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CONFESSTION MACHINE

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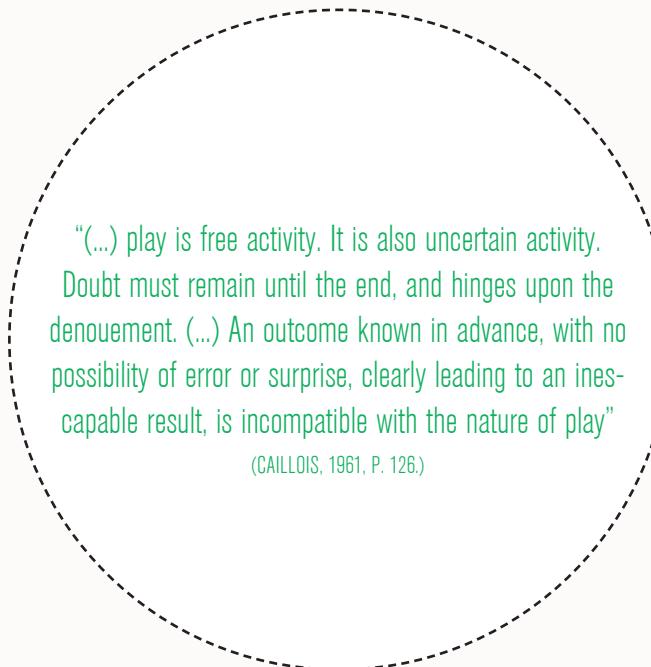
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“(...) play is free activity. It is also uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement. (...) An outcome known in advance, with no possibility of error or surprise, clearly leading to an inescapable result, is incompatible with the nature of play”

(CAILLOIS, 1961, P. 126.)

PLAY IS OFTEN associated with childish activities important for “learning, socialization, and general preparation for later life”, but when applied in the context of adults, play begins to be “viewed as ‘a frivolous throwback to childhood for adults’” (Meier, 1988, p. 191). In this paper we are going to explain why play is also important for adults, and how we facilitate play with our concept, the Confession Machine. This introduction will explore how we play, the importance of play, and how one can use play in design.

The Western culture values work and not play because the general consensus is that play results in a lack of production or productivity. Meier (1988) argues that this is a misconception and that play actually facilitates an increase in productivity: “...play is frequently posited to serve a prophylactic or therapeutic service as recreation, warding off disasters and ills of the mind and body, and also developing health, fitness, and strength, thereby facilitating increased productivity” (p. 192).

Gaver (2009) also defends play and explains how play is essential in life because it is used to develop and recreate ourselves in that “Play is not just mindless entertainment, but an essential way of engaging with and learning about our world and ourselves — for adults as well as children. As we toy with things and ideas, as we chat and daydream, we find new perspectives and new ways to create, new ambitions, relationships, and ideals. Play goes well beyond entertainment: it’s a serious business” (p. 3.).

Not only is play essential to personal development, according to Kadlec (2009), there can also be dire consequences if an individual never engages in play: “Through play we learn empathy, flexibility, creativity, optimism, and communicative openness, and in the absence of play we become narrowed in our thinking, brittle in our emotional responses, and more likely to misread social cues and view others with fear and hostility” (p. 3).

“PLAY IS NOT JUST MINDLESS ENTERTAINMENT, BUT AN ESSENTIAL WAY OF ENGAGING WITH AND LEARNING ABOUT OUR WORLD AND OURSELVES FOR ADULTS AS WELL AS CHILDREN”
(GAVER, 2009, P. 3.)

Play is not only important in life, but can also be used in design. A recent trend in the field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) has begun to move away from functional design to an emphasis on more playful, value-sensitive design. This new trend also moves away from the very user-centered view on design to a more design- and designer-oriented focus (Fallman, p. 2). Even though the users are not the sole center of design, this new HCI wave strives to design a ‘user experience’ (Fallman, 2011, p. 3). Gaver (2009) argues that this revolution is happening because computing has moved from something that belongs to the workplace to something that has an essential place in many people’s everyday lives (p. 2).

Gaver (2009) describes people as “Homo Ludens”, meaning that humans are defined as playful creatures (Huizinga, 1950 in Gaver, 2009, p. 2). This definition confronts the assumptions that technology should only focus on making the most efficient solutions (Gaver, 2009, p. 2). Gaver argues that there is a new paradigm in design that involves designing for human beings as playful creatures. He emphasizes the importance of making design playful, but also argues that design should “be pleasurable in ways that go beyond mere entertainment” (p. 10).

We believe that the Confession Machine goes beyond mere entertainment; we have tried to design something playful within the theme: Enjoying unpleasant things. Our concept turns confessing, a very serious action, into something that becomes playful and therefore easier to do. While the input and the output of our concept are both serious, the execution and function are both exceptionally playful.

“**PEOPLE OFTEN MIX** bits of play - a wisecrack, a joke, a flirtatious smile - with serious activities in order to lighten, subvert, or even deny what is apparently being communicated” (Schechner, 2006, p. 89). The goal we seek to achieve with our concept is to make the unpleasantries associated with confessing more enjoyable.

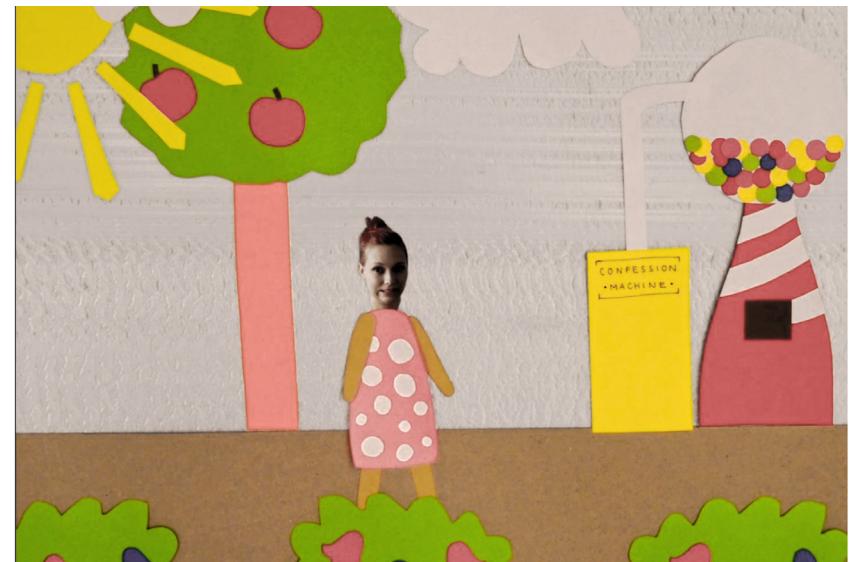
CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

OUR CONCEPT, the Confession Machine, is a machine that allows a user to make confessions by writing his or her confession in a text message and sending it to the machine. Once the user has sent his or her confession, the user will get another person's confession in return in a tangible form.

The Confession Machine is shaped like a traditional gumball machine, but unlike a traditional gumball machine, the Confession Machine has a box of empty balls attached to it. The mechanics of the machine are as follows:

- (1) THE USER SENDS A TEXT MESSAGE CONTAINING A CONFESSION FROM HIS OR HER CELL PHONE TO A SPECIFIED NUMBER;
- (2) THE MACHINE RECEIVES THE MESSAGE, PICKS UP AN EMPTY BALL FROM THE BOX, AND OPENS THE BALL;
- (3) THE CONFESSION IS PRINTED ON A SMALL SLIP OF PAPER, WHICH IS THEN CURLED AND PUT INTO THE OPEN BALL;
- (4) THE BALL IS THEN CLOSED, TAGGED, AND "SUCCED" FROM THE BOX AND DEPOSITED INTO THE GUMBALL MACHINE, WHICH IS ALREADY POPULATED WITH BALLS THAT CONTAIN PREVIOUS USERS' CONFESSIONS;
- (5) A RANDOM CONFESSION-FILLED BALL FROM THE GUMBALL MACHINE WILL BE RELEASED TO THE USER;
- (6) THE USER CAN THEN OPEN THE BALL LIKE A KINDER EGG AND READ THE CONFESSION IN THE BALL; AND
- (7) WHEN THE USER'S CONFESSION HAS BEEN RELEASED, THE TAGGED BALL WILL SEND A TEXT TO NOTIFY THE USER THAT HIS OR HER SECRET HAS BEEN RELEASED.

For a more visual representation of how the Confession Machine works, please refer to our video prototype located at <http://bit.ly/1OG0ZmG>



THEORETICALLY, STARTING FROM the first user that inputs a confession, he or she will only get his or her confession in return, leaving the number of balls in the machine at zero and the confession returned to be the user's own. Because of this pitfall, effective use and operation of the Confession Machine requires a pre-determined number of balls in the machine. A simple solution to this problem is to have the designers of the concept (us) and our friends fill the confession machine without receiving any confessions back until the machine is adequately filled.

MACHINE AESTHETICS

Once we all agreed that we wanted to work with the concept of a confession machine, we brainstormed ideas regarding the look and aesthetics of the machine. We wanted to create a simple design that would make the function of the machine clear to the users. Our first idea resembled the design of the Danish mail service, Døgnposten. The machine would consist of a lot of small lockers, and when the user input his or her confession, one of the lockers containing someone else's confession would open. The playful aspect of this design was the uncertainty and surprise of not knowing which locker would open, and the natural curiosity of what the lockers would contain.

WE ALSO WORKED with an even simpler idea of a box with curtains that would reveal the confession. However, we were concerned that these ideas were not playful enough, and that the users would consequently not be inspired to interact playfully with the concept. We were thus worried that people would take the concept too seriously. In order to avoid this, we came up with the gumball machine as the design of our concept. Because people are already familiar with the way gumball machines work, our concept is intuitive to use. Furthermore, a gumball machine is already associated with playfulness, meaning that we can create a relaxed atmosphere surrounding the concept, which will make the users willing to confess, but not confess something too serious.



USER INPUT

A second consideration apart from the aesthetics of the Confession Machine was how the users should input their confession. At first, we wanted to embed a screen and a keyboard on the machine through which people could input their confession. However, we were concerned that the users would sense a lack of privacy and feel that people could look over their shoulders and see what they were typing. In order to provide people with a sense of privacy, we decided that people should write a text on their cell phones and send it to the machine.

LOCATION

Lastly, we considered what the ideal location for the Confession Machine would be. We decided against placing it in a closed environment like a university not only because there is a possibility of being seen by familiar people when using the machine, which could make potential users hesitate to use it, but also because the population sample is not large or diverse enough in terms of social demographics. Additionally, we ruled out places like bars and large public events like Roskilde Festival because the prominence of alcohol consumption in these types of places may put the Confession Machine at a higher risk of being used improperly.

“ ARCHITECTURE IN THIS SENSE IS LIKE A SEASONAL FLOWER, BEAUTIFUL IN ITS VERY EPHMERALITY AND PROVISIONAL PRESENCE AND APPRECIATED NOT ONLY FOR WHAT IT PROVIDES, BUT ALSO IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT WILL, VERY SOON, BE GONE”

(BORDEN, 2007, P. 334.)

DESIGN PROCESS & USER MOTIVATION

We decided that a public place of reflection would be the most effective location for the Confession Machine; one such ideal location is a park like Kongens Have (King's Garden), or other similarly scenic public space that encourages introspection where people go to relax, think and partake in other related leisurely activities as a way to take a break from their daily lives.

KONGENS HAVE IS a well-visited, but quiet and relaxing place that is conveniently located in the center of Copenhagen. Furthermore, the playful environment of parks already facilitates play and as a result, our concept would not stand out uncomfortably, but fit somewhat appropriately. The ways that our concept would stand out then, would be by its vibrant colors and familiarity, but also by making it a temporary installation in the cityscape:

According to Borden (2007) "We need architectures of an impermanent and temporary nature that appear for a few weeks, days or even hours, that do whatever it is that they need to do and then disappear without leaving a trace, except that they remain in the minds of all those who witnessed them. Architecture in this sense is like a seasonal flower, beautiful in its very ephemerality and provisional presence and appreciated not only for what it provides, but also in the knowledge that it will, very soon, be gone" (p. 334).

Even though the Confession Machine is not a public space, but rather a public installation, it is not a dominating piece of architecture, and it does not replace anything. It is temporary, and people may or may not remember it, but it is important that it is temporary in order for it to stand out and be remembered.

PLAYFULNESS

One motivation for using our concept is that it facilitates the activity of play and encourages a playful state of mind for the user. Caillois (1961) argues for an overall distinction of play as a continuum between what he refers to as *paidia* and *ludus* (p. 130). *Paidia* is "*a word covering the spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct. (...). It intervenes in every happy exuberance which effects an immediate and disordered agitation, an impulse and easy recreation, but readily carried to excess, whose impromptu and unruly character remains its essential if not unique reason for being*" (Caillois, 1961, p. 141). At the other end of the continuum is *ludus*, which "*provides an occasion for training and normally leads to the acquisition of a special skill, a particular mastery of the operation of one or another contraption or the discovery of a satisfactory solution to problems of more conventional type*" (Caillois, 1961, p. 142). The Confession Machine can be placed somewhere between *paidia* and *ludus*, but due to its rule-oriented, instructional nature, the machine leans more towards *ludus* than *paidia*.

CAILLOIS (1961) ALSO PROPOSED a division of play into four different play forms: *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx* (p. 130), where *agôn* is play dominated by competition, *alea* is dominated by chance, *mimicry* is dominated by simulation, and *ilinx* is dominated by vertigo (p. 130). These four forms do not necessarily stand alone, but can be combined, and they can be linked with either *paidia* or *ludus* or a combination of both (p. 130).

The Confession Machine is primarily *alea*, which is "*all games that are based on a decision independent of the player, and outcome over which he has no control, and in which winning is the result of fate rather than triumphing over an adversary*" (Caillois, 1961, p. 133).



Even though our concept is not a game where one can be a winner or a loser, the concept still holds an element of surprise and chance; because of the sheer number of confessions inside the machine by previous participants and the resulting variety of responses available, the user does not know what kind of confession he or she will get in return for his or her own confession. This aspect of the concept will be elaborated further below in Exchange of Personal Information and Curiosity.

"OUR CONCEPT SUPPORTS A SHORT BREAK IN ADULT PEOPLE'S BUSY LIVES AND ALLOWS THEM TO PLAY FOR A SHORT WHILE WITHIN A SET OF RULES"

However, as mentioned, our machine is play within a framework of "rules" and strives for a defined outcome (a confession), which are both qualities that make it less playful than authentic free play (Gaver, 2009, p. 3). Gaver (2009) argues that "*In order to truly leave work behind, we need to embrace an open-ended, self-motivated form of play. This is an engagement that has no fixed path or end, but instead involves a wide-ranging conversation with the circumstances and situations that give it rise*" (p. 4).

Whether a design is truly playful depends on the notion of play vs. game. Gaver (2009) distinguishes between play and game by saying: "*In play, one is carefree; in a game, one is anxious about winning*" (p. 3).

What we strive for with our concept is a more carefree atmosphere where users should not be considering winning or losing; there simply should not be a possibility for what Gaver (2009) describes as the very negative and competitive "instrumental version of 'fun'" (p. 4).

Our concept does not truly leave work behind as it requires people to think about something (a confession) in order to play, challenging them a bit more than what a true playful environment would do. In cases of play like our concept, Gaver (2009) argues that "*No matter how bizarre the result, designs that seek to reify experience in this way will not truly support self-motivated play*" (p. 8).

DESIGNS THAT SUPPORT self-motivated play "focus less on the novelty of the values they support and more on exploring a different conception of interaction itself. They let go of the idea of desirable goals or outcomes to the point that one can say they aren't 'for' anything at all. Instead, they create situations that people can explore and interpret for a variety of reasons and from diverse frames of reference." (Gaver, 2009, p. 8). The Confession Machine facilitates playfulness and engagement in uncommon activities through play by making people confess something to complete strangers, but because of its restrictions in the form of instructions, it does not truly support self-motivated play in the traditional sense.

"WHAT MAKES OUR DESIGN PLAYFUL IS, FIRST OF ALL, THE LOOK OF THE MACHINE. THE VIBRANT COLORS OF THE MACHINE AND THE MOVEMENT OF THE COLORED, PLASTIC BALLS ROLLING DOWN A LIGHTED CHUTE"

Our concept does not allow people to find the purpose of use by themselves. However, according to Schechner there is also a difference between how children and adults play: "*Adult playing is different from children's in terms of the amount of time spent playing and the shift from mostly "free" or "exploratory" play to rule-bound playing*" (Schechner, 2006, p. 92). Our concept supports a short break in adult people's busy lives and allows them to play for a short while within a set of rules. "*Both child play and adult play involve exploration, learning, and risk with a payoff in the pleasurable experience of "flow" or total involvement in the*

USER MOTIVATION

"activity for its own sake" (Schechner, 2006, p. 92). Our concept would not be ideal for child play because it is neither truly free nor exploratory, but since it targets more mature individuals we argue that it can still be playfully designed.

What makes our design playful is, first of all, the look of the machine. The vibrant colors of the machine and the movement of the colored, plastic balls rolling down a lighted chute containing a previous user's confession encourages play on the visual senses.



SECOND OF ALL, the machine is playful because of its connotations of play and playfulness, because people are reminded of the purpose of an original gumball machine; by inputting a coin you get to see one of the gumballs rolling all the way down the slide. Furthermore, the activities of guessing the color of the gumball, chewing the gumball, and creating bubbles can be considered play as well. All these connotations of play and playfulness are connected to the machine itself and are thus automatically transferred into our concept.

THE GOOD LIFE

According to Ryan, Huta and Deci (2008), eudaimonic living can be represented through a combination of "*a focus on intrinsic goals*," reflection, and mindfulness (p. 161). Several positive outcomes associated with eudaimonic living include subjective and psychological well-being, increased sense of meaning and vitality, improved physical health, among other things (Ryan, Huta and Deci, 2008, p. 161). The Confession Machine allows its users to reflect upon "*the meaning and value of one's way of living*" (Ryan, Huta and Deci, 2008, p. 158), encouraging a more eudaimonic lifestyle in order to achieve the Good Life (Ryan, Huta and Deci, 2008, p. 144).

"IN ESSENCE, THIS MACHINE GIVES PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME TO TERMS WITH THEIR MISTAKES AND TO FINALLY LET GO OF ANY NEGATIVE FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR AFOREMENTIONED MISTAKES"

ACCORDING TO SIMMEL, humans have the ability to meditate upon the past and to adapt to the "*present as a set of problems or lessons*" (Henricks, 2006, pp. 117-118). The Confession Machine seeks to help people reflect on their past mistakes to figure out what they did wrong and what they learned from their experience. In essence, this machine gives people the opportunity to come to terms with their mistakes and to finally let go of any negative feelings associated with their aforementioned mistakes, thus improving psychological well-being and supporting the ideology of living well.

Furthermore, play, which can “serve as a prophylactic or therapeutic service as recreation, warding off disasters and ills of the mind and body” (Meier, 1988, p. 192), is often considered inappropriate for adults to partake in. By incorporating a playful aesthetic and interactive elements to the machine (the gumball machine’s appearance and sound effects), the machine allows adults to participate in a socially acceptable “throwback to childhood” (Meier, 1988, p. 191) and to experience relief through both confession and play.

MOREOVER, IN ADDITION to contributing to psychological well-being, confession is also likely to be related to positive physiological health. In a study by Anita Kelly, “*subjects were asked if they had a secret unknown to anyone else. Some were asked to either write about the secret in a journal entry or talk about their secret into a tape recorder. The control group had no outlet for secrets. The study found that those who confessed their secret visited their doctor less frequently in the subsequent six months than the control group,*” suggesting that, “*expression and confession are important to both psychological and physiological health, even if the act involved an inanimate object that provided no feedback*” (Benedetti, 2011, p. 314).

Several other studies resulted in findings that “*linked eudaimonia to prosocial concerns*” (Watterman, 1981 in Ryan, Huta and Deci, 2008, p. 164). When users of the confession machine receive a confession in return, they are able to empathize with other people’s mistakes. The idea that “*I’m not the only one who makes mistakes*” can alleviate any sense of alienation or aloneness that a confessor may feel, can yield deeper understanding of one another, and can lead to greater “*care, concern and responsibility*” within a society (Ryan, Huta and Deci, 2008, p. 164).

ANONYMITY

There is no shortage of myths across all cultures and ages depicting some sort of confession to an inanimate object (Benedetti, 2011, p. 314). This, coupled with modern day society’s increasingly liberal use of the Internet to “*confess their darkest secrets, believing they are protected by the anonymity and intangibility of digital communications on the Internet*” (Benedetti 314), shows that people inherently “*possess a desire to share those secrets*” (Poletti, 2011, p. 33). This can be seen in online communities like PostSecret, where numerous people have already felt compelled to anonymously share their secrets despite the fact that millions of people are reading them.

LIKE POSTSECRET, the Confession Machine takes advantage of such “*human compulsion to reveal secrets*” (Benedetti, 2011, p. 314), and presents itself as a “*private space within a public space*” where users share their secrets without fear of attribution under the pretense of anonymity (Benedetti, 2011, p. 313). This kind of space can be considered an “*intimate public*”, meaning that it serves as an “*affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging*” (Berlant, 2008 in Poletti, 2011, p. 33). This intimate public should highlight the “*healing power of confession in an empathetic public*” (Poletti, 2011, p. 33) in that it promises the feeling of belongingness, and that it seeks to provide a “*complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline and discussion about how to live*” (Berlant, 2008 in Poletti, 2011, p. 33).

Our concept would provide a “*structure of feeling around secrets and confessions that normalizes the importance of the act of confession*” (Poletti, 2011, p. 35); in other words, by confessing via our concept, the user would feel like he or she is joining a community held together by a “*resonate, normative core*”—the possession of a secret, regardless of how big or small the secret is (Poletti, 2011, p. 29). “*The possession of any secret, and a willingness to share it and ‘hear’ others, is what counts*” (Poletti, 2011, p. 34).

EXCHANGE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION AND CURIOSITY

Simmel views social life as an “exchange”: “As they do in strictly economic activities, people in other aspects of their lives make decisions about social participation based on perceptions of potential costs and benefits” (Henricks, 2006, p. 115). Furthermore, “People participate with others when their projected involvement is anticipated to be ‘worth it’” (Henricks, 2006, p. 116). Even though our concept is not a face-to-face interaction, the exchange of personal information can be seen as a motivation for using our concept. People want to use the Confession Machine because they give something and get something in return.



IN CONNECTION TO this is the notion of curiosity. The fact that you get another person's confession is not only a motivation because you feel like you get something in return; it is also a motivation because it adds an element of surprise and uncertainty to the concept, which according to Caillois (1961), is an important aspect of play: “(...) play is free activity. It is also uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement. (...) An outcome known in advance, with no possibility of error or surprise, clearly leading to an inescapable result, is incompatible with the nature of play” (p. 126). By making the confession-containing balls visible in the Confession Machine, we try to intrigue people and make them curious about what is inside the balls.

NOSTALGIA

We believe that nostalgia is another motivation for using our concept. By shaping the Confession Machine like a gumball machine, it is likely that we evoke nostalgia in some, if not many of the users. According to Pascal, Sprott & Muehling (2002) nostalgia is “*a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)*” (p. 39). They explain that nostalgia is connected with a lot of different emotions, but generally positive emotions such as warmth, joy, affection, and gratitude (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002, p. 40) and argue that nostalgia can also be used favorably in the marketplace by taking advantage of people’s affections in the past (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002, p. 39).

“SINCE NOSTALGIA REFLECTS an individual's positive affect for the past, it would appear to have strong potential to evoke positive affective responses from consumers (Holak and Havlena 1998) and consequently may be assumed effective in producing favorable advertising outcomes” (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002, p. 39).

Pascal, Sprott & Muehling talk about using nostalgia in advertising, but we argue that it also applies to our concept. Instead of making people purchase products, we motivate them to use our machine by extending Pascal, Sprott & Muehling’s (2002) observations about the effectiveness of nostalgia in the marketplace to the Confession Machine.

“(...) CONSUMERS MAY RESPOND FAVORABLY TO NOSTALGIC ADVERTISING BECAUSE THEY DERIVE A SENSE OF SECURITY FROM THE NOSTALGIA EVOKED BY THE ADVERTISEMENT”

(PASCAL, SPROTT & MUEHLING, 2002, P. 40)

Value	object	function	technology
healthy living	stressball	expiring/relax	
entertaining	interactive lights	shadow puppets	
entertaining	pen	lights by touch	
connection/empathy	rocking chairs	makes music	
social hygiene	hourglass	connected	
entertaining	hand wash	dialogue triggered	
healthy living	silverwear	colour	
entertaining	veggies	sound	
social/entertaining	cutting board	chase	
enjoying unpleasant things	metro	clovers	
enjoying unpleasant things	words/pictures	lights	
health living	Obrieta		
	Staircase		

Besides being playful, the look and feel of the gumball machine also invokes a sense of security in the user, caused by the nostalgia and feelings from the past: “(...) consumers may respond favorably to nostalgic advertising because they derive a sense of security from the nostalgia evoked by the advertisement” (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002, p. 40).

The Confession Machine evokes the powerful and evocative emotion of longing for the simple life of being a child where happiness could be equal to getting a ball of surprises from a gumball machine. We want people to become nostalgic as soon as they catch sight of the machine, making them want to go back to the past to experience the same childhood bliss.

We aim to recreate the same childhood emotions by emulating a surprise in a gumball machine. Because “consumers are unable to satisfy this (...) desire by returning literally to the past”, the Confession Machine provides “the next best alternative (...) that have been associated with these longed-for past experiences” (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002, p. 40). With this type of nostalgia, called personal nostalgia, we aim to make the users remember the playfulness of their personal childhood and remind them that it is important to engage in play and get in contact with the childish side of ourselves as adults too.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, play, at its best and most useful form, rewards the user with increased maturation in mental and physical capacities, often in response to a rapidly changing environment and the increasing complexity of social interaction required during the aging process (Gaver, 2009 & Kadlec, 2009).

In order to create a playful experience that is simultaneously meaningful and rewarding, the machine integrated several principles with moral epistemic standing (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1186) into its design. These values possess ethical import, a term used to describe the ability to impart morals that center around common values prevalent across the globe, such as those relating to “*human well-being, human dignity, justice, welfare, and human rights*” (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1186). This approach, called value-sensitive design, emphasizes the role of “*values, ethics, and moral concerns in the design process*” (Fallman, 2008, p. 8).

There are several values in particular that the Confession Machine highlights: Ownership and Property, Privacy, Freedom from Bias, Identity, Trust, and Universal Usability.

OWNERSHIP AND PROPERTY

THE “COLLECTIVIZED AFFECTIVE pleasures of confessing the ownership of a secret, and the redemptive power of uttering it” (Poletti, 2011, p. 35) is a powerful property the Confession Machine possesses. The Confession Machine awards both tangible and intangible ownership. On a superficial level, the “reward” is tangible: a plastic ball containing a slip of paper, which particularly appeals to the childish senses. However, the slip of paper on the inside imparts the intangible—a secret, a cultural phenomenon with universal appeal regardless of age, gender, or any other social differences.

PRIVACY

For the sake of defining privacy, the three types recognized in HCI will be used. These include: (1) the kind where information concerning when and what about the user is being captured and to whom it is made available, (2) the kind where the user decides what is made available and to whom it will be available for, and (3) the kind using privacy-enhanced-technology that prevents sensitive information from being traced back to a specific person (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, pp. 1188 - 1189).

THE CONFESSION MACHINE uses the first two privacy types; the first through confirmation when the ball that holds the user's secret visibly enters the machine, and then reinforced once again when the user receives the plastic ball holding a random previous user's secret. The second type of privacy is through the user, who has the liberty to impart his or her secret in whatever detail he or she chooses. On a physical level, using the cell phone as a medium between the machine and user mimics texting between two individuals; it simulates privacy the user otherwise would not have if we had chosen to make a public keyboard for the Confession Machine.



Regarding the third privacy type, it was agreed upon that there would not be any privacy-enhanced-technologies involved in the prototype since any type of censorship would undermine the inherent foundation of the Confession Machine. By making this decision, we open up the potential risk of having actual ill-intent confessions with potentially criminalizing content. There is also a risk of people writing personal details that can be used to

identify specific individuals. However, we would like to believe that our users would have the moral responsibility to not write revealing information. Furthermore, the design of the machine itself as a gumball machine is playful, minimizing the risk of confessions following more malicious themes. Use of a personal cell phone also naturally deters criminalizing admissions, because the cell phones are so personal and easily traceable.

FREEDOM FROM BIAS, IDENTITY AND TRUST

The anonymous characteristic of the Confession Machine consequently produces three interrelated design values: freedom from bias, identity, and trust.

Freedom from Bias

Biases within the context of HCI exist in three different forms: a pre-existing social bias, which takes its "*roots in social institutions, practices, and attitudes*"; a technical bias that "*occurs in the resolution of technical design problems*"; and emergent social bias, which "*occurs in the context of the computer's use*" (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1189).

ONE OF THE main values that the Confession Machine presents is an opportunity to share a confession free from any pre-existing social biases due to its anonymous nature, as "(...) *anonymity can limit the depth of interpersonal relationships (...) [but] anonymity opens up new interpersonal opportunities [as well]*" (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1190).

From start to end, the confessions remain anonymous, and therein lies the main appeal of the Confession Machine—an opportunity to reveal secrets, facts about the user without the judgment that usually comes with identified confessions. It becomes "a space of mediation in which the personal [the secret] is refracted through the general [the pos

"THE SAFER WE FEEL IN THE GAME WE'RE PLAYING, THE MORE WILLING WE ARE TO PLAY IT (...) WE MUST ALSO BE ABLE TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE SAFE WITH EACH OTHER"
 (PASCAL, SPROTT & MUEHLING, 2002, P. 40)

THIS IS A TECHNICAL bias because as the number of dropped balls increase, earlier balls are pushed downward and the likelihood of dropping from the machine increase. Though it is a technical bias, the important part is that it is a non-discriminatory bias because every single ball is subjected to increasing odds over time as the Confession Machine cycles through the confessions. As for emergent social bias, the use of a gumball machine by an adult may potentially raise eyebrows, but this emergent social bias is not serious enough to obstruct use of the Confession Machine.

Identity

"(...) virtually all of us feel like we live reasonably coherent lives, and that the person we are today is pretty much whom we were yesterday and last week, if not last year. Thus, identity appears to be multiple and unified (...) a single person can be, for example, a father, lover, poker player, gourmet cook, computer geek and animal lover." (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1192). A person "has as

session of a secret]" without the risk of exposure and consequent fallout associated with 'going public' with one's secret alone" (Berlant, 2008 in Poletti, 2011, p. 32).

In terms of bias within the machine itself, there is not much technical bias aside from the fact that the balls towards the entrance of the machine will usually drop down.

many social selves as there are individuals that recognize him" (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 36 in Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1192). Because confessions are anonymous, the Confession Machine allows for the user to embrace one or more identities in his or her confession without fear of being judged.

Trust

There is an element of implied trust in these secrets because anonymity gives rise to new interpersonal opportunities. DeKoven (2002) states that "*the safer we feel in the game we're playing, the more willing we are to play it (...) We must also be able to believe that we are safe with each other*" (pp. 16-17). If we had decided to include privacy-enhanced-technologies, it would not only be difficult to differentiate between criminal intent and trolling or hyperbolic use of language (such as "I was so angry I wanted to murder him"), censorship would also compromise the feeling of trust in the machine.

UNIVERSAL USABILITY

"UNIVERSAL USABILITY REFERS to making all people successful users" (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1189). The goal of our prototype is to enable anyone to use the Confession Machine. The more users, the more diverse the confessions and the more rewarding using the Confession Machine becomes.

INTEGRATING OUR VALUES INTO THE CONFESSION MACHINE

Designers integrate such values like the ones listed above in technology through three ways: embodied, exogenous, and interactional (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1178).

Embodied

Akrich says, "*a large part of a designer's work is that of 'inscribing' or embodying his or her vision of "the world in the technical content of the new object"*" (Akrich, 1992 in Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1179), or literally embodying the value into physical form. For our concept, the gumball machine, plastic ball, and little slip of paper holding the confession are all embodiments of our values. The gumball machine embodies universal usability, the ball embodies ownership and literally encasing privacy, and the little slip of paper yields a freedom from bias.

Exogenous

Culture exists as a driving force for how the device will be used. "*The exogenous position holds that societal forces (...) significantly shape how a deployed technology will be used*" (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1179), which is why a gumball machine was chosen as it is universal in its mechanics.

OPERATION OF A gumball machine is fairly familiar for most people regardless of the different types of candies and toys inside the gumball machine dispensers. The user inputs something, usually in the form of a coin, and the machine outputs a token. In this machine's case, it is a confession that is dispensed after the user inputs his or her own confession.

Interactional

Interactional methods of placing a value onto a design involves prototyping properties that amplify certain values and decreases others (Friedman & Kahn, 2002, p. 1179). The interactional features of the Confession Machine are fairly minimal due to the fact that the users will text on their own phones. There is not as much physical interaction as there is visual interaction because contact with the machine is rather minimal. A user sends a text, the machine dispenses a ball after printing a secret, and the user takes a ball. However, the user will be able to have the satisfaction of seeing his or her own ball being created and falling into the rotunda, as well as another person's secret rolling down the lighted spirals.

THE CONFESSION MACHINE utilizes all three aforementioned methods that impart human value into a technical design. Since some users will notice (to varying degrees) the embodied methods of the machine, while others will notice the exogenous methods, and still others will notice the interactional methods of the machine, this shows that the combination of all three methods will open more avenues of understanding for these values depending on what the individual notices. The machine takes advantage of the different interpretation avenues regarding these values, which results in an increased number of people impacted by the Confession Machine across a broader audience.



Sengers & Gaver (2006) argue that multiple interpretations of computer systems can be fruitful: "Systems that can be interpreted in multiple ways allow individual users to define their own meanings for them, rather than merely accepting those imposed by designers" (p. 3). We designed our concept with some basic guidelines on how people should use our machine, but have still offered some degree of freedom in what to confess. If people were to use it in entirely different ways, the meaning of the concept would disappear.

WE CAN DESIGN our concept so that it suggests how to use it and what to do with it, but we cannot control whether people will actually use it the way we want them to. We have tried to control interactions with the Confession Machine by making it anonymous so that people actually dare to share their deepest confessions, and by making it playful, people are reminded that no one is going to judge them and that it is okay to make mistakes.

However, because our concept is so paradoxical - it is neither completely serious (adult), nor is it completely playful (childish) - it automatically opens a channel for multiple interpretations of what should be confessed, which can be difficult for us as designers to control. In other words, there is room that allows for dark play.

When entering the universe of a given game, the participants, or the players also enters a space with set boundaries. The rules ensure that the game will be played correctly: "*The confused and intricate laws of ordinary life are replaced, in this fixed space and for this given time, by precise, arbitrary, unexceptionable rules that must be accepted as such and that govern the*

DARK PLAY:
"PLAYING THAT
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TION, AND
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(SCHECHNER, 2006,
P. 119)

correct playing of the game" (Caillois, 1961, pp. 125-126). In some games, violation of the rules can lead to disqualification or entail a penalty e.g. football, basketball and tennis. However it has to be stated that many games do not have rules - children's games of free improvisation is an excellent example of this (Caillois, 1961, p. 126). Even though the Confession Machine is not a game, if it is to function properly, several rules are implied.

WHEN PLAYING WITH THE CONFESSION MACHINE, THE RULES ARE FAIRLY SIMPLE: (1) the input produced by the player has to be truthful, and (2) when receiving another person's confession, one has to govern and keep the secret safe. According to Caillois (1961), rules are vital for games to function, but if a player contravenes the rules, he does not necessarily destroy the game. "*If the cheat violates the rules, he at least pretends to respect them. He does not discuss them: he takes advantage of the other players' loyalty to the rules*" (p. 126). When doing so the violator separates himself from the other players and his actions can be explained with the notion of dark play.

ACCORDING TO GEERTZ (1972), dark play can range from using minor cheats to the more severe deep play (Schechner, 2006, p. 118). According to Schechner (2006), fantasy, risk, luck, dares, invention and deception can all be parts of dark play, which as an activity can occur either amongst a group of players or entirely in private as well. This leads us to an interesting question: why would players create and enact dark play? One might state that a possible solution to this question could be that dark play can be rewarding in the forms of deceit, disruption, and excess, but in actuality there is much more to it (Schechner, 2006, p. 119).

"IN OUR CONCEPT, PLAY IS USED AS A PERSONAL EXPRESSION WHERE PEOPLE INVOLVE THEMSELVES BY CONFESSING SOMETHING PRIVATE. THEY PUT THEMSELVES AT STAKE WHEN USING OUR CONCEPT, WHICH IS SOMETHING THAT OTHER PEOPLE CAN MISUSE"

RISK OF DARK PLAY & PROTOTYPE

WHEN PLAYERS CHOOSE to engage in dark play, assuming a new or alternative identity can be a part of the game. Cloaking an individual's ordinary life to get away from the monotony of the daily humdrum is a central notion in this context. "Sometimes a person puts herself at risk to test her luck, to prove her value, to enact a special destiny" (Schechner, 2006, p. 121), and the resulting thrill and rewards might tempt players to ignore the rules and venture into the exciting, but sometimes dangerous journey called dark play.

There are different elements that can make play become dangerous. One way is when play is personal (IT-University, 2013, slide 12). In our concept, play is used as a personal expression where people involve themselves by confessing something private. They put themselves at stake when using our concept, which is something that other people can misuse.

Another way play can become dangerous is by being appropriative (IT-University 2013, slide 9). Usually appropriation of play is when one takes over a situation, which is not made for play and explores what is at stake (Sicart, 2013). The Confession Machine is made for play but as already mentioned, there are aspects of it which we as designers cannot control—like what the participants should write in the texts. This enables people to appropriate our concept and make it their own.

ONE WAY PEOPLE could appropriate our concept and thus make it their own, could be by making their own rules for the Confession Machine. We do not want to control the content of the texts that people send to the machine; therefore, people could potentially write non-confessional messages to send to the machine. In the event that this were to happen, those who use the machine as intended may be impacted in a positive or negative manner. The expectations amongst those who play by the rules would then not be fulfilled and they might feel disappointed when the "confession" they get in return turns out to be something other than expected. This clearly shows that players who violate the rules could be taking advantage of the other players' loyalties, consequently making dark play a part of our concept.

THE MAIN REASON for prototyping in design is that "Creating quick and dirty prototypes allows you to test a number of ideas without investing a lot of time and money up front" (Plattner, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, prototypes are a very efficient and manageable way to gain empathy and develop a deeper understanding of the users as well as the design space (Plattner, 2011, p. 4). There are several different ways of making prototypes, but in the end they all have the same purpose:

"Prototyping is getting ideas and explorations out of your head and into the physical world. A prototype can be anything that takes a physical form - be it a wall of post-it notes, a role-playing activity, a space, an object, an interface, or even a storyboard" (Plattner, 2011, p. 4).

For our prototype, we decided to make a stop motion short film using cardboard and paper to depict a young woman using the Confession Machine. Aside from not having the materials to create a realistic, customized prototype, we also did not possess the mechanical skills required to make a functioning gumball machine. Prior to making the short film, we prototyped in the form of sketches to help us explore the different opportunities for the desired aesthetics and feel of our concept (Plattner, 2011, p. 4).



"IN THE END, DESIGNERS THEMSELVES NEED TO BE HOMO LUDENS. WE NEED TO RECOGNISE THAT WE ARE PLAYFUL CREATURES, AND THAT OUR WORK DEPENDS ON OUR PLAY"

(Gaver, 2009, p. 14)

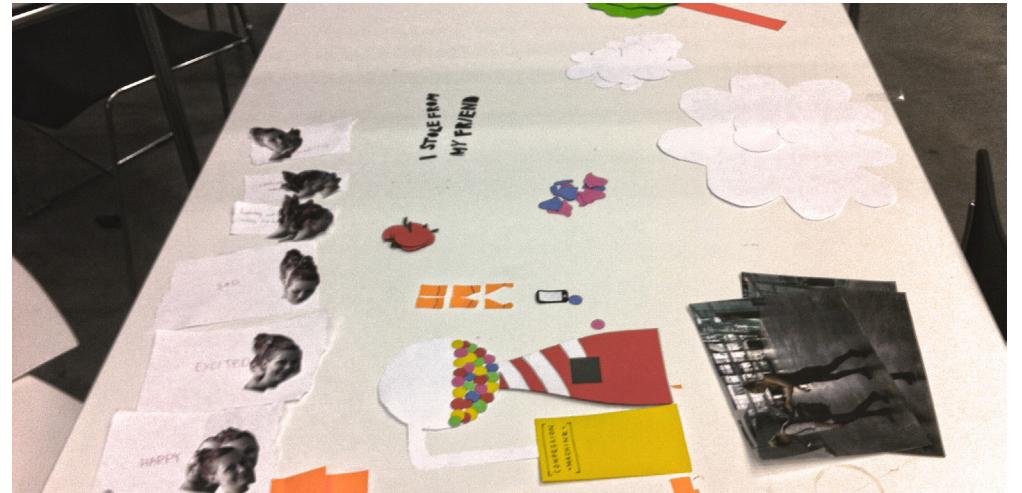
By conducting user tests, we could have gained more insight about our potential users and made sure that our concept would be used correctly (Plattner, 2011, p. 5). Even though we were unable to conduct user tests, we still managed to discover how the machine should work and what information should be made more clear to the users by acting through the cardboard figures.

ACCORDING TO FALLMAN, the user is not the only center of recent trends in HCI design anymore: "(...) third wave HCI has reacted against the second wave's strong commitment to users (and the consequential lack of emphasis on the designer) in favor of a more design-oriented, exploratory, interpretative, playful, ambiguous, and at times taken on an activist attitude [16, 25, 27, 28, 19, 20, 30, 4, 51, 11, 60]" (Fallman, 2011, p. 2).

Even though we lacked data from user experience tests, we as designers are more in the center than ever before, tasked with the need to not only give users what they want but also bring something new to the table:

Another important aspect of prototyping is the ability to test the concept on real people. Unfortunately, the fact that we prototyped our concept through a short film meant that we could not have real interactions with our prototype and therefore, could not observe and analyze the exact user experience (Plattner, 2011, p. 4).

"Prototypes are most successful when people (the design team, the user, and others) can experience and interact with them. What you learn from those interactions can help drive deeper empathy, as well as shape successful solutions" (Plattner, 2011, p. 4).



"Instead, they [the designers] need to seek a kind of empathy with the people and places for which they design, while maintaining their own sense of self. For technologies should not only reinforce pleasures that people know, but they should suggest new ones as well" (Gaver, 2009, p. 15). This is especially true for our concept, because we have designed it to be temporary to make people reflect on their actions, instead of being a sustainable solution to a personal problem.

Besides testing our concept on users, we as designers should personally involve ourselves in the concept and interact with it. While making the video, we immersed ourselves in our concept through play. We played around with different ideas on how the cardboard figure of the young woman should interact with the Confession Machine, and what emotional expressions we should depict before, while and after using the machine. We also improvised a lot throughout the filming process, which forced us to clarify aspects of our concept and taught us about the user experience.

"IN THE END, designers themselves need to be Homo Ludens. We need to recognise that we are playful creatures, and that our work depends on our play" (Gaver, 2009, p. 14).

CONCLUSION

PEOPLE INHERENTLY WANT to share their secrets. It is this basic innate desire that drives the inspiration for the Confession Machine. The machine seeks to challenge the traditional connotations surrounding confession; instead of following the conventional confession box method, the Confession Machine puts a modern, light hearted spin on this age-old act and provides users a playful outlet where people can gain relief through confession.

Through use of our machine, we want to provide people with a service that can facilitate interactions that help the user live the Good Life. In order to design a concept that helps people live the good life, we designed for different ways to integrate values regarding ethics of human welfare into our concept, enabling users of the Confession Machine to regard and reflect emphasized values across a broader audience.

The Confession Machine will encourage introspection within the user and inspire the user to make changes in his- or herself to prevent the repetition of past mistakes, hopefully leading to a more morally just life. In addition to this, we can see even more aspects of our concept that encourage the Good Life. First of all, our machine helps the user achieve autonomy. By luring the user in with the nostalgic appearance and child-like appeal of the gumball machine, our concept helps to spawn the urge to confess in the users. In support of the idea of an autonomous user, we see that it is the desire to be released from their secrets that drive the users to confess; the users confess for themselves and not for anyone else.

Second, giving users the opportunity to watch their confessions join the other secret-filled balls in the machine and to receive confessions in return for theirs can build empathy--users are able to understand that humans are not so different from each other; everyone has their secrets. A community built on the acceptance of the idea that making mistakes is a natural part of human nature is an empathetic community.

From the nostalgia-induced feeling of childhood bliss to the sense of the communal unity achieved through the anonymous give and take of secrets, the Confession Machine maintains a perfect balance of playfulness and seriousness and effectively practices the Good Life, encouraging users to move not only towards a better understanding of the people around them, but towards a better understanding of self.

THOUGH THE PURPOSE of the machine is to live the good life, the Confession Machine comes with risks that stem from the paradoxical nature of our concept. The risk of dark play presents a challenge for us; as designers we can influence the ways our machine can be used, but we cannot completely control use in the way we envisioned. While dark play can ruin the experience of the players that did not take advantage of the implied honesty and privacy required of the Confession Machine, it can lead to unexpectedly positive and negative outcomes and experiences.

IN CONCLUSION, THE CONFESSION MACHINE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTROSPECTION DONE IN A PLAYFUL AND HEALTHY MANNER AND IS A SMALL, YET DEFINITIVE STEP TOWARDS LIVING THE GOOD LIFE.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

THOUGH WE HAVE carefully considered all aspects of our concept, there are still a couple of potential issues that should be discussed further. If given additional time, these issues could be addressed and resolved in a future prototype.

In our current concept, we assume that the user will not send a confession if he or she is not near the machine. However, in reality, this may or may not be true. In the event that a user sends a message to the machine from home, what would happen? Since it is not possible to disallow text messages based on proximity with the currently available cellular technology, this is a pertinent problem that should be addressed in future developments.

To counter this problem, the Confession Machine would need to incorporate the use of a release system. For example, when the user sends a confession, he or she will receive a confirmation number that first needs to be entered into the machine before the confession can be released for print. To prevent the machine from needing to keep track of too many unreleased confessions, the confirmation number will be time sensitive. Once the user sends a confession, he or she will have e.g. 24 hours to release the confession before it is erased from storage. This is only one potential implementation of the release system--the idea of the release system can still be iterated on and carried out more playfully if desired.

A SECOND ISSUE that warrants discussion regards preventing users from trolling or sending spam. One way to prevent spam would be to enforce a fee to use the machine; however, doing this could make the users feel exploited--especially if they think that someone is making a profit off of their secrets or confessions. Furthermore, people should not have to pay to tell their secrets. In real life, people neither need to pay to use a confession box, nor do they need to pay to tell a friend or a stranger a secret, much less a confession machine. An alternative solution would be to put a limit on the number of confessions a user can send a day. Although this is a more viable solution, it presents another question: what should the limit be? If the limit for the number of confessions a person is allowed to send per day is one, then the one allotted confession becomes a limited commodity and therefore, more valuable, thus causing the user to feel more compelled to send a proper confession and not to waste it. On the other hand, it can also be argued that people are not limited to making a certain number of confessions a day, and that by imposing a daily limit, we are also limiting the users' freedom of confession.

IN CONCLUSION, the best solution to both of these problems cannot be determined simply through discussion, but through a combination of discussion and implementation. Ideally, given enough time and resources, the Confession Machine could be made into a physical prototype. This would allow us to conduct user tests on the machine to find out what problems are actually encountered and could provide insight on what the best ways to fix these problems would be.

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