Diversity Games

Marlies P. Schijven and Toshiko Kikkawa

Dear readers and authors of Simulation and Gaming,

Universities, like societies, have labelled 'diversity' as a quality not to be overlooked and to be embraced. When it comes to the academic playing field, in establishing teams one may focus on diversity of sexual orientation, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, political preference – and many more to consider. Indeed, diversity is a highly celebrated word, but how to safeguard its concept and value, especially when interests of players are not aligned? Yes, there are many (mostly role-playing) games out there to 'train' diversity and one's perceptions about it. There are different types of diversity to consider, let it be 4, 7 or 9 (is there even a limit??) and multiple methods to exercise diversity-training inclusivity. Actively engaging into this concept may indeed cultivate solidity and foster a sense of community among us, people who may not (at first) have anything in common. What better way to engage or exercise the concept of diversity than by using games, in which one can wonder and roam around free from guilt, blame and damage in an effort to better understand? But what little to find in literature on the topic, in great contrast to societal interest in the concept.

For interest in society and even in the gaming community there is, for sure. There are even online meeting places, such as the website 'games[4diversity]' online. This community tries to change the game, stating to contribute to the representation of socio-cultural minorities in games by organizing real-life events. By organizing (gaming) events, they attempt to facilitate a dialogue between game developers and players to stimulate them to create more diverse games and characters. Additionally, to boost the visibility of minority game developers themselves, striving for a diverse and colorful game industry. And that is needed. For all too often, games do stereotype. The dumb blond 'Barbie-type' character, the thick-rimmed glasses wearing nerd, the grey professor with hairs standing out. We all know that stereotypes are prominently featured in comics, movies, and games, as industry is simply used (and relies on) recognizable patterns and features to get messages across. Easy, perhaps, but at what expense?

Inclusion and diversity issues in gamers and board games must be pointed out (e.g., Hargrave, 2020) by those developing them and researching the field. Lately, the game industry has been paying more attention to this matter indeed, as the ever-increasing gaming population is simply better served when characters and game play is more diverse. But much more is to gain here.

Now both your editors are not the usual stereotypes. We are full professors, not gray at all (yet...) and both female. And maybe that is why we feel we must speak up. As both of us see in academics, and beyond, that there is still so much to gain on the topic of diversity and research. In real life, for sure, but let's start and prep our students and patients using simulation and gaming.

Hence, we aim to foster and strive for a safe, all-inclusive approach for our Journal – when it comes to subjects and ideas. We love to encourage you to think further than 'the usual'. And to challenge us with fresh ideas. About gaming for diversity, inclusion and how to train and research this well. We hope you take up the challenge!

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

References

Hargrave, E. (2020). *Inclusion, diversity, and representation in board gamers and beyond.* https://stonemaiergames.com/inclusion-diversity-and-representation-in-board-games-and-beyond-guest-post-by-elizabeth-hargrave/

Author Biographies

Marlies P. Schijven, MD PhD MHSc, is a professor of surgery with vast expertise in the simulation and gaming field for medical education. She is the former president of the Dutch Society for Simulation in Healthcare (DSSH), longtime member of SSH (Society for Simulation in Healthcare) and SESAM (European Society for Simulation) and president of the WATCH society (wearable technology in healthcare). She is the Chief Medical Information Officer of the Dutch Government, and national lead on eHealth.

Toshiko Kikkawa, PhD, is a professor at Keio University social psychologist and specializes in S&G and risk communication. She has been in the position of a vice-chair of Japanese Association of Simulation and Gaming (JASAG) since 2015 and was the Executive Board member of the International Simulation and Gaming Association (ISAGA) from 2012 to 2016.