"…to log on and always have queer Indigenous interaction…": problems of representation for queer Aboriginald and/or Torres Strait Islander gamers

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INTRODUCTION

Representation is a core element of analysis for all screen media, videogames are not except from this approach. It can take very different forms, from looking into the extension of identities from individual players (Klimmt et al, 2009), moving into more complex understanding through intersectional approaches (Hoch, 2020). However, most studies take as a starting point the ideas of the Gamer identity as the background for any conflict or lack of representation (Chess, 2020; Kivijarvi & Katila, 2021; Blom, 2023). Further research done deepening this type of critiques come from African American positionings that forward the difficulties and problematic representation that happen when mainting only perspectives from priviliged or partially priviliged positions (Gray, 2023: Trammel, 2023). These line of thinking do not take away from shining light into practices being carried out that still work around the oppressing structures put into place and furthering change from within the space. Most of the highglited work is being carried out in the space of the US or Canada (see Gray, 2020; Mckenna et al, 2022). At the same time, common ideas of the importance of representation were confronted by seminal studies regarding sexuality and gender consdierations (Shaw, 2014, Ruberg, 2019) and still carry weight into reflections representation has for gender and sexual diverse groups. While these works are of great relevance and give a good guide on movements and contestation approaches, they are based on a particular set of circumstances that encompass the US/Canada context. For its part, works highliting Indigenous perspectives, soverignty and queerness in videogames, on an international level, have changed the focus onto Indigenous practices in the last years (LaPensée & Emmons, 2019; LaPensée, Laiti & Longboat, 2021; Clapper, 2021; Laiti, 2021; Miner, 2022; Loban, 2023).

This paper seeks to forefront the perspectives of queer Aboriginald and/or Torres Strait Islander gamers, understood in a wide sense, as it relates to their viewpoints on representation and character/avatar creation. This work intents to center Indigenous knowledges as they relate to gaming practices and experiences in the particular context of so-called Australia. Considering the historicaly simple and stereotyping existing representation, questions about its role as an integration and visibility tool emerge. It is not an element to be considered outside of public life and its significant

restrictions (Gossett et al, 2017). Through the critical scrutiny of the multiple elements that are entangled in the attempts of the Colonial Project of Gender and Sexuality (O'Sullivan, 2021) and the Modern/Colonial System of Gender (Lugones, 2008) to continue functioning, problematizing representation needs to include not only an intersectional approach but on pathways being constructed to disrupt those attempts. The posibilities of including complex representations as well as workings around the limitations presented by different videogames structures are some of the aspects discussed by the participants to the survey that informs the project from which this paper emerges. At the same time, considerations regarding the relationship with Commnunities enrich the discussions concerning the extension and importance of representation in a wider sense. Reaching this perspectives can only happen by centering Indigenous worldviews and knowledges. By carrying out this practice we can approach particular practices of resistances within and across videogames.

BIO
Leandro Wallace (he/him/él) is a non-Indigenous PhD Candidate at the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University, originally from Argentina, in Abya Yala. He works with Prof. Sandy O'Sullivan in their ARC Future Fellowship Project "Saving Lives: Mapping the influence of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ creative artists" focusing on experiences and resistances of queer Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander gamers. In his work, he looks to connect the anti-colonial Indigenous practices and theorizing of both geo-political spaces: Abya Yala and the continent known as Australia. Leandro is also an Editor-member of the International Online Journal "EnGender!", co-organizer of their annual Conference, and co-host and co-producer of the podcast "EnGender Conversations".

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