Abstract:

The highly interactive nature of interpersonal communication on online social networks (OSNs) impels us to think about privacy as a communal matter, with users’ private information being revealed by not only their own voluntary disclosures, but also the activities of their social ties. The current privacy literature has identified two types of information disclosures in OSNs: self-disclosure, i.e., the disclosure of an OSN user’s private information by him/herself; and co-disclosure, i.e., the disclosure of the user’s private information by other users. Although co-disclosure has been increasingly identified as a new source of privacy threat inherent to the OSN context, few systematic attempts have been made to provide an empirical understanding on the commonalities and distinctions between self- vs. co-disclosure. To address this gap, we conducted two empirical studies (one theory-driven and the other data-driven) to measure OSN users’ concerns over co-disclosure and potential privacy harms caused by co-disclosure. This research serves as a starting point for theorizing privacy from the non-individualistic perspective and for understanding interdependent privacy issues as a result of interpersonal interaction and social influence.