Designing social VR spaces that nudge prosocial interactions

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Facebook's *gentrification* of social VR (a.k.a Metaverse) will *reshape* our lives and will *intensify* social media abuse.

Social virtual reality immerses users in novel, chatroom environments. Social media and VR abuse is higher amongst female, non-white, non-anglo users; *49% women vs. 36% men* reported sexual harassment in VR (n= >600). These harassed users will have slower; which is a commercial and societal loss in creating a *brave new world*.

Beyond proxemics and safety features; how might we, *empathise* with *new* and *diverse* social VR users?

Harassment in social VR exists and persists. Environmental psychology and urban design have typically used spatial design to *nudge* and *affect* people to make prosocial decisions. Applying a similar process, can the VR space be designed with nature, prospect-refuge and the right scale to *encourage prosocial behaviour* which benefits all users.


Completed 80 hours of social VR (i.e. VRChat, AltSpaceVR and RecRoom); travelling across various worlds on these platforms, tracking the location of unethical behaviour amongst avatars.

Held semi-structured interviews with 5 world builders. Held 4 directed storytelling interviews with active social VR users to broaden my understanding & awareness of the social VR landscape.
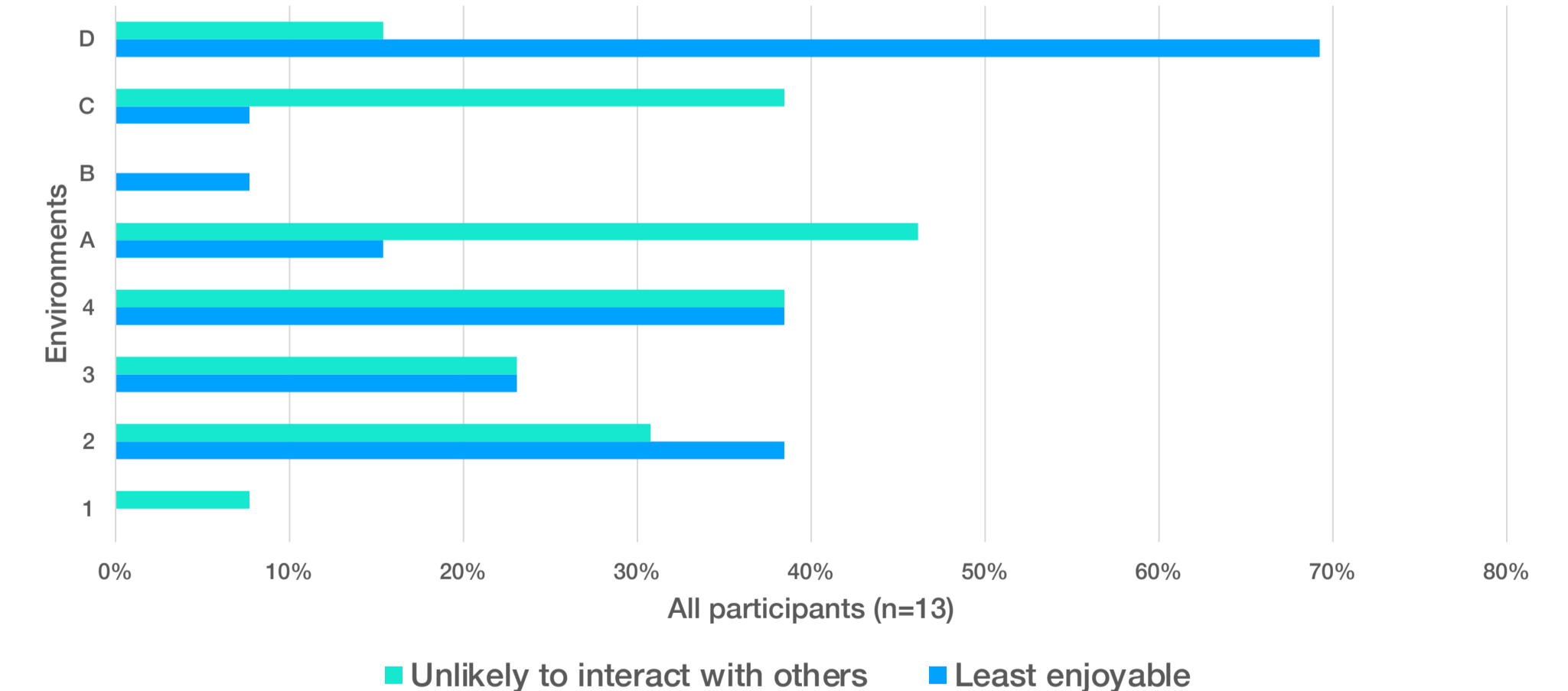
Define →

Auto ethnography

Interviews

Experiments
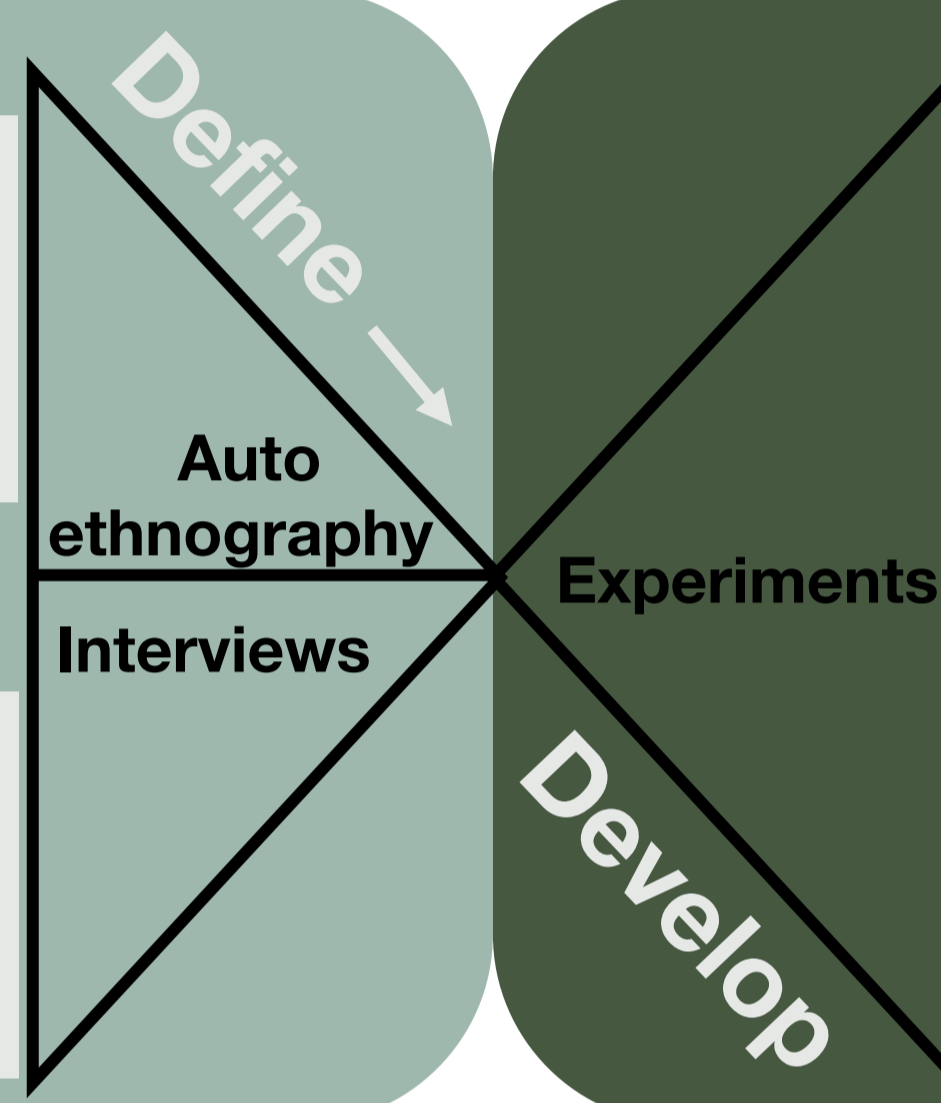
Develop

		Prospect-Refuge		Not Prospect-Refuge	
		Biophilia	**Not Biophilia**	**Biophilia**	**Not Biophilia**
Scale		1 – B,PR,S	B – NB,PR,S	3 – B, NPR, S	D - NB,NPR,S
Not Scale		A – B,PR,NS	2 – NB, PR, NS	C- B,NPR,NS	4 - NB,NPR,NS

Where would users prefer to meet friends/strangers?

Environments

All participants (n=13)

■ Meet Strangers ■ Meet Friends
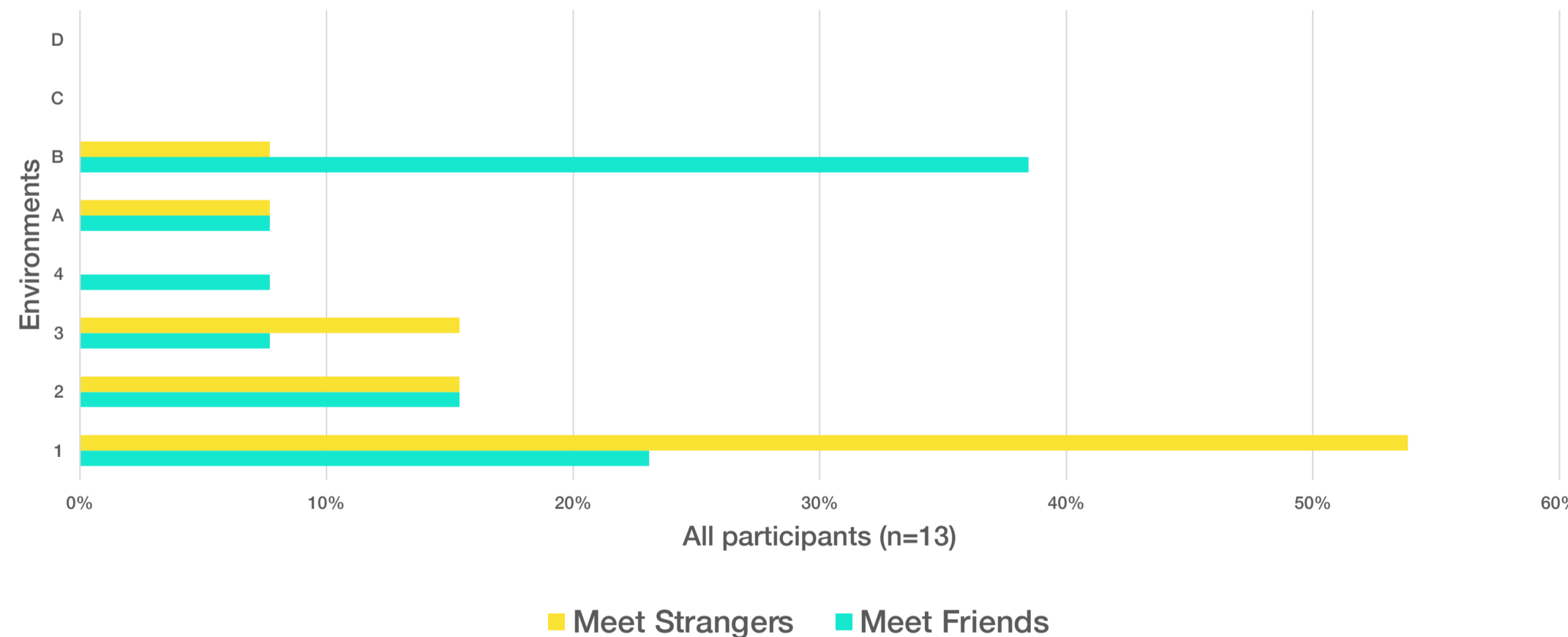
Where would users prefer to NOT meet others?

Environments

All participants (n=13)

■ Unlikely to interact with others ■ Least enjoyable

What does a prosocial VR space look like?
Prosocial VR spatial design solutions lie on a scale and are contextual

❖ Biophilic design that doesn't *overwhelm* enables interactions amongst users rather than meditation
❖ If the space does not have proper scaling or visible exits; this increases the likelihood of discomfort and departure
❖ Vantage points, doubling as spawning points, provide strong first impressions and give users the cognitive and spatial *space* to see everyone, spaces and decide "what next".
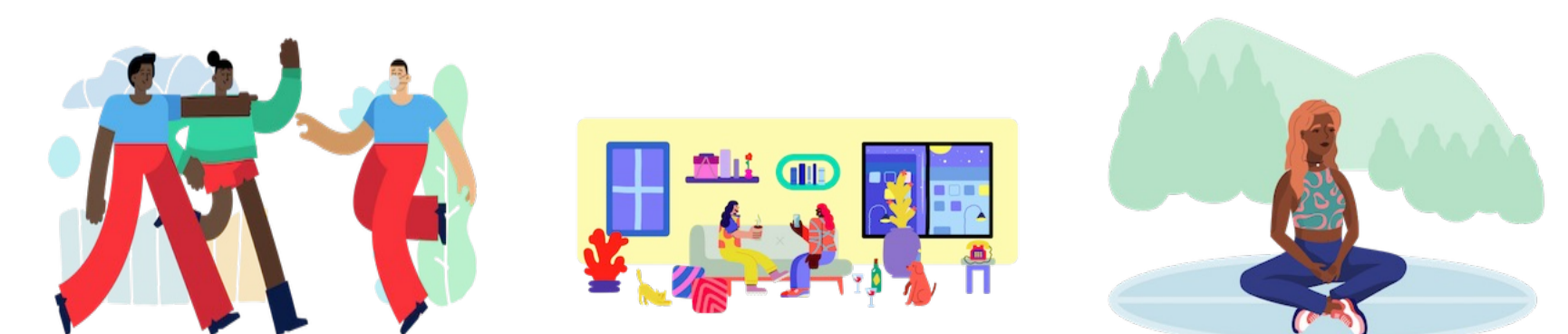
Which of the eight environments are you most likely to engage with other avatars?