LEARNING A WHOLE NEW WORLD:
FROM DESIGN SPACES TO AGENCY

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CMS.600 - Video Game Theory & Analysis

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Please see http://www.2kgames.com/bioshock/
OUTLINE

• Game Overview
• Key Concepts (Design Space, Agency)
• Examples
• Learning Process within BioShock
• Conclusion
GAME OVERVIEW

- Plane Crash Survivor
- Underworld Dystopia - Rapture
- ADAM/EVE
- Big Daddy/Little Sisters
- Gameplay
GAME OVERVIEW

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DESIGN SPACES

• Henry Jenkins
• “Environmental Storytelling”
  – Narrative v. Interactivity
  – Evoke, Enact, Embed, Emerge
• In BioShock, design provides basis
• User chooses to finish what designer started
  – Multiple Endings
  – Different Choices
AGENCY

• Theorized by Mateas & Stern
• Ability to affect narrative on their own
• In BioShock
  – Harvesting
  – Plasmids
  – Hacking
• Intersects with Design Space of Game
DESIGN SPACE

- Number of unique characteristics
  - No consequence for dying
- Overarching sense of fear
- Interactive part of game
  - Learning which route is better
  - Learning about harvesting
  - Learning which plasmids to store
  - Learning within game & about game design spaces in general terms
- Design Space contributes to learning process
DESIGN SPACE

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Plasmid Design Space Route

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Ammo Type
AGENCY

- Created through the Design Space of the game
- Main choice - HARVESTING
  - Rescue Little Sisters (promised ADAM in end)
  - Harvest Little Sisters (receive ADAM now)
  - Moral ambiguity
  - Game ambiguity
- Other examples
- Learn & Discover how elements of Design Space lead to Agency and Overall Understanding of BioShock
AGENCY

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LEARNING PROCESS

- Discovering gameplay choices in narrative
- Inability to see things immediately
- Not recognizing the larger goals while in midst of game
- What I learn about playing BioShock mirrors what I’ve learned about games in general
- Patience
- Trial & Error
CONCLUSION

- BioShock brings together an environmental Design Space & Agency to teach user
- Goals for rest of game
  - Become better at first person shooter
  - See what my consequences are from my actions with Little Sisters/Big Daddy
- Questions