Group Project Research:

The following document will list my findings and research on similar games to our own group project game. The research will cover games that are suited for Co-operative and have a core element and implementation of physics. These games will also be similar mechanics wise to our own in order to collect and provide a more concentrated form of research.

The first game I looked at with the research task was the popular 2D game Agar.io, this does however not include the ability to be coop or have physics involved but as a starting place I chose this to get a sense of the similar playstyle that this game has compared to our game. The whole objective of Agar.io is to dominate the board with your own character that you can move around and use to consume other and usually smaller opponents.

Upon the consumption of your opponents your character is able to grow in size to go on and consume even bigger opponents until your character is the biggest on the board and there is no one else bigger than you. I found this interesting because in a sense this is a game based solely on dominating the board amongst everyone else who is also out to dominate the board. This creates a really tense sense of competition one that can be rivalled at any point, placing you in a lower or higher state of advantage or disadvantage.

Because of its ability to hold several people in one game it can create scenarios of hectic movement and gameplay and forces the player to play in the optimal way in order to resolve the current chaos. Ultimately this game is a game of skill based movement and strategy as to which opponent you pick off first and how you plan out a way to win or become the largest on the board.

Another game I looked at that has a similar theme to our own was the game de blob. De blob is a game all about the re-colouring of a world that has none in it. The whole condition behind completing the game is to fill the world with colour to dominate any surface and area with varying colours. With our game the gameplay will be focused around the colouring of blocks within the level. These similarities all add to the game’s level of easy fun as well as social fun in the case of our game. This is because our game will pitch two players against each other, as they both attempt to colour and control the highest quantity of blocks in their colour.

In terms of De Blob it is made in such a way that makes the game fun and enjoyable from the player’s experience in said game. Noting the importance of the player’s experience, our game wants to reflect that same element of fun and pleasure as well as creating a tense and competitive environment between the player. Between the pacing and the skill and strategy involved in the game, our game will use elements and similar mechanics to De Blob in order to create a fairly quick, turn based, competitive colour control game.

Honing in on the core mechanics of our game I did some research on the ways that our main mechanics can be done and used within our game. The mechanic I had in mind was the mechanic behind the firing of the projectile in our game, the projectile will act as ammo for the player to take turns firing it at several blocks in an attempt to hit and turn the most amount of blocks into their colour. Because of the way that our game is played by the player, aiming and firing the projectile is a big part of the strategy and gameplay. It requires the player to not just aim the projectile in a particular manner but also make them think about where the projectile will land and what it will hit.

A game that is similar to this with its element of angular projectiles is the popular mobile game Angry Birds. Angry birds was a huge success and still is relative to the marketplace, with popular spin offs such as Angry Birds Rio, Angry Birds Star Wars and Angry Birds Go! At the heart of Angry Birds was a core mechanic much like the mechanic our game has, a sling mechanic. The sling mechanic took a hold at the center of Angry Birds gameplay as the whole game revolved around the destruction of structures, but the only way to destroy these structures was to sling birds at it via a slingshot. As noted in this article on the Game Design of Angry Birds *“The mechanics of the slingshot are set up with the classic premise of “easy learn, hard to master.”* The reason for this is due to the way that the sling mechanic works and how it is immediately apparent to the player, but the use of it is what takes time to get right.

For example, in Angry Birds the player is shown a slingshot, the player already knows a bit if not all of how a slingshot works in real life and can therefore figure out how it works in a moderately easy fashion and pace. However, if you give them a structure to destroy in a certain number of moves then you force the player to use each shot sparingly. During the process of firing, the player has to therefore consider the drop off, the gravitational impact, the angle and the force at which the bird or projectile is being launched at. These variables and ever-changing factors are what makes these sling mechanics hard to master and get right in order to win or proceed in the game.

By using this sling mechanic in our game we are able to add to the competitive nature of the game and put the player in the correct mind-set to win, forcing the player to think more tactically and strategically means that there is more tension between the players and also between each shot. The addition of this sling mechanic not only changes the pace of the game it also creates a sense of enjoyment and achievement amongst players when it comes to beating your opponent or firing off a really good shot.

Whilst doing the research on Angry Birds I also wanted to compile another section of research on a game that also has a sling mechanic that works more like a bow, whereby the player will drag the projectile back in a certain direction, angle it and then let go to release the projectile. Just like you would nock a bow, draw the bow and fire it. Some of the examples I looked at where Bow Master and crush the castle, both games had a main element of a sling mechanic within them. In both cases these were used to control the machine used to fire the projectiles. In crush the castle the player would be given a plethora of different ammunition and a number of moves to complete the level in, the winning condition for each level was to eliminate all of the people present in the destroyable structures. With Bow Master the sling mechanic is similar but instead of crush the castles usual click and click again, making it important to time, bow master allows the player to pull back on the arrow at a certain angle in order to release and hit the enemies. There would be waves of enemies heading towards your castle and you would need to fire arrows at them with some considerable speed at the later levels to win.

These are just two ways in which a sling mechanic can be used in a game like ours and how it can increase or in some cases decrease the pace of the game and increase the competitiveness and tension between social fun, as well as being enjoyable and pleasing to those who enjoy the easier fun in games.

One of the other big decisions that needed to be made and therefore needed research for was the platform that we would decide to put our game on. For our group and group project there are two major contenders for our choice of platform. One being PC and other being Mobile. Both platforms have their own respective advantages and disadvantages but in order to make an informed decision there needs to be examples and research put in to suggest and support the decision made.

In terms of the Mobile platform option, I went and looked at the popular example of Angry Birds and took a look into what makes the game good and what made it enjoyable and fun to play, as well as how well the mechanics and controls worked within the game. The general idea behind Angry Birds controls is a more find out for yourself kind of scheme where the controls are apparent and obvious and not too difficult to wrap your head around or remember. With this in mind, the mobile platform seems like a very comfortable place to put our game on, especially with the core focus of the game being on its control system and similar sling mechanic to that of Angry Birds. Whilst our idea and theme are different, placing our game on mobile will allow us to streamline the game and refine it to a point where we are happy with the end result as well as have our game require more attention from the player and more strategy in order to succeed and win the games. With the easy to learn and use sling mechanic and the simple ruleset and gameplay of the game its perfect for mobile and will therefore allow the player to simply walk around with the game and play anywhere against anyone they can find. It’s quick, its simple but is fun and can become greatly competitive.