



Prifysgol Cymru
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1822 - 2022

Games For Positive Impact (ACCA4041) - Case Study

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11/5/2026

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Detroit: : Become Human, Identity and Society

“Detroit: Become Human is a cinematic neo-noir thriller” developed and published by Quantic Dream, released on 25/5/2018 [1]. The premise of this title is set against the backdrop of a 2038 Detroit advanced by the creation of androids, but overtime these androids begin behaving as if they were human. The story follows the life paths of three of these androids as they embark on a collision course leading to everyone questioning their self identity [1].

Some positive reviews for this title that are publicly available on steam [2], some users have remarked about the positive elements that are highlighted in this title. Below are extracts from some of these reviews:

“The narrative is beautifully crafted, following multiple characters whose paths intertwine in meaningful ways, exploring themes like identity, freedom, and what it means to be human.” - Xanditto

“ The mix of cold futurism, social tension, and small everyday details makes Detroit feel uncomfortably real, like a future we could actually end up in.” - dänüsch ツ

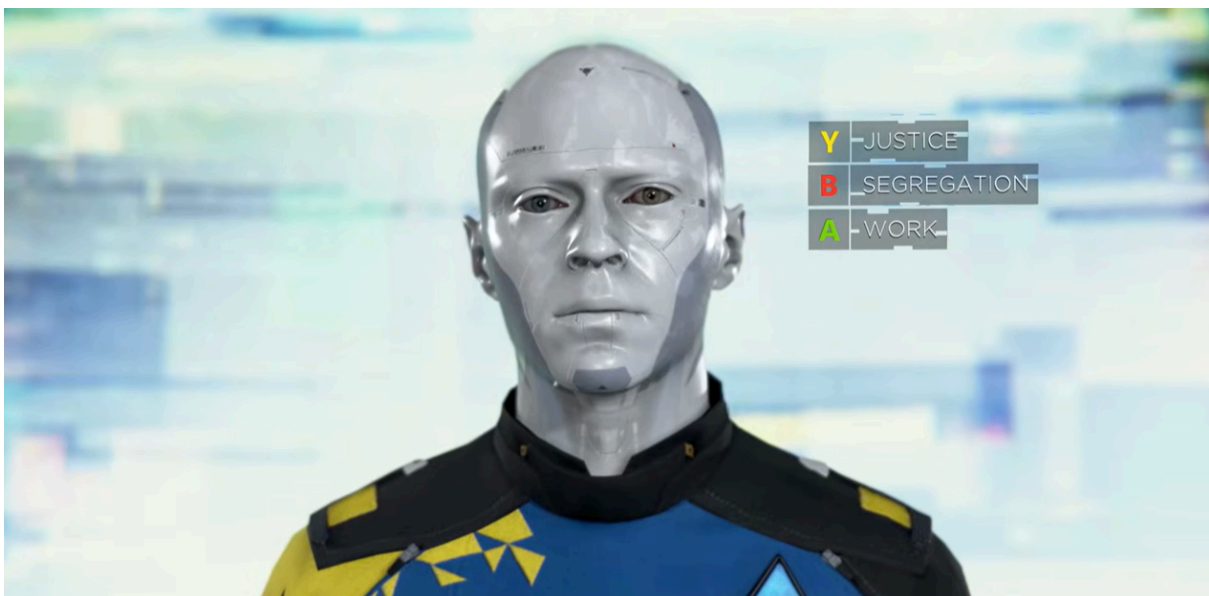
Following elements mentioned by players in the above reviews, the themes of humanity are heavily present throughout this title. With a YouTube longplay provided by Shirrako available online[3] , An immediate example is showcased in the first chapter - “The Hostage” whereby one of the protagonists, an android, is sent as a negotiator to diffuse a hostage situation where the culprit is also an android who has bonded with the family who owns him, but feels he is no longer wanted due to discovering he was going to be replaced by a newer model and embarks on a rampage, fueled by emotion [1].



(11:20 - Detroit: Become Human Longplay [3])

As seen in the above image, the user is provided with branching dialogue options to influence the android's response and emotion, treating the android as if they were in fact a human and thus determining the outcome of the situation. Depending on player actions, new dialogue can be attained to “sympathise” with the android by mentioning how he discovered that the android was closely bonded with the above seen child and was distraught upon seeing the parents’ decision to purchase a newer android [1]. This opening chapter alone already presents so much about what it means to be a human - to feel and be kind.

On dänüsch ‘ツ’s note of “a future we could actually end up in”, in a way that future is already here.



(5:16:00 - 5:18:30, Detroit: Become Human Longplay [3])

On Chapter 23 - "The Stratford Tower", one of the protagonists - Markus - and other androids break into a major broadcasting station to relay a message to the citizens of Detroit requesting that civil rights be amended to facilitate androids having the same status, and rights that humans do to break a segregation bridge. This message is later reinforced on Chapter 28 - "Freedom March" where legions of androids march across the streets of Detroit in unison protesting for their fight for rights [2].

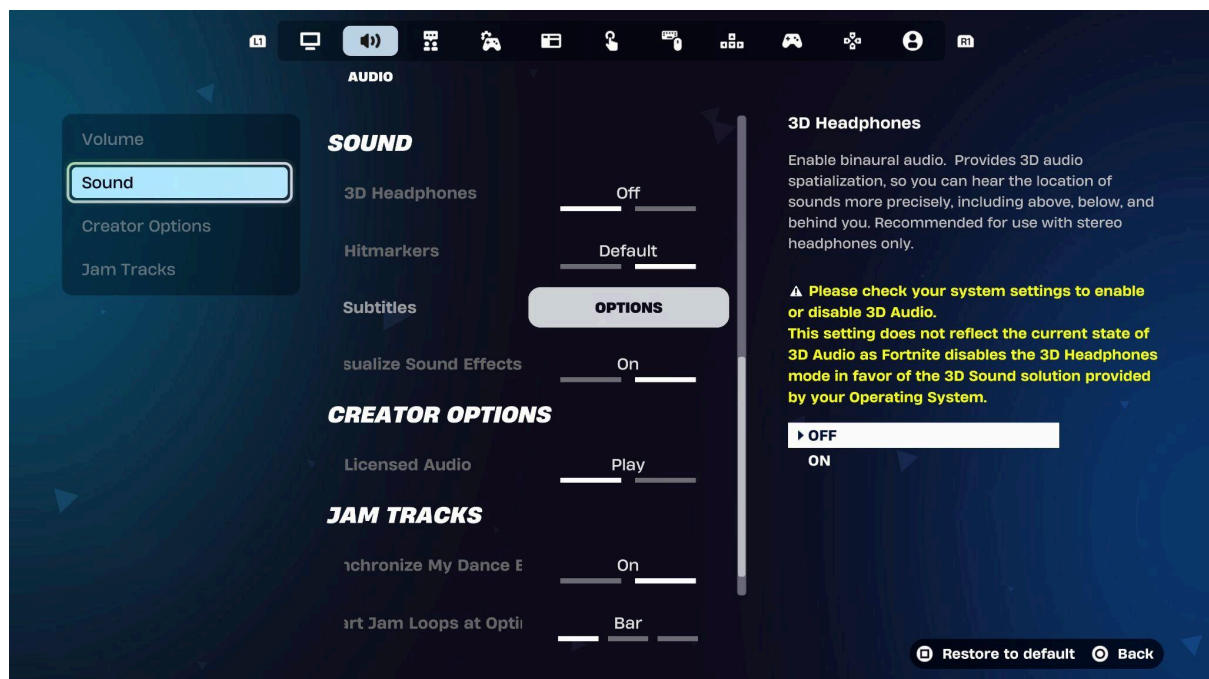
The events of these two chapters can be reflected in real life by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement founded in 2013 to fight against racism, especially in the uprising of "unjust killings of black people by police" of which is condemned by society, leading the fight for change against segregation and upholding the stance that people of colour should be treated with the same dignity as white people [4]. While the real life movement of BLM and Detroit: Become Human are vastly different, they both share the similarity of leading a societal and constitutional fight to break down segregation barriers enforced by the public to ensure society can thrive in harmony, regardless of race. With this in mind, this title can be seen as having a positive impact by shining the light on deep flaws in our society through an intriguing story.

Fortnite, Socialism and Accessibility

Fortnite Battle Royale is a multiplayer game released worldwide on 21st July 2017 by Epic Games [5]. The main premise of this title centres around a multiplayer game in which 100 players are placed into a singular environment in which all players must engage in combat against each other until only one remains, achieving victory.

This online experience can be viewed as a unique positive impact to its global influence on both community and industry for a variety of reasons. Fortnite's free to play model (as seen on Epic Games Store Page [2]) allows players to access this title from across the world regardless of background fostering socialising as Fortnite breaks down both social and geographical barriers as users experience the same shared space.

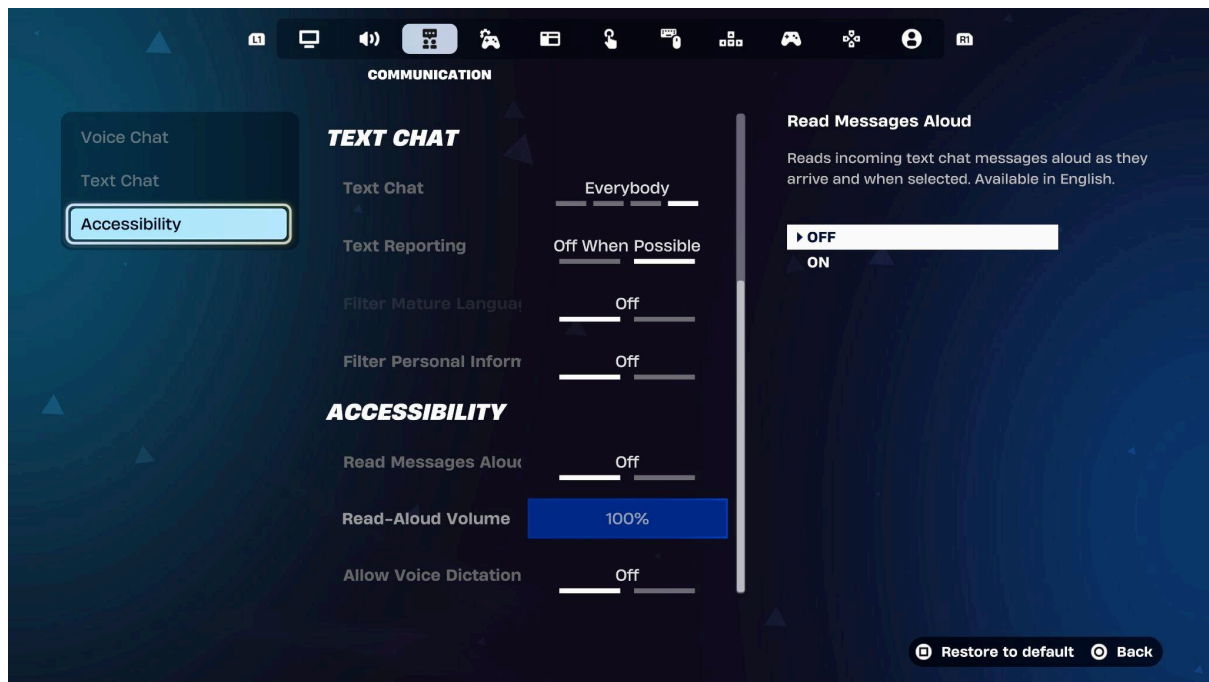
Accessibility is another core feature which players with disabilities benefit from as the in-game settings host a variety of features that may suit different disability types.



(In-game settings - Sound)

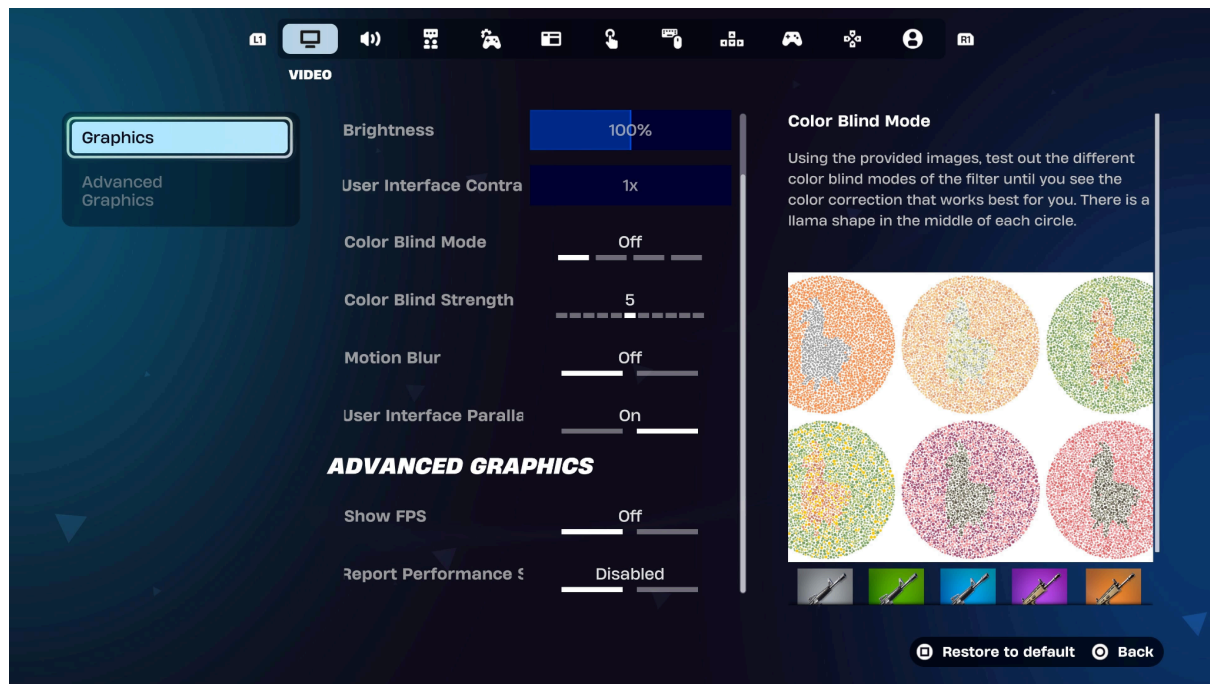
Focusing on users that are hard of hearing, this title offers 'Visualise sound affects' which enables a special function in-game that creates a marker around the users' reticle with a corresponding icon so that the user has visual back of where sound is

coming from around them and for what purpose the sound is being produced enabling users that are hard of hearing to engage with the game with the same level and consistency as normal players.



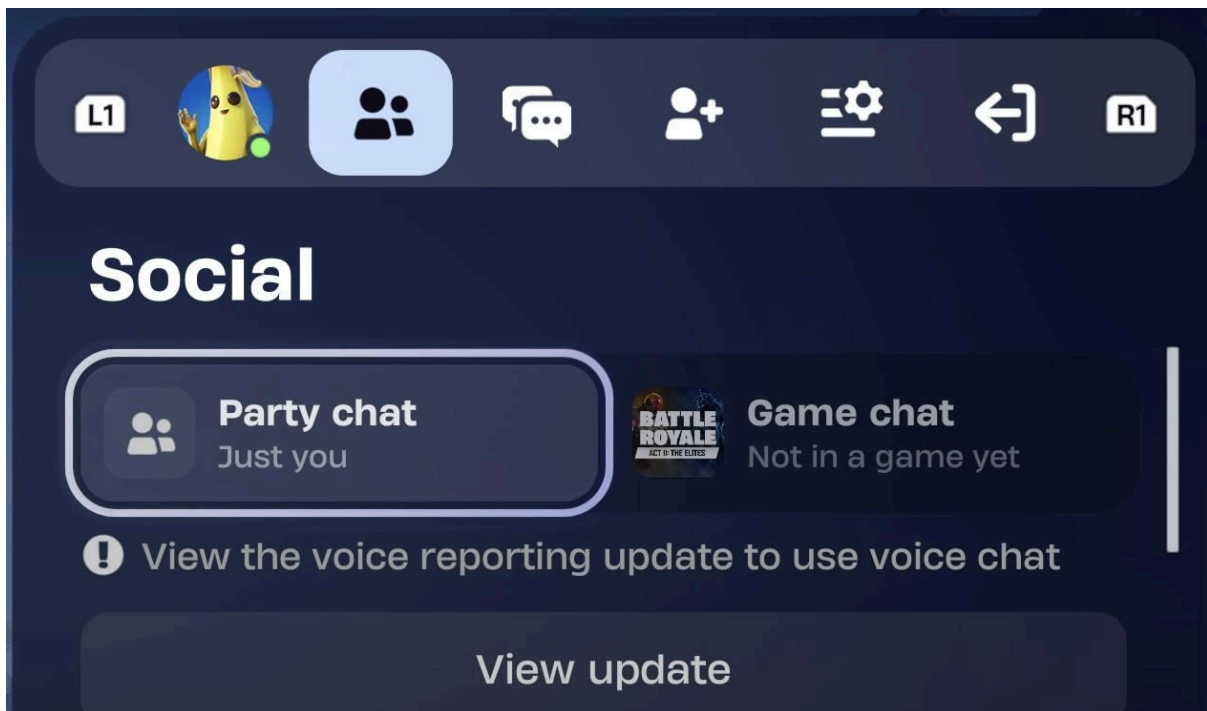
(In-game settings - Communication)

For players that may have difficulty with vision, especially with navigating the games' UI, have the option to enable 'Read Messages Aloud' so that incoming message will be translated into audio so they can be relayed to the user promptly. Furthermore, 'Voice Dictation' allows the user to speak rather than type to send messages to other players.



(In-game settings - Graphics)

Users that suffer from colourblindness may find accessibility features suited for them under 'Graphics' in which the game can be toggled between several colour types to adjust every colour in-game to allow the user to view the game properly, allowing the colourblind to also engage efficiently whereas this wouldn't be possible in a majority of other titles.



(Party Chat - lobby UI)

Found in the pre-settings UI, many social options are provided to the player. The toggle between Party and Game chats allows players to decide whether they want to strictly communicate between players in their own squad or publicly communicate with players found within an on-going session offering both privacy and community engagement at player discretion.

The messaging service (under the text bubble icon) gives users the options to directly communicate with friends in-game if the option for voice chat isn't available or to deliver a message that is meant for only one user boosting means of privacy to players.

Under the person icon, players may choose to add other players to become an in-game friend which opens up the option to invite players to existing game sessions, no matter where each end user is from, allowing for real time collaboration in a communal space.

Alongside the title's social success follows competitive success, with the most notable being the World Cup where professional players fought against each other for a real life money prize pool [6]. With Fortnite's free model, widely available accessibility features for disadvantaged players and the drive for social engagement present its clear that this title has had a large positive impact on players worldwide.

Catherine, Psychology and Interpersonal Crisis

Catherine is an adult-oriented puzzle horror game produced by Atlus and released by SEGA originally in 2011 [7]. The story follows Vincent Brooks as he begins to suffer nightmares caused by large relationship difficulties between two people that share the titular name and must navigate these troubles with character interactions during the day while surviving the night time torment with player interactions affecting the outcome of the story.

While not noticeably visible, this title, through Vincent, will hint to a cascade of psychological problems that can be experienced individually.



(31:31 - Catherine Longplay [8])

Following a longplay [8], one psychological issue of which is present can be found during the first interaction with Catherine (as seen in the above image). Vincent can be found in the aftermath of a situation of which he realised he was cheating on Katherine with someone also called Catherine [7] in which Vincent will exude hints of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance can be defined as “mental discomfort experienced when a person holds two conflicting beliefs or when their actions don’t align with their beliefs” [9]. Vincent experiences this phenomena during the aforementioned scene as he can be seen carefully choosing his words to Catherine while being distraught due to his actions not following his current lifestyle with Katherine creating internal tension within Vincent. This issue can be further reinforced with other psychological distress scenarios showcased further down the story.

Another two issues that uphold the idea of cognitive dissonance are decision paralysis and commitment anxiety of which are both present within the same scene.



(32:00 - 37:00, Catherine Longplay [8])

In this scene, Vincent is seen discussing future plans with his girlfriend, Catherine whereby she reveals that she may be potentially pregnant and is pressuring him to get married, remarking that Vincents’ current lifestyle must change to adopt long term goals. Immediately hearing this news, Vincent is locked into what’s known as decision paralysis.

Decision Paralysis is a common scenario in which a person abandons decision due to overanalysis, leading to no action being taken due to the fear of potential outcomes [10]. Vincent goes through this scenario as he is unsure what to do in

terms of lifestyle, whether to continue with Katherine or to spend life freely with his friends, especially due to his recent cheating. This paralysis and overall dissonance is further backed up by his commitment anxiety, in which a person wants to avoid long term commitments in life due to losing their ability to live and choose independently [11]. Vincent realises that he has to make a careful choice on whether to continue his current lifestyle on destructive habits such as late night drinking with friends and living dirtily (from Katherine's remark of leaving clothes everywhere) or to become a family man and provide for his potentially new family.

Finally, all of these problems that Vincent experiences will culminate in what is known as avoidance coping, defined as "dealing with stress where a person changes their behavior to avoid thinking about, feeling, or doing difficult things" [12]. The title provides Catherine as a means of giving Vincent a means of avoidance coping to avoid thinking about his future with Katherine but rather these events will force Vincent to reflect about what he truly desires in comparison to what Vincent might be destined to do, like raising a family.

The title uses Vincents' predicament to subtly hint at all these tightly bonded psychological issues to introduce how simple decisions in the real world can affect a person's mind and the consequences of their actions from other characters. The story also produces a sense of irony as users will play 'Catherine' as a means of avoidance coping from their own real life experiences but will instead cause the user to reflect on their own actions as they will find themselves relating to Vincents' own crisis, thus leading the player to consider changing their ways in the real world to lead a healthier and happier life.

The above named psychological problems and many more makes 'Catherine' a unique gameplay experience as it does not convey personal issues in the traditional sense but rather places the user into an uncomfortable scenario compiled from real life experiences that may mirror the real life stories of the user, making them consider the thoughts of others and what may happen depending on what they decide to do, engaging real psychological issues from thinking about a fictional

character suffering the same type of fate. With this at hand, 'Catherine' is a standalone experience that provides a positive impact through direct reflection in comparison to subtle nods.

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