PODCAST SCRIPT:

Note that VT stands for Voice Track, clips are taken from the transcription, and names of the speakers are shortened to the first letters of their name; Justin (J), Lisa (L), Harry (H), Allen (A), Daniel (D)

SFX: 15 second theme song plays, comprised of a future funk beat and sounds of retro technology

VT 1: Introduction
Hey everybody, my name is Justin and welcome to the first episode of Technical Difficulties, the podcast discussing the world's newest technologies and the problems that come with it! On today's show we'll be taking a look at VR and how it may deal with a topic familiar to many gamers: video game harassment. Let's welcome the guest's for today's episode, my fellow media studies classmates from UBC!

Clip 1: Introductions
H: Hi, my name is Harry
D: I'm Dan
A: My name's Allen
L: I'm Lisa

SFX: A did-you-know type BGM theme fades in

VT 2: Introduction of VR
Before we move onto today's topic, let's talk about what VR is. A constantly reemerging technology, VR began with the sensorama in the 1950's as a device to "expand cinema to involve not only sight and sound, but also taste, touch, and smell"[1]. Several decades later, Nintendo releases the Virtual Boy in 1995, with it's technical limitations unfortunately tarnishing the name of VR. However, with the announcement of Oculus' Kickstarter in 2012, VR blew up. At E3, John Carmack used his game "Doom" to showcase what the technology could do; provide realistic stereoscopic vision, head tracking, and surround sound that worked together to completely immerse the user. The world hadn't seen anything like it before. In the following years, we would see Facebook purchase Oculus, seeing the VR platform as the next step to online social interaction. HTC and Valve would collaborate to create the HTC Vive, further pushing the boundary's of our imaginations as they introduced full room-scale VR with tracked controllers to the world. Big tech companies, such as Google, Samsung, Sony, and Microsoft, have also begun to deeply invest into this new medium. A powerful and innovative technology, VR looks like it's here to stay. However, no technology is perfect, so let's take a look at the technical difficulties on today's episode of Technical Difficulties!

SFX: Did-you-know BGM fades out as a relaxed coffee shop BGM fades in

Clip 2: VR Experience
J: So, do you guys have any experience with VR?
A: Well, in the Samsung store I've tried the Gear VR

J: What type of experience was it?
A: (*SFX: ocean sounds play underneath*) It was a demo where they put you in an underwater cage and you get to see sharks and whales around you. It's pretty disorienting at first but you get used to it and then it's really amazing (*SFX: ocean sfx fades out*)
J: Was it super immersive?
A: Well, not super immersive, but immersive enough to feel like you're actually there
L: I have no VR experience *laughs*
J: Daniel?
D: Yeah, really limited. I've tried Cardboard before; someone had a school project with that, and that's probably the only VR I've done
J: *laughs* Ok, yeah
H: I have a Google Cardboard, so kind of. And the last time I was in Japan, I went to an arcade place called VR Park and it was full of VR games
J: Oh, yeah? Is it the one with Mario kart and...
H: No, mine was just typical games like baseball. The games weren't really long, but the VR experience was good; really fun
J: I own an Oculus and a Cardboard, I've tried the PSVR and HTC Vive and I've been to VR conventions, so I kind of have a long history with VR.

SFX: Transitions back to the did-you-know theme

VT 3: VR arcades
It's notable that, although we'll mostly be talking about VR from a Western perspective, VR is evolving in different ways across the world. For example, in Asia where arcades and gaming cafe's are more popular than personal computers, VR is taking shape through VR arcades like VR Park, as Harry mentioned. (*SFX: Sounds of an arcade fade into the background*) One VR arcade that has recently caught the internet's attention is VR Zone Shinjuku, an arcade created by popular video game company Bandai Namco. The arcade has games featuring the likes of Mario Kart (*SFX: Mario's Yahoo! catchline*), Dragon Ball (*SFX: Goku's Kamehameha! catchline*), Evangelion (*SFX: A bit of Cruel Angel's Thesis*), and Ghost in the Shell (*SFX: The Major's name being called*) as VR experiences, and is becoming a popular attraction in Tokyo due to the draw of these Japanese household names. (*SFX: Arcade BGM fades out*) In my opinion, it's a great way to market VR to a bigger audience, opposed to the West, where VR has mainly been marketed to hardcore gamers.

SFX: Transitions back to the coffee shop BGM

Clip 3: Video Game Experience
J: So, do you guys play any video games?
H: Yeah, of course, Team Fortress 2, all time favourite
L: I don't really play games *laughs*
A: I only play DOTA
D: Uh, I play LoL, but recently not much cause I'm busy

VT 4: Gaming
As for myself, I tend to play a lot of Overwatch and story based Steam games. So from hardcore gamers to casual gamer's, we've got a wide range of people and opinions today!

SFX: BGM fades to a more detective theme with a serious tone

VT 5: Main Topic
Now, let's talk a little bit about harassment culture in the video game industry, specifically relating to VR. We'll be focusing on an article titled "My First Virtual Reality Groping," where author Jordan Belamire recounts her first VR experience. Using her brother's HTC Vive, Belamire plays the tower defence game QuiVR, where the player embodies an archer shooting demons. She describes how real it felt, how immersed she was, and simply how amazing VR is. However, while playing in an online multiplayer mode, a player by the name of BigBro442 recognized that Belamire was female from her voice comm, and proceed to approach Belamire's VR avatar and rub her chest. Surprised, Belamire tell's him to stop, but "this goaded him on, and even when [Belamire] turned away from him, he chased [her] around, making grabbing and pinching motions near [her] chest. Emboldened, he even shoved his hand towards [her] virtual crotch and began rubbing" [2]. Although Belamire wasn't physically harassed, "virtual groping feels just as real," and Belamire understandably quit the game feeling violated, knowing that somebody thought those actions were ok [2]. However, if we take a step back from VR, we can look at an industry where millions of people are being harassed everyday.

Clip 5: Video Game Harassment
J: So in video games, have you heard of or seen any form of harassment?
D: This case really stood out to me because normally it's just verbal harassment that's detached. It's not specific to gender
H: Yeah, this case is really bizarre to me, but I haven't heard of anything like that
L: I know it happens but I haven't heard specifications
H: Yeah, like what Dan said, I always see verbal harassment when I'm playing games. Even I harass people *everybody laughs*

SFX: Fades from the serious tone back to the coffee shop BGM

L: Yeah, we truly have a range now
J: So, you kind of mentioned that it's almost normal now. Why do you think that is? Like, it's almost a meme at this point, like oh you're trolling or you're salty
D: I think it's because in a normal competition, let's say in sports, there's a form of animosity between competitors, but in gaming you're anonymous so it's way easier to insult or harass others. I think it's part of competition
H: I think because we're all anonymous on the internet, we think we can talk to people without them figuring out who we are
D: Without consequences

H: Yeah, without consequences, and they won't interfere our daily life. But, I mean for me I *takes a deep breath* sometimes I'm a big troll when I play games, and I've trolled to a point that there was a guy trying to find out who I am. But then even to that point I didn't feel afraid, because that's the nature of the internet.
J: Have you ever heard of a story where somebody has been harassed in a video game to the point where they wanted to stop playing the game?
L: Not with video games, but just in general on the internet
J: Yeah, if somebody told you "Oh you suck, your kill death ratio is way off *everybody laughs* stop playing," would you actually stop playing?
A: First I'll be… sad, you would think so, but I wouldn't stop playing, because I know that's a normal thing in video games for people to usually do that
H: For me, since I'm a big troll, I love arguing when I play games, but I wouldn't care that much if people harassed me. A few years before, there was just once where I was feeling so bad because I was trolling somebody first, but then this problem got bigger and bigger to the point where everybody on the server's like "Oh, they're arguing," and then it got to the point where I got so uncomfortable that I quit the game and turned off my computer.
J: Ah, okay, yeah.

VT 6: Recap
So from our discussion, it seems like the reason why video game harassment is so rampant is due to competition, as Dan pointed out, a want to win and anger that may ensue if you were not able to achieve your goal. Harry points out a different side, where people just do it to get a kick or to have fun. And Allen and Lisa have pointed out that society has actually become so accustomed to this that we've kind of turned a blind eye on it. Does this mean we'll be looking forward to a future where "virtual reality groping" is going to become the new norm [2]?

Clip 6: The Future of VR Harassment
J: So, the article talks about somebody being harassed in VR, but do you think, since we're already desensitized to being harassed in video games, do you think we'll be desensitized to being harassed in VR, maybe 10 years down the line or so?
L: I don't know if we'll be desensitized from, but maybe, cause I don't know about video games, but for example, if you think about cyberbullying, that's already kind of desensitized
J: Yeah, that's true
A: Do you think there's a difference between being harassed in video games vs being harassed in VR? Due to the presence of VR?
L: I think it's about the same, but VR is just a little more immersive
J: Have you guys read Ready Player One?
H: I've bought it, but because of the midterms I've no time to read it
D: I've seen the trailer for the movie. I know it's a book as well
J: Yeah, so I read the book, and the characters in the book live in a VR world that they call the Oasis. So basically it's this heaven where people interact through VR avatars and they become completely immersed in this whole thing. They have access to all five senses, so everything they feel in that world, they feel on their real body. And as I was

researching this article last night, I began to wonder how they prevent, like obviously it's a book, but how do they prevent sexual harassment and stuff like that? Or do they just treat it as how you would in the real world? (L: Let it be) Yeah, let it be
H: I would think that harassment just needs to be treated like how it is in the real world. We need regulations to control it.

VT 7: Regulations
Harry brings up an interesting point here; that we'll eventually need regulations to prevent harassment in VR. We've actually seen the video game industry combat harassment and cyber bullying through banning players in various ways. While this is certainly a valid solution for VR, the new medium may need another way to regulate.

Clip 7: Combating VR Harassment
J: Do you guys have any other solutions to this problem?
L: Just not have the option to do that
J: Oh, so like code it so that you can't put your hands near somebody else
L: Yeah, just not have that option
J: I was also thinking about educating the public with video's about the do's and don'ts of VR when they put the headset on, or putting somebody in the opposite gender to build sympathy.
A: Yeah
J: So, does the article about getting harassed in VR make you want to do VR more or less? Or does it not change your opinion at all?
D: I think it doesn't change my opinion cause I sort of knew it would be there. Like with any social interaction, there's a chance of harassment
L: Same for me. It's kind of inevitable
H: I feel like I recognize more of these problems now. I didn't know that this existed in a serious stance. But it doesn't change my view, I still think VR is good

SFX: Wrap-up/conclusion music fades in

VT 8: Conclusion
As VR is still a developing niche, many people look at the platform with optimism. But as VR enters into a bigger mainstream audience, case's of harassment alike what we talked about today will definitely pop up in the future, unless developers do something about it now. Unfortunately, that's all the time we have today, but what are your thoughts about VR? Do you have any solutions to harassment in this new medium? Email us at opinions@technicaldiffculties.com and we'll be sure to discuss your opinions on the next episode! I'll like to thank my guests for their valuable input today, and this is your host Justin, signing off!

SFX: old style tv turning off

Sources Cited
[1]"VIRTUAL REALITY A TO Z: EPISODE 01 - THE BEGINNING." *YouTube*, 4 Oct. 2017, youtu.be/VeVCp9R7vO8?t=5m18s

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