Talk Summary

- Brief motivation on playtesting importance
- Three workshops, not one
- Workshops, not lectures

NOTE: Resources at:
www.playtestingworkshops.com

Take-Away Points, Up Front

- Super short iteration cycles
- Hand's on practice, immediate feedback
- Freedom to fail (not being graded)
- Applicable to game design courses, studio/project courses, Game Creation Society meetings, ….

Credits: CMU Playtest Workshops

Jessica Hammer

Jodi Forlizzi

Judeth Oden Choi

MacKenzie Bates

Rachel Moeller

Credits: Playtest Materials

- www.playtestingworkshops.com contents informed by academia and industry

Test: Example

Johann Sebastian Joust

Photo by Brent Knepper in *Die Gute Fabrik* (http://gutefabrik.com/joust.html),
J.S. Joust by Douglas Wilson for PS Move, http://www.jsjoust.com

Self-Assessment-Manikin Scales

By: Hans Irtel

An explanation of a pictorial rating system used to obtain assessments of experienced emotions on the dimensions affective valence, dominance and arousal.

Why We Play Games: Four Keys to More Emotion Without Story

By: Nicole Lazzaro

XEODesign conducted an independent cross-genre research study on why people play games and identified over thirty emotions coming from gameplay rather than story.

Motivations of Play in MMORPGs

By: Nick Yee

Yee built an empirical model of the underlying motivations of MMORPG players. This model provides a meaningful way to differentiate players from one another and a tool to explore in-game preferences and behaviors.

🌐 Read More

🌐 Read More
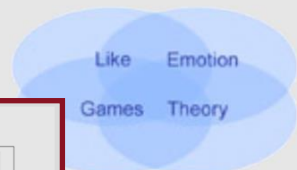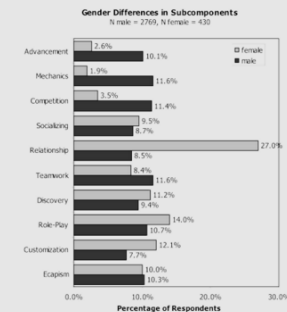
Usability and Playtesting

- Usability: efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction
- Playtesting: "getting people to come play your game to see if it engenders the experience for which it was designed" – Jesse Schell, *The Art of Game Design*
- Definitions/context made into a packet which can be read-ahead material before workshops

Iterative Playtesting Process
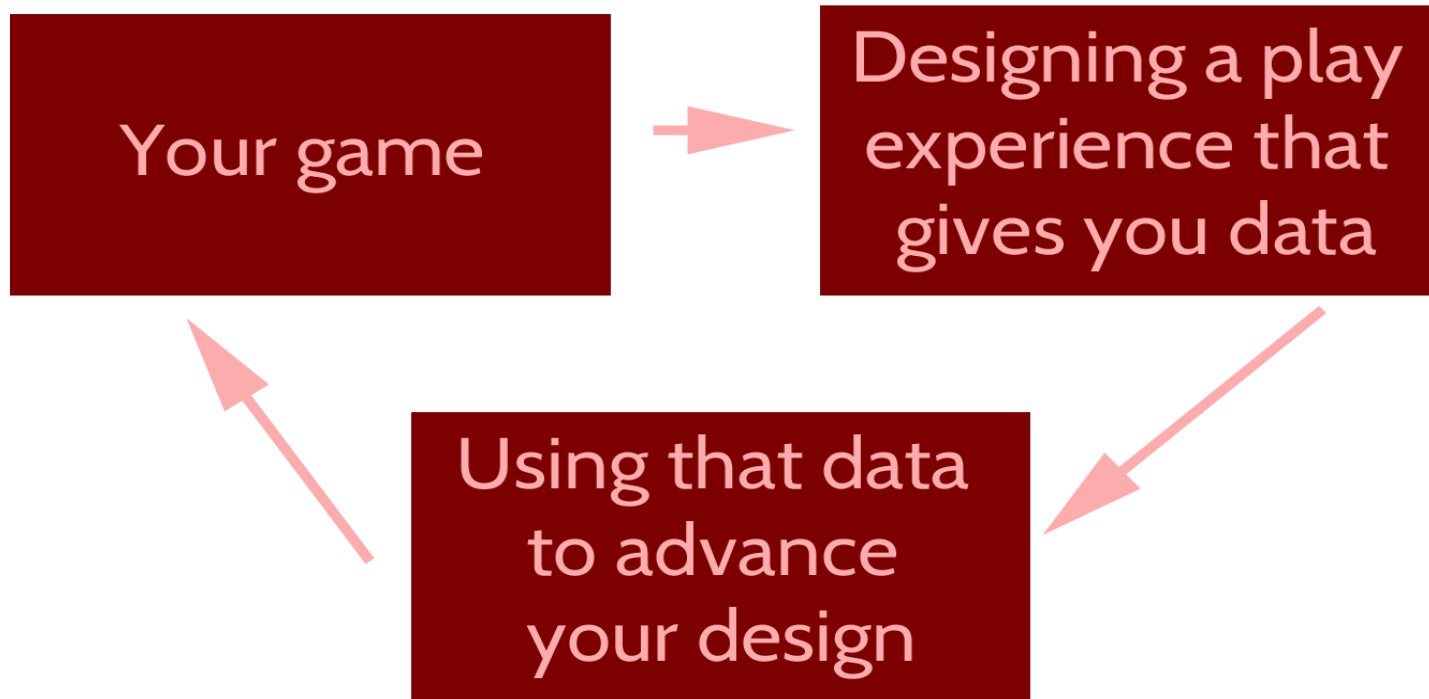
Playtesting Skillset

- Exploring a design space
- Asking useful questions
- Choosing a method
- Executing effectively

- Interpreting what you learn
- Iterating your game
- Making a case with data

Handouts Important!

- Gives context to activities
- Provides take-home advice

Recon Activity: Composition Box Guide

So, you've started brainstorming ideas for your game or experience! Use this visual organization tool, a Composition Box, to gather your design team's and stakeholders' ideas, inspiration, expectations and needs, and start developing your player experience goals. You might not be able to answer all of the questions below, and some will be more relevant to you than others—so choose where to focus your energy. To do this exercise you will need a poster, markers and printouts of images that inspire you.

Start with what you know. Write a one- sentence description of your game or experience.

Playtesting with Plex Cards: Idea Generation with Stakeholders

Try this within your design team to generate many ideas fast, or ask for participants outside of your team to do the exercise while you observe. Perhaps they will generate surprising new ideas. By having multiple people play with the same set of cards, you may find trends that your design team wants to explore or clichés that you want to avoid.

Method One: Brainstorming
1. Split into pairs.
2. Each pair randomly draws a Plex Card and faces it heads up. This is the seed card. (You might pre-select the seed card, if you know that there is a particular type of playfulness that you want to explore.)
3. Each player draws three more cards and keeps them in their hand.
4. Player 1: start exploring an idea based on the seed card: What kind of games or experiences come to mind? Do you have a particularly memorable experience with this

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Inside the box collect the ingredients that might go into creating your game: from game assets, to ideas, to personal experiences, to themes and styles.

↓ **Game Description**

Inspiration!
Gather together games, art, stories, music, characters, and articles. Use images when possible. Try to articulate what inspires you about the examples.

Consider:
- Gameplay—mechanics, level design, feel, POV
- Art—character design, art styles, consider art from different media and eras
- Music—think game soundtrack, theme, feel, or era
- Stories & Articles—What literature, ideas or current events inspire you?

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Experiences!
Understanding the past and current experience of your stakeholders is essential to designing a game with meaning and resonance. Remember that your design team's experiences are also valuable fodder for design.

Consider:
- Play experience—How experienced are your stakeholders in your game-type? What kind of games do they have experience playing?
- Technical experience—How technically experienced are your stakeholders? What technical expertise does your design team have? What skills does the design team want to learn or practice?
- Personal experience—What personal experience do your stakeholders and design team have with the themes or subject matter of your game? What personal experiences might affect how they encounter your game and what type of expectations they might have for the game?

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Needs!
What need(s) does your game satisfy? Is it a gap in the gaming market? Is it an educational need? An emotional or social need? Does it reach an underserved population?

Consider:
- What are your client's needs?
- What are your players' needs? (What will/should keep them playing?)
- What are the needs of other stakeholders?
- Don't forget the needs of your design team. What do you want to get out of this experience?

↓ **Player Experience Goals**

What do you want your player to feel or experience? By the end of this process, you should be able to articulate your player experience goals.

Playtest to Explore

This workshop is for you if:

- You are early in the development process.
- You want to understand your players better.
- You are struggling to find your game or experience.

Playtesting Methods in Explore:

- Observe if you know your target population.

- Probe if you know an asset you'd like to use.

- Test if you know your core mechanic.

- Co-design if you know the impact you want to create.

Explore: Composition Box

- Visualize many aspects of the experience
- Captures perspective of varied team members

PLEX Cards · Playful Experiences Cards
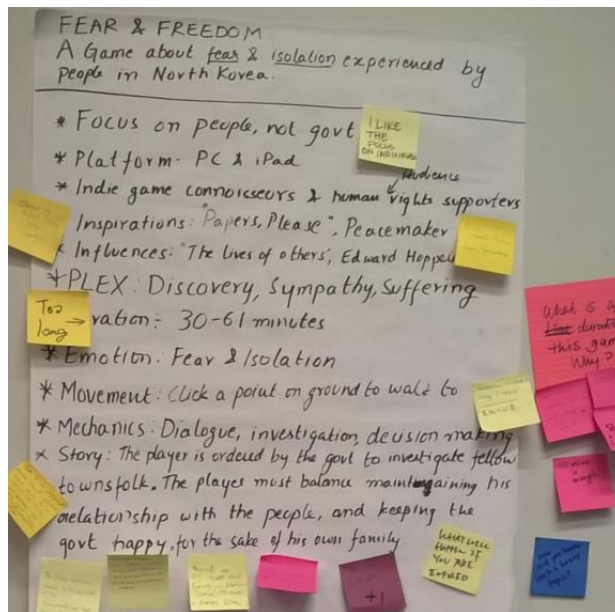
Explore: PLEX Cards

- Design for playfulness
- Credits: Andrés Lucero & Juha Arrasvuori (funkydesignspaces.com/plex)
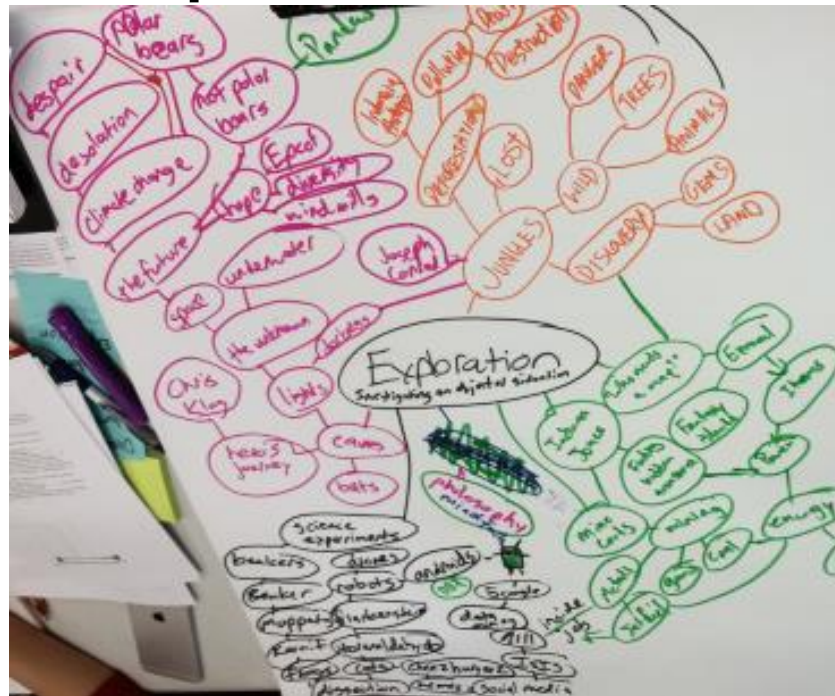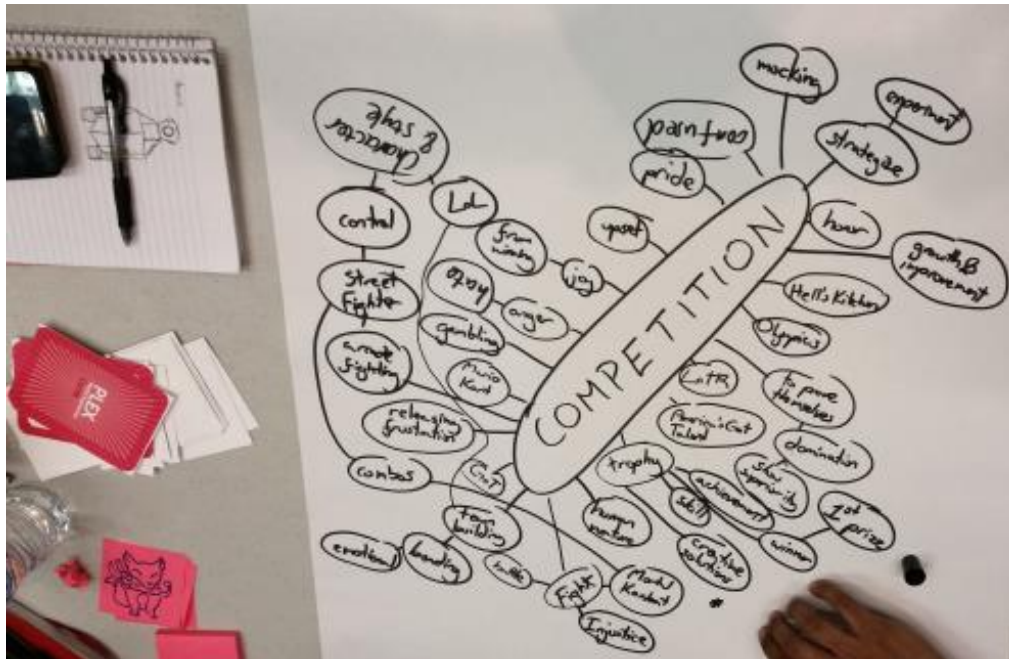- Idea generation through mind maps triggered by card subset

Explore Composition Boxes

PLEX-inspired Mind Maps

Playtest to Refine

This workshop is for you if:

- You are working on a playable prototype: lo-fi, hi-fi, subset of the experience, …
- You can articulate your player experience and/or design goals.

Playtesting Methods in Refine:

- Observe to capture behavior
- Think-aloud protocol to capture thoughts and decisions
- Interview to capture motivations, feelings and attitudes
- Surveys to capture structured data

"Good" Question Attributes

- Important
  - Know what is core to your project
  - You only get to answer so many questions
  - Don't be tempted by what is easy
- Answerable
  - Use familiar but unambiguous terms
- Accurate
  - Be aware of bias: leading terms, social desirability

Refine: Practicing Observation

- ~4 players, ~4 observers repeated as needed across 4 modified *Uno!* card games
- Focus: social engagement (player-to-player)
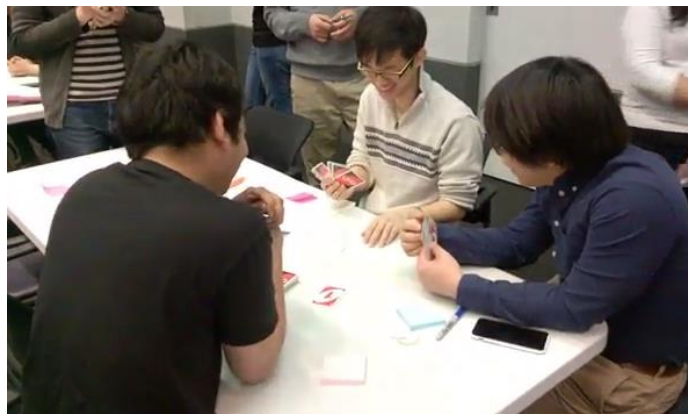
Refine: Observation Lessons

- Look for ACTION: vocalizations, gestures, etc.
- Look for CHANGE: posture, focus (eye contact)
- Situate within game, recording when action or change occurred
- Withhold Interpretation
- Do NOT Interrupt
- Observation can lead to later directed surveys

Refine: Survey Bias

(1) How fast was car A going when it turned right?

(2) Did you see a stop sign?

(x) How fast was car A going when it ran the stop sign?

(y) Did you see a stop sign?

Refine: Survey Bias

Elizabeth F. Loftus, Leading Questions and the Eyewitness Report, *Cognitive Psychology*, 1975(7): 550-572
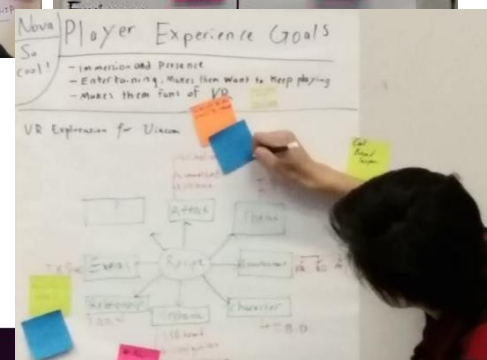
(1) How fast was car A going when it turned right?

(2) Did you see a stop sign?

35% answered yes to (2)

(x) How fast was car A going when it ran the stop sign?

(y) Did you see a stop sign?
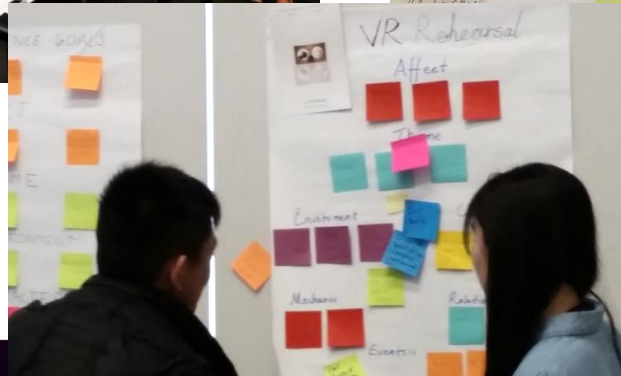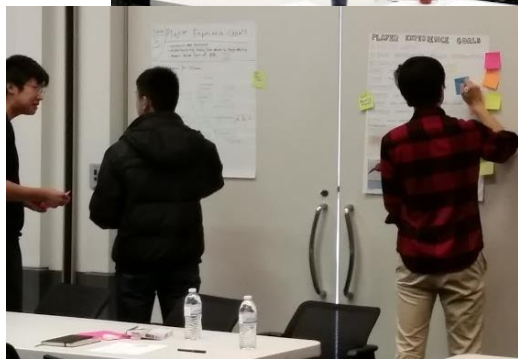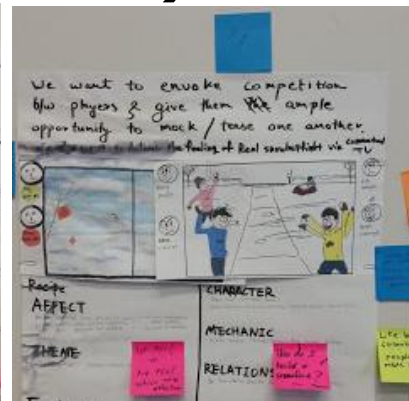
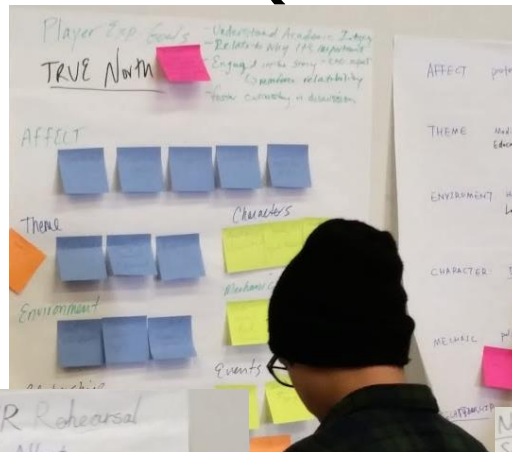**53% answered yes to (y)**

Refine: Player Experience Goals +

Refine: Peer Post-Its (+ and −)

Prove: Identifying Stakeholders

Workshop opens with teams filling out rows across three columns:

- Stakeholder
- Claim
- Evidence

Prove: Handout Excerpts

Expert Panels:
Ask experts to review your game. This may be a great way to get credible feedback.

1. What is your claim?

2. What is your timeline for receiv

3. Who are your experts? Some

Goal:
Communicating what you've accom

We will look at how to plan, execut
- Expert panels
- A/B testing
- Pre/post testing
- Time series tests,
And how to articulate decisions bas

A/B Testing:
Use A/B testing to test two possible versions of your game. Choose this method to help your design team make a difficult design decision.

1. What is your claim?

2. Describe version A

3. Describe version B

4. Who are your play

Pre/Post Tests:
Testing before and after playing your game could be an effective way to playtest educational games or games that are intended to evoke a particular response.

1. What is your claim?

2. Who are your playtesters?

4. How will you find your playtesters?

If You May Need Playtesting…

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    - Super short iteration cycles
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More Playtesting Information

- Explore, Refine, Prove Carnegie Mellon Workshops: http://playtestingworkshops.com

- Professional interviews (some at above site)

- Relevant books (some links at above site)

- Academic studies, e.g., ACM Digital Library (ACM *CHI Play* has relevant papers)

- Mike Christel, Entertainment Technology Center, christel@cmu.edu

Carnegie Mellon University
Entertainment Technology Center