Creating Safer Online Spaces for Marginalized Youth Communities

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We provide a summary of the ongoing research on adolescent online safety for marginalized youth happening at the EPOCH Reseach Lab. Our goal in attending the workshop is to connect with a network of experts interested in combating online risks and learn about new actionable research practices we can implement in our ongoing work.

1 INTRODUCTION: WORKSHOP INTERESTS AND EXPLORATION

At the EPOCH[1] Research Lab we focus on exploring how the design and use of technologies impact the lives of people, organizations, and communities. Online Safety for Youth is our main research thrust. As an emerging research group, we are interested in networking opportunities that can connect us with other experts in the HCI community with whom we can collaborate and generate solutions to combat online risks. In this paper, we discuss three major research projects our lab is working on. Attending the workshop on "Combating Toxicity, Harassment, and Abuse in Online Social Spaces" will enable us to fulfill the following goals: 1) Form connections with other HCI experts interested in youth online safety research that could lead to future collaborations, 2) Engage in conversations about research methodologies, frameworks, and taxonomies we can leverage in our ongoing research efforts, and 3) Discuss challenges we are facing conducting sensitive and risk-based research with youth. Through our participation, we we hope to identify potential solutions to the challenges we have identified and foster collaborations focused on creating a better online world for our youth.

2 PREVIOUS WORK: UNDERSTANDING ONLINE SAFETY FOR TEENS IN FOSTER CARE

Dr. Badillo-Urquiola's prior work used a social ecological approach [2] to investigate sociotechnical systems that could help promote more teen-centric approaches to online safety and reduce the digital inequalities experienced by teens in foster care. Much of this work focused on studying the youth's social support systems (foster parents and caseworkers), however, we plan to continue this research to work directly with youth in foster care to co-design effective socio-technical interventions that can protect them from online risks.

3 UNDERSTANDING ONLINE SAFETY FOR LATINO YOUTH

Adolescent online safety in the United States has predominately been studied within the general teen population; typically, white, more affluent families, and children living in two-parent households [6, 7]. While there has been some research recognizing the importance of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic differences in the online experiences of families [5], many of these do not address online safety. However, understanding the online experiences of diverse communities, such as the Latino population, is essential for combating toxicity and fostering inclusivity in online spaces. We are conducting semi-structured interviews with Latino youth and parents living in the United States to understand how cultural and familial factors influence the types of experiences (positive and negative) these youth encounter online and how technology is mediated within their homes. The purpose of this research is to understand how race,

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[1]Empowering People, Organizations, Communities through Human-Computer Interaction

ethnicity, and culture influence the online experiences of families, particularly the Latino population. Understanding the unique online opportunities and challenges of Latino families is essential for developing interventions and programs that support their well-being in the digital environment.

4 UNDERSTANDING ONLINE SAFETY FOR TEENS WITH DISABILITIES

The growing popularity of social virtual reality (social VR) technology among youth has highlighted the need to explore potential risks and safety implications to promote adolescent online safety. While prior research [1, 3, 4] has provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by youth in social VR, none address the unique experiences of vulnerable teen populations like youth with disabilities or those in foster care situations. Therefore, we plan to conduct a study with teens who identify as having a disability to understand their experiences in social VR. By exploring the implications of VR affordances (such as embodiment, identity representation, and presence) on their online social interactions and user experience, we can develop better sociotechnical solutions for promoting their online safety.

5 CONCLUSION

Our research aims characterize the online experiences of vulnerable youth populations to design and develop sociotechnical solutions that promote the online safety of youth. We look forward to engaging with others in conversations about their work and receiving feedback on our ongoing work.

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