

The new media landscape and our relationships

Introduction

Start by completing the 'MIL for me' students activity. This is done by going to <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/mil-for-me> and then clicking to go further. The section describes how the line between online and offline has become blurred, and that our online lives have become intertwined with our offline lives. It also mentions how schools have a significant responsibility to provide support when it comes to violations online - and that, in today's society, violations that take place online are equally important to discuss as those that occur in the schoolyard.

The purpose of this chapter is for students to reflect on how the media landscape affects our relationships. The chapter includes exercise suggestions for three 60-minute classes, but it is also possible to pick individual exercises that you think would fit your group of students.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS - CLASS I

Exercise A

Where do we draw the line? What is legal?

Some online behaviour is criminal and can therefore be reported to the police. Other actions, while offensive, don't actually break the law. It is not always clear where we draw the line on what is legal and what is not. What can we actually do online without committing a crime? The purpose of the exercise is to explore and learn more about where to draw the line and what the law says.

The laws varies between different countries. Help your students to find out about the laws in your country that apply to internet use. You may wish to consult for this exercise: <http://fosigrid.org/>

Discuss

Example questions:

- If you are under 15, can you be punished for doing something illegal on the internet? At what age should you be held responsible for something you do online?
- In Sweden two girls posted images of others on Instagram, and followers of the account wrote defamatory captions. The girls were punished and had to pay damages. Do you think that this was the right outcome? How could they have acted more responsibly?

Work in groups

Continue the exercise by dividing the class into groups. Have each group study and become more familiar with legal implications regarding the internet.

Study the following (different terms might apply in your country):

- Slander
- Assault
- Harassment
- Stalking
- Child pornography offenses/child sexual abuse images
- Incitement to racial hatred
- Unlawful photographs

Exercise B

What is okay? Understanding violations online.

At the end of 2012, two high schools were temporarily closed in Gothenburg, Sweden. The reason was that angered crowds of young people had gathered outside the schools to protest about offensive images that were posted on Instagram. The purpose of the exercise is to reflect on cyberbullying and think about how you yourself would act.

Discuss and make notes on the following

- What do you think is the main reason that young people post pictures with offensive comments of other young people on Instagram, Facebook and other social networking sites?
- Why is it that some of those who see the pictures press like?
- Is it easier to bully online than offline? If so, why do you think this is?
- Would you be willing to like an offensive image? If so, what would be the reason for this?

Case example - individual assignment

One of your classmates is negatively portrayed on Instagram with a photo and comment which suggests that he or she is taking drugs and having sexual relations with several different people. Everyone in the class has seen it and knows which classmate posted it.

What would you do after seeing the post?

- Like the post.
- Write a comment agreeing with the post.
- Write a comment disassociating yourself from the post.
- Find the person who posted it and hold them accountable.
- Pass on the information to a teacher, principal, parent or other person.

Consider whether any/some of the following factors would change your reaction and the way you act:

- The gender of the person who posted the content.
- The victim's gender.
- The position in the class/school of the person who posted the content.
- The victim's position in the class/school.
- You know the victim.
- You know the person who posted the content.
- The father of the person who posted the content is a colleague of your mother.
- The victim's father is a colleague of your mother.

Group assignment

Present what you have come up with and discuss similarities and differences. Discuss and try to arrive at a common position:

- What conditions should be met in order to feel the need to pass on the information and report content?

Exercise C

When do you speak up? About online courage.

It can often be easier to agree than to speak up. This may, for example, be because you want to be in a certain group and, if you don't act like the others, you might be excluded. Within social psychological research we talk about individuals conforming. This means that we mostly do as everyone else around us and that we rarely take our own position and act on it. The purpose of the exercise is to find out what courage is and to construct our own instruction on how online courage should be.

Work in groups

- Determine what the term courage means. Discuss it and write down your own explanation.
- Take a moment to think individually about a person that, in your opinion, has shown courage. In turn, present the person you chose to the other members of your group and justify your choice.
- Have you ever shown online courage? If you have, tell the rest of the group about this.
- If we consider that moral courage should be used on the internet, what would this look like?
- Your assignment is to write instructions on how to show courage online. The instructions should have 5-10 points. Remember to write simply and clearly with suggestions of what to do.
- The instructions must be in writing, preferably on the board or on an A3 sheet since it will be presented to the rest of the class.

Each group presents its instructions, remembering to justify the choice made.

The class votes for the instructions which they deem to be the best. This is done as follows:

- All the groups' results are posted on the board or on a separate piece of paper, see above.
- Each student gets 3-5 dots each.
- Students can allocate their dots as they wish to the instructions contained in the different proposals.
- Students cannot vote for their own proposals.
- The 5-7 instructions which have received the most votes are compiled into a single document for the class with an appropriate heading.
- The class result could be disseminated in some form on the internet – for example, it could be uploaded on the school's website, via Facebook, on a blog or similar.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS - CLASS II

Exercise A

Do you have to know who I am? About anonymity.

When it comes to the possibility of identifying who we are, the basic viewpoint in our society is openness. This can be done by introducing yourself by name, showing your face or signing the article you wrote. However, there are situations where anonymity can be acceptable. The question is: which situations? The purpose of the exercise is to consider anonymity in relation to democracy.

Take a stand

Below are several examples of individuals in different roles that have made themselves anonymous online. When do you think it is okay to hide your face? Write *yes*, *maybe* or *no* after each alternative.

1. Fire fighter
2. Participant in a protest march
3. Football supporter
4. Police officer
5. Teacher at a junior high school
6. Physician
7. Journalist
8. Recreation leader
9. Pop star
10. Politician

Discuss

Present your results to each other. Discuss similarities and differences.

- Look at options where everyone in the group answered maybe or no. Are there any situations where the answer could be yes? Discuss.

Discuss in class

- Can anonymity cause any problems in a democracy?
- What can function better in a democracy if anonymity is allowed?
- Would teachers' assessments be fairer if students could be anonymous when they took tests or did assignments?
- Should witnesses remain anonymous during trials?

Exercise B

Who said this? About anonymity.

In most situations, we want to know who is behind a particular piece of information. We want to know who the sender is. It may also be that different senders have different effects on us. We trust some, and don't trust others. The purpose of the exercise is to think about the importance of knowing who said or wrote what.

Discuss

- Are there contexts where it is not important to know where the information came from?
- Why are there rarely any anonymous articles in a newspaper?
- Should there be anonymous articles in a newspaper? Discuss the answer.
- What does one want to know about the author in the following cases?
 - o News article
 - o Editorial
 - o Commercial/advert
 - o Textbook
 - o Teacher

Study and discuss

In the Swedish democracy there is a concept called freedom of information (*meddelarfrihet*). Does your country have that? Find out what this is and what function it has. Do you think it is an important principle? Discuss.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS - CLASS III

Exercise A

I see you - I don't see you! About hatred.

There is a difference in how we communicate with each other online and offline. Online, we tend to express ourselves in a more direct and extreme way than when we meet offline. One reason may be that we do not see each other and that the response we get looks different.

Work individually

- Think about something or someone you like very much.
- Imagine that you are going to tell somebody about this.
- Prepare yourself by writing down key words. Talking about this should take about a minute.

Work in pairs

- You will now tell each other about the information you prepared above. This will be done in two different ways:
 - In the first version, you will not see the face of the person you are telling. The person must also be completely silent.
 - In the second version, you sit opposite each other so that you have eye contact. Once again the person you are telling should be silent.
- Reflect on whether there were any differences between the two experiences and, if so, what they were. One reason why we are more expressive and perhaps more extreme online, according to psychology, might be that this kind of communication is *asynchronous*. Find out what this means and reflect on whether it can be a reason for abuse online.

The whole class

- Share what you came up with when working in pairs.
- There is not only hatred on the internet, but also love. How has the internet influenced our behaviour when it comes to saying nice things to each other or expressing love?

Exercise B

Daring there but not here! About the tone online.

There are those who write things online that they would never say to another person face to face. Why is it easier to express negative things, even hatred, online than in real life? The purpose of the exercise is to discuss and reflect on online behaviour.

Discuss

- When on the internet, how much should we tolerate, where do we draw the line, and is the line the same for everyone?
- Is there a difference between what the following people should tolerate online?
 - o Private person
 - o Journalist
 - o Politician
 - o Blogger
 - o Celebrity
- Is there a difference between what can be said and accepted online in comparison to in other contexts
 - for example, at work, at school, in the company of friends and so on?
- Has the internet created a new behaviour - online hatred - or is the internet just a new arena for a behaviour that has always existed? And if this behaviour has always existed, how did it manifest itself before the internet?
- Can a harsher climate when we communicate with each other online influence society at large?
- For further reference please consult more information about the Insafe Helplines on the Better Internet for Kids portal: <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/practice/helplines>.

Disclaimer:

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