

Summary and Conclusion

Results: "Passport, Please!" has emerged as a captivating and immersive video game experience that delves into the complexities of immigration processes. Through engaging gameplay and interactive dialogue, players navigate the challenges of presenting themselves to immigration officers and experience firsthand the consequences of their actions.

Examination of the Application of Theoretical Grounding: The project successfully integrates theories from communication studies, social psychology, and education into its gameplay mechanics. Drawing from social identity theory, stereotype research, and the psychology of gaming, the game provides a nuanced exploration of immigration dynamics and societal biases.

Ethical Impact/Concerns: "Passport, Please!" raises essential ethical considerations regarding its portrayal of immigration processes and the potential implications of its narrative and mechanics:

1. **Political Neutrality:** Political neutrality is a fundamental ethical principle guiding the development of "Passport, Please!" The project does not advocate for or against any specific immigration agenda or policy stance. Instead, it aims to provide players with an immersive and educational experience that encourages critical thinking and empathy without imposing a particular ideological perspective.
2. **Avoidance of Political Bias:** Intentionally, politics is omitted from the game's narrative and mechanics. By refraining from explicit political commentary or agenda-driven content, "Passport, Please!" seeks to create a neutral and inclusive space where players can engage with the complexities of immigration without being influenced by partisan agendas or biases.
3. **Realism and Authenticity:** The dialogues and scenarios depicted in "Passport, Please!" are inspired by real-life interactions and experiences. This commitment to authenticity ensures that the game's portrayal of immigration processes remains grounded in reality, fostering empathy and understanding among players.
4. **Representation of Unnamed Country:** To mitigate potential ethical implications and avoid singling out any specific nation or culture, "Passport, Please!" is intentionally set in an unnamed imaginary country. By adopting this approach, the game's narrative remains universal and applicable to a broad range of immigration contexts, allowing players to engage with the game's themes without imposing preconceived notions or stereotypes associated with real-world countries.
5. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Another ethical consideration is the representation of diverse backgrounds and experiences within the game. By featuring characters from various cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, "Passport, Please!" strives to promote inclusivity and diversity, challenging stereotypes and fostering empathy for individuals navigating the complexities of immigration.
6. **Transparency and Accountability:** Transparency and accountability have been paramount throughout development. The solo developer is committed to maintaining open communication with players, addressing feedback and concerns, and upholding ethical standards in all game development and distribution aspects.

Technical Lessons Learned: Developing "Passport, Please!" has provided valuable technical insights, particularly in game design and development, despite the challenges faced by a solo developer.

1. **Python Proficiency:** Learning Python, the programming language used with the Ren'py platform, presented a significant challenge. As a solo developer with limited prior programming experience, mastering Python required dedication and countless hours of self-directed learning. This involved studying tutorials, reading documentation, and seeking guidance from online forums and communities dedicated to game development. Overcoming this learning curve was essential for understanding Ren'py's scripting language and implementing game mechanics effectively.
2. **Ren'py Platform:** Utilizing the Ren'py engine for game development introduced its challenges. While Ren'py simplifies certain aspects of game creation, such as visual novel scripting, mastering its features and capabilities requires hands-on experimentation and exploration. Hours spent troubleshooting errors, experimenting with different commands, and seeking advice from Ren'py's online community were instrumental in gaining proficiency with the platform.
3. **Iterative Development:** Embracing an iterative approach to development proved invaluable. Given the complexity of game design and the limitations of being a solo developer, the ability to iterate on ideas, refine gameplay mechanics, and incorporate player feedback was crucial for improving the overall quality of "Passport, Please!" This iterative process involved continuously testing new features, gathering feedback from players, and refining the game based on user experiences.
4. **Resource Management:** Managing resources effectively was a key lesson learned. Balancing time and effort across various aspects of game development, such as programming, art design, and sound production, required careful planning and prioritization. Learning to allocate resources efficiently while focusing on the game's core objectives was essential for maximizing productivity and achieving project milestones.
5. **Community Support:** Leveraging the support of online communities and forums was invaluable throughout the development process. Engaging with fellow developers, seeking advice from experienced Ren'py users, and participating in discussions on game development forums provided valuable insights, troubleshooting assistance, and moral support during challenging times. These communities' collective knowledge and expertise were instrumental in overcoming technical hurdles and refining the game's design.
6. **Host Platforms itch.io** Leveraging hosting platforms such as itch.io proved instrumental in reaching a wider audience and distributing the game effectively. itch.io's user-friendly interface, customizable storefronts, and supportive community provided an accessible platform for showcasing "Passport, Please!" to players worldwide.

Limitations: Despite its strengths, "Passport, Please!" faces several significant limitations, primarily due to its solo project status. As the sole creator, time and resources are inherently limited, impacting various game development and quality aspects.

1. **Resource Constraints:** Being a solo developer means that only one person is responsible for programming, music composition, dialogue writing, character design, research, and all other aspects of game development. This limitation in human resources can lead to slower progress and may affect the overall quality and depth of the game.
2. **Limited Access to High-Quality Assets:** Solo developers often rely on free or low-cost online assets due to budget constraints. While this allows for some level of customization, it also limits the availability of high-quality graphics, sound effects, and music, potentially detracting from the overall immersive experience of the game.
3. **Learning Curve:** Developing a video game requires a diverse skill set, including programming, graphic design, sound engineering, and storytelling. As a solo developer, the creator may face challenges in mastering all these skills simultaneously. The learning curve associated with acquiring proficiency in each aspect of game development can be steep and time-consuming, leading to delays in project completion.
4. **Time Constraints:** Balancing the demands of game development with other commitments, such as work or education, can be challenging for a solo developer. Limited time availability may result in slower progress and longer development cycles, potentially delaying the game's release or compromising quality due to rushed production.
5. **Scope Limitations:** With only one person overseeing all aspects of development, the scope and complexity of "Passport, Please!" are naturally limited. Expanding the game's features, adding more characters or scenarios, or incorporating additional gameplay mechanics may be constrained by time and resource limitations, affecting the depth and richness of the player experience.
6. **Testing and Feedback:** Solo developers may need help gathering comprehensive feedback and conducting thorough game testing. With a dedicated team of external testers, identifying and addressing bugs, balancing gameplay mechanics, and refining the user experience may be more accessible, potentially leading to a more polished final product.
7. **Iterative Development:** The iterative nature of game development, where feedback and testing inform ongoing refinements and improvements, can be more challenging for solo developers. Limited resources may restrict the frequency and extent of updates and iterations, potentially limiting the game's long-term viability and relevance in the gaming market.

Other Key Takeaways: The development journey of "Passport, Please!" as a solo project has yielded several vital takeaways, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement:

1. **Creative Exploration:** The process of conceptualizing and designing the game allowed for creative exploration and experimentation. The solo developer was free to explore diverse ideas and narrative concepts, pushing the boundaries of storytelling within the constraints of game development.
2. **Time Management:** Effective time management emerged as a critical skill. Balancing the demands of game development with other commitments required careful planning and prioritization. However, despite best efforts, time constraints inevitably led to some

ideas being left on the table. Only some envisioned characters, scenarios, or gameplay mechanics could be fully realized within the project timeline.

3. **Emotional Depth:** While "Passport, Please!" aimed to portray a range of emotions and experiences for its characters, the reality of solo development meant that not every character could be depicted with the intended depth and complexity. Time constraints limited the exploration of character emotions and interactions, potentially impacting the game's ability to evoke empathy and immersion in players.
4. **Iterative Improvement:** Embracing an iterative approach to development proved essential for refining and enhancing the game over time. Regular playtesting, gathering feedback, and implementing iterative improvements allowed the solo developer to address issues, fine-tune gameplay mechanics, and polish the overall player experience.
5. **Adaptability:** Flexibility and adaptability were crucial traits throughout the development process. As challenges arose, such as technical hurdles, design limitations, or unexpected setbacks, the solo developer had to adapt quickly, problem-solve creatively, and persevere in adversity.
6. **Community Engagement:** Engaging with the gaming community and seeking feedback from players proved invaluable. Through online forums, social media, and playtesting sessions, the solo developer garnered insights, suggestions, and support from fellow developers and players, enriching the game's development process and fostering community around the project.
7. **Continuous Learning:** Developing "Passport, Please!" was a learning experience. From mastering new programming languages and game development tools to honing storytelling and design skills, the solo developer embarked on continuous learning and growth, expanding their technical expertise and creative repertoire.

Revisions or Suggestions for Future Iterations: As "Passport, Please!" continues to evolve, several revisions and suggestions can enhance its impact and depth, leveraging lessons learned from the initial development phase:

1. **Expansion of Characters and Backgrounds:** Future iterations of the game should prioritize the inclusion of more characters with diverse backgrounds, representing a broader spectrum of migrant experiences. This could involve adding characters from different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, enriching the narrative and providing players with a more comprehensive understanding of immigration dynamics.
2. **Community Engagement and Interviews:** To ensure authenticity and representation, consider partnering with organizations like the Charlotte International House to interview individuals from immigrant and refugee communities. These firsthand accounts can provide valuable insights and personal narratives that can be incorporated into the game, adding depth and authenticity to the characters and scenarios depicted.
3. **Integration of Refugee Experience:** Incorporating the refugee experience into "Passport, Please!" can further broaden its scope and relevance. By exploring the challenges and obstacles faced by refugees seeking asylum, the game can shed light on the complexities of displacement, asylum processes, and the human cost of forced migration.
4. **Inclusion of Race as a Variable:** Race should be integrated into the variables influencing gameplay outcomes. By acknowledging the role of race in immigration

dynamics, the game can explore issues of racial profiling, discrimination, and bias in the immigration process, fostering critical reflection and awareness among players.

5. **Addressing Time Constraints:** Acknowledge that some research related to race implications and biases may have yet to be fully implemented in the initial release due to time constraints. Moving forward, allocate dedicated time and resources to thoroughly explore these issues and integrate them into the game's narrative and mechanics.
6. **Investment in Artistic Resources:** With additional funding or resources, consider hiring an artist to create original character designs and assets for the game. While free assets are a cost-effective solution, original artwork can elevate the visual quality and immersion of "Passport, Please!", enhancing the player experience and overall aesthetic appeal.
7. **Iterative Development and Feedback:** Embrace an iterative approach to development, continuously soliciting feedback from players, experts, and community members. This ongoing dialogue can inform future game iterations, guiding enhancements, refinements, and additions to ensure "Passport, Please!" remains relevant, impactful, and engaging for players of all backgrounds.

In conclusion, the journey of creating "Passport, Please!" has been a rollercoaster of challenges, triumphs, and invaluable learning experiences for the solo developer. Despite the inevitable headaches and moments of doubt, the creator found immense joy and fulfillment in bringing this project to life. One of the most formidable hurdles was when a game with the originally intended name, Papers, Please, was discovered, prompting a swift pivot to the new title, Passport, Please. This obstacle underscored the importance of adaptability and resilience in the face of unexpected setbacks. Throughout the development process, the creator's wife played a pivotal role as a vital source of support, serving as a dedicated tester and providing invaluable feedback during the iterative process. Her unwavering encouragement and constructive criticism were instrumental in shaping the game's direction and enhancing its overall quality. As the creator reflects on this journey, they are grateful for the opportunity to embark on this creative endeavor, and they look forward to sharing "Passport, Please!" with players worldwide.

Introduction

Entering the master's degree program, my primary aim was to deepen my understanding of human behavior, particularly from the perspective of a neurodivergent individual. However, as I immersed myself in the coursework, I was captivated by the intricate theories of identity and their profound relevance to immigration and the Latino persona. This unexpected journey of discovery ignited a passion within me, shaping the trajectory of my academic pursuits and personal growth.

Throughout my studies, I've centered my work around the rich tapestry of Latino identity and the complexities of the immigration experience. From examining historical narratives to dissecting contemporary media representations, I've navigated the myriad nuances of these subjects, gaining a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of intercultural communication.

The study of identity has not only enriched my academic pursuits but has also catalyzed significant personal growth. Through introspection and scholarly inquiry, I've gained insights into my cultural heritage and its influence on my worldview. This journey of self-discovery has imbued me with a heightened sense of empathy and cultural awareness, shaping me into a more effective communicator and leader.

The pinnacle of my master's journey was creating my Capstone project—an immigration-themed video game simulating the airport's passport control process. Despite my limited programming experience, I embraced the challenge wholeheartedly, immersing myself in the world of game development. It was a thrilling and sometimes daunting experience, but I brought my vision to life through perseverance and creativity.

As I reflect on my master's journey, I find myself intrigued by the prospect of further exploration in leadership studies. Specifically, I am drawn to the intersection of video games, immigration, and identity and their implications for leadership in diverse communities. With this in mind, I am considering pursuing a Ph.D. in leadership studies. I want to delve deeper into these intersecting themes and contribute to our understanding of effective leadership in an ever-evolving global landscape.

My master's journey has been transformative, deepening my understanding of communication, leadership, and identity. As I embark on the next chapter of my academic and professional journey, I carry the invaluable lessons and insights from this experience, eager to continue my exploration and make meaningful contributions to the field.