

Designing Queer(er) Games: A Game Design Analysis Through Queer Game Studies Concepts and Practices

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Abstract

This paper explores the current practises in representing LGBTQ+ lives in the video game industry, in order to gain more in-depth understanding of queer game studies. With the help of concepts pulled through *Queer Game Studies* (2017), a book edited by Ruberg and Shaw, and more particularly Chang's chapter on queergaming, queer game studies will be defined and a framework of Chang's repurposing of Galloway's countergaming values (2006) extracted. These values are as follows: queer(er) design, queer(er) play, and queer remediation. These are then used to analyse two video games in particular: *Life is Strange* (2015) and *Gone Home* (2013). These games' queerness is therefore analysed through the games' design and gameplay, but also through its fans.

The main findings of the paper are that representing LGBTQ+ people in video games is not only about adding queer characters and relationships, but also about how to view the medium as a whole, and differing from the normative ideologies in video games, because this is what the queer experience is about. In *Life is Strange*, its strengths lie in the characters of Max and Chloe, but also challenging play with the time-rewind mechanic, defining choices and the focus made on the exploration. However, the game uses common traps like queerbaiting and the Bury Your Gays trope, but this also creates queer remediation by its fans. In *Gone Home*, the game is structured around its queerness. It also differs from normative play by inviting the players to explore without specific objectives. In terms of remediation, *Gone Home* finds itself in the middle of acclaims and critics surrounding its specific gameplay, and queer representation.

Overall, it appears that queering a game from its design to its gameplay, in addition to adding queer characters and relationships, are key to improve LGBTQ+ representation. It is also a way to create new gaming experiences. To go further, representation should also be thought of as intersectional.

Keywords: Queer Game Studies, Queergaming, Queer Design, Queer Play, Queer Remediation, LGBTQ+, Video Games, Game Design, Life is Strange, Gone Home.