



## *Mix-A-Body-Match*

*A board game for families in India about the menstruation taboo.*

*Design by Petra Salaric*

*Text by Pieter Desmet*

**A short Facebook post. When she read it, Petra Salaric had never imagined the impact it would have on her choices as a designer. The post referred to a project about the influence of imagery in the media on the stigma surrounding menstruation. This made Petra think. She realised how little she, herself, knew about this subject and about the influence menstruation has on her own life. That insight, she later told me, ignited a feeling of responsibility; the feeling she had to do something with this, both as a woman and a designer. It was the beginning of an incredible design trip. She immersed herself into the history of menstruation, studied holy writings and conducted fieldwork in India. And all of this was eventually brought together in *Mix-A-Body-Match*: a progressive card game about puberty for parents and their children.**





The Mix-A-Body-Match card game

### The menstruation taboo

After reading the Facebook post, Petra signed up for the Design for Emerging Markets course and saw an opportunity to further develop her knowledge about menstruation. For context, she chose India. Menstruation has a complex meaning in this diverse and culture-rich society. She interviewed both Indian women and men to gain insight into how menstruation influenced various aspects of the lives of women in India, with the related social stigmas and health problems. An important insight gained from these first interviews was that in order to be able to address these problems properly, men need to be involved. India is a patriarchy, and men have a great influence on the lives of women, but they often don't have the required knowledge about menstruation to have the ability to support women.



Families play the Mix-A-Body-Match card game



### The trip to India

The next step was a trip to India. By now, Petra was so deeply involved that she chose the subject to be the starting point for her graduation project. She immersed herself in the history of menstruation in India, the relation to religion, media, tradition, education, nurturing and family. She spoke to experts, teachers, doctors and families. This complex, culturally layered society still has many taboos when it comes to menstruation. The image has been shaped over many years by various influences such as religion and traditional upbringing, to myths that are created by the lack of knowledge and driven by fear. There is no regulated education on puberty and girls often do not learn how to safely handle their menstruation.

### The game

The strength of a game is that all family members are explicitly brought together by a fun activity. This works as an ice breaker when it comes to addressing sensitive subjects, providing a positive atmosphere. For the design, Petra worked closely with nine families from Bangalore. This is how a card game was born: Mix-A-Body-Match. At the core, it consists of 75 cards. The graphic design is based on patterns and colour combinations of Indian sarees. Each card has a drawing on it. Some refer to changes during puberty (such as chest hair, sperm, menstruation, body odour and breast forming) and others are more general (such as a spoon, flip flop, sun, dancing, flower and ear). The box also contains a booklet with the rules, an explanation of the images and more information about puberty and menstruation. The game is very simple. The cards are distributed among the players. A game leader is appointed. This person chooses a card and places it on the table. All other players put down a card as well. The goal is to create a combination with the game leader's card that is as funny as possible. The players then proceed to explain what the combined image means. The game leader gets to decide which combination is the funniest. There are various options on how to earn points but the essence of the game is to stimulate humour.

### Normalising menstruation

Of all the game-types Petra tried, the Mix-A-Body-Match was the favourite as it created the best atmosphere; it is fun and it normalises the changes that puberty brings as being a normal part of growing up. The design is surprisingly simple: a box with some cards with funny drawings on them. And yet, this is a small revolution. Family members are having fun together and can talk about sensitive subjects such as the physical changes that come with puberty – including menstruation. A father on the test panel said to his young daughter whilst playing the game: "It is a sign of fertility. So how can something that you were born out of be bad?" Petra told me she found the project to be an incredible and impactful trip. A trip that has not yet been concluded. She is currently talking to the *Bibliothèques Sans Frontières* Foundation to research how the game can best be launched.



Examples of card mixing

### The family is the basis

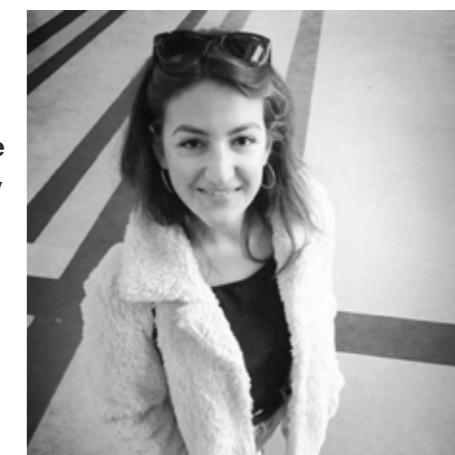
Petra took on the challenge of creating a design to support education about menstruation that involves men as well. Because menstruation is a very sensitive subject in India, it was important to work in a safe context. This brought her focus to the family. Family relations are very important in Indian society, and the way menstruation is treated in the family home often has a great influence on girls' and women's experiences. During her research, she found a correlation between the positive attitude of girls towards their menstruation and their freedom to discuss this with both parents, also before she actually starts her cycle. She therefore set out to design something that could facilitate the dialogue between all family members before the girl starts menstruating. So not just mother-daughter but also father and even brothers and sisters. The choice for a game was easily made as this enables you to work with a light-hearted way of interacting.



Example pages in the explanation booklet.



**Petra Salarić (photo) developed Mix-A-Body-Match in 2019 during a self-initiated graduation project for the master's programme *Design for Interaction*. The project was made possible by the *TU Delft Global Initiative*. The supervisors were Jan Carel Diehl and Pieter Desmet (TU Delft). Petra is currently working on her PHD at Loughborough University (UK). Her research topic is the influence of online communication on the forming of intimacy during the early stages of romantic relationships. In addition, together with *Bibliothèques Sans Frontières*, she is researching the possibilities to further develop and implement the Mix-A-Body-Match game.**



# Colophon

## **Mix-A-Body-Match: A board game for families in India about the menstruation taboo.**

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### **Product concept & design by Petra Salarić**

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### **Reference**

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