

## 2019 ChLA - Paper Submission

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### **Making the Game Experience Socially Relevant Through Narrative**

In games, social value can only be created through a narrative a child can relate to. Whether we turn to David Winnicott on child development, Jerome Bruner on acts of meaning, or Susan Engle on narrative schema, story dominates as the most valuable experience in the construction of a child's world and how they act within it. As digital games evolved a limited number of narrative schema were seen to be successful, with the language of the narrative not necessarily being literal and requiring "reading between the lines." Messages coded in game-speak must give up their meaning to children through the play they enjoy with characters in nuanced situations. This presentation looks at the work of a group of European Union (EU) Erasmus students at the University of Lower Silesia, Wroclaw, Poland (Spring 2017) in a course on narrative-based, physically engaging games for children that encourage social responsibility. The Manchester Bombing (May, 22 2017), in which 23 people died, occurred during the course and the course theme was steered towards developing a narrative game to help children understand political and social situations that lead to acts of terror and help them to consider how to respond to these acts. The EU students discussed ways to explain different points of view, what actions to take during acts of terror, and how to relate to those who were victims or were present in these situations. Each of the students brought a different cultural and social background to the problem. Looking into their own lives they considered topics as varied as white slavery, or the potential of being shot going about their daily activities, to see directions they could take to create game narratives that would help children understand and negotiate the complexity of issues that might at some point touch their lives. EU students were from Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Romania, Spain, and Turkey.