

PrivacyCon 2019

Title:

The Role of Cognitive Defense Strategies, Age, and Motivation in Children's Privacy Protection

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Extended Abstract:

Protecting children's online personal data represents an extremely important issue for parents, consumer groups, companies, and federal agencies (e.g., Federal Trade Commission). Given the incessant online activity for many children and their parents, several challenges emerge around privacy protection. For example, very little is known currently about what might empower children and teens to limit access to their private information online and restrict what they share on social media and video sites. Our study focus is on one of the most popular social media sites for children and teens today, i.e., YouTube. Based on children's information processing research (Brucks et al. 1988; John 1999; Roedder 1981), our study proposes that their online safety beliefs and decisions will vary according to the type of cognitive defense strategies provided (e.g., educational video, quiz with feedback, or absence of a strategy), their motivation to restrict sharing in general, and age categories (e.g., limited: ages 6-7; cued: ages 8-12; strategic: ages 13-15). Results indicate that those children/teens exposed to a quiz with feedback, who were more motivated to restrict online sharing in general, and older children/teens (i.e., 13- 15 years) had more favorable online safety beliefs. Children and teens exposed to the educational video about online safety and older children/teens (i.e., 13-15 years) were more willing to restrict the sharing of a YouTube video watched.

Our study extends previous cognitive defense research (Brucks et al. 1988; John 1999), by examining: (1) effects beyond advertising as applied to information privacy online; (2) not only beliefs and knowledge, but also decisions; (3) multiple age categories; (4) multiple cognitive defense strategies, and (5) accounting for motivation to restrict what is shared online. Overall, our research demonstrates that there is a need to develop a general and national privacy education campaign to enhance and empower children to protect their privacy.