CHICAGO IDEAS
YOUTH

Digital Rights and Responsibilities:

Report

WHAT IS CHICAGO IDEAS?

Chicago Ideas is a nonprofit platform that inspires, connects, and enables the curious and the committed to build a more thriving, more joyous world for everyone. We believe that progress begins when everyone has access to big ideas. Chicago Ideas aims to support and create accessible, high-quality content and experiences designed to inspire; all the while enabling our community members to connect with individuals and organizations around the world who are working towards progress.

WHAT IS CHICAGO IDEAS YOUTH?

The Chicago Ideas Youth program seeks to serve and empower the next generation of changemakers in our city. Now entering its 6th year, the goal of Chicago Ideas Youth is to provide a platform where Chicago high school students can seek out new opportunities, internalize a leadership mentality, and gain exposure to ideas that will spark their desire and enlarge their capacity to change the world around them. CI Youth organizes and empowers over 1,400 Chicago teenagers over the course of the year—through our Ambassador program, Ideas Days, Speaker Connects, Professionalism Series, Youth Labs Week, and Chicago Ideas Week.

WHY DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP? (AND *WHAT* IS IT?)

Part of the issue with defining digital citizenship, and situating it in a broader dialogue of youth participation and engagement, is the ambiguity surrounding the scope and content of the topic. To some it's about practicing 'internet safety', to others it's online activism in a targeted and distilled form. Neither of these definitions—or any that fall in between for that matter—provide *both* a broad *and* nuanced concept of what's at stake by combining the words 'digital' with 'citizen'.

Perhaps it's easiest to begin by stating a negative: Digital Citizenship is <u>not</u> an exercise in traditional civics—*but now* with computers! What has become abundantly clear since the rise of the Internet, and social media, is that when technology infuses every element of our lives, technology inextricably alters how those lives are lived. It changes how we

communicate and how we form and conceptualize community—and in doing so, also influences what we value in those exchanges and spaces.

The effects of this digitally-infused life are particularly amplified for youth. The current generation of under-20-year-olds is the first generation to grow up not knowing a purely analogue world. Facebook was founded before the oldest from this generation was in Pre-K. Their childhoods have a public digital record. Their friendships, foibles, and fights have all been documented—by themselves, their families, their friends (and at times, their enemies).

As this generation approaches adulthood a series of questions begins to emerge:

- What do youth view as acceptable behaviors and expectations surrounding digital and real-world engagement?
- How do they characterize responsibility (and responsibility *to whom*) in online spaces?
- What does it mean to have voice within a digital community? How do you exercise it?
- How have their experiences with technology and digital practices influenced their perspectives on each of these fronts?

What older generations view as issues of digital access and use, this generation views as everyday existence. What we want to know is how this level and type of participation in an ever-present digital space impacts how youth view their roles, rights, responsibilities, and futures in our world.

This is what we mean by **Digital Citizenship**: **The rights and responsibilities exercised, and the group standards created, by participating in digital communities**. And to be clear as to the scope of this inquiry, one of the most foundational lessons that came out of our work thus far is that youth no longer define anyone in this world as bystanders—because of the Internet, and omnipresent access to it—*everyone is viewed as a participant* by default. As enlightening (and onerous) as this discovery is, what cannot be avoided by their assessment is the realization that this generation experiences and defines our world (and imposes a set of expectations on its inhabitants) differently than those who have come before it.

WHAT IS YOUTH KICK OFF?

Every October, prior to Youth Labs Week and Chicago Ideas Week (CIW), Chicago Ideas hosts a Youth Kick Off for 300 of our Chicago high school youth participants. In addition to getting them informed and hyped about their upcoming experiences, the purpose of the Kick Off is to provide our youth with a framework through which all of those upcoming opportunities can be experienced. Because so much of our CIW programming centers on themes of technology, equity, action, and innovation, it seemed like an ideal forum for our youth to be exposed to the questions and challenges of digital citizenship and lend their voices to collective answers.

Chicago Ideas holds firmly to the principle that the best way to learn from and engage communities is to treat *any* community as *the* expert on *their* lived experience. What better way to learn about digital citizenship than to have youth weigh in on it themselves? As it turns out, no one has explored this theme in this manner to-date![1] In partnership with the Susan Crown Exchange (SCE), the theme of this year's Kick Off was the Rights and Responsibilities of Digital Citizenship.

On October 3rd, 2018, Chicago Ideas hosted 250 students at the South Shore Cultural Center for Youth Kick Off. During the first half of the event, students were treated to a dinner, networking opportunities with their peers, and a stage program with speakers and spoken word artists. The second half of the evening was comprised of youth-led breakout sessions. In these sessions, youth evaluated different scenarios on competing rights and responsibilities associated with digital citizenship (privacy, transparency, organizing, speech, the creation of safe spaces) and collaboratively decided on appropriate actions and solutions to the challenges at hand.

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[1] There are some recent surveys on Millennials, technology, and opinions regarding civic engagement. The most comprehensive being *The GenFwd Project* (2018) at the University of Chicago. (Reports are available here.) However, this generation is older than our target population, and also straddles a unique position insofar as what makes Millennials standout is that they had an analogue childhood, but a digital adolescence/early adulthood. This hybrid relationship with technology does not hold for today's teenagers. Also, previous surveys have been primarily quantitative in nature, and focused on questions about American political participation and technology access. Our approach is qualitative, and focuses instead on behaviors and norms surrounding engagement, action, and digital practices more broadly construed.

The 15 breakout sessions (of appx. 15-20 youth each) were co-led by an adult facilitator and a Chicago Ideas Youth Ambassador.[2] In this sense, the event was a youth-led endeavor, but assisted and supported by adult mentors. Youth voice dictated the topic and content of the evening—adults merely provided the sessions with a set of tools, perspectives, and a platform to help students dig into the material. The conversations and solutions were also recorded by an independent observer.[3] The observers were comprised of Chicago-area graduate students from across the social sciences. All observers were well-versed in ethnographic research and observation methodologies, and submitted their observations post-event. These writeups form the primary source of qualitative data for the report that follows. Conversations and follow-up with the Chicago Ideas Youth Ambassadors account for an additional content stream.

The materials that the breakouts used as the basis of their discussions were also grounded in youth voice and experience. During July and August of 2018, the Chicago Ideas Youth Ambassadors (along with three other Chicago area youth organizations) participated in two focus groups led by a facilitator from SCE. The focus groups set about to pinpoint how youth use technology on a daily basis, and learn what they view as the most pressing challenges in the digital world. SCE subsequently shared their findings with Chicago Ideas. From these findings, Chicago Ideas built out a Digital Rights and Responsibilities Framework and created the Kick Off breakout session materials and guides.[4] Chicago Ideas Youth Ambassadors then devoted the entirety of September to preparations for their breakout sessions.

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[2] The adult facilitators were professionals recruited from a number of diverse fields: human-centered design, technology, finance, consultants/MBAs.

[3] A complete list of independent observers and their home institutions are located in the Acknowledgements section of the Appendix.

[4] All materials are located in the Appendices of this report and include: the Digital Rights and Responsibilities Framework, Digital Citizenship Breakout Group Case Studies, Adult Facilitator Guide, and Independent Observer Guide.

WHAT DID WE WANT TO LEARN?

In addition to creating a platform for students to voice their experiences and opinions, we wanted to hone in on five key elements. Each element relates to how students approach and parse their digital rights and responsibilities in the scenarios at hand. Our independent observers were tasked with tracking and recording student input across the following areas:

1) **Youth Evaluation Process**
   We wanted to see how students went about evaluating complex situations. How are they evaluating when and how to exercise their digital rights and responsibilities? Are there factors that they weigh more heavily over others? What's the give-and-take of the discussion?

2) **Decision Calculus**
   Similar to the Evaluation Process focus, we want to know how they're arriving at final decisions regarding the situation and the rights at play. (For example: *Why did the student choose the Right to a Safe Space over the Right to Free Speech? How did they justify their decision?*)

3) **Ranking of Rights**
   What rights do the participants view as more or less important? We're trying to figure out if there's a hierarchy of digital rights for this demographic. What (if any) rights are students willing to sacrifice in order to protect others?

4) **Agency, Responsibility, and Consent**
   Who do they view as actors (i.e. who is being burdened with responsibility in these scenarios)? Who do they view as active participants, who is making choices, who is portrayed as a bystander? Relatedly, we wanted to discover how these students conceive of participation, voluntarism, and responsibility for (in)action.

5) **Missing Topics/Rights**
   Are there students who suggest additional rights not found in our framework? Are there supports or resources that students feel are lacking (and required) in order for them to effectively exercise their rights and responsibilities?

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: FINDINGS-BY-RIGHT

Below you will find an account of the trends and consensus witnessed in our breakout sessions. They are organized by Case Study (A-E). Each topic provides a brief synopsis of the rights/responsibilities under examination, and the scenario that the youth participants were tasked with responding to. Full Case Studies and student question prompts are provided in the Appendices (*See: Digital Citizenship Breakout Case Studies A-E*).

A. **Right to Privacy vs. Right to Free Speech**

Synopsis of Case Study A:
Groups 1-3 were tasked with discussing two different scenarios. In the first scenario, a sexted picture has been shared from one male friend to another of his (now) ex-girlfriend. The young man who was sent the photo by the (ex)boyfriend is grappling with the decision to share the sexted pic with a larger group, or keep it to himself.

In the second scenario, a group of friends is hanging out by a corner store after school. They witness another group of young people being harassed and physically abused by police officers. One of the youths decides to record the incident and post the video online using the hashtag #blacklivesmatter.

In both scenarios, students were confronted with questions about who is exercising free speech, who is having their privacy violated, and what responsibilities correlate with these circumstances.

Conclusions from Groups 1-3

In terms of assessing the scenarios, in all three groups, students very clearly saw the sharing of the sexted picture as a violation of the young woman's privacy. Youth also drew a very clear distinction between private, personal relationships and public encounters. Across all groups, the students stated that the police officers from scenario 2 had no claim to 'Privacy' because they were public officials, in a public space. The students also stressed—in terms of a very strong notion of civic, group-facing responsibility—that it was a responsibility or duty of the video-takers to share information that showed a violation of trust on the part of the police officer, and that for the greater good of the community the video ought to be shared. Interestingly, some students did point out that sharing the police brutality video could be seen as a violation of the Right to Privacy of the young men being

assaulted. However, consensus seemed to be that the responsibility to protect the community outweighed an individual's right to privacy.[5]

The three groups that discussed Case Study A had the most dissent out of all of the breakout topics regarding which of the two rights they valued most. Two of the three groups were of the opinion that Free Speech was more valuable than Privacy; the remaining group felt the opposite to be the case.[6]

In the dissenting group, the justification for their elevation of the Right to Privacy over Free Speech centered on a fairly cynical, though not unjustified, account of what 'privacy' even means in a digital age (HINT: All youth participants viewed privacy in a **very** limited manner). As the independent observer summarized from Group 1: "Their rationalization for valuing Privacy over Free Speech was that it was bad enough that their life was on display on the Internet," and because "privacy is integral to to one's self-making and identity" the Right to Privacy should absolutely be protected over that of the Right to Free Speech. The students recognize that because there is so little privacy left to them in the digital world, what remains should be considered incredibly valuable. They also viewed unlimited free speech (i.e. disseminating the sexted picture) as a real threat to an individual: emotionally, socially, and legally.[7] That said, they did not question whether free speech should be restricted in this context.

For the groups that explicitly ranked Free Speech over Privacy, their reasons were similar to each other and were primarily grounded in concepts of personal responsibility and far reaching implications of censorship of any kind.[8] One student

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[5] A student in Group 2 even stated to the others that if she was "being brutalized by police, [to] *please record the incident*," (the group as a whole concurred). This wish seems to indicate an implicit understanding of the group that Privacy is secondary when concerns of public good are at stake.

[6] It should be noted that there were three particularly vocal dissenters in this group who consistently pushed back in favor of Free Speech—there was no consensus reached by the group as a whole.

[7] All groups that discussed Case Study A brought up the legal consequences of sharing sexual images of a minor (even with other minors), along with the long term social consequences (i.e. digital footprints and employment). However, despite this baseline awareness that there could be legal action against ALL parties involved, no one was particularly well-informed on the detail or depth of such consequences.

[8] Interestingly, Group 3 originally assessed that Privacy was more important than Free Speech, but then reversed the position by the end of the breakout.

from Group 2 surmised, without the Right to Free Speech, "How can your story be heard?" "You can't defend yourself without it [Free Speech]." Underlying the concerns about censorship and personal voice, students from Group 3 also decided that "having a voice and expressing yourself is important, and that [if you don't] have anything to hide, ultimately your privacy is "on you"."

However, most interesting to note here is that though Free Speech was deemed to be of higher value than Privacy, *both* Groups 2 and 3 supplemented their justification with a very high level of civic and social responsibility to defend the person who's Right to Privacy was violated. Group 3 asserted that the precise reason we need a Right to Free Speech was the "need to spread awareness and speak out for those who can't." Group 2 echoed this sentiment, that we have a "responsibility to keep environments (especially in the context of social media) safe for others." So, despite their defense of Free Speech, Groups 2 and 3 felt that part of the exercise of their Right to Free Speech online was the responsibility to defend marginalized groups or individuals under attack.

B. Right to Free Speech vs. Right to a Safe Space

Synopsis of Case Study B
Groups 4-6 were tasked with discussing a single scenario. In this case, a gay student—who is not yet completely public about his sexual identity—encounters a barrage of escalating cyberbullying through his social media accounts. The severity of the harassment and hate speech cause the student to experience not only a threatening atmosphere online, but also to fear for his physical safety in school, at home, in his neighborhood, etc.

Students were confronted with questions about the tensions inherent between absolute freedom of speech and the right to inhabit a safe space. They were also prompted to grapple with questions of responsibility in the face of abuse.

Conclusions from Groups 4-6

Groups 5 and 6[9] echoed the same rigorous notion of responsibility that we saw in Groups 1-3. In direct relation to the scenario of cyber bullying and harassment, students stated that there was a great deal of responsibility owed by the witnesses of such abuse to say something both in an online space, and at times in a physical one. Some students even went so far as to claim that there was an "absolute responsibility to intervene." Though 'intervention' meant something different to individual students, all required an action in some way, shape, or form when confronted with (in this case) cyber bullying. Here is a sampling of calls to action heard in both groups:

- **Confront the perpetrator online** and **address the comments** when you see them. Students pointed out that the anonymity of online interactions actually lent itself well to this behavior. There was less at stake, and less individual risk involved, than saying this to someone's face. (This would be the digital opposite of 'trolling'.)
- **If you know the person** making the hateful comments online, then **call them out in person**. This option seemed to divide students, who by-and-large characterized all conflict and discord as having the potential to lead to physical altercations.
- **Provide support to the individual being harassed**. "Affirm his experience and provide friendship," and "report the perpetrator to the school officials or police."

One of the most pertinent takeaways for adult advocates for youth is that throughout the discussion of Case Study B, students seemed at a loss once these actions/responsibilities were put forward to the group. They felt that their suggestions for responsible action fell short of actually protecting the harassed individual. One student commented that he did "not believe that Jaylan could be fully protected since every offender could not be caught." They also focused on the fact that the anonymity of the Internet and social media makes it very difficult to have meaningful interventions for people that you disagree with (let alone people who are assaulting others with hate speech).[10] Both groups called for external assistance on this front, and stated that they needed help building more responsible online communities. They were unclear on what this help ought to consist of, whether it be governmental assistance or regulations in managing technology, or

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[9] We did not receive a final report from Group 4.
[10] It's interesting that they see this anonymity positively when calling out hate speech. Online anonymity is seen as both a shield for perpetrators, as well as a source of empowerment those who wish to speak out in defense.

companies implementing firmer standards. However, as the observer of Group 6 noted, they want *someone* to help "provide greater support, care, and protection for vulnerable members of the community while enforcing consequences for those who infringe on the well being of others."

Consensus was split from these groups regarding which right (Speech or Safe Space) was more important. Group 4 decided the Right to Free Speech trumped the Right to a Safe Space, Group 6 decided the reverse to be true. However, despite the appearance of discord, both groups were primarily in agreement when it came to their reasoning and the justification of their decisions. The difference in their final ranking of rights has more to do with how they framed the extent of the rights themselves, and less with any substantive disagreement.

Though Group 5 said that the Right to Free Speech was of primary importance, it is noteworthy that they were the only group across all the breakouts assigned Free Speech[11] as a topic that argued for a *limited* Right to Free Speech. Specifically, this group decided that *hate speech should not* fall within the category of protected speech online. As their observed noted, "They recognized that when safety in online environments is compromised, it leads to individuals feeling unsafe in physical spaces, such as schools." As a group, this was their tipping point: when speech infringed on the safety of another individual, it was no longer an acceptable exercise of that right. Group 6 was in complete agreement on this point. As one student (Marissa) from that group commented: "The harming of another person or social group is the line at which the right to Free Speech borders the right to a Safe Space."

C. Right to Organize vs. Right to Safe Space

Synopsis of Case Study C:
Groups 7-9 were given two different scenarios that highlighted contemporary examples of how online organizing could be transformed into real-world political action. The first scenario highlighted the work done by the Parkland students' March for Our Lives. The second scenario was that of the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA.

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[11] Nine of the 15 breakouts received Right to Free Speech as one of their topics (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, and 15). The hypothesis behind this group as an outlier will be discussed in the 'Big Picture Takeaways' section of this report.

Students were tasked with differentiating between these cases of online-to-real-world organizing, assessing whether there ought to be limits on free speech when mobilizing online, and determining what responsibility exists (if any) in preserving a safe space in both online and real-world iterations of organizing.

Conclusions from Groups 7-9

Groups discussing Case Study C all agreed that the Right to Organize was of higher value than the Right to a Safe Space. Therefore, unlike the case descriptions above, this summary will treat the respondents as one whole group. The biggest themes to emerge from these discussions were a near-universal connection between online disagreement and the threat of physical conflict, a staunch defense of unlimited free speech, and the concept that no one in an online community exists as a bystander.

On the initial point, youth agreed that organizing online was easier and safer (than in person) because it was "easier for people to speak their mind online." "Online it's easier to say something, it's more anonymous. In person it might get physical." Interestingly enough however, though the lack of physical risk to one's self was repeatedly noted re: online activity, students did not view this behavior as risk-free to their identities or well-being. Students affirmed that there was always a risk to share: "It's never safe to publicly share [whether on the Internet or in person] your political beliefs because there's always someone who will disagree with you. In person it can [just] get more physical." However, they remained divided on whether that risk was greater to one's physical well-being, or online identity.[12] Almost all students in these groups felt that conflict and disagreement *in any capacity*—but online in particular— led to violence (or the potential for it) in the real world. The assumption of peaceful or civil engagement over a disputed topic was not treated as a given in any of the group discussions.

Though students seemed to feel an ever-present threat to their wellbeing when participating online, remarkably, they *also argued for unlimited Free Speech when organizing in that space*. The independent observers all noted that at some point in the discussion all the groups used this as justification even for hate speech to be left

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[12] One student stated, "I think there are more repercussions to speak out online" than in person. Unfortunately, the student did not follow up with a justification of this view.

unchecked online.[13] Students also argued against technology companies/platforms having the ability or right to to ban offensive groups from certain sites.[14]

As a whole, youth seem to take for granted the action of organizing online. Everyone is a member of countless groups and communicates constantly about issues that matter to them. In the discussion, students primarily chose to grapple with the Charlottesville example—presumably because there was real conflict that resulted from those digital organizing efforts, as opposed to the Parkland scenario. All of this brings us to the 'solutions' posited by students discussing Case Study C. The primary solution to the existence of hate speech and threats to a person or group online seemed to be to ignore it. As one of the observers assessed: "Students attributed agency not only to those producing [hateful] content, but to those viewing it. The person online [therefore] has a choice to join groups that create hurtful content or ignore them." A student echoed this general trend by saying, "As wrong as it [allowing for hate groups online], I don't think there should be [a ban]. Everybody's entitled to their own opinion. If you don't agree with it, then try to stay away from it." The solution of ignoring hate speech online, along with the assumption that any disagreement can (or should) be resolved by sidestepping difficult conversations, is one of the largest areas for future exploration on the topic of Digital Citizenship. The students also revealed a weakness here in their assumption of agency on the part of everyone—no one discussing Case Study C brought up the possibility that an individual/group targeted for harassment or by hate speech *might be unable to ignore these threats* or walk away from this treatment in an online space.

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[13] This conclusion was also the position of Group 10 in Case Study D.
[14] The contradictory nature of these conclusions re: hate speech and arguments of students in Case Study B will be discussed later on in this report.

D. Right to Transparency vs. Right to Privacy

Synopsis of Case Study D:

Groups 10-12 were tasked with evaluating consequences associated with unthinkingly clicking 'I agree' on Terms and Licensing Agreements. Students were presented with a case where as a result of downloading an app, and agreeing to its Terms and Conditions (without reading them), their digital privacy was violated. Initially, the 'violations' were perceived as positives. The fictitious student in the case study received coupons and discounts. However, the scenario concluded with the student realizing that the app had also shared her personal information with another third party: the police.

Students in these groups encountered questions that made them evaluate what they thought about 'privacy' in general, the responsibility of both themselves (and of companies) in understanding and having access to transparent sources of information, and the tipping point between a 'positive/wanted' violation of privacy, and a 'negative/unwanted' violation of that right.

Conclusions from Groups 10-12

There was consensus among all of the groups assigned Case Study D that the Right to Privacy was more valuable than the Right to Transparency. However, as we discovered, their concept of 'privacy' is an incredibly limited one. The groups asserted that only "really personal info" should be protected by a Right to Privacy:

- Social Security Number
- Address[15]
- GPS Location
- Financial Information (bank account number, PIN)

Students recognized, in very general terms, that their generation had a 'different' understanding to privacy than older generations. However, there was very little detailed discussion of what that actually meant with regard to how much information was being collected on them, or concern regarding the degree of access they had granted an app or company. However, multiple students in Group 11 did state that this increasingly limited view of privacy essentially equated to having nothing protected at all. "Everyone posts everything on social media, anyway," and the "government collects what it wants," and "we agree to terms and conditions for

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[15] Some students also asserted that 'School Attended' should be on this list, due to threat of gang violence or retribution. Though this very specific example deserves noting, as part of the broader list it would appear to be subsumed under either Address or GPS/Physical Location.

apps without reading or understanding them," were the gist of their sentiments on this score.

This curtailed understanding of privacy led students down an interesting path regarding the purpose and stakes of transparency in an online setting. Consent and voluntarism was a tricky concept in this context and most students struggled with it. The students openly admitted that they do not read or understand the terms and agreements that they "agree" to accept in online settings. The conversations around the case study began with most students agreeing that even if you didn't understand the terms (or hadn't read them in the first place), that you were still accountable and had voluntarily given up your right to/expectation of privacy by signing them. No student suggested that the lack of transparency around these agreements, or the legalese that they are written in, voided a concept of voluntarism—i.e. that an intentional withholding of transparent information means you cannot truly consent to giving away your personal information. However, most groups did acknowledge that companies were probably *intentionally* making this information hard to find and understand. As the observer for Group 12 noted, "They had a difficult time wrapping their heads around if they thought privacy was violated or not in the case study. They didn't realize what could be at stake for people who click "I agree" when they're signing up for apps or websites. [However,] they also realized that, in the end, they did agree to it."

There was no strong consensus was reached by the groups about how to maintain commitments to both a Right to Privacy and a Right to Transparency. No one was clear about what they should be able to demand or expect from companies or websites on this score, but most wanted some clearer way to access information about the online agreements that they are making. Some students did provide some suggestions for positive developments on this front:
- Apps should provide an abbreviated list (in understandable language) that informs the user about potential repercussions, or what permissions you're actually agreeing to grant a company.
- There could be an 'opt in/out' service on your phone where you could 'opt into' a company accessing your information for services you want (coupons, or vetted friends seeing your location), and 'opt out' of third parties gaining access to this information. This would function like a transparency/privacy 'gatekeeper'. A single,

easy to understand interface (like something in your Settings) that would then filter or restrict the information that apps you downloaded had access to.

Lastly, an unexpected conversation arose in response to a prompt about when it's *okay* for your privacy to be violated. Students felt that it was *alright for their privacy to be violated* by Federal government, but *not* by local or state governments. As the observer noted, this consensus seemed to stem from both a distrust of local-level government by Black and Brown communities, but also a lack of transparency/understanding on the role of Federal law enforcement.

E. Right to Transparency vs. Right to Free Speech

Synopsis of Case Study E:
Students in groups 13-15 were given a scenario that highlighted the consequences of unknowingly sharing fake news. In this scenario, students were asked to imagine themselves as college freshman, eagerly anticipating their first election and chance to vote. As a result of a number of fake news articles, the students are tricked into thinking that they are no longer eligible to vote, and they then proceed to (unknowingly) spread those false articles on their social media feeds—which in turn results in a statewide low voter turnout among youth, and the politician that the student *would not* have voted for winning office.

In this case study, students discussed responsibilities and rights surrounding access to (and dissemination of) accurate/valid information online. Prompts challenged them to assess the repercussions for uncritical engagement, and the responsibilities associated with consuming and providing accurate information—and whether or not that responsibility is a requisite part of their right to Free Speech.

Conclusions from Groups 13-15

All three of these groups were unable to come to a consensus as to which right was more valuable: Transparency or Free Speech. The groups, and *individual students* within them, were split 50/50 in their evaluations of the rights under discussion. However, this mixed conclusion should not be interpreted as confusion among the groups, or as unresolved tensions between stalwart defenders of Transparency or Free Speech.[16] Students in all of the groups avoided elevating one right over another

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[16] As with all group discussions there are exceptions to this, and there were diehard defenders of Free Speech sprinkled among the groups. However, as a whole, most students provided a far more nuanced understanding of the tensions in these rights.

because of a very nuanced understanding of responsibility as it relates to both. Essentially, in cases of fake news and free speech online, students argued that their right to transparent information was preserved by their exercising their right to free speech. The lack of hierarchy between these rights is due to their inability to isolate one from the other.

Students across all three groups expressed empathy toward the students in the scenario. Everyone was familiar with fake news as a phenomenon, and they possessed a solid understanding of the fact that there are people in the world whose job it is to create and spread disinformation. They were not under any sort of delusion that these stories just happen, or are casual rumors. A number of the students also explicitly connected fake news with misleading advertising and commercial interests. The idea that this age group is simply naive about the content they consume online is inaccurate.

Echoing trends that we saw in the other topics, students in these groups were also in favor of unlimited free speech online. However, whereas previous groups stood by this right on account of fear of censorship or as exercise of their identity, Case Study E students said that their right to say anything online was actually how they would preserve transparency for themselves, and their community as a whole. Students were near resolute that it is a primary responsibility of all participants online (again, assuming NO ONE exists as a bystander) is to practice due diligence on what you're reading and sharing. In reference to the scenario under discussion, they assigned responsibility and fault to both the creator of the fake news article, and to the students who (unknowingly) spread that fake news. As the observer from Group 15 summarized: "The students understand that everyone online is a participant…It is the individual's responsibility to teach themselves what is wrong vs. right online and to intervene if there is false information." She added, students believe that an individual is at fault if they do not "expose false information, as well as the creator and sharer(s) of the false information." "Students agreed that it is the individual's responsibility to share information that is true, and it is the individual's

responsibility to be critical of the validity of *all online information*." Interestingly, no one felt disseminating wrong info was a violation of free speech.[17]

Though every group was explicit in their claims that transparency was protected through an individual's exercise of free speech, the concrete ways that this form of digital free speech and system of transparency was to be enacted became murky. All groups noted that an individual's primary responsibility in this space is to fact check sources. One student (Group 13) provided a personal suggestion about the fact checking process, that "he tries to find multiple sites with the same information and compare them against one another." However, beyond saying that checking sources was important and the primary way to protect against the dissemination of fake news (and the preservation of transparency), very few students had concrete examples of how to do this in practice. One of the largest takeaways from Case Study E is that students need additional resources on what fact checking looks like in daily practice. Most students seemed familiar with checking sources in a classroom setting (i.e. a document based question or research in History), but it appears as though those academic skill sets remain disconnected from daily use or applicability.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: BIG PICTURE TAKEAWAYS

A fairly coherent image emerged of what youth value in online spaces when we examine the 15 groups as a whole. From across the five Case Studies, here is a ranked list of digital rights as determined by our participants (#1 being most valued, #5 being least):

1) Right to Free Speech
2) Right to Privacy
3) Right to Organize
4) Right to Transparency
5) Right to a Safe Space

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[17] The idea that creating or spreading fake news should be a protected right/excise of free speech is an interesting one. Given more time, this topic merits further student engagement.

We arrived at this ordering as a result of weighing which digital rights were most often determined to be of the highest value, by group, in each of the case studies, and combined this with rights brought up in scenarios not explicitly about that given right.[18]

The Right to Free Speech was far and away the most valued digital right. Perhaps most strikingly, the overwhelming majority of students argued for *unlimited free speech in digital spaces*—inclusive of hate speech (and the right for hate groups to use social media to organize themselves), and the dissemination of fake news. The only exceptions to this position occurred in Case Study B when they were confronted directly with troubling, personally relatable examples of harassment and abuse. When faced with the personal ramifications for an individual, with a name, the students recognized and argued for checks in online speech. The less abstract the right (i.e. the scenarios that focused on the repercussions/impact on the individual, or those that elicited empathy) the higher the value they placed on privacy, safety, and collective goods (i.e. free speech to defend another). However, the more abstract (i.e. not tangbily felt as an individual) the right or case study, the less their focus was on a commitment to community or an individual's well being. In future iterations of the curriculum and scenario design, it would be fruitful to see if youth views on free speech in other digital contexts were altered by examples that more pointedly elicited empathy on the part of the discussants.

The Right to Privacy came in 2nd—though arguably, it could also have been put last. There was little to know expectation of privacy on the part of our youth participants. Most students did not feel that privacy exists. There were two primary reasons for this: One, the nature of social media means that people are "putting their business out there" anyway (and therefore any 'private' material is implicitly fair game to distribute), and two, government or businesses know everything anyway (and have access to any information they want). As a result, youth placed very little importance on a broad or traditional view of privacy. However, there were a handful of personal identifiers (SSN, address, bank account numbers) that nearly all students felt were non-negotiably private and never to be shared or accessed without transparent consent. The justification for giving the Right to Privacy the

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[18] For example, if a student brought up the importance of the Right to Free Speech when discussing Case Study C (Organize vs. Safe Space), this valuation was noted by our independent observers.

#2 spot is based off of our participants' acknowledgement that what they consider "private" may be quite limited—but what does occupy that space is sacrosanct.[19]

In 3rd place is The Right to Organize via social media primarily because students agreed that political efficacy was of greater value than the Right to a Safe Space. The Right to Transparency came in 4th in large part because of the students' difficulty in isolating the discussion of this right independent of Free Speech (which we already know they place an exceedingly high value on). Finally, the Right to Safe Space came in last. However, as was already noted about Safe Space and Case Study B, when students were directly confronted with a scenario that triggered empathy they tended to value communal goods and view themselves as duty bound to protect marginalized groups/individuals. Whether students truly believe the right to a safe digital space is negligible, or this is a product of framing and the roles played by empathy or abstraction in the examples given, is open to discussion. Further, it is worth pointing out that although students appear to award the Right to a Safe Space a low value in these discussions, the claim to this right emerged from conversations with youth—and it therefore still ranks as one of *the* most important values that they hold in online spaces.

CONCLUSIONS + FUTURE INQUIRY

The Internet is (currently) not viewed by youth as a productive, friendly or supportive space. In every Case Study, students almost universally expressed that online disagreement leads to the threat of violence (both online and in person). One of our observers (Group 1) noted that for her group: "The Internet is inherently a space of conflict…and they perceive social media as *inevitably* argumentative." That said, students across all of the groups asserted a hopefulness that this space was alterable for the better.

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[19] Similarly to the role that empathy played in students' valuation of limited free speech, in scenarios where students could relate on a personal level to a character, their concept of digital privacy rights became slightly murkier. Despite students asserting that privacy does not really exist, barring a few pieces of identifiable information, nearly every student who discussed Case Study A felt that Cherish's privacy had been violated with the unconsented sharing of her sexted pic. Yet again we see that the more empathy-inducing the scenario, the more nuanced the treatment of rights. In no other groups did we see any assertion that personal communications between individuals were to be considered private.

Yet, when it comes to making these spaces more welcoming, or building online community, students stated that they remain largely on their own; and feel unable to act or lack the proper resources to do so. Overwhelmingly, youth had very few coherent ideas about what resources were available to them if they wanted to act upon things they know to be right. Most suggestions focused on 'walking away, ignoring/not paying attention, etc'. Many students noted a feeling of paralysis on this front—that they were unable to 'do anything' about the violations/abuses they encountered online. They are very aware of tools built into social media, but they also stated that blocking users and trying to isolate yourself from harmful influences and dialogue wasn't effective or practical. A number of groups explicitly asked for guidance and resources when it came to digital engagement, and the exercise of their digital rights and responsibilities. One of the largest takeaways here is that youth have a very clear view of what online behaviors they view as desirable vs. destructive, but they lack a coherent toolkit for digital interventions to make their spaces better places.

Though some of these tools or resources simply do not exist yet, there are others that simply need to be accessed and put into use. Just as the existence of physical communities predates the laws and norms that (eventually) give order to them, so to with digital worlds. Youth need to be involved with the creation of the norms and systems that regulate online communities. This proposition is, clearly, not a short term solution or an easy fix, but a long term commitment to having their voices and experiences front and center in this dialogue. The rules and regulations that currently exist in online spaces (like blocking a user) are generally disregarded and seen as ineffectual by this population because they don't reflect how youth use these spaces, or represent the rights and responsibilities that they value in them. Hearteningly, and more actionable in the nearterm, there is another set of tools that youth need for navigating online spaces that they already have access to—like fact checking and sourcing information. Youth simply need more comprehensive and dynamic training in how these resources are *transferable* to daily, digital existence, and do not simply exist as academic or classroom skills.

The light here is that even though they often stated a sense of paralysis, almost all groups pointed to a shared, extremely high standard of responsibility to act in the face of something they know to be wrong or threatening to a constructive community. Multiple groups stated that there is "no way to be a bystander" in an online space, everyone is a

participant. So while youth may think that all conflict or action has the capacity to lead to violence or threats threats thereof, they don't view this as acceptable. Their expectation of personal responsibility and diligence is VERY high as a generation, it's just the ways in which they can, should, or are able to exercise these felt responsibilities that remains opaque. If we want this generation to thrive in the digital spaces that they will find themselves in for the rest of their lives, then we need to work with and support them in developing and accessing the resources required to alter those space for the better.

APPENDICES

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