

Deconstructing a Traditional Gender Norm via VR Platform

Abstract

For a better society, Gender Studies have been one of the most important fields for those who want to understand the differences and diversification of people. In the past, there had always been gender inequality between men and women, suggesting there are jobs that need to be done by specific genders. And, due to the difference of sex, it was common for women to be discriminated against in the main roles of society, preventing women from voting or earning income for their families. However, this phenomenon has changed a lot since every individual took a lot of effort to deconstruct gender norms through continuous learning. Also, as human beings, we all have human rights and understand that these rights must be protected. According to Unicef, 'All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status as explained by the human rights treaty bodies.' ("What Are Human Rights?") However, these days, there is a field that many people do not pay attention to regarding the concepts of LGBTQ or Queers. So, when it comes to discussing the rights and identities of Queers and LGBTQ, there still exists the discrimination against them. A lot of people deny that the third gender or transgender must not exist. But with the advanced technology, virtual reality, this challenge can be resolved by creating the VR simulation where every user can experience the diverse situations that do not exist in reality. This paper investigates the concepts of gender theories and develops the VR platform.

Introduction

Society is a place where different kinds of people with distinctive cultures live, and the genders are one of the most important parts that people have to understand. In the past, people had different perspectives towards genders, men, and women, and they interpreted this idea in their own way even though genders should be equal. This was where gender inequality started to take place. Gender Inequality, which has been one of the most disputed problems in the world, is exerted on people with different aspects. When it comes to discussing occupations, the job positions or duties have been separated into two different parts: a man's role and a female's role. Of course, there are indeed some differences if they have different sexes. Different sex doesn't mean different genders. So, to deconstruct this inequality, a lot of governments have made legislation to protect the rights of humans. However, these days, a lot of theories regarding genders have come out: Queer Theory, Intersectionality, and LGBTQ rights and identities, which are completely new to the public. These are recent theories developed by those who want to deconstruct traditional gender norms. To figure out whether these norms can disappear, people must study and research the information regarding Queer people. So, to act as a buffer, utilizing one of the most advanced technologies, virtual reality (VR), we decided to create a VR platform to apply diverse situations that can apply different perspectives of Queer and LGBTQ people so that the users of VR can see and meet each other. This VR project starts with learning key concepts of theories and applying them into the simulations in order to show the

extraordinary scenes and scrutinize the users' responses when they face various situations that are not familiar to them. Before implementing the VR platform, we have created the hypothesis, Can VR simulation deconstruct traditional gender norms?, so this hypothesis will be tested whether it can be proved or not.

Essential Theories

Gender inequality

Gender inequality continues to be a deeply entrenched and pervasive problem throughout the world. It exerts influence across different aspects of society, such as political and cultural norms. Despite commendable progress made in many regions to foster gender equality, stark differences persist. However, it keeps hindering efforts to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development. This comprehensive report that our team is heading seeks to delve into the key landscape of gender inequality and deal with how gender, age, and other factors affect society both mentally and physically, including disparities in economic opportunities, education, political representation, and experience of gender-based violence. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and efforts towards creating a more inclusive and equitable world for all genders.

Queer Theory

One of the key concepts in queer theory is the idea of “heteronormativity,” which pertains to “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged” (Berlant). Heteronormativity is a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normal and/or preferred sexual orientation, and is reinforced in society through the institutions of marriage, taxes, employment, and adoption rights, among many others. Heteronormativity is a form of power and control that applies pressure to both straight and gay individuals, through institutional arrangements and accepted social norms.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., ‘race’/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created.

LGBTQ Rights and identities

LGBTQ+ rights are human rights that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other people outside traditional sexuality and gender categories have. But in practice, these rights are often not protected to the same extent as the rights of straight and cisgender people. LGBTQ rights and identities include a wide range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions, pushing for acceptance and the freedom for everyone to live truthfully in all societal elements without discrimination. This movement challenges conventions and legal inequities that have discriminated against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The LGBTQ+ movement aims to eliminate discrimination and promote inclusivity by emphasizing a variety of human experience through events such as parades or

workshops. The movement's goal is to create a world in which everyone may freely express their identity without fear, producing a more understanding and empathetic society. Among others, LGBTQ+ rights include: physical integrity rights, such as not being executed for their sexuality or gender and not being subjected to conversion therapies; social rights, such as changing their legal gender, being sexually intimate, marrying, and adopting children with people of the same sex; economic rights, such as not being discriminated at work; and political rights, such as being able to advocate for themselves and their communities publicly.

Motivations of Creating Virtual Space

Every person possesses their own stereotype towards people in the society. To improve themselves, learning is an important process. However, in reality, it is almost impossible for people to be in various situations with multiple scenarios. This is one of the negative things when people try to experience something new for the first time. So, since our vision is to see whether the traditional gender norms can be broken down, replaced by new gender norms, this has motivated and inspired us to create a Virtual Space that provides users with diverse simulations with different characteristics and scenarios of Queer.

VR Museum for LGBTQ

To deconstruct the idea of traditional gender norms, there have been a lot of efforts. One of the most impressive developments is a Virtual Space that Antonio had created. It is called LGBTQ VR Museum. Since the LGBTQ+ people tend to be isolated, Antonia Forster, the creator of VR museum for LGBTQ and Queer people, developed a virtual space to exhibit various things that can represent Queer ideas for LGBTQ people. Through this development, a lot of people have visited in this museum, looking into the meanings of the works that were done by LGBTQ people. Usually, there is a lack of space for queer to express their rights to the society, discriminated against all the policies or regulations. As a queer, it is challenging to perform these exhibitions physically, but the virtual space has helped them to express their feelings and ideas more easily, sharing the similar ideas of LGBTQ. Furthermore, anyone who can access VR can visit this museum, understanding the ways to deconstruct the traditional gender norms, which is one of our intentions in this XR project.

According to Antonio, she wanted to build a place where LGBTQ and queers could interact with each other and share their artworks with their own stories. With the stories and artworks, she expected to let people know about the challenges that they are facing, and the perspectives from the society were not as pleasant as they thought. At first, when Antonio tried to collect various stories from other people who wanted to participate in her VR museum, she wanted to search diverse stories and voices from different groups, including those that support specific intersectionality marginalized demographics, such as queer people of color, or queer youth. [She] also reached out to friends, and put public shout-outs on several social media channels and groups. (Hart) Eventually, with a lot of effort, she could collect stories from men, women and genderqueer people, cis and trans people, people of many different ethnicities, ages (mid-20s to mid-60s), and cultural experience.(Hart) Since all different stories and artworks had been collected, Antonio could finally organize all of the idea in VR museum. Antonio wanted to show there were more diverse communities to the public and let other people know about their special stories. Not only that, she wanted to overcome the challenges existing in the society. Even if there are people who try to express their identities, the society still differentiate those queers and LGBTQ. To deconstruct the ideas of traditional gender norms, including gender inequalities or queer theories, Antonia set up the artworks sharing their stories. For example, stories from their local queer community, or from a specific

demographic (e.g. LGBTQ+ women, QTIPOC, queer people with disabilities or neurodivergence, trans folks, queer youth or elders), or around a certain topic (e.g. mental health, family, human rights). (Hart)

Based on the idea that Antonio had performed, the motivations of our XR project were similar, so we decided to benchmark Antonio's idea to our VR platform. To apply the similar concepts of VR museum, we had to choose one of the most fascinating artworks in VR museum. The artwork that delivers special messages to the public is named 'Memorial to Marriage' This artwork was originally made in sculpture and created by the renowned NY artist, Patricia Cronin, and it was considered as the first monument to LGBTQ+ marriage equality. (.....) The reason why we wanted to apply this artwork to our system is that this symbolizes the eternal relationship between lesbian couple even in the time when the same-sex marriage was not legal in the United States. We can utilize the artwork of the Memorial to Marriage created by Patricia, who wanted to have the rights to express her identities of Queer and LGBTQ. Actually, in the past, the same-sex marriage was not legal in the United States. Even though they couldn't be acknowledged with the normal couple, their love or relationship couldn't end, meaning forever love. This artwork, when Antonia saw it first, shocked her since she was still in the closet when she was young since Antonio didn't have the bold mind to be coming out. She thought there was no one understanding her real identity. Also, there were a lot of queer and LGBTQ people isolated from the society, and they couldn't express their rights to the public. However, the artworks with stories had helped those who hid behind the line as queers could feel a whole new community where they can share their ideas and have the right to express their identities.

How to Participate in Virtual Space

Survey Questions in VR

If the VR simulation should work effectively, the procedures that users might face have to be precise and easy to understand. So, like a virtual reality game, we decided to come up with simple survey questions that can introduce our intention of simulation. The questionnaire that can be utilized in this survey is about the introduction of genders and sex and asks the user's status, which continues to other questions. The detailed questions are shown below. The survey questions are divided into three different parts: Beginning, Middle, and End. Starting with questioning the current gender status of users, we can figure out users' current status of sex and genders. Following the first question, it is crucial to ask them about their own perspectives of genders. This basic information can help our simulation more effectively.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10_1FGf5LthroPrVKC89Ch1jVeevfnGcj9N-9ODmpXHA/edit?usp=sharing

Possible Situations

Gathering the data that can improve our system is very important. Also, our goal for this project is to let people experience completely different situations regarding gender issues so that they can broaden their views and even understand their thoughts. By applying various theories that we have covered, a variety of situations will be adjusted into Virtual space like a game. There might be offline social activities - Having dinner at a restaurant, shopping at a mall, attending classes - which provide users with familiar places so that the users can feel comfortable as soon as they log onto Virtual Space.

When it comes to setting up, the first thing that we have to consider is peculiarity, meaning that the situations should be completely opposite to our normal society. To tackle the deconstruction of traditional gender norms, we are going to conduct a detailed analysis by making various assumptions which should include each theory that our project team has reviewed. For example, the situation that is opposite to our society might be used in the system. All the theories will be applied to VR when a user is in the simulation. Applying 'What if?' simulations, users can experience various feelings and show different responses to each of the scenario so that the system can gather the data from the users' responses.

What if?

Gender Inequality (What if?)

- a) If there is a blind date with a man and woman, what if a woman tries to open the restaurant door for the man and pull the chair for the man?
- b) What if there is a man who likes to collect Hello Kitty dolls?
- c) What if a man does all of the housework in the family?
- d) What if a woman is earning money for her family members?
- e) What if a man wears a skirt?
- f) What if a woman's hairstyle is short like a man's?

Users participating in the VR will be asked to give feedback after they come out of the scenario.

Queer Theory (What if?)

Marriages - ideas regarding same-sex marriage (Queer) - Finding out the reaction of the users.

- a) LGBTQ parade - reactions from the VR Users
- b) What if you have the best friend who did the same-sex marriage?
- c) What if you are the main bride of Same-sex marriage?
- d) What if one of my friends likes me?
- e) Imagine 80% of the students in the school are gay or lesbian. And the user has to study in that particular school.
- f) What if sports that are only for lesbians and gays are selected in the Olympics?

Intersectionality (What if?)

- a) Imagine there is a transgender who is in one percent of social status, very very rich, and this person is isolated since there are not a lot of people understanding this person.
- b) One day, this person met the other person who is the same transgender who is very poor (lower social status) As a result, they can understand each other even if they are not in the same social classes.

- c) Imagine a person who wants to deconstruct traditional gender norms would like to officially make a third gender law. (I would agree only if there are more than 30% of the population who support third gender law, in the world.)
- d) Imagine a person with Buddhism, and this person came out as a gay.
- e) Different religions but same identities (both transgenders)
- f) Business Meeting with LGBTQ)

LGBTQ Rights and Identities (What if?)

- a) Let's pretend there are 30% of the population coming out to be LGBTQ, and they want to deconstruct the traditional gender norms.(Protest) - What are you going to do?
- b) Marriages - ideas regarding same sex-marriage(Queer) - reaction of the users.
- c) Finally, the government alleviated all the strict regulations and policies towards the LGBTQ to recover their rights and identities. What if there are a lot of oppositions regarding the decision of governments, what kinds of results can be drawn?
- d) What if you are the staff of LGBTQ parade? And there is a lot of opposition from the public? What kinds of solutions can be drawn?
- e) Dating with LGBTQ - Going to a movie theater and watching the movie with transgender stories, and having dinner together.

As there might be a lot of situations that can affect users' feelings of behaviors in Virtual Space, we have to consider various questions regarding diverse gender theories. When it comes to creating the questions, we need to consider various things related to our motivation of the study. For example, by asking ourselves like "can these assumptions deconstruct the traditional gender norms?" It is quite crucial since if this Virtual space cannot be used as a tool to deconstruct the traditional gender roles, it might be a failure. Even if there were a failure, we would have to gather some of the data for future research. So, the important thing is that if we cannot guarantee the situation, we have to accept that there might be more challenges. Since the history of mankind is about 5,000 years, it might be very hard to change in such a short amount of time. But, we have to focus on trying and applying new technology to create a VR platform to invite users continuously.

Development Process of Virtual Reality

Phyton, Java, etc (LEarning Technical terms and descriptions)

Screenshots of Coding with explanations (will be added)

Coding different movies together

Results

Based on the gender theories and our hypothesis that ‘can the VR platform be used as a tool to deconstruct the traditional gender norms?’, we could not only understand the details of the theories, including gender inequality, queer theory, intersectionality, LGBTQ rights and identities, but also project the potential changes of definitions regarding genders. The term ‘gender’ was originally divided into only two different words, male and female. However, as various facets regarding genders were added, our society has had a duty to take care of those who have different identities and rights. Despite this fact, since there are not enough ways to face the issue, the gap between the traditional gender norms and new aspects of genders has become huge. This motivated us to develop a VR space to apply various simulations that can help users understand LGBTQ. Through this development and research regarding gender studies, a lot of results can be accumulated into the system, broadening the knowledge of gender theories. Moreover, a lot of people can figure out what kind of challenges can exist when it comes to LGBTQ since they don’t have the rights to do something in the current society. Since the feedback is one of the most crucial parts of the XR project, we have created different kinds of questionnaires in the beginning, middle, and at the end of the VR simulation. This feedback will be accumulated into our dataset, leading the VR system to be more sophisticated and produce more effective situations that can help users’ understanding knowledge.

Conclusion

There are a lot of perspectives regarding the genders. In the past, gender inequality between a male and female was one of the serious issues in society, but through an infinite number of movements, the roles of women could have been recovered, which proves that the past traditional gender norms, between men and women, have been deconstructed and modified through the constant efforts from the public and the government. Nowadays, more sophisticated issues have risen since there are various new gender norms, broadening the definition of genders, emerging Queers and LGBTQ. And, those who are classified with Queers and LGBTQ want to be treated equally by society and the public. However, the lack of channels to understand queers has caused misunderstanding among the public, widening the gap. To make matters worse, even though some people want to understand or accept the idea of queer, it’s actually hard for queers to participate in social activities in a proper way since there are a lot of barriers of regulations and bias from other people. To eradicate the prejudices from the public and let queers share their own stories, XR project team decided to develop VR platform, providing various simulations that include various concepts of queers and LGBTQ so that everyone knows that although deconstructing the traditional gender norms is very challenging, since the history of mankind has been developed with only two different sexes, no matter how long it would take to change the perspectives of people, creating a VR platform to provide users with various situations that cannot exist in the real world will be a meaningful process for the future generation. Eventually, this will also be a tool to finally deconstruct the traditional gender norms. Users who can experience various VR simulations will be able to understand what kinds of thoughts that LGBTQ have had and realize the differences between the males and females. Not only that, as the data is accumulated throughout the process, we can

Based on the results in VR or Feedback, is the hypothesis made in the beginning of the project proved?

Experts from other fields - the readers of this report

They want to find out new things that can challenge them

Why are we producing this report?

There are several reasons. Psychological issues

To make other people understand new gender roles, and how they have been trying to protect themselves.

The report is formal, so if there is no report, there is no way to move beyond our performances.

Appendix

Detailed information that can help readers to understand the meaning of the work or word.

Psychology view based on gender and sex.

Traditional gender norms and modern gender norms

Finding out the

Reference

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