

Hire Ground

Rules & Facilitation Guidelines

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Brief

Hire Ground is a conference game for 12 to 25 players designed to expose what social exclusion (inequality based on identity) feels like and the challenges it poses to effective risk management. The game is based on the difficult reality that certain groups are more exposed to risk through social exclusion, which reinforces itself in small and compounding ways.

Players must reach out to each other for help. As players understand the ramifications of giving and receiving help, they gravitate towards similar people and groups in power. The more a player advances, the more information they have about how things work. Players who cannot cope with floods or droughts or simply the lack of opportunity may gain insight into what is going on by smartly watching what happens to other players. People they once received help from no longer want to associate with them. They begin to see how their identity limits the benefits of education and hard work.

Hire Ground creates a compelling social experience among development workers, humanitarians, government senior staff, and students whom the game is designed for. The specific design goals of the game are to:

- Experience the gradual, compounded impact of inequity based on identity through series of small actions and events.
- Experience the benefits and limitations of a social safety net that relies on other players.
- Encourage dialogue about the different experiences of more privileged and less privileged individuals in the game system and in society at large.

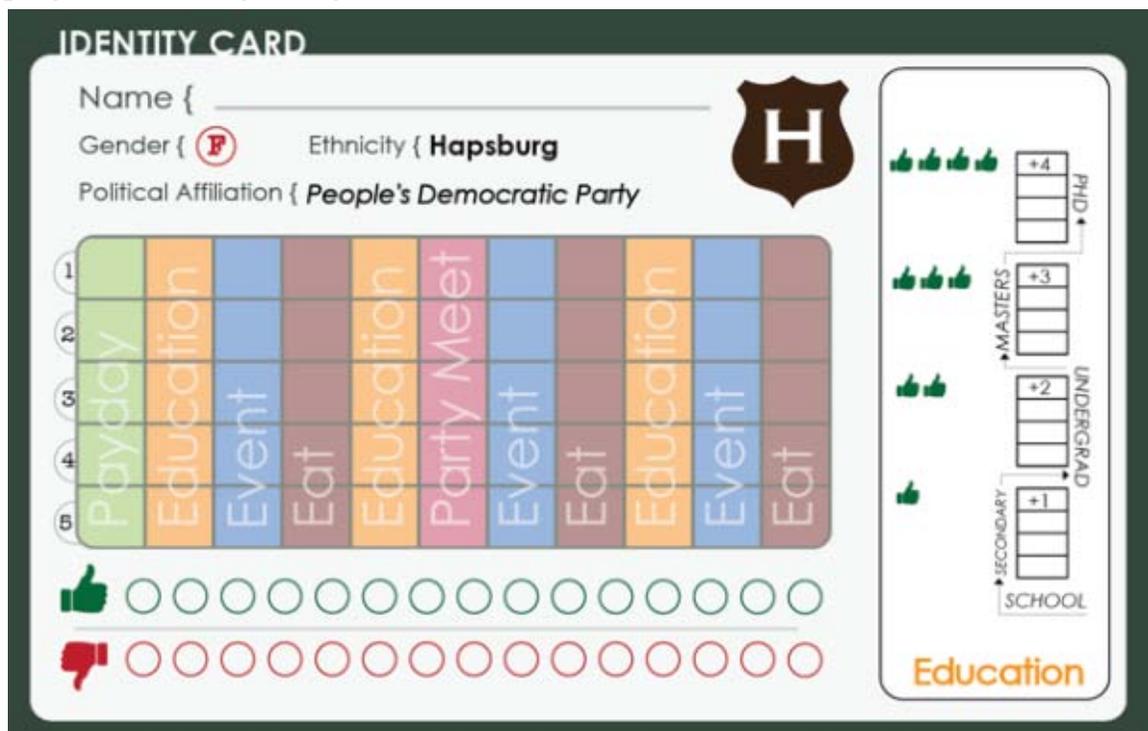
Game Components

Tables

The game is played at four tables. The tables represent different economic levels of society, which are reached through successfully acquiring better jobs. At the outset of the game, all players start at the same table. By successful applying for jobs, players may move to higher tables. Players can see how well everyone is doing in the game and are grouped with the people at their same level. One table is dedicated to those players who cannot pay for their food and are refugees.

Identity Cards

Identity cards indicate who the player is in terms of gender, tribe, and political party. The card is also used to track stigma and prestige points accumulated during gameplay, education level as the player buys units of education, and turn progression through the game.



A blank Identity card

Identity

The three identity factors, gender, tribe and political party, assigned to each player have ramifications for what kind of opportunities are available to them, how events impact them, and the stigma and/or prestige they will gain from helping other players, etc. The implications of their identity will often only become apparent after several events.

Stigma/Prestige

Stigma and prestige, marked in the bottom of the identity card next to the thumbs-up and thumbs down symbols, play significant role in what kinds of opportunities the players can take advantage of. Players gain stigma and prestige by helping other players, applying for jobs successfully or unsuccessfully, or spending time as a refugee. The facilitators will let players know when they have earned stigma or prestige points.

Education

Education is available to be purchased several times in every turn progression. Education is needed in order to successfully apply for jobs. When a player buys a level of education, he/she marks it off on their identity card.

Turn Progression

Turns in the game are based on an 11 turns that make up one round. One may think of the round as a year, or a season in real time. The game consists of five rounds in total. The turn order is on each identity card. This is also where the player tracks how much money they have. The following actions are performed on the corresponding turn of the round:

- 1) **Payday** – each player collects his/her pay
- 2) **Education** – each player has the opportunity to buy education that costs 5 game-money per level.
- 3) **Event** - An event card is drawn and the associated actions or impact is

- performed.
- 4) **Eat** - Players pay 4 game-money to purchase food.
 - 5) **Education** – each player has the opportunity to buy education that costs 5 game-money per level.
 - 6) **Party Meeting** – members of each political party vote on opportunities that will take place for party members at the subsequent meeting
 - 7) **Event** - An event card is drawn and the associated actions or impact is performed
 - 8) **Eat** - Players pay 4 game-money to purchase food.
 - 9) **Education** – each player has the opportunity to buy education that costs 5 game-money per level.
 - 10) **Event** - An event card is drawn and the associated actions or impact is performed
 - 11) **Eat** - Players pay 4 game-money to purchase food.

Event Cards

Each of the tables, except for the refugee table, has a stack of event cards. These cards are drawn on the appropriate turn and impact the people at the table where the event card is drawn. Event cards are stacked in a specific order designed to pace events as the game progresses.



An event card

Facilitators

Hire Ground runs best with two facilitators. One facilitator controls the turn progression with the assistance of projected slides that display the current turn, job opportunities, political party meetings, and other global events. This facilitator is stationed at the front of the room, controlling the advancement of the slides and the pace of the game. An assistant facilitator floats among the tables to manage job applications and distribute stigma and prestige points.



The lead facilitator introduces the game to players.

Game Play

Goal

The goal of the game is to be in the political party with the most prestige points at the end of round 5. Players are assigned to a political party at the beginning of the game, but there are several opportunities to switch parties. All members of the winning political party share a prize at the end of the game!

Set up

Four tables are set up with a projected image at one end of the tables. The first table is the refugee camp. All players take a seat at the 2nd table and receive an identity card from the facilitator. The associated event decks are played on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th tables. The lead facilitator introduces the turn order with the slide that shows the 5 11-turn rounds and their associated events.

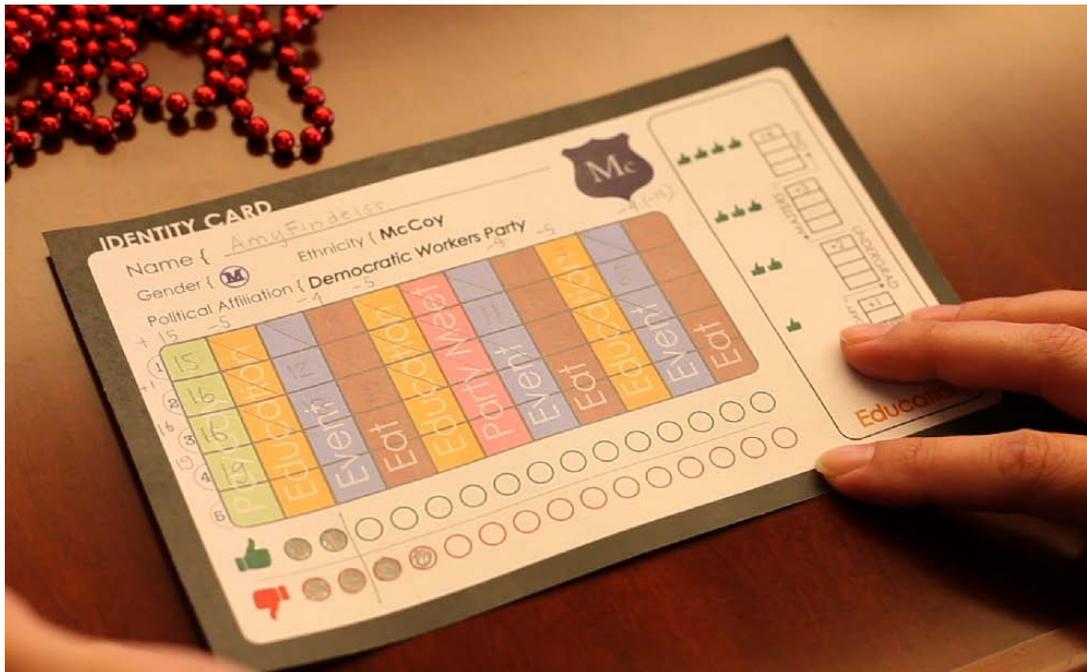
Optional: Give players markers like necklaces, wristbands or buttons to indicate their tribe, political party, and/or gender to other players. This can help fuel conversation and negotiation at some parts of the game.



Midway through a game, there are three tables, with the refugee table being a line of chair on the far left wall. Some players have advanced to higher levels by successfully applying for jobs while others are have fallen into the refugee camp. The two facilitators and projection are seen at the front of the room.

Turn Progression

There is at least one slide for every turn in each of the 5 rounds in the game. These slides mark the turn order as well as special global events that affect everyone playing. When players get paid, they mark their current total money in the turn column on their identity card. As they pay for things or get paid, their updated total funds are written in the square on their identity card indicating that turn.



A player's identity card with money, stigma and prestige points marked off for several weeks of turns. This player has been at a disadvantage most of the game and could not buy much education.

Types of Events

Local Events

Local events are events on the cards at each table that are played 3 times a round. Those events affect people sitting at that table. The refugee table has no event deck.



Local event cards played at the highest-level table.

Global Events

Global events are events in the slide projection that apply to everyone playing the game. These events could relate to education, political party meetings, and job opportunities. When these slides come up, the lead facilitator walks the players through the action.

Political Party Meetings

Political party meetings happen once per week. Several opportunities are presented at the party meeting. Each party gets to pick one of the events they would like to happen to its members through a vote (usually by raising hands in support of an option). The option with the most votes wins. The chosen action will take place at the party meeting the following week.

PARTY MEETING

Vote on a Measure:

- 1) +1 Money to all party members next meeting.
- 2) Allow other players to join this party for free.
- 3) Party members may buy Education for 3 money next party meeting.
- 4) Party members may bail people out of the Refugee Camp for 3 next party meeting.

Switch parties for 3 Money

The slide for a party meeting.

Job Opportunities

Job opportunities are global events that happen periodically through the facilitator's slides. Opportunities happen for different job levels. For jobs that move players from the 2nd table to the 3rd table, the assistant facilitator accepts applications from players by taking their identity cards and comparing their identity, education, and stigma/prestige. One successful applicant is chosen and moves to the next table. The assistant facilitator informs them of their new, higher pay. The unsuccessful job applicants receive one stigma point and all the identity cards are returned to the players.

If the job opportunity is for someone to move from the 3rd table to the 4th, the successful job applicant then takes applications from people at the 2nd table to fill their old position. The assistant facilitator helps the player choose by sharing some of the criteria they should consider in hiring someone. If they hire someone with too many identity characteristics different from themselves, they receive a stigma point.



The slide for a job opening.

Sigma and Prestige

Accumulating stigma points will close a player off from opportunities like jobs to move to higher tables. Prestige will make them better candidates for those jobs and advance their political party toward victory at the end of the game. The assistant facilitator lets people know when they have received a stigma or prestige point.

A player gains Stigma points by:

Receiving help from other players to pay for food

Unsuccessfully applying for a job

Having members of their ethnic group in the refugee camp

A player gains Prestige points by:

Completing a block of education

Helping a player who needs money to pay for food

Help

Since local events disproportionately effect players, there will be circumstances where some players will not have enough money to eat. They can appeal to their fellow players for financial help.

The facilitator should allow time for people to organize themselves and negotiate but apply some time pressure to keep the game moving. The conversations and debate about giving and receiving help, as well as helping people out of the refugee camp, constitute one of the most important learning opportunities in the game.



After a difficult series of turns, several players who are almost out of money appeal to players at a higher table for help. In this case, they are raising their hands with the number of money they need as the more advantaged player picks out whom she will help.

Refugee Camp

If they do not receive help, they must sit at the refugee table until someone can bail them out. Everyone from the same tribe receives a stigma point every turn for each member of his or her tribe in the refugee camp. Bailing them out costs 6 money, which the rescued player keeps to make it through the next few turns.

End game

In the 5th and final week of the game, rather than turn over a local event card for the last event, players have a final opportunity to switch political parties for 8 money before the end of the game, where the winners will be the members of the political party with the most prestige points.



The two players who made it to the highest table conspire on their strategy for the end of the game. Since they were very well off with good jobs, they helped many other players out and received many prestige points. They were in different political parties, as they different color necklaces indicate, but switched into the same party. These two players have greater influence over the end of the game than all the other players combined.