Reflection Paper

Compliment App

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This project, the Compliment App is all providing human connection, even when you cannot be there physically. It is all about finding that one person that keeps you happy and being able to get asynchronous affection from them. I have a hard time with depression many times stemming from a feeling of not being seen or acknowledged, and many times what I need is to feel some sort of affection, usually words of affirmation if I can't have physical contact. Though one of the issues with living like this is that you cannot always get someone else's attention when you need it. We also have to realize here that it is selfish to rely on others to set aside time to give you affection when they have busy lives and are probably struggling with many of the same issues that we are. So, with the creation of this app, it was important to me that I created a way to provide a way to give and receive affection asynchronously, allowing the users to receive affection at any time.

Also important to me was human connection and a way to surpass distance. I did not want to just create a random compliment generator, I wanted to make sure that people were getting customized messages. What better way to get customized compliments than to receive them from someone who knows the intended user? I also wanted a way for the users to receive compliments from any distance. What is so weird is that all of this was my internal reasoning at the beginning of the semester, and then COVID-19 came along and multiplied all these needs by 10. I think we are all feeling negative impacts of social distancing which makes the need for affection and affirmation that much more important. Personally, I have missed my significant other for the duration of entering self-isolation and have greatly needed some way to stay connected, even when we are both busy with schoolwork.

Admittedly, a lot of my motivation for this project was to satisfy my needs, but in constructing the project, I put a lot of thought into who would be using this app. I wanted to make sure that anyone who wanted to use the app could, and that it would be easy and convenient for them to setup a connection through the app. Knowing that I would be trying to assist those that don't live with their significant other, I knew that my target audience would most likely be young adults. Knowing this, it allowed me to create the product around this target group. I know that almost every young adult has a smartphone and would be able to download this app onto their phones. I also knew that I had a little bit of leeway with the setup (having them go through google sheets and setup a spreadsheet with the compliments and exchange URLs), knowing that they probably have a bit of technical competence to be able to do these steps.

So that is why I ended up choosing to develop a mobile app, but I could have coded in many different coding environments, but I chose to produce my app in Unity. I am very comfortable with Unity (not really Unity2D) but there were more reasons than just that. Unity provides so many built-in functions and features that make very interactive apps. The code is just in C# which I was able to manage, but the art was greatly helped by Unity. I was able to add an interactable custom button, a scaling border, particle effects for the button, sounds on the button, etc. All these features through Unity allowed me to make my app more and more interactive, which was one of my goals when laying out my project to begin with.

As for the pros/cons for my application, I think that a lot of my planning paid off when it came to platform and usability. I think that this app is very accessible, and very convenient to

use, I think there are a lot of pros to the asynchronous features of the app, and I think that there's pros to the compliments being user-generated. For all of the reasons I listed above, it was important that this app was able to be used at any time, and that it would be incredibly easy for the users to do so, and I think all of these goals were achieved. As for the cons, I think that the asynchronous nature of the app can kind of be a disadvantage. It is easy to set up this app and then forget about it, on both sides. For the user, they can forget that the app is there, because it is not an in-grown reaction to go to this app when they need affection. As for the person creating and maintaining the database, it is easy for them to completely forget about the google sheet and stop updating it. It also takes quite a while to get into google drive in the first place, and then to edit a spreadsheet would seem like a large task that many people might just choose not to do because of the time commitment.

I think the strongest aspect of this app is the code supporting it. I had the most time to work on this, and it was the backbone of my idea. Everything from php pull requests, to the list structure that makes sure you see the full list of compliments before repeating, to the save/load features are very strong features. All of these were strong coding choices that I stand by. As for the weaknesses, I think I could have made some better art/particle effects and a better tutorial. I think I could have also added some more features so you can save you favorite compliments, etc. But the second half of this project was severely limited by COVID-19. I think they are still not terrible, just not exactly what I envisioned.

So, now that the project is done and I am turning it in, how do I feel? Honestly, my gut reaction is to be upset about not achieving everything I set out to achieve, being a perfectionist,

but I'm working on being kinder to myself, so I think that in the end I'm proud of myself. I know how hard this semester was, and putting that in perspective, I think the project was a success. I am looking forward to getting access to a Mac so I can download this app onto mine and my significant other's phones 😊

As for the documentation, I am very proud of this deliverable. I chose to create and maintain the documentation on GitHub which is very structured (which was an advantage and disadvantage) but it ended up looking great. The way I structured the documentation, it is very easy to follow, and I was able to access it from anywhere which made editing it very easy to do. I also think that I provided a lot of written explanation for every aspect on my app, hopefully successfully providing my internal monologue for the entire process. I hope that you find it helpful and that you enjoy reading through it (and using my app for that matter).