Executive Summary

The GDI Playbook

With well over three billion people playing video games worldwide, players of all ages, backgrounds, and perspectives are connected through the shared joy of gaming.[1] However, multiple studies have revealed a sizable gap between who today's players are and their reflection on-screen. The Geena Davis Institute (GDI) has crafted a playbook to help you understand, reflect on, and address possible biases in your game's narrative and character development. Our goal is to support game developers with tools to make positive shifts in representation and inclusion.

The GDI Playbook is divided into five topics which are the keys to help you craft engaging and meaningful games.

Key 1: Craft Your Approach
It is important to be aware of how individuals' experiences vary depending on their intersecting identities and how our own identity shapes our perspective. Self-reflection involves introspection to guide thoughtful and respectful creative choices. Additionally, exploring and understanding how individuals' identities overlap and influence their experiences can help you create authentic, multidimensional characters that will resonate with your players.

Key 2: Craft Stories
If your game is set in a real time and place from history, what historical and cultural realities do you want to reflect? Incorporate research, expert consultation, and collaboration with team members to make these choices. Develop narratives and characters that actively challenge identity-based stereotypes. In turn, create more complex stories and broaden narrative opportunities by featuring diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences using creativity and innovation.

Key 3: Craft Characters
Aim for a diverse character roster — from protagonists to NPCs — to help players' connection to the overall representation landscape of your game. Learn what the research says about real-world impact on players from in-game experiences, and use that awareness to inform character portrayals that prioritize respect, experience, and engagement. A framework you can use to help construct multidimensional characters with distinct

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[1] DFC Intelligence. (2020). Global video game consumer population passes 3 billion. Retrieved from https://www.dfcint.com/global-video-game-consumer-population/

personalities, motivations, and backstories is GDI's "5Ps." When developing your characters, reflect upon their portrayal as it relates to:

1. **Prominence:** How significant is the character to the game world?
2. **Power:** Does the character have agency?
3. **Personality:** What unique set of traits define the character and shape their interactions and reactions in the game?
4. **Proficiency:** What are the unique skills, abilities, and talents the character possesses in the game world?
5. **Profession:** What is the character's job, role, or professional background in the game world?

Key 4: Craft Connection
Directly involve those who can speak to diverse perspectives and the nuances of identity to build authentic player connection. This starts by including and gathering feedback from people you want to represent throughout development. Then, refine games based on that feedback and check back to ensure that any issues identified were resolved.

Key 5: Craft Belonging
Consider strategies to enhance player engagement and encourage long-term retention.
You can measure player response to inclusive representation efforts through player feedback and engagement metrics. Collaboration is key: facilitate collaboration across teams, publishers, and gaming-related spaces to prioritize creating content and spaces of connection and belonging for all players.

Representation is nuanced, so the GDI Playbook will not cover every challenge you might encounter — it is a tool, not a checklist. As you'll see, we recommend pairing this with expert consultation, additional resources, and inclusive company practices to achieve your goals.

Thank you for taking this journey with us!