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CIS 121 Introduction to Computers and Information Systems

In a world gone digital, where new ideas and technological advances in every field are being developed, it makes sense that one of the most popular innovations is virtual reality (VR). VR is defined as a computer-generated environment that a person can explore and interact with ("What is virtual reality"). It is more than a piece of equipment that you use to ride a virtual roller coaster or slice through fruits or play real-time versions of the mobile games you love. In fact, it is something that can be used to help you become better at your job or experience the world in a different way that will help you become a better and more educated person. Through the many applications of this technology in the education, entertainment and military fields, VR can influence culture and impact every aspect of how we live our daily life.

One way that VR can be used, is as a learning tool in which you can immerse yourself in a language and culture, or even learn school subjects in new ways, such as exploring historical landmarks or identifying and practicing procedures on a virtual body, or getting to teach virtual students in order to practice the skills you would need as a teacher (Scott). By fully immersing yourself in a culture or language, you can learn more effectively and efficiently. You won't be wasting time learning simple words, you can actually converse with people and learn how they act and talk and be able to respond better. When I was learning Chinese before I moved there, my family and I were learning from a program, which was not a very good one. They were having a conversation with a local but the local was responding like they were a a nonnative. For example,

when I went to China, I learned Chinese in class as well and the book talked about the basics of conversation, which was not as helpful as going out and actually talking with the locals. Each person had a different dialect and sometimes did not say the same things in the same way as the book or program taught, but the context and meaning was the same. They talked fast and sometimes did not respond in the same order as what we had been taught. If you only rely on class and books, you won't get the same experience as being fully immersed in that culture. By being able to be virtually immersed, you can get the same experience, learn effectively, and save money. Because of that, you will probably master the language in half the time that it would take to learn a language the standardized way. By being able to fully submerge oneself in a specific culture and language, people will be able to be more open and culturally aware, which can help them be more educated and seem well-travelled. You could travel all over the world that way at a much cheaper rate and still be in your bed at night.

Being able to teach virtual students in a safe and realistic environment is something very useful and applicable. By using this technology to better prepare students to work in the world they want a career in is very smart. Students who want to be teachers usually do not get experience or opportunities to teach until after they finish college, in which they might not know that it is something they might not want to do. They also won't be experienced and will not be as confident as someone who has taught for many years. If they are given actual opportunities to learn what works and what doesn't in a virtual classroom, they will be better equipped and more confident. Sometimes, young teachers are not as confident and overcompensate by trying to make their students obey them and showing that they have authority, which might not be the best choice and might make their students very uncomfortable. However, as I said before, if they

were already trained and knew what worked and were confident in their authority, they would

not be trying to prove it, they would already assume that they had it and that students would obey

if they wanted to succeed. This would create a new generation of better equipped teachers and

educators, which would in turn, create a new generation of students who might actually learn

something in school and be more passionate about learning. If kids have teachers that are

passionate and know their subject and how to teach it well, they will be able to learn more

effectively and not feel as if they are wasting their time.

Entertainment is what most people picture virtual reality being used for, but it is not

limited to merely games and fun, it also includes sexual programs and virtual reality tours to

various art museums or places around the world. As the popularity and spread of virtual reality

games become higher and higher, more and more people will choose to isolate themselves away

from the outside world and seek comfort in fantasy worlds. In addition, the more life-like the

environment, the more people will want to stay in that virtual world. They might become

addicted and find actual social interactions much more difficult or foreign because they are not

used to it. If people are using virtual reality to escape from an uncomfortable or unsafe home

situation, such as abuse, in order to fulfill their basic human needs, why shouldn't they. It might

keep them alive longer and give them something to live for (Kim).

Virtual reality games centered around sex and finding romance might lead to a

deterioration of sexual relationships in the real world because men might rate their partners as

less attractive and not respect them as much. If they get into a fight, they might cheat with their

virtual partner which could be considered cheating and might feel like a betrayal to their partner

as well (Koltko-Rivera). In addition, some programs might create assumptions that violence or

sadistic impulses during sex is normal. If the partner in the program complies with whatever you want him/her to do, that might not be good for your actual relationship or relationships you might want in the future. For instance, if you have a partner who does whatever you want, but then you find someone later on in life who may not feel comfortable doing that, but you expect them to do it anyway and get violent if they do not do it, that would be considered abuse. VR technology is intended to help individuals adapt to the demands of the real word in a safe environment, but if it actually causes deterioration of relationships instead, that would be a negative impact of this technology and should be examined (Koltko-Rivera).

With a combination of a mobile app and a virtual reality headset or goggles, you can now explore art sites and historical landmarks all over the world in one day in the comfort of your own home without having to worry about travel costs. Google has an app called Arts and Culture which, when combined with the Google Cardboard hardware can help you visit ancient temples in Sicily, asian art at the Singapore Art Museum, and even get to explore and follow the journey and construction of the Statue of Liberty ("9 Virtual Reality Tours"). These tours will impact culture and society as whole by allowing them to be more educated in the areas they love. There is only so much articles and books can teach. Sometimes, you have to go to that site and see it for yourself to really get an idea of how important that sculpture or art piece was to that culture and era. Even though you are not physically there, being able to be there virtually will get you very close to that feeling and really help solidify your knowledge and passion. Lastly, by going on virtual reality tours, you can see whether or not you really like a museum and you can save money in case you don't actually like it. If you end up loving a museum or art site and end up going there in person, you will know where everything is and what to look for. You can also use

virtual reality to explore sites and take tours of colleges or schools to see whether you would like it there or not. If what you see really excites you, then going there in person will be even more meaningful and you will take away a lot more.

Lastly, virtual reality can be used to help the military train soldiers and pilots in a safe environment so they can learn the techniques and skills faster and safer, as well as help them overcome PTSD and give practical ideas to assimilate back into a normal life as soon as possible ("What is Virtual Reality"). I think being able to use virtual reality software as a way to help combat PTSD is one of the most important applications of VR and has a lot of potential. Soldiers often come back from the wars and have a hard time adjusting back into a non-military based lifestyle or trying to find a normal job. They often have PTSD, even if they never diagnose it or get help for it. This sometimes decreases the quality of their relationships and their everyday life. They might be traumatized or be triggered by something seemingly normal and they might not know why and so they won't ask for help. However, if they are trying to diagnose themselves and fix their problems and come across PTSD and how there is a cure, they might be very willing to try it. Using virtual reality to bring up things that might trigger them but giving them a safe environment in which to react and make decisions is very helpful and will give them hope that they can actually live a normal life. Soldiers who are able to fix this part or cure their depression that might result will give them happiness and contentment and they will not have to worry about being a threat to their family or friends. The more that this software is available and the more aware that people are that this exists, the more that society will be benefitted and there won't be as many soldiers without families or a good support system.

In conclusion, virtual reality is a new technology that is being used in many ways ranging from immersive and virtual classrooms, virtual reality tours, and training soldiers on how to treat the battle inside their minds after they leave the battlefield. As VR software becomes more and more popular and as the products range from educational to entertainment devices, the culture will become more and more impacted. Virtual reality is something new that has come a long way but still has a long way to go. However, the impacts are already here and existent. The more available and attractive it is, the more people will be addicted to it, especially if it is an escape from a world they would rather not live in or a world which is much better than the world they currently live in. However, if it is something that is causing them to not be able to interact with the people closest to them and causes a deterioration in their relationships, then something needs to change. There is always going to be people who use new software in a negative way, which then causes people to think it is a bad thing, but that is not true. There are so many good applications that will affect culture in a positive way. For instance, being able to take a virtual reality tour of a place far away in distance but close to your heart is something that will really be beneficial. Being able to teach students or learn in a virtual classroom will create and raise passionate and better educated students, who then have a higher chance of getting a job close to what they want to do as a career. Lastly, being able to train and prepare soldiers on how to assimilate back into a non-military lifestyle will create strong relationships without as many divorces or abuse situations, which will in turn benefit society.

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