

Introduction

As a simulation of contemporary challenges and opportunities that Hawai'i faces, the Value of Hawai'i Card Game is an interactive, project-driven extension of The Value of Hawai'i book.

Tasked by contributor Mari Matsuda with the challenge of making the book's content engaging for and accessible to young people, educator and media designer David A.M. Goldberg fused the mechanics of popular collectible card games epitomized with web 2.0 interactivity and classical Hip-hop's spirit of DIY creative competition.

Mililani High School teacher Claire Gearen implemented the curriculum with her seniors in the fall of 2010, inviting Goldberg to her class on multiple occasions as a guest lecturer. During these sessions David and the students discussed how values are established in a society, the practice of visual criticism, the relevance of gaming and simulation to their generation, Hawai'i's economic and ecological fragility, and the fact that they cannot afford to wait for one of their peers to come become a legislator in order to tackle these problems.

Under Gearen's direction, this eager team of beta testers did the hard work of bringing a concept to full fruition in the form of over 600 cards! To do so they worked in a truly interdisciplinary manner, integrating reading, critical analysis, visual design, writing, and abstraction. Their excitement, effort and trust resulted in the project getting funding from the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities and the Biographical Research Center.

Through this institutional support Goldberg returned to Mililani High School during the spring semester and introduced the game to several other teachers and hundreds more students. The "Ambassador Deck" – named for its intended relation to other schools in Hawai'i who may want to explore the game – is the distillation of their best work to date.

What is "Seeing the Value?"

Seeing the Value is a card game for one or more players designed to encourage consideration and discussion of the many challenges and opportunities that Hawai'i faces in the 21st century such as homelessness, indigenous Hawaiian rights, sustainable agriculture, ecology, energy, tourism, public education and domestic violence. Over 125 cards from 23 categories represent these ideas, each one conceived and created by a student at Mililani High School on O'ahu. Players attempt to overcome negative challenges by playing positive cards according to rock-paper-scissor style rules and verbal communication.

Object of the game

There is no way to "win" in the traditional sense of a card game like Go Fish, Pokémon, Solitaire or Bakugan. To conclude a game the total negative value on the table must be brought to a level of zero or better by playing appropriate positive cards. The rules for doing so are based fundamentally on rock-scissor-paper, with some modifications that foreground critical thinking and verbal communication skills.

Seeing the Value is being played correctly when participants are engaged in an active discussion about the issues represented on the table. Naturally, not all of these discussions will be easily resolved. Therefore the object of the game is twofold: 1) to come away from a round of play with a different perspective on the issues than one started it with; 2) to encourage players to make their own cards, either to confront a challenge that is already in the deck, or introduce one that they feel is not adequately represented.

Before you start playing...

Seeing the Value was designed as a supplement to the book "The Value of Hawai'i," and though playing the game doesn't require reading it, it is certainly helpful to do so in order to understand the broader context of a particular card's perspective on an issue. None of the cards are absolutely right or wrong. They represent an expression of the card creator's values in response to their understanding of the issue when they made it.

Card Anatomy

Seeing the Value cards are broken down into five sections: The *image*, the *suit*, the *issue*, the *argument* and the *value*. Positive cards beat negative cards based on a relationship between of all five aspects. One must take more than the suit into account when playing. Unlike a throw in rock-scissor-paper, the cards in “*Seeing the Value*” are not arbitrary – they mean something.



The image

The photograph or drawing on a card is the first clue as to what the card means and what the card creator is trying to say about the issue. The image ties the card’s argument, suit, value and issue together.

The suits



Like a traditional deck of cards has hearts, clubs, spades and diamonds, and Bakugan has earth, air, fire, water, light and dark, *Seeing the Value* has suits as well. Look at the back of any card and you will see four icons (left to right, above): a home representing *lifestyle* (ka nohona), an island with waves representing the *land* (ka ‘āina), a seal with the letter G and crown representing *government* (ka aupuni), and a dollar sign representing business (ka ‘ohihana).

Trumps

You’ve played rock-scissor-paper before?



*The rules are simple. Players count to three and “throw,” revealing their choice. The winner is chosen by comparison: **Rock beats scissors; scissors beats paper; paper beats rock.***



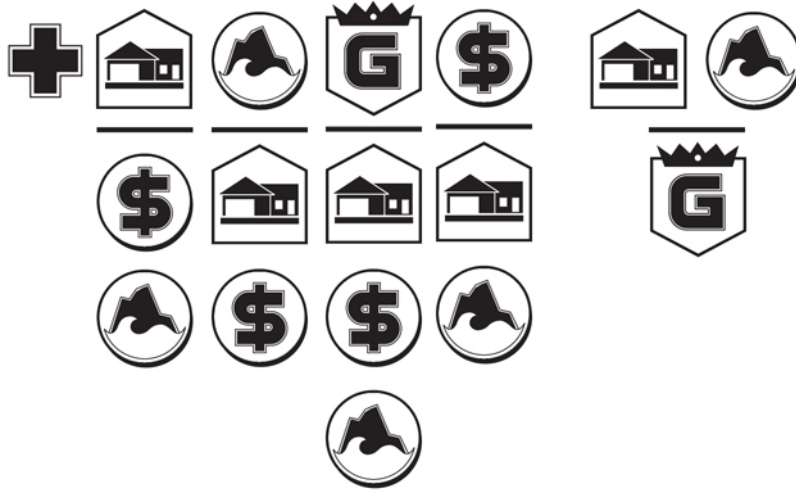
*In the event of a tie, the players have to throw again. In *Seeing the Value*, cards of matching suits cannot be played against each other.*

One aspect of *Seeing the Value* works on similar principles, but with four suits instead of three. The upper right corner of the front of the card shows the card’s suit and whether it is positive or negative in value. A negative card has only its suit icon in the corner with a minus sign next to it. A positive card has a plus sign next to its suit icon, and a list of negative cards it can be played against below it.

Positive lifestyle beats negative business and negative land

Positive land beats negative lifestyle and negative business
Positive government beats all negative cards
Positive business beats negative lifestyle and negative land
Positive land and positive lifestyle TOGETHER beats negative government

For a deeper discussion of how the trumps have been set up, please see the “Philosophy” section.



The rules for trumping dictate the primary way of determining if a card can be played against another. The following sections discuss other constraints.

The issue

Running vertically along the left side of the card is the issue that it addresses. You will see titles such as Energy, Public Education, The Arts, Tourism, The Military, etc. There are 23 issues in all. When playing one card against another there must be a logical sense to the relationship between them. To test the general logic of a play, try creating a short sentence:

“This opportunity in _____ can overcome this problem in _____.”

The first blank is positive issue, and the second is the negative. Sometimes this will make sense: “This opportunity in ENERGY can overcome this problem in TRANSPORTATION.” Sometimes it won’t, such as “This opportunity in THE ARTS can overcome this problem in TRANSPORTATION.”

But don’t give up! Issues that don’t seem to address each other “naturally” can still be played if the arguments are carefully considered. One of the goals of *Seeing the Value* is to generate thinking between issues that at first seem unrelated. For a more detailed discussion see the “Philosophy” section.

The Argument

The yellow strip across the bottom of the card holds the cards argument. This short sentence is meant to help the player understand how the creator intended the card to be played. Some arguments are highly specific, others are more poetic. In all cases it is the job of the player to actively interpret the meaning. With a little creative thinking, just about any positive card can be played against a negative, so long as the rest of the group goes along with your reasoning!

The value

In the upper left corner of each card is a red tag with a number in it. This number ranges between -100 and 100, indicating whether the card is a challenge (negative) or an opportunity (positive). The size of the number indicates how serious or

powerful the card is supposed to be. For example, a card valued -50 or 94 will communicate a much more serious problem or challenge than a card valued -3 or 17.

The value does not determine whether it can be played or not, but is used to track progress toward the conclusion of the game. To play a positive card, its value does *not* have to be greater than that of the negative card it is being played against. Positive cards can be stacked on top of each other in an effort to overcome the negative value. For a more detailed discussion, please see the “Philosophy” section.

Setting up the game

Dealing

1. Pick a dealer who will separate the deck into positive and negative stacks and shuffle both of them.
2. Count the number of players. The dealer places this many negative cards on the table, face up. Solitaire games should work with at least four cards.
3. The dealer passes out positive cards to the players. Each player should end up with as many cards as in their hand as there are players at the table.

EXAMPLE: With four players, after separating and shuffling the cards, the dealer should have placed four negative cards face up and dealt four positive cards to each player.

Reporting

1. Pick a reporter who will total the negative value on the table and log each play in the game by updating the total negative value after each turn.

OPTION: To speed game play, players may simply opt to document the state of the game layout when play has concluded. This creates a record of moves made, but with less detail and nuance than actively reporting.

Playing

Play proceeds starting from the player to the left of the dealer. Each player attempts to trump a negative card on the table with a positive card from their hand. If a player cannot trump any of the negative value cards on the table, she or he can trade one card in their hand for a card from the positive stack. There is no limit to the number of times a player can draw new cards, but they can only do so once per turn.

To trump a card, two things must be satisfied:

1. The suit must be valid for trumping. Every positive card has a column of icons in the upper right corner. The top icon can trump cards from any suit whose icon is listed below it.
2. The majority of players at the table must agree that the card being played can stick. The player must consider the image, the value, the issue and the argument as a combined factor in order to play the card. The player must be able to present valid reasoning to the rest of the players in order to make the card stick. Some cards will obviously trump, while others may require a little bit more debate and discussion.

There are three reasons why a player may not be able to place a card.

- 1) The cards they hold cannot trump any negative cards on the table.
- 2) The cards they hold do not make any sense to the player, that is they have no sense of what the card actually means.

3) The majority of players do not agree that the card can be played.

In all three cases, the player can use their turn to exchange 1 card with one from the positive deck. A newly drawn card cannot be played right away, the player must wait for their next turn.

There is no limit to the number of positive cards that can be played against a negative one. Positive cards must be placed in such a way that the value of the negative card can still be seen beneath it.

Players are encouraged to look at each others' hands and propose possible moves to each other (though the game can be played in a more competitive mode where no one knows what solutions others bring to the table)

As play proceeds, the reporter should take note of any interesting debates, confusing cards, or challenging moments that come up. It is very important that the record of the game includes turning points or times when you got stuck with each other - especially if you discussed your way through the impasse.

Philosophy

This section contains a more detailed discussion of *Seeing The Value's* rule system.

Positive vs. Negative

Players must accept the assertion that there are positive and negative lifestyles, business practices, land uses and governmental strategies, relatively speaking. Otherwise they will find gameplay either entirely mechanical or not very meaningful.

Each issue represented in *Seeing The Value* has a numeric value that ranges between -100 and 100. Because it is rare to achieve a unanimous perception of the importance of a problem or opportunity in a given community, card creators were encouraged to resist rating any issue with a maximum positive or negative value.

The assignment of a numeric value is a fundamental gesture that encourages players to consider the *relative* merits and severity of the issues, for this is how actual community leaders, politicians and individuals prioritize their approach to solving and identifying problems.

The values on the cards are not meant to represent absolute, universal or even objective judgements. They reflect the assessment made by the card's creator, based on *their* understanding of the issue at the time of the card's creation.

Trumps

Lifestyle, Land, Government, Business... what do they actually mean? The essays in *The Value of Hawai'i* are divided into four sections reflected by the suits of the game. From the perspective of the book one is no more important than another. However, making categories leads to making comparisons, and in developing a game it is comparisons that lead players toward winning or losing. The problems explored in one section of the book have the seeds of solutions in others, and this is the basic mechanic that informs the trumping rules of *Seeing The Value*.

The comparisons between trumps are primarily poetic, for example: "Positive lifestyle trumps negative business," "positive land use trumps negative lifestyle," and "positive business practice trumps negative lifestyle." Nevertheless, behind the poetic is a concrete assertion that requires a little contemplation. Would not a positive change in one's lifestyle, say shifting to a diet based on sustainable agriculture, have an impact on negative business practices such as dependence on food imports? Conversely, couldn't a business that made an effort to supply healthy food to its community have a positive impact on the people in that community that might be living off of processed, high-fat and high-salt foods?

Though the relationships between the suits are based in real life examples, keep in mind that *Seeing The Value* is still a simulation, a model, that cannot help but abstract certain ideas in the interest of its overall goals of promoting relational and critical thinking.

Argument

Seeing The Value is played correctly when all involved are actively discussing the issues on the table. The game is not about speed or purely logical relationships moving toward a value greater than zero. Because all players must agree with the reasoning behind the decision to play a card, even if the value and the trump are valid, much can happen well before it is actually placed.

Alternately, if not all players are committed to carrying out the discussion and the game is played “automatically,” or if a minority of players is engaged in justifying their moves, there remains an opportunity for investigation. The way the game is played is an active metaphor for how political decisions are reached in actuality. Often times members of a body will simply “go along” with what others argue simply to move things along. Sometimes, “for the sake of argument,” individuals will block every possible move, slowing the problem-solving process. Players finding themselves in such a game should recognize it as embodying the same dynamics as larger-scale community interactions.

Credits

The Value of Hawai'i Card Game

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Developed by Claire Gearen and David A. M. Goldberg

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Is *Seeing The Value* missing a challenge or opportunity that you can identify and represent? Have you come across a problem with no card to play against? Create your own card online! Go to <http://tvoh.manoa.hawaii.edu/upload/>