

**Human Crossing: New Horizons**

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**Introduction:**

No one did not expect COVID-19 and how the pandemic continued for over two years. At the beginning of the pandemic, all people only focused on how COVID-19 influences our economy through social distances; however, as the pandemic continues, their attention has moved to children's social development. With social distancing, children could not attend school and enjoy outdoor activities with other children, and therefore, time spent at home increased. Of course, it was helpful to increase time with family before the pandemic, but it prevented children from socializing with other peers and developing their social skills. Consequently, it leads them to show a downward trend of social development.

A frequent problem in children's social development is having trouble understanding other children's emotions. By shortening time to hang out with many friends, children's ability to read others' emotions and communicate with their nonverbal messages would decrease. In the journal *Children's Emotion Regulation Understanding: Development, Social Context, and Maternal Influence*, Sara Florence Waters argues that children's emotional regulation has been influenced effectively by peers. Peers' roles in emotional regulation differ from those of parents, and children could regulate their negative emotions more with peers. She also said that children who cannot associate with peers well would have lower achievement in psychology and academics. Therefore, it causes the children to feel it is hard to understand what cooperation and coordination are and why communication is essential for being a social member. According to this argument, developing the children's social skills to read other's emotions and moods is vital for better cooperation and communication with peers.

During the pandemic, one of Nintendo's video games, *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, was famous to people around the world, and people were able to meet their friends in this video

game virtually instead of meeting in person. People could build their town and do various activities, such as fishing, farming, gardening, etc., in the video game, and they could also do these activities with their friends. Therefore, if virtual reality is combined with this video game, it would be a great game to protect and maintain the children's social development during the pandemic. Then, the new video game, Human Crossing: New Horizons, was created.

**Design:**

According to the development of peer interaction in the lecture slides, children between the ages of 4-5 years share play more and longer with others. It means that children at that age could understand cooperation, so they no longer prefer to be a hero in a play. It means they know each one's role is valuable, not the hero is the only important thing in the world. In addition, children between the ages of 6 and 7 focus on coordination and successful play, and at the age of 7 to 9, they expect friends to share and help them. Therefore, children realize the importance of peer interaction by growing up.

Children can still maintain their social development on emotion, peers, and self-regulation with video games with virtual reality technology. The current Nintendo video game, Animal Crossing, is a social simulation game for the Nintendo Switch. Players can do numerous social activities and interact with their friends in a virtual environment. However, instead of themselves, the characters they make play a role in the game. So, I imagined and designed the new style of the Animal Crossing video game, the VR version: Human Crossing. Children can play the game as they are playing in the real world.

First, players should wear glasses instead of using a Nintendo Switch. These glasses show players a virtual reality. The method of using the game is the same as the existing game

method. However, the difference in the game is that the actual self becomes a player, and features such as players' behavior, facial expressions, and speech are not technically created but show who they are. Simply put, it is a social activity in a game. In this game, children can continue outdoor activities that could not be sustained due to COVID-19. In addition, you can create a school server in the game so that children can attend there instead. During the pandemic, classes were conducted through video chat, but this is not the best way. Video chat thinks that children just watch rather than directly participate. However, in this game, virtual children can be educated as vividly as they go to school by attending classes. Children can develop their economic ideas not only through academic achievement but also through economic activities in games.

**Expected Benefits:**

I think the effect of this game is that children can meet and interact, read, and learn peers' facial and body expressions directly with other people, even though it all happens in the virtual environment. During the pandemic, children could not experience this social interaction in the real world, reducing their ability to socialize with peers. With this game, children can experience all activities the same way as before the pandemic. They can attend school and take classes, play with and work on a group project with peers, and even travel and do any outside activities that are impossible in the real world because of COVID. Everyday lifestyles in the video game would foster their social skills, how to interact with peers, and what and why cooperation is essential. It would be precisely the same process to develop the child's socialization. In addition, children could face other children as they see them in the real world with VR technology, so they could also maintain their ability to read nonverbal communication

through this video game. Because children play and cooperate with others in a virtual environment, they still learn how to regulate their emotions in social situations. Learning emotional regulation by interaction is beneficial for being a valuable and helpful member of society—act without caring about your friend’s feelings. You might be unable to maintain a good and comfortable relationship with your friend because nobody wants to get along with people who do not consider them valuable things. As I mentioned above, Mrs. Waters claims that children develop their emotional regulation with emotional responses from others. Consequently, interaction with peers helps build socialization and learn emotional regulation by exchanging emotional expression. In addition, the authors of *Children’s Emotion Regulation: Self-Report and Physiological Response to Peer Provocation* prove that children who effectively regulate their emotions can regulate emotions physiologically, behaviorally, and experientially at similar levels. Children are also assumed to be equally good regulators across different contexts. As a result, children who are effective emotional regulators have a higher possibility of being good self-regulators, allowing them to hang out with others well. Each process will interact with each other and should result in positive social development for children even though they are quarantined from the world during the pandemic.

**Conclusion:**

At first, when I brainstormed this paper, I believed that the most critical social development is the self. Learning who I am is the primary goal of my life, and social development can also happen after knowing and understanding myself. So, the self is the primary factor to develop. However, I changed my thoughts after watching lectures and reading the two references I used.

All references claim the same argument that all social development is influenced by other social development. Consequently, learning what is an excellent way to regulate emotions helps to develop a good socialization with others, and building a good relationship with others has an influence on the development of self-regulation and then being a good self gives a positive effect on the expression of emotion. So, all three areas of interest are essential for developing children's reduced social skills during the pandemic. My new Nintendo video game is associated with virtual reality technology; therefore, children can experience ordinary life the same as the previous life of COVID, and it will be helpful to maintain their social development. As a result, I believe that Human Crossing: New Horizons should be an excellent candidate for social development.

## References

PSC 142/HDE 102 : Social and Personality Development Lecture Slides from Dr. Julia Ribeiro:

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