RESEARCH METHOD CLASS DISCUSSION
By Ozioma Oguine

Hi Professor Weninger,

Given the advancement in technologies such as head-mounted displays (HMDs) and body tracking systems, online 3D virtual spaces have gained prominence across a wide range of demographics and social groups, including teens and adolescents. However, much is still yet to be known about the nuanced interaction within this new paradigm and its possible implications among users. My research at EPOCH research lab is focused on understanding the myriad of safety concerns and online risks encountered by vulnerable adolescents in online social environments (Social VR).

In my search for possible related work, I identified these papers to be relevant to my current research, and I feel that unpacking the knowledge within them will be interesting.

❖ It Is Complicated: Interacting with Children in Social Virtual Reality
❖ Harassment in Social Virtual Reality: Challenges for Platform Governance

General topic studied
Previous studies on teens/adolescents' online interaction have revealed several intricacies regarding the context of risk exposure and the paradox that exists between adolescents' online privacy. Consequently, with the transition from web 2.0 to 3.0, online social interaction is moving from a 2D space (social media) to a more immersive 3D space (VR/AR/XR). This trend has been observed by several researchers to be inherent from social behaviors in the physical world and have been shown to have certain negative implications (e.g., toxicity, microaggression, harassment, etc.) on user experience.

The specific behavior or activity they are studying
The two papers proposed for this discussion seek to understand the system of interactions that occurs within social VR and some of its negative implications for several demographics of users (e.g., Minors, young adults, LGBTQ, etc.)

Paper 1
To gain a better understanding of the interaction that exists between minors, Maloney et al. [1] proposed the research question:

RQ1: To explore this open space(social VR) by discussing how young people are perceived and understood in social VR, safety concerns for them in social VR from adult users, and design implications for creating safe and comfortable social VR spaces for both children and adults.
Problem: This study aimed to fill the gap that existed in works of literature at the time regarding the online interaction of minors within social VR.

Importance: The benefit of this study is multifaceted. However, from the online safety and privacy point of view, this study provided unfettered insights into the possibility of online harassment and toxicity among minors in social VR. Also, this study makes possible design contributions by suggesting future safety mechanisms for minors in social VR.

Claims: Findings from this study suggests that minors in social VR were engaged in toxic behaviors such as cyberbullying and harassment.
The study also asserts that despite the satisfaction that came with the immersive online interaction, adults experienced some tensions during their interactions with teens.

Evidence: This research employed a participatory observation in data collection. Hence qualitative methods were used to analyze the data.

Paper 2
To explore the implication of social VR affordances on user harassment experiences, Blackwell et al. [2] proposed the research question:

RQ1: What are users’ experiences of harassment in social virtual reality, and how do they compare to experiences of harassment on social media sites?

RQ2: What specific affordances of virtual reality environments exacerbate or mitigate harassment experiences?

RQ3: What are users’ expectations for appropriate behavior in social virtual reality environments, and how are these expectations established and enforced?

Problem: This study aimed to fill the gap that existed in works of literature at the time regarding the role of various affordances of social VR in exacerbating online harassment and toxicity.

Importance: The benefit of this study is multifaceted. However, from the online safety and privacy point of view, this study provided unfettered insights into the growing trend of harassment that exists in social VR from the insights derived from user experiences. This study also highlights the implication of affordances provided by social VR in facilitating online harassment. Lastly, this study makes possible design contributions by suggesting future safety mechanisms to reduce/moderate online harassment in social VR.
**Claims:** Findings from this study validates through analysis the presence of online harassment and toxic behaviors within social VR. The study also asserts the potential complication posed by the affordances provided by social VR that facilitated the intensity and levels of harassment experienced by users online.

**Evidence:** This research employed a semi-structured interview in data collection. Hence qualitative methods were used to analyze the data.

Conclusively, my decision to select these papers was based on their relevance to my research.

Best.