How do youth protect their digital privacy across contexts?

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BACKGROUND

- Digital spaces, an important part of youth culture, involve privacy negotiation across contexts (e.g., person-to-person, person-to-corporation).
- In the US, COPPA offers children (<13 yrs) privacy protection online from corporations, but this is regularly violated. Such business practices, coupled with youth's active sharing with peers, requires that adolescents actively manage their privacy online.
- Currently, not much is known about what young adolescents understand and do online in relation to information sharing and privacy protection.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What kinds of privacy practices do youth use with other people (person-to-person) and corporations (person-to-corporation) online?

RQ2: What are youth's beliefs and preferences for digital privacy?

RQ3: To what extent do student characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race), beliefs, and preferences predict privacy behaviors online?

RESULTS

- **RESULTS**: Girls reported more person-to-person privacy-protecting behaviors (β=0.13, p<0.01) compared to older tweens, gender became nonsignificant when controlling for preferences around peer relationships and corporate surveillance.
- **Beliefs about corporations and future thinking were unrelated to person-to-person and person-to-corporation privacy behaviors.**
- **Stronger beliefs about protection from potential predators predicted more privacy-protecting behaviors, both with people (β=0.17, p<0.001) and corporations (β=0.13, p<0.001).**

METHOD

Online survey completed at middle schools in June 2019

Participants
- 6th-8th graders aged 11-14 years (M=12.58, SD=0.94), 54% male
- 52% White, 12.3% Multi-Ethnic, 8.9% Latino/a, 8.5% Black, 8% Asian
- 414 students completed section 1 of the survey (behaviors and beliefs) and 293 students completed the additional section 2 (preferences)

Privacy Beliefs and Preferences

5-pkt Likert scale: 1) Strongly Disagree to 5) Strongly Agree

**Corporation Surveillance Beliefs**
- Companies use information about what you do online to try and sell you things (M=2.98, SD=0.5)

**Future Orienting Thinking Beliefs**
- Having a positive reputation online is important for getting a job in the future (M=3.00, SD=0.5)

**Potential Predators Beliefs**
- You can never be really sure who you are talking to online (M=2.91, SD=0.5)

**Peer Relationships with Risk**
- It is important to keep all your accounts private (M=2.91, SD=0.5)

**Corporation Surveillance**
- Companies use information about what you do online to try and sell you things (M=2.98, SD=0.5)

Privacy-Protecting Behaviors

4-pkt Likert scale: (1) Never, (2) Sometimes, (3) Most of the time (4) Always

**Type of Privacy**
- **Person-to-Person**
  - Read privacy policies for apps/websites (M=2.98, SD=0.5)
  - Block push notifications (M=2.98, SD=0.5)
- **Person-to-Corporation**
  - Use a VPN (M=2.98, SD=0.5)
  - Let people I have met follow me (M=2.98, SD=0.5)

Analysis

Frequency and t-tests for RQ1 & RQ2, OLS regression with student characteristics, privacy beliefs, and preferences as predictors of privacy behaviors.