

Zach Howells GPI Assignment 1

280225

by Zach Howells

Submission date: 27-Feb-2025 05:32PM (UTC+0000)

Submission ID: 251372813

File name: 58225_Zach_Howells_Zach_Howells_GPI_Assignment_1_280225_644376_1724156211.docx (1.2M)

Word count: 2170

Character count: 12353

Zachary Howells (2404977)
Games For Positive Impact (ACCA4041)
Assignment 1 – 2 Game Report

In this report, I will be discussing 2 different games that I have identified as having a positive impact upon the audiences that engage with them. These impacts include but are not limited to accessibility, inclusivity, social/problem solving skills and education. The 2 games that will be discussed are The Last of Us Part 2 and Minecraft.

The Last of Us Part 2 – Inclusivity/Representation

The Last of Us Part 2 [1] is an action/adventure game developed by Naughty Dog. Released in 2020, the game features hours of content that has drawn in various types of players over the years. This is in part due to the addictive gameplay loop and gripping story; however, what also makes this game so memorable is the different ways in which it leaves a positive impact on the audience.

One of these impacts surrounds a specific character in the game, 'Lev', and their struggle with being a transgender person in this incredibly hostile post-apocalyptic environment. Whilst being a controversial point for some fans, there is no denying that this is a huge mainstream representation of/for transgender people, and a big step forward for this community.



Above: Lev from The Last of Us Part 2. [2]

Lev is portrayed as an exceedingly strong-willed character that consistently overcomes all odds, despite being enrolled in a feud with the group of people he used to call family (a religious cult known as the 'Seraphites'), as they have cast him out due to him shaving his head and identifying as transgender, in order to escape an arranged marriage in

which Lev would be appointed as an elder cult member's wife. For the audience, particularly transgender players, this can be seen as a huge positive that impacts them in the way of representation and inclusivity. Being the deuteragonist for half of the game, this comes in droves as Lev is front and centre.

Lev's is portrayed by transgender actor Ian Alexander, and his story serves as a commentary on transgenderism, escapism and religious cultism, positively impacting players in a way that increases their social awareness of such issues, as in the real world, they are very real. [3]

The Last of Us Part 2 – Accessibility Presets

Another positive impact of The Last of Us 2 is the droves (over 60) of accessibility options that the game offers to players of varying abilities and capabilities.

To begin with, the game offers various presets consisting of varying degrees of accessibility options, catered to players with sight, hearing or motor function disabilities. If players navigate to the 'Accessibility' tab in the options menu, they will find over 60 options that allow them to fine-tune the game to fit their specific needs, along with built-in presets for more common disabilities:

The 'Vision Accessibility' preset is built for players who are blind or have low vision. Activating this preset will toggle various options that help blind & low vision players access all the game has to offer; Text-to-speech describes the action out loud as it is happening on screen. High-contrast mode enables much higher contrast, brightly coloured character and item models so that they clearly stand out from foliage and background environment assets (increasing visibility).



Above: what

mode' looks like when activated in-game. [5]

'high contrast

The HUD scale will be set to large and auto aim functions will be set to maximum so that players will be able to enjoy the gunplay and check their status with ease (depending on their level of vision). Navigation and traversal assistance will be turned to the maximum level, implemented along with the ability to skip certain puzzles if the player so wishes.

In the 'vision' accessibility preset, there are several more options that are created specifically with this group of differently abled players in mind. This is an objectively positive impact that these players will experience when playing this game and one that has been praised over the years since the game was released and is treated by fans as an impressive accomplishment by Naughty Dog.

For example, Access Ability UK (a UK based gaming accessibility advocate), states that in the testing phase of The Last of Us Part 2, many blind and low vision players managed to complete the game start to finish with little to no problems stemming from lack of vision. [6]

Motor function accessibility options include fully activated auto-aim, movement and camera control assistance, the ability to hold buttons rather than rapidly press them when it comes to quick time events and melee combat combos, and automatic weapon swap and item pickup. [7] This makes the game less of a chore to play through for the audience members with motor function disabilities and makes sure that they are not deprived of the experience, being able to fine-tune it as much as needed for their level of ability – another massive positive impact provided by Naughty Dog.



Above: an arrow showing the correct direction to go next, for players with motor function assistance enabled. [8]

The final accessibility preset offered by TLOU2 is one centred around players with differing hearing capabilities. This provides increased

vibration frequency for combat and stealth situations, an on-screen marker when the player is seen by enemies, and larger subtitles with toggleable backgrounds and speaker names – again, a huge positive impact upon the hard of hearing community members that engage with this game.



Above: the player is being prompted with on-screen markers depicting what direction they are being attacked from. [9]

All these options were meticulously implemented by Naughty Dog in collaboration with differently abled industry experts, as well as accessibility-oriented professionals, to make The Last of Us Part 2 playable by as many people as humanly possible.

Minecraft

Minecraft [10] is a first-person survival sandbox game created by Mojang Studios and released for the first time by independent game developer Markus Persson in 2009 (early access) and then released as a full completed game in 2011.

Minecraft has since gone on to become the most successful game of all time, and since its release has provided hundreds of millions of players with positive, impactful experiences. Whether it is to do with improving teamwork, boosting creativity, improving problem solving skills, even so far

as providing players with an intermediate understanding of electricity and circuits, Minecraft has it all. [11]

Minecraft – Boosting Creativity

The primary pull of Minecraft is that it is an open world sandbox game with an incredibly extensive building and creating mechanic, that bolsters players freedom to truly create anything and everything they want to. The direct result of this is a massive positive impact that players can take from the game and apply to many real-life situations, architecture and painting being two prime examples. [12]

This impact is especially prevalent in children. A study carried out by Iowa State University researchers has proven that children who have spent time playing and enjoying Minecraft have boosted levels of inventiveness overall, and that in a test of creativity, they outperformed other students that play more structured games. [13]

This positive impact is undeniable, and Minecraft has clearly helped people improve upon a very transferrable life skill. As a result of this, Minecraft is widely used in schools across the world (more than 40,000 schools across 140 countries) as a tool to help embolden the creative confidence of children.

In doing so, it has also boosted creativeness in the teachers that implement it in their syllabus. These teachers use Minecraft to teach other, stereotypically 'boring' lessons to young students as well, such as mathematics and science, to large degrees of success. [14]

Minecraft – Developing Problem Solving Skills

One of the biggest draws for new players to Minecraft is that it lets them significantly flex their problem-solving muscles. The game is unique in that it allows players to set their own goals and gives them the freedom to find their own way to achieve them.

The most common problem players are faced with in Minecraft is to find shelter before the night comes – it is safe to wander around in the daylight, but once day becomes night, monsters will begin to roam, and the player must either find/create shelter or fight to survive.

Even this simple problem has a massive array of ways in which the player can solve it. They can create a makeshift hut out of dirt or wood, they can dig a hole in the ground just big enough to fit in to, they can find a naturally formed cave to hide in, or they can even create a bed and simply sleep the night away. These, along with all other possible

solutions, are equally valid and provide the player with the common satisfaction of completing a task that Minecraft provides in droves.



Above: an example of a dirt hut players commonly create on night one of their adventure. [15]

Amongst this commonality that the game has with providing solved problem satisfaction, is an argument that states that playing Minecraft actively makes players smarter, a definite positive impact. [16]

Much like in an academic environment where students are faced with task after task of generally increasing difficulty, Minecraft mirrors this. After finding shelter, it is often found that the next task players impose upon themselves is to find a steady source of food and begin mining for resources.



Above: the default Minecraft player character mining for resources. [17]

Again, there are endless opportunities for players to have completely unique problem-solving experiences whilst carrying out this task, and the more they engage, the more they subconsciously learn and absorb.

This problem-solving feature of Minecraft is enhanced massively when used in a classroom environment, especially with children. It has been proven that children learn best when they are having fun. [18] One of the largest demographics for Minecraft is children – making it the perfect

learning tool. To advance and solve problems in the game world, they must be engaged and focussed with what is happening on screen, especially if they are playing with other friends and classmates.

These features all come together to provide an exceedingly positive impact on anyone that spends a lot of time playing Minecraft, hence why it is the most popular, successful game of all time. [19]

Conclusion

It has been argued for decades whether games provide any sort of positive impacts upon their audiences. The two games researched in this study are shining examples that yes, games can provide a lasting positive impact on audiences and sometimes do a better job of it than most other forms of learning. It is a form of learning that, when done successfully, is hard to beat.

Bibliography

[1] – Naughty Dog, "The Last of Us Part 2," Sony Playstation, Jun. 19th, 2020. <https://store.playstation.com/en-gb/concept/230079> [Accessed 23 Feb. 2025].

[2] - Gayming Staff, "12 Trans Characters in Video Games," Gaymingmag.com, 2025. <https://gaymingmag.com/2024/11/12-trans-characters-in-video-games/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[3] - J. B. II, "The Untold Story Behind Lev's Voice in 'The Last of Us Part II,'" *WIRED*, Jun. 24, 2021. <https://www.wired.com/story/untold-story-lev-the-last-of-us-part-ii-ian-alexander-neil-druckmann/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[4] - Playstation, "The Last of Us Part II - Accessibility," *PlayStation*, 2020. <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/the-last-of-us-part-ii/accessibility/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[5] - Playstation, "The Last of Us Part II - Accessibility," *PlayStation*, 2020. <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/the-last-of-us-part-ii/accessibility/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[6] - L. Dale, "The Last of Us: Part 2 Remastered – Accessibility Review," *Access-Ability*, Jan. 16, 2024. <https://access-ability.uk/2024/01/16/the-last-of-us-part-2-remastered-accessibility-review/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[7] - SpecialEffect, "The Last of Us Part II | GameAccess Motor Accessibility Options," YouTube, Nov. 11, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_HiTi6BV-w (accessed Feb. 25, 2025).

[8] - Playstation, "The Last of Us Part II - Accessibility," *PlayStation*, 2020. <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/the-last-of-us-part-ii/accessibility/> (accessed Feb. 20, 2025)

[9] - M. Baker, "Accessibility Consultation: The Last of Us Part II," Morgan L. Baker, Jul. 03, 2020. https://leahybaker.com/tlou2_access/ (accessed Feb. 25, 2025).

[10] – Mojang Studios, "Minecraft", Microsoft Corporation, May 17th, 2009, <https://www.minecraft.net/en-us> (accessed Feb. 25, 2025)

[11] - L. Alton, "10 Reasons Why Minecraft Is Beneficial for Your Kids," *Lifhack*, Nov. 05, 2014. <https://www.lifhack.org/articles/technology/10-reasons-why-minecraft-beneficial-for-your-kids.html> (accessed Feb. 25, 2025).

[12] - B. Muir, "How Playing Minecraft Boosts Creativity - California Beat," *California Beat*, Apr. 03, 2023. <https://www.californiabeat.org/how-playing-minecraft-boosts-creativity/> (accessed Feb. 26, 2025).

[13] - B. Muir, "How Playing Minecraft Boosts Creativity - California Beat," *California Beat*, Apr. 03, 2023. <https://www.californiabeat.org/how-playing-minecraft-boosts-creativity/> (accessed Feb. 26, 2025).

[14] - Microsoft, "Minecraft Official Site | Minecraft Education Edition," education.minecraft.net, 2023. <https://education.minecraft.net/en-us> (accessed Feb. 26, 2025).

[15] - Shock Frost (2023). MINECRAFT - HOW TO BUILD A DIRT HOUSE. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMztzNWFwGc> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2025].

[16] - FunTech (2020). *Does Minecraft Make You Smarter: Is it Good for Your Brain / IQ?* [online] FunTech Blog. Available at: <https://funtech.co.uk/latest/does-minecraft-make-you-smarter> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2025].

[17] - Minecraft Wiki. (2018). *Tutorials/Mining*. [online] Available at: <https://minecraft.fandom.com/wiki/Tutorials/Mining> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2025].

[18] - Concordia University-Portland. (2016). *Why Adding Fun Activities in Classrooms Helps Children Learn*. [online] Available at: <https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/curriculum-teaching-strategies/let-children-play-add-fun-to-classroom/> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2025].

[19] - FunTech (2018). *11 Reasons why Minecraft is educational for kids*. [online] FunTech Blog. Available at: <https://funtech.co.uk/latest/11-reasons-why-minecraft-is-educational-for-kids> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2025].

FINAL GRADE

64/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Engagement With Literature Skills (65%)

References are featured in the report, showing an application of research in the submitted work.

A bibliography is included, with a range of sources and is presented in IEEE format as requested. Good work.

2. Knowledge & Understanding Skills (63%)

Inclusion of related imagery and screenshots provides useful context, particularly with captions helping to relate the images to the main body of text. Examples of accessibility options in particular benefit from this approach, as the reader can see the differences these features can have on the game experience.

Appreciation of multiple positive factors in games is evident in the work, which is good to see. Case studies have not just been provided for a simple, single reason.

3. Cognitive & Intellectual Skills (64%)

Inclusion of research has allowed references to be featured in the main body of work, which is good to see. To take this a step further, consider discussing the positive elements of these games from an academic perspective – maybe studies/papers/journals etc. that use statistics or survey data to help re-enforce the importance of LGBTQ+

representation, or the increase in engagement in education when games are used – these help you convey a point in your work.

4. Practical Application Skills

(not assessed in this assignment)

5. Transferrable Skills for Life and Professional Practice

(not assessed in this assignment)

Overall Mark: 64%

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9
