

Online Self-Disclosure and Offline Threat Detection
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ABSTRACT

Human beings have evolved to detect and react to threats in their physical environment, and have developed perceptual systems to assess physical, sensorial stimuli for current, material risks. In cyberspace, those stimuli can be absent, subdued, or deliberately manipulated by antagonistic third parties. Security and privacy concerns that would normally be activated in the offline world, therefore, can remain muted, and defense behaviors can be hampered, online. In order to start understanding the interrelationships between online and offline threat detection and online decision making, we investigate the extent to which “visceral” stimuli in the physical world can impact security and privacy behavior in cyberspace. In particular, we present the design and results of a stream of controlled human subject experiments that explore the influence of sensorial stimuli (indicating the presence of other human beings in the proximal space of a subject) on subjects’ online disclosure of personal, and highly sensitive, behaviors.

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