

Nisha Devasia

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EDUCATION

University of Washington

PhD Candidate, Human Centered Design and Engineering

Seattle, WA

2025 - present

University of Washington

M.S. in Human Centered Design and Engineering

Seattle, WA

2023 - 2025

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

S.B. in Computer Science & S.B. in Comparative Media Studies

Cambridge, MA

2017 - 2021

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles.....

- **Devasia N.**, Kenderova G., Newman M., Kientz J., & Lee J.H (2025). 'I Would Not Be This Version of Myself Today': Elaborating on the Effects of Eudaimonic Gaming Experiences. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 9(6).
- **Devasia N.** & Lee J.H. (2024). The role of narrative in misinformation games. In *Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review*, 5(5).
- Williams R., Ali S., **Devasia N.**, DiPaola D., Hong J., Kaputsos S., Jordan B., & Breazeal C. (2022). AI + Ethics Curricula for Middle School Youth: Lessons Learned from Three Project-Based Curricula. In *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*.
- Ali S., **Devasia N.**, Park HW., & Breazeal C. (2021). Social Robots as Creativity Eliciting Agents. In *Frontiers in Robotics and AI* 2021; 8: 673730.

Peer Reviewed Conference Proceedings.....

- **Devasia N.**, Rodriguez A., Tuttle L., & Kientz J. (2025). Partnership through Play: Investigating How Long-Distance Couples Use Digital Games to Facilitate Intimacy. *Proceedings of the 2025 Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS '25)*.
- Coward C., **Devasia N.**, & Lee J.H. (2025). Escape Rooms for Misinformation Education: A Case Study of Co-design with Two Communities. *Proceedings of the 2025 Digital Games Research Association Conference (DiGRA '25)*.
- **Devasia N.**, Zhao R., & Lee. J.H. (2025). Does the Story Matter? Applying Narrative Theory to an Educational Misinformation Escape Room Game. In *Proceedings of the 2025 Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction (CHI '25)*.
- Rodriguez A., **Devasia N.**, Pei M., & Kientz J. (2024). Towards Construction-Oriented Play for Vision-Diverse People. In *Proceedings of the 26th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS '24)*.
- **Devasia N.**, Figueroa A., Evans S., Herman B., & Aragon C. (2024). Student Perspectives on Learning and Teaching Data Ethics Through Speculative Game Design. In *Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL '24)*.
- Ali S. and **Devasia N.**, & Breazeal C. (2022). Escape!Bot: Social Robots as Creative Problem-Solving Partners. In *Proceedings of ACM Creativity and Cognition 2022 (C&C '22)*. (**Honorable Mention Award**)
- Jordan B., **Devasia N.**, Hong J., Williams R., & Breazeal C. (2021). PoseBlocks: A Toolkit for Creating (and Dancing) with AI. In *Eleventh AAAI Symposium on Educational Advances in Artificial Intelligence (EAAI-21)*.

Book Chapters.....

- **Devasia N.**, (*in prep*). Shinra at the Intersection of Science, Technology, and Society. *The Psychgeist of Pop Culture: Final Fantasy VII*. Carnegie Mellon University: Play Story Press.
- **Devasia N.** Domesticating Bliss: Facilitating Long Distance Relationships Through Virtual Play. *The Psychgeist of Pop Culture: Stardew Valley*. Carnegie Mellon University: Play Story Press.

Posters, Workshops & Short Papers.....

- **Devasia N.** (2025). What are we talking about when we talk about escapism? Workshop on Exploring Future Directions for Healthy Escapism and Self-Regulation in Games. *Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction*

in Play (CHI PLAY '25).

- **Devasia N.**, Espinosa-Briones J., & Kientz J. (2025). Preliminary Results from a Systematic Review of Narrative Game-based Interventions for Mental Health. *Abstract Proceedings of the 2025 Digital Games Research Association Conference (DiGRA '25)*.
- Pande M., Moran R., Lee J.H., Kientz J., Yarborough S., **Devasia N.**, & Symonds L. (2025). A PILOT TRIAL OF AN ESCAPE ROOM GAME TO COMBAT CANCER NUTRITION MISINFORMATION. *Abstracts of Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC '25)*.
- **Devasia, N.**, Coward, C., & Lee, J.H. (2025). Misinfo Madness: Rapid Ideation and Design of an Educational Misinformation Escape Room Game. *NextLibrary Festival 2025*.
- Yoon, S., Evans, S., Aragon, C., Herman, B., **Devasia, N.**, Miles, T. (2024). Responsibility and Care in AI/ML Education: A Collaborative Approach to Ethical Awareness. *Association for Information Science and Technology 2024 (ASIS&T '24)*.
- **Devasia N.** & Lee J.H. The Role of Narrative in Misinformation Games. *Trust and Safety Research Conference 2024 (T&S '24)*.
- Ali S. and **Devasia N.**, & Breazeal C. (2021). Designing Games for Enabling Co-creation with Social Agents. Workshop on Designing Games for and with Children: Co-design Methodologies for playful activities using AR/VR and Social Agents. *ACM/IEEE Interaction Design and Children Conference 2021 (IDC-21)*.
- Ali S., **Devasia N.**, & Breazeal C. (2021). Building Child-Robot Collaborative Relationships in Creative Interactions. Workshop on Measuring Child Robot Relationships. *ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction 2021 (HRI-21)*.
- **Devasia N.**, Ali S., & Breazeal C. (2020). Escape!Bot: Child-Robot Interaction to Promote Creative Expression During Gameplay. In *Extended Abstracts of the 2020 Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play (CHI PLAY '20)*.

FUNDED GRANTS WITH KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **HCDE Doctoral Grant (University of Washington)** **Award Amount: \$500**
Connecting Eudaimonic Game Experiences to Theories of Behavior Change 2024
Nisha Devasia (Key personnel & Lead proposal writer), Jin Ha Lee (PI), Julie Kientz (PI)
- **CIP Innovation Fund (University of Washington)** **Award Amount: \$4200**
Effect of Transportation and Identification on Learning Outcomes in a Misinformation Education Game 2024
Nisha Devasia (Key personnel & Lead proposal writer), Jin Ha Lee (PI), Chris Coward (PI)

TEACHING & MENTORING

- Led Directed Research Group in Developing a Digital Diary Application, Winter and Spring 2025
- Mentor for DUB REU program, Summer 2024 (Mentees: N. Gorkar, J. Espinosa-Briones)
- Led Directed Research Group in Facilitating Long-Distance Connection through Gaming, Spring 2024
- Mentor for Twitch Intern program, Summer 2023 (Mentee: K. Dhamnait)
- Resident Peer Mentor at MIT, Fall 2020
- Instructor for Amazon Future Engineer, Summer 2020
- Mentor for Project Scientist, Summer 2019
- Associate Advisor at MIT, Fall 2018 to Fall 2019
- New Hampshire Girls' Math Circle, 2014-2016

SERVICE

- CHI PLAY 2026 Organizing Committee (Social Media & Publicity Chair)
- Reviewer for: ISLS 2024, CHI 2025-2026, DIS 2025, NeurIPS-25 Education 2025, ACM Transactions on Health
- Student Coordinator for UW Center for Digital Youth, Fall 2023 to present
- Program Advisory Committee for B.S. in Computer Science and Engineering, DigiPen Institute, Spring 2023
- Intern Review Committee for Twitch University Recruiting, September 2022 to September 2023
- Technical Interviewer for Twitch University Recruiting, September 2022 to September 2023
- Educational Counselor for MIT, Fall 2021 to present

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Playing Critically

August 2025 - present

Mentors: J. Kientz, J.H. Lee

Creating tools for students to annotate and reflect on their gaming experiences in order to promote critical reflection. Building 1. a desktop annotation overlay for taking notes on personal gameplay sessions and 2. adapted the micro-narrative methodology to create a reflection chatbot for post-game use.

Effects of Eudaimonic Gaming Experiences

October 2024 - present

Mentors: J. Kientz, J.H. Lee

Investigating how people form meaning, learn, and improve their own well-being using a eudaimonic lens for gameplay experiences (results published in CHI PLAY 2025).

Narrative Games for Mental Health

June 2024 - present

Mentor: J. Kientz

Conducting a systematic review of how narrative-based games are utilized in mental health contexts. Investigating use of evidence-based practices and how HCI researchers can work better with clinical practitioners. Working on creating narrative games as single-session interventions grounded in clinical research.

Affordances of Digital Games for Long Distance Romantic Relationships

January 2024 - present

Mentor: J. Kientz

Investigated the features of digital games that help adults in long distance romantic relationships feel more connected. Conducted a diary study and a mechanics-dynamics-aesthetics activity with participants. Ran a research group to design a product or interface that can enhance feelings of connection while gaming. Wrote up a mixed-methods analysis under submission for DIS 2025. Building a desktop application to help couples store meaningful virtual memories in Electron.js, Vite, Python, and AWS.

Role of Narrative in Misinformation Games

October 2023 - present

Mentor: J.H. Lee

Created a theoretical framework for the role that narrative plays in connecting people with how they experience misinformation in gameplay settings, from a game design and game studies perspective (published in the *Harvard Misinformation Review*). Ran a randomized controlled trial to identify connection between narrative transportation and identification and misinformation learning outcomes. Paper published in CHI 2025.

Designing Speculative Learning Games for Data Ethics

October 2023 - December 2024

Mentors: B. Herman, S. Evans, C. Aragon

Investigating the use of game development as a speculative activity to teach data science ethics incorporating the Directed Research Groups (DRG) format, that decentralizes classroom dynamics, emulates real-life working environments, and offers students creative choices driven by their own interests. Paper published in ISLS 2024.

Towards Gamified Crafting for Blind/Low Vision Youth

November 2023 - February 2024

Led by: A. Rodriguez

Investigated values and needs around how BLV individuals can express themselves through digital crafting, with a focus on how theories of joint media engagement can be applied to collaborative game interactions between sighted and low vision individuals. Thematic analysis and design implications published in ASSETS 2024.

Escape!Bot: Child-Robot Interaction for Creative Expression During Gameplay

January 2019 - June 2021

Mentor: S. Ali

Created a 2D platforming game in Unity to foster creative expression in children as they played the game with an embodied socially expressive agent providing creativity scaffolding. Designed and ran a 2x2 study to determine factorial efficacy of embodiment and creative scaffolding. System and results published in CHI PLAY 2020 and Creativity and Cognition 2022.

Dancing with AI

March 2020 - May 2021

Mentors: C. Breazeal, H. Abelson, R. Williams

Designed a middle school AI curriculum, teacher materials, and assessments focusing on movement-based AI models such as Teachable Machine, Affectiva, and Posenet. Deployed the curriculum using synchronous online learning with 40 middle school students during Summer 2020. Assessed learning gains and conducted trainings for teachers nationwide for deployment in their own classrooms. Tool design published in EAAI 2021; curriculum design published in IJAIED.

Open Collectives: Architecture for an Equitable Digital Economy

February 2020 - May 2020

Mentors: M. Moran Jahn, S. Williams, R. Segal

Analyzed historic examples of 'collectives' and co-designed transmedia artifacts through sensory ethnographic interview with potential users. Project resulted in a display at the Venice Biennale 2021.

EXPERIENCE

foundry10

Seattle, Washington

Graduate Student Researcher

October 2025 - present

- Assisting with ideation, prototyping, and data collection on a number of foundry10 research projects.

Twitch

San Francisco, California

Software Engineer II

August 2022 - September 2023

- Self-initiated improvements to baremetal workflows, including piloting addition of integration tests to baremetal services.
- Rearchitecting legacy baremetal services using Amazon Builder Tools and AWS.

Software Engineer I

August 2021 - July 2022

- Architected, coded, and built multi-component monitoring service for detecting abrupt drops in network traffic using AWS SQS, Kinesis, ECS, and Apache Druid.
- Designed and implemented distributed locking system for polling daemon using AWS DynamoDB.
- Wrote from scratch and maintained team's deployment runbooks, as well as several service and onboarding documents.

Software Engineering Intern

June 2020 - August 2020

- Refactored polling protocol in Golang to receive 1.5x more data per minute at no change to costs, providing better approximation of network traffic for video system.
- Created and owned pipeline that tracks live CDN utilization metrics, using AWS Lambda, Kinesis, and CloudWatch.

MIT Media Lab (Personal Robots)

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Research Assistant

January 2021 - June 2021

- Deployed Escape!Bot study to 50 schoolchildren aged 5-11 in the greater New England area. Conducted study sessions with teammate, analyzed results, and published paper in ACM C&C '22.
- Co-wrote short papers and workshop posters in IDC and HRI surrounding work on social robots and creativity.
- Conducted teacher trainings for Dancing with AI curriculum, which teachers then deployed to their students around the country.

Undergraduate Researcher

January 2019 - January 2021

- Designed and built a 2D platformer game in Unity and C# to measure creativity in elementary school children.
- Ran study sessions and compiled results for graduate student's work on creative social robots.
- Developed and piloted an interactive AI curriculum for middle schoolers through the Amazon Future Engineer program.
- Wrote curriculum and designed prototype for online textbook to teach K-12 schoolchildren about GANs.
- Helped build and maintain raise.mit.edu, the front page of MIT's multidisciplinary AI education initiative.

Education Development Center

Remote

Curriculum Designer

December 2020 - March 2021

- Developed data science integrated curricula for biology, physics, and chemistry.
- Co-designed lessons and activities with educators. Curricula will be used by the State of Massachusetts.

PlayStation (Santa Monica Studio)

Los Angeles, California

Engine Programming Intern

May 2019 - August 2019

- Revamped studio-wide debugging tool using modern rendering package to increase usability and productivity.
- Gained C++ and system design experience creating pipeline tools for a triple A video game studio.

The Education Arcade

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Undergraduate Researcher

June 2018 - August 2018

- Designed, prototyped, and implemented features for TaleBlazer, a location-based AR smartphone app.
- Implemented highly requested time dependent features for online editor using a Javascript frontend.

- Blogged about student life to thousands of potential applicants.
- Provided feedback to MIT Admissions and act as an ambassador for MIT to the general public.

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

- CERES Scholar, Jacobs Foundation, 2024-2025
- Academic All-Conference Team, Northeast Fencing Conference, 2021
- Xbox Women in Gaming Scholar, 2020
- Rewriting the Code Fellow, 2019
- National Merit Scholar, 2017
- State AP Scholar and National AP Scholar, College Board, 2016
- Reischauer Scholar, Stanford University, 2016
- Japan-America Friendship Scholar, Youth for Understanding, 2016
- 2x National Semifinalist, North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad, 2015 and 2016
- Math Prize for Girls, Advantage Testing Foundation, 2015
- Distinguished Honor Roll (top 1% of test takers), American Math Competitions, 2015
- 2x AIME qualifier, Mathematical Association of America, 2014 and 2015

INVITED TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

- **Partnership through Play: Investigating How Long Distance Couples Use Digital Games to Facilitate Intimacy.** ITU Copenhagen. 2025.
- **Games and Child-Computer Interaction.** Guest Lecture for INFO 498A at University of Washington. 2025.
- **Games and Misinformation.** Guest Lecture for HONS 1830W-69 at Vanderbilt University. Remote, 2024.
- **Introduction to PoseBlocks.** GirlsInAI2021 Hackathon - India. Remote, 2021.
- **Interning Remotely.** Jameel World Education Lab (J-WEL). Remote, 2020.

SELECTED MEDIA COVERAGE

- **GeekWire:** From stress relief to self-discovery: UW researchers reveal the deeper impact of video games. [link] (My research made it onto GeekWire!)
- **UW News:** Q&A: How video games can lead people to more meaningful lives. [link] (University-wide news article covering my PhD research)
- **MIT School of Engineering:** Love of the game. [link] (student spotlight covering my undergraduate research)
- **Santa Monica Studio:** Inspiring a New Generation. [link] (interviewed as part of STEM outreach team)
- **Daily Mail UK:** [link] One of my student blog posts went infamously viral and made it to the tabloids.

SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS

- **Skills:** Software Engineering, GoLang, Game/Interaction Design, Unity3D, Python, Java, C#, Writing, Blogging
- **Coursera Certifications:** Getting and Cleaning Data, R Programming, UW Machine Learning Certification
- **Other Certifications:** Japanese Language Placement Test N2 (full professional fluency)