Themes and narratives for group brief

**Idea 1:**

This idea is based on the player taking the role of a child’s deceased parent, with the goal of guiding the child around their house, while avoiding a variety of obstacles and dangers, e.g. a skateboard at the top of the stairs or piece of broken glass on the floor. The reason for the parent’s death doesn’t need to be explicitly explained, but can be hinted as being through child birth, making the player character female.

Ideally, this game would be in 3D but this may lead to animation issues, as 3D characters would be difficult to animate and the group has no experience of this. 2D could work, if done in a realistic style, using spritesheets for character animation.

As the player is effectively cast as a ghost, movement would be unrestricted, in terms of direction and collision with things like walls. But the player would be required to interact with certain objects, to move them and such. The easiest way to implement this would be by assigning the action to a specific button, e.g. space bar or left mouse click.

Some basic Pathfinding AI would be required, to enable the child to move through the level, which would require extra research to accomplish.

The game could be either point and click movement or movement tied to the WASD or Arrow Keys, depending on which fits the game better and is preferred by the team and playtesters.

Empathy is gained by seeing the child look sadly at a picture of their dead parent at the start of the game, before the player has taken their first action, possibly in the form of a mini-cutscene or used as a background image for the main menu. This allows the player to instantly see that the child has lost a parent and immediately empathise with them, using the show don’t tell method. This is further enhanced by the actions the player partakes in, in terms of protecting their character’s child.

Target Demographic would be females aged 18-30 due to the protective nature of the game and theme. This demographic also mostly play point and click games, like hidden object games, so the mechanics would appeal to this demographic too. As of 2017, 41% of global gamers are female and 50% are under 35 years old. (Lofgren, 2017).

Also, female gamers may be able to identify more with a female protagonist, further increasing the empathy they feel when playing.

**Idea 2:**

This idea is based on a mother animal protecting her young, in an open world setting. The player would have to manage things like thirst, hunger, warmth, etc. however, there would be a combat element, where the player would have to defend the young animals from a dangerous predator. The type of predators would be based on which animal the player is cast as. For example, the player as a rabbit would have different predators than a lion.

Would have to be 2D again, due to the aforementioned 3D animation issues, but can still look realistic. However, the violence would have to be turned down, e.g. no blood from prey, as the target demographic wouldn’t appreciate an emphasis on violence.

Empathy would be gained through the players actions and by spending time with the young animals. A bound can be formed quickly if one of the first actions the player partakes in, is defending the young animals.

The game could be either point and click movement or movement tied to the WASD or Arrow Keys, depending on which fits the game better and is preferred by the team and playtesters.

Target Demographic would be females aged 18-25 due to the protective nature of the game, the combat and theme. This demographic also mostly play point and click games, like hidden object games, so the mechanics would appeal to this demographic too.

The combat mechanic would have to be simple, for the target demographic, and could be implemented as a rock-paper-scissors system quite effectively. This would enable the players to pick up the mechanic easily, but add in a sense of strategy, as different enemies could favour a certain option. Also, as there is open world exploration present, the combat mechanic needs to be something that is easy to remember, as there could be periods of gameplay where combat isn’t needed for an extended period of time.

Finding a way to get the young animals to follow the player could be a challenge, from a scripting point of view, as there is a lot of opportunity for them to become stuck in different parts of the world. Also, getting them to only follow when the player is moving could be a challenge, as the young would need to stop following when the battles take place, but resume following after a battle.

**References:**

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