Stop & Think

Teaching Players About Media Manipulation in Headliner

Jakub Kasztalski
Founder & Creative Director
Unbound Creations LLC

@UnboundCreation or @Koobazaur https://discord.gg/Zz3eD5Q This line exists for symmetry

Games = Interaction

Books can tell you something...

Movies can show you something...

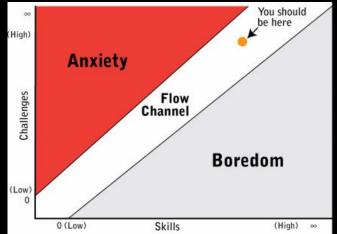
Poems can make you feel something...

Games can make you <u>do</u> something...









Keep playing

Stop & Introspect







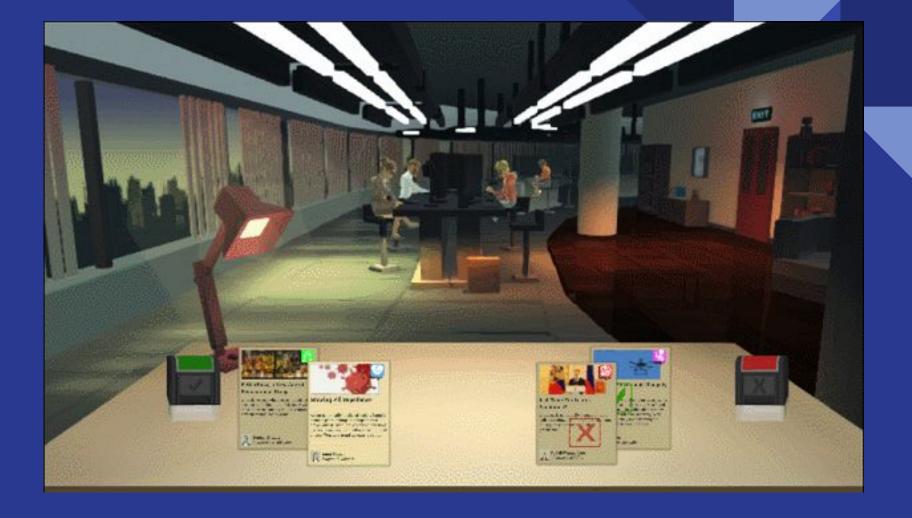




Our game











Charles W. 1 day ago

This is the most realistic simulation of American Mainstream Media I've ever seen!!!





REPLY

Goal

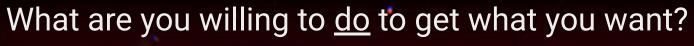
We wanted to make a game that helps players understand how (and why) media is manipulated, and question their own biases. Spoiler: it's a lot more complicated than "evil journalists"



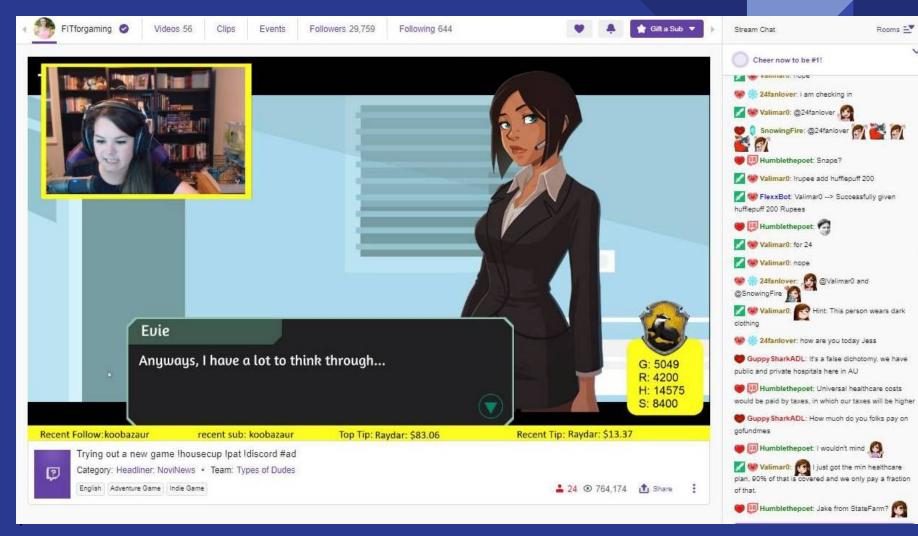




History is written by the victors The present is written by the media







Real World Impact

- Used to a class on media Literacy at Pacific Buddhist Academy in Hawaii (and others)
- Mentioned in GeekWire, LA Times and in Philip DeFranco show
- Case study for a talk organized by IGDA,
 Foundry10, Seattle Ed Tech and Seattle Indies
- Has 95% positive Steam user ratings
- Silver Award at Serious Play Conference, Best Indie Game of Tokyo Game Show, IndieCade Nominee, IndieMegabooth at PAX Official Selection twice
- Made affordable in the Philippines and Brazil, which struggled with media issues
- Featured at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image

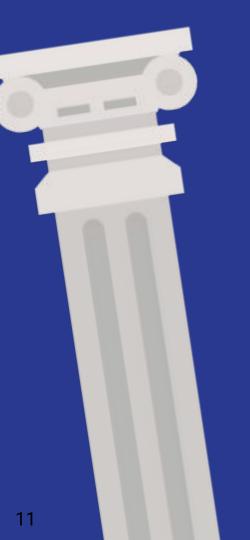




Development

Design Pillars and Constraints

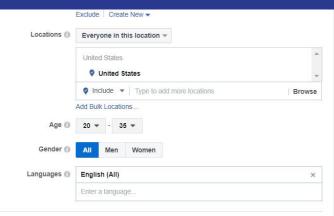
- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game



Important and Relevant Issues

But why?

Makes the game timely and allows players to draw connections to things they care about



Detailed Targeting INCLUDE people who match at least ONE of the following

Interests > Additional Interests

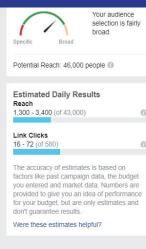
Environmental science

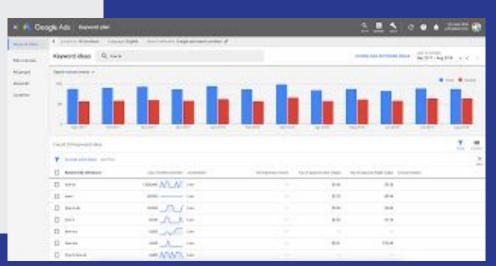
Exclude People or Narrow Further

Add demographics, interests or behaviors

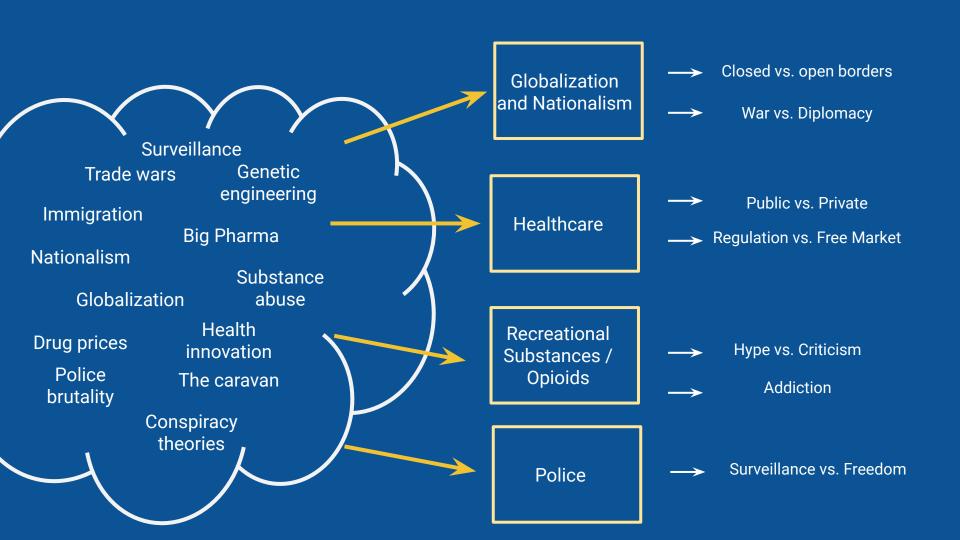


Suggestions Browse









Make it believable





Maria Ressa, journalist and Duterte critic, arrested in Philippines

By Joshua Berlinger and

Updated 11:28 AM ET.

HUFFPOST

.og Ir

Join HuffPost



WORLD NEWS 06/14/2019 03:25 pm FT

Sudan Military Ac Against Protester

Over 100 people were reportedly killed in t sweeping crackdown last week.

AP Bassam Hatoum and Nona Elhennawy



KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) - Sudan's ruling milita



The Post's View • Opinion

Marriage equality in Taiwan is a landmark move for the rest of the world







Examples

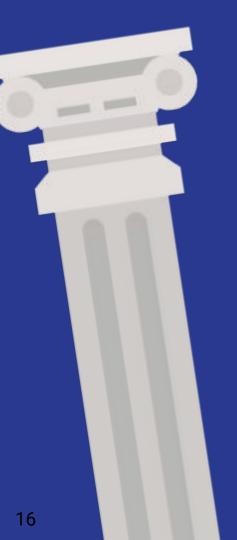


Design Pillars and Constraints

Important and Relevant Issues

No Agenda

- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game



No Agenda

But why?

If we want to teach players about media manipulation, we don't want to push them away by seeming like we're pushing an agenda they disagree with (especially bad with how polarized many of the issues are)

Lure players into feeling like they're following their beliefs, and then show them the unintended consequences and far-reaching implications





Maria Ressa, journalist and Duterte critic, arrested in Philippines

By Joshua Berlinger and

Updated 11:28 AM ET.

HUFFPOST

.og Ir

Join HuffPost



WORLD NEWS 06/14/2019 03:25 pm FT

Sudan Military Ac Against Protester

Over 100 people were reportedly killed in t sweeping crackdown last week.

AP Bassam Hatoum and Nona Elhennawy



KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) - Sudan's ruling milita



The Post's View • Opinion

Marriage equality in Taiwan is a landmark move for the rest of the world









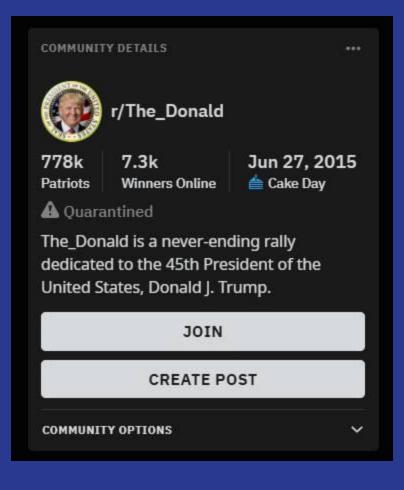
Justin Sullivan/Getty



Chicago Tribune



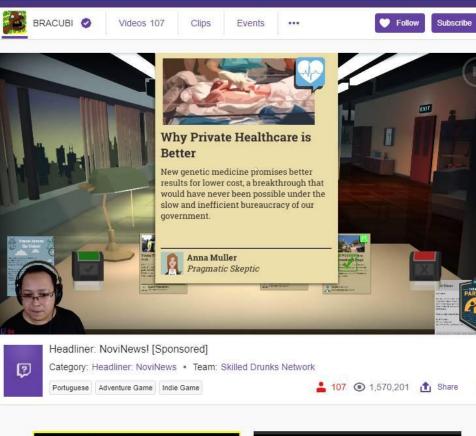
Women of the 1920's | Sutori





Example: Nationalized Healthcare

- What are the arguments FOR it?
- What are the arguments AGAINST it?
- Not, that what YOU think what people who stand for that side actually think.
- Can you find other news sources or scientific journals defending either position?
- Makes it believable and genuine
- Show these effects directly:
 - I.e. your brother gets access to therapy, refers to actual CBT
 - I.e. your coworker is stuck waiting at the hospital, doesn't get treatment in time



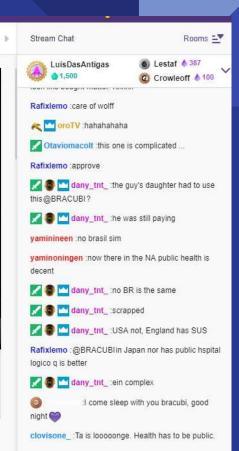


PATROCINADORES

Premium Sponsor:

Anonymous Totaling more than \$ 4,000 in cash and parts.

-

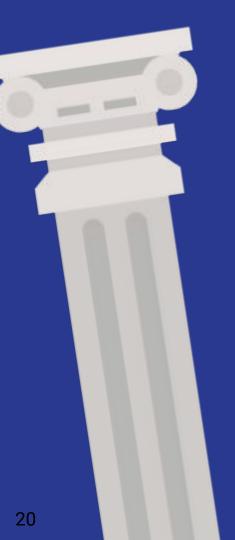




- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda

Fictional Setting as Buffer

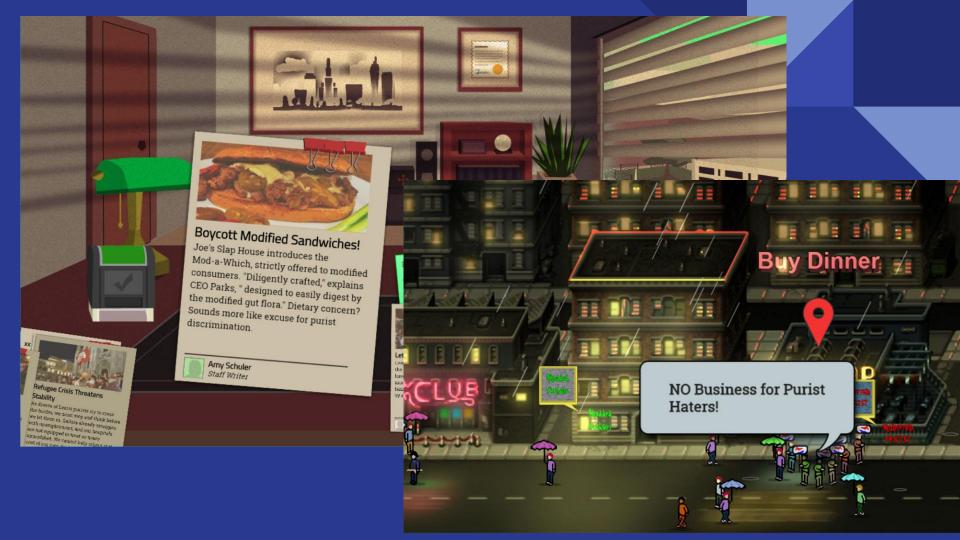
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game



Fictional Setting

Acts as a "buffer" between the real world and the game and lets players lose themselves in the game world and buy into the fantasy of being a media mogul.

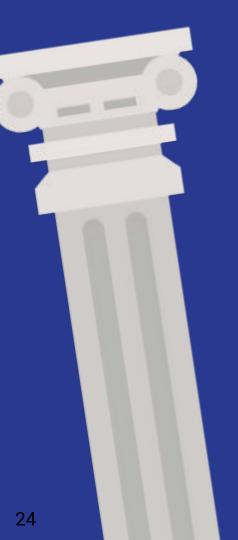
If we based it on real world examples, we might get more media coverage, but we would likely alienate a lot of the people who we wanted to educate about these issues







- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
 - Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game

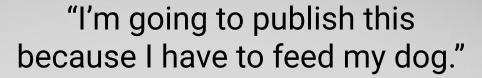


Humanize the Issues

It's not effective if a game simply tells you moral lessons...

...it's better if a character you care about tells you about them...

...and even better if it happens to them.











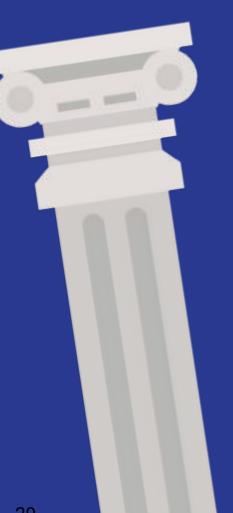








- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
 - No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game



No Good or Bad Outcomes Only Trade Offs

We don't want the player to feel the game has a clear win or lose conditions. It's NOT about what's "right" or "wrong." That's for you to figure out!

Follow your biases and see the consequences...





Career vs. Family vs. Society

You can only choose 2

For every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction.

Aka "No good deed goes unpunished"

Player Choice







You CAN get what you want, but how far will you go to get it? What are you willing to sacrifice in the process? What effects might this have that you haven't



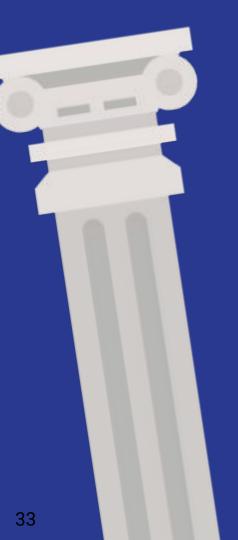
Word of caution

Psychologically, we perceive negative effects more strongly than positive ones. We actually had to re-balance and re-write parts of the story, as initially players were overwhelmed by the negative consequences and disregarded the fact they actually achieved their goals. There's a difference between feeling "you can't win" and "you always loose."

- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs

Replayability

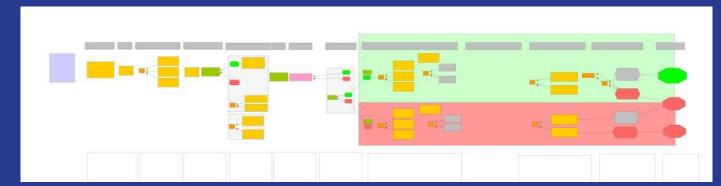
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game



Replayability

The full message can be seen by playing the game multiple times and seeing different sides of the story. It also helps reinforce that your choices were truly meaningful.

- Deliberately short
- Multiple parallel branches (each character has 3-5 different endings)
- New content on subsequent playthrough, a little 4th wall breaking
- Get "insider knowledge" that can help you on subsequent playthroughs (i.e. Justin imprisonment)
- Kill your NPCs
- "Share your Ending" feature



Scott Fedor @fistfightking1 · Nov 24 I just beat Headliner: NoviNews...

I started a revolution

I cost people jobs #lamHeadliner2

I started a war

EVIL

Money just piled up #lamHeadliner2

I helped oust an usurper

l just beat Headliner: NoviNews...

I watched my brother struggle with anxiety My coworker managed her illness I laughed while a mega corporation burned

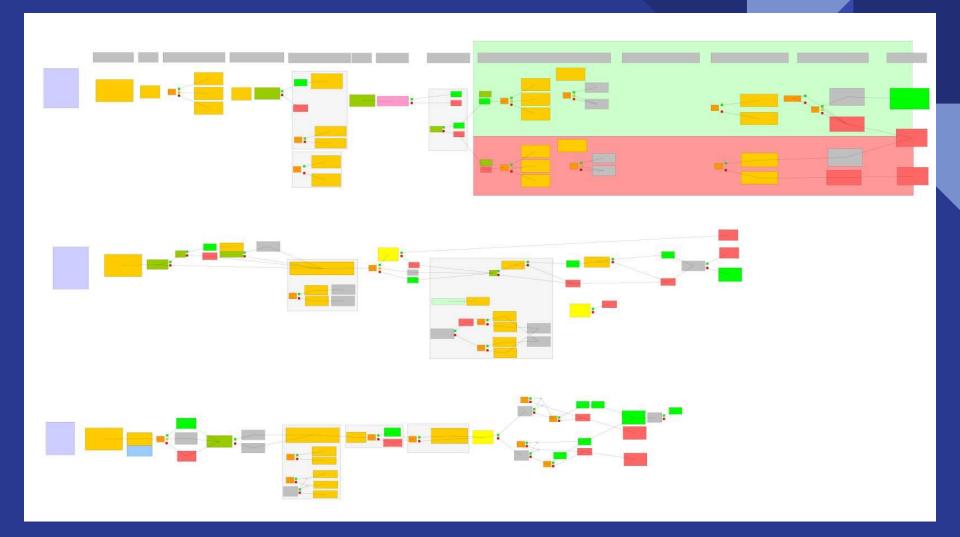
I cost people jobs

#lamHeadliner2

I started a revolution

17

- FalingDutchman, Sat Nov 30



Some stats

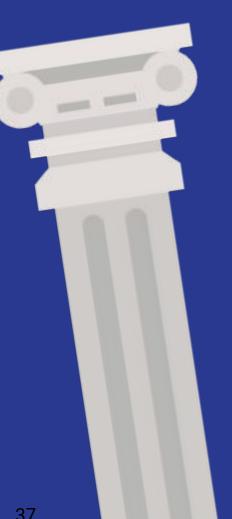
Over half of the players who beat the game once, played and beat it again.

7% beat it 5 times.

28% shared their ending.

85% of players adopted the doggo.

- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
 - Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)
- Put a Game in Your Game

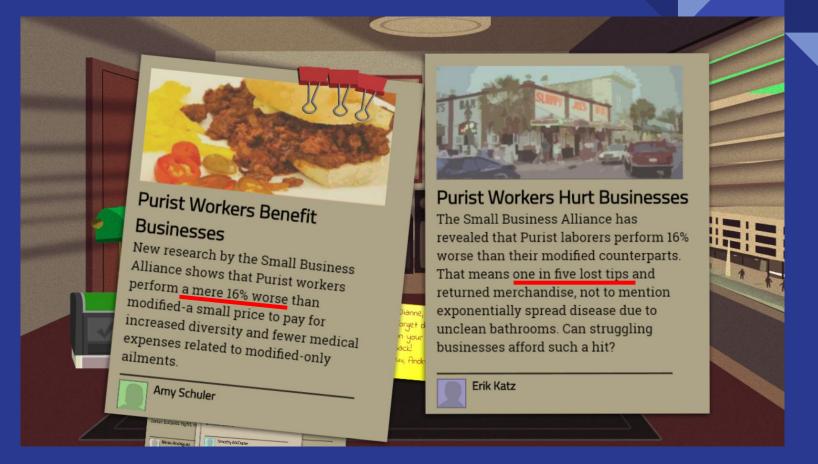


Teach by Doing

Being a "creator" is more impactful than being a "recipient"

If we want the players to understand media manipulation, we have to make them manipulate some media!

Statistical manipulation



Profiling



Man Shot on Capitol Square

Young man was killed late last night on Capitol Square, marking worrying trend in gun violence. Numerous witnesses reported the assailant as "foreign-looking."



Young Woman Found Dead in Park

Last night, the Police found the body of Sofia K. hidden in the bushes of a nearby park. NoviPD issued no statement, but likely suspect is her boyfriend Hermann P., who is not a Novistan native.



Rudolf Wunnenberg Clearheaded Editor



Rudolf Wunnenberg Clearheaded Editor

Repetition / Lies of Omission



Scapegoating



Packaging / Bundling / Hidden Agendas

Florida passed this year's weirdest ballot initiative: a ban on vaping and offshore drilling

The unlikely combination of drilling and vaping was bundled into one amendment.

By Julia Belluz | @juliaoftoronto | julia.belluz@voxmedia.com | Updated Nov 6, 2018, 9:40pm EST











MOST READ

Mexico releases the full text of Trump's immigration "deal"

7 winners and 9 locars of the 2020 Democratic

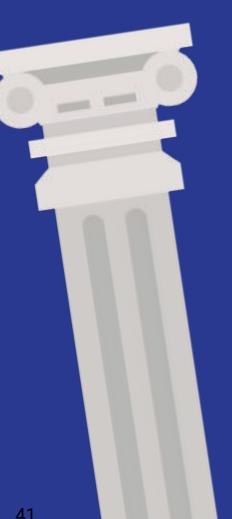
Government / Financial Pressure



Design Pillars and Constraints

- Important and Relevant Issues
- No Agenda
- Fictional Setting as Buffer
- Humanizing the Issues (Through Believable and Relatable Character)
- No Good or Bad Outcomes, Only Trade Offs
- Replayability
- Teaching by Doing (Systems Literacy in Media)

Put a Game in Your Game



Put a Game in Your Game

But why?

At the end of the day, it's still a game and has to be engaging (or interesting)

We want players to stop and think, but also to go back to playing after!

Something that is still often missing from purely social impact or educational games

Attractive art style and compelling story



Effects are accelerated and exaggerated



Little nuggets of joy



Law of Unintended Consequences



Things that didn't work out...

The Spouse You Hate



Influence Indicators



Randomization



It's hard to keep up with reality...





Koobazaur Today at 1:21 PM

Mother I have a line in Headliner where the "Union is laughing at us" as a satire, and now I will have to change it



AGAIN

><

Stop

Trump

omg





Photos reveal migrant children sleeping on ground 02:50

(CNN) — The photos, obtained by CNN, could have been taken at a refugee camp in the Third World. Children sleep in the dirt, some covered only by Mylar blankets. A woman and child sit on rocks, huddled against a building. People mill about outside makeshift tents.



Fox News gets exclusive access to one of nation's largest ICE detention facilities

Correspondent Griff Jenkins gets a tour of the ICE processing center in Adelanto, California.

A law library. Access to 24-hour health care and mental care. Outdoor soccer fields.

In Sum...

- Games can be a powerful medium of sharing ideas and organically broadening horizons.
- Simple balanced trade-offs can force players into difficult choices.
- Make players draw their own conclusions, don't tell them.
- Let your players fall on their biases and do horrible things.

"Oh my god... what have <u>I</u> done?"

Stop and **Introspect**

This model could be applied to many other topics...

- Amazon Warehouse Working conditions [sorry, taken!]
- Deforestation/Pollution (short-term profit vs. long-term effect)
- Automation effect on jobs
- Healthcare costs
- Anti-government protests/riots
- Trade wars
- Stock market bubbles and crashes
- Online Privacy and tracking
- Propagation of (mis)information on social networks (working on this!)
- Addictiveness of games
- Addictiveness of social media
- Online harassment/trolling/doxxing



Such talk. Very slides. So educated.

Let's talk social impact games - Connect with me!



Jakub Kasztalski Founder & Creative Director Unbound Creations LLC

@UnboundCreation or @Koobazaur Discord: https://discord.gg/Zz3eD5Q

Studio Page: www.UnboundCreations.com

Blog: www.koobazaur.com



Photo by @QuetzalliAle

Credits

- Boy playing wii game https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boy_playing_wii_game.jpg
- Gary's Video Game Engagement Session http://www.photobombpodcast.com/garys-video-game-engagement-session/
- Flow Chart https://thinking.philosophie.is/engineering-the-flow-state-6b2317c0be07
- What's shaping the future of mobile gaming? -http://www.theleader.info/2018/02/02/whats-shaping-future-mobile-gaming/
- Snowstorm painting: A Very Gallant Gentleman (John Charles Dollman)
- Jan Matejko-Astronomer Copernicus-Conversation with God
- Ship with Squid Martin Davey Illustration
- Victorian Social Molieres LAvare
- Balance Painting by Ellen Beauregard

•