Game: Undertale

Reading: Doing Things with Games: Social Impact Through Play (Social Impact Through Play)

Undertale is a role playing game(RPG) which tells a story of how a child (Frisk) falls into a mountain which inhabited by a group of monsters, and how Frisk escapes it. In the game, one is given the option to play it as a traditional RPG, killing the monsters to gain EXP and raise ones LV (abbreviations here are on purpose and will be explained later). Alternatively, one is able to complete the game by showing mercy to the monsters, which does not raise ones EXP and LV. However, the twist of the game is that EXP stands for execution points (rather than experience points), which quantifies the pain that one has provided to others. In addition, LV stands for level of violence (as opposed to level), which shows the ability for one to distance his or herself from violence, and capacity to hurt. This goes against the traditional RPG concepts to gain a maximum LV and EXP, and grow stronger to fight of monsters which are shown to be ‘bad’. In the game, monsters are portrayed as likable characters, just of a different species.

From playing undertale, one is able generate a greater empathy for monsters in an organic way. This is contrasted in other games which have a heavier and more direct emphasis on empathy, such as PETA’s parody of Pokemon, Pokemon Black and Blue. Some of the reasonings have been gleamed from Social Impact Through Play. The length of the game during a pacifist run (about 6 hours) provide time to develop connections to the monsters’ characters. In addition, the story themes of friendship, loss and choice provides an opportunity for the player to be more personally invested in others. Lastly, the difficulty of showing mercy is akin to Grace and Lindsay’s scaled emotion, whereby one has to jump through many hoops to show mercy to monsters, while resisting the temptation to fight, which is easier.