

GAME JAM

ADL Mini-Guide to Identity, Bias, and Games

Our Mission:

To stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.

CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY AND THE BELFER FELLOWS

In a world riddled with cyberhate, online harassment, and misuses of technology, the Center for Technology & Society (CTS) serves as a resource to tech platforms and develops proactive solutions. Launched in 2017 and headquartered in Silicon Valley, CTS aims for global impacts and applications in an increasingly borderless space. It is a force for innovation, producing cutting-edge research to enable online civility, protect vulnerable populations, support digital citizenship, and engage youth. CTS builds on ADL's century of experience building a world without hate and supplies the tools to make that a possibility both online and off-line.

The Belfer Fellowship program supports CTS's efforts to create innovative solutions to counter online hate and ensure justice and fair treatment for all in the digital age through fellowships in research and outreach projects.

The program is made possible by a generous contribution from the Robert A. and Renée E. Belfer Family Foundation. The inaugural 2018-2019 Fellows are:

- **Rev. Dr. Patricia Novick, Ph.D., of the Multicultural Leadership Academy, a program that brings Latino and African-American leaders together.**
- **Dr. Karen Schrier, an associate professor at Marist College and its founding director of the Games and Emerging Media Program.**
- **Samuel Woolley of the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford, who works with Jigsaw, Google's think tank.**

ADL is a leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry, its timeless mission is to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. ADL is the first call when acts of anti-Semitism occur. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

Learn more: adl.org



ADL Mini-Guide to Identity, Bias, and Games

This guide was created by
ADL Center for Technology & Society
and Belfer Fellow, Dr. Karen Schrier,
in collaboration with ADL Education

How to Use This Guide:

So, you just got the theme (Identity!), and you got into your groups. Now you are ready to make a game! But, first, spend time brainstorming, thinking and reflecting.

- ✓ Look over possible steps on how to approach the game jam (see pages 6-7).
- ✓ Read more about the Identity theme on page 9.
- ✓ Do ~2 different identity exercises with your team — it helps with brainstorming AND getting to know each other! (see page 10)
- ✓ Read through the Identity-related questions on page 12 while you reflect on the exercises.
- ✓ Check out some Dos and Don'ts on page 21.
- ✓ Have a concept? Ready to design your game? Go to page 14.

***Don't have time for the whole guide?**

See our one-page summary sheet on page 25.

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How to Approach this Game Jam: Possible Steps*

Game design is the process of creating the game, including the game play, mechanics, goals, obstacles, and overall experience for a specific audience. As you embark on the Game Jam, here is a possible process to follow:



BRAINSTORM

1

Do some identity exercises, read about identity, ask questions.



IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

2

For instance: lack of understanding around non-binary gender; political divisiveness; or the difficulties of interviewing for a job.



USE THE PRINCIPLES

5

For help in creating design principles and game concepts, see the Identity Game Design Principles on pages 18.



PROTOTYPE THE GAME

6

Sketch out your game concepts and design raw paper prototypes, even if you are making a digital game.



BUILD THE GAME

9

Continue to build and revise the game until you are satisfied with it (or until time runs out!).



IDENTIFY THE AUDIENCE

3

This could be 5-year-olds, diabetes patients, middle aged accountants or butterfly researchers. Be specific as to your audience and consider your audience's specific needs.



IDENTIFY THE CHANGE YOU WANT

4

A great worksheet for walking through this can be found at: goo.gl/sDkmPW. For instance, how do you want to change their: Knowledge, Skills, Behavior, Attitudes, Emotions, Perspectives, Opinions, Values. Which activities support this change?



PLAYTEST THE GAME

7

Watch and observe what works and what doesn't work. Be open to feedback from others.

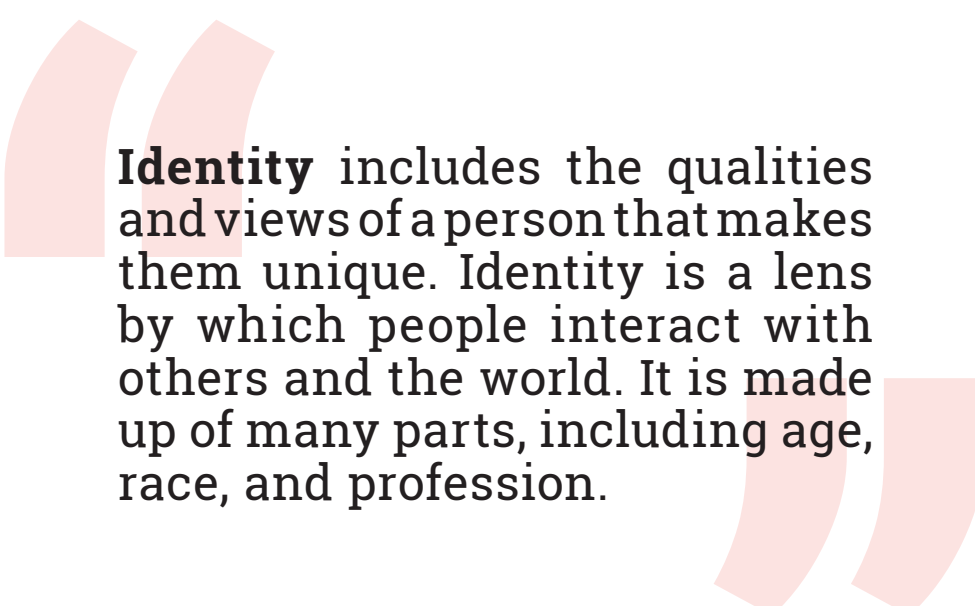


REVISE THE PROTOTYPE

8

Continue to revise and test the game in an iterative process (design, test, revise, design, test, revise).

**Adapted in part from Fullerton's and Salen/Zimmerman's approaches to game design, ADL's Anti-Bias Education Framework, Schrier's Guiding Questions for Educational Games, Schrier's EPIC Framework, and the Transformational Game Design model by Chamberlin & Schell (2018)*



Identity includes the qualities and views of a person that makes them unique. Identity is a lens by which people interact with others and the world. It is made up of many parts, including age, race, and profession.

Our Theme for This Jam is

Identity

Your mission is to make a game related to identity.

We encourage you to make a game that does one or more of the following:

- Expresses your own identity.
- Expresses another's identity.
- Shows the biases that a particular identity may face.
- Invites players to empathize with a particular identity.

Components of identity can include:

- Sexual orientation
- Profession/skills
- Abilities
- Socioeconomic class
- Hobby/pastime/activity you enjoy
- Family structure / parenting status
- Language(s) spoken
- Political beliefs
- Social relationships
- Volunteer activity
- Ability and disability
- Community/geographic location
- Emotions
- Age
- Ethnicity
- National origin
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Race
- Religion
- Health (physical and mental)
- College, school, or alumni affiliation
- Types of games, music or other arts
- Personal traits (courage, hard worker, connector)

Identity Exercises

*We adapted some exercises created by ADL Education. Please feel free to use any of these activities or none of them, or adapt them. We recommend doing at least 2 different ones, as they serve as icebreakers as well as inspiration starters. Let the conversation flow, as fellow teammates may end up sharing stories and expressing their identities in different ways. Make sure that all teammates get a chance to share. Don't forget to really **listen** to each other and **no judgment!** Try to be vulnerable if you feel comfortable but be mindful of others' comfort level. Do not share what you hear outside of the group unless you receive permission.*

The Story of Your Name

This is an exercise adapted from ADL's Education Training. Spend 3-4 minutes having everyone on the team "free write" a (true) story about their name. They can write about anything they want related to their name: how they got it, what it means to them, and/or whether they like their name. At the end of the 4 minutes, have everyone take turns reading their stories aloud. Have the participants identify common themes and differences among the stories. At the end, you can brainstorm ways to translate parts of the stories or themes into game concepts.

The Game Developer Bag

Every person on the team needs to take an object out of their pocket/purse/bag/thing they are carrying with them. This object should be meaningful to them. The people in the group should take turns explaining why this object is meaningful to them. Then, the team needs to put the objects in a pile and together brainstorm games that use those objects in some way—such as obstacles, mechanics, characters, or themes.

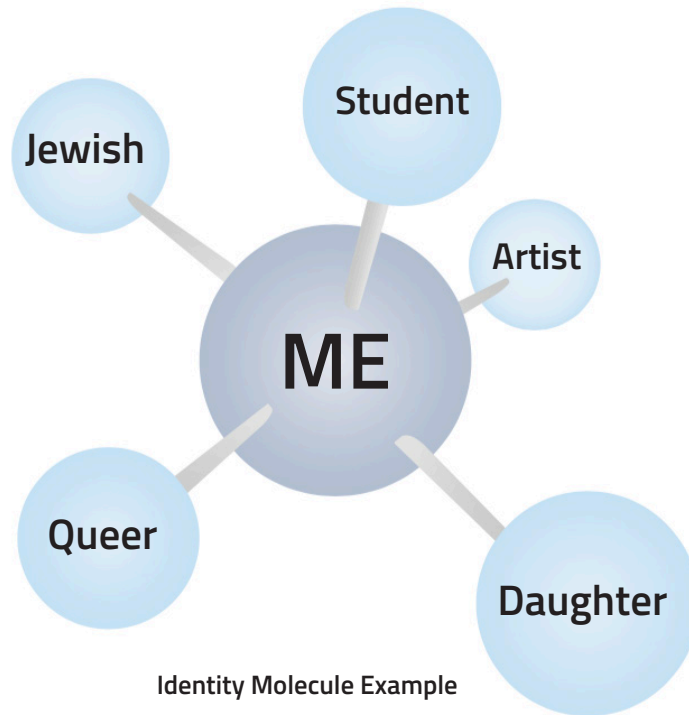
Things in Common

This is an exercise adapted from ADL's Education Training. Set a stopwatch for 3-4 minutes. Everyone on the team should spend that time trying to figure out all the different random things they have in common (besides just being game developers, living in the same city, or liking games). Try to get to at least 7-8 items. Once the list is made, try to create a game concept together that is made using 3-4 of those commonalities (this can be done together or separately).

Identity Molecule

This is an exercise adapted from ADL's Education Training. In it, participants fill in a "molecule" with their five key identity groups, and then discuss it. These groups could be anything from gender identity to political beliefs. Participants can share the identity groups out loud, and then discuss how the team might create a game concept that reflects those groups.

(See the example diagram on the next page)



Identity Molecule Example

More Identity Exercises

Consider participating in these additional identity-related exercises before you start designing the game.

Share and reflect on your own identities

- Share games that reflect your identity.
- Share games that get your identity wrong or perpetuate stereotypes about aspects of your identity.
- Talk about your identity and listen to other's stories.

Learn about others' identities

- Consider how to represent other cultures through games. What is appropriate to show or not show?
- Brainstorm and share cultural practices, objects, perspectives, attitudes, dialogue, communication styles, interactions, and histories.

Explore other perspectives and identities

- Switch positions and perspectives with other designer(s) and see what happens.
- Change hats, outfits, roles, locations, and/or costumes and express how your perspective changes, while being mindful of cultural appropriation and the inappropriate use of others' identities.

Identity-Related Questions

As you brainstorm and do the identity exercises, consider asking and reflecting on these questions. Refer back to them as you design and playtest as well!

- 1** When playing a game, are players acting as themselves or playing the role of another? Would they act like this in real life?
- 2** If there is an avatar in the game, to what extent do players really identify with this avatar?
- 3** How does identity relate to bias?
- 4** What are the ethical considerations of representing an identity or cultural group through a game?
- 5** Can we make a game about an identity to which we do not belong? If so, how should we go about doing that?
- 6** How do we ensure we do not perpetuate stereotypes when we represent identities in games?

7 In what ways (if any) has your identity been depicted using stereotypes in games?

8 How do systems of privilege and power get replicated (or subverted) through games?

9 How can we build in moments where players can reflect on their own identities and those of other players or characters?

10 How can we use concrete or personal details to reveal more universal human conditions?

11 What are novel ways that players can communicate their identities in the game or to each other?

12 How will you approach and try to understand cultures that are different than your own in order to give a holistic view and not perpetuate stereotypes?

Ready to Design and Develop?

Do you have a concept? Are you ready to design your game? We recommend checking out the following:

- ✓ Think through the questions on [page 15](#).
- ✓ Read through the general principles you can use to design your game for empathy on [page 16](#).
- ✓ Dig even deeper by reading the 4 identity-specific principles for more detailed ideas on how to design the game for identity on [page 18](#).
- ✓ Check out the research findings for just-in-time information that can help refine your design on [page 20](#).
- ✓ Read the Dos & Don'ts for quick hints on [page 21](#).
- ✓ Not sure how to develop your game? check out possible tools to use on [page 22](#).

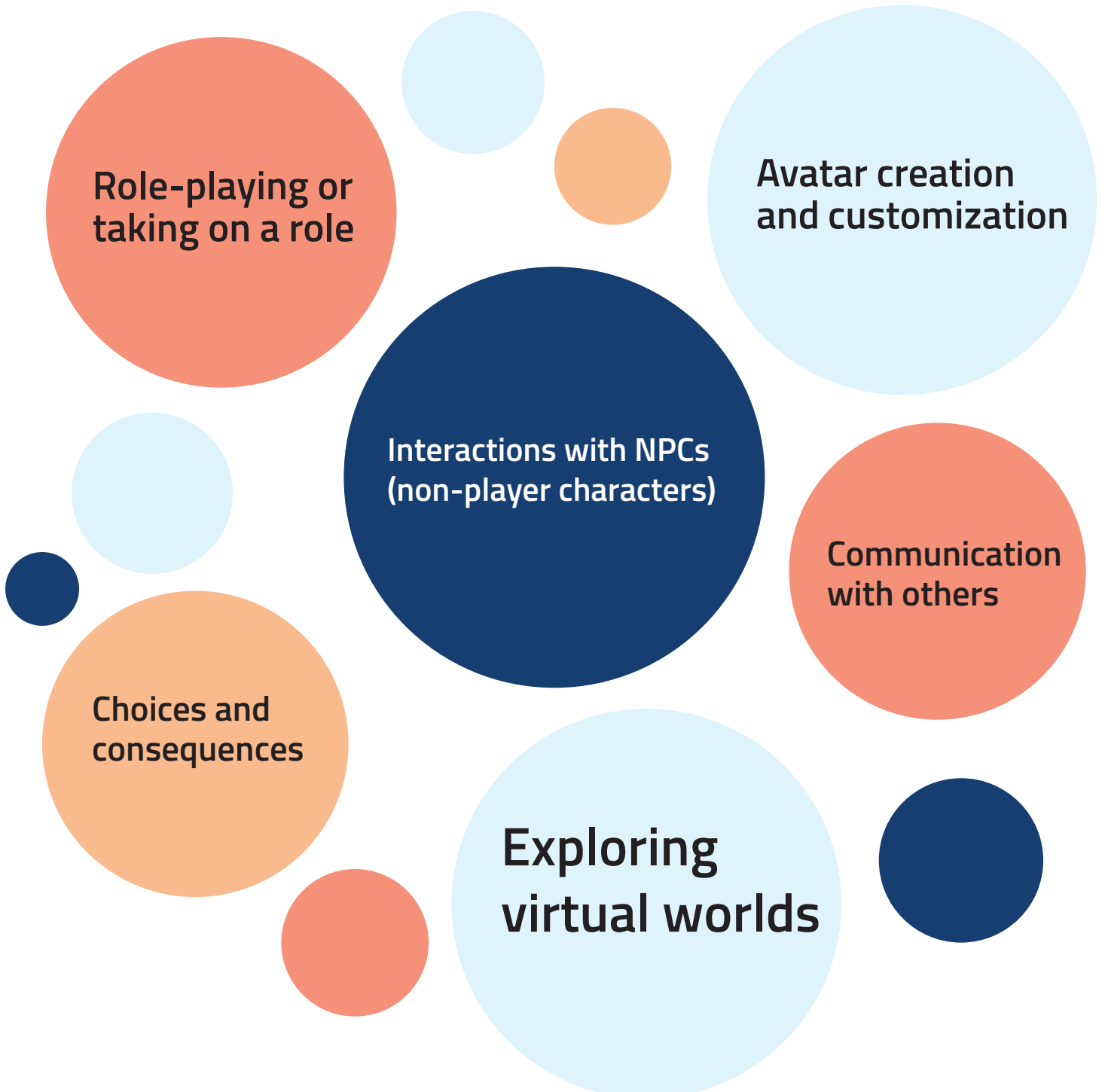
Questions to Ask Ourselves as We Make a Game For Learning

As you begin designing the game, consider these questions:

- 1 Why make it a game?
- 2 What are the goals?
- 3 Who is the audience?
- 4 What is the context for the game?
- 5 How do we balance all of the different needs and perspectives (e.g., accuracy of the game with engaging game play)?
- 6 Are there connections to curricula or standards that need to be met?
- 7 What are the practical and technological considerations?
- 8 How are we assessing and evaluating the game?

Empathy Game Design Principles

Are you ready to design your game? Want players to empathize with a perspective or identity? Consider using these general principles related to empathy and perspective-taking. You do not need to use all of them, but consider using a few that make sense for your goals.



**Deliberation, dialogue
and discourse**

**Agency and
responsibility**

**Reading, evaluating,
interpreting, and
analyzing information**

**Opportunities
for reflection**

**Simulating situations,
systems, and trends**

Identity-Specific Design Principles

Ready to get into your game design? Want to enable your players to grapple with their own and other's identities, perspectives and biases? Consider using these identity-specific principles!

Allow players to reflect on and express their own identities

Possible principles to use:

- Players can play as an avatar with a unique identity.
- Players can create and shape their own avatar or character.
- Players can customize a perspective, opinion, identity or persona.
- Players can make choices, experience consequences, and reflect on decisions.
- Players address how their avatar's and own identity intersect, and/or how it intersects with others.

Enable players to interact with and experiment with other identities and perspectives

Possible principles to use:

- Players can try on different identities and personas.
- Players can interact with others' traits, identities, and arguments, while being mindful about not perpetuating stereotypes or engaging in cultural appropriation.
- Players can observe and reflect on what happens when others make choices.
- NPCs/other characters and/or other players can share their perspectives with the player.
- Players are encouraged to listen, evaluate, and reflect on others' perspectives.

Help players cultivate awareness of other cultures and individual and systemic biases

3

Possible principles to use:

- Players can experience different cultural identities, and/or meet other players and NPCs who reflect these identities.
- Players can interact with cultural artifacts, histories and activities.
- Players can play with different cultural systems.
- Players can experiment with different data, information, people, stories, or views.

Allow players to negotiate their (and others') identities and consider other perspectives

4

Possible principles to use:

- Players can negotiate positions or perspectives with others.
- Players can change or adapt their identities throughout the game, and see how these changes impact their experiences.
- Players see how others change at individual and/or systematic levels, and what possible consequences are.

Useful Research Findings

What works when it comes to empathy and games? Here is a little help so you can design your game to better support empathy.

A little distance

Players may identify more with their avatar, but they may empathize more with another character or player, because they need a little distance to support empathy.

Take the time

Designers should allow relationships and connections to unfold over time. Intimacy needs to build. People may be more empathetic to other players, and even virtual characters or objects after spending time playing with (and relying on) them.

Reflection

Designers may also want to build in time for players or even characters to reflect on decisions, perspectives, or outcomes.

Authenticity

Designers should use authentic details, voices, themes, contexts, and stories when expressing an identity and/or cultural group. Try not to resort to stereotypes or one-dimensional characters or representations.

Meaningful choices

Any choices in the game should be meaningful--both in terms of the game, as well as for the player. The choices should make a difference in how the game is played and/or how other players or characters treat the player. But it should also connect to the player and their personal experiences, interests, and/or values.

Agency

Designers should constrain a player's choices appropriately. Consider whether players should have (or should feel they have) control over their gameplay. Designers may want to limit agency, for instance, to show how helpless someone feels in a given situation, or may want to expand agency to highlight privilege and power.

Perspective-taking

Perspective-taking is the act of taking on another person's or group's views. Often people identify with their "in-group," and think that the "out-group" is different from them. Perspective-taking can bridge this by making an "out-group" seem less different. But if a person over-identifies with their own group (their in-group) and/or has low self-esteem, this may backfire. Also, this may not work in a highly competitive or conflict-filled type of game.

Cooperation and collaboration

Cooperative or "co-op" games tend to be more inclusive than ones that aren't co-op. Even if the game is not totally "collaboration"-focused, designers may want to find smaller ways for players to rely on each other, to play together, or to complete problems with each other's help.

**See more about this research in the Appendix, under further resources. Particularly work by Darvasi and Farber/Schrier*

Dos & Don'ts

Read these Dos & Don'ts before you get started!

Do

- ✓ Take at least an hour to do some Identity Exercises. Spend time chatting, sharing, and expressing your thoughts about identity BEFORE you start to design.
- ✓ Really listen as your teammates are sharing their stories and ideas. Sketch, write, and jot down your own ideas while you listen.
- ✓ Before you design, think about what activities you want your players to do within the game. Do you want them to: think something, feel something, change some type of behavior, and/or connect with others in some way? See more in Possible Design Steps.
- ✓ If you are making a game about identities that are not your own, consider including people with those identities in your design process.
- ✓ Prototype your concept and playtest before you start developing it.

Don't

- ✗ Don't be afraid to paper prototype your game, even if your game is going to be digital.
- ✗ Don't ask a teammate to be the "representative" of their identity group or cultural group.
- ✗ Don't try to reduce an identity to one small thing, or expand it to everyone. Every person's experiences have aspects that are both unique and generalizable to humanity so design for that complexity.
- ✗ Don't base your thinking on stereotypes or one-dimensional narratives. Consider the ethics of representing identities in a game.

What Tools Can I Use to Make a Game?

Game developers may use all different types of platforms to create their games. Some platforms that are popular to use during Game Jams are:

Unity: A serious game development tool used by studios. It is good for both 3D and 2D games, very flexible and Mac and Windows-based, but it has a steep learning curve and is good for more advanced developers. <http://unity3d.com/>

Construct 2/3: A Windows-based game-creation tool that is particularly good for side-scrollers and platformer games, and is available on Steam (a popular platform for finding and buying games). <https://www.scirra.com/construct2>

GameMaker Studio: Similar to Construct 2, it is available on Steam and is Windows-based. (<http://www.yoyogames.com/studio>)

Twine/Twine 2: A browser-based interactive fiction (writing) tool that has a low barrier to entry. (<https://twinery.org/2>)

Metaverse Studio: Make an augmented reality game that can be played with an iOS or Android mobile device. (<https://studio.gometa.io/>)

RPG Maker: A windows-based platform that makes old style Japanese role-playing games. <http://www.rpgmakerweb.com/>

Pen and Paper: We encourage participants to make non-digital (board, card, athletic) games.

Appendix

Key Terms (from ADL's glossary)

Identity: The qualities, beliefs, interests, etc. that make a particular person or group similar or different from others.

Bias: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

Culture: The patterns of daily life learned consciously and unconsciously by a group of people. These patterns can be seen in language, governing practices, arts, customs, holiday celebrations, food, religion, dating rituals and clothing, to name a few.

Cultural appropriation: When people use specific elements of a culture (e.g. ideas, symbols, images, clothing) without regard for that culture. It usually happens when one group exploits the culture of another group, often with little understanding of the group's history, experience and traditions.

Ethnicity: Refers to a person's identification with a group based on characteristics such as shared history, ancestry, nationality, geographic origin, language and culture; and though related, it is not synonymous with race. For example, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian.

Gender: The socially-defined "rules" and roles for men and women in a society. The attitudes, customs and values associated with gender are socially constructed; however, individuals develop their gender identities in two primary ways: through an innate sense of their own identity and through their life experiences and interactions with others. Dominant western society generally defines gender as a binary system—men and women—but many cultures define gender as more fluid and existing along a continuum.

Gender Expression: Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their bodies' characteristics. Gender expression is not an indicator of sexual orientation.

Gender Identity: How an individual identifies in terms of their gender. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Inclusion: An environment and commitment to support, represent and embrace diverse social groups and identities; an environment where all people feel they belong.

Race: A socially constructed concept and has no biological basis. Nonetheless, people use physical traits to categorize people into different racial groups. While some people self-identify with a racial group consistent with how society would identify them, others find that their racial identity does not match with society's perception.

Sexual Orientation: Describes a person's attraction to the same or opposite sex. While some argue that one's sexual orientation is visible, such observations are based on stereotypical gender norms, not to whom the person is attracted.

Sexual Identity: Sexual identity labels include "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "bi," "queer," "questioning," "heterosexual," "straight," and others. Sexual identity evolves through a developmental process that varies depending on the individual. Sexual behavior and identity can be chosen. Though some people claim their sexual orientation is also a choice, for others this does not seem to be the case.

Stereotype: An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Further Resources

ADL Education, <https://www.adl.org/education>

Chamberlin & Schell (2018). Secret Process for Making Transformational Games. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO4l342r7CM>, <https://www.slideshare.net/jesseschell/the-secret-process-for-making-games-that-matter>

Darvasi (2016). "Empathy, Perspective, and Complicity: How Digital Games Can Support Peace Education and Conflict Reduction." [Unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002599/259928e.pdf](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002599/259928e.pdf)

Farber & Schrier (2017). "The Limits and Strengths of Games as 'Empathy Machines'": <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002619/261993E.pdf>

Foster, Shah & Barany. (2017). Projective Reflection: Facilitating Learning as Identity Exploration Through Game-Based Learning. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320471724_Projective_Reflection_Facilitating_Learning_as_Identity_Exploration_Through_Game-Based_Learning

Games for Change website, <http://www.gamesforchange.org>

Schrier (2015). EPIC: a framework for using video games in ethics education. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283788911_EPIC_a_framework_for_using_video_games_in_ethics_education

Schrier (2018). How can we use games to understand others better. <https://www.adl.org/blog/how-we-can-use-games-to-understand-others-better>

Schrier (2018). Guiding Questions for Game-Based Learning. J. Vogt et al. (eds), *Second Handbook of Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Education*, Springer.

T.L.Taylor, (2006). *Play between worlds*. <https://www.amazon.com/Play-Between-Worlds-Exploring-Culture/dp/0262512629/>

Yee's works on identity: http://www.nickyyee.com/daedalus/gateway_identity.html

Yee, Nick. (2014). *Proteus Paradox*. <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300190991/proteus-paradox>

Quantic Foundry, <https://quanticfoundry.com/>

Our Theme is Identity

We encourage you to make a game that does one or more of the following:

- Expresses your own identity.
- Expresses another's identity.
- Shows the biases that a particular identity may face.
- Invites players to empathize with a particular identity.

Principles to Use to Encourage Empathy

- Role-playing or taking on a role
- Interactions with NPCs (non-player characters)
- Communication with others
- Exploring virtual worlds
- Choices and consequences
- Avatar creation and customization
- Deliberation, dialogue and discourse
- Opportunities for reflection
- Reading, evaluating, interpreting, and analyzing information
- Simulating situations, systems, and trends
- Providing appropriate agency and responsibility

Identity-Specific Game Design Principles

- Allow players to reflect on and express their own identities
- Enable players to interact with and experiment with other identities and perspectives
- Help players cultivate awareness of other cultures and individual and systemic biases
- Allow players to negotiate their (and others') identities and consider other perspectives

Identity Related Questions

1 When playing a game, are players acting as themselves or playing the role of another? Would they act like this in real life?

2 If there is an avatar in the game, to what extent do players really identify with this avatar?

3 How does identity relate to bias?

4 What are the ethical considerations of representing an identity or cultural group through a game?

5 Can we make a game about an identity to which we do not belong? If so, how should we go about doing that?

6 How do we ensure we do not perpetuate stereotypes when we represent identities in games?

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12 How will you approach and try to understand cultures that are different than your own in order to give a holistic view and not perpetuate stereotypes?

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For additional and updated
resources please see:
www.adl.org

Copies of this publication are available in
the Rita and Leo Greenland Library and
Research Center

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ADL by the numbers | OUR IMPACT

EDUCATE

5.2m
STUDENTS 

impacted through our Holocaust education program, Echoes & Reflections, since inception in 2005

27k
EDUCATORS 

acquired skills to teach anti-bias concepts and support students in using ally behaviors to challenge bias and identity-based bullying

30,000
EDUCATORS 

receive ADL Education Updates and Curriculum resources

ADVOCATE

45
STATES + D.C. 

have enacted Hate Crimes legislation based on, or similar to, the ADL model produced in 1981

INVESTIGATE

11k 
CASES

in which ADL has provided extremist related information to law enforcement, including critical, up-to-the-minute background on extremist threats

MONITOR

2.6M 
TWEETS

Tweets containing anti-Semitic language were identified in our 2016 report about online harassment of journalists

250 
WHITE SUPREMACISTS

who attended the 2017 "Unite the Right" Rally in Charlottesville were identified by ADL in cooperation with local law enforcement

PARTNERS

300+ 
MAYORS

pledged to join ADL through the Mayors' Compact to Combat Hate, Extremism and Discrimination, a new partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors

TRAIN

100% 

Of all new FBI agents have been trained by ADL since 2001

+150k 
LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS

were trained by ADL in the last 10 years, helping them to fight extremism and build trust with the communities they serve

How ADL is Responding

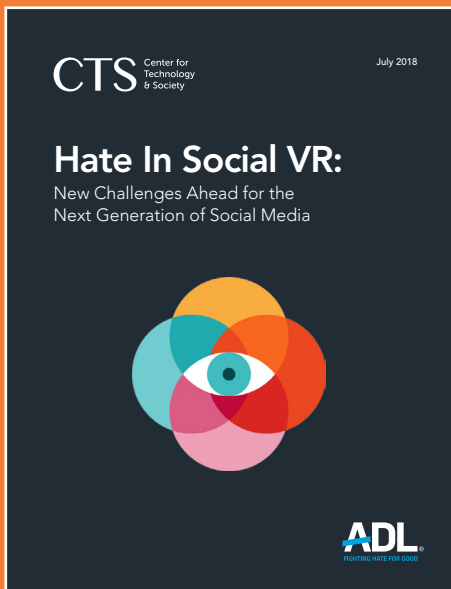
ADL has a comprehensive approach to address anti-Semitic incidents and to counter all forms of hate. ADL's Center on Extremism is a foremost authority on extremism, terrorism and all forms of hate. The COE's team of investigators

and analysts strategically monitors and exposes extremist movements and individuals, using cutting-edge technology to track real time developments and provide actionable intelligence and data-based analysis to law enforcement, public officials, community leaders and technology companies.

ADL also does this work through:

- Reaching 1.5 million students annually with our anti-bias and anti-bullying programs
- Building coalitions among diverse organizations and communities, and boldly advocating against government policies, organizations and people that promote anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry
- Working in Silicon Valley through ADL's Center on Technology and Society, which works in close partnership with tech industry leaders to establish best practices for addressing cyber hate and to develop proactive solutions to fight the spread of anti-Semitism and other forms of hate online

Featured Resources on this topic:



Hate in Social VR Report



Game Jam 2017
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