

ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Prosocial User Experience of Empathy Lesson Plans in Minecraft for Adolescents

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Video games have grown in storytelling and graphical accomplishment in the past couple decades, and studies into how they can promote prosocial behavior and empathy are needed to better understand how this media can promote positive psychological development in adolescents. One video game that is popular with this demographic is *Minecraft: Education Edition*, which offers structured lesson plans that promote empathy and prosocial behavior.

This thesis documents a study that uses quantitative analysis to better understand the relationship between *Minecraft: Education Edition* and the promotion of empathy and prosocial behavior in these lesson plans. The study results partially support the hypotheses that individuals who play a video game with lesson plans specifically designed to instruct them to act empathetically will show more empathy and prosocial behaviors in the short term than those who play the same game without predetermined goals or lesson plans. Although there was not a significant difference between the two groups in the total score for the three scales measuring empathy or prosocial behavior, one individual item score on each scale was significantly or marginally improved in the experimental group. These three individual items were related to prosocial behavior and perspective taking, which is a subset of empathy.