Egale offers training on LGBTQI2S identities and experiences, as well as skill building for inclusion. In the Research and Policy Department, where I currently live, we conduct research and policy analysis on municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal programs, legislation, and funding allocations that impact LGBTQI2S young people.

How did you become involved in The eQuality Project?

Egale was asked to participate in the eQuality project based on the work we do in and for LGBTQI2S communities. We have been involved in eQuality since the beginning, with me only jumping into the project over the last year. It was such an honour to attend last

year's annual meeting! I met such incredible folks who are doing amazing work and have made LGBTQI2S inclusivity – and intersectionality in general - within that work a commitment. That's so wonderful to see.

Which eQuality activities interest you?

For me, the best part of eQuality is being kept informed about all the work that is being done in the area of cyberviolence, and being connected to a network of stakeholders committed to this work and gender-based violence efforts more broadly. It has provided a crucial opportunity to network and engage with each other – and I'm really grateful for that.

What would you like to see as a long-term outcome of the project's work?

I would love to see more research specifically dedicated to cyberviolence prevention and intervention strategies for bisexual, trans, gender diverse, and Two Spirit women, as well as queer and trans women with intersecting identities, as well as knowledge mobilization efforts to share these findings broadly. We know rates of gender-based violence are heightened for these communities but there is limited research, specifically a lack of Canadian research, that discusses how best to address and support them.

A phrase/quote/passage that inspires you:

Everyday I look at a quote on my wall from Audre Lorde that says "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self preservation". The work we do is not always easy and can take a big toll on our health and wellbeing. If we don't take care of ourselves, we can't be there for others and the work we love.

The eQuality Team

Who We Are:

We are a partnership of academic researchers, community organizations, educators, policy-makers, and civil society groups working with youth to identify evidence-based practices and policies that promote healthy relationships and respect for privacy and equality online.

What We Do:

We are working together to create new knowledge about young people's experiences and needs with respect to networked technologies. Our research is informed by participatory action methods that see young people as equal participants in the knowledge-creation process. We are also committed to using intersectional methods that explore how social location affects young peoples' sense of self and opportunities. We will use the new knowledge we develop to create innovative education; policy and public engagement initiatives (such as classroom modules, media production-based learning activities for youth, workshops, train the trainer programs, policy intervention toolkits, and an online repository of multi-media materials) to help parents, teachers, school administrators, communities and policymakers work with youth.

Our Researchers:

PROJECT CO-LEADERS:

Valerie Steeves
Jane Bailey

PROJECT CO-INVESTIGATORS

Jacquelyn Burkell
Priscilla Regan
Rakhi Ruparelia
Leslie Regan Shade

PROJECT COLLABORATORS

Carlisle Adams
Ann Cheung
Faye Mishna
Kathryn Montgomery
Shaheen Shariff
Karen Smith

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Sarah Heath

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR:

Robert H. Porter

Our Partners:

The Alberta Teacher's Association
The Canadian Centre For Gender &
Sexual Diversity

Canadian Internet Policy and Public
Interest Clinic

Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Canadian Teacher's Federation

Canadian Women's Foundation

Egale Canada Human Rights

George Mason University

Government of Alberta

Human Rights Research and
Education Centre

MediaSmarts

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis
Centres

Ottawa Coalition to End Violence
Against Women

Status of Women Canada

The Vanier Institute of the Family

University of Ottawa

University of Toronto

University of Western Ontario

YWCA

Our Youth Advisory Committee

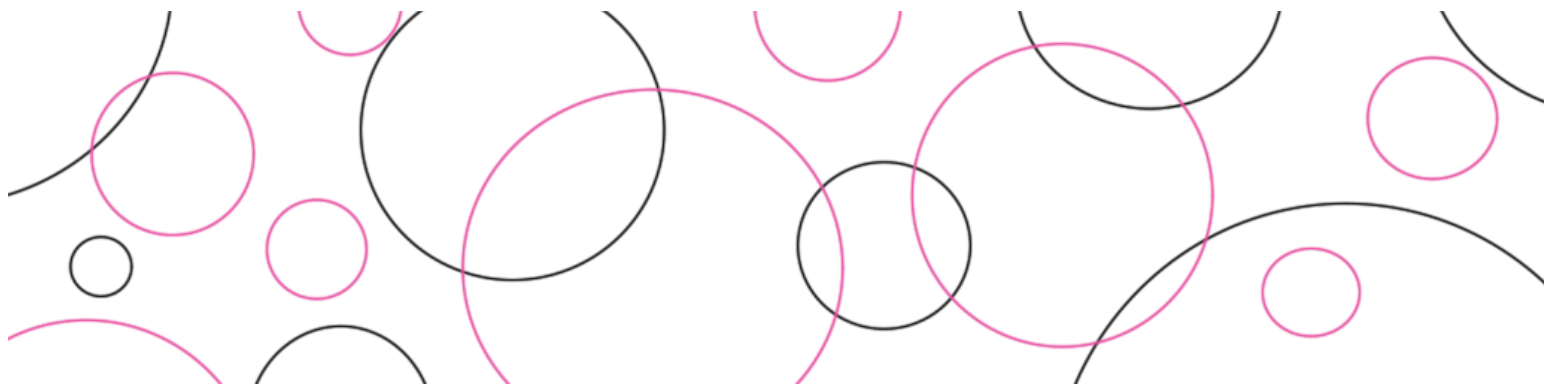
Dee Dooley
Tara MacDougall
Christine Moreau
Yami Msosa
Jackie Sarvini
Andy Villanueva

Our Research Assistants:

Maria-Cristina Cavicchia
Suzie Dunn
Grace Foran
Chandell Gosse
Roderick Hawes-Ospina
Elsa T. Khwaja
Lauren Middlemiss
Trevor Milford
Sara Shayan-Yeganeh

Friends of the eQuality Project:

The Information and Privacy
Commissioner of Alberta
The Information and Privacy
Commissioner of Ontario
Office of the Privacy Commissioner of
Canada



The eQuality Project
University of Ottawa
Room 5005, 120
University Private
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
CANADA

E-Mail: info@equalityproject.ca
Website: equalityproject.ca
Twitter: [@eQuality_ca](https://twitter.com/eQuality_ca)