

Reputations and law in an online world

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Technology & Law Mini Enrichment Course

University of Ottawa Faculty of Law

7 May 2019



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What does the word “research” mean to
you?



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Law Commission of Ontario



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20 participants aged 15-21:
10 self-identified as female/10 self-identified as male
12 urban/8 rural



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What sorts of things do you do online?



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What does the word “reputation” mean
to you?



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When you think of the word “law”, what do you think of?



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Questions 1-3

(1) How does someone build a reputation online?

(2) What kinds of things do you take into account when you're deciding what you think of someone online? What do another person's comments or photos online tell you about them? Does the platform matter?

(3) Do other people's online reputations affect what other people know of and think about them when they're not online?



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reputation



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LinkedIn – professional
Instagram – “artsy”
Facebook – social/family oriented



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“You have, you know, two altered reputations based on which platform you’re using.”

Aaron, age 21



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“So, I would say in reputation-wise, when you look at each one, it might show a different side of who I am. But all—if you look at it all together, I would say it shows one person, like who I am. But you have to connect them together. You can’t just look at me on LinkedIn and that’s, that’s all I am.”

Caitlyn, age 20



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“yeah, it’d be the personal conversations that I have on Snapchat or Facebook Messenger or just general texting ... it’d be ... 100 per cent ... of who I am.”

Caitlyn, age 20



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“There might be different circles of people that have different opinions on you ... like if you’re a supervisor at a store or something. ... Your employees might know you as kind of a hard ass but then your family knows you’re a big sweetheart. So your reputation ... it’s what others think but there’s differing groups with different opinions of that.”

Aaron, age 21



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“I find that so, like awful, because you don’t know who’s going to see that they’re going to know that you drink, like underage ... And that’s going to make you seem like a wild child ... And it can come back to bite you some time in the future.”

Morgan, age 15



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“that’s a problem with being a teenager
... you’re making plans for your life at a
time when your personality can literally
be ... polar opposites between different
weeks.”

Michael, age 16



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“I wouldn’t want them to base me on the last 15 years because I’m a different person now.”

Caitlyn, age 20



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“[t]hey wouldn’t think the same things that ... the people who are seeing it now [do] cuz it’s like they’re seeing it out of context. ... It’s not fair, but it’s life.”

Stéphanie, age 15



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Questions 4-6

(4) Have you ever seen online conflict over someone saying something *false* about someone else online? Who started them? What ended up happening? For example: how did the person the statements were made about feel? What did they do?

(5) Have you ever seen online conflict over someone saying something *true* about someone else or sending photos of someone else to others? How did the conflict start? What ended up happening? For example: how did the person the statements were made about feel? What did they do?

(6) Do you think false statements affect people more, less or about the same as true statements? Why?



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harm, truth, falsity



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defamation



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“... publicizing [true] things, [is] almost like a slap to the face and ... the rumours and lies is almost like a slap to the wrist where you can keep slapping someone on the wrist, but if you get slapped in the face, no one likes that.”

Daniel, age 18



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“... that can really suck for some people, especially if it’s a family that you know ... isn’t going to take it well. ... In that case yeah, the truth might be really ... worse [than a lie] because if it’s false then like you can at least deny it...

But then ... you don’t want to deny it because if you eventually do want to come around and tell the truth ... people are going to be like ‘then why did you lie back here or whatever’.”

Michael, age 16



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“it got around really fast ... a lot of words got exchanged about her being like a slut ”

Rain, age 16



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“she’s the reason why ... this teacher got fired”

Stéphanie, age 15



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“it wasn’t her fault, he ... had no right to do the things he was doing to her. So technically it’s his fault for putting his job in jeopardy.”

Stéphanie, age 15



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“throwing shade”
“sub-tweeting”



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“... if you don't know who it's about, you assume who it's about and you might talk to your friends or gossip and be like 'oh my God, did you see what they tweeted about this person?' And it might not be about that person [at all].”

Kim, age 18



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Questions 7-13

- (7) Do you think people who lie about other people online should have to pay money to the person they lied about? Why or why not?
- (8) Do you think a person who harms someone else by making true statements or distributing photos of them online should have to pay money to the person they harmed? Why or why not?
- (9) Do you think that people should go to jail for lying about other people online? Why or why not?
- (10) Do you think you would ever bring a lawsuit to protect your reputation? Why or why not?
- (11) Do you think that online service providers (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) should take down posts if someone asks them to? Why or why not?
- (12) Do you think schools should get involved if one student posts something mean and/or false about another student? Why or why not?
- (13) If someone lies about someone else online, does it make things better if they apologize?



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last resort



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“involving the police or the law might be worse than actually what’s happening because then it can be blown out of proportion and then if the parents can be involved ... it can be bad for the children”

Kim, age 18



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“It might make them feel good at first, because oh it’s just cash, but at the same time, does it really resolve anything? They’re always going to be like, Oh that person. They’re always going to be mad at that person for telling lies about them, so I don’t think it resolves anything in any way.”

Ameera, age 20



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“how do you assign a dollar value to that?”

Aaron, age 21



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“if you have anything negative to say, I would prefer if you private ... messaged me about it.’ ... Because then we can resolve it instead of making a scene.”

Morgan, age 15



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“didn’t really want the school to be involved ... because her parents worked at the school, so she told one teacher that she really trusted, and they kind of resolved the situation.”

Ameera, age 20



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“crappy [one-time] workshop interventions” and work toward a “more integrated approach to anti-cyberbullying”

Harper, age 21



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What can these groups do to support
young people to deal with online
attacks?

Adults/Parents

Teens

Government

Corporations/Service Providers

Schools



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THANK YOU!!

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