

IAT 445 SWEET SACRIFICE

Super Sparkly Pink Unicorn 4000 

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WHO?

WHAT?

WHERE?

WHEN?

Story and Theme

Our theme focuses on isolation, depression, suicide, and compassion. The fear of interacting with society is fueled by many reasons which would easily be brushed off by society as a sign of failure or danger to society. More than often, mental diseases are involved and suicide is closely tied to these conditions.

The main character is visiting a friend at their hometown after having left for many years. Through exchanging emails, the friend seems to be very positive and outgoing. However, upon visit, the main character is shocked to discover that their friend had passed away. Unable to enter the apartment during day, the main character sneaks in at night to uncover clues to solve mysteries behind the true reason of death and what kind of life did their friend lead.

Goal and User Experience

We intended for the player to revisit the memories and lifestyle of a dead character and to experience how the dead character came to her condition. This however is only a small part of our concept. We want to communicate the message of how people are abandoned or shunned, and that we as fellow human beings should be more compassionate towards others.

Our research led us to bibliotherapy which is the use of narrative as models to understand dilemma and real-world situations. This form of interaction possesses the potential to trigger growth and healing as it allows for identification with characters and catharsis through experiencing the character's rollercoaster of emotions. After learning of the character's background, players will hopefully be able to assimilate their thoughts and address this social issue with their own conclusive insight. At the ending, showing people from a community who could possibly be a family member or close friend, is meant to make the player feel connected and apply our message in their personal experiences. To further induce emotions into players, we will be playing recordings with timely audio cues to drive the emotion within the recording to affect the player's emotions.

Rationale/Motivation

Social-awkwardness is a knowledgeable theme amongst young adults and is thus familiar to our fellow peers. We want to create a project that reflects upon ourselves. Many people are insecure and introvert, but to take things a bit further, we want to bring attention to the extremities and seriousness to the problem as well as dispel common misconceptions of how social-reclusiveness should not be seen as lazy or weird, and that there are many factors contributing to the condition.

Framework

We used Brown and Cairns' Grounded Theory framework to create our game. Our theme of social-awkwardness should be familiar to many people, thus allowing players to have a reasonable expectation based on their own experiences for easy **engagement**. We hope players will be **engrossed** by interacting with many different objects to unravel the story of our main character. The urgency of uncovering clues, search of the house, and listening to recordings require the player to invest their time and emotion to finish the game.

From the narrative, we hope players will feel **total immersion** and emphasize with the main character. Although not all of us personally know a person that is a victim of suicide, we can still understand the feelings that is associated with losing a friend. The contrast of showing an individual story and showing the mass data associated to depression and social avoidance disorders is meant to shock the player into feeling sadness, shame, or regret, relating these feelings back to how they treat people around them.

Design Approach

We used a top-down design approach to come up with our story and setting. We first decided on the theme of social-recluse and the effects it causes on people. We researched different behaviors between males and females suffering from depression and general reasons that cause the mental sickness. The information found was used to develop our character's house and their cause of death.

Technical Implementations

The game is controlled using a PS3 controller. Noise canceling headphones are worn to block out outside disturbances and allow the player to focus primarily on the game.

Conclusion

Our project draws attention to the issues surrounding depression and what we perceive of others may not necessarily reflect their state of mind. We realise that our current iteration perhaps sensationalises social avoidance disorder, and would thus perform more thorough research in future iterations. Our user testing results point out that hardcore gamers tend to speed through to find available items, while casual gamers or non-gamers made more effort in analyzing and piecing together the clues. If we were to continue work on this project, we would like to include additional interactivity for the player and make them fit more into the story.

Video

<https://vimeo.com/113446656>

