


Data Storytelling Studio

participatory data games

CMS.631/831
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This sketch is about participatory games - on or off screen. The goal is that you'll work with some data to create some kind of experience that people can participate in. This sketch is three class sessions over a week and a half. The first is this lecture; the second is in class group work time, and the third is project presentations.

Agenda

- [30] Inspirational examples
- [15] Readings
- [15] Brainstorm
- [15] Datasets and team-forming

Real World Examples

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Prudential Stickers Experiment



Spectragrams (Aspiration Tech)

SCAP YRBS Data Game

What percent of Somerville middle school students did NOT drink alcohol during the past 30 days?

- a) 46%
- b) 61%
- c) 79%
- d) 91%

Somerville Cares About Prevention.
Courtesy of City of Somerville. Used with permission.



Migration Board Game (Data Studio course 2016)
Courtesy of MIT students. Used with permission.

[Biking to a Healthier MIT](#) (Data Studio course 2016), using Hubway data to create an interactive video game.

Here are some examples that I count as in this space:

- The Prudential ads you've already seen, but here is another one. This one invites people to collaboratively create a histogram on a giant wall to represent the oldest people they know. The power here of seeing your personal data to everyone else's changes it from Prudential's data to your own, which of course changes the potential for impact.
- The board game is a project from a previous year of this class. They looked at data about migration from Syria into Europe to develop a game that tried to help convince people to accept refugee populations, and understand what their arduous journey was like.
- The Biking example used Hubway data about usage of the public bicycle rental program to create an interactive video game. You sat on a Hubway in a stationary stand they built, and then were racing the subway on a screen. As you pedaled you saw information about the public health and environmental impacts of using Hubway pop up. If you beat the train then you got a free token to use Hubway.
- The SCAP game is an interactive survey. They ask a question and then have the audience hold up signs to indicate which answer they think is correct. This sets a social norm in the room, and then when they indicate the correct answer, provides an opportunity to talk about the difference.

Spectrogram

- [30] Inspirational examples
- [15] Readings
- [15] Brainstorm
- [15] Datasets and team-forming

Have everyone stand up and run a [few spectrograms](#). Here are a few strong statements about data visualization from the [Responsible Data Forum](#) that you could use:

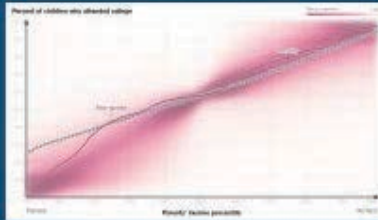
- Data visualization should always be able to be interpreted without accompanying narrative
- Objectivity is the holy grail of dataviz
- Everyone should learn how to visualize data
- Bad dataviz is better than no dataviz
- Only rigorous statistical inference should be visualized at all

Digital Inspirations

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[Super Campaign Dodger](#) - *The Atlantic* (2/2016)



[You Draw It](#) - *New York Times* (5/2015)



[Party, Gender, Whiskey](#) - *New York Times* (2/2015)



[Parable of the Polygon](#) - *VJ Hart & Nicky Case* (2/2016)

Public domain image.

[SNAP Judgements](#) - 2015 Data Studio class project, a text-based game about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

- The Super Campaign Dodger was created using data about when US political TV adverts were run during the 2017 election primary season. The game turns you into a TV viewer, having to dodge all the political ads running. The playful interaction leaves one with an impression for the sheer volume of ads used by various candidates to try and get their message about.
- Case's Parable lets you play out a simulation to understand complex societal forces. These "explorable explanations" exemplify [a lot of Bret Victor's writing](#).
- The NYTimes "draw it" is one of a number they have done that let the reader draw what they think, and then compare it to the data and other peoples guesses. Like the SCAP question/answer, this helps you understand the *way* people's misconceptions don't match the data.
- The NYTimes "Party, Gender, Whiskey" is an example of how the text of a story can change based on selecting a subset of the data. The information below changes based on the selection in a series of dropdowns. Exploring multi-dimensional datasets like this can be hard to offer to a user, especially without reducing the dimensionality. This example is one way you could try to do it. This is more exploratory, rather than explanatory.
- The SNAP Judgements game is a project from this class in 2015. Students created a text-based game (using [Twine](#)). It lets you experience what it might be like to be on food aid from the US government (SNAP) and how that can influence your decisions. Building empathy is hard, but this project tries to do it.

Readings: Engagement Games

- How do "engagement games" differ from other types of social games for change?
- How do you assess if an "engagement game" is working?
- What kind of problems are well-suited to an "engagement games" approach?

Grad Reading

Student

- MyPosition



Have a student present the MyPosition reading.

Brainstorm Activity

bit.ly/treeinfo

- Make small groups
 - Take a look at the [Somerville Tree Data](#) again
 - Brainstorm a data-game you could make for a specific audience and a goal in mind
 - Present it back to us in 1 minute
 - You have 10 minutes
-

Run this brainstorming activity.

Suggested Datasets

[Kyoto Flowering Dates \(info\)](#)

[Sea Ice Coverage](#)

[Fuel Economy Measurements](#)

[Hubway Data](#)

[Somerville](#) or [NYC](#) Tree Data

I've provided some clean datasets they can use (see the syllabus for details). They can use something else, but it should be clean (so they don't waste time cleaning it).

Team Forming

Find people to work with

What do you know?

What do you want to make?

What dataset are you interested in?

Have everyone stand up and think about these three questions. Then have everyone pick someone else in the room to talk to. Give them 2 minutes to discuss. Then have them switch to someone else and do the same. Repeat for 3 rounds and then tell everyone to form groups of ~3.

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