

Respecting Social Norms in Virtual Environments

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When encountering people in virtual environments, it seems plausible to assume the same social conventions that we are used to from interactions in reality. Engaging in social virtual reality (VR), we realize that this expectation is often not met. Users demonstrate inappropriate behavior as they never would in a video call or in person. From personal VR experiences with professionals in an academic context as well as teenagers in the context of youth work, I share observations of violations of social norms and propose to distinguish three types: anonymous trolling, unintended impropriety, and intended provocation. Understanding the reasons and motives will inform system designs improvements and user education.

Due to the file size limit, please find the video submission here:

<https://ogy.de/SocialNorms>

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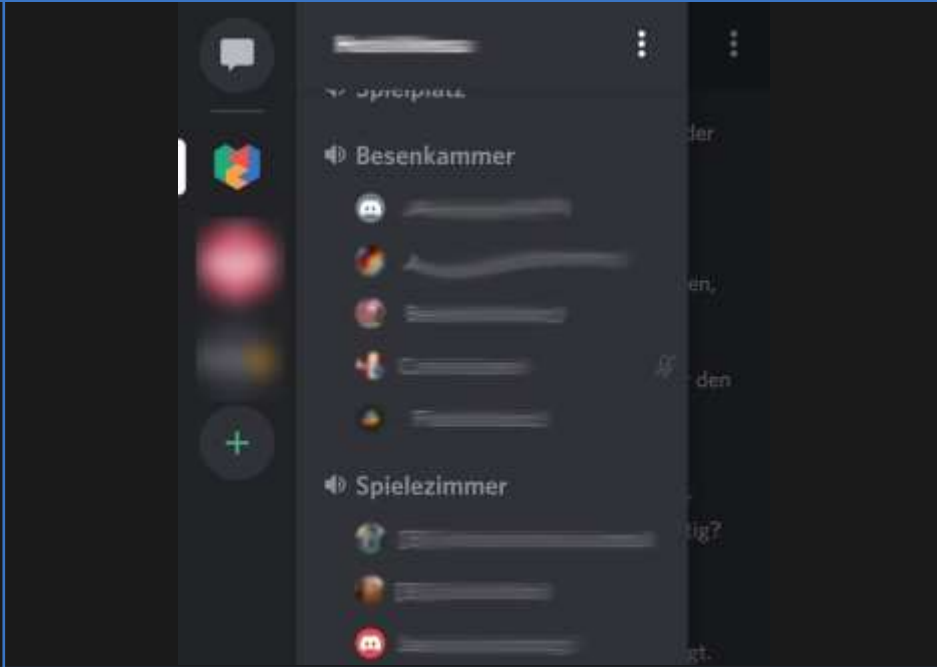
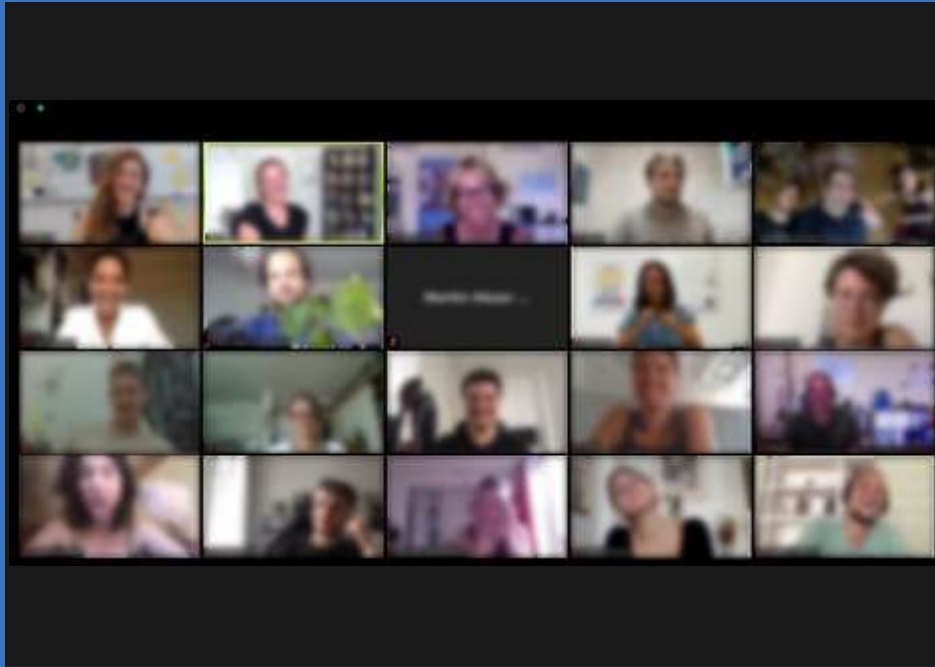
CHI'21: Workshop on Social VR

Contribution by Michael Bonfert, Digital Media Lab Bremen

Professionals

Teenagers

Voice / Video Chat



Virtual Reality



Anonymous Trolling

Zoom-Bombing: Pornography and racial slurs
→ similar trolling on social VR platforms



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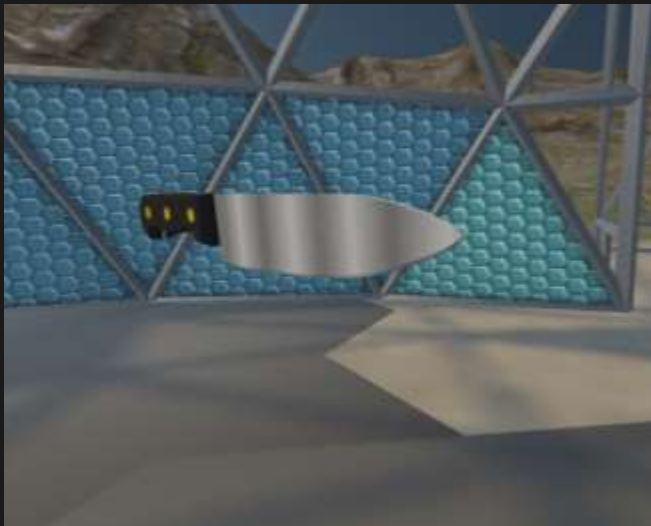
Unintended Violations of Social Norms

- standing too close or into others
- unnatural postures
- showing inattention
- crashing a presentation on stage



Intended Provocations

- pushing boundaries
- threatening with a knife
- crashing the immersion
- spawning a whipping daemon



Anonymous trolling

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Unintended impropriety

→ Improve system design and teach users

Intended provocations

→ Understand reasons and motives

Why would somebody do that?

- Technically challenged
- No feel for the social situation or spatial orientation
- Testing features and exploring possibilities
- System limitations
- 2D desktop users seem less human – are they treated less human?
- Dissociation with the avatar
- Lower hierarchy

What will adapt?

The systems or the social norms?



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