

What are the most effective strategies to improve gender balance in game studios?

A worldwide issue about to be completely and instantly solved by some random undergraduate student dancing on the heavy side of the gender balance scales

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Question

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Background

- According to IGDA, women comprised 21% of the game industry workforce in 2018 [?] - down 1% from 22% in 2014 [?].
- Similarly, in 2018, women comprised only 17% of IT sectors in the UK [?]
 - Management positions have the most balance: in 2018, the proportion of women in IT project and programme management positions was 32% [?] (up from 15% in 2013 [?].)
- Finally, according to HESA, only 17% of computer science university students were female in 2016 [?] - corresponding with the IT industry
 - This limitation in developing talent suggests the issue begins at a much earlier stage than the workplace.

- Having a “sense of belonging” is said to enhance meaning in life [?] (cite more...).
- Regular incidents of targeted harassment of women by vocal portions of the gaming community (see GamerGate) [?, ?] (Cite more) could threaten this sense of belonging.
- In such an example of harassment and the resulting controversy, a minority may be inclined to believe that this is a result of being outnumbered by an oppressive entity.

Issues - Part 2

- Many studies (cite) and news articles (also cite) push for greater character diversity in games.
- Is the appeal of a game equivalent to the appeal to produce the games?
 - Games that represent women more could improve the sense of belonging in the gaming community through role model - predicting the desire to make games. (cite 'playing games' linked to making games) Are female players more likely to play games with female characters (Cite study)

- Not a problem-free circumstance
- A difference in gender, among other demographic differences, have been associated with a negative perception of subordinates by superiors overall [?]
- An influential study analysing relational demography [%20Different%20Relational%20Demography%20and%20Organizatio showed that workers in a heterogeneous workplace reported highest satisfaction when the organisation comprised members of their sex.

Impacts of discussion

“even though our society has become sensitized to negative sex stereotypes [...], it remains blind to its gratuitous emphasis on the gender dichotomy itself.” - S. L. Bem [?]

- Discussion of discrimination is far from sufficient, but is necessary to facilitate the development of solutions.
- Movements such as #MeToo and #GamerGate raise awareness of the harassment of women in the workplace.
- Counter-productive effects:
 - Greater awareness of workplace harassment, while essential for progression, may simply portray the workplace as an unappealing and unreachable place for women
 - Conflict avoidance (cite) between both sexes - perhaps especially women (cite) - reduces the appeal and increases a fear in identifying with aggressive feminist culture.
 - Sensitivity to the topic from conflict-fearing individuals, for fear of tension, could hinder progress

Role models

- Role models are believed to have a high impact on career choices (cite)
 - A 2013 study

Frame Title

Limitations

- The

Outstanding Questions

- What are the links between game content and developer demographics?
 - Hard to answer definitively: Demographics for players of specific games are hard to find.
 - Anecdotal intuition may suggest a natural link between the gender of an artist and its fanbase, owing to differences in preference and perspective.
- What is the association between the IT industry and gaming industry?
 - A 2009 study [?] found that the link between gaming and working in the IT industry was quite significant, even though the gender disparity between both industries is similar.