

VRDC
FALL 2017

ROAD TO ART3MIS: WOMEN'S FIRST-TIME EXPERIENCES IN SOCIAL VR

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WHO AM I?

- Virtual Reality Experience Designer for Intel® RealSense™ Technologies
- ARVR Academy cofounder
- 200+ hours in Social VR experiences as a woman
- Presenting results of a study by Jessica Outlaw (Masters in Behavioral Science) and Beth Duckles (Ph.D. Sociology)



MEET HELEN

23 years old

Professional software developer

Uses social media daily / interacts with strangers there

Regularly plays mobile and board and occasionally Steam games



HELEN'S IMPRESSIONS OF SOCIAL VR

“People can interact with you semi-violently.”

“When people got close to me I felt the same as like if someone got close to me in real life. Like there was this one guy who kept running around me in circles and I was like ‘Dude back off’”

“I don't think I would do [this] just for fun.”



WHAT HAPPENED?

Helen's characteristics led us to believe she would like VR.

However, she found it creepy.

Gender appears to be fundamentally ignored in social VR experiences.



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Females in Social VR get unwanted attention, which is a barrier to adoption. How might we learn more about female users in order to make Social VR appealing to all?



HERE'S WHAT WE DID

Recruited 13 tech-savvy Millennial women who had never tried social VR before

30 minute unguided experience of RecRoom, Facebook Spaces, or AltSpaceVR (or a combination) followed by 30 min post interview.



facebook Spaces

△ AltSpaceVR





3 KEY FINDINGS



**SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE
CHALLENGING**



**NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL
SPACE WAS DIFFICULT**



**THEY CAN'T EXPRESS
THEMSELVES**



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SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE CHALLENGING



SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE CHALLENGING

FLIRTING - WOMEN FELT SINGLED OUT FOR ATTENTION AND THEY DIDN'T LIKE IT

"One of the first things he said to me was 'hey beautiful' and...I automatically jumped back...my body and my avatar...At one point I brought up my boyfriend and we kept talking and he said 'don't tell your boyfriend about this' and I was like 'Nah, I'm going to tell him all about this because this is pretty cool.'"



SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE CHALLENGING

DISRESPECTING BOUNDARIES

Someone...kept shoving a marshmallow in my mouth and I didn't want him to do that and he kept doing it... **It felt very bro-ish and entitled** for the dude to be... I was trying to explore and told him I didn't... not to shove marshmallows in my mouth, **but that behavior didn't surprise me."**



SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE CHALLENGING

LACK OF SOCIAL NORMS

“...**the people who were randomly in the game behind me totally freaked me out.** Partly because the avatars are a little scary, and partly because **you have no sense of where they are.** And there is really no clarity of... are you playing the same game as me? There’s always like... **‘Why are you here? Are we playing the same game? Are we playing together?...Are we passing by?’** It’s almost like the **codes of interaction** around that **are really unclear.**”

SOME CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

A 2014 Cornell University survey of 4,872 American women under the age of 40 found that **85% of women reported being harassed** in a public space (e.g., catcalling, being followed, etc.) **before they reached the age of 17.**

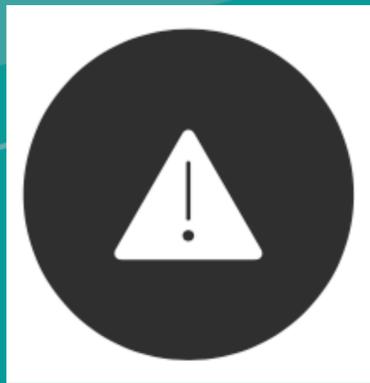


SOCIAL DYNAMICS WERE CHALLENGING

IMPLICATIONS

Understanding Women's real life experiences with social dynamics and harassment will help VR creators anticipate the needs of and design for half the population.

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NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT



NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

FOR 13 / 13 WOMEN IN THE STUDY, LEARNING THE MECHANICS OF MOVING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS A BARRIER TO ENGAGEMENT

MENUS FEEL HIDDEN

CONTROLLERS TAKE TIME TO LEARN



NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

NOT UNDERSTANDING THE MECHANICS IS A SAFETY ISSUE

“In the same way that some people sit in the corner of the restaurant so they can see the door, so they can control the situation, **I don't choose often to get into situations where I can't control the outcomes.** ... if it were going to be something I would use on a regular basis, I would definitely need to understand the mechanics better.”



NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

USERS WANTED TO FEEL LIKE THEY WERE IN CHARGE

“I wanted more control over what I was doing and the controls were all over the place. Like the screen popping up and the control panel and another panel popped up and then I couldn’t necessarily get them all to go away at the same time. **It became way too much.** I started to feel weirdly claustrophobic. I was being engulfed by my drawings.”



NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

PARTICIPANTS STRUGGLED WITH **WHAT** TO DO

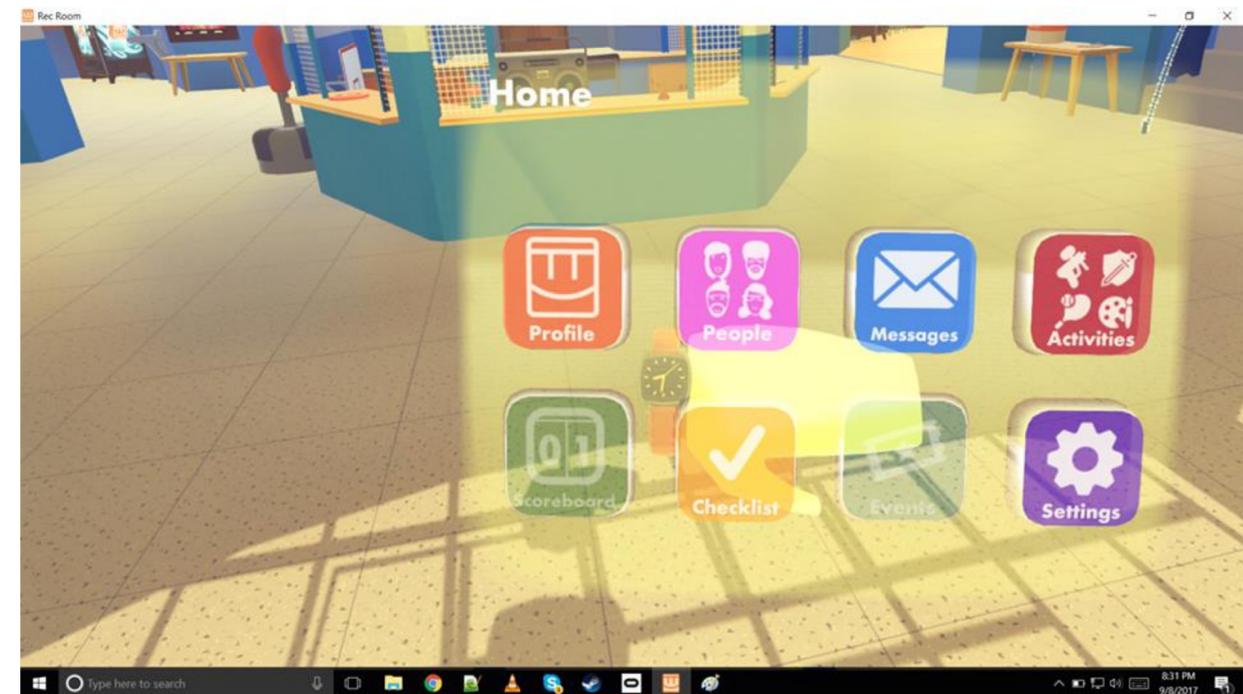
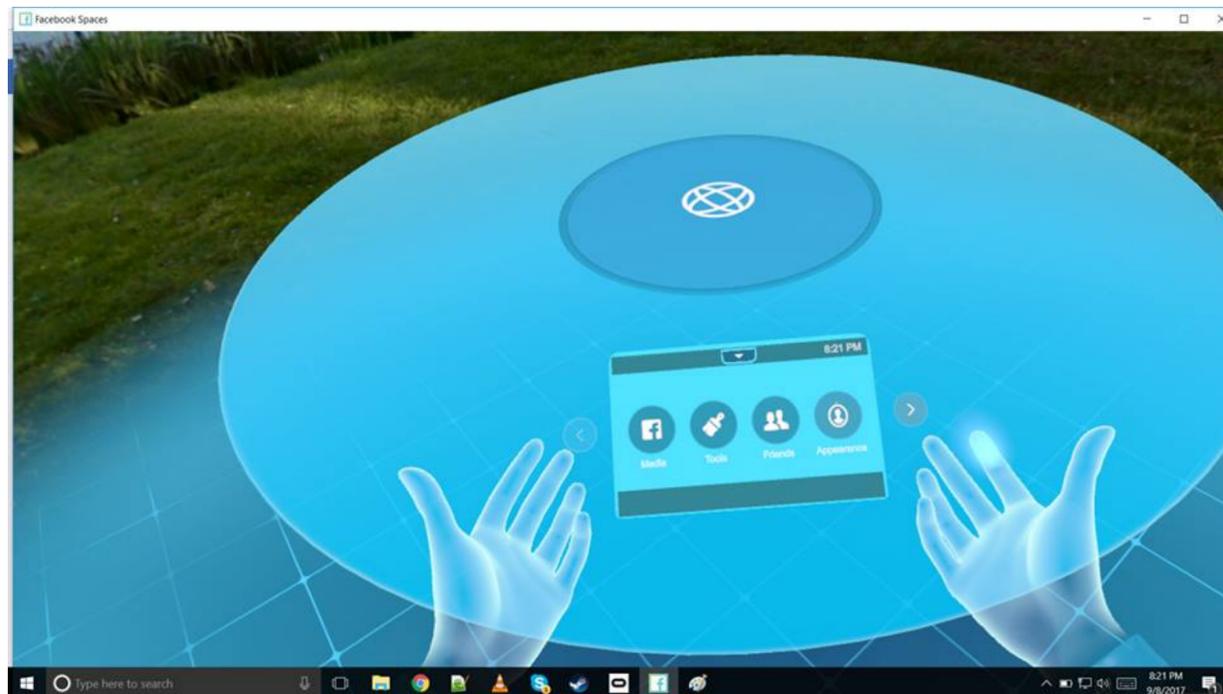
“It was weird. Everybody seemed to know what they were doing and I was the only one who felt ‘I don’t know what I’m doing here, I don’t know these people...They seemed really comfortable. I wasn’t really sure, other than exploring, **I didn’t know how things worked.**”



NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

DON'T HIDE MENUS

All respondents expressed a dislike or a frustration in time spent navigating (or LOCATING) menus. In Facebook Spaces (left), users have to press a small arrow to reveal more menu choices. In Rec Room, users couldn't remember they have to look at their left wrist to pull up the menu and asked for help.

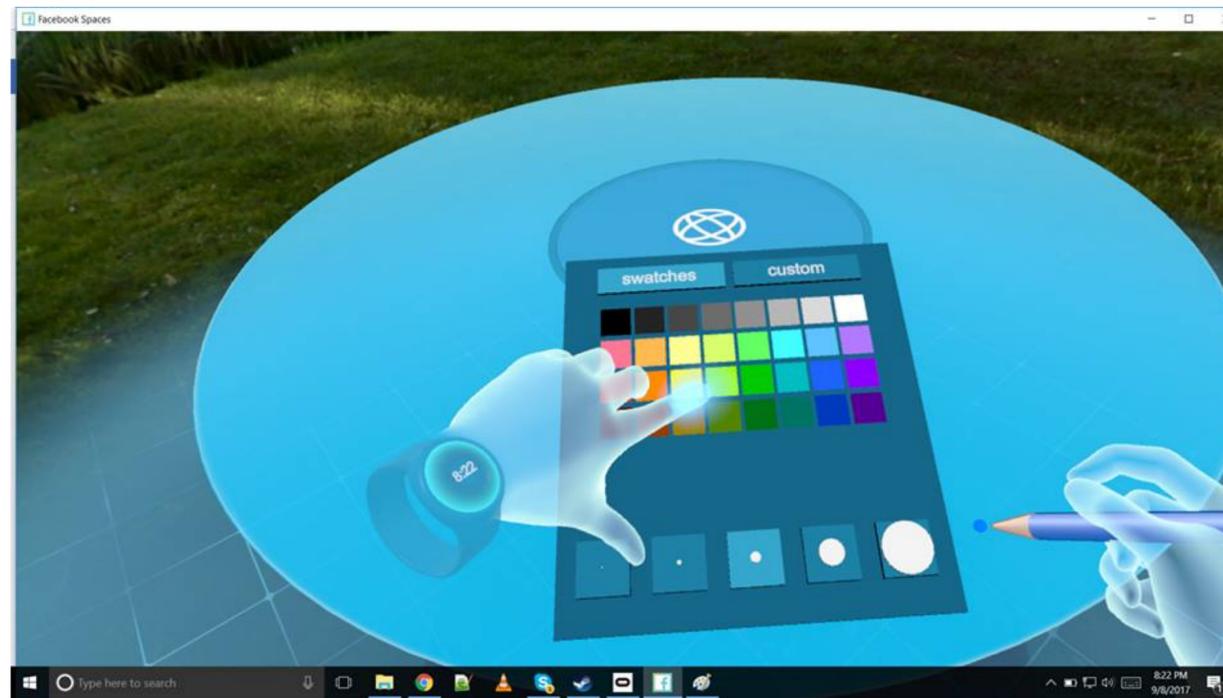




NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE WAS DIFFICULT

LEARNING THE CONTROLLERS TAKES TIME

Some respondents repeatedly jabbed items in the menu even when they couldn't select or figure out how to press or pull a trigger to make the menu work. Here the participant was trying to select the color green with your left hand and getting frustrated that it wasn't working. The participant had to dip the point of the pencil into the palette to select green.



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THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES



THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES

AVATARS CUSTOMIZATION WASN'T INTERESTING

“I didn't have an interest in changing my avatar to something I was interested in because I can't even see it. ... I ended up changing it to a robot. I thought it was cool looking which is why I chose it, but I did not spend very much time thinking 'this is what I want'...I was just 'okay I'll get that one.'”



THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES

AVATARS CUSTOMIZATION WASN'T INTERESTING

“It was kind of nice just being a generic avatar because I kind of got the feeling from the beginning, like if I had been a blonde girl... **If I was an attractive avatar it would be weird...** Like unwanted attention **and they would all talk to me and be annoying.**”



THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES

AVATARS CUSTOMIZATION WASN'T INTERESTING

“The only real discomfort is when you start out, your avatar is a balding white male. And I am not a balding white male.”



THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES

THEY DON'T WANT TO BE NOTICED

If I'm in an online game, **my standard practice is to mute** anyways, because **I'm not going to interact outside of the game-playing mechanisms**. That helps as a baseline level.... I think my negative experiences predispose me not to want to communicate that way."



THEY COULDN'T EXPRESS THEMSELVES

THEY FELT EASILY OVERWHELMED AND THEY WANTED TO WITHDRAW

All of that talking and extraneous noise was so distracting. **I don't know that I would ever be able to be comfortable with that...** If there were games I could play and not have to hear all of that, that would be okay. But otherwise **I don't know that I would be able to get past that part."**

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PROPOSED SOLUTIONS & NEXT STEPS

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

SAFETY MATTERS

Privacy should be the default

DEVELOP SOCIAL NORMS

Use cultural and environmental cues to get the behavior that you want

MAKE IT ENTICING

Give people things to do that fit their interests

ASK QUESTIONS

User test with a range of experience levels

NEXT STEPS

DOWNLOAD THE FULL STUDY ON OCTOBER 9TH

WWW.EXTENDED MIND.IO/SOCIAL-VR

FILL OUT A SURVEY ABOUT *YOUR* EXPERIENCES IN SOCIAL VR

[HTTP://TINYURL.COM/YDDEF4H3](http://TINYURL.COM/YDDEF4H3)

TWEET QUESTIONS TO [@THEEXTENDED MIND](https://twitter.com/theextendedmind)