



PSY B203 Ethics and Diversity in Psychology

I teach an online gen ed/required undergraduate psychology course titled Ethics and Diversity in Psychology (Psy-B203), with an enrollment of ~180 students per term. One of the learning outcomes for that course is to apply, analyze, and evaluate psychological research and practice to discern bias and challenge claims that arise from myths, stereotypes, or untested assumptions. One of the modules in the course addressing this objective concerns prejudice reduction principles, which includes the concept of empathy and perspective taking. Currently, I have student watch a 10-minute video of a sexual harassment victim talking about her harassment experience and how it affected her as a way to help students gain empathy and perspective taking on the issue of sexual harassment. They then engage in an online-small group discussion about the video with guided discussion questions designed to elicit empathy and perspective taking and to share those feelings and perceptions with other classmates.

I am applying for an XRI grant to start to develop this activity into a VR or other XR platform because of the potential for extended reality technology to substantially enhance empathy, which in turn, may lead to pro-social behaviors such as willingness to be an active, effective bystander if they should witness similar situations as well as reduce their intentions to engage in sexual harassment or related conduct. Although my long-term goal would be create a fully animated, interactive VR environment where students could either experience (mild) harassment or witness it and make various decisions and see how those might play out, as well as to see how various courses of action might affect their empathy and perspective taking, currently I would like to take my existing videos (2) and turn them into 3-D videos to get an initial assessment of how it affects students empathy, perspective taking, and other outcomes such as attitudes toward victims of sexual harassment, and their intentions to engage in sexual harassment. Should this initial step into XR technology show encouraging signs for these outcomes, I would seek funding to develop more immersive XR experience for my students.