

Public Abstract

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Title:Culturally conditioned privacy in online photo-sharing: A comparison between American and Chinese users of social network sites

This research examines how American Facebook users and Chinese Renren.com users deal with their privacy in photo sharing on social network sites. It has been a long-debated problem whether privacy is culturally specific. This research explores the problem in the context of online communication. Most relating previous studies are quantitative studies that lack in-depth description. This research seeks to provide a rich description and explanation of online privacy in reference to cultures. It recruited 10 American and 10 Chinese undergraduate students, asked each of them to take 10 photos of significant events during the winter break for the purpose of sharing with friends on social network sites, and conducted interviews about online privacy and friendship with the participants. It discovers that American social network site users share more about private lives in online photo sharing, and show a higher level of intensity of feeling towards online friends than their Chinese counterparts. These differences of online privacy and friendship are the results of the combined influences from not only the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differences between America and China, but also from the specific situation of interaction on social network sites that mediate American and Chinese cultures. The results of this research provide an enriched understanding of privacy in reference to individualism and collectivism. The results also serve to facilitate the cross-cultural understanding of privacy and friendship on social network sites.