

Our Stance on the Rightful and Just Ethics of Covid Clicker in Terms of the Consumer

We, Temporary Team Name, believe that our game is relevant to everyone and can act as a sort of relief for those who like idle games while having to deal with the Coronavirus outbreak. Although it may seem a bit insensitive to create a game about a serious pandemic, we've created this game with a sort of "edutainment" model that appeals to everyone, since everyone has been affected by Covid-19 in one way or another. Also, our game depicts no graphic content in any way, shape, or form, so it is easily digestible content for all ages. Our game is accessible in the sense that we only require a mouse or trackpad to click a couple of buttons to play, and the game itself is not labor intensive and is a good time-passer, so no stress is necessarily added onto the user.

During the first sprint, and before we started sprints, we planned out the basic structure of the game we desired to create. While planning, we thought about popular games, such as Adventure Capitalist, which may contain some potentially controversial ideas or undesired topics, like politics, and instead turned toward a more educational route, with an idea everyone can relate to: the pandemic and how our bodies react to illness. The following sprints we implemented the ideas described by our created user stories, and thus did not run into any new ethical dilemmas. In fact, we decided at the end of sprint 3 that we would not be implementing certain more advanced features, and thus this created less possibilities for discrimination and inaccessibility. Ultimately, we decided on limited features and a shorter time required for completion, which allows for the players of our game to be able to enjoy more of our game at once.

According to the ACM Code of Ethics, our game is considerably not unethical by any means. Firstly, our game respects the player, regardless of how they may look, as we recognize the

importance of regarding everyone as a “stakeholder in computing,” as stated in section 1.1 in the ACM Code of Ethics. specifically section 1.2, some examples of harm are, but not limited to, “unjustified physical or mental injury, unjustified destruction or disclosure of information, and unjustified damage to property, reputation, and the environment.” As a simple idle game, we definitely are not causing any harm to anyone, including the player, as we do not include nor retrieve any personal information, or any method of destroying property. Furthermore, not only our game but also our group is held accountable to being honest and trustworthy, as stated in section 1.3. As aforementioned, there is no hidden and/or malevolent intent within our group and game, and especially no code that retrieves personal information from the user, so we also respect privacy, as per section 1.6.

Furthermore, we have chosen to design for inclusiveness of all people in the sense that this game is appropriate for all walks of life and does not include any particular content or information that is necessary to be able play this game. All important information needed is stated in the user manual. Some may argue that besides Professor. Dancy’s face is an example of content that may cause some confusion, but knowledge of who Professor Dancy is is not necessary at all for the game; his face is simply used cosmetically. Moreover, it must be noted that the type of game was decided upon purposefully, as incremental/ idle games are not incredibly taxing or require tons of hours to beat. With less time necessary to be devoted to our game, more people have the ability to enjoy it. Thus, our game is more inclusive than others.

As such, there was never a point in which we’ve explicitly had to alter our design or choices when implementing our game. Ethics-wise, I, coincidentally the ethics manager, would say we are either intrinsically morally decent people, or our game is too simple to offend or discriminate. Personally, I believe it is a mixture of the two. Overall, we have adhered to the ACM Code of Ethics through our ethical choices and commitment to our professional responsibilities.

Justice-wise, we have not discriminated against any person and we believe that we are very transparent with what is required of the players of our game. We do not take personal data nor do we require internet access to play the game, just to access it and/ or download it. Therefore we do not put those with unstable or slow internet in a position to be completely unable to play our game. This, in turn, poses no class --and thus potentially race-- biases, because, along with being a free to play game, no money is required whatsoever to access and/or play our game. As Costanza-Chock explains in **Design Justice**, the concept of design justice “proposes systematic evaluation of the values that we encode in designed objects and systems,” so we should hold ourselves accountable by putting more thought into design, especially who it is for. Thinking back about the principles presented in the ACM Code of Ethics in combination with the principles discussed in Costanza-Chock’s **Design Justice**, it is clear that design must be thought about in terms of everyone, not only oneself-- the designers. Design justice hopes to achieve true equality and so do we, Temporary Team Name, as we’ve been mindful about the values we’ve encoded in our design, as attributed to Costanza-Chock to the best of our abilities.

In conclusion, as our game is relatable to everyone in some way, and not much is required of the player to actually play the game, we believe that our game holds up against the code of ethics, and from a design point of view. We’ve strived to make as inoffensive of a game as possible, especially regarding what may be a more serious topic for some. Mostly, as this is just a simple game, however, there has not been much that can be said about justice and somewhat ethics; as our game is a simple cookie-clicker-esque type of entertainment, there is not much that can be expounded upon about rights being infringed upon, or potentially, racist, sexist, ableist, and any other other form of discrimination.

Additionally, it's not that ethics and justice are necessarily incongruent with our game, especially within its design, it's mostly the fact that our game's topic and material are mostly innocuous by nature, and simple to the point where both not much is given, and conversely not much, if at all, is given to be able to play, since this is a free to play game. Obviously, if we were to release this game to the public, we would add more features and polish up the game a whole lot more, but as this game is mostly just for demo-ing as our final project, and cultivating both our agile scrum, teamwork/ communication, and software-development skills, our product is not particularly for the public. Consequently, principles of ethics and justice, although not as necessary, are still followed and included in our design.

References:

Gotterbarn, D., Brinkman, B., Flick, C., Kirkpatrick, M. S., Miller, K., Vazansky, K., Wolf, M. J. (2018). ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need.