

Hindsight

The Legacy card game about letting go



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Ideation and Brainstorming

- Core concept came from a single thesis: We want to make a game that's *meaningful*. Something that moves the player, and evokes a strong, honest emotional response.
 - This begs some questions: What emotion? What response? How?
- Some seed ideas directed our mechanical and emotional research going forward:
 - Legacy Card games seemed like an excellent space to explore this concept; The game is unique to each playthrough, each player. This allows for personalization.
 - The focus of the game should be on creating a resonant *player experience*, rather than on mechanical complexity.
- Some initial mechanical concepts (very rough)
 - Over course of game, cards are removed from deck (cut, burned, destroyed, etc) until only 1 card remains.
 - Deck as vehicle for narrative. "Twine as a legacy card game".
 - Double-sided cards / "Both sides matter".
 - Cards merging. Combining text of 1 card to art of another.

So where did we go from here?

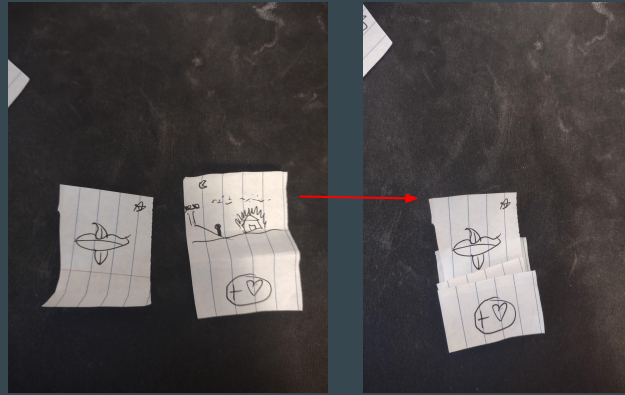
Research

- Initial Research Phase
 - Individual group members researched 3 legacy card games, looking for methods of modification, approach to continuity, reasons for *being* Legacy games.
 - Also researched tabletop games that try to convey meaningful messages, look for common threads.
 - Brainstorm an initial narrative to base the game on.
- Research results:
 - Narrative proved hard to make concrete, interesting. Quickly became stumbling block.
 - Instead, we aimed for an implied narrative derived through player's choices, requiring less concepting, and improving the adaptability of the product.
 - Paper prototyping quickly outed most of our original mechanics as flimsy, vapid. Something simpler and more robust was needed.

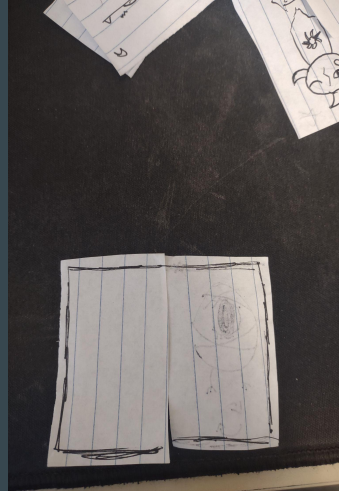
Card Ideation Examples

Paper prototype results:

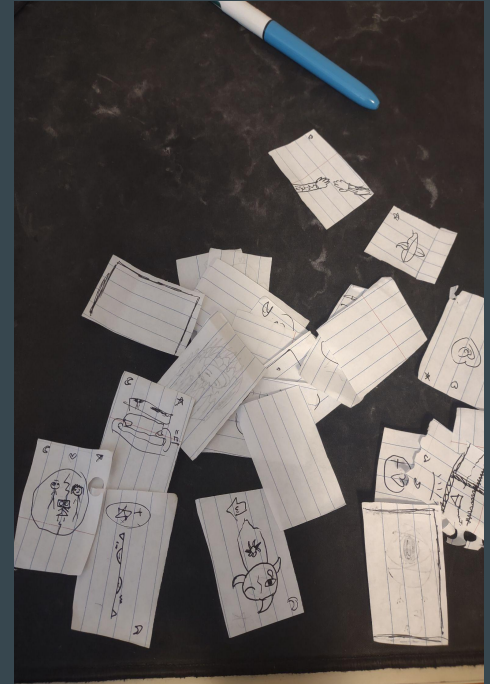
Top Left: Extension of card through folding. Right card is "folded" into Left Card, adding the text of the right to the art of the left.



Bottom left: Extension of card through open borders, allowing for recontextualization.



Mid Right: Examples of prototyped cards, including abstract art, rough dimensions, and a potential resource system (since scrapped).



Primary Takeaway from Research and Ideation

- Key idea from research: "Dunbar's Number"
 - Pseudo-scientific concept detailing the number of social relationships humans can maintain at once.
 - Key quote from research:
 - The feeling of time passing you by? Of relationships and dynamics changing? Of things 'never being the same'? I want to make a game that makes people feel how I feel right now.
- Other key concepts taken forward:
 - Marking up cards via sharpie / dry-erase markers.
 - Cards as relationships, maintained through "decks" meant to represent time.

- Hear me out:
- DUNBAR'S NUMBER
 - Kind of BS statistically, but was a HUGE pop culture thing in the 90s and 2000s.
 - TLDR: Dude extrapolated the avg number of stable social relationships/friends we can maintain at a time.
 - Came up with 150
 - Ignore the fact that this has been hella debunked but hear me out
 - You have finite social capital / brain space for friends, family etc
 - You have to let people go sometimes to let new people in
 - Game SHOWS THAT THROUGH CARDS
 - Cards are your relationships, hobbies, loves, fears, etc
 - 1-3 finite resources to "spend" by carrying these cards.
 - If a cards needs one of these resources you don't have, you have to let the other cards go

- Wait 2-3 more things
- Maybe players draw / create cards that are seeded / shuffled into the deck?
 - Dry-erase?
 - Sharpie?
- Wants, desires, people they know?
- Folding cards on top of one another to add stats / costs?
- Cutting cards in half left-to-right, and combining art, text?
- Gluing cards together?
- STICKERS ON CARDS WOULD BE COOL
- Taking them off one card to apply to another

- Resource system (finite quantities of 2-3 resources? Cards take resources to hold, have to give up cards to move forward / pass up options due to lack of resources? Resources could be social capital, energy, etc)
- Folding was fun. Folding cards onto one another to create a new card with more text/value was particularly interesting.
- For card art, I doodled some pretty specific stuff, and it didn't hit. Art should be less explicitly "moving" to allow for multiple interpretations.
- Deck as "time?" Moving through the deck feels like missing options?
 - Cards you don't use are burned? Folded? Cut?
 - Bottom of cards has $\rightarrow X$, where x is number of cards to move through?
- Add cards to deck at each playthrough? (in the vein of Betrayal Legacy, perhaps?)
- Double sided cards? Flip over cards you keep from one playthrough to the next, which reveals more costly / meaningful backsides?
 - Cards cost more resources, perhaps?

- Maybe the cards you held go back in the deck but flipped? I worry if they stay in front of you that you get attached and taking new cards is no longer a decision.
 - Perhaps cards start to need more and more resources over time?
 - Can be representative of toxicity, or just emotional enfranchisement: either or.
 - Making things vague allows projection and ME LIKEY PROJECTION

- FUCK the feeling of time passing you by? Of old relationships/friendships/dynamics changing, and the feeling that "thing will never be the same"?
- I want to make a game that makes people feel how I'm feeling right now.

Pictures of Ideation

Solidification of Direction

- During group meeting, after going through research and synthesizing takeaways, we listed off a gamut of potential mechanics.
- Once listed, we assigned 5 "points" across all of the options (more than 1 point could be allocated per idea).
 - Top ideas continued on, tied ideas went through runoff, until only our top ideas remained. These were our core design tenets.
- Top: Physical modification of cards, breaking the "magic circle", "Dunbar's Number", Deck as "time".

CONTENDER COMPONENTS:

- ~~Shrinking deck down to 1 card~~—personal, narrative impact
- ~~Twine game through the lens of a legacy card game~~
- Physical Modification of Cards * * * *
 - Cutting
 - Burning
 - Folding
 - **Writing on**
 - **Writing OVER** ← THESE IN PARTICULAR
 - **Drawing on/Doodling**
 - Combining
- Both sides of the card matter (alternative personality? Something changes in the story?) *
- Breaking the magic circle (Reference to real life, player, etc) * * * *
- ~~Resource system (finite quantities of 2-3 resources? Cards take resources to hold, have to give up cards to move forward / pass up options due to lack of resources? Resources could be social capital, energy, etc)~~
- Deck as "time?" Moving through the deck feels like missing options? *
 - Cards you don't use are burned? Folded? Cut?
- DUNBAR'S NUMBER * * *
- Cards that are seeded / shuffled into the deck? *

(colored asterisks represent different group members & level of preference)

“A-ha” moment

- Another hour of brainstorming ensued before we arrived at our next jump:
 - Sort cards into different decks, each representing different stages of life. Cards interacted with / modified in 1 are maintained & follow into subsequent decks.
 - Cards represent relationships, but we have a problem: No one piece of art will mean the same thing to every player. How do we make everything resonate?
 - The “A-Ha”: **Have the player draw the art themselves.**
 - Cards have field for dry-erase marker. Players draw art corresponding to PROMPTS on cards. This way, everything corresponds to player experience.
 - Cards (read: relationships) maintained at each stage are shuffled into subsequent decks
 - THIS PARTIALLY ERASES THE CARDS, allowing players to redraw (recontextualize) relationships as they “grow”.
 - At end of game, players draw over kept cards in PERMANENT MARKER, creating a visual artifact they can reflect upon.

Last Day of Brainstorming

- At this point, we had figured out:
 - How to make the game personalized.
 - Our main emotional metaphor.
 - Some rough ideas for mechanics / themes.
- We needed to uncover:
 - How “letting go” of relationships worked.
 - Why can’t you just take every card? What’s the opportunity cost?
 - When can you take a card? How does this work?
 - What kind of prompts do we want?
 - Text? Visuals?
- Large day of brainstorming ensues:
 - Heavy focus on problem specification and restatement. What do we need to solve?
 - Main issue: why not take every card? How do we emulate the “letting go” that Dunbar’s Number specifies?
 - After waffling for 30 minutes, we cap the player’s hand size at 3. Taking new cards requires “Letting Go” of old cards. Old cards are blacked out with permanent marker.

Last Day of Brainstorming Pt. 2

- Size of each deck, broad themes, and mechanics finalized:
 - Childhood
 - 6 cards.
 - Draw top card of deck, answer prompt. Keep or "Let Go".
 - Hand shuffles into next deck.
 - Teenage (Later Adolescence)
 - 7 cards.
 - 45 second time limit per card.
 - Otherwise same as Childhood.
 - Young Adulthood
 - 5 Cards.
 - Hand is sharpied (as relationships tend to solidify by adulthood) at end of round.
 - Hand does NOT shuffle into next deck.
 - Adulthood
 - 4 cards.
 - Cards are questions about cards in hand, providing insights about these relationships.
 - Once answered, cards are paired with a card in hand.
 - At end of round, pairs are taped together, back to back, creating double-sided cards.
 - "And Beyond"
 - 3 cards.
 - HEAVY questions.
 - Hand is sleeved at end of round, creating a tangible artifact.

Last day of Brainstorming Pt. 3

- Final concepts
 - We wanted the game to represent the flow of relationships as you age and grow as a person.
 - To that end, game should be playable at any age, and still be impactful.
 - The solution? 2 Modes of play:
 - Speculative: Play each deck once you feel you have passed through that phase of your life. Wait to play next deck until the appropriate time.
 - 1 Sitting: If old enough to play all decks, play in one sitting, as a longer, more retrospective experience.
 - At the end of either "mode of play", player comes to a small brown envelope.
 - If played speculatively, player writes in the age that they think they will have *passed through* adulthood ONTO the envelope. Waits to open until then (very time capsule-esque).
 - Otherwise, player opens envelope and reads final card.
 - Final card has a simple, poignant message. Nothing too heavy handed, just something to wrap the game up, maybe make you think.

Teen. Ya. AJ.

24
8

7 6 5

to 3 8

we do
filing?
y?
to I case
are?

resources

why not "take" every card?

consequences?

losing other
cards?

physical
bandwidth?

balancing

Childhood Phase

Downing Cards - 1 at a time
hold on to 3
after cards are done
put into next deck

Shuffle 6

too much
"game"

Players more
"game"?

Rules guide
story

Sharpie?
lost cards?

Deck makeup

Holding v letting go

Holding v letting go
this is how the Deck
Recontextualize - How?

- Play until current like done
- then speculate - ?

difficult
to make

Mechs

- Ch. Teen Ya. A.J.**
 - G 7 5 4 3
 - G 10 8 7 6
 - Age: 1-12 13-17 18-24 25-49 50+
- Dunbar**
- Deck make up**
 - Holding v letting go
 - How to travel the Deck
 - Recontextualize - How? Why?
- Y.d. 5+3**
 - Sharpie hand end
 - Remove time limit
- A.B. 3+3**
 - No shuffling
 - 3 Q's Heavy
 - Cards kept in sleeve
 - hand goes into sleeve @ end of round.
- Teen 7+3**
 - + Time Limit Per Card (45 sec)
 - Shuffle hand into next deck
- Last Card**
 - Was your speculation correct
 - Don't open until

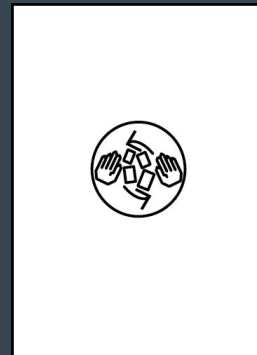
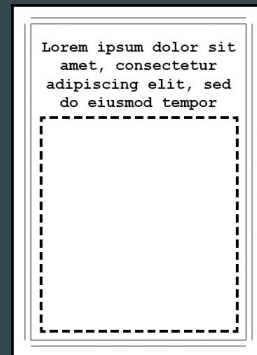
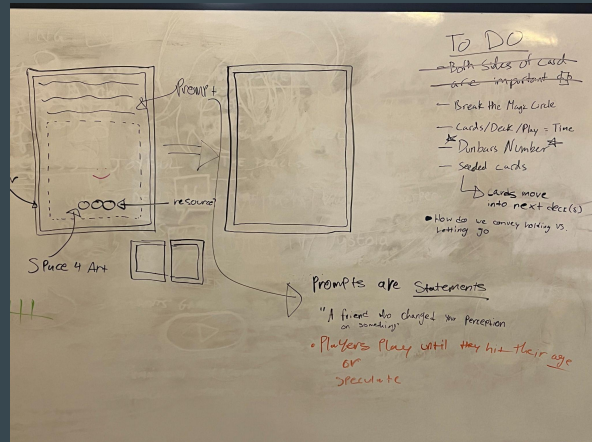
Prompt Ideation

- On shared Doc, each group member threw out 3–5 ideas prompts for each Deck.
- Once done, all prompts were read over, vetted, and paired down to fit deck size specifications mentioned previously.
 - Focus on breadth of concepts. If 2 cards could reasonably answered with the same person, hobby, memory, etc, we aimed to cut 1 out.

Final List

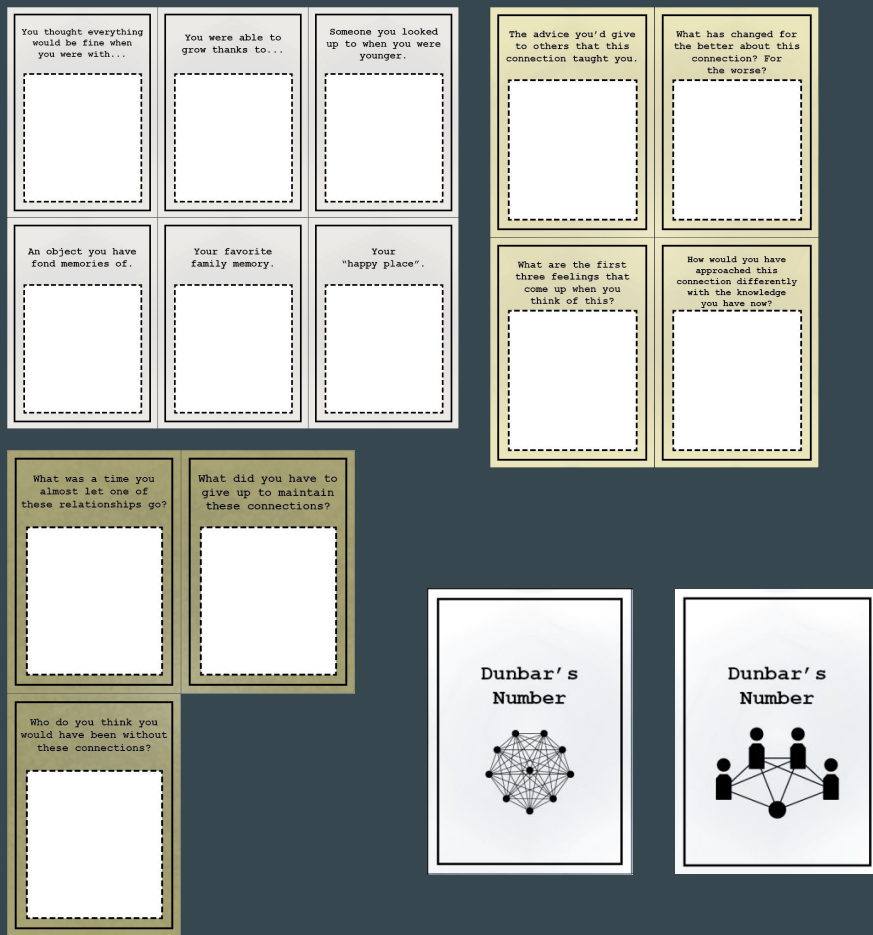
Card Designs

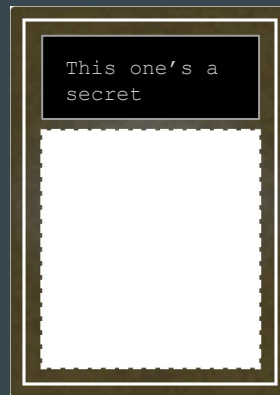
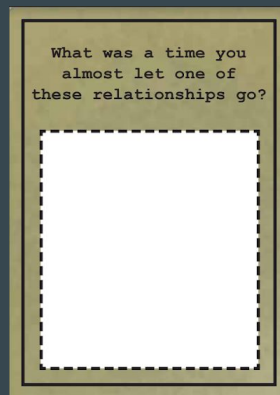
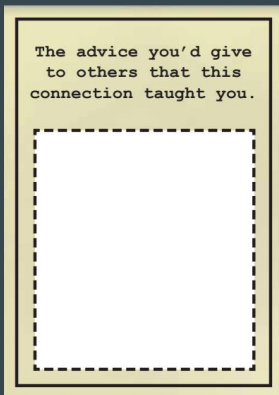
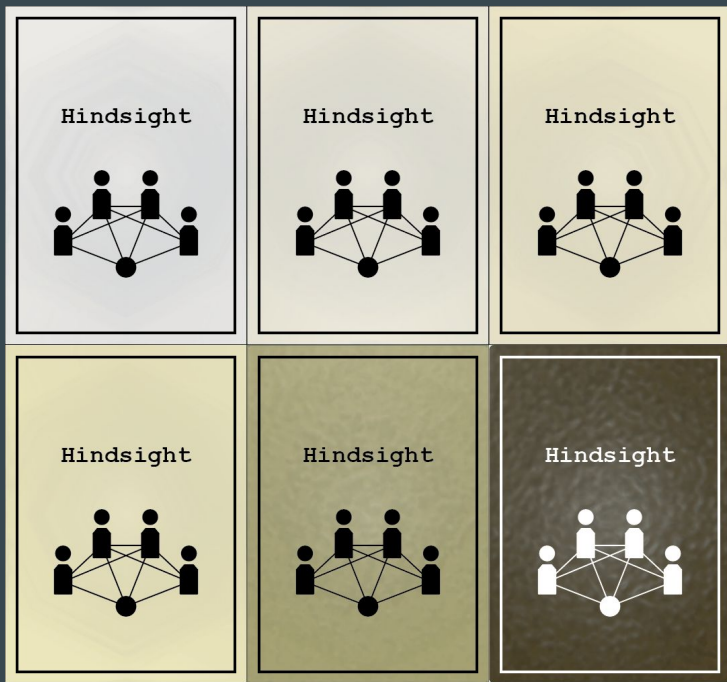
- Cards were originally split into “writing” and “drawing” prompt types, but we decided to merge them and give players freedom to choose whether they want to write or draw.
- Our first visualized concept for the prompt cards was brainstormed in our in-person session. Cards consist of the prompt, and a blank space to present your answer.
- Early prototypes for the cards were gray, but changed to white to fit the dry erase aesthetic a little better.
 - We also played around with making icons to visually represent our mechanics, such as the circular shuffling method. We decided instead on printing the rules on the packaging for each deck.



Card Designs - Polish

- During polishing, a subtle gradient from cream to brown was added through each card "phase", and cards from later phases received an increasing texturization. We wanted to invoke an "aging" that went with the game flow, as well as reflecting the changing mechanics of the cards.
- Two different alternatives of the logo on the card fronts were made - both visualizing Dunbar's Number as the criss-crossing relationships (lines) between individuals (circles). We went with the second version because it felt more human and less grounded in the theory than the first.





Final Designs