



immersive virtual reality: criminology's key enabling technology?



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Abstract

Immersive virtual reality (VR) offers a series of merits for social science and behavioral research, such as its ability to achieve high levels of ecological validity without compromising internal validity, reproducibility, and the possibility of (near) real-time observation of behavior in unobtrusive ways. For the study of criminal behavior and other types of antisocial conduct, however, it offers several additional, sometimes less evident, affordances. In this talk, I will focus on three specific such affordances, namely the ability of VR to study behavior that normally occurs outside of our field of view (e.g., burglary), the possibility to have research participants embody a character with properties that differ from their own characteristics (e.g., someone from the opposite sex, a future self), and the ability to elicit and measure intense emotions (e.g., anger). I will illustrate these affordances with examples of research from my own group and that of others.

About the speaker

Jean-Louis van Gelder studied both law and psychology at the University of Amsterdam. After finishing his doctorate on the development of informal settlements in the city of Buenos Aires (Ph.D 2009, University of Amsterdam) he shifted his research focus to crime research and worked at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR), first as a postdoc and later as a senior researcher. In 2012 he obtained a second Ph.D. (psychology) at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. In 2018, he was appointed as Full Professor at the University of Twente (NL). Since January 2020 van Gelder heads the Department of Criminology at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law (formerly Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law).