

## Sex and Gender in Video Games

In all forms of media there are a compilation of images and subliminal meanings aimed at either openly or subversively transferring information to the audience. The methods of usage for this imagery and text is utilized by companies in tangent with what is the overall perception of audience appeal.

Since the dawn of the media form of video gaming, trends can be seen both in a stagnant and evolving way as the video game industry has grown through the years since its birth back in the 1970s.

Sexual and gender referral are similar in various genres of games and furthermore, if the sex of the main character alters factors of audience reception, use of sexual imagery or innuendos, and if female characters contain the same in depth background stories and in game capabilities as male characters is an important aspect when considering gender equality in video games.

In 2016 and some closer previous years, the market for female led games has been advancing. As the overall ratio of female to male game players equalizes, its only natural to understand that the call for female title characters becomes greater.

Some countries are already more advanced then others, for example, Japan. Since the origination of massively accepted video game systems such as Commodore 64, Atari and later systems such as Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft's XBox, Japanese game development has always been top notch.

Japanese culture utilizes video games similar to their utilization of “anime”, or animated, cartoons. With these media formats, the censorship of the material is vastly different then television or film platforms. Primarily, subject matter that would not be acceptable for viewership on common television or movie theaters is “fair game” in the industry of video game development.

Japan, of course, is not the only country to put sexual imagery or misrepresent a certain sex in video games. The United States of America is the home of hundreds of video game development companies that sell products involving suggestive story lines, racial stereotyping and sexual connotations, that in reality, would create a negative situation on a massive scale.

“It's still beautiful, it's still strong, it's still characterful, but it's not sexualized in the way it was done before”, says Rhianna Pratchett, head writer on the next installment to the Lara Croft: Tomb Raider video game series, *Rise of the Tomb Raider*, and gender quality advocate, who spoke on a radio show explaining how the new line of games is approaching male and female characters in new developments.

In the past, game such as Metroid Prime, featuring Samus Arran, and other games like Conker's Bad Fur Day and the aforementioned Lara Croft: Tomb Raider series, have been infamous for overtly sexualizing women and men, primarily “shedding” women in a less then appropriate way, causing a large amount of scrutiny.

As video game development continues and new titles are released to consumers mainstream, it is evident that advanced have been made in the realm of gender equality and sexual reference. Ratings are

stricter and the overall content of games has transitioned from “whatever sells” to a better evolved story line and in depth character background. Video gaming is advancing for the better and it shows no signs of slowing down as virtual reality and other formats expand.