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## **Accessibility:**

Designing games so that all people, including those with disabilities, can enjoy the full experience. (Visit <https://gameaccessibilityguidelines.com> for more information.)

## **Animalistic Dehumanization:**

A form of dehumanization that strips away human characteristics — such as intelligence, rationality, and morality — by attributing animal-like traits to the human character, which serves to justify mistreatment, discrimination, or violence against the dehumanized character, such as likening a human character to vermin in dialogue.

## **Belonging:**

A feeling of acceptance — that one can be their authentic self — within a group.

**Body Diversity:**

A variety of human body types (e.g., by height, fatness, muscularity, gender presentation, limb differences, use of mobility aids), which creates deeper connections for players, especially for nonbinary, trans, fat, and/or disabled gamers.

**Brain Trope:**

A character trope that defines a character as tech support or the “brain” of the operation. These characters are sometimes stereotypically cast as physically disabled.

**Caricatures:**

Using exaggeration and/or distortion when creating character descriptions or appearance.

**Cisgender:**

A description for someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Colorism:**

Discriminatory treatment of people with darker skin tones, which upholds beauty standards of whiteness that benefit white people and those with lighter skin.

**Counternarratives:**

Perspectives that challenge dominant points of view or the status quo, and are typically from the point of view of a marginalized voice.

**Counterplay:**

Play that interrupts, fractures, or subverts gameplay or the process of becoming a player (Meades, 2015).

**Cultural Appropriation:**

The use of elements of a culture by members of another culture, often without understanding or respecting the elements’ significance to that culture (Young, 2008).

**Cultural Sensitivity:**

Awareness of cultural differences without assigning a value judgment.

**Damseling:**

A plot device in which a female character finds herself in distress or in a perilous position, needing rescue by a hero. She becomes a prize for the hero, an object in the storyline, with limited or no opportunity for player interaction.

**Dehumanization:**

A process of treating or describing others as if they are not human. When this happens, it can be leveraged to justify violence, unfair treatment, or other harmful actions. (See: Animalistic Dehumanization.)

**Digital Identity:**

A digital extension of an individual's identity, such as in a video game (Waggoner, 2009).

**Diversity:**

Proportionate representation across dimensions of human difference.

**Explicit Bias:**

A kind of bias that people are aware of having, like when someone has a conscious preference either for or against particular groups.

**Face-ism Bias:**

The erasure of women's faces in media. Media that portrays women as though their bodies were sufficient to represent them are engaging in face-ism bias (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

**Fridged Woman Trope:**

A storyline where the male hero's background includes the violent murder of a woman he loves. The male hero grapples with guilt for failing to perform his socially expected, patriarchal role of being the protector of women.

**Gender Swapping:**

When a player chooses an avatar or character that represents a different gender than the gender they present as in real life.

**Healer Trope:**

A character that supports another character through healing. These characters tend to be supportive and comparatively passive, often represented as white or Native women.

**Hero's Journey Trope:**

A common story structure centered on a hero (usually a man) who goes on an adventure, learns a lesson, wins a victory with that newfound knowledge, and then returns home transformed. Oftentimes, the hero wins a woman as a prize at the end. (See: Damseling.)

**Hypermasculine:**

Exaggerated stereotypical behavior for men, such as an emphasis on physical power, aggression, dominance, violence, and cockyness. (See: Man Box.)

**Implicit Bias:**

Unconscious beliefs that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions. These biases are often rooted in societal norms and can impact how we perceive and interact with others, particularly in relation to characteristics such as race, gender, or age.

**Inclusion:**

An approach of welcoming and respecting all identities in a way that an individual feels valued, respected, and heard.

**Intersectionality:**

A framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person's social and political identities (for example, gender, race, class, sexuality) combine to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991).

**Learned Gender Roles:**

Societal expectations and behaviors that are taught to individuals based on their perceived gender. These roles can vary across cultures and time periods. Generally, women and girls are taught to be caring and prioritize others. Men and boys are taught to be independent, take risks, and show aggression.

**Linguistic Minstrelsy:**

The use of parody and caricature to reinforce racist, anti-Black stereotypes. Often, this invokes exaggerated African American Vernacular English (Bucholtz & Lopez, 2011).

**Male Gaze:**

Visual media choices that prioritize pleasure for cisgender, heterosexual men, such as zooming in on women's thighs or breasts (Mulvey, 1973).

**Man Box:**

Common ways that boys and men are socialized and expected to behave — in other words, they are boxed in. These seven pillars of masculinity can have negative effects for boys and men: 1) self-sufficiency, 2) acting tough, 3) physical attractiveness, 4) rigid masculine gender roles, 5) heterosexuality and homophobia, 6) hypersexuality, and 7) aggression and control (Heilman et al., 2017). (See: Hypermasculinity.)

**Marginalization:**

Means of treating a person or a group as less significant than the dominant group — excluding them and affording them less power.

**Matilda Effect:**

The practice of popular media exaggerating gender differences in STEM fields by centering male contributions to STEM and rendering female contributions invisible (Rossiter, 1993). (See: Role Congruity

Theory.)

**Mechanistic Dehumanization:**

A form of dehumanization invoking machine-like attributes, such as being cold, rigid, indifferent, and/or without heart or soul, which serves to justify mistreatment, discrimination, or violence against the dehumanized character. (See: The Tank Trope.)

**Media Effects:**

Far-reaching effects that media has on social, cultural, and personal values and perspectives. Video games are an important cultural touchstone that also influences other forms of entertainment and, as with other media, plays an important role in socialization.

**Medical Oddity Trope:**

A disabled character who is depicted as unnatural or the subject of a medical experiment gone awry.

**Micro-affirmation:**

A small act or acknowledgment of inclusion and acceptance.

**Microaggression:**

A seemingly small but deeply hurtful action — such as a joke or disrespectful comment — that singles out individuals from marginalized groups. Microaggressions are usually encountered in routine situations, such as workplace meetings or in the classroom.

**Overrepresentation:**

When a particular group is represented to a greater extent than would be expected based on its proportion in an overall, real-world population.

**Proteus Effect:**

The phenomenon where an avatar's age, attractiveness, height, skin color, and gender influence aspects of players' behavior, including their extraversion, aggression, and risk-taking (Yee, 2014).

**Queer Theory:**

A framework for looking at the world that challenges normative categories of identity in favor of finding new ways of thinking about existing social norms and assumptions. A way of critiquing social norms, power structures, and inequality.

**Reflexivity:**

The process of being aware of how one's background and experiences shape their perspective, and actively considering these influences in order to improve the objectivity and quality of one's decisions or perspectives.

**Role Congruity Theory:**

A theory suggesting both that stereotypes about gender roles influence the judgments made about individuals in leadership or other roles, and that there is a bias toward perceiving congruity between gender and role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

**Self-Objectification:**

When individuals view themselves as objects, and their value stems from assessment of their physical appearance. It is associated with depressed personal efficacy, increased preoccupation with one's appearance, decreased body satisfaction, depression, and disordered eating.

**Sexual Objectification:**

Occurs when a person is treated as a sexual object, rather than as an individual with thoughts, feelings, and agency. (See: Male Gaze.)

**Social Structures:**

The arrangement of institutions in which humans live and interact with one another. This includes the regularities of social life, customs, traditions, roles, and norms. To understand social inequality, it's important to recognize how social structures have created, reinforced, and perpetuated inequality.

**Stereotype:**

Categorical representations that reduce groups of people and places to basic generalizations. Stereotypes often include making assumptions about individuals based on a group they are a part of, and can reinforce the dominant ideology and power of elite groups because they influence the audience's attitude toward the people and events being described.

**Supercrip Trope:**

A character who compensates for their physical disability with superior intellect or some other unique skill.

**Tank Trope:**

The “**tank**” is a character class that attracts enemy attention, defends weaker teammates, and has substantial armor and weapons capabilities. Often, this class is represented by a dumb brute character with a lot of strength who can take a lot of damage, and is also often portrayed as a person of color, which risks reinforcing racial stereotypes and contributing to dehumanization. (See: Mechanistic Dehumanization.)

**Tokenization:**

The practice of including a small number of individuals from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of diversity. This practice makes token individuals a stand-in for a larger group.

**Transgender:**

A description for someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a trans man identifies as a man (gender identity) but was assigned female (sex) at birth.

**Trigger Warning:**

A statement preceding a piece of content (e.g., article, video, game) that alerts the viewer, reader, or player to content that may be distressing.

**Trolling:**

When someone posts or comments online to “bait” people, which means deliberately provoking an argument or emotional reaction.

**Trope:**

A storytelling shorthand that provides familiar elements for audiences to easily understand and relate to. They often perpetuate stereotypes.

**Underrepresentation:**

Underrepresenting marginalized groups relative to their real-world population. This imbalance distorts one’s view of society and can reinforce harmful stereotypes about marginalized groups.

**Universal Design:**

Indicates design that is useful and beneficial to everyone (and is a complementary concept to “accessibility”). A real-world example is a curb ramp, which allows a smooth transition between sidewalks and streets, thereby making them accessible for people with wheelchairs and other mobility impairments as well as benefiting those with child (or pet) strollers, travelers rolling their luggage, and more.

**White Gaze:**

When the default point of view is a white perspective. It assumes that the media content’s audience is white, and/or it prioritizes a white audience’s experience.

**White Knighting:**

When a male protagonist goes to great lengths of personal sacrifice to rescue women he perceives to be helpless, with the intention of making himself feel self-satisfied, and without considering whether the women actually need help.

**White Savior Trope:**

Portrays a person of color as a victim whose saving is dependent on the goodwill of a white character.



**Whitewashing:**

Replacing historical or real-world figures of color with white actors, casting white actors to portray characters of color, or overrepresenting a white population or perspective.

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