

Sam Lewis – 2501827 – Games of Positive impact (ACCA4041) - Research Portfolio

Videogames come in many different genres, from fast-paced hero shooters to slower and more strategic games like Civilization VI, some of these games can even have a positive impact on people who play them in many ways, in this document, I will talk about 3 different games that have shown to have a positive impact on their players in very different ways

Game 1 – Minecraft

One game that has shown to have a positive impact on people is Minecraft, this game has endless possibilities with how you can play, you can play a normal survival world and explore or you can make a creative world and build whatever you can come up with, there are many different reasons why Minecraft can have a positive impact of people.

One reason for this is the limitless things to do in Minecraft, letting the player choose exactly how they want to play, exploring the enormous world they create and be able to make almost anything they can come up with. This has positive impact as it boosts both creativity and imagination for the player, giving them the opportunity to build whatever comes to mind will allow them to stretch their imagination to greater lengths like building massive cities or trying to replicate a building from the real world.

Another reason why Minecraft has a positive impact on people is helping players enhance both their problem-solving skills and their critical thinking skills. This can be seen in a multitude of ways in Minecraft, for example, if the player was in a dire situation, they would need to think about what the best course of action would be that could get them out of their situation, this could be making a small base to not risk dying, finding a village for food or crafting a sword to defend themselves at night. These are just a few things the player would think about and decide what would be best in the moment, improving on their critical thinking skills.

Another example of the players critical thinking and problem-solving skills being improved through Minecraft is the games Redstone mechanic. This mechanic allows the player to make lots of different machines with different Redstone components such as Redstone dust, pistons, Tripwires, dispensers and much more. Players can use Redstone to make simple machines that automate farming for them, for example, destroying sugarcane when fully grown and moving it to a specific chest, or players can

use Redstone to build massive machines that can do almost anything using just the in-game Redstone items and mechanics.



Here is an image of a redstone staircase that I made in Minecraft [1]



Here is the redstone staircase when stepping onto the pressure plates at the bottom [2]

This then leads into a final point for why Minecraft has a positive impact for people, it helps to improve spatial awareness in game. When building anything in Minecraft you will need to constantly think about the surroundings of where you are both for an exterior and an interior when building, making sure that you have enough space to build

what you want while also making it look good or not taking up too much space. For example, if you wanted to build a tower and wanted a staircase going to the top, you would need to make it a spiral staircase and have enough space on the inside of the tower so the staircase can fit in with the build without trouble and so it is not too cramped to walk up and down constantly. [3]



Here is an image of a house interior, using the space efficiently so there is no clutter [4]

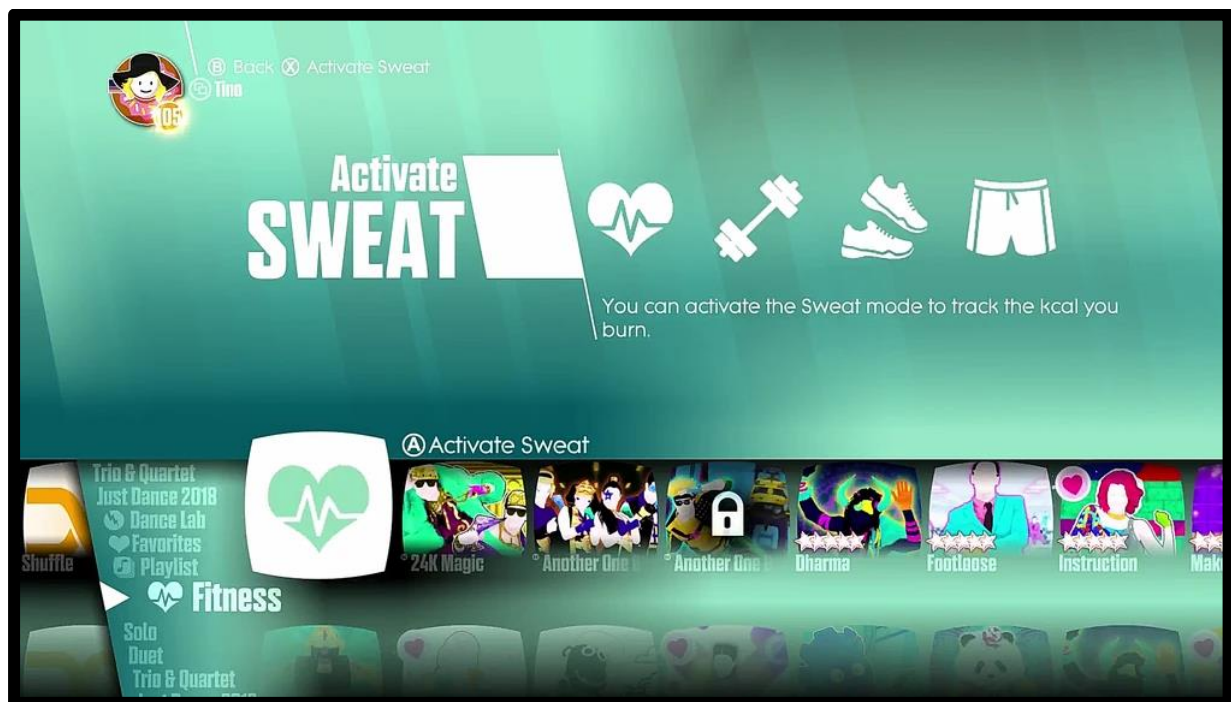
Game 2 – Just Dance

Another game that has had a positive impact on people is Just Dance, in this game you must hold a controller in your right hand and follow dance moves in the game to score points and get the highest star score possible, you dance to lots of different songs by artists from different generations such as ABBA, Queen, Bruno Mars and Lady Gaga.

Just dance can have a positive impact on people for a numerous of reasons, one of these reasons is that dancing in general can lower your stress and improves your mood, in an article written by International Arts & Mind Lab (IAM Lab), a dance made by a Chinese couple called their “rural-style shuffle dance” that went viral helped the husband improve his mood after falling into depression. A meta-analysis of 41 studies was carried out with over 2300 participants confirming that dancing can both improve mood and emotional affect [5]. Another study showed that dancing can also improve you stress management and reduce the feeling of distress, which is believed in the ability for dance to reduce levels of cortisol, which can combat stress levels that rise into being problematic. Since Just Dance is a game all about dancing to the beat of

songs, just playing the game every day for 30 minutes can lead to lower levels of stress and to help improve your mood, along with it being fun too so you can get lost in the dancing without realizing it.

Another reason why Just Dance can have a positive impact on someone is that it can be a fun and good way to work out. The simple act of dancing for 30 minutes can burn up to 340 calories alone, so playing Just dance 4 or 5 days a week for 30 minutes can lead to a good workout that you want to keep doing, it is also a very fun way to work out as you can choose a more movement heavy song for added challenge or choose a lower energy song and have a less intensive dance routine. In the game you can also create playlists of different songs you enjoy dancing to more, so you can make a fun dance playlist you can dance to everyday or just pick a random song and go along with it, you can also enable sweat mode, which changes the star system to showing you a calorie count showing you how many calories you are burning while playing the game, keeping you incentivised to keep playing and burn more calories.



Here is an image of the Just dance sweat menu in Just Dance 2018 [6]

A third reason for why Just Dance can have a positive impact on people is that it can help to build people's confidence. In an article written by BlackGirlNerds, "Dancing can be terrifying. As fun as it may be, it also leaves us feeling very exposed and puts us at the center of attention" [7]. This could lead into the person who is dancing feeling self-conscious about what the people around them could be saying about them while dancing. Just dance helps build up the players confidence with them playing within the privacy of their home with no one to see them, making the player less self-conscious, you can also express yourself more this way, being more bouncy with the moves in game and letting yourself feel more relaxed and energetic while playing. This is helped

with in game encouragements found in the scoring for Just dance giving players a super or perfect score on moves and letting players earn a superstar or megastar rank for the various songs, this gives players more confident as it makes them feel like they are doing well at the dances and lets them visually see what moves they could improve on if they want.



Here is an image of someone playing a song, with the scoring system on the left side and the rating of their dance move on the top [8]

Game 3 – Animal crossing new horizons

One final game that has a positive impact on people is Animal crossing new horizons, this game is a social and life simulation game where the player has an island that they get the freedom to decorate it how they like as they go through the open world style gameplay with real world time impacting gameplay.

One of the main reasons of animal crossing new horizons has a positive impact on people is the cozy game genre people have given it, the therapeutic and relaxing nature of the game allows escapism for the players, letting them relax and lower their stress levels through tough times, like the pandemic for example. An article written by Ryan Hosseini on Medium says that animal crossing new horizons “quickly became a cultural phenomenon, the game allows the players to build their own virtual island, engage in various relaxing activities such as fishing, gardening and catching insects, as well as interact with anthropomorphic animal characters” [9]. Ryan also talks about how animal crossing new horizons was released at the perfect time, right when the world

had to go into lockdown and stay indoors, this game gave people something to do for the first couple of months in 2020, with the gameplay being very relaxing as well formed the perfect game for players to escape reality and destress. The relaxing nature of this game also improves players mental health just by playing the game, interacting with all the different animal characters you find throughout the game makes your island livelier and doesn't make it feel like an island, and instead like a village with people to talk to wherever you go.



Here is an image of me fishing in the game [10]

Another reason why animal crossing has a positive impact on people is that it allows creative freedom, like Minecraft, you can decorate you island and change the landscape to whatever you want it to be, multiple layers with rows of houses, one flat land with everything scattered or just putting things in random places, your imagination is the only thing stopping you from making what you want. This is further amplified with the slumber islands added in the 3.0 update, which gives players access to a completely blank island, and they can use the items, furniture, flowers etc, to make whatever island they feel like, like Minecraft's creative mode, which again gives players lots of creative freedom in making what they want with the only limitation being the items they have found while on their island. There is also a dlc called the happy home paradise released in 2022, which allows the player to create homes for different residents on the designated island you work on, with only 3 items requires for each design, this also allows the player to express their creativity and make houses fit for the type of home the residents ask for and is described as “overwhelming and encouraged me to think outside the box when decorating” [11] by Taylor Lyres on IGN.

One final reason why animal crossing has a positive impact on people is the social connection and the multiplayer found inside the game. The player can visit the islands of different people through either local multiplayer or online play, which lets you then visit friends or family or other players via third party services like discord to see how they decorated their islands. Players have used this online mode to make trades with other players through fan made apps like Nookazon or NookNet to send custom made clothing, designs or tunes. These different apps and websites make by the community of animal crossing allows players to interact with each other and the community in positive ways, being able to help each other out and get items they do not have access to normally which brings the community together and shows how positive animal crossing can be with other people.



Here is an image of me and my friend playing Animal Crossing New Horizons Together on one island. [12]

To conclude, games can have a positive impact on their players through many ways, letting them be expressive and creative in game, letting them become more stress-free while playing or allowing social interactions between friends and family, games of all types can impact anyone in a positive way.

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