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GAT 210A—Spring 2014

Instructor: Jeremy Holcomb

Game Analysis

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**Playtesters**

He Said/She Said (version 01: Everything is Awful)

Classmates from the GAT210 Section A participated as first-time players for the rules that are written in the written rules section of concept and design documentation. One complete game was played during this playtest.

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**Playtesting Results**

He Said/She Said (version 1: Everything is Awful)

I went into this week’s lab a little hesitant about how well my Project-D playtest would go. I’ve never been a huge fan of games that consisted purely of cards, but I think my rules are solid and the game should be playable. My biggest concerns, as with all of my first playtests, are that my rules are understandable and the game is not confusing. I have tried to make my rules and cards as consistent as I can by color coding sections of the rules to match the color code of the cards. For my playtest this week, Chris and Garrett are first-time playtesters for my game.

Fortunately, reading through the rules seems to be not difficult, and after about 7 minutes both Chris and Garrett were ready to start playing the game. Unfortunately, playing the game was anything but easy for both of them. While it may be a factor that many projects were due this week and we are all tired and delirious, Chris is especially having a hard time keeping things in order. He is particularly confused about winning lie sections and what this really means. To make matters worse, both players are unhappy with the actions that the cards have. Because the point of a round is seen to be to get rid of your cards, any cards that force a player to draw an extra card is seen as a detriment to how well the game is played. As it turns out the actions I’ve created for the cards are basically hard to understand, whether through the difficultly of reading my hand writing or because the actions are counter intuitive to how the game should be played.

Only two rounds were played, but Garrett seemed to understand the concept of the game quicker than Chris. Due to this, a complete game was not played because Garrett was able to out play Chris on “Good Kid” and on “Bad Kid” rounds. Chris did not like having to win some cards and try to lose for the bad cards. Garrett also had problems with the way the actions played out for the cards. Considering that there are three lie piles that need to be played on, playing on some of these lie piles would hurt you even when you didn’t mean to. Also, drawing cards did not help you at all, despite the fact that they were “sympathy lie” cards. Summing it all up, the quality of the actions, my hand writing, and perhaps the current state of my playtesters have all combined to make this first playtest quite a disaster.

**Playtesters**

He Said/She Said (version 02: Board Game Elements)

Classmates from the GAT210 Section A participated as first-time players for the rules that are written in concept and design documentation. Two complete games were played during this playtest with minor variations to the written rules played on the second playtest.

**Name: Email:**

* Josh Gutenberg j.gutenberg@digipen.edu
* Howard Wang [h.wang@digipen.edu](mailto:h.wang@digipen.edu)

**Playtesting Results**

He Said/She Said (version 02: Board Game Elements)

I must admit that after last week’s playtest I was not too confident about what to do for the next version of my Project-D game. I decided that making a game that uses only cards was not working in the way I had hoped it would so I made a board game that gives each player dice and a player token. Now the new objective of the game is to collect lies from class rooms and then use those lies in a mini card battle to determine the winner of the game. The game still has a card element to it, but it not the only focus of the game. For this week’s playtest Howard and Josh were first time playtesters for this version of the game.

The written rules for his version of the game are a little more Spartan than I usually like to do, but reading the rules seemed to go over well. Both Howard and Josh very quickly read the rules and started playing the game. Because of their rush to get to the game, some of the areas of the rules have to be read again, but it was not a huge detriment to the flow of the game.

The game board part of the game was simple enough. Both players understood that they needed to collect lies and so they both proceeded to methodically encompass the board in order to collect all the lies they could. I had intentionally designed this version of the game to not need all the lies in order to win, but both players felt that collecting all the lies was necessary, so they did so. This part of the game went smoothly, though it could probably be improved upon. The idea behind the principal piece was a way to introduce some interaction between the players as they try to use it to capture each other’s pieces. Unfortunately, the principal piece did not accomplish much other than causing Josh to have to reroute himself once through the proceedings of this phase of the game. Due to this, the game board section feels kind of mechanical, with not much interaction between the players.

Both players collected all the lie cards they could and Howard was the first person to reach the principal’s office in order to start the lie battle. Before the lie battle, neither player even bothered to check and see what kind of lies they had received, so this part took awhile as the players read through the actions on their cards. Thankfully, this time around the actions on the cards worked much better than in the previous incarnation of the game. Howard ended up using his actions on the lie cards to his advantage, narrowly beating Josh. After the game was over both of them said they really enjoyed the lie battle, particularly with how the actions of the lies worked to hurt or counter the cards that their opponent played. This surprised me because I thought this was going to be the weakest part of the game. Howard and Josh even played the game two more times, each time adjusting their strategies to see if getting to the principal’s office sooner to deny the other cards would be a good strategy. This is great to see, because I had thought the card part of the game would not be very interesting, but maybe there is some hope left in how the card part of the game works.

A second playtest was played by both Howard and Josh but without the board game elements to the game. They shuffled and passed out an even amount of cards to each other and proceeded to do the “lie battle”. Both Howard and Josh appear to like this part of the game much more than the board game, and when asked they both said that the board game part of “He Said/She Said” is not really needed. This is great news, especially considering how unconfident I was feeling about the card portion of the game. This puts me in an interesting position: should I continue developing this game as a card game or change the game altogether like I was considering doing before the lab?

**Playtesters**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 03: Cards Revisited)

Classmates from the GAT210 Section A participated as first-time players for the rules that are written in concept and design documentation. Two complete games were played during this playtest with minor variations to the written rules played on the second playtest.

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**Playtesting Results**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 03: Cards Revisited)

For the third version of my game I decided to make so major changes to the game. For starters, the game has been renamed to “Good Kid/Bad Kid” and the game is mostly a card game, but with a dice element to the game. The game has kind of taken a step back to the first version of the game, but it is a much simpler game now. The main action of the game is an extended version of the “lie battle” from version 02 of the game. For this playtest, Berne and Garrett are the playtesters of this game and neither of them has played this game before.

Right off the bat there are a few problems with the clarity of the rules. There are huge blocks of text in this game that need to be broken down into either lists or more concise chunks of text. Despite this, both Berne and Garrett are not struggling too much and begin to play the game after a few minutes of reading. Garrett elects to play as the “girl” and Berne plays as the “boy”.

The mechanics of the game appear to run smoothly. Both Berne and Garrett understand that their objective is to win “Good Kid” cards and avoid winning “Bad Kid” cards. The first card they play for is a “Bad Kid” card, so both of them try to do their best holding on their cards and forcing their opponent to run out of cards. The actions on the cards seem to be working out much better, aside from a few problems.

Most of the actions are straight-forward in their action, but both Berne and Garrett would like to have the option of either assigning their opponent to perform the action or perform the action on themselves. I have to agree that this oversight would greatly help the game play better. Because of the dual nature of wither winning “Good Kid” cards or losing to avoid “Bad Kid” cards, having the option to inflict and action on oneself or on the opponent would help greatly.

Garrett wins the first “Bad Kid” card and also the first “Good Kid” card. There are some questions to how exactly the “Bad Kid” and “Good Kid” cards add up at the end. It appears I neglected to state that the “Bad Kid” cards are supposed to take away a won “Good Kid” card. This rule seems odd to Berne, who suggests the idea of a ratio system. This is something I’ll consider in the next version of the game.

One of the proudest additions I’ve made to the game is the “challenge” cards. Both Berne and Garrett really enjoy the games within this game. After the playtest was over they both expressed that the addition of these children games to the card game help the game’s theme fit, and provide a physical challenge aspect to the game. I’m really glad that this decision I’ve made has improved upon how fun the game. At the very least, it was a lot of fun to watch them compete in thumb wars, rock paper scissors, and betting.  
 Unfortunately, there are still some balance issues with the game. I’ll have to sort out just how many cards there are and reduce the amount of challenge cards. Also, the betting card needs a hard limit, because Garrett basically bet his whole deck away near the end of the game. Surprisingly this helped him win easier. I’m not sure if this is a good or bad thing.

**Playtesters**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 04: Balancing Act)

Classmates from the GAT210 Section A participated as first-time players for the rules that are written in concept and design documentation. Two complete games were played during this playtest with minor variations to the written rules played on the second playtest.

**Name: Email:**

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* Jonathan Blunden [j.blunden@digipen.edu](mailto:j.blunden@digipen.edu)

**Playtesting Results**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 04: Balancing Act)

I was excited going into the fourth playtest for my project-D because I finally felt like the game was taking shape in a way that was both fun and played to my theme well. For this playtest it will be the first time I’ll be playtesting the non-prototype components. Specifically I’ve made cards that finally have a design and flavor text instead of merely hand written instructions for how the card is meant to be played. I will be looking forward to if these components play well, are fun to look at, and are balanced. For this playtest Glen and Jonathan are my first time playtesters for “Good Kid/Bad Kid” version 04.

As this is the first playtest with the new components, these rules are also the first time anyone’s read them with actual non-prototype graphics on the rules. Both Glen and Jonathan read through the lists easily, and insist upon playing the game and going from there. One thing that Jonathan points out is that I really should have a setup graphic so that players know how to arrange the cards.

As the cards are shuffled and dealt out, both Glen and Jonathan say they love the look of the cards. While there is some grumbling about who gets to be the “boy” and who is the “girl”, they both like the organization of the information and how consistent the layouts of the cards are. There is a little bit of an issue about how to apply actions to either one’s self or to the opponent, and it turns out I might have to adjust the language on a few of the cards that are meant to give the players a choice of how they want the actions to be played. I’ll have to add something like “choose either yourself or your opponent” to these cards so that it is clear to understand that there is an option of choice.

Quickly into the game it turns out there is a problem with the new “Hand Slap Game” challenge. I had to explain to the players how this game is played, because I did not include any challenge game rules on my rules sheet. This is a glaring oversight that I’ll have to include. I had just assumed that these little kid games were known to all. Such a big mistake! This will definitely be corrected on the next written rules for the game. Despite this, once the challenge games are played, both Glen and Jonathan get really into these challenges. This interaction between players looks like it is engaging to both players and provides an added layer of competition to this card battle.

Glen ends up winning the game with 2 Good Kid Cards and a Bad Kid Card, while Jonathan has 1 of each card. The ratio idea appears to work, but still might be a little clunky. Both Glen and Jonathan say they like the game, but suggest that I tone down the amount of challenge cards or at least make more “no action” cards so that way the game is not all special cards. I have to agree with them that this might make the game better as a whole. Hopefully this does not through off the balance of the game by making the special cards too challenging to get.

**The “Why”**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 05: Final)

More than any other of the game projects, the making of “He Said/She Said”, and later “Good Kid/Bad Kid”, was quite a struggle. For some reason I really felt like I had it in me to make game that was purely done with custom cards. More than likely, I was excited over how well the “event cards” went with my project-C game, “Subterfuge”, and so I felt like I could possibly make a purely custom card game because of it. This thought turned out to make my project-D a nightmare.

I do not have a lot of experience with card games other than traditional card games like “Hearts” or “Gin Rummy”. Due to this lack of experience with custom card games, I feel like my project really hurt for the first half of making it because I was at a loss for how to accomplish what it was I was really trying to do. In hindsight, I really should have reached out more to other students, especially Glen Aro, who I later found out is quite the custom card game aficionado.

Although I was given an out in making “He Said/She Said”, I decided to stick with it as it morphed into “Good Kid/Bad Kid”. The minor success of my very simple “card battle” in version 02 coupled with my stubbornness to try and get it right might have made me suffer a bit more than I’d like to have, but I was able to keep my game mostly card based. In the end I think my game is stronger because I struggled with trying to make a complex card only game and accepted that I would have to expand my self-imposed restrictions in order to make a themed game that worked.  
 The game is not perfect, and I’m sure some more card balancing tweaks could be made to it, but it definitely better than the initial game was. It is my hope that this game will feel like an elementary school insult showdown between two kids. Using little kid insults and games, hopefully the theme of this game brings players back to when they were in school playing silly games while calling each other silly names.

**Mathematical Analysis**

Good Kid/Bad Kid (version 05: Final)

There are 32 cards in total for each player’s deck for a combined total of 64 cards that are playable for each player. The decks for each player are symmetrical in terms of what types of cards are in each deck. This symmetry is lost during game play as some cards are discarded and if not retrieved by the end of a round, are considered no longer usable in game. The idea behind this is that players can strategically use their cards to get rid of cards that they do not want each other to have. This makes the cards played on a per round basis important because each round affects the next round’s availability of cards.

Within each 32 card deck for each player there are 8 different types of cards: Challenge, Attack, Defense, Recover, Lose a Turn, Draw, Tease, and No Action cards. The majority of each deck is comprised of No Actions cards at 13 cards or 41% of the deck. The reason behind this is to make the other cards special by decreasing the probability of drawing these cards and to help the game move along quicker with less complex actions. Challenge cards make up 6 cards or 19% of the deck. These cards have actions that can go either way for the players and add to the variety of interaction between players. These cards slow down the game a bit, but are generally fun when not overplayed, hence why they do not make up the majority of the deck. There are 4 Defense type cards or 12.5% of the deck to help block unwanted actions or discard other player’s cards. Attack, Recover, Lose a Turn, and Draw each make up 2 cards each of the deck or 6% of the deck for a combined 24% of the total deck. All of these cards either affect turn order or the amount of cards in the hand. This can either help the game go by quicker or slow it down a little bit depending on how the actions are played. There is only 1 Tease card in each deck or 3%, which is meant mostly to just be a playful and fun card to help the players interact more on a personable level.