

# TEAM WAACK

Video URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6InioX3Z7Qg>

## Problem Statement

A globalized academic environment can increase university students' opportunities to interact with peers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, it also signifies that there will be more opportunities for cross-cultural conflicts and miscommunications, especially those stemming from stereotypes, discrimination, and biases because individuals will encounter people with diverse attitudes, ideas, thought processes, and more (Herrmann, 2015). According to Guzman et al. (2016), stereotypes, discrimination, and biases have serious consequences. Students who are on the receiving end are more likely to disengage from the school. This problem can be amplified in the metaverse, where the lines between our physical and virtual realities will become blurred, and universities will become increasingly globalized. It can also contribute to a hostile environment for everyone. Therefore, our project aims to alleviate these negative consequences by helping university students ages 18-25 gain cultural competence skills to prepare them for the globalized cultural interactions in the metaverse. Cultural competence is the “ability of a person to effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful relationships with people of various cultural backgrounds (Gusman et al, 2016)”. Although developing cultural competence is a lifelong process, our project will be a starting point for individuals to increase self-awareness, build cultural knowledge, and develop social skills and behaviors.

## Design Rationale

[De]Alienated is a VR narrative-based game where the player acts as a human trying to navigate an unfamiliar planet to interact and form connections with aliens. Their goal is to find a way back home. We created a fictional storyline because research has shown that it is a basic human tendency to resist persuasive communications that are perceived as too forceful or forthright with their intentions, especially topics regarding behaviors and attitudes around stereotypes, discrimination, and biases (Kaufman, 2016). The fictional storyline would break resistance by providing a safe space between individuals and the serious themes in the game. The most crucial part of developing cultural competence is for one to recognize their assumptions about others (Guzman, et al. 2016). To challenge students' assumptions, we created aliens with different cultures. As they meet other aliens, they realize that they need to use various communication strategies. We also designed a system called M.A.G.N.E.T that provides players hints based on their responses. It will allow players to recognize their mistakes and reconsider their biases as a scaffold.

Furthermore, our stories will follow Bruner (1960)'s spiral curriculum design which emphasizes the importance of providing key concepts repeatedly while deepening their complexity. The increasing difficulty will allow players to build their overall cultural knowledge and slowly learn how to make meaningful connections in a multicultural environment. Some skills that are touched upon include observation, recognizing verbal and nonverbal communication cues, and active listening skills.

## Market Value

Our product is competitive in the market as the demand for virtual reality training and simulation is growing. According to Verified Market Research (2021), the VR training market is valued at \$262.36 Million in 2020, and is expected to increase to \$628.62 Million by 2028. As the research shows that the virtual reality training and simulation market is continuously expanding, we expect our game to have much potential to grow in this market.