

impact

Nayar Prize II Phase I Quarterly Progress Report January 2017

Project: Cyberbullying Early Warning and Response System
Team: Libby Hemphill and Aron Culotta

Progress Summary of Nayar Prize II Phase I

The goal of the Cyberbullying Early Warning and Response System project is to develop software tools to forecast imminent cyberbullying threats and vulnerabilities in online social networks that individuals and communities can use to avoid escalation. Highlights of our work from September–December 2016 include:

- Hired **2** student research assistants
- Recruited **2** partner schools
- Identified **6** specific, high-profile incidents for training the system
- Harvested **7** million Instagram comments for training the system
- Submitted **1** federal funding agency grant application for continued support

Lessons Learned

During interviews with staff at two local schools, we learned that both the academic and mainstream press mischaracterize the kinds of cyberbullying that have the greatest impacts on students' daily lives. Staff and students told us that cyberbullying usually happens between two or more people who are known to one another that it may begin online (especially on Instagram), and that it usually escalates into a face-to-face conflict. These new insights required us to shift our focus from anonymous posts on Twitter to networked interactions on Instagram. We are now focusing on delivering an Instagram-based system for year one.

Future Plans

Computer science doctoral student Ping Liu will join our team and will be using the data we've collected from Instagram and the bullying incidents we've already identified to train the first forecasting model. We expect to iterate on that model throughout early 2017 and to head into summer ready to build the user-facing components of the system.