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Part I

The Study of Persuasion Through Digital Games

Introduction to Part I

Joost Raessens & Teresa de la Hera

This part of the book sheds light on how we can understand persuasion through digital games from a theoretical perspective. The authors in this section discuss different perspectives on how digital games can be used with the intention of influencing the attitude and behavior of players. Their contributions go beyond the utopian and dystopian discourses on persuasive games and the debate on their validity that centered game scholars' attention when this new field of research was emerging more than ten years before this volume was published. Therefore, we reflect critically on the role and the value of digital games to be used as a medium for persuasion, we pay attention to the medium itself and its characteristics, and we provide theoretically grounded propositions on how to work with persuasion within digital games. Together, these chapters not only demonstrate that persuasive games have become part of our contemporary media culture, they also provide a critical discussion of what the role of persuasive games is in our current media landscape. These chapters also pay special attention to the role players have in the process of persuasion through digital games and how their characteristics and performances should be taken into consideration in this process.

Ian Bogost opens the first part of this book by revisiting his claims on procedural rhetoric published in his book *Persuasive Games* in 2007. In his chapter entitled 'Persuasive Games, A Decade Later', he admits to having been wrong in some of his predictions about the role persuasive games would play in the actual social and political context. Bogost acknowledges that persuasive games have not become the tools of complex knowledge he predicted. He also admits that persuasive games are not being widely used, as he expected, to make arguments about what worldly behaviors are desirable or undesirable and on how to address the big, important problems in the world. The author nonetheless stresses the value of continuing to study and discuss persuasive games as a concept.

In Chapter 3, Miguel Sicart broadens the discussion of the persuasive potential of digital games by paying attention to playful persuasion and critically reflecting on the playful design of services apps. In 'Playing an Automated World', he uncovers the social, political, and ethical consequences of embedding a playful design in these apps, and with this purpose in mind, he claims that by applying methods and concepts from toy and game design,

this engaging and persuasive software might be eroding forms of labor and social connection.

Teresa de la Hera and Joost Raessens pay attention in Chapter 4 to how players' characteristics should be taken into consideration when designing digital games with persuasive intentions. In 'Looking Beyond Persuasion Through Rule-Based Representations in Digital Games', the authors propose that persuasive goals and game goals should be aligned differently depending on whether the main purpose of the game is to shape, to reinforce, or to change players' attitudes. In addition, De la Hera and Raessens critically discuss the academic debate on procedural rhetoric and reflect on how designing digital games that can be both persuasive and engaging for players.

In the last chapter of this section, Geoff Kaufman, Mary Flanagan, and Max Seidman defend the idea that persuasive games greatly benefit from using a nuanced, less explicit approach to convey their persuasive messages. In 'Creating Stealth Game Interventions for Attitude and Behavior Change', the authors present a model of 'embedded design' that offers concrete strategies to convey persuasive messages in games tackling social issues. The strategies proposed as part of this model are focused on bypassing players' psychological barriers to try to foster a more positive mindset towards the persuasive message.