

Jaime Bravo

EDU 786

Game Design Proposal

In this age of portable technology teens spend a significant time using their phones and tablets. Their time is spent using social media as an alternative form of communication. Social media is a platform where teens interact with each other and share personal information. Sometimes there are negative aspects of social media and teen interactions. For example, cyberbullying, picture sharing and unsafe online dating are some of issues teens encounter on social media. Addressing these issues in a platform where teens enjoy visiting is a great opportunity for educational institutions to offer. According to the Pew Research Center teens ages 13 to 17 use Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat the most. The sign-up process for social media accounts is easy and only requires an email account and age verification. But during this sign-up process social media platforms do not go over dangerous situations a minor can encounter while using these applications. One can assume that the age verification will filter out minors from creating an account. But that is not the case, many teens are familiar with imputing the correct birthdate to be old enough to have social media accounts.

Gaming whether it is educational or for entertainment is also a common aspect of teens lives today. Serious games have become integrated in many educational establishments as an alternative to traditional teaching in the classroom (Egengeldt-Nielsen, 2008). According the Pew Research Center about 81% of teens have access to a game council. Based on this information, designing a game that provides basic social literacy including do's and don'ts of

social media in a gaming platform, can benefit cyber-social interactions teens encounter every day.

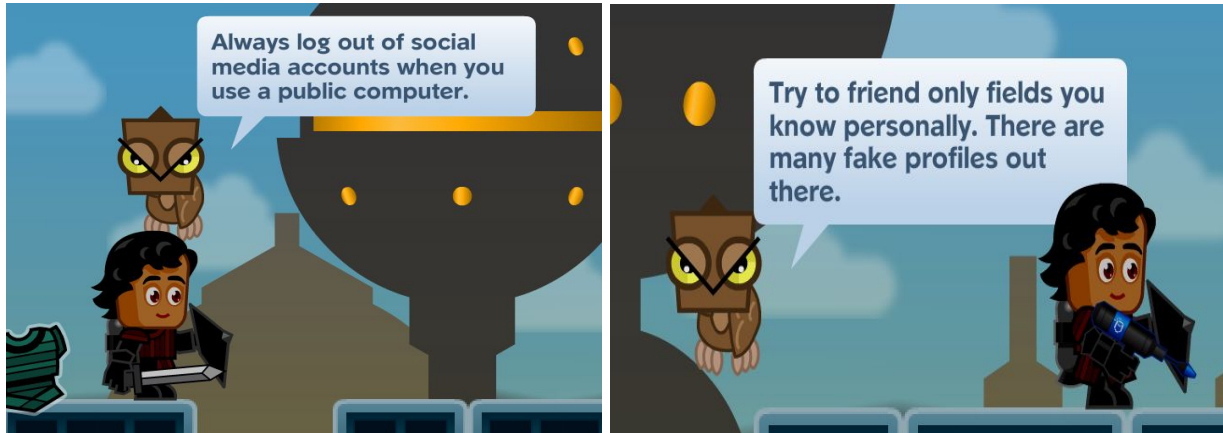
The design of the game is based on scenarios and information provided to the player. This information provides both education and real-world scenarios teens can identify as possible issues they would encounter. The examples provided in the game gives teens tools to address issues around bullying, sharing personal information or pictures and online dating. These are only basic tools on how to approach different topics and serves a basic introduction. The main learning goals for this game is to provide social media literacy which is, being able to communicate appropriately, responsibly and to evaluate conversations critically in social media platforms (“What is Media Literacy”, 2017). Similar to media literacy where teens apply critically thinking skills to media messages they consume, social media literacy applies basic concepts for teens to learn from and provides different ways to address these issues. The educational outcomes for the game are social/emotional interaction, problem solving and accountability. The outcomes are geared for teens to personally develop in decision making, critical thinking skills, increased confidence and self-esteem. After completing the game, players will have a basic understanding of problems facing youth in social media. Parents and guardians will also benefit from teens playing this game since it is a starting point for conversations they can have with their children. There are teens that are not allowed to have social media accounts this game can serve as a preliminary requirement to getting an account.

The title of the game is *Do it for the Likes* which will be hosted in the website Sploder.com. Sploder is a free online website that lets players create different kinds of digital games including platformer games. This website is also used to teach youth about coding and

game design. Do it for the Likes is a platformer game which is a popular form of game for many teens. The game also allows for players to move freely in the game environment and complete the required tasks to pass to the next level. In *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* the experience of a game is described as truly interactive only when the player makes choices that “have been designed into the actual structure of the experience” (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). A platformer game creates the experience of playing a game more interactive by having the player in continuous action either jumping up into suspended platforms or avoiding obstacles.



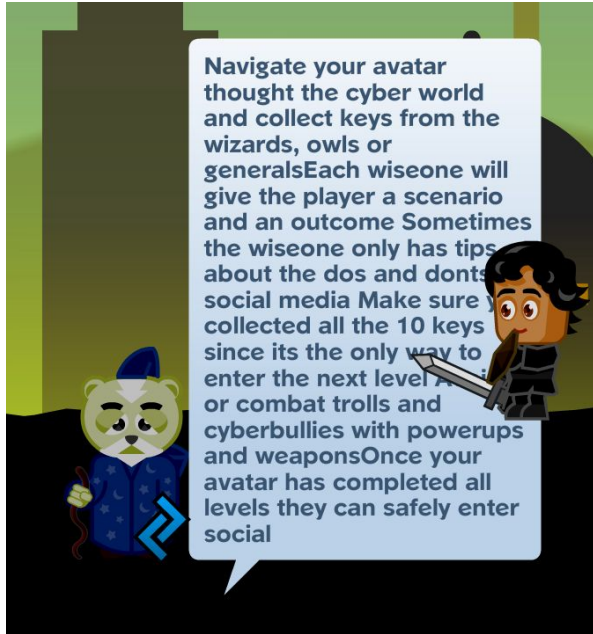
This level of activity will also balance the breaks players will have to make in order to read the scenarios and information provided in the game. A crucial component in the game are the micro and macro level choices players are able to make during their journey in the game. Micro level choices are small choices during different time-frames in the game “moment to moment interactivity” (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). Macro level choices is a “long-term of choices in the game” that blends micro choices to provide players with a meaningful play experience (Salen and Zimmerman 2004).



In the game *Do it for the Likes* players will be given 2 paths to take, different weapons to defeat their “cyberbullies” or shields if they search for additional information in the game. These choices are all micro level choices that in the longer time frame will impact macro level choices in the game experience. Teens enjoy personalization and the ability to explore. The game will have to have elements that allow teens to have choice but at the same time be able to navigate the game and learn from the scenarios provided. Choice has been an important component for players to experience meaningful play (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004).

Do it for the Likes game rules are as follows:

- Navigate your avatar through the cyber world and collect keys from the wizards, owls or generals
- Each wise-one will give the player a scenario and an outcome
- Sometimes the wise-one only has tips about the do’s and don’ts of social media
- Make sure you collected all the keys since it’s the only way to enter the next level
- Avoid or combat trolls and cyberbullies with power-ups and weapons
- Once your avatar has completed all levels they can safely enter social media accounts



Teens can enter the magic circle as they read the instructions and go through the initial phase of the game. The narrative of the game shows the avatar ready for combat and other characters willing to help during the journey.

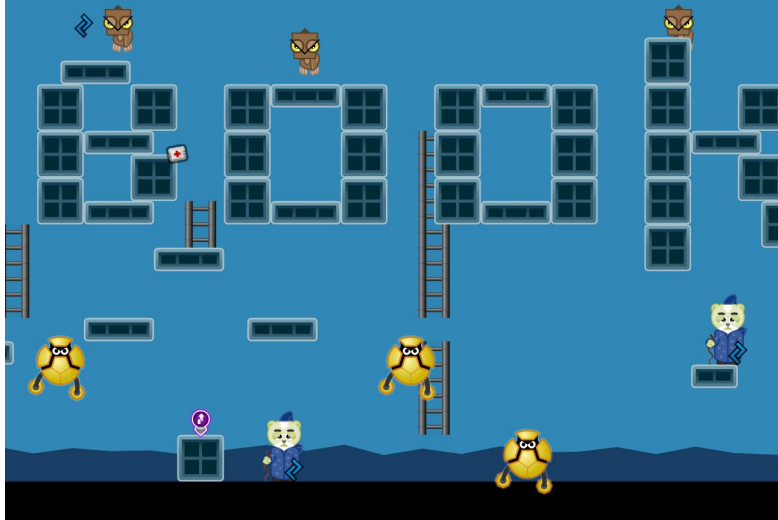


The “constitutive rules” of the game explain the logic of the game but there are various ways the player can collect the keys and strategize to survive the social media platform (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). This also gives the player an opportunity to understand the basic role that their avatar has in the game. The scenarios and examples provided by the wise-ones also give context to the player. This is an opportunity for the player to choose whether or not to connect their avatar to the scenarios they encounter.

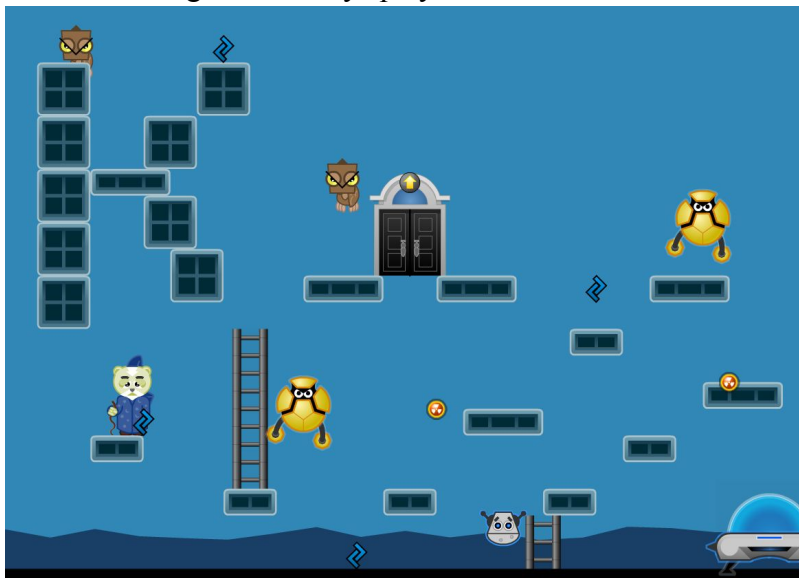
The gaming elements of *Do it for the Likes* are action, challenge, uncertainty and emotional content. These elements can provide the player with a meaningful play experience because the player has to complete the challenge they are given. The level of uncertainty in the

game is reflected by the player not knowing what is ahead and how the weapons work. As Salen and Zimmerman explain, if outcomes of games are predetermined the experience does not lead to meaningful play. The game provides enough uncertainty that the player can continue with the game because they know they have to collect a certain number of keys to move to the next level. As Salen and Zimmerman explain, there needs to be the right balance between randomness and uncertainty, if there is not enough randomness the game is boring and if there is too much the player will feel chaotic and distressed (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004).

There is a flow experience in the game *Do it for the Likes*, while playing the game teens will be able to battle enemies that will require strategy and concentration. There is also a level of challenging activity for players that are not familiar with platformer games. Csikszentmihalyi's idea of flow is "an emotional and psychological state of focused and engaged happiness, when a person feels a sense of achievement and accomplishment, and a greater sense of self" (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). Based on the game design teens will have a few breaks from battling their enemies while they read the don'ts of social media and short scenarios presented by the wizard. Therefore, the areas will be clear from harm where owls and wizards so the player can concentrate and read carefully.



After collecting all blue keys players can enter the next level of the game though the level door.



Ideally the game will be played for both education and entertainment purposes. In hopes that teens are able to better navigate issues that arise in social media. The game is a basic introduction of the dos and don'ts of social media. It also provides teens with specific scenarios about other teens experiences with specific platforms and possible ways of addressing these situations. Playing the game can benefit teens by providing a context to where they can engage

these topics on their own. It also serves as an introduction for discussion either in school, library or home.

Work Cited.

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