



Games and inclusion: gender, minorities, and society

"[In] Dragon Age there's a transexual character, which is something really important because if a transsex person [...] sees themselves represented in a positive way, it can give them hope." – quote from an interview with a player. **PI06.**

Keywords: [Art](#), [cultural value](#), [Diversity](#), [Gender](#), [Inclusion](#), [Social Value](#)

Who will find this scenario particularly interesting? [Developers](#), [Policy makers](#), [Researchers](#)

Description

For all ages, video games are an expressive medium that is increasingly diversifying both the identities of the protagonists and the events and interactions presented in them. Issues addressed by video games include gender identity, treatment of cultural and ethnic minorities, refugees and war survivors, grief, love, sexual health, domestic violence, religion and faith, socialism, capitalism and neoliberalism, and, in a notable example from 2017, a playable interpretation of the work of the philosopher of Alan Watts (Everything). Such games can be used in a classroom



context, but they are also commercial and non-commercial entertainment products that are already being played by millions of Europeans. The expansion is not restricted to content, but also includes a wide range of people that are becoming involved with, or more visible in, the development and communities of video games.

However, this increased visibility is not occurring without challenges and, like in society more broadly, there has been populist opposition to progressive inclusivity. Such opposition has included threats or murder, rape, assault, financial and legal implications, and even 'swatting' (the making of fake reports to the police of gunshots at their target's house, with the hope to provoking an armed law-enforcement 'SWAT' response). As seen in many parts of society, moving beyond the past and present systemic prejudices against women and minorities is making bumpy progress, but the determination to do this successfully was supported by every game developer stakeholder interviewed during the Gaming Horizons research and aligns with the goal of increasing RRI presence in EU funding policies beyond only ethics compliance.

Meet Pierre, a gamer who is heterosexual, and his friend David, a gamer who is gay.



Pierre feels like there's too much fuss over minority groups saying that they are not visible in cultural artefacts, like video games and television. He thinks there's nothing wrong with the way games reflect society, and he sees a lot of characters in games that he can relate to: white, male, cisgender, and heterosexual, and he's never really thought about how it would feel for others to see themselves so rarely. Rather than engage with the lack of representation, Pierre makes jokes about others who are asking for equality. David is Pierre's friend, but he would like to see different communities represented in games.



Although David laughs at Pierre's joke, 'dragons don't exist?', David secretly wishes that Pierre would take him seriously, but as a member of a minority group he knows that objecting puts him in danger: at the least he would change the nature of their friendship, but at worst he could be attacked verbally or physically. David has friends who have been attacked for being gay and he's nervous about being too forthright about wanting equal treatment.

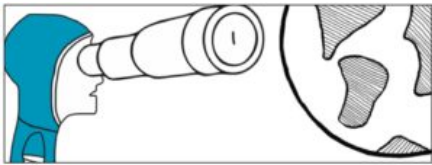
In a nutshell

Encouraging entertainment and artistic games developers to use women and minorities in their games will help build visibility for these communities as participants in everyday life and society. The wide reach of video games into European society allows them to function as a key asset in improving cultural understanding, relationships, and community. It is also likely to stimulate creativity in the industry, presenting new gameplay scenarios and inspiring new interactions.

Three approaches would contribute to progress in this area:

- further research to understand the current, past, and possible future states of women and minority gender and sexualities in video games, particularly in a European cultural context;
- training and workshops aimed at minority groups specifically intended to give participants game development skills;
- targeted arts funding for creative video games that specifies inclusivity (either in theme, individual/team, or both) as a metric of consideration.

Resources



- [Why diversity matters in the modern video games industry](#)
Stuart, K. (2017, July 18). Why diversity matters in the modern video games industry. Retrieved December 15, 2017.
- [Video games need a more diverse cast of characters](#)
Marks, P. (2009, September 22). Video games need a more diverse cast of characters. Retrieved December 15, 2017.

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Partners



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