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### Assignment 3

1) Last winter, I was part of a video game competition with SONY, where I had to work with a group to propose a new video game title. The rules were that the video game title had to be based on an established media property (like a book or movie) that wasn't already a game. We had to consider which property could be a potential hit, so we had to think through a lot of these same issues. My group decided on Roald Dahl's book "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," because it is currently being made into a new movie. Thus, it would be part of the cultural ether—especially if it was a popular movie. If people liked the movie, they would be looking for other ways to interact with the story, such as a video game. We also thought it would be a good title because it is also a personal touchstone for many children and adults. Many people have read the book growing up, and have vivid memories associated with the story. Also, the world of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" is colorful and imaginative—it is very compelling. It lends itself to a game environment with bright, vivid hues and whimsical music. Furthermore, the world that Dahl creates seems filled with possibility—as if there are infinite sub-stories inside it that a video game can explore. The characters and locations are entertaining and novel. The main character, Charlie, is someone with whom many kids would identify. He is an appropriate avatar for exploring the crazy, curious world of Willy Wonka. Finally, the underlying story is a unique spin a primal myth: the underdog triumphing and good winning over evil.

2) A few years ago, the physics department at MIT completely redesigned the curriculum and course design for introductory physics. Almost 20% of MIT's freshmen had been failing the course. They looked at students' performance, observed how they interacted inside and outside class, and conducted surveys. After looking at the results, they considered ways to make the course more engaging, and came up with a new design. The classes are no longer lecture based; they are more like the mini-samba schools that Seymour Papert describes in "Mindstorms." The class is completely hands-on, and students work together in groups to perform experiments or work through problems; through these constructions and collaborations the students could connect more easily to physics concepts.\**For more information, see "Technology for Active Learning" by Dori, Belcher, et al. (2003).*

For determining a new design for this physics class, it seems like they looked at how they could make a student an active learner rather than a passive participant. They thought about what motivates the students to attend to the information. They considered what type of a course would encourage students to actively use the necessary problem solving skills. They thought about the kind of classroom setting that could facilitate conceptual connections. They looked at ways the course material could engage more of the learner's senses: the visual, tactile, interpersonal. They considered the extent to which a new curriculum could represent abstract concepts in tangible, constructionist ways so that the students could form more immediate, meaningful connections with the material. Thus, even if a student hadn't had a close relationship with gears, they could create a new relationship with a different, tangible, real-world model.

3) To make a piece of media or demo that would be broadly appealing, I would probably first look at what is aesthetically and culturally appealing today. For example, if we look at what was appealing for website design five years ago, it is completely different than what is aesthetically appealing today. I would also consider what is culturally "hot"—the sociopolitical/media landscape. I would ask myself: What is my audience already personally connected to that I can incorporate into my demo to make people feel more immediately connected? I would also think about current trends in humor—because this usually relates to what are people thinking about, and how they are talking about or expressing their hopes and fears. In my demo, I would also want to include a main character, narrator, or avatar with whom my audience could identify. This character could be adjustable (like in the Sims) or static and appealing to a broad audience in terms of its needs and experience. In terms of the look and feel of the demo or artwork, I would survey what types of palettes, designs, and styles were common. I would look for styles that people are used to—not necessarily something new and flashy, but predictable, comfortable, and appealing. It would be a mix of traditional designs with contemporary sensibility. Finally, if possible, the artwork would incorporate a story that is very primal—one that builds on the traditional myths of our culture and fits into the way we live our contemporary lives. This story

should take place in a world that is accessible because it is our own world, just presented in a compelling, imaginative way through this piece of art. Personally, my preferred way of getting feedback on a design would be written constructive criticism, results of a qualitative/quantitative survey, and/or through a dialogue with the audience about their reception of my design choices.

4) The attributes most important for a relationship with a robot are probably a mix of the attributes integral to forming a long-term relationship with a human being and an object. For a human-being it would be a sense that they are attending to you—listening to you and responding based on this. You would need to be able to sense that this robot cares about how you interact with it—that there are implicit consequences (positive or negative) for how you act to each other. I would need to believe that the robot has feelings and some notion of right and wrong. This relationship must have the ability to change over time depending on your interactions. Thus, the shared history of interactions and experiences should be able to affect and alter your present interactions. As an object, I would need some personal connection to it. It needs to fit into the stories of my life, and relate to my identity—either the way I see myself or how I imagine others see me.