

Final Project Proposal

Student Information

Course: PCGG, Fall 2021

Name: Anna Boronina

E-mail: a.boronina@innopolis.university

Introduction

On the 3rd of July, 1981 The New Your Times [1] reported that 41 homosexual men were diagnosed with rare and quickly developing form of cancer for an unknown reason. In the following year, it was given the name acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). A bit later researchers had discovered that human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the one causing it. People started to refer to the disease as gay-related immune deficiency [4], which helped put even more stigma on gay people, who just started to fight for their rights in 1969 [4]. It is hard not to hold the church responsible for spreading false information about the disease. The church spoke against condoms, sex education, abortion, and the queer community [16].

At first, people were scared of the unknown - that is the first step to discrimination and segmentation. Later, the doctors revealed that one can get infected through unprotected sexual contact, sharing needles, breastfeeding, and birth. The virus was spreading with enormous speed [2]. The main reasons for that were a problem with sharing the information and stigma:

- *There was no information. I think it was shrouded.* [5, 0:58]
- *Los Angeles Times poll found that 50% of Americans favor quarantine for AIDS victims. 48% said that they should be issued special identification. 15% said AIDS victims should be tattooed.* [5, 1:18]
- Many infected people were abandoned by their friends and families [3].

In January of 1982, Larry Kramer establishes Gay Men's Health Crisis [6]. Later, in 1983, there appeared AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLS). In 1987 Larry Kramer created ACT UP in New York. APLS played a huge role in fighting HIV. Nevertheless, my project will focus more on ACT UP/NY movement and their actions against the government.

The only thing required to join ACT UP was to be angry with the government and society. People lost many loved ones, and they united and turned their anger into street protests and provocative actions.

They said [7]:

"WE ARE ANGRY:

- *At the Government's policy of malignant neglect*
- *At the irresponsible inaction of this president*
- *At the shameful indifference of our elected representatives*

- *At the criminal hoarding of appropriated funds by government agencies”*

“I don’t recall that we did a lot of mourning. I mean, I think we turned our mourning to anger” (Hayse 2000).

Indeed, thanks to their anger, there were multiple raids organized by ACT UP. They helped to push the government to continue working on drugs to help HIV-positive people. The first price for a drug called AZT was \$10.000 per year. After the first ACT UP raid, it lowered by 20% in three days. After a while it lowered to \$3.200 per year.

It is important to say that even though ACT UP fought for gay rights, the hierarchy within the community still existed [7, 15]. As Deborah B. Gould states, one of the reasons ACT UP was slowly falling apart in the 90s was racial and gender conflicts [7]. It is very well shown in the FX series "Pose": *"Everybody needs someone to make them feel superior. That line ends with us, though. [Discrimination] runs downhill past the women, the blacks, Latins, gays until it reaches the bottom and lands on our kind"*. By *"our kind"* were meant transgender people in the 80s. Even though transgender people were silenced by ACT UP itself, they still played a big role in the movement [15].

That is why I do not want this game to be focused on white male gays who managed to receive at least some amount of care. I also want to include other parts of the queer community and show their role.

Game Definition

The game is based on the history of fighting for the queer community rights in the 80s and 90s. It focuses on ACT UP's angry and provocative actions towards pushing the government and society to help reduce the pandemic. The Introduction section gives an excessive background on the topic.

The game introduces several groups, each with people united by a goal or beliefs. In the current prototype of the game, these groups are:

- **ACT UP** (angry people who plan the riots and actions, they should be careful and know a bit of game theory)
- **US government** (can include people who are strictly against helping HIV-positive people and people who are secretly supportive, but have to hide it, etc.)
- **People with a lot of money.** Other groups can convince them to sponsor their campaigns.
- **Journalists** (they can influence the mood of the general public)
- **Media people** (dancers, singers, artists, any celebrities can show support or opposition to ACT UP)
- **Game master.** It can be a small group or just one person who makes sure that everyone plays according to the rules. They have to know the history and rules very well to do that. This role will be mentioned once again in the following section.

Each group, excluding the game master(s), can include from 5 to 20 people. I believe that even number 20 is too high because the group decisions can take hours. At the same time, the more people, the closer the game is to real life.

I would like to include one more group that would represent underground life, people who participate in the ball culture, create houses, and support each other [12, 13], [14]. A part of this group can be related to the ACT UP group. Since I did not think about it enough, that is why it is not included in the list above, but I hope it will be later.

Proposed Method

This game provides many ways to include PCG elements in it, mainly because it is history-based. PCG elements I introduce are the following:

- **Roles and groups.** Each person is assigned a role and goal in the game. For example, person A is a lesbian who does not have HIV (at the beginning) and wants to do as much as possible to help ACT UP. At some point, she can decide to organize a women's march against the Cosmopolitan article [8] or, indeed, be against it and support the government not to lose her job.
- **Dice.** Sometimes things must be out of the players' control and have to be decided for you. One way to introduce randomness is to make this decision depend on a dice outcome. For example, after every two rounds, there is a 2/6 chance that some people can get +1 to their HIV stage.
- **Hidden intentions.** Some players can be forced by the game rules to follow, so even the group they belong to might not know their intentions in some cases. Maybe she is also working in the government. So, this person will have to make decisions based on their status, goals, and moral values that are assigned at the beginning.
- **The game master (optional).** They make sure that everyone is playing according to their role. Besides, they can introduce additional rules, actions, or roles if they know the history well.
- **Journalists.** Papers and TV are powerful tools for information spreading. They can influence the game in any way they want. The group of journalists is not united by the same objective but they argue with each other and control the percent of people supporting ACT UP or the government.
- **Cards.** Cards are drawn at the beginning of each round. There are cards of three types:
 - Cards describing an action. E.g., for ACT UP: "plan an action in the church" [9] or "come up with a plan on how to decrease the price of AZT".
 - Cards to be played on oneself. E.g., "Your family accepted you" or "Your family does not want to support your actions anymore, you decide to cut them out of your life"
 - Cards to be played on someone else (not necessarily that they contain bad news) "Your partner dies", "Your campaign did not succeed", or "You lost all or part of your money. You can get some of it back if (...)". The last one can be played on a businessman/businesswoman.

D&D [10] is very similar to what this game should be - there is a story made during the game itself, there is a game master, there are roles that must be followed no matter what player's internal wish to act differently.

Placement within in the Taxonomy

According to Julian Togelius *et al.* [11], my game is placed within the taxonomy in the following way:

- **Online Versus Offline.** Since the game can include many people, it can be played online - it requires only a way to communicate.
- **Necessary Versus Optional Content.** All the elements of the game are necessary and can be used to influence the scenario in one way or another. At this stage of developing the game, there are no optional elements.
- **Random Seeds Versus Parameter Vectors.** Both are present in the game. Examples of a random seed could be dice rolling, cards drawn from the deck. Examples of parametric vectors could be the game master and players using the cards on themselves or others.
- **Stochastic Versus Deterministic Generation.** Since the game does not have predefined scenarios, it is completely unpredictable, hence stochastic.
- **Constructive Versus Generate-and-Test.** At this stage of developing the game, I believe that it is constructive because all the cards, groups rules, and possible hidden intentions are created before the game once.

Necessary Materials

While writing this document, I have already found enough materials for the creation of the game prototype. I think the most important one will be the movie [5] "United in Anger" since it contains many emotional interviews, scenes from the protests, and a very informative timeline of the events.

One of the things that inspired me to create this game is the FX series I mentioned before. It also helped me see what people had to go through in the 80s and 90s [12].

While searching for papers I could use for the game I found one [7] that helped me understand the emotions behind ACT UP actions and provided some slogans and quotes.

Evaluation

Success:

- Introduce an uncountable number of possible scenarios for the game, thus creating a stochastic game
- Raising awareness and getting at least one person to want to know more about things such as how hard freedom is gained, how hard it is for discriminated people to live lives, how important it is to recognize discrimination.

- Manage to avoid creating a romanticized story about the movement. There was a lot of discrimination within ACT UP itself to the point that some women left the group, black people did not want to join, transgender people were not always welcomed [7, 15]. Moreover, some members of ACT UP say that the meetings were boring and it was a lot of hard work [7]. So, I do not want everything to look easy and fun.

Failure:

- None of the points from the “Success” section happened.

Timeline

I will show it as several deadlines I set for myself.

- **19.09:** decide on how to include ball culture in the game
- **23.09:** decide which emotions and atmosphere I want this game to have
- **26.09:** create an idea of the action cards design; list all action cards I want to have
- **30.09:** draw some examples of action cards; consider suggestions from Dr. Brown and implement changes
- **03.10:** finish the documentation and presentation
- **06.10:** present the game to the class

Risk Disclosure

1. The biggest risk is that people cannot play the game in case they lack some knowledge. So, to eliminate this, a short story and some links must be included in the rule book. To make the history less boring, I would include a lot of quotes to give a general sense of the emotional atmosphere around AIDS in 80s and 90s.
2. A person is assigned a role they cannot take due to their personal reason. For example, one may show acceptance to transgender people but not understand what they go through or not understand the ball culture. In this case, they would not enjoy the game as they will be focusing too much on their doubts. The simple solution would be to allow players to refuse to play a certain role - that is something that should be managed by the Game Master. But the reason to refuse must be very well reasoned. If one says "I do not want to play for a gay person because I do not like gays", this person can join the government's group as long as they do not say anything offensive to anyone.
3. There are not enough players to make this game interesting. Indeed, it is difficult to find enough people to play it offline. I think this kind of game must be played online, especially because this game does not require a special interface.
4. The game is too long. I hope that this game is only played by people who are interested in this topic, want to know more, or practice their rebelliousness. In some cases, this game may take days. To be honest, I think it is fine because the real thing took ages. D&D that I mentioned before can also take a day to finish, yet people still play and enjoy it.

References

References 2 and 7 are attached as PDFs.

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