### Group Project: Individual Journal

## **Evaluating player feedback in relation to**

## **emotional response**

### Introduction

As a group, we were tasked to develop a game within six weeks, following a brief that was given to us. As a group, we decided to work on brief two which asks us to develop a two player, hyper-paced, synchronous adversarial game either in a digital or non-digital format. The primary outcome of the brief was to make the player feel specific emotions, these emotions include frustration, fiero, schadenfreude and raucous laughter. As a group we decided on a non-digital game, the main reason behind this decision is it gives us more time to design, iterate and balance the game, and secondly, we have had positive outcomes from our previous non-digital projects.

In this individual journal, I will evaluate how the player feedback influenced the development of the game. I will also discuss the research I conducted and the iterations we made to the game to reach the final product.

### Management

The development process of the project was group managed, the group would discuss what needed to be done and create tasks together. We used an agile scrum methodology, every morning on the dedicated days of the week the group would have a scrum meeting. In this meeting would discuss what we needed to be done and what is stopping us from doing it.

Trello was used to set tasks, track the weekly sprints and to give us topics to discuss for our scrum meeting,

the timetable for group work is shown in Appendix A.

Online communication was not necessary on this project as all members communicated in person on the dedicated group days.

### Research

As a group we conducted research on the emotions we were trying to create, we investigated how to trigger these emotions and the desired effect these emotions had on the player. As well as academic research on emotion we also played similar games with mechanics that evoked the desired emotion, we played games like Munchkin (Jackson, 2008), Pandemic (Leacock,2011) and card against humanity (Temkin, Hantoot, 2009) to evaluate how these games evoke the emotion and what mechanics they use.

### Iteration 1

After researching the emotions and similar games the group came to the decision to create a non-digital card game. For the first iteration, we focused on the emotions we wanted the player to feel, the mechanics were created based on our research into these emotions.

Schadenfreude is when a person feels pleasure or happiness when seeing another person’s misfortune, this works great as the brief wanted a two-player adversarial game.

To implement this, we created a simple prototype following the Uno mechanic of discarding cards, the first person to have no cards left wins. We created cards that contained effect, these effects would activate once played. These effects would either target the opposing player and force them to draw more cards or allow that player to discard cards from their hand. When internally playtesting this mechanic we found that players enjoyed screwing over the opposing player, we also discovered some humour when players won the game by screwing over their opponent.

An issue we found with this is once a player was in the lead it was very hard for the other player to win and we didn’t want a single player to always have to upper hand.

To fix this we wanted to incorporate cards that could turn the game around so that no player could easily run away with the game. We wanted the losing player to always have a chance and quickly turn the game around, we added serval effects like trade hand and place cards into opponent’s hand etc. When testing this feature, it became difficult to guess who would win, and it defiantly frustrated players especially if they were in the lead and suddenly the game completely changes. However, from our research we didn’t want the game to be too frustrating “if it’s too frustrating players will be more likely to quit” (Jennett et al., 2008; Sweetser and Wyeth, 2005). So, we needed to ensure that the game didn’t punish players too often.

From playtesting the game, we decided that some cards were overpowered, or we had too many of certain effects. This lead to balancing the deck and the effects as we didn’t want to punish the player too severely. When testing this, we found that the trade hand effect was very overpowered as we had too many of them in the deck, the game became a constant loop of players trading hands. It was very easy for a player to fill their hand up then trade with their opponent, this basically made it impossible for the opponent to come back if they didn’t have another trade card. To fix this issue we removed several of these cards and playtested the game until we were happy with the results.

These mechanics also increased the competitiveness of the game and made the players want to target their opponent to get revenge “become hostile towards whomever they blame” (Battigalli, Dufwenberg and Smith, 2018). The rise in competitiveness increased schadenfreude as players were more inclined to screw over their opponent.

This mechanics directly led into the fiero emotion, the card effects implemented were creating moments of fiero, especially when trading hand with the opponent or drawing a card that a player needed to win. Most of the Fiero was coming from the player who was behind, as they could play a card that could completely turn the game around and screw their opponent over.

The final emotion and most difficult to implement was humour, as a group, we found it difficult in the beginning to create humour from a card game because humour is very subjective. At first, we were going to use imagery on the card to create this however once we started discussing it we were laughing more at the name of the cards and not the images themselves.

We decided on a theme that allowed us to have the creative freedom to be manically stupid with the card names, this theme was “things that could happen in a dream”.

At this point we created crude and stupid card titles and started calling the names of these cards out when playing them, examples of our cards are;

* Falling into rectum
* Attacked by testicle shark
* Witness the turkey revolution
* Mugged by the Queen

Each player would need to say the name of the card out loud when playing it if the player forgets they needed to draw another card. From internal and external playtesting, it became clearly apparent that this mechanic increased the humour of the game from the manic stupidity of the card titles and imagery combined. However, it didn’t create raucous laughter that the brief asked for more of a slight giggle.

### Iteration 2

The second iteration of the game was a completely different game, we wanted to try to create a humorous narrative between the card instead of using the card effects.

The whole group enjoyed saying the names of the cards out loud, so we took that aspect and created a memory game in which the player would have to remember the previous cards played in order and relay the card names each turn, we changed the winning clause to whoever forgets the order first loses.

At first, this worked, however, it was difficult to know when a player had gotten the order wrong, so we added a challenge mechanic. During play it allowed players to challenge their opponent if they believe they had gotten the order wrong. If the challenge was successful, that player would win, if not the other player would. From playtesting this feature we created frustration from losing the challenge and created fiero for winning the challenge.

The biggest issue of this iteration, however, was the lack of humour, we believed as a group that this would create more humour than the first because players would have to keep repeating the names of the cards but repeating it didn’t make it funnier. Once the game progresses the number of the cards a player needed to remember increased, this completely removes the humour from the game as the players were too focused on remembering the order.

When internally playtesting it became apparent we were focusing on remembering the order of the cards and not the funny narrative we wanted to create. This point was further supported by an external playtest that was done by someone who played the first iteration, they also said they were more focused on remembering the order than the cards names and images.

### Iteration 3

In the final iteration, we revised the first prototype and added elements from the second. We brought back the previous winning clause and card effects, we then looked at games that focused heavily on humour as this was the biggest issue we had. The game that the whole group thought of was cards against humanity (Temkin, Hantoot, 2009), the reason we found that game funny is that players created their own narrative between the cards given out, we also like the stupidity of the cards and that each game is different from the last because of the randomness. We liked the idea of a player created narrative which we tried in iteration 2 but we removed the memory aspects as it took too much away from the game.

We took this idea of a player created narrative and created a way for players to link their card to the previous card played by the opponent, we wanted to give the players the freedom and creativity to connect 2 cards together and create a story. An example of this is as followed;

Player 1: Plays falling into a rectum

Player 2: Plays attacked by testicle shark

At this point Player 2 would need to create a short narrative to connect the two cards together, for example, As I was falling into the rectum I flew past a testicle shark that decided to attack me.

This increased the senses of humour as it gave the game more imagery, it also gave players the freedom to be as creative and stupid as they wanted which made every game completely different.

After this, we tried to find a way to score the game based on the narrative given by players, however not only was it difficult to score players on creativity but also, we didn’t want to punish people for not being creative. This lead to sticking with the win condition from iteration 1 which was discarding your cards to win.

### Results & Discussion

Overall, we created a two player, synchronous adversarial game, that made players feel frustration, fiero and Schadenfreude, we did create some humour, but it didn’t compare to the raucous laughter that the brief asked for.

The brief wanted the game to be hyper-paced however as a group we decided that the player driven narrative gave more to the game than the hyper-pace did so we removed it.

### Conclusion

Overall the project was a success however there were some problems during development that will be improved next project.

Firstly, a problem I found with this project was the amount of external playtesting that was done, unfortunately, it was difficult to find other people to play the game. We had a few external players that gave feedback, but it would have been beneficial to have more.

Secondly, as a group we should’ve focused more on the most difficult parts of the brief, I would have liked to have spent more time on researching emotions like humour as we found that the most difficult aspect of the game to implement.

Appendix A

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| **Day** | **Module** | **Hours Spent on Module** |
| **Monday** | Group project | 6-8  30 mins scrum at 12:30 |
| **Tuesday** | Group project | 6-8  30 mins scrum at 12:30 |
| **Wednesday** | Group project | 6-8  30 mins scrum at 12:30 |
| **Thursday** | Dev Management | 6-8 |
| **Friday** | ILP | 8 |

References

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Jackson,S (2008) Munchkin [Non-Digital Game]. Steve Jackson Games.

Jennett, C., Cox, A., Cairns, P., Dhoparee, S., Epps, A., Tijs, T. and Walton, A. (2008). Measuring and defining the experience of immersion in games. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 66(9), pp.641-661.

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