Thesis Project Portfolio

Smart Suggestions

(Technical Report)

Virtual Reality… Friend of Physical Activity?

(STS Research Paper)

An Undergraduate Thesis

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Sociotechnical Synthesis

Obesity is a story that's told all too often. 21st century habits haven't helped this at all, with poor dietary choices and increased sedentary lifestyles being acomplices in continuing this nationwide issue. However, with modern technologies, like Virtual Reality (VR) and it's sibling technologies, there might be a new way to address obesity. Research will be conducted to determine the efficacy of VR as a supplementary technology in the aid of reducing obesity. From a purely technical standpoint, VR may be able to help solve the obesity epidemic. The use of the technology has already proven to be fascinating, and seemingly could find ways to benefit the general public's health. However, on top of the technical potency research that will be conducted, social and human facets have to be analyzed. The obesity epidemic is simply too complex and too longstanding to be caused by technical dearth alone. This problem is uniquely human. In order to solve a human problem, both human and social aspects have to be considered—quite heavily at that. The diffusion of ideas framework and the technological stabilization framework can both prove useful in the effort to discovering how VR technologies might actually be implemented in society for obesity needs. What this entails is a concentrated effort in finding previous literature on the current and potential uses of VR not only for the cause of weight loss, but other health benefits. It is expected that there should be some positive outlook with regards to VR's potential in the health space. When this research is considered simultaneously with the technical report, even though loosely related, both are geared towards the betterment of one's quality of life. Whether that be making a workflow easier, or increasing your physical activity engagement through VR gaming, both sections of research and reporting should inevitably help someone. This research has the potential to impact tens of millions of people across the United States.