

Montgomery 1960

IT'S NOT BLACK AND WHITE.

ABSTRACT

Montgomery 1960's Design Team was tasked with creating an interactive environment that enabled decision making through perspective-taking and empathy. This was done through the ongoing qualitative research of a landmark federal court case: Dixon vs Alabama. Developing this environment involved content and mechanical research, core systemic development, and iterative design processes.

Game design allows for users to enter and interact with content. The simulation of such an environment allows them to apply what they learned to their own time. Game design was thus a well-suited approach to this problem.

STRUCTURE

GEMS

The game's foundational structure was built via the "gems" of the historical content in combination with the goals of the abstract.

A "gem" in this context serves as a metaphor for engagement. Through the interdisciplinary study of the events at ASU in 1960, the team was able to uncover the pivotal moments of characterization, motivation, and historical relevance. These emerged as four themes: the threat of racism, influence of Civil Rights activist, involvement with the protests, and the price of justice.

ARCHETYPES

Research eventually centered on the student perspectives of the events. Three central "Archetypes" emerged from collected data: the Student Leader, the Student Activist, and the Student Academic.

Having both courage and support, the Student Leader sees activism and change as a personal responsibility. Communication and information are the Student Leader's instruments of success. They recruit their fellow students, join relevant organizations, and strengthen their communities.

In contrast, the Student Activist is primarily concerned with activism and involvement. The Academic student is concerned with their standing at school.

ACTIVISTS

Three of the exemplar characters in the Montgomery 1960 narrative, St. John Dixon, James McFadden, and Dr. Eleanor Moody-Shepherd, met with the Design Team during the project. They were asked questions about their outlooks, experiences, and lives during and after the events at ASC. This information was later compiled in a spreadsheet.

James McFadden spoke about his passion for the Movement taking place at the time. He provided specificities about what life was like in Montgomery, including everything from music to literature to football games. As the exemplar of the Student Leader, he interacted with everyone on the ASC campus. He emphasized the longevity of the movement and expressed hope that the game might inspire this in our own time.

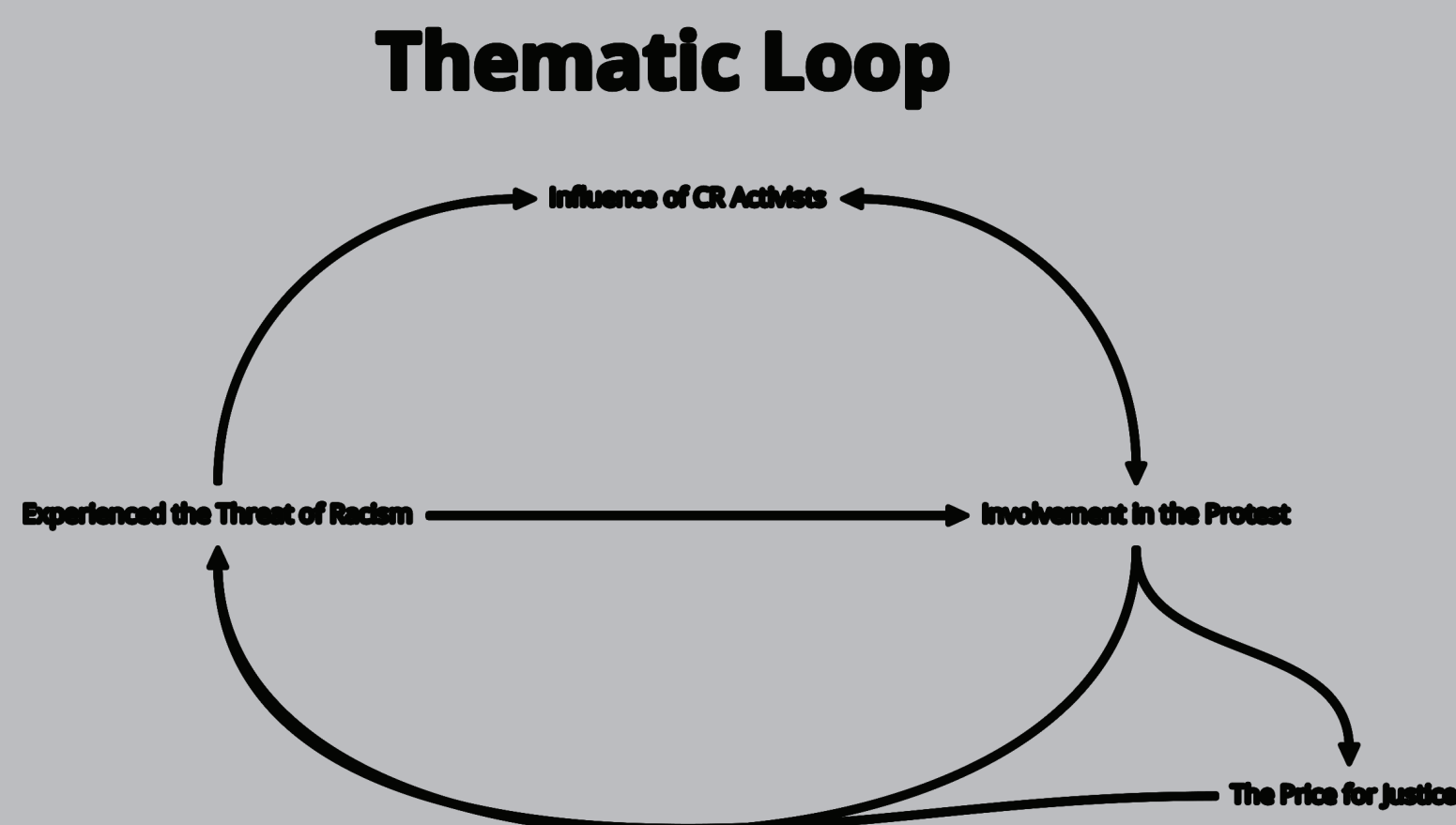
The information the activists provided served as a frame for the structure of the game.

| What is the interesting point or story related by the activist? | How does this point relate to the archetype? | Does this event / perspective / observation / memory relate to other characters in the world? | What is the point value of this event? | Additional observations that might be helpful to the next team |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Please document all of the stories and moments that your activist discussed. Be sure to look out to other team members for additional recollections and memories. Specifics about Dorm life in 1960s Montgomery | Location & character building | St. John Dixon also lived in the dorms. | Alliance: working living with other people at ASC. Student Leader Archetype: Study to live on campus due to proximity to student life. | ~8x115, four to a room with bunk beds. Community restrooms. Roommate assigned roommates. Day Room on provide avenue for social change. McFadden was. It wasn't he went to college. 1960. Expressions independence that came with being away from parents. |
| Specifics about Black Greek Life at an HBC | Student life. Black Greeks had a huge part of the organizational process of the school. | All other activists. | Alliance: working with other Black Greek members. | Signs was involved in the political aspects of ASC. Through some social aspects, purpose was advocating for social change. "Militant" culture for service and service for humanity" Chair contrast with "White" members of a PNL |
| Limited Migrants/Options at ASC | Background/contextual information | All students | N/A | ASC was an education college. McFadden's major was Science with a minor in PE. He wanted to be a physical therapist. |
| Hopes for the game: "Passing the Baton" | Character motivation, characterization, "let" goal of game | St. John Dixon, EMS | Coalition: working with the activist type | When asked what he hoped the game would accomplish, he said he hoped it would motivate the next generation of activists. He emphasized that there was still work to be done. He praised the team's personal response that there was the murder of George Floyd, and ended with a note that we need to do better. |
| Dr. Hardy as a Guide of Students | Better choice for "guide" of the residence hall. Game structure | St. John Dixon, EMS, likely most students | Coalition: Dr. Hardy had a hand in many student affairs. | Dr. Hardy taught a class on social change. She also helped with finances, etc. He taught the first year "Introduction" class, and made decisions from then on. All the activities we spoke to had him in high regard. Common to have him in the office. |
| Impact of Written Communication | Important to stay informed, networking with others | All other activists, almost all students | Coalition: this is true for all archetypes. | Communication was incredibly important to the Student Leader in coordinating events and understanding contemporary affairs. McFadden collected books. There were on telephones in the Day Room of the Residence Hall, so letters were important to communicate with family. |

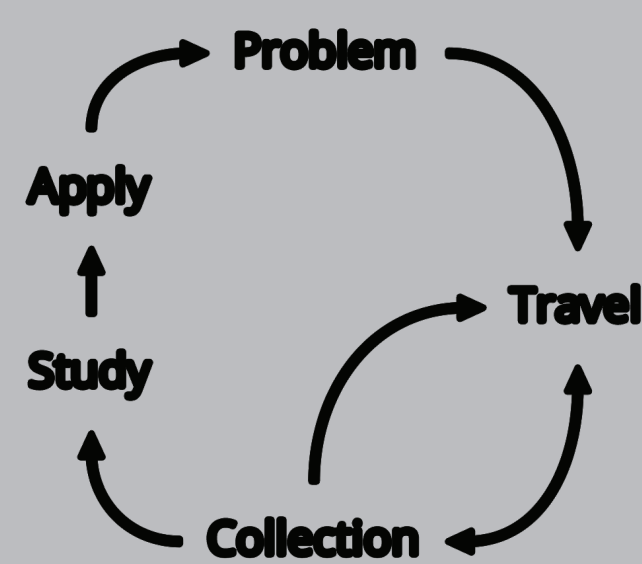
CORE LOOPS

The core mechanic loop describes the general course of action a player repeats in each "level" of a game, including core mechanics.

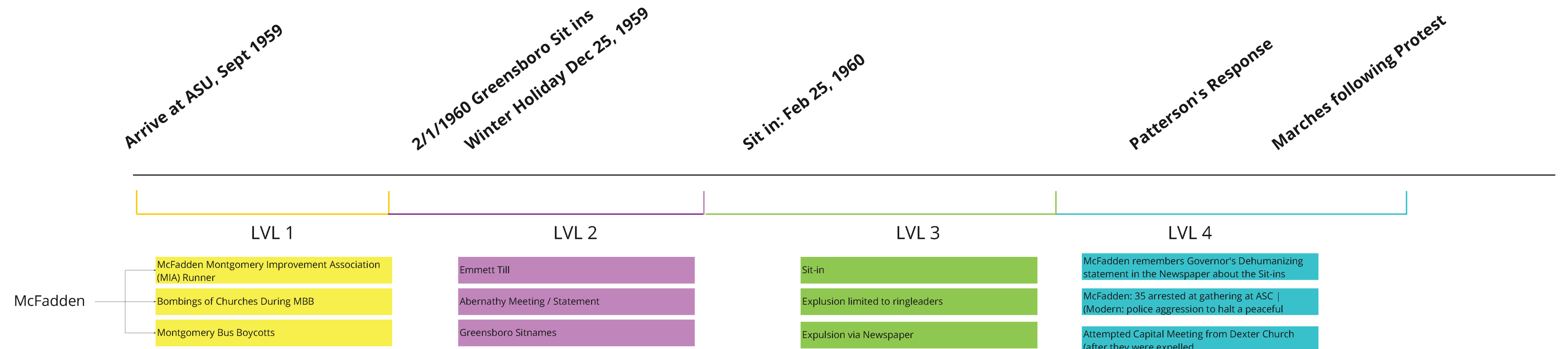
The combination of our definition and our identified themes produced the thematic loop. Themes flow into each other for the student leader; the action of one results in the reaction of another. This guided our decision process in level design.



Mechanical Loop



STUDENT LEADER ARCHETYPE



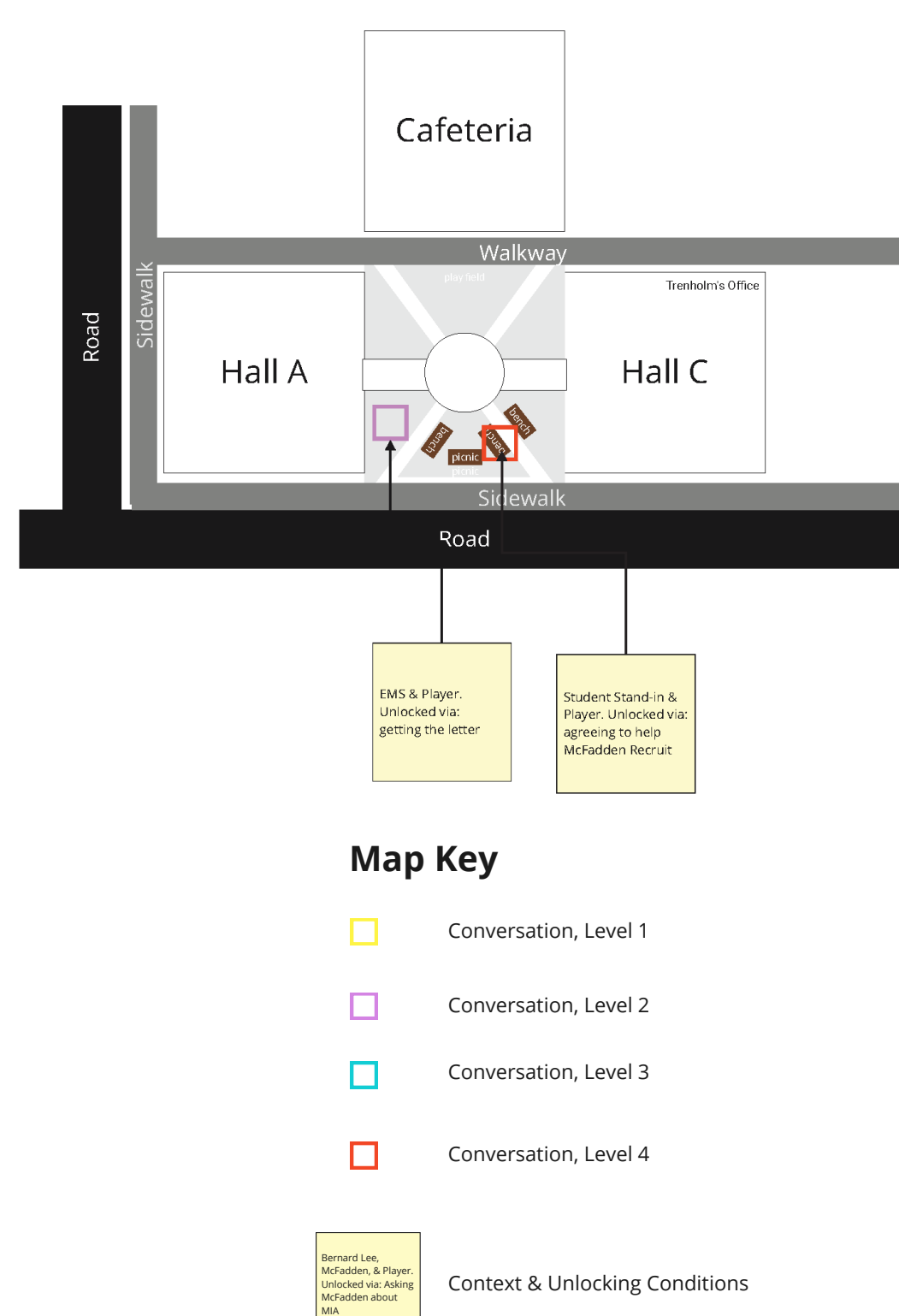
LEVEL DEVELOPMENT

The game takes place over four levels. The first level serves as an introduction to Montgomery and central game mechanics. In the second level, the player builds rapport with the key activists, attends meetings, and socializes with them. If they choose so, they begin planning the sit-in. The third level is primarily focused on the sit-in and its immediate aftermath, including the expulsion. The fourth level involves the marches after the sit-in and an epilogue describing the real world events.

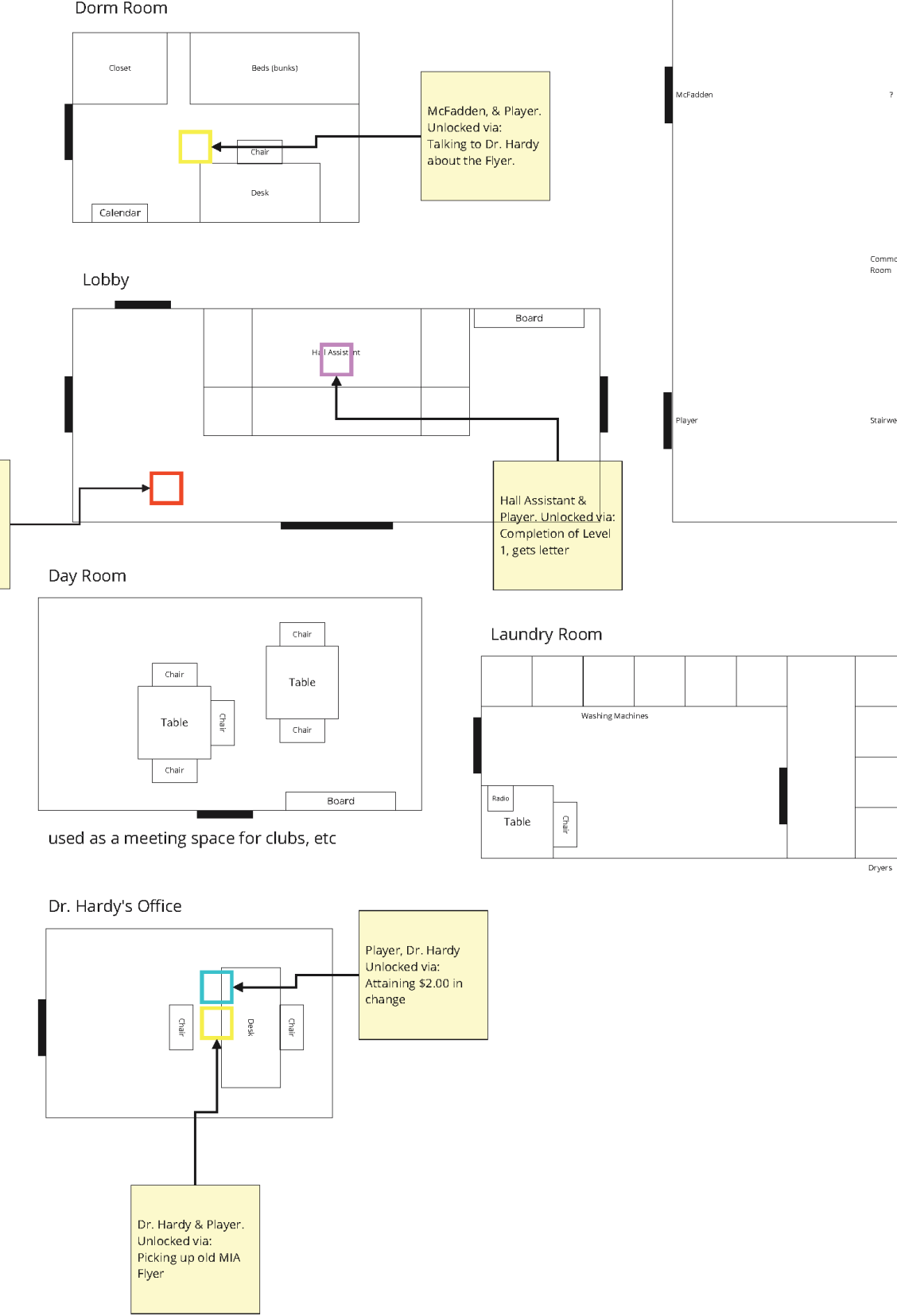
MAP

Players interact with characters via discussion and decision making, allowing for ethical contemplation. Interaction with the world is done via exploration and items. The map shows the locations of interactions for the Student Leader, as well as the conditions the interaction takes place under.

The Quad



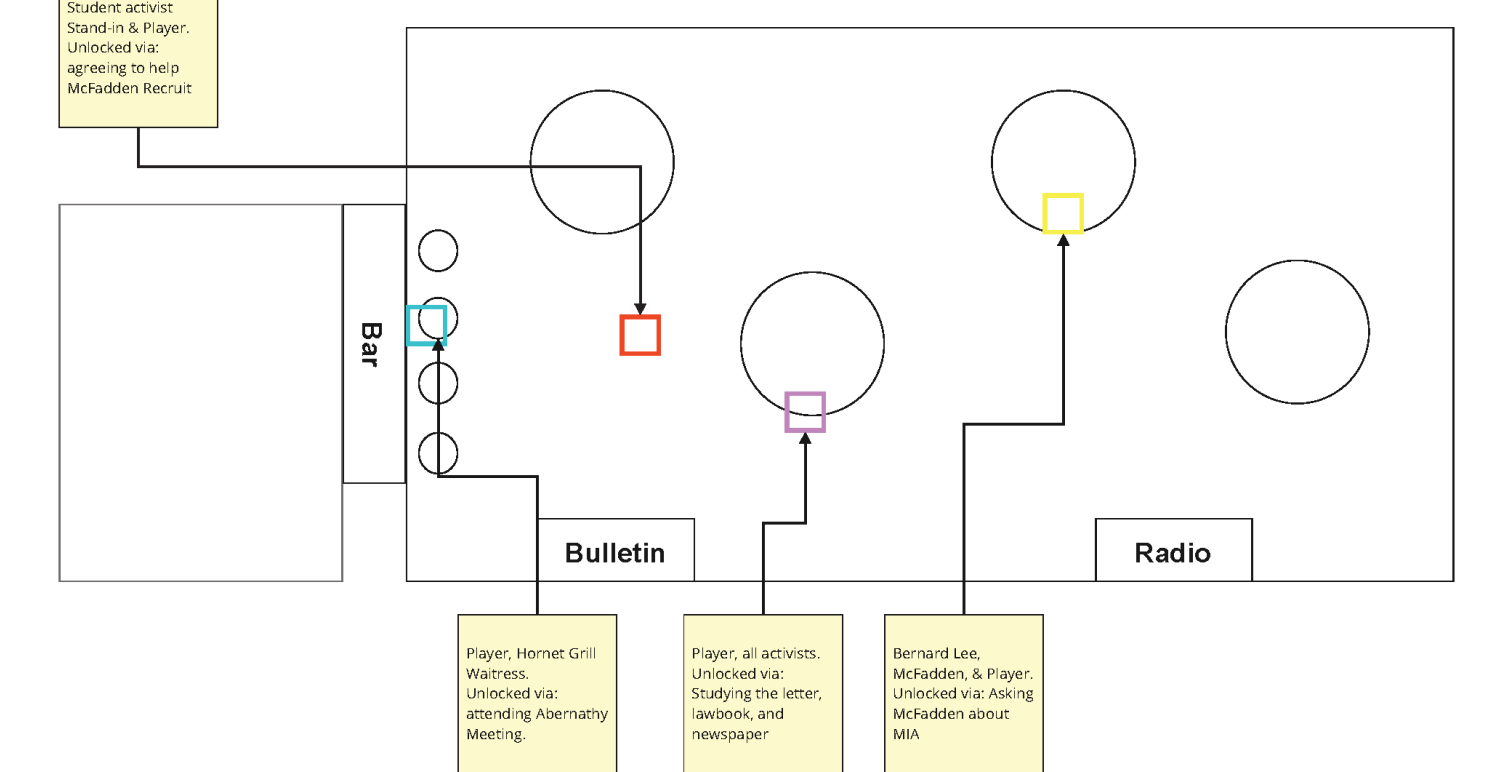
The Residence Hall



LEADERSHIP

This structure allowed the "golden path" experience to mimic that of James McFadden, the exemplar Student Leader during the Alabama State sit-ins. The aforementioned "gems" identified by the team guided these plotlines, allowing for an engaging and accurate environment. However, in order to successfully provide an environment for decision making, players must be allowed to deviate from this predefined path.

The Hornet Grill



POINT TREES

The actions a player chooses to partake in are kept track of throughout the game. This is done via a point system categorizing their type of action, which can be checked against at a later date.

QUANTIFYING CHOICE

These are measured via "Alliance" points, where a player acts with the same archetype, "Coalition" points, where a player acts with a different archetype, and "Fusion" Points, where a character engages with the narrative and content. This system was likewise developed from identified "gems." This system was designed to allow variability without punishment. It encourages players to act authentically within a historical environment.

NEXT STEPS

Both narrative and mechanical elements need development. Possible areas of interest for the narrative include: concept art, complete dialogue trees, and historical accuracy development. Mechanic elements include: development of the authority's perspective, clarity of quests' goals, and the eventual coalescence of the archetypes' golden paths.

