Little Suzie Is a game I made for an honors directed study in the Spring 2016 semester. It is a top-down perspective action game in which the player's goal is to defend an avatar named Suzie from waves of oncoming enemies. My intention in the design was build the mechanics in such a way as to have an emotional response of powerlessness and guilt in the player. I approached this by a process of building a connection with suzie's avatar, building up a sense of power in the player, and quickly stripping down that sense of power at the climax. The game opens with only a blue dot in the middle of the screen, with arrows above it to communicate the game's controls. Once the player begins moving, a smaller pink dot with a small bow moves out from the side of the screen towards the player. Most players will infer this small dot is meant to represent a little girl, especially since the player has been primed by the title to expect a little girl. The pink dot will follow the player, which, combined with the player's personification of the pink dot as a little girl and the player's likely assumption the dot's name is suzie, will build a sense of connection in the player's mind. After a few seconds, enemies will begin to appear and attack the player, getting progressively more difficult as the player defeats them. The progression of difficulty builds a sense of power in the player, as well as a state of flow where the player expects more of the same thing to continue to occur. Once the player has defeated enough enemies, a final, new enemy type will appear and freeze suzie, as well as use ranged attacks at the player. This forces the player to move away from suzie to defeat this last enemy, during which time a weaker enemy defeats suzie. This action quickly strips the sense of power that the player has built during the process, and disrupts the player's expectation to expect more of the same interaction. The climax is the most important, and most challenging part of the design. Suzie must be attacked in such a way that the player sees it as his having made the wrong decision, as opposed to it being a fluke in the mechanics, which will only cause frustration.

The design of the game originated as a personal exercise to influence player emotion using game mechanics, inspired by the "emotion shop" project group in the master's of entertainment technology program at Carnegie Mellon. During the course of the semester, as I was doing research in narratology, the focus shifted from influencing player emotion to using game mechanics as a narrative device and my question changed from "how can I induce a particular emotion in the player?" to "how can I induce a narrative in the player's mind?" While the design still reflects the focus on emotional impact, I was able to learn a great deal about the relationship between game mechanics and narrative as a result of making this game.

Working on this game has also provided me with a great deal of experience in making active design decisions and creative challenge, as opposed to analyzing another person's work. Some of the more difficult design challenges were determining how to signal that an enemy is about to charge (by spinning before the charge), Forcing Suzie to be far enough from the player at the end that he can't save her (by only spawning archers in the last wave, which stay at the edge of the screen), and setting up everything else after the wizard spawns to avoid frustrating the player.

Probably most importantly, I learned just how little I knew about programming a game. I initially thought I could finish it within a month, and instead it took six months. I found it to be just the right kind of challenge that I couldn't pull myself away from solving the list of problems, which seemed at the time to never run out.

Installation instructions and controls are in the readme file.
https://github.com/ceciltheawesome/Little_Suzie