

How are LGBTQ+ members represented within AAA games?

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This paper will consider the different ways that members of the LGBTQ+ community are represented in AAA games. Initial research into this question has found an alarming trend in quite a few mainstream AAA titles that lead to a more negative viewpoint on people from within the LGBTQ+ community. However not every AAA game follows this trend as I have found some notable mainstream titles that change the usual views on people from within the community. After looking at each of the different types of representation I will also consider what effects this might have to people within the gaming industry and the consumers buying the games.

1 Introduction

The first section of this paper will look at how LGBTQ+ members are represented in negative ways within mainstream games such as Dead Rising 2 and Grand Theft Auto V among others. The second will then discuss the implications this might have on the LGBTQ+ community and how

the consumers of these mainstream titles might start to view members of the community.[1] The next section will then look at the more positive representations of the community within games such as Fable[2] and how they try to balance the views on homosexuality within the gaming industry. I will then discuss which portrayal is the most predominant and how this might be beneficial or detrimental to the LGBTQ+ community and finally I will discuss different industry stances on issues with LGBTQ+ representations within their games.

2 Negative LGBTQ+ Representation

The first game I looked into was Dead Rising 2 which features two characters Crystal and Amber Bailey who serve as an incestuous lesbian couple and major villain within the games story, this is a very obvious example of a section of the LGBTQ+ community being depicted as 'Evil' as within the story they help to start the zombie outbreak and attack the main character of the game. The second game I looked into is Grand Theft Auto V which depicts Trevor one of the main playable characters as gay but also very clearly depicts him with having some very serious mental issues such as Bipolar while having psychotic tendencies. This within the game is usually played off for comedic effect opening the possibility of people to see that these mental illnesses are something that should be laughed at.[3]

3 Effects on the Industry and Consumers

Having characters so prominently shown in these games as part of the LGBTQ+ community sends quite a strong message to the players, and while it is not stating outright that there is a connection between mental illness and the

LGBTQ+ community, due to the quantity of the games that follow this trend it suggests a strong correlation that many tend not to question while playing through a video game.[2] This could potentially lead to a more opinionated and stereotypical view on the LGBTQ+ community even if it is not specifically intended by the consumers of these products as subconsciously it is easy to see a correlation as a causation.[4] This would lead to a generally more negative view on the community and could lead to discrimination, mockery, and an outright dismissal of different mental illnesses and how they affect people.[5][6] With representation like this being frequent and within mainstream media allows for discrimination from the ignorant and uneducated.[7][8]

4 Positive LGBTQ+ Representation

Within the past 5 - 10 years there has been a shift to a more positive or at least more neutral stance on characters who are depicted to be within the LGBTQ+ community[9] with more games including LGBTQ+ protagonists. One example of this would be Dragon Age: Inquisition where you can romance and enter sexual relations with both male and female partners and other races. Another few examples would be the newly popularised visual novel style of games in the form of dating simulations such as Coming Out on Top and Dream Daddies both of these games received positive praise and went viral online gaining lots of attention with both games primarily focusing on homosexual relationships with other men.

5 Effects on the Industry and Consumers

Due to this shift in representation the effects that the games have on the consumers and the industry have changed dramatically from what they used to be to a more positive outlook towards the LGBTQ+ community. This will lead to a higher awareness of the community meaning it will be more widely accepted by the general public. More games like this will also help to encourage younger players to research and learn new things about the LGBTQ+ community, sexuality and gender.[9]

6 Opinions of the Gaming Industry

While it seems that the gaming industrys position on LGBTQ+ relationships are moving to a more positive standpoint there has been multiple examples of publishers changing or removing LGBTQ+ representation, such as EA in The Sims where they removed the option to have same-sex relationships.[10] While at first many people didnt notice or didnt really care to say against this, many other publishers who have done similar to this received massive backlash from the consumers of their products leading to more positive change within big AAA developers.

7 Conclusion

Overall looking at different videogames at different points in time, there seems to be more games that are older that represent the LGBTQ+ community in more negative light, however going through the different console generations and looking how videogames have developed over time there seems to be more games that have better representation of the community but there are still lots of games within the AAA sector that portray people from the LGBTQ+

community to be in some way either evil or mentally challenged. More and more people over the years seem to have spoken out against developers who repeatedly represent the LGBTQ+ community in this way with the hopes of changing how they are seen in AAA titles however big game developers seem to be slow upon acting on these changes usually only acting on major backlash from the consumers rather than instilling better representations in their videogames from the start.

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