

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL VIRTUAL REALITY

PROJECT TEAM:

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THE REALITY OF SOCIAL VIRTUAL REALITY: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DESIGN AND USE OF SOCIAL VR

Social virtual reality (SVR) is often presented as a revolution in online communication that provides improved opportunities for creative, physical, and social interactions. Yet there is very little data about who is using SVR platforms (such as, VR Chat or Rec Room), how they are using them, or even why. Current VR research is biased towards white male participants, hence little is known about other demographics and how their experiences differ.

Kukshinov and the interdisciplinary project team combined their expertise in human computer interaction, media psychology, critical media studies, and research-creation to better understand how diverse demographics navigate social virtual reality.

The team designed experiments that tested immersive human experience in SVR, such as the feeling of “being represented”. Participants created avatars and environments, and the research team analyzed how and why users of diverse demographics customized their virtual presence in SVR. They have collected over 100 survey responses and many in-depth interviews with a diverse group of users to challenge how SVR is used for self-expression and self-representation beyond the traditional white male culture.

INTERESTING FACT:

Many of the participants had not had the opportunity to use SVR previously. This was the first time they were empowered to design their own avatars and spaces in SVR.