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4/3/16
ART 007
Usability Test Results

Game: “Cupule”

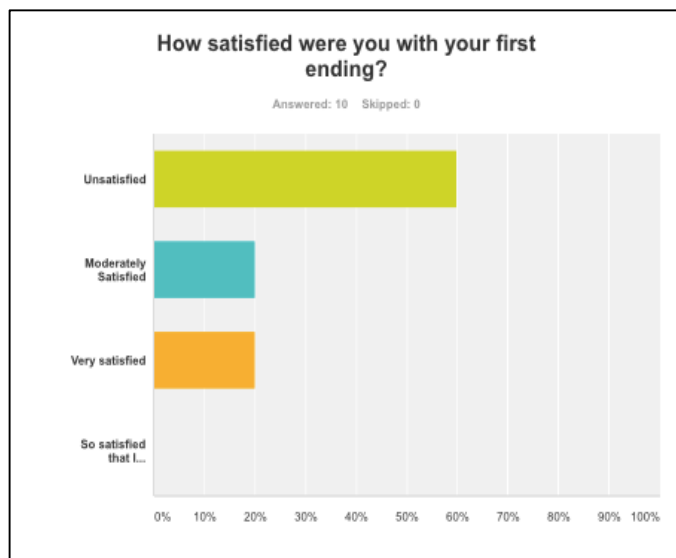
Respondents: 9, a mix of Yale and non-Yale students

Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XJP2PNW>

Several themes can be seen in the survey results:

1. *Cupule* is fairly fun and engaging, but can take some time to get going.
2. The narrative, while interesting, most often leads to an “unsatisfying” ending on the first play-through, and lacks any sort of truly “good” ending.
3. The level of choice allows players to ultimately feel in control of the narrative, though sometimes players faced unintended or arbitrary consequences of their actions.

This game takes a while to get through—all but one person played for 10 or more minutes. The time spent with the game was mostly spent on replaying to obtain a better ending, though some didn’t find the narrative engaging enough to start again. It’s possible that the narrative, which starts off slow, is a bit long for a story that can kill players off so quickly. While



players felt they had moderate to great influence on the narrative, more often than not, that agency led to their deaths the first time through. Only one or two players managed to survive past the first two possible end states during their initial run. The effect of this quick death varied; it encouraged most players to go back and try

for a better ending, but left others feeling like their choices negatively affected the narrative in an unfairly arbitrary way. As it stands, the game's "branching paths" are little more than one or two—passage deviations from the main path that usually lead to a sudden death. Only once you get past these fail states—which are apparently fairly hard to detect/anticipate/avoid—does the player reach the more varied, satisfying endings. The game requires either more ways to return to the central path or multiple main pathways.

By the developer's design, even the "good" ending doesn't leave the player feeling particularly satisfied. This, coupled with the fact that the "Start Over" link appeared on every end page, left players confused as to whether they had "won," and as to whether or not they should keep replaying in order to reach a more satisfying end state. A few ended up spending much more time than they would've liked playing through the game; they were past the point of enjoyment and now focused solely on finding a win state that didn't exist. While this caused those players to despise the game's antagonist as intended, it also resulted in frustration that arose more from ambiguous design than from a challenging-yet-engaging experience. The game's endings must be modified to reflect that one or two are the "winning" endings, or else the developer must somehow warn the player that this story isn't going to end happily ever after.

Implementation of Player Feedback

While much of the game's major modifications will take more time, several steps were taken to improve the user experience:

- The "good" endings are now more obviously the best endings the player is going to get.
- Technical bugs and grammatical issues were addressed, allowing both the game and the narrative to flow more effectively.