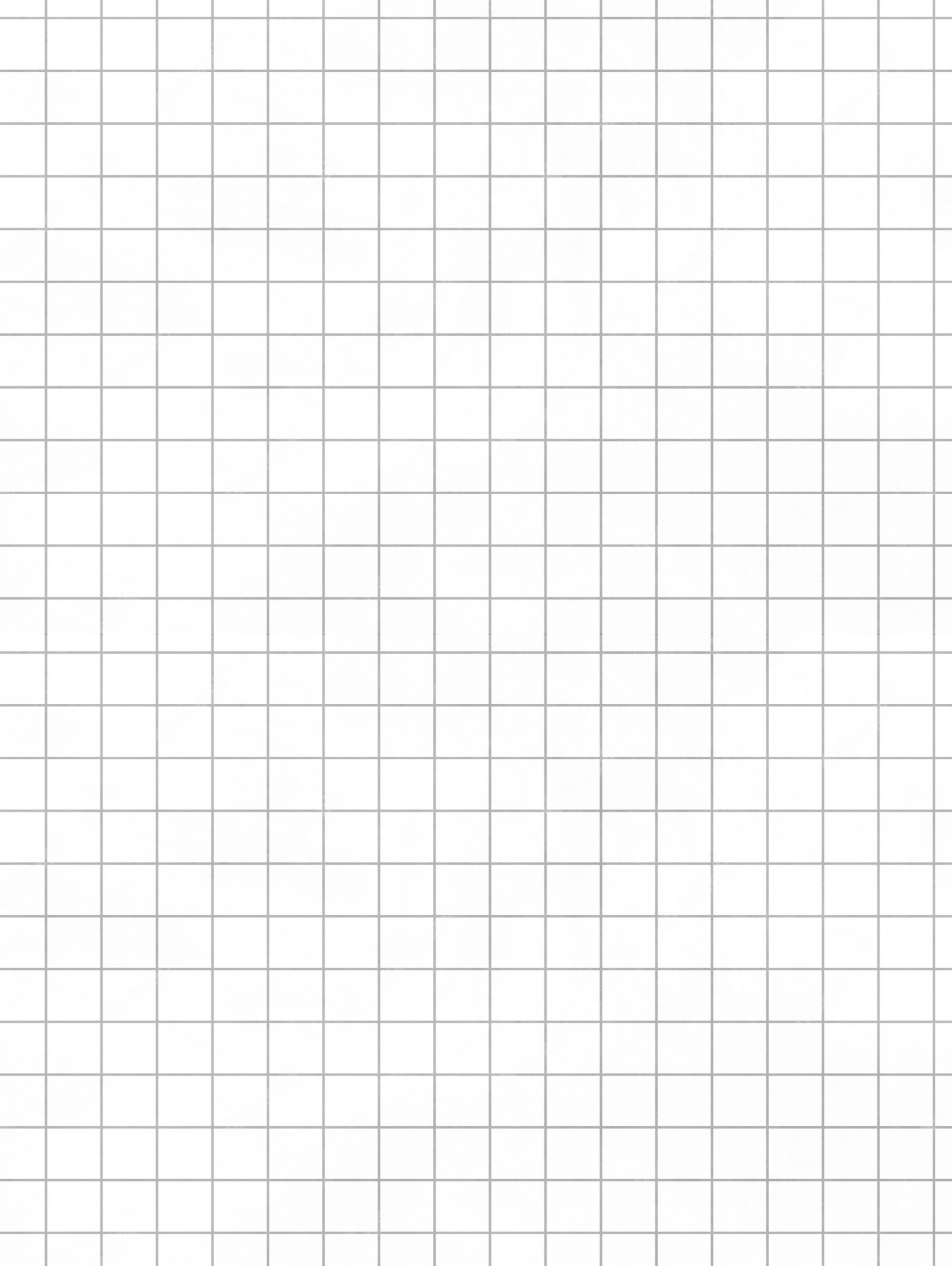


Home Maker - A Game

SDA Forms of Identity

- **How to play**

- This is a game about what goes into creating and making a home. Home is more than a physical location, rather it is found at a nexus of imagination and materiality and this game asks you to explore how different features, from objects to emotions, coalesce and compete to create what you might call home.
- The game is composed of a series of roll tables/lists of different objects or ideas connected to home and to play you simply roll for each list (using either a die or a random number generator) and the result is part of your home.
- The grid paper on pg2 is a space for you to draw anything inspired by the rolls you get. For instance, you might wish to draw out what you imagine a given item looks like or perhaps sketch out a floor plan, adding things as you roll new information about your home. Feel free to add more paper.
- If you want to roll a second time on any given list you can answer a question from pg3. Try not to repeat any questions. You can use this for a maximum of 2 bonus rolls on any roll table.
- You can play this game by yourself or with another person. If you play with another person you may wish to imagine your future homes together, thus rolling once for the both of you, or play separately and ask each other the questions as they come up.



Questions

1. What does this tell others about your life?
2. What question do people always ask about this when they visit?
3. Will you ever replace this and with what?
4. What are three adjectives to describe this?
5. How do you feel about this being part of your home?
6. Do you consider this essential to your home, why (not)?
7. Did you always feel this way?
8. What is a memory you have where this plays a central role?

- A) Where is your home located?

1. A town you visited once as a child then somehow found your way back to in the past few years
2. The centre of a city that murmurs and sings in a hundred languages, machine and human coexisting
3. A windswept cliffside that you half fear may be taken by the tide some day so you vow to enjoy it whilst it's here
4. Nestled in the heart of a comforting forest
5. A quiet suburb, a dozen local crafts stores and all friends are a stone's throw away
6. The same place you've lived forever, it's in your bones at this point

- B) What do you call your home?

1. A name that it came with
2. A name that struck you the very first time you saw it
3. The name you always imagined calling your home as a kid
4. Just "home"
5. A name with spiritual or cultural significance
6. A name different than the one on the official address

- C) What feature immediately drew you to this home?

1. You wouldn't say that any feature immediately jumped out, but over time you've come to appreciate many little things
2. The white and empty shell because you knew it was yours and yours alone to fill
3. The appliances that you've never had access to before but that make your life so much more efficient and easy, freeing you from having to spend so much time and energy on chores
4. The historic details, a bay window, exposed beams that remind you of those who made their homes here before you
5. The fact it was a fixer-upper because you were excited to leave your own mark
6. The location, it gives you great access to lots of the hobbies and work that you're passionate about whilst also providing you space to work on them at home

- D) What project are you working on in your home right now?

1. Renovating the bathroom, you've taught yourself the basics of plumbing and electricals to do so
2. Framing and displaying art made by a variety of your friends in every room so that you never feel alone
3. Building a set of new chairs from scratch
4. Planting a range of herbs and flowers on your window sills and outdoor space
5. Switching to fully renewable energy
6. Sewing fresh curtains for your lounge

- E) What part of home do you find is the most work?

1. Inviting others round, knowing they could judge your curations and choices or stumble across something you didn't want them to see
2. The drudgery of washing up, how it piles and piles, each plate filling you with despair equal to the food you just ate from it
3. Staying on top of your never-ending list of projects to improve the place
4. Carefully balancing your wants and needs with those of the others you share the space with
5. Remembering that you are not beholden to anyone else's rule but your own here, letting go of past fears and knowing you are safe
6. Managing the expenses

- F) When does your home feel complete, or when will it feel complete?

1. It never will, and you enjoy the fact that it's a journey
2. Whenever you have friends or family over, it brings the space to life and they are your real home
3. It doesn't feel complete and you can't put your finger on why, you're constantly searching for what's missing
4. When you settle in at the end of a long day, comfortable and safe
5. When everything is in tidy and in order
6. When the light falls in through the window just right and hits the table illuminating your seat perfectly for reading with your breakfast, just as you had adjusted it

- For the following two questions you can write your own answers on the pattern of the questions above - you can also add more of your own questions if you want to explore different ideas relating to home.

- G) What strange piece of furniture has travelled with you across time and space - as soon as you set it up in a new spot it becomes more homely?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

- H) What unusual habit have you developed thanks to a unique spatial or locational element of your home?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Home Maker: A Game About Home and Identity

I created the game *Home Maker* to draw attention to the myriad ways that home and identity overlap and intersect. Home is a sprawling and interdisciplinary concept that resists easy definition (Ahmet 2013, 621; Blunt and Dowling 2006, 2; Benson 2017, 142) hence this work doesn't have the scope to cover every way home and identity inform each other but instead will engage with scholarship predominantly from the disciplines of geography, sociology, and design to interrogate how activities in the home and ideas such as domesticity have significant implications for identity, as well as how the fluidity and multiplicity of the concept of home resonates a great deal with identity work.

Home Maker is inspired by a skipping game I played at primary school. My memories of it are somewhat fragmented but the premise is akin to the future-predicting game "M.A.S.H." which is an acronym standing for "Mansion, Apartment, Shack, House."¹ The way I remember it, one friend would pick a category, such as "dwelling type" (which is what the title "M.A.S.H." is based on) then list four things that fit that category. Your friend would then chant these as you skipped furiously and whichever they were saying as you stumbled was destined to be your future. The fact

¹ See the M.A.S.H.+ website for a modern web version of the game at <https://mashplus.com>, or see this wikiHow article that describes how to play a pen and paper version <https://www.wikihow.com/Play-M.A.S.H.>

that this game came to mind as I was pondering the topic of home brings to mind feminist geographers Blunt and Dowling's (2006, 1) comments on the complex temporal relations that entwine home with our identity, where "Your sense of home might be closely shaped by your memories of childhood, alongside your present experiences and your dreams for the future." In their interdisciplinary reflection on what it means to leave home Erickson (1993, 238) too suggests that the home is a site of blending and bending temporality, reflecting that, "Perhaps we impress upon a place our dreams as well as our memories." This complicated way that we connect our past, present, and future identities onto our definition and experience of home is reflected in both the original skipping game, which is one of predicting a future home, and *Home Maker*, which invokes a potential future whilst also mindfully incorporating references to the past. This is evident in options such as B3 "The name you always imagined calling your home as a kid," and A1 "A town you visited once as a child then somehow found your way back to in the past few years" which highlights the fact that our youthful relationships to places have ongoing significance in our lives (Erickson 1993, 239).

On the surface, the option within the instructions to play *Home Maker* with someone else rather than alone relates simply to memories of childhood play with friends, as in the example of M.A.S.H. above, however the call to play alongside another highlights the ways that how we conceive of our homes, what we put in our homes, and how we live in our homes is all social, or as Campbell (2020, 9) puts it "we

can't separate home from society." Notions of home and morality judgements about how you live in your home are not the private domain that they should be in order for citizens to live without judgement and control one's environment (Young 2005, 152), but rather they are implicated in politics and prejudice (Campbell 2020, 8). Gorman-Murray (2008) powerfully demonstrates this through his work on the role that meaningful objects within the home play in reconciling and producing gay and lesbian identities. He argues that for queer people, home can be a complex site where heteropatriarchal norms are often challenged and subverted through the display of explicitly queer art, photos, or flags which can challenge typical social understandings of what the home may mean to those who associate it with traditional "family values" (Gorman-Murray 2008, 289, 295), yet at the same time he acknowledges that some queer people have to compromise this sense of freedom and safety when they are around others in their home who may not be accepting (Gorman-Murray 2008, 285). Our homes and the identities that we derive in concert with them are subject to the judgements of others, who may draw assumptions about us. For instance, in the West there is considerable prestige attached to owning (rather than renting) one's home and due to this conservative political history renters are often viewed as socially disruptive (Kremer 2012, 130). Playing *Home Maker* alongside others is not intended to provoke rifts in relationships, but rather to emphasise the ways that we might mediate and moderate our dreams and imaginings for an ideal home based on who we are sharing them with and how we want to be viewed by them. In fact, given the way that the material facets of home convey elements of identity (Dempsey 2020, 50) answering

questions such as “What project are you working on in your home right now?” may bring players closer together as they communicate values and interests (Cox 2016, 71).

Home Maker is a deliberately provocative title, designed to simultaneously invoke ideas of domesticity that is connected to the idea of “homemaking,” which has traditionally been a role forced upon women and which is the subject of much feminist critique and reflection (Young 2005, 123), and that of making, as in physically constructing, a home or parts of a home, an activity more closely aligned with DIY and with men and masculinity (Cox 2016, 70). In reflecting these two disparate relationships to home, the title highlights the way that people experience and relate to home based on a range of identity features, such as gender, ethnicity, and class (Ahmet 2013, 622) and the game itself is designed to bring together practices from both meanings in order to question the potentially binary nature of these identities and to ask the player to envisage themselves participating in both practices.

I chose a game as the medium to explore the relationships between home and identity due to the significance of imaginative potential that games, home, and identity all rely on, albeit in different ways. Art historian Campbell (2020, 7) notes the key role that imagination plays in how we relate to the home and posits that its claim to universality, in that we all have some connection(s) to and feelings about home, allow it to be a fertile ground for the production of art. The game format also allows the player

to understand the blend of material, emotive, and imaginative components that comprises definitions of home across multiple disciplines (Benson 2017, 142). This in turn provides the player with agency, a core feature of games (Schell 2020, 12) and helps them find their own personal connection to the enigmatic concept of home. In this way, players respond to Campbell's (2020, 11) assertion that art "can challenge us to rethink the history of the domestic by asking who holds the authority to recreate the past."

That your results from each roll table are the product of random chance (rather than you getting to pick your preference) is not an attempt for the game to curtail the player's freedoms but rather to showcase how significant autonomy and freedom are to the concepts of home. Political scientist and feminist philosopher Young (2005, 152) lists "individuation," namely the state of having space and rights to be oneself, as one of the 4 "normative values of homes that should be [...] minimally accessible to all people" (Young 2005, 151). The cruciality of freedom is highlighted in Ahmet's (2013, 628) geographical work which notes that for the participants of their study, young mixed-race men, home was linked indelibly to autonomy, to the point that participants located home outside of the traditional sphere of the parental home in outdoor locations such as parks where they could develop their own identities beyond what was prescribed to them by others.

In addition, this mechanic reflects the fact that there may be features of our home that we do not choose, or would not have chosen, but nevertheless come to love

and appreciate, a point that Erickson (1993, 239) poetically illustrates in her comparison of homes to relationships, noting how may take one a while to fall in love with either a place or person. This relates to psychologist Van Lennep's (1987, 209) claim that a space becomes our own through living in it, rather than due to any inherent quality of the room or house itself. He suggests that it is the connections that we draw between ourselves and our spaces/belongings that make us feel at home, familiarity producing intimacy (Van Lennep 1987, 212) and this familiarity is what the questions are specifically designed to elicit, for instance "What is a memory you have where this plays a central role?" serves to embed the rolled result in the player's imagination.

The fact that you can choose to roll again on any given table is equally significant. Insofar as the game is about constructing one's home, it could be argued that the game parallels the projects of self-builders, particularly regarding the way that this positions the home as "a (necessarily) incomplete project" (Benson 2017, 145), and idea made explicit with question F and answer 1 which suggests one's home is an ongoing journey. Both Benson's sociological work on self-building and Cox's housing studies work on why people do DIY highlight the affective properties of making changes to a space, and how this made the space feel more like home for those studied (Benson 2017 143; Cox 2016, 65). Ultimately the choice to reroll an additional answer to develop your imagined home and the research into the ongoing project of home construction both serve to underscore the fluidity that, according to sociologist Gorman-Murray (2008, 286), unites home and identity, as they are mutually constitutive and ever-evolving in response to each other.

To conclude, in developing *Home Maker* I have drawn together theory about the relationship between home and identity from across a broad range of disciplines and combined them into the game in order to produce an interdisciplinary experience for the player, enabling them to discover multiple points of intersection between home and identity including the significance of temporality and social relations, the role of physical home construction in identity construction, and the pivotal role freedom and autonomy play in shaping the complex idea of home.

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