



EXTRAS / GAME CHANGERS / GAMING

## A Queer Subject: LGBT Diversity in Games

*"I hope that those reading will have a greater understanding why LGBT representation is good for gamers and games, and that it'll allow more discussion in the future."*

/ February 22, 2016 / 0

*"I hope that those reading will have a greater understanding why LGBT representation is good for gamers and games, and that it'll allow more discussion in the future."*

As we enter an age where being gay, bi or trans\* has become much more acceptable I believe there needs to be a discussion about LGBT diversity in videogames. Although it is not something that should be forced into every game (I don't care about the sexuality of Pikachu) many story-based games could benefit from exploration of the issues that LGBT individuals face. This article will not go into the nuances of how to best place LGBT qualities and figures into games but instead focus on the benefits audiences stand to gain from greater representation.

First things first – I should say that I'd rather developers not try to make LGBT characters if they focus on stereotypes. It is certainly possible that the depth of a character can be improved by an exploration of their sexuality or gender-identity, but using stereotypes removes any depth the character might achieve. A game that attempted to use LGBT representation and infamously ended up using stereotypes is *Ultimate Gay Fighter*, a 90's-style fighter game. It ridiculously featured a woman who became bisexual when drunk – many bisexual females have been fighting this stereotype for years, and for a game purporting to be representing queer individuals it is disgusting. The fun thing is that game was trying to criticise stereotypes, but rather than actually providing criticism just trotted out the stereotypes that they wanted gone. Stereotypes help no one and ruins games for LGBT individuals, so that is obviously not what meant when I say representation in games.

*"The fun thing is that game was trying to criticise stereotypes, but rather than actually providing criticism just trotted out the stereotypes that they wanted gone"*

*The Witcher 3* provides one of the best examples of showing how depth can be brought through exploration of LGBT themes. There is a very short interaction Geralt (the main character) has with a huntsman called Mislav. Up to meeting this character, everyone says that the huntsman is peculiar and very unusual; in the world of the *Witcher* that normally means that person is a monster, a fiend. Even when Geralt meets him, Mislav describes himself as cursed. Geralt assuming that Mislav is a werewolf offers to brew up a cure in thanks for helping him, but he instead replies that he's gay. Not only does this add depth to the world through the fact that sexuality in this half-Tolkienist world isn't the standard maidens and knights, but it shows the acceptance of Geralt towards Mislav. The sheer fact that Geralt doesn't care in the slightest (and is arguably slightly sympathetic to Mislav) shows he is against the world, and thinks it is wrong. Both Geralt and his world is deepened by Mislav, and without would the game would've been weaker.

I'd argue that good representation not only improves games but it also allows individuals to empathise with a group they may not know. Although the situation has massively improved for LGBT individuals there are still issues for the entire queer community – especially for bisexual and trans\* people. Although few games have dealt with allowing the player to empathise with the LGBT community, there is certainly opportunity to do so. If a developer made a player character queer it would force the player to understand the issues that character may face. The excellent film *Pride* about a lesbian and gay group supporting Welsh miners allows the viewer to empathise with the struggles with acceptance, and makes all but the most intolerant viewer more sympathetic to the LGBT movement. Although similar representations are few and far between in videogames (excluding specifically "gay" games), it could be an even more powerful medium for understanding and empathy for understanding and empathy. Representation in games improves the situation of LGBT people by allowing non-LGBT to understand the problems that individuals go through, and therefore improves the community of gamers as a whole.

*"Although similar representations are few and far between (excluding specifically "gay" games) in videogames, it could be an even more powerful medium for understanding and empathy"*

These short arguments are only a small response to the huge issues of LGBT representation in games. The absolute lack of trans\* representation, the fact that bisexuality is seen as optional, and that stereotypes still persist need to be tackled in other discussions. Regardless, through this I hope that readers will have a greater understanding why LGBT representation is good for gamers and for games, and that it'll allow more discussion in the future.

**Tim Spencer**

If an individual is trans\* and willing to talk about specifically non-cis diversity in games, please get in contact at [gaming@impactnottingham.com](mailto:gaming@impactnottingham.com)

Image: Character roster from "*Ultimate Gay Fighter*" – a mobile game for IOS, android and Windows OS, by developer Michael Patrick

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and feel free to leave a comment below.