

Examining Children's Applications of Privacy Norms in a Digital, Photo-Sharing Game

Sarah Petriw Ms

University of Manitoba , Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Shaylene Nancekivell

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Abstract

Children develop an understanding of privacy through experiences in both real and virtual contexts. As technology becomes central to their lives, it is crucial to explore how they navigate privacy in digital environments. This study examined children's application of privacy norms in a digital photo-sharing context and tested whether a privacy intervention could improve their understanding. In Experiment 1, 85 children (ages 5–8 years) and in Experiment 2, 35 children (ages 5–7 years) listened to a story about Sally, who appeared as a cartoon and a real person. Children decided whether Sally should allow a game to take her picture in different settings. Older children judged taking real Sally's picture as less permissible than cartoon Sally's. Experiment 2 introduced a privacy intervention, which influenced judgments equally across both versions of Sally. These findings suggest that children's privacy reasoning develops with age and can be shaped by targeted interventions.